

## **FLEET STATION MAY BENEFIT FROM UPGRADE PLANS**

There has been a long standing need to upgrade Fleet Station and Hart District Council will consider plans for this in the 6 December Cabinet Meeting. The Cabinet will consider a report which recommends allocating £300,000 of S106 developer contributions towards the improvements in a £6.2 million project which Network Rail/South West Trains propose to bring forward for completion by April 2014.

All station users know that there is fierce competition for parking after 07:30 every weekday and that there is no proper access for people with disabilities, a poor forecourt layout, and insufficient cycle parking. The current facilities are dull and inefficient and a cause of congestion and confusion at busy times for all concerned.

The proposed facilities would include:

New station buildings, with an enlarged booking hall, waiting room, toilet facilities, platform canopies, improved forecourt and a new, covered footbridge with lifts, suitable for people with disabilities. An example of the new type of facilities can be seen at Farnborough.

Increased car park capacity in a new single-decked car park above the existing 'town centre side' car park to create an additional 150 spaces.

Additional, secure and improved cycle facilities to increase capacity by 48 spaces.

Hart District Council believe that for £300,000 this project will deliver good value for money and bring much needed and long overdue improvements for all rail users. According to FACE-IT, however, the final Fleet Station Travel Plan and the investment proposal now clearly recognise the parking and access issues for people who are unable to walk, cycle share a car or take a bus, but do not go far enough to resolving the current problems, never mind the additional pressure that will come from the occupants of the new housing proposed in the Local Plan.

Some 2,500 people arrive at the station every day and 1,450 arrive in the peak period between 7a.m. and 9a.m.. A little more than half the people (1,325) arrive by car. Some 700 cars are parked at or near the station by those who drive themselves or are car sharers and a further 525 cars are used to drop people off at the station. Some people drive further miles to Winchfield, just to be able to find a parking space without having to face the parking problems in Fleet. Some vehicles being used to deliver people to the station often make two round trips per day (1,050 journeys), adding to the congestion. With only 347 car parking places, and a true demand that is probably already in excess of 800 spaces, the car park fills quickly and by 8a.m. competition for spaces is bitterly fierce.

By providing the proposed 150 more parking spaces, FACE-IT believe that daily car journeys for those currently being dropped off at the station could probably be reduced by 300, thus delivering a significant and welcome contribution to reduced road traffic and congestion. The other proposed improvements to the station are excellent and should also go ahead. Unfortunately the plans fail to address the full extent of the car parking problem and there will still be an immediate shortfall of about 300 spaces and this problem will get worse as the population increases. The plans represent a good first step but more parking is still required.