

**CONSERVATION AREA  
CHARACTER STATEMENT  
FOR  
WATEREND**



**May 2007**



# CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT WATEREND

## INTRODUCTION

The Civic Amenities Act 1967 empowered local planning authorities to make provision for the preservation and enhancement of areas of architectural and historic interest by designating them as conservation areas. The hamlet of Waterend was designated as a conservation area on the 27 July 1977.

Conservation should not be thought of solely as a process of preservation and an impediment to change. Designation of a conservation area represents an opportunity to formulate positive policies to improve and enhance its environmental quality and to ensure the successful integration of any development or redevelopment necessary for its continued success as a living and working community. The St Albans and District Local Plan Review (adopted November 1994) sets out the general principles which will be observed when dealing with applications for new development and redevelopment (Policy 85 – ‘Development in Conservation Areas’).

The aims of this Character Statement are to show the way in which the form of the conservation area has evolved and to assess its present character; to indicate the principles to be adopted in considering planning applications in the area; and to form a framework within which any detailed proposals may be formulated.

## DESIGNATIONS

**CONSERVATION AREA** - The settlement of Waterend was designated a conservation area on 27 July 1977 (see map).

**STATUTORY LIST** – Listed buildings are buildings included on a list of “Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest” compiled by central government. The Council is required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, when considering any application for listed building consent or planning permission which affects a listed building or its setting, “to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting”. Applications will be assessed against District Plan historic buildings policies and government advice. There are 3 residential properties in the hamlet and within the conservation area which are all statutory listed buildings including Waterend House a Grade II\* listed building. These are shown on the attached map. Outbuildings within the curtilage of listed buildings are normally protected under the main listing and are not separately indicated on the plan.

**METROPOLITAN GREEN BELT** – The whole of the Waterend Conservation Area is covered by the Metropolitan Green Belt, which is subject to Policy 1 of the District Local Plan. This states that only very specific types of development will be acceptable, and that it should integrate with the existing landscape. Siting, design and external appearance are particularly important and additional landscaping will normally be required. Significant harm to the ecological value of the countryside must be avoided.

## **LOCATION AND SETTING**

Waterend is a small rural hamlet, which lies to the north east of St Albans and 1 ¾ miles east of Wheathampstead. It is situated in a low hollow at a crossing point of the River Lea (also known as the Lee), which runs west east along the valley before turning south. The hamlet is surrounded by fertile flood plains, gently undulating agricultural land and woodland.

The hamlet is approached from the south by a road lined with trees and high hedges that create a sense of enclosure and anticipation before descending into the hamlet, which is virtually hidden from view. The narrow and verdant roads leading into the hamlet are classed as “Quiet Lanes” which are designated by Hertfordshire County Council. These are designated as such to make them more attractive to people who are not in motor vehicles, and to encourage people who do drive to take extra care.

The Brocket Hall estate, which is a Grade II historic registered park and garden, lies to the east of the hamlet and although the conservation area does not include any part of the current Estate the parkland contributes greatly to its setting.

## **HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

The River Lea would have been a natural highway for prehistoric peoples to access the higher ground. In particular, in the Late Mesolithic (c.6,000 to 4,000 BC) there are far more sites away from the river valley than in earlier periods. In the conservation area there are no known prehistoric monuments but almost every field produces flintwork dated to the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age (c. 2,000 BC). A number of the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) entries are for ring ditches. These may be the sites of quarry ditches of Bronze Age barrows, with a central cremation or inhumation, possibly with satellite burials. Alternatively, they may be the sites of roundhouses dating from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age.

From the later Iron Age the landscape is first enclosed by ditches and probably hedges on banks. The majority of the SMR entries for this area are for linear ditches or double ditches which are probably part of this development, which appears to first start in the Late Iron Age and continues into the Early Roman period. Some of the same SMR entries may date to the early Roman period and be part of a landscape now dominated by the Roman Road which follows the line of the Road through Waterend. Running off this at right angles some of the field boundaries may be part of a relic Roman landscape, or if cut across by the road, an even earlier one. The Roman road, running from Silchester Gate to Akerman Street near Nash Mills, Hemel Hempstead is believed to have crossed the River Lea at this position.

