

Crookham Village Parish Council

Comments on HDC Draft LDF Proposals October 2011

1. The LDF must take full account of the views of the existing population of council-tax payers and electors. If localism is to have any meaning, then significant weight must be given to the local view, vigorously expressed at public meetings held in the parish for the SHLAA and recently for the LDF, that the area around and within the Parish of Crookham Village has seen far more than its share of new development over the last few decades, that enough is enough, and that there should therefore be no more large-scale development in this area.
2. If housing demand is to have a place in deciding housing targets, then full account must also be taken of current slow rate of completions downstream of existing approvals on major sites, which gives a more-accurate and much-reduced measure of current demand than earlier theoretical studies.
3. Expanding Fleet with small dormitory developments remote from the town centre will not generate community spirit and hence have an adverse effect on social cohesion, law and order, and well-being in the longer term.
4. Claims that a minimum of 4000 dwellings is required to justify a new settlement seems not to take account of experience with Elvetham Heath, where 2000 dwellings provided significant social infrastructure (church, school, community centre, public house, supermarket, fuel station, nature reserve) on a greenfield site. No explanation is offered as to why this could not be repeated elsewhere with only 2000 dwellings. The alternative of a new settlement has not been properly researched, thus undermining the whole basis on which the draft LDF is constructed.
5. **It is therefore judged to be over-ambitious to develop LDF plans out to 2028 at this stage.**
 - 5.1. **Reduction of the period to 2021 with an update in 2016 would allow time properly to examine options for new settlements and the infrastructure implications of the various alternative proposals whilst retaining provision of a 5-year land supply in the published plan.**
 - 5.2. **The threat of market-led housing targets being imposed by the revised National Planning Policy Framework could render existing proposals obsolete before publication.**
 - 5.3. **The present banking crisis was triggered originally by failures of sub-prime mortgages encouraged by social policies that ignored economic realities. Theoretical housing demand must be moderated by a realistic assessment of ability to pay in these times of general financial hardship.**

6. Transport issues have not been properly considered.
 - 6.1. Capacity of country roads to the west and south of Fleet is already inadequate for peak-time traffic. One way to offload this network would be to provide a new access to the M3 somewhere near Fleet Services.
 - 6.2. Trains to London are already approaching capacity during rush hours. Increased rail capacity to London will be required to support a significant increase of population in Hart and Rushmoor, together with enhancements to stations and associated parking facilities in Hart. Full analysis must also demonstrate that the road network can handle the extra traffic to stations at peak times.
 - 6.3. Long-term provision of attractive and affordable public transport in the Fleet area, with coverage throughout waking hours, could reduce some of the traffic problems.
7. Grove Farm proposals require deeper examination of the following issues before inclusion in the LDF.
 - 7.1. Expansion of Calthorpe Park School funded by additions to Edenbrook does not depend on financial contributions from a Grove Farm housing development, even if part of the Grove Farm land is required for school playing fields. The case for this development rests solely on meeting perceived housing targets which could be met in other ways.
 - 7.2. Visual and spatial separation of urban Fleet from Crookham Village would be compromised.
 - 7.2.1. The knoll within the Grove Farm site threatens unacceptable visibility from Crookham Village of any development on the southern slope or on the skyline, with even-greater adverse effects from light pollution at night.
 - 7.2.2. The Country Park mentioned in the SHLAA for this site does not appear in the LDF, thus removing insurance against further expansion.
 - 7.3. The capacity of the road network through Crookham Village has changed little since before Fleet was first established over 150 years ago and is woefully inadequate for existing traffic speeds and flows, much less further increases from new developments.
 - 7.4. Community cohesion within smaller developments requires physical and sense-of-place links to existing communities and community facilities. Where community facilities are inadequate, or would be overloaded by new developments, plans must include appropriate new or expanded facilities.
 - 7.5. Road access is required towards Fleet rather than only outwards towards Hitches Lane.

8. If the Grove Farm development goes ahead, CVPC seeks the following:
 - 8.1. Infrastructure solutions to traffic issues through Crookham Village and along Crondall Road that funnel traffic away from these overcrowded rush-hour routes. Investigations should cover a wide area of the road network so that the consequences of extra traffic and rebalancing of traffic flows is fully researched.
 - 8.2. Allocation of 20 affordable housing units under RES rules linked to Crookham Village.
 - 8.3. Guaranteed permanent open-space buffer towards Crookham Village – ideally in ownership of CVPC.
 - 8.4. Permanent Crookham Village Hall (existing WI Hall is a ‘temporary’ WWII structure on grace-and-favour land with rolling 6-month tenure only) to maintain and enhance social cohesion within the parish.
 - 8.5. Site access, layout and facilities should encourage integration with existing communities, including footway/cycle links.
9. Expansion of Calthorpe Park will generate a significant increase of school-run traffic through Crookham Village. New developments will also add school-run traffic to infant and junior schools. Alternative traffic routes and options for school buses should be fully investigated and implemented to offload parish roads.
10. Concentration of retail development within Fleet town centre exacerbates transport problems and restricts numbers of new dwellings within the town itself. Alternatives of adding local retail outlets in the suburbs of Fleet have not been properly considered.
11. Local doctors’ lists are already near capacity. Increased population will require additional doctors and health facilities, ideally not concentrated in Fleet centre.
12. Telephone-based broadband is of very variable quality in the parish. High-speed broadband for new developments may require significant off-site telecoms infrastructure.
13. If demand-led housing targets are introduced by the government, the LDF must consider the possibility that redeveloping Fleet Town centre to make it a more desirable place to live may result in a further (and undesirable) increase in housing demand.