

Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan

SAHAM TONEY SAYS “YES” TO ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN!



Referendum result:

466 votes (turnout 34.3%)

Yes: 449 = 96.35%

No: 17 = 3.65%

This is the biggest majority for any neighbourhood plan in Norfolk!

Firstly, I'd like to thank all those who took the time to have their say. Given the resounding endorsement in support of the Plan, of course my team and I are delighted, and give a particularly hearty thanks to all who voted “yes”.

The only formality left is for Breckland to vote at a Council meeting to “make” the Plan part of its Local Development Plan, from which point on, along with the Local Plan and national planning rules, it will have full legal status in helping to decide planning applications and appeals in the village.

In my view, the Plan will benefit the village for years to come, as it makes clear what development the village will and will not accept. Indeed, some recent planning decisions have reflected that clarity by rejecting proposals not in line with the Plan; the most recent of those being the refusal of an appeal for 8 houses at Saham Tythe Barns. It is now the responsibility of developers to adhere to the Plan's policies, for Breckland planners to apply them rigorously when deciding applications, and for the Parish Council and villagers to monitor that is done satisfactorily, or make objections where unsuitable proposals are put forward.

It's now around 5 and a half years since work on the Plan started, and I've been involved for all but the first of those. I never anticipated such a long process, and if I had, I probably would have steered well clear of involvement! But there have been reasons for the time taken, with each step strengthening the Plan, and of course a lot of things to learn along the way.

As well as villagers who supported the Plan at the referendum, I'd also like to thank all of those who responded to our consultations or attended our events. I can honestly say that every comment we received helped us to refine and improve the Plan, and even those comments we didn't implement gave us pause for thought to check we were on the right track.

I'd also like to record my thanks to the various consultants who helped with studies, guidance and advice, all of which gave the Plan extra force and integrity, and some of which will remain in use in future. Of all our consultants, the biggest thanks go to Rachel Hogger of Modicum Planning, whose contribution I cannot overstate.

Last but very much not least, I want to publicly thank the other members of my group, for their vital contributions, unflagging enthusiasm, sense of humour and the invaluable support they gave me in numerous ways; so please take a bow, Andrew Walmsley, Brian Mitchell, Chris Darge and Trevor Bunce. Likewise, many thanks to their wives – Jan, Shelley, Bev and Sue; and to my own, Luda - for supporting each of us and tolerating being a 'Plan widow' as we devoted time to work on the Plan.

Besides the Plan itself, we also leave a good legacy for the village by virtue of our village design guide, drainage design manual and housing needs assessment, and the landscape character assessment a consultant prepared.

Our Plan achieved a number 'firsts' in Breckland. It is the first:

- To allocate sites and provide the certainty that gives about new housing;
- To prepare a landscape character assessment and use it in policies;
- To prepare a sustainable drainage system design manual;
- To produce a design guide consistent with the National Design Guide;
- To include a sewerage management policy;
- To define non-designated heritage assets;
- To include a specific policy on climate change.

I hope many of you will find a reason to make good use of the Plan in the years to come, whether that be to object to a development you don't agree with; to submit an application of your own; to get on the housing ladder with an affordable home, to find a smaller new home to downsize to; or simply to continue to enjoy the green spaces, countryside, public views, wildlife, community facilities and gap to Watton that are all protected by the Plan.

This will be my last article, so it only remains for me to thank the editor for publishing all of my articles – by my count this is my 46th – and for all those who have read them. I hope you found them useful.

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