

Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan

We have again made good progress this month – one of the very few benefits of lockdown is I suppose the lack of many of the normal distractions! We've also been fortunate that all of our consultants have continued to work.

Over the last month:

- ✓ The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been completed. It concludes that overall, the Plan will have a positive effect. By the time you read this, a 6-week public consultation on the report will be in progress, so if you're interested please see details on our website or the parish notice boards and participate in that;
- ✓ The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been completed and sent to Breckland Council, who have a duty to confirm it is compliant with the regulations. The report concludes that "that the Plan has an extensive policy framework to protect the conservation objectives of European sites";
- ✓ A flood risk study has been completed. Because of our limited budget, its scope concentrated on reviewing our drainage and flood risk policies and concluded they are robust while making a few recommendations to improve them. It was pleasing that when the Lead Local Flood Authority saw the report it said *"It is really welcome and encouraging to see the attention to surface water flooding and flood risk within the document and through the conversations we have had. If only all Neighbourhood Plans we see were like this"*;
- ✓ We have completed an equalities impact assessment of the Plan, as required by the regulations;
- ✓ We published a series of 'stay at home' slideshows about the Plan on our website to keep you all informed;
- ✓ The Parish Council has formally adopted four of our documents (updates to the village design guide, site selection report and housing needs assessment, and a new masterplanning study report) and requested Breckland Council to refer to them when making planning decisions; and
- ✓ We have sent the Plan and its 19 supporting documents for a 'health check', and hope to get the results of that by late June / early July.

The last item is the first of three crucial reviews the Plan will undergo before it is ready for its final submission. The other two will be pre-submission reviews by Breckland Council and by our main consultant.

The results of all three reviews, plus the SEA consultation, will tell us what changes might be needed to give the Plan the best chance of being accepted when we submit it.

Apart from making such changes, dare I say we've just about finished preparing the Plan, and are now moving into the stage when we will largely be in the hands of others:

- The people who will make the three reviews I've mentioned;
- Villagers and others who comment on the SEA report;
- Breckland Council who will decide if the HRA is acceptable; and decide if and when public consultation on the Plan can go ahead after we submit it;
- Villagers, Breckland Council and other organisations who may comment on the Plan during the 6-week public consultation that will take place after we submit it;
- An independent examiner who will decide if the Plan can go to a village referendum and if any final changes to it will be needed before that; and
- The lifting of Covid-19 restrictions sufficiently to allow public consultation on the Plan and in due course, a referendum to go ahead.

On the last point the Government has already announced that no referendums may take place till 6 May 2021 at the earliest.

All of the above means it's impossible to be certain of a timescale for the remaining stages. All I can say is by the very best estimate we could submit the Plan in the second half of August; more pessimistically, that won't happen till late November. Naturally we'll keep you updated as things become clearer.

As usual, if you have any comments or questions on any of this, or the Neighbourhood Plan in general, or if you'd like to be added to our mailing list, please get in touch with me. **Most importantly, stay healthy and safe!**

Chris Blow, STNP Work Group leader



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***Neighbourhood Plan
Shaping the future of
Saham Toney!***