



OBJECTION to 14/001387/MAJOR

Outline application for up to 423 residential dwellings and a community facility. Associated vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access, drainage and landscape works including provision of public open space and sports pitches.

Provision of country park / SANG as an extension to Edenbrook Country Park. **Details of access to be agreed.**

At Land North Of Netherhouse Copse, Hitches Lane, Fleet, Hampshire.

Note: References to application documents quote their document number on the HDC web site.

914907 – FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT AND DRAINAGE STRATEGY

914908 – LANDSCAPE DESIGN STATEMENT

914910 – PLANNING STATEMENT

916200 – TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY

CVPC Objects for the following major reasons:

- Closure of the gap between Fleet urban areas and Crookham Village, especially along Hitches Lane, but also on the wider front.
- Unsustainable site due to lack of adequate transport facilities – no feasible bus route to cater for the whole development and over-reliance on cars with inadequate capacity admitted by the applicant at both ends of Hitches Lane. The narrow transport assessment failed to consider the effect on Crookham Village and the wider highway network.
- Environmental damage to fragile habitats and ancient woodland in the Upper Hart Valley.
- The site layout faces towards Edenbrook and thus fails to address integration of those living on the development with the remainder of the CV parish, which was discussed at length, with possible solutions, during pre-application meetings with the developer.
- Lack of non-sports facilities for the overall Berkeley Homes developments along Hitches Lane, which would be further exacerbated by this dormitory enclave.
- Applicant seeks full approval for what is admitted to be only a preliminary layout of the southern roundabout. Full approval can only be given to firm proposals.

1. Loss of Gap

1.1. Hart saved policy CON21 states: [“Development which would lead to the coalescence or damage the separate identity of neighbouring settlements will not be permitted in the following local gaps: i\) Fleet to Crookham Village”](#).

1.2. With only 275 yards between the houses in Crookham Village on Hitches Lane and the proposed roundabout, the vestigial rural gap to the village will be unacceptably small and damage the separate identity of Crookham Village, contrary to CON21.

1.3. The Intervisibility quoted by the developer is from FP6 at the bottom of the valley (914908 para 5.7 towards The Street, which is at almost the same altitude as the top of the knoll within the proposed development. CVPC contends that the proposed houses and street lights would be visible from houses on The Street and hence further damage the visual gap towards Fleet.

1.4. The distance between the first house in Crookham Village on Hitches Lane and the closest proposed dwelling on the application site is only 225 metres. This development would remove the spatial separation of

Crookham Village from the urban sprawl of Fleet and, by building on top of the knoll, remove the shielding effect the knoll currently offers from urban light pollution and visual intrusion of urban landscape into the countryside footpath network.

1.5. CVPC objects most strongly to the proposed closure of the gap between urban Fleet and Crookham Village and its Conservation Area.

2. Unsustainable

2.1. This proposal fails these tests from NPPF para 17:

- actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable; and
- take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

2.2. 916200 paras 5.5 and 6.37 make the unsubstantiated assertion that making Hitches Lane less attractive to through traffic will reduce traffic problems. This vague optimism ignores the reality that there are no sensible alternative routes to attract vehicles away at peak times.

2.3. 916200 paras 6.17 and 6.24 admit that both the Hitches Lane/Pilcot Road junction and the roundabout at the Elvetham end of Hitches Lane will be over-capacity by 2022. Para 6.30 then fails in its attempt to explain away this overcapacity as being of no significance. It is not acceptable to prove a point in one place by traffic analysis and then try to wriggle when the answer is not the one you want.

2.4. Local use of cycles is down in the 1% area. Any sustainability arguments that seek to promote the use of cycles as serious alternatives to the car have no basis in reality. And offering vouchers for a cycle shop in Farnborough (916200 para 7.7) ignores the fact that there is already an established cycle shop in Fleet.

2.5. 916200 Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show a route from the southern edge of the proposed development, past Grove Farm buildings and out onto The Street, none of which is presently a public right of way.

2.6. 916200 para 5.17 offers the hypothesis that the 77 bus route might be able to loop through the site. However, no explanation is offered about the commercial viability of such a route, nor how a bus route would fit in with the assertion at para 5.9 that internal roads will be designed to a 20mph standard (whatever that means). Previous local experience suggests that extending local bus services through convoluted enclave developments will not survive the realities of economics and on-street parking.

2.7. The result is that inhabitants would rely heavily on the car and add significant adverse additional traffic on already-inadequate country lanes serving the site.

2.8. CVPC objects to this unsustainable greenfield site being proposed for housing.

3. Environmental Damage

3.1. This applications fails to meet the environmental objective of NPPF para 7: “contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity...”

3.2. The ecology of the Upper Hart Valley has already been very adversely affected by opening up farmland as SANG for Edenbrook. Adding additional SANG land for this development would further reduce the rural habitat essential for important local flora and fauna, quite apart from the dramatic loss of habitat within the area proposed for houses.

3.3. Several important small areas of ancient woodland are immediately adjacent to the site and/or the proposed SANG extension. Human and domestic animal intrusion into these sites would have a significant adverse effect.

3.4. 914908 para 3.2 makes the risible assumption that building all over the site will somehow ‘enhance the site’s biodiversity routes’. It is not surprising that this assertion is not explained in detail.

- 3.5. The SANG area includes the flood plain of the River Hart with the result that large areas become effectively impassable in wet weather, thus reducing the effective area and attractiveness of the SANG to a significant degree. The combined SANG fails to provide the necessary all-weather attraction to walkers who will otherwise use the SPA.
- 3.6. CVPC objects to the serious loss of habitat in the Upper Hart valley, the loss of productive agricultural land, the threat to ancient woodland and the wider effect of increased footfall in adjacent areas of considerable environmental value.