In the Saxon period it appears the landscape changed and became dominated by dispersed small settlements within a possibly rejuvenated woodland environment, before it again opened up for agriculture. The Lea itself was part of a major territorial boundary for a short period when it separated Wessex/England from the Danelaw to the north. The manorial estate of Waterend centres on the probable site of the manor house quite possibly in the area where Waterend House stands today.

The land around Wheathampstead, including Waterend, was granted to Westminster Abbey by Edward the Confessor in 1060. The Abbey Manor controlled the open fields along the River Lea.

Waterend House was probably built about 1610 for Sir John Jennings whose granddaughter became Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough 1660 -1744. The building is a good example of a mid 17<sup>th</sup> century medium sized country house.



### **Waterend House**

Later evidence of landscape use in the surrounding area includes a chalkdell, which may have supplied chalk for agricultural purposes, or possibly the chalk was used to make lime for building purposes. There was also a post-medieval brick kiln to the north of the conservation area which may have been connected with the building of Waterend House.

The hamlet had close connections with the Brocket Hall Estate. The 1880 Ordnance survey map shows that Croft Cottage was known as "Keepers Cottage" and what is now Waterend House was known as Waterend Farm. In 1938 one of the largest barns at the farm was no longer required and the Brocket Hall Estate had it relocated to a prime location they owned in the centre of St Albans.

## **CHARACTER**

The density of development in the hamlet is low with a dispersed and informal layout and no strong building line or uniform roofline. The small hamlet contains 3 residences and a number of weatherboarded outbuildings. With the exception of Waterend House the properties in the area are low one and a half storey buildings.

The River Lea and its flood plains and the rural landscape around Waterend are very important. Much of the character of the conservation area is created through the combination of rural and residential usage and the dispersed settlement pattern with informal layout and verdant setting. The buildings show a strong harmony of colour, texture and materials creating pleasant visual relationships within the area.



### **The River Lea**

The soft textural contrast of the trees to the buildings adds to the tranquil setting and enhances the sense of rural cohesion within the conservation area.

The open spaces are generally enclosed with hedges, flint walls with brickwork copings and piers, or wooden fences.

## **APPEARANCE**

The Jacobean style Waterend House dominates the conservation area and is a key building in this rural hamlet. It sits parallel to the road, so that it is not immediately noticeable on entering the hamlet, but its striking architectural presence makes an important contribution to the conservation area.

With the exception of Waterend House the other properties in the conservation area are either vernacular cottages, outbuildings or agricultural buildings. The residential

properties are of a simple rectangular and shallow depth plan with rendered walls over timber frame and clay tile roofs. The windows are wooden casements (many are multipaned), with a white painted finish. White Cottage has gabled dormers.



### **White Cottage**

Throughout the conservation area the use of traditional and natural building materials is important in creating a pleasing cohesion between buildings and landscape. Locally distinctive materials include bricks, probably produced at the nearby brick kiln at Sparrow Hall Farm, white or cream renders, and plain red clay roofing tiles on the residential buildings. Boundary treatments are predominantly hedgerows or walls in the local bricks and flint and outbuildings and agricultural buildings are constructed of dark stained weatherboarding and clay tile or slate roofs.

### **SIGNIFICANT VIEWS**

Much of the character of Waterend Conservation Area comes from its enclosed rural situation.

Important views from the conservation area are;

- The view down to the ford from Waterend Lane and views up out of the conservation area along Waterend Lane and pastoral surroundings.



**Views towards the Ford**

### **TREES AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS**

The rural landscape and the significant mature trees and surviving hedges are major contributors to the conservation area's setting, character and appearance. Many of the historic field boundaries still retain their hedgerows, which are also important wildlife habitats. The willow tree by the ford creates a quintessential English scene, whilst there are a number of feature trees in the landscape which may be part of the original historic planned landscape of Brocket Hall.

