



SIGNS OF ENCOURAGING CHANGES TO THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The FACE-IT residents group have given a cautious welcome to the work of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Steering Group at Hart District Council (HDC). A spokesman for FACE-IT, who have been campaigning for a more sustainable housing development plan, improved infrastructure and to protect the Fleet and Crookham environment, stated that they were encouraged by the LDF Steering Group recommendations from their 6 June meeting, now made public. Significantly, the Minutes of that meeting record:

‘Members agreed the principle of removing Grove Farm as an allocated site in the Core Strategy and redistributing the 450 dwellings lost as a consequence around the district.’

‘Whilst we should welcome this important development, we also need to be cautious’, said the FACE-IT spokesman. ‘This is only a recommendation and much further work remains to finalise the LDF plan. HDC Cabinet will now review the recommendations and we expect work will continue through the summer to evaluate the housing allocation and distribution required to meet Hart’s housing needs. Presuming that the final LDF document will be submitted for approval at a full District Council meeting on 27 September, it is likely a public consultation will follow in the autumn.’

‘One of the encouraging features in the new recommendations appears to be potential for the increased use of brown-field sites in Fleet, which are currently occupied by empty office blocks and which are increasingly subjected to vandalism and decline. Some of these properties are close to the Station and on the right side of town for ease of connection to the M3. If these were developed, the occupants would have good access to the town centre,

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would not need to drive to use the station and cherished countryside would not be ruined by the development. Any increase in the population in the Fleet area would, however, bring further pressure on schools and health facilities unless a truly integrated strategy was included in the revised LDF, which properly addressed these essential infrastructure needs. Otherwise, yet more children would be bussed to schools in other districts and the waiting periods to see your doctor of choice would increase further.’

The recommendations in the LDF Steering Group Minutes also show some 233 unallocated houses to be developed in the Fleet and Crookham area, plus 500 unallocated houses in ‘rural areas’. No doubt sites will be identified for some of these houses soon, but clarification will be needed.

‘In FACE-IT, we will continue to closely monitor any housing allocations, whilst seeking transparency and fairness in the process. We will also continue to prepare for the public consultation.’, said the spokesman. ‘We believe good progress is being made and that the wishes of local residents to preserve the green gaps between settlements and provide for real sustainability are now being taken more seriously. We understand and support the need for the revised LDF to be agreed and adopted as soon as possible, including a robust, minimum 5 year land supply. Once the threatened developers’ free-for-all has been avoided, FACE-IT will be pressing for a sensible longer term strategy that takes a more integrated look at sustainable development needs in the District, including a review of the new settlement option.

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