**Statement by WAG and WeHeartHart 18 Nov 2015**

We welcome Hart’s new Consultation on the Housing Options.

However, in our opinion the Options document does not present a fair and balanced analysis of the pros and cons of the three Approaches, and it is therefore invalid as the basis for a public consultation.

We have sent a detailed document to Hart explaining all the issues – this statement gives a few examples to illustrate the problem.

There are two key issues which have been misrepresented. First, in the Options document Brownfield site capacity is estimated as 400 homes when in October Hart estimated the capacity to be 1,800 homes. Second, Hart’s Objectively Assessed Need for homes is based DCLG’s 2011 based forecasts and has been radically revised downwards in a report received by Hart from a distinguished planning consultant.

Apart from these key issues the Options document is written in a way which is unfairly biased towards the development of a Winchfield New Settlement. A good example of this bias is the Tables of the Advantages/Disadvantages of the three Approaches (on pages 32, 35 and 41).

The most serious disadvantage of Approach 3 is that it would provide abundant capacity for Hart to accept overflow housing from the much more urbanised districts of Rushmoor and Surrey Heath. This disadvantage was listed in the Nov 2014 consultation so its omission in the current Options document must be a deliberate bias.

A second critical disadvantage of Approach 3 is that it ruins the countryside that lies between Fleet, H/W, Hook and Odiham and provides each of those towns/villages with a much-used and much-loved amenity and heritage resource. WNT will destroy that amenity and risk coalescence between all those settlements. It is clearly biased to raise coalescence as a risk for Approach 2 but not mention it for Approach 3.

A third example of bias is the indefinite statement that "new service provision could be costly" for Approach 3 versus the definite "Would require significant and costly investment in infrastructure" for Approach 2. This hides the truth that the infrastructure cost of a New Settlement will be far higher than the infrastructure costs associated with equivalent urban extensions

A final example of deliberate bias is the map on page 40. The little orange circle representing Winchfield NT seems designed to fool the reader into thinking that WNT will not impact on the Heart of Hart area whereas a true map showing the extent of the proposed Town would paint a very different picture.

We strongly recommend that Hart delays the publication of the Options document until it presents a fair and balanced view of the issues. Failure to do so will result in an invalid consultation which will be open to legal challenge.