

FACE



Fleet and Crookham
Environment **is Threatened**

13 January 2014.

LOCAL RESIDENTS STILL FIGHTING TO SAVE HART VALLEY FROM DEVELOPERS

On Saturday 11 January over a hundred residents gathered at a meeting organized by residents of Zebon Copse and the FACE IT campaign to discuss concerns over development proposals. Several District and Parish Councillors and candidates for the forthcoming elections in May were present at the meeting.

The momentum for the meeting started because a few residents in Church Crookham got together to work out how to help protect the area that they live in. After a meeting of the ZCRA in November the residents have made huge efforts to distribute leaflets to over a thousand households and organise the meeting with FACE IT in the community centre.

At the meeting the FACE IT team explained how strong feeling, particularly in the West Fleet, Crookham Village and Church Crookham areas, which will be most affected by sites proposed for further development, led to the creation of the FACE IT Group two years ago. The group is campaigning for a better local development plan for Hart that provides full and balanced



Press Release

arguments for and against all the potential development sites in Hart and not just for those to the west of Fleet. A key aim of FACE-IT is to make the critical information that needs to be considered for planning housing available and understandable to everyone so that they can actively influence local decision-makers.

Of particular concern to the campaigners are the proposed housing developments on low-lying land in the River Hart Valley. One such proposal is to develop 340 high-density homes on a **greenfield site** at Watery Lane and Albany Farm in Church Crookham next to the River Hart. The development would mean the closure of the Albany Stables used as a riding school for the disabled, and the destruction of the paddocks on which the horses are grazed. The sheer number of homes potentially being proposed is also of concern including the continuing plans to develop 450 homes at Grove Farm adjacent to Crookham Village and West Fleet, a number of other smaller developments and 'garden-grabbing' schemes, and the introduction of development at the brownfield site of Tudgies Nursery in Crookham Village. The 'Edenbrook' development is already breaking out into open countryside that was previously farmland and wetland to the west of Fleet and is set to be extended by another 170 homes.



A view of the proposed development site in the Hart Valley at Albany Farm

Many residents expressed concerns that the local infrastructure is now getting seriously overloaded. For example **school places** are increasingly hard to come by,

especially where large areas of housing have been developed without an appropriate increase in school capacity. Although some improvements in school provision are planned, these will only cater for the current developments including 800 homes at 'Crookham Park' on the site of the old QEB barracks and the 'Edenbrook' development to the west of Fleet. New housing developments are likely to be outside catchment areas or current capacities of the schools. **Local roads** are already at capacity with the existing traffic which is worsening with the developments in the pipeline. Major pinch-points such as the crossing points over the canal and railway line, and local junctions are very likely to become bottlenecks if more development is approved.

The meeting also addressed the value of the **landscape character** and **biodiversity** of the Hart Valley. This valley follows the course of the River Hart from which the district takes its name. Its location to the west of Fleet provides an important north-south corridor for wildlife and a wide diversity of environment with its mosaic of hedgerows, ancient woodland with rare plants, scrub, farmland and floodplain wetlands grazed by cattle, horses and sheep. It is rich in wildlife with important concentrations of rare and declining birds, such as skylark and yellowhammer.



Yellowhammer



Teasel

It is highly prized by many locals for its scenic countryside and is easily accessed by numerous public footpaths. The Hart Valley is an **irreplaceable natural asset** for Fleet

and its residents. But the valley is under ever greater pressure from housing developers who are keen to build on its open fields.

Hart is vulnerable whilst the Hart local plan is being revised and studies are underway to determine demand and impact of housing in the area. The community wants to be sure that any more housing in our area will be to support local needs and not to satisfy developers' wishes or 'top down' Government targets. "We need to support Hart against the imposition of quotas and the demands of developers" said one resident. The meeting concluded that everyone should at least have the chance to be given the correct information and to voice their opinion. They will continue working with and through FACE IT to achieve that.

If you have an interest in this topic, you can find out more, follow the latest news and read articles and watch videos explaining the how the countryside is under threat at the FACE IT website www.faceit-group.org . The group also has a presence on Facebook – why not ask to join in the debate?

Ends

Pictures courtesy of FACE IT Members

For further information contact publicity@faceit-group.org or socialmedia@faceit-group.org