

Summary of the Main Changes to the Neighbourhood Plan as a Result of the Exam Report

It is important to understand that an examination report cannot be contested. If some of its recommendations are not accepted the only option is to withdraw the Plan. Although it is disappointing that not all policy criteria were accepted, that was inevitable, but the Plan remains far and away the best (and probably only) means by which to ensure that future development takes place in a way that preserves the unique character of the village.

The main requirements deleted are:

- The need for developers to provide evidence of sufficient social infrastructure; because we were unable to provide factual evidence of the need for that;
- The phasing of housing development over the entire plan period;
- Seven of the eight surface water drainage policies, because the examiner decided they dealt with design rather than planning matters.

The main requirements amended are:

- Specified housing numbers are now termed “approximate” rather than the precise numbers previously given. That does not mean numbers will rise dramatically, but the examiner decided there should be an element of flexibility;
- The remaining policy on surface water drainage has been completely rewritten. To offset the deletion of 7 drainage policies, reference to the village Sustainable Drainage Systems Design Manual in the remaining policy has been reinforced, and that manual has been updated and republished to include the requirements of the 7 deleted policies. The combination of the policy reference to the manual and the manual update means those requirements cannot simply be ignored

The main requirements enhanced are:

- Those with a village connection will have priority access to all new affordable housing in the village. Previously this applied to only a proportion of such housing;
- The need for the larger sites to comply with their master plans;
- More readily enforceable provision of publicly accessible amenity land as a consequence of developing the site at Richmond Hall;
- The provision of electric vehicle charging points on all new developments.

The key elements of the Plan that have been retained are:

- Design requirements;
- Density guidelines for new housing;
- Site access and parking requirements;
- Measures to preserve the village’s ‘dark skies’;
- Measures to tackle climate change;
- Requirements for any non-residential development;

- Preservation of a rural gap between Saham Toney and Watton;
- The protection and conservation of heritage assets;
- The protection and conservation of the village's landscape character and key public views;
- The protection of 6 specified local green spaces;
- The protection and enhancement of wildlife, biodiversity, green infrastructure, trees and hedges, and habitats;
- The policy for foul sewerage provision.

The conclusion we draw from the report is that although it is disappointing there has been some relaxation on housing numbers with phasing of development deleted; and that the full set of 8 drainage policies were not accepted, the fundamental aims of the Plan remain in place, i.e.:

- ❖ **Development:** The right homes in the right places
- ❖ **Local character:** Retain and improve our village's distinct character
- ❖ **Watton gap:** To keep the gap to Watton
- ❖ **Heritage:** Safeguard our village's unique heritage
- ❖ **Wildlife:** Protect our rich and varied wildlife
- ❖ **Flood risk:** No new flood risk

In due course we expect Breckland Council to announce a village referendum on whether to accept the Plan. We commend the Plan to you as the best way to retain control over the development that takes place in Saham Toney – and also which is not allowed to take place – over the next 15 years. Despite the changes that must be made to it the Plan retains a balance between development of housing on 9 sites that have been shown to be suitable, and all that villagers value about the local environment. So, when the time comes, please have your say in the referendum:

Your village; Your Plan: Vote YES