

Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan



**A public consultation on the Plan runs from
19th August till 13th October 2019**

**Everyone who lives, works or runs a business in
the Parish can take part, and everyone in a
household can make individual comments**



**See the Plan & make
comments online at
www.stnp2036.org**

Or see a paper copy of the Plan at the WCCC

In this pamphlet you can:

**Read a summary of what's new and what's been updated;
Find out why a new consultation is needed;
See where sites are being allocated;
Learn what the Plan can and cannot do about flood risk;
Find out how to make comments on the Plan**

Why is a new consultation needed?

Since the last public consultation in spring 2018 a lot of new work has been done, most notably:

- ❖ A landscape character assessment of the whole Parish;
- ❖ The preparation of a village design guide; and
- ❖ The assessment and selection of housing sites for allocation in the Plan.

This work led to new and revised policies. In parallel, while we have not changed the intent of the policies previously published (and supported by around 95% of villagers who responded) we have tried to strengthen them and to add clarity by splitting some of them

All this means the updated Plan has a lot of new material and much of what was in it before has been rewritten and reorganised - all with the aim of improving it - so now it's only fair that everyone should have another chance to give their comments

We want the Plan to be as accessible and understandable as possible, so we hope this pamphlet will help you understand its most important points.

If it whets your appetite to find out more, on our website you can download the Plan itself and its twelve volumes of evidence. There's a lot to read, so we also give the text of each policy separately, to let you just read about what interests you most

www.stnp2036.org

Neighbourhood Plan at a Glance

The Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan (STNP) actively promotes development of the right type and amount in the most suitable locations, and which fulfils the Plan's vision, as follows:



To preserve and enhance Saham Toney's distinct and tranquil rural character whilst ensuring village life is peaceful and fulfilling for all residents. This will be achieved through a process of gradual and sustainable development of a scale having regard to, and consistent with, the Neighbourhood Area's development constraints, and appropriate to its place in the Breckland settlement hierarchy, spread over the plan period; and by protecting the area's richness of landscape, history, wildlife and community



STNP complies with national and district planning rules, and builds on both by setting out local policies that aim to best satisfy the expressed aspirations of villagers, while also respecting the needs of other stakeholders. Taken together, the policies create a coherent, positive and sustainable framework for development in Saham Toney that **preserves its past, respects its present and seeks to ensure it thrives in future**. The “**STNP TOP 10**” overleaf, shows the key measures it adopts to do that.

THE STNP “TOP 10”

1

- Seeks to ensure development is consistent with the infrastructure and facilities available

2

- Sets an appropriate level of development by allocating residential housing sites

3

- Defines a housing mix that meets identified Parish needs

4

- Provides design guidance aimed at maintaining local distinctiveness

5

- Sets housing density guidelines that respect local character

6

- Prevents Saham Toney coalescing with neighbouring Watton

7

- Conserves village heritage

8

- Sets out measures to preserve and enhance landscape character and key views

9

- Recognises the importance and value of wildlife and green spaces

10

- Defines criteria to alleviate surface water flood risk

Of the Top 10, the most important addition to the Plan is the allocation of housing sites, in order to:

- ❖ Increase certainty about what is built, where and when;
- ❖ Make sure only sustainable sites will be developed; and
- ❖ Give control over the conditions under which sites will be developed

Site Allocations - How Many Houses?

