



THE INFRASTRUCTURE MUST COME FIRST

Whilst the immediate threat of development on Grove Farm may be reduced with its deletion from the emerging Local Plan, the possibility of a planning application being made for this site has not gone away.

Furthermore, until the Local Plan has been adopted, hopefully by mid-2013, a risk of other development plans being launched in the Fleet/Church Crookham/Crookham Village area to take the place of Grove Farm is increasingly likely according to FACE-IT. 'Grove Farm was only the most immediate challenge when FACE-IT was formed', said a spokesman. 'The countryside to the west of Fleet provides an invaluable natural resource for all local residents to enjoy and contributes significantly to the overall quality of life in the Fleet and Crookham community.'

The campaigners are concerned that yet more housing in West Fleet will put further strain on infrastructure that has not been sufficiently upgraded to cope with existing or already planned development. Provision for important local needs, such as access to the M3, access and parking at Fleet station, school places, health care facilities and the local road network is invariably overlooked in development schemes, with broad assumptions made that existing facilities will be adequate.

Any development that begins the process of joining up West Fleet to Crookham Village or just adding more and more housing to current developments, such as Edenbrook or Zebon Copse, will inevitably lead to the destruction of nearby green spaces and contribute to a step by step growth of Fleet to the west, absorbing all the settlements in its path.

There is a history of developers offering to provide funds for much needed infrastructure and for limits to the extent of their development plans. They also suggest that they will provide wonderful areas of country parks that will improve the habitat for wildlife, in comparison to that which existed when the land was used for agriculture. So often, the plans for school provision, garden allotments, playing fields, real improvements

Press Release

FACE IT

**Fleet and Crookham
Environment is Threatened**

to the road network and other attractive facilities fail to be delivered because costs were underestimated or the land was required for incremental development.

For many years, Fleet and its surrounding settlements have experienced a series of bolt-on developments, which were never big enough to provide a critical mass of funding for much needed infrastructure. Access roundabouts may have been provided, but assumptions were made that the developments were sustainable and that the existing health facilities, schools, roads shopping and community facilities could cope.

As we heard last week, population growth in the UK is at a record high and new housing is required to cope with this increased demand. Government is also strongly supporting development plans to help with the recession and developers will feel encouraged to propose schemes, even if they are not needed. They are profit driven, however, and need to meet their targets for growth and return on investment rather than provide required infrastructure. The position is further complicated because third parties, not the developers or Hart District Council, are responsible for the provision of road, rail, health, education and utility upgrades and improvements. They are discussed for years, large sums of money are spent on feasibility studies with consultants and the costs are inflated by delays and inefficient procurement. Often, this means that it becomes too expensive to provide the essential infrastructure needs.

The FACE-IT spokesman said that they were closely monitoring all development plans emerging for the Fleet, Church Crookham and Crookham Village areas, to assess whether these should be viewed and welcomed as sustainable development or would just add to the problems of the already stretched infrastructure and adversely impact the cherished countryside environment. Development in Hart should be truly sustainable, using brownfield sites wherever possible, and must have appropriate infrastructure and transport links agreed and provided in advance of the housing. Longer-term, a large, new eco-settlement should be considered, because significant infrastructure could all be planned and provided as part of the development.

Press Release