

# FACE

Fleet and Crookham  
Environment **is Threatened**



16 January 2014.

## **CAMPAIGN GROUP ORGANISES WALK TO VIEW CHERISHED COUNTRYSIDE**

On Saturday 15 March a group of local residents enjoyed a walk organised the FACE IT campaign around the area of countryside where Martin Grant Homes propose to build further housing.

Richard Hellier, who led the walk, highlighted the many, valid and varied reasons why this area is vital to the Hart Valley ecosystem and so valuable to so many species and to the community. The walk on the public footpaths around Albany Farm and Watery Lane, near to Zebon Copse on the outskirts of Church Crookham, showed the proposed development sites and the threat they pose to this exceptionally rich place for wildlife.



**Press Release**

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 the **greenfield site** at Watery Lane and Albany Farm in Church Crookham next to the River Hart. The planning application is currently being registered with Hart District Council and will be subject to a five-week consultation period and will be decided within 13 weeks. 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.

Part of the walk was along the River Hart, which runs through the proposed development site, and although the recent flooding has now subsided, the evidence of the recent rainfall on the river levels was clearly evident. Despite recent dry weather, much of the ground was wet underfoot and its value as a water-meadow in storing water and reducing flooding downstream could be seen.



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

With the onset of Spring, the rich fauna and flora of the area was becoming evident, with a variety of butterflies, song-birds, many of which are migratory, and early flowering plants and trees now showing their colours.

The walk highlighted 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.



There is now a video of a previous walk around the same site, containing much useful information about the landscape character and ecological value of the site, on the FACE IT YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtVJP5XQG9Y> and there is more information on our FACEIT website at <http://faceit-group.org/the-threat/watery-lane>.

The group is campaigning for a better local development plan for Hart that provides full and balanced 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.

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 Tudgeys 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.

Ends

Pictures courtesy of FACE IT Members

*For further information contact [publicity@faceit-group.org](mailto:publicity@faceit-group.org) or [socialmedia@faceit-group.org](mailto:socialmedia@faceit-group.org)*