



Blackwater Valley Special Report

September 2009

Pyestock mega-warehouse given go-ahead *Rick Kimber reports*

The UK democratic planning process is in jeopardy; a warehouse the size of the Millenium Dome has been given the go ahead by a 'Green' Government more interested in job creation than devastation to the local environment. BVFoE worked closely with the local group, SPLAT, to oppose the development, their main point being the huge traffic increase around Cove and Southwood. The extra noise and air pollution caused by the forecasted one extra lorry per minute every day will obviously add to an already congested area. The impacts will also be felt by the nearby Special Protection Area of Fleet Pond, already degraded due to the airfield development. The run-off from the development during its construction will further silt up the pond, and once complete, the solitude of the pond will be ruined by noise and the site of this

monstrosity looming over its treetops. Together with the recently announced expansion of the Cody Technical Park, and the proposed airfield expansion, any strategic gap between Fleet and Farnborough will cease to exist, as they will merge into one industrial conurbation.

Hart Council rejected the proposal at a planning committee meeting in March 2008 (held at the Princes Hall, Aldershot, with a capacity for over 500 local objectors). The developers, Prudential Property Investment Managers Ltd and Astral Developments Ltd, then appealed against the decision to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. The Government Planning inspector, Christina Downes, prepared a report, highlighting environmental and traffic concerns. She concluded that

"This is a finely balanced case but it is my overall conclusion that the identified environmental harm is of overriding importance and for this reason alone I recommend that both appeals be dismissed".

But in an rare, undemocratic move, the Government overruled their own planning inspector stating, *"While the inspector considers that the identified environmental harm which would result is of overriding importance, the Secretary of State gives more weight to the fact that the appeal proposals would provide up to 1,500 jobs."* Given the usual high employment rates locally, though, most workers will come from outside the area. This will increase pollutions as the area can only be accessed easily by car, with only a skeleton token bus service planned by the developers.