

NEWS RELEASE

Date: 17 April 2012

FACE IT - FLEET AND CROOKHAM RESIDENTS' LIFESTYLE IS UNDER SEVERE THREAT...

At a packed Parish meeting, members of the newly formed **FACE-IT** group of local residents strongly expressed their views about the proposed developments of major housing estates in the green countryside that currently separates Fleet and Crookham Village.

FACE-IT Chairman, Brian Watt, outlined the massive pressures that would be placed on the area's already over-stretched infrastructure of schools, roads, rail facilities and health and the adverse impact the plans would have on the cherished and ancient landscape in the local gap that currently existed between Fleet and Crookham Village. This area, with its exceptional biodiversity, was used by residents of all the surrounding communities in the Hart Valley and many regular visitors from other areas. Its network of footpaths, ancient woodland and country setting would be a tragic loss to everyone if the plans went ahead.

Watt quoted David Cameron from his interview with John Craven on 8 January 2012:

'I care deeply about our countryside and our environment and I would no more put that at risk than I would put at risk my own family.

When you list what is great about our country, to me our countryside comes right at the top.....

Our vision is one where we give communities much more say, much more control. What the fear people have in villages is the great big housing estate being plonked down from above.... I think our reforms will make it easier for communities to say 'we are not going to have the big plonking housing estate landing next to the village but we would like the 10, 20, 30 extra houses and would like them to be built in this way , we'd like them for local people.....

Under our plans, villages and towns will be able to designate new green spaces in their local plans that they want to keep, that is a protection they don't necessarily have now.'

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Watt explained that this is exactly what the **FACE-IT** community was expressing in its views and that **FACE-IT** was most concerned about the late introduction of proposed developments such as Grove Farm into the current Local Development Framework (LDF). It even seemed possible that the Grove Farm development might be approved before the delayed report on the roads had been published, with developers already surveying the site.

FACE-IT rejected the current content of the LDF and believed it would not provide a solution that could really be viewed as sustainable development. It just offered an easy solution to the provision of the required housing numbers that would satisfy developers and bring some central government grants; it was not what local residents wanted.

Attendees expressed great frustration at the complex and technical nature of providing inputs into the consultation process on the LDF.

FACE-IT members were told that time was short and that it would be very difficult for any changes to be made to the LDF at this stage. Credible alternatives would be required if Grove Farm and other sites were to be challenged effectively.

The **FACE-IT** resolution is now to work with CVPC to ensure local views are heard, reflected in the Parish Plan, and taken proper account of by HDC and in the next LDF consultation. **FACE-IT** totally reject the current LDF in respect of proposed and potential developments impacting Crookham Village and will press for an objective and evidence-based, strategic re-evaluation of all Hart sites – including Fleet, Crookham Village and the other country villages being considered, as well as options for a new settlement.

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