

Crookham Village Parish Council



CVPC OBJECTION to 16/01651/OUT

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 at Land North of Netherhouse Copse Hitches Lane Fleet Hampshire

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

1144283_16 FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT AND DRAINAGE STATEMENT REPORT
1137995_16 LANDSCAPE DESIGN STATEMENT
1138025_16 PLANNING STATEMENT
1144281_16 TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT INC DRAFT TRAVEL PLAN
1144283_16 FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT AND DRAINAGE STATEMENT REPORT
1147315_16 ECOLOGY_AND_COUNTRYSIDE_OFFICER

SUMMARY

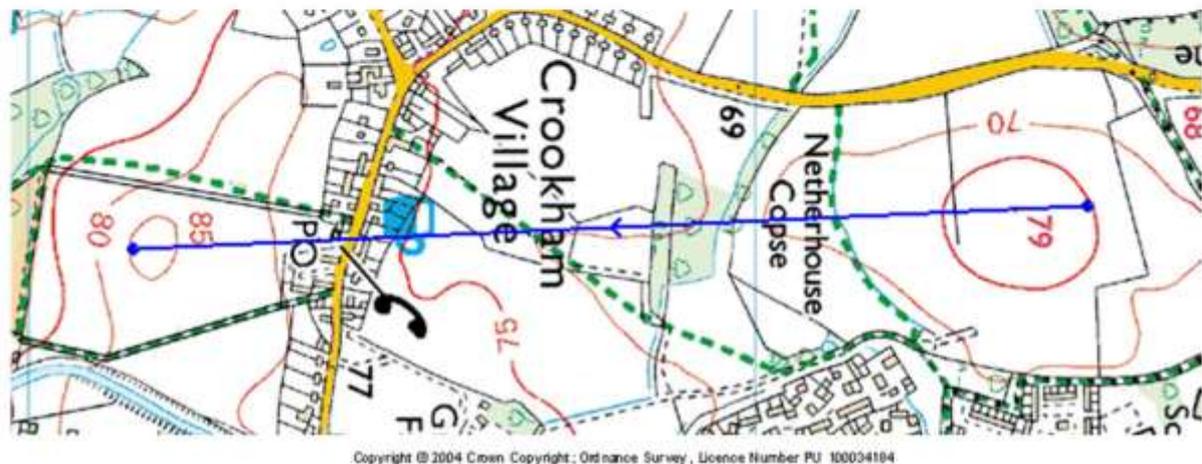
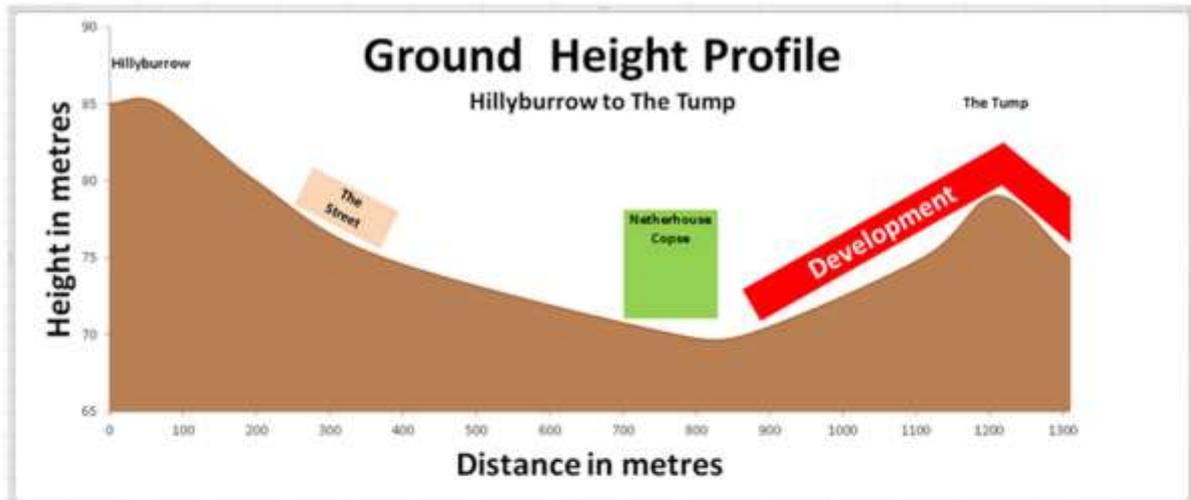
CVPC Objects for the following major reasons:

- 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 and fantasises about alternative strategic routes.
- 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.
- No commitment is made to the supply of fast broadband to the development.