4. Site Layout

- 4.1. Vehicular access to the site is only from Hitches Lane, which means that there will be natural synergy with Edenbrook, but none with the remainder of the parish of Crookham Village in which all of the proposed housing areas is situated.
- 4.2. The great majority of public open space is around the edge of the development, which means that there will be little overlooking and, from experience elsewhere in the parish, this is most likely to introduce issues with supervision of youngsters and law and order problems with older children.
- 4.3. The proposed sports pitch and community building adjacent to the northern entrance shows no allowance for parking on what would be a major access route for those living deeper into the estate.
- 4.4. 914910 para 3.4 emphasises synergy with Edenbrook. No mention is made of community links with the remainder of the parish of Crookham Village despite extensive pre-application discussions on the subject between CVPC and the developer.
- 4.5. The site straddles or is adjacent to rural footpaths enjoyed by a significant number of existing inhabitants. This development would cause a serious loss of amenity to users of these rights of way as is noted in Hart saved policy CON21: [“Any public rights of way within these gaps are usually heavily used and of high value to those living in adjoining settlements. The reduction of gaps can adversely affect the use and amenity of such rights of way, as well as impeding attempts to introduce new or extended footpaths or cycleways”](#).
- 4.6. CVPC objects to the loss of amenity on public rights of way and to the lack of community integration with the rest of the parish offered by this development with regrets that the developer has completely ignored pre-application discussions on parish integration with CVPC.

5. Community Facilities

- 5.1. This application fails to meet this objective from NPPF para 7: [“a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being”](#).
- 5.2. 914910 para 3.4 emphasises synergy with Edenbrook. No attempt to foster a sense of community with Crookham Village and the rest of the parish in which the houses would be built.
- 5.3. Edenbrook plus this development approaches 1000 dwellings without any retail facilities and with reliance on the projected Leisure Centre to cater for community needs. The Leisure Centre would be a District facility with no sense of ‘ownership’ for residents of Berkeley homes properties along Hitches Lane despite the claimed ‘synergy’ with Edenbrook. The small building adjacent to the proposed sports pitch at the Northern end of the application site is hardly enough to provide a community focus for so many houses.
- 5.4. CVPC objects to the inadequate proposals for community facilities and community cohesion.

6. Access

- 6.1. This application seeks full approval of site access comprising a roundabout and a simple junction into the housing area and a simple junction into the SANG extension. However, 916200 para 5.8 states that drawing 4756-018 is only a preliminary layout. The southern site access is therefore insufficiently specified for full approval to be given based on the information provided.

- 6.2. The proposed southern roundabout is only 275 metres from the first house in Crookham Village along Hitches Lane. This vestigial gap is insufficient to preserve the separate identity of Crookham Village and would serve to give the impression of Fleet extending to the very doorstep of the Village.
- 6.3. The traffic assessment considers only very local effects on Hitches Lane. Traffic through Crookham Village is already a major issue at peak times and this development would add further to excess peak traffic in Crondall Road and across the bottleneck at Malthouse Bridge.
- 6.4. The combination of the northern access into the site and the junction into the new area of SANG and the intrusive roundabout proposed for the southern entrance would have a seriously-urbanising effect on the rural street scene and emphasise the closing of the gap to Crookham Village.
- 6.5. 914908 para 2 states “High quality site vehicular entrances will provide a Garden Suburb landscape character for the new development and a strong sense of arrival to the development.” A strong sense of arrival does not sit well with preservation of the rural street scene on Hitches Lane.
- 6.6. By having access only onto Hitches Lane, the development would be a constrained enclave with no likelihood of integration into long-term public transport routes and it is already admitted by the applicant that the end junctions of Hitches Lane will be overloaded in the longer term.
- 6.7. NPPF para 32 states: “Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.” This state has already been reached in Crookham Village and this development would add further to existing severe traffic problems at peak times.
- 6.8. CVPC objects to the reliance on Hitches Lane to take all of the new traffic generated by this development despite the developer’s admission of inadequate junction capacity at each end, to the serious adverse visual effect on the rural section of Hitches Lane, to the narrow focus of the traffic assessment which masks significant problems that would be caused in Crookham Village and further afield by this development, and to the lack of a realistic prospect, due to the proposed access arrangements, of a commercially-viable bus service for the development.

7. Other Issues

- 7.1. There are inconsistencies between the various application documents which should be resolved before the application is determined.
- 7.2. Doctor’s surgeries in the area are already over-extended. Without extra facilities, this and other large-scale developments around Fleet will cause a serious further degradation in health provision for existing and new residents.
- 7.3. Local schools are already full with children being exported to schools further afield. This is an unsustainable situation with effects not only on schooling, but also on traffic flows at peak times as parents deliver children to widely-separated destinations.
- 7.4. The developer admits that additional off-site provision may be required for electricity, water and sewage. Such vagueness is unacceptable when seeking planning approval, especially since 914907 para 2.14 states that, due to the geology of the site, soakaways are unlikely to be effective, which suggests that disposal of storm water is likely to add further pressure to external drainage facilities.
- 7.5. Car parking space for public open space seems not to have been addressed. The proposed NEAPs and LEAPs are largely on sites that are not overlooked by housing and thus pose a significant supervision problem for both parents and those responsible for the equipment.
- 7.6. Occupants of affordable housing are less likely to have access to two cars, with the result that without a viable bus service, one car will be used to get to work leaving affected mothers and children with significant problems accessing health facilities in Fleet and Frimley and to be unacceptably remote from shopping facilities.