NORTH MYMMS DISTRICT GREEN BELT SOCIETY

**June 2019**

**Response to the Call for Call for Sites Consultation**

**Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (7th May 2019)**

**Addendum prepared form the Society by Jed Griffiths MA DipTP FRTPI**

Site BrP17: Land east of Swanland Road and west of Warrengate Road

The site (1.25 hectares) is a long narrow stretch of land adjacent to the hamlet of Water End. There is no estimated dwelling capacity. It is part of a larger site of 4.6 hectares which was assessed under the HELA 2016, but was rejected. The site was also identified as being “not suitable” in the earlier Stage 2 SHLAA of 2012. On both occasions, this was because it was not within, or adjoining, a settlement excluding from the Green Belt.

There are a number of other strong reasons why this site should be rejected. The Environment Agency Flood Map shows that the entire site is adjacent to an area designated as Flood Zones 2 and 3. Much of the northern part of the site is within Flood Zone 2. Development on the site would therefore be contrary to national policy in the NPPF 2019 (paragraph 155). Water End has a long history of flood incidents, and any development would exacerbate the problems which exist, particularly on Warrengate Road.

To the north of the site is the Water End Swallow Holes SSSI, which is of national importance. Any development in the vicinity of the SSSI is to be discouraged, so as to protect water quality and hydrology.

The existing hamlet of Water End contains 28 dwellings. Although no capacity figure for the site is given, it is clear that development of the site would more than double the size of the settlement. With the exception of the local public house, there are no facilities and services and there is no public transport. Access to and from the development would be almost entirely by car. Warrengate Road is a narrow lane, with no street lighting, and is popular with local walkers and cyclists. It is entirely unsuitable for the additional traffic which would be generated.

Although Water End is not designated as a Conservation Area, it has value for its rural character. It is of great historical importance, and its linear pattern of development has existed for centuries. Within the settlement, there are five Grade II listed buildings, and there is a notable absence of post-war development. In terms of the NPPF, the introduction of new development on the promoted site would “significantly and demonstrably” destroy the historic character of Water End.

In the Stage 3 Green Belt Study, Water End, including the promoted site was excluded from the areas chosen for assessment. At the behest of the Inspector, the primary aim of the study was to assess all potential development sites adjacent to the urban areas. Water End does not fulfil this criterion.

Water End was, however, included in the assessment of “washed over” settlements, summarised in chapter 5 of the study. It was recommended that the hamlet should be retained as “washed over” settlement, primarily because its open character contributes to the openness of the Green Belt. In its response to the Green Belt Study, the Society welcomed this conclusion.

In summary, it is clear that the promoted site is unsustainable and is entirely unsuitable for development for the reasons set out above. The Society would object most strongly to the removal of the area from the Green Belt.