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 (1137995_16 para 5.7) is from FP6 half way between The Knoll and The Street. The Street is at almost the same altitude as the top of The Tump. With added height in upper storeys of dwellings, the proposed development would be significantly less obscured than shown in Figure 1.33 of 1137995_16. CVPC contends that the proposed houses and street lights would be visible from houses on The Street, especially during periods when the deciduous trees in Netherhouse Copse would offer less leaf cover. The effect would be to close the visual gap between The Street and Fleet and hence challenge the setting of Crookham Village and its Conservation Area. A measured vertical layout is given below.



- 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. 1144281_16 para 5.6 asserts that “a compact roundabout ... therefore deter existing vehicle movements that may currently be using Hitches Lane as an alternative to using wider strategic routes. The deterrence effect is expected to be reinforced with the introduction of a 40mph speed limit. Traffic analysis is limited to Hitches Lane and Reading Road North and offers no analysis of the supposed ‘strategic routes’ that could be used instead. CVPC asserts that this is because there aren’t any useful alternative routes for the majority of traffic along Hitches Lane at peak hours.

2.3. 1144281_16 para 5 makes no offer of improved cycle facilities along Hitches Lane, which will be essential if cycling is to be viable along this route when yet more traffic from this site is added to the existing peak-time problems.

2.4. 1144281_16 paras 6.20 admits that the Hitches Lane/Pilcot Road junction will be over-capacity by 2022. Para 6.21 then asserts that their proposed improvement to this junction will mitigate any impact of development trips, but seemingly ignores the evidence that the junction will be operating beyond capacity anyway. This claim of adequate mitigation does not seem credible to CVPC.

2.5. Local use of cycles is minimal, not least because of the danger of cycling at peak times on overcrowded roads. 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 (1144281_16 para 7.7) ignores the fact that there is already an established cycle shop in Fleet. This para also refers to the long-defunct Buzz bus company and its equally defunct Stagecoach successor services in the area of the development. Furthermore, no commitment is made for operating the information services in the longer term.

2.6. 1144281_16 Fig 3.1 shows that the nearest bus route (No 7) does not service the new development and that walking distances to bus stops significantly exceed guidelines. Para 5.19 dangles, with impressive but unrealistic optimism, the possibility of the No 7 service being able to negotiate the tortuous proposed site, but fails to address historical evidence that such optimism is always unfounded. Existing passengers will be discouraged from using a service that takes an even more convoluted and extended route whilst take-up from the new development will inevitably disappoint with the resulting risk of compromising the economic viability of the whole service. 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.

2.7. 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. 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. CVPC shares the concerns expressed by the HDC Ecology and Countryside Officer (1147315_16) about the overall viability of the SANG due to flooding.

3.5. 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. 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”.
- 4.5. 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. 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 at para 2.9. The site for a 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.
- 5.3. CVPC objects to the inadequate proposals for community facilities and community cohesion.

6. Access

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. 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.
- 6.3. 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.
- 6.4. 1144281_16 para 5 hints that public rights of way will be retained as routes through the site, but makes no mention of the potential for these pedestrian-only routes to be misused by bicycles.

- 6.5. 1137995_16 para 2.1 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. 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. However, as demonstrated by negotiations related to the approved Watery Lane development, achieving an acceptable redeployment of health facilities is a task not to be taken lightly. Only concrete and agreed health redeployments should be given any credibility when considering this application.
- 7.2. 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.
- 7.3. 1144283_16 para 2.17 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. This aspect needs to be fully resolved before determination of this application.
- 7.4. Car parking 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.
- 7.5. Occupants of affordable housing are less likely to have access to two cars, with the result that without a viable bus service, the one car will be used to get to work leaving partners and children with significant problems accessing health facilities in Fleet and Frimley and leaving them unacceptably remote from shopping facilities for sensible access on foot.
- 7.6. It is far from clear that acceptable high-speed broadband provision would be available for this site, an issue which CVPC is advised also affects the adjacent Edenbrook developments, which is contra to the guidance given in NPPF section 5.