The boundaries and hedgerows of the conservation area mainly consist of native trees and shrubs.

Most trees located in conservation areas are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Six weeks prior written notice must be given to the local authority of any proposed surgery or felling. This period enables the Council to make a Tree Preservation Order if it considers that the proposal is unacceptable.

### **PROPOSALS FOR ENHANCEMENT**

To preserve or enhance the hamlet's historic character and appearance, it is important that any development is of a high standard of design, sympathetic to its surroundings and the conservation area as a whole. It should not detract from the setting of nearby existing buildings, its form should have regard to the surroundings and the existing balance of buildings and landscape, and should be of good quality, normally built with traditional and natural materials.

Opportunities for enhancement include the retention and re-introduction of traditional materials and techniques of repair. Any new development or change of use should respect the grain, setting, scale, materials and use of existing development or land.

Traditional boundary walls and fencing and hedging form an important part of the character of the area and should be retained and enhanced whenever possible.

The introduction of inappropriate boundary treatments also detracts from this otherwise rural area and creates alien and obtrusive features and should be avoided. Planning permission is required for the erection of means of enclosure in the curtilage of listed buildings.

uPVC windows and doors lack the finish and details of traditional joinery. They should be avoided and will not be acceptable for listed buildings, conversions or new development.

Car parking has destroyed areas of the verge near the Ford and consideration needs to be paid to protecting the verge from any further damage by parked vehicles. It may be possible to re site parking spaces away from the Ford and any proposal would be subject to a planning application to ensure it is acceptable within the conservation area. Intrusive signage and street furniture needs to be replaced with more appropriately designed items to reduce their impact on the rural ambience.



**Unobtrusive footpath signage**

## **SUMMARY**

It is the Council's policy to encourage the retention of those features which it is felt make the conservation area special; including historic buildings; their historic and architectural features, and their settings, historic brick walls, wooden fences, trees and hedges. Every effort should be made to maintain landscape features, and spaces between buildings and landscape and to avoiding infilling such gaps.

## **STATUS OF THE DOCUMENT**

This document should be read together with saved Policy 85 of the St Albans City and District Local Plan Review 1994. It has been produced as part of DPR Project 9: Policy Statements - Conservation Areas.

On 6 December 2006 the Planning and Conservation Portfolio Holder considered a report on the draft Waterend Conservation Area Character Statement and resolved that the text should go to local consultation. Consultation took place from December 2006 to February 2007 with the following: local residents, Wheathampstead Parish Council, Ward Councillors, Planning (Development Control) Committee North and the Wheathampstead Local History Society.

As a result of this consultation comments and queries were received and addressed. Some alterations were made to the text as agreed by the Planning and Conservation Portfolio Holder on 30 May 2007. This amended version forms the Waterend Conservation Area Character Statement.

If further advice or guidance is required please contact the Department of Enterprise and Civic Environment, St Albans City and District Council, Council Offices, PO Box 2, Civic Centre, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3JE. Tel. St Albans (01727) 866100.