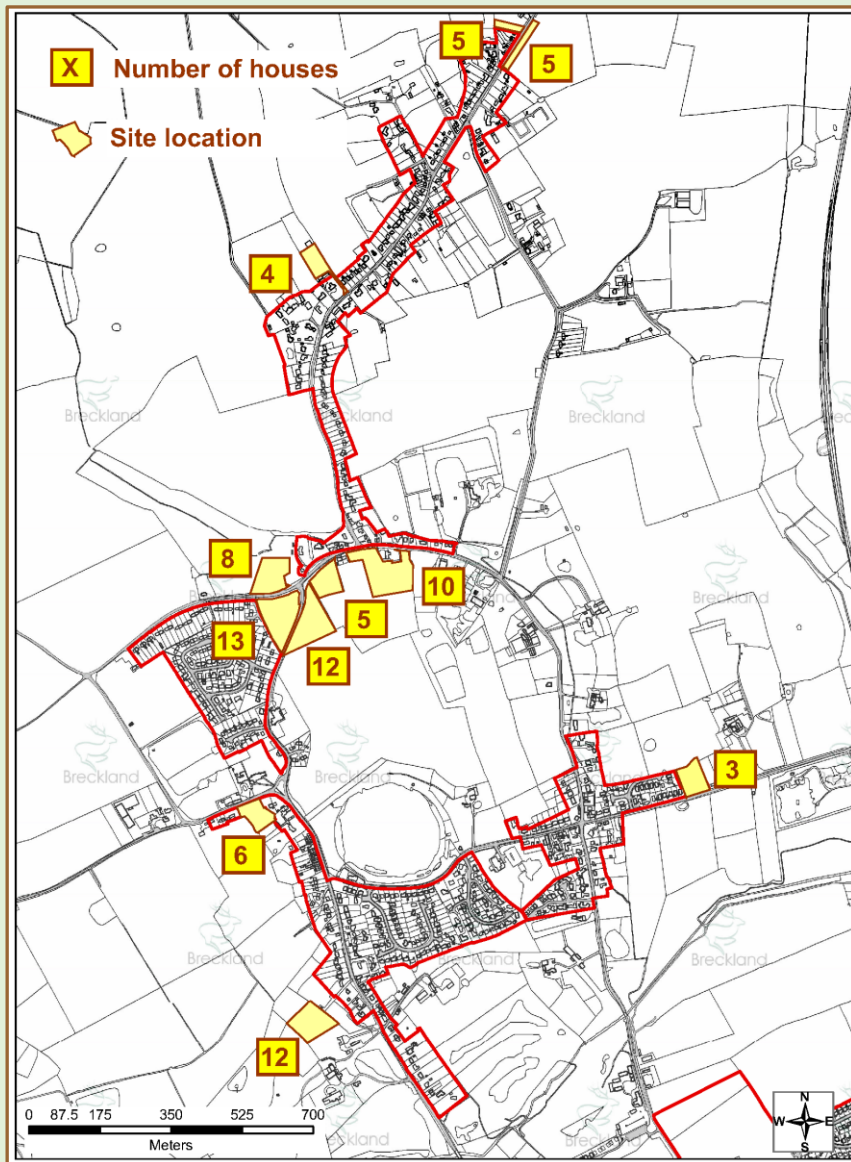
The Plan allocates 83 houses on 11 of the 18 sites assessed, with their development phased up to 2036: so, on average about 5-6 houses per year, which is about half the rate of approvals by Breckland planners over the last 8 years

Sites were chosen as a result of independent assessments of each site proposed, by four organisations:

- The Government appointed consultants AECOM;
- The Local Highways Authority;
- The Lead Local Flood Authority; and
- Anglian Water.

Their assessments were followed by a site selection process that rated each site against 17 weighted policy criteria. We believe that comprehensive, analytical and objective approach is much better than the arbitrary method proposed by Breckland planners, which takes no account of landscape, heritage, flood risk, infrastructure limitations, or any other factors specifically relating to Saham

WHERE ARE THE ALLOCATED SITES?



The site assessment and selection reports, available at www.stnp2036.org tell you in great detail why these sites have been chosen

Why allocate sites, why not just accept the Breckland Local Plan target?

TO GIVE CERTAINTY: It's the only way to be sure where new housing will be built, and - where it will not; neither of which the Local Plan does.

TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY: The Local Plan sets out arbitrary criteria for where sites can be located, and planning decisions often pay scant regard to real sustainability. By having objective, expert and fully independent assessment made of all potential sites, we now feel confident that those allocated will be sustainable.

TO BE IN CONTROL: Not only will the village have certainty of site locations, but the Plan will control how many houses are built and when, and site-specific policy criteria, agreed with the owners, will prevent future developers coming along and doing something completely different with a site.

FOR PROTECTION: The 5-year housing land rule is explained in full on our website. The fact that Breckland Council rarely complies with the rule is the reason many recent planning applications have been allowed in Saham, and even when our plan is approved, that fact could seriously weaken its policies. However, by allocating sites Saham will instead be subject to a 3-year rule, at least for the first two years, and so much more immune from this loophole.

All of this will allow the Plan to make this slogan a reality:

**The RIGHT homes, in the RIGHT places,
built at the RIGHT time**

**None of which will happen if the village relies
on the Local Plan to decide for it**

Summary of the site selection process



1

- Constraints identified by site assessments mitigated where possible

2

- Selection criteria chosen from the Local & Neighbourhood Plans

3

- Each criterion given a weighting to reflect its relative importance

4

- 5-step rating scales defined with "black and white" descriptions

5

- Each site rated against each criterion

6

- Results summed

7

- Draft policies written for each site with a positive rating

8

- Policy conditions discussed and agreed with site owners

9

- Initial villager views canvassed

10

- Allocations approved by the Parish Council

Why