



FACE-IT campaign intensifies – stop breaking our HART

Fleet and Crookham Environment is Threatened (FACE-IT) action group, is stepping up its campaign against Hart District Council's Local Development Framework plan (LDF).

Brian Watt, Chairman of FACE-IT, said that during leaflet distribution the action group received a high level of interest, the most frequent questions being 'how do we vote and who definitely does not support this development?' Although not aligned to any political party, to help local residents with answers to these questions, FACE-IT has put a guidance section 'Voting in the Local Elections' on their website (www.faceit-group.org), which gives full details of all the candidates. FACE-IT encourages everyone in the contested wards to vote on 3rd May in a manner which supports early removal of the proposed Grove Farm development from the Conservative led LDF proposals currently under consideration.

'Hart is the happiest place to live in Britain, according to a recent survey by Martin Ellis, a Halifax economist' said Watt. Sadly, all that is about to change. Hart has become a victim of its own success. Others want to move here but too many people threaten the quality of life that attracted local residents in the first place. Hundreds of supporters have now joined FACE-IT and want their voices to be heard and views taken into account.

Over the last twenty years Hart has more than contributed to its share of new housing including five massive housing developments with another two currently under construction. The population has swelled from 81,000 in 1991 to 89,700 in 2012. A Tory dominated Hart Council is proactive in seeking more residential development and has included in its LDF, greenfield

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Environment is Threatened**

sites made available by local landowners, aiming for a quick profit by selling their land to developers.

Despite the influx of people into Fleet, the town centre has suffered. As shops close down, they are boarded up or turned into pound and charity shops, causing degradation of the urban centre and increased traffic heading outbound for work or to shop at other towns.

Small scale brownfield development has happened in Fleet but this is minimal. Surely brownfield sites are the way forward for this area of the South East? Hart District Council seems set to encourage a large supermarket development on the sites occupied by Gurkha Square, The Harlington Centre and W.C.Baker & Son, so that they can move into new offices or even be forced to merge with Basingstoke, Deane or Rushmoor.

Locals foresee that the Council's hurried plan for 'bolt-on' developments around Fleet will not take adequate account of the impact of traffic flow in an area where many 'choke points' already cause long delays. The true impact of building projects already underway will not be known for some years. Health provision, water supplies, school places, public transport, parking and refuse disposal are all currently at capacity. Children have to be bussed to other towns because local schools are full. On top of this, an exceptional and treasured piece of ancient landscape, with biodiversity, that forms the green gap between Fleet, Crookham Village and Dogmersfield would be lost forever. So confident are the developers that surveys are already being carried out on land at Grove Farm, suggesting that development is moving ahead, even in advance of a planning application being submitted and the Local Development Framework (LDF) being finalised. There is increasing concern that although the due consultation process has hardly begun, it's looking horribly like a 'done deal'.

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Watt explained that the FACE-IT supporters would fight passionately and vigorously against the current LDF plans being proposed by the Conservative led majority on the Hart District Council. He said they were determined to protect their heritage and quality of life. ‘Today our village is under threat,’ said Watt. Tomorrow it will be your village facing the same challenge. Whilst FACE-IT was not supporting any particular party, voting for a Conservative candidate in the local elections this week would be like voting for the current LDF. The message for David Cameron and the local Conservatives is to stop talking and listen. Stop breaking our Hart!

Ends

For further information contact publicity@faceit-group.org

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