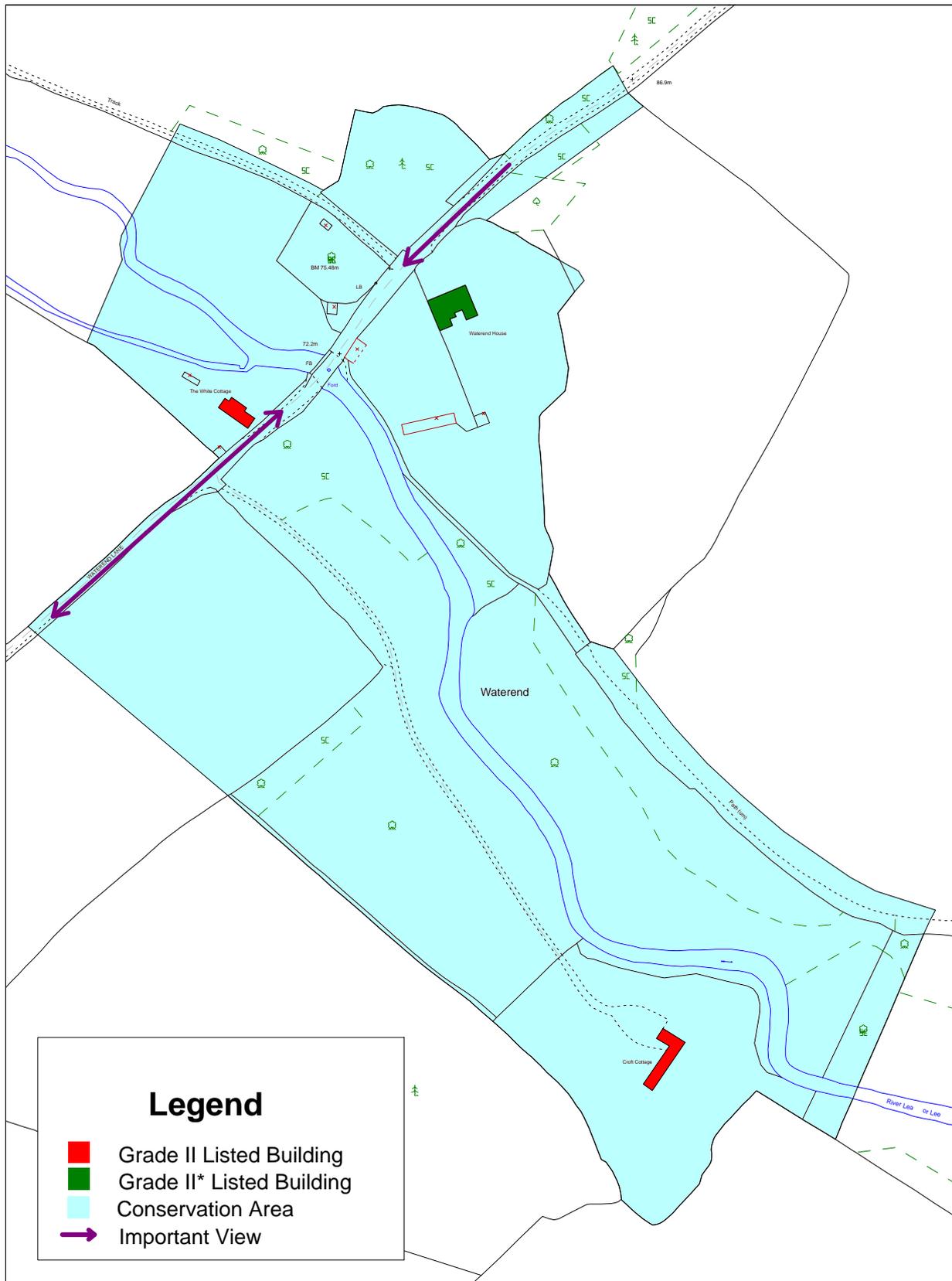
## **LISTED BUILDINGS WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA**

**Waterend House** is a Grade II\* listed building which was originally known as Waterend Farm and is thought to have been built around 1610 for Sir John Jennings. The house is built of red brick with stone mullioned windows with square leaded casements and a plain red clay tile roof. Behind the roof are three tall chimney stacks with grouped octagonal shafts, which are moulded at the bases and caps.

**The White Cottage** (Grade II). This cottage dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century or earlier but also has 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century features. It is timber framed with painted brick and plaster. It has a plain tile roof with three gabled dormers. The windows are a mixture of casements from different dates.

**Croft Cottage (formerly known as Keepers Cottage)** (Grade II). A 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed house with red brick infill and later extensions. It has a plain tiled roof. Mixture of casement window styles.

# Waterend Conservation Area



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