

FACE-IT WELCOMES AND SUPPORTS THE LOCAL PLAN

This week has seen the publication of a special November edition of the Hart News, the newspaper of Hart District Council, devoted to the Local Plan. In this issue of the paper, the content and status of the Local Plan are explained in a clear and helpful manner for all concerned. The paper explains why we need a plan, the Vision for Hart, the key issues, where development will take place and many other issues. The FACE-IT Group very much welcome the Local Plan as it now stands and believes it reflects great changes and improvements compared to the previous version, which was known as the Local Development Framework. Hart District Council have indeed taken note of the strong and clear opinions given in consultations on the previous document and have taken account of these inputs in the new Local Plan.

Perhaps the most important issue highlighted in the Hart News is on the last page of the November special edition. The Plan is now at the 'Pre-Submission' stage and there is a very important opportunity for the whole community to comment on the plan during 6 weeks of Public Consultation. Following this, it is planned that it will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for approval in the spring of 2013, leading to an Examination in Public by an independent Inspector early in the summer of 2013, with adoption following in late summer.

All comments must be received by Hart District Council by Monday January 7 2013. The FACE-IT Group spokesman explained that they would now be recommending to its membership that they submit their inputs before Christmas and that they could do this on line (www.hart.gov.uk), by sending an e mail (planningpolicy@hart.gov.uk) or in writing to the Planning Policy Team, Hart District Council, Harlington Way, Fleet, Hampshire, GU51 4AE. In the Hart News, there is an explanation of the importance at this stage of considering whether the Local Plan is 'sound' and it explains what the tests of 'soundness' are. To help its membership understand these issues and to give further guidance on making submissions to the Public Consultation, the FACE-IT Group have arranged a meeting on 27 November 2012 in The Street, Social Club, Crookham Village from 20:00 to 21:30. Daryl Phillips, Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer of Hart District Council, has been invited as a guest speaker. 'It is very important that all our comments on the Local Plan are relevant and made in an appropriate manner,' said the FACE-IT spokesman, 'and we strongly encourage our members and any other local residents who may be interested to attend to hear the expert and helpful input from Daryl.'

The Hart News also mentions the opportunity for the development of Fleet Town Centre. There will be a consultation in The Harlington on 24 November between 10:00 and 16:00, in which local residents will have the opportunity to discuss the future of the Town Centre and to put forward their views and proposals for this project.

Despite the encouraging progress with the Local Plan, the FACE-IT Group remain concerned that the local infrastructure is already under pressure, especially our local schools, health care facilities, roads, station parking, and leisure facilities. The Local Plan starts to address some of these issues and gives priority to schools, transport, community facilities, leisure facilities, sports and recreation facilities, green infrastructure and water. The plans for these improvements are not yet at a mature stage and are eagerly awaited. In particular, the plans for the development of schools to increase local capacity were of vital importance, as were the arrangements for pupils to get to and from

school safely. The outcome of the recent consultation on the proposals for a new Leisure Centre would also be of great interest, as would the potential provision of additional parking at Fleet Station. This last project, to be considered in the December Hart District Council Cabinet Meeting, is part of a £6.2 million scheme that would provide a range of improvements to station access and facilities, including 150 new car parking spaces, about a third of the real requirement.

For the Local Plan to be seen as being truly sustainable, all the key shortfalls in current infrastructure still need to be addressed as well as the increased pressures that would come from the development outlined in the plan for the next 15 years.