

EVIDENCE BASE

FOR THE SAHAM TONEY NEIGHBOURHOOD

DEVELOPMENT PLAN



REASONED JUSTIFICATION FOR

POLICY 7C: LOCAL GREEN SPACES

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1. STATUTORY BACKGROUND

1.1 Paragraph 99 of the National Planning Policy Framework states "The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period." Policy 7C is fully in accordance with these requirements.

2. ASSESSMENT OF SPACES

2.1 In accordance with paragraph 100 of the National Planning Policy Framework the following criteria have been used for assessing open spaces as potential Local Green Spaces:

- i. The green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- ii. The green space is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife;
- iii. The green space concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

2.2 The table below categorises each Local Green Space against criteria i-iii and further defines whether there is public access to the green space. It can be seen that all the designated Local Green Spaces satisfy all three of the above criteria.

2.3 In order to be deemed "demonstrably special to the community" open spaces were assessed against the following criteria suggested by the Open Spaces Society in its Information Sheet No. 20 - Local Green Space Designation:

- a. Beauty: This relates to the visual attractiveness of the site, and its contribution to landscape, character and or setting of the settlement;
- b. Historic significance: The land should provide a setting for, and allow views of, heritage assets or other locally-valued landmarks;
- c. Recreational value: It must have local significance for recreation, perhaps through the variety of activities it supports, and be of value to the community;
- d. Tranquillity; it may provide an oasis of calm and a space for quiet reflection;
- e. Richness of wildlife: This might include the value of its habitat;
- f. Supported by the Parish Council.

GS1: The parish sports field 	Description: A 3.5 hectare publicly accessible site, home to the village cricket club and Watton rugby club. It recently became the site of the annual village fete, and a community orchard is planned on part of the land.	
	Beauty ✘	Tranquillity ✓
	Historic significance ✘	Richness of wildlife ✘
	Recreational value ✓	Supported by Parish Council ✓
Close proximity to the community?	Demonstrably special to the community?	Local and not extensive?
Yes	Yes	Yes

<p>GS2: The Wells-Cole Community Centre park land</p> 	<p>Description: A 1.81 hectare publicly accessible site around the village community centre. It has two children's play areas and is a well-loved dog walking area. It's a site for the Wayland "Growing Together" project and by 2018 will benefit from the installation of outdoor adult fitness equipment.</p>	
	<p>Beauty ✘</p> <p>Historic significance ✘</p> <p>Recreational value ✓</p>	<p>Tranquillity ✓</p> <p>Richness of wildlife ✓</p> <p>Supported by Parish Council ✓</p>
<p>Close proximity to the community?</p>	<p>Demonstrably special to the community?</p>	<p>Local and not extensive?</p>
<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>

<p>GS3: Open land immediately surrounding Saham Mere</p> 	<p>Description: A 3.2-hectare site, accessible only by the invitation of the owner. It surrounds a 4.8-hectare body of water dating back at least 12,000 years, used by fishermen and well known locally for the eels it is home to.</p>	
	<p>Beauty ✓</p> <p>Historic significance ✓</p> <p>Recreational value ✘</p>	<p>Tranquillity ✓</p> <p>Richness of wildlife ✓</p> <p>Supported by Parish Council ✓</p>
<p>Close proximity to the community?</p>	<p>Demonstrably special to the community?</p>	<p>Local and not extensive?</p>
<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>

<p>GS4: St George's churchyard and cemetery</p> 	<p>Description: A 0.87 hectare publicly accessible site, and a haven of tranquillity, commended by the Church of England for its good condition. It's interesting to note that despite ecumenical differences in earlier centuries many Methodists were laid to rest in the cemetery as there was no burial land with their chapels in the village.</p>	
	<p>Beauty ✘</p> <p>Historic significance ✓</p> <p>Recreational value ✘</p>	<p>Tranquillity ✓</p> <p>Richness of wildlife ✓</p> <p>Supported by Parish Council ✓</p>
<p>Close proximity to the community?</p>	<p>Demonstrably special to the community?</p>	<p>Local and not extensive?</p>
<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>

<p>GS5: The village allotments</p> 	<p>Description: A 0.75-hectare site with access restricted to plot holders. The source of many entries to the village fete fruit, vegetable and flower competitions.</p>	
	<p>Beauty ✘</p> <p>Historic significance ✘</p> <p>Recreational value ✓</p>	<p>Tranquillity ✓</p> <p>Richness of wildlife ✘</p> <p>Supported by Parish Council ✓</p>
<p>Close proximity to the community?</p>	<p>Demonstrably special to the community?</p>	<p>Local and not extensive?</p>
<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>

<p>GS6: The bird sanctuary</p> 	<p>Description: A 0.78 hectare publicly accessible site of wet woodland providing a rich habitat for wildlife suited to those conditions.</p>	
	<p>Beauty ✘</p> <p>Historic significance ✘</p> <p>Recreational value ✘</p>	<p>Tranquillity ✓</p> <p>Richness of wildlife ✓</p> <p>Supported by Parish Council ✓</p>
<p>Close proximity to the community?</p>	<p>Demonstrably special to the community?</p>	<p>Local and not extensive?</p>
<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>

Notes to Table:

Close proximity is taken as within 1.25 km walking distance as recommended by Natural England.

A site is deemed to be tranquil if it is relatively free from noise disturbance by traffic or visual evidence of human influences such as housing development, agricultural uses and associated buildings.

2.4 Two further open spaces were assessed but not designated as Local Green Spaces. They were:

- a. Those parts of Richmond Park Golf Course within the Neighbourhood Area were not designated due to having too large an extent and not being freely accessible to all parishioners. It remains an Open Space, as designated under Policy ENV 04 of the emerging Local Plan;
- b. Wispy Meadows holiday park was not designated due to having too large an extent, not being freely accessible to all parishioners and being subject to active planning permission.

3. EVIDENCE FROM THE LOCAL PLAN AND ITS SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS & THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.1 Breckland Council's document "Statement of Community Involvement" states: "A Neighbourhood Plan can decide where and what type of development can happen in the neighbourhood". It indisputably then follows that a Neighbourhood Plan may also decide where and what type of development cannot happen in the neighbourhood. Policy 7C follows this principle.

3.2 Paragraphs 5.51 to 5.53 of the Local Plan explain the circumstances in which Local Green Spaces may be designated (in accordance with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework). Policy 7C adheres to those provisions.

3.3 In Paragraph 5.54 and table 5.3 the Local Plan identifies only three Local Green Spaces in the entire district, and none in the Neighbourhood Area, so it is permissible for this Plan to identify such spaces in accordance with paragraph 99 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 A Neighbourhood Plan should strike a balance between the need for future development and the protection and enhancement of the natural environment, elements of which, once destroyed, cannot be regained. Other policies of this Plan address development need; Policy 7C strikes the balance by defining criteria relating to green spaces and infrastructure.

4.2 The Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan recognises the need for new housing, economic development and infrastructure, but considers that the significant pressures that imposes on open spaces and green infrastructure only strengthens the case for the protection of the most important aspects of those features while not restricting planned and sustainable levels of development.

4.3 The Locality guide "Neighbourhood Plans Local Green Spaces" notes the following benefits of green spaces:

- i. Being part of the public realm, where informal social interaction can take place;
- ii. Providing pitches and facilities for sports and supporting physical activity;
- iii. Forming part of a network of paths and spaces, enabling movement through an area;
- iv. Providing habitats for wildlife and a natural corridors and spaces through urban areas;
- v. Providing flexible space for recreation, local cultural events and performance;

- vi. Adding to local amenity, providing an attractive setting and outlook for surrounding residential and commercial properties;
- vii. Forming part of the character or setting of historic areas, buildings and townscape;
- viii. Forming part of flood mitigation, such as SUDS;
- ix. Providing areas and opportunities for growing local food.

Policy 7C seeks to achieve these benefits for the local community.

4.4 Green spaces contribute to the quality of a place and quality of place is a key factor in attracting investment, jobs and growth to an area. Therefore, they have economic value and thus contribute to sustainability.

4.5 The Norfolk Wildlife Trust has advised that local green spaces are valuable assets in providing alternative recreational spaces to nearby sensitive wildlife habitats. This is particularly the case with regard to dog walking.

5. COMMUNITY SUPPORT

5.1 The Neighbourhood Area has a limited number of publicly accessible open green spaces. These are precious to the community as evidenced by 143 responses to preliminary consultations that sought the preservation of open spaces and wildlife, and access to them. These spaces make an important contribution to the character of the Neighbourhood Area and so warrant protection and wherever possible enhancement. Policy 7C defines a number of important open spaces in the Neighbourhood Area that are to be protected to a greater degree by their designation as Local Green Spaces in accordance with Paragraphs 99 and 100 of the National Planning Policy Framework. In each case the Local Green Spaces are integral parts of the settlement within their own area and are therefore valuable to the community.



**Prepared by the Neighbourhood
Plan Work Group**



**Saham Toney
Parish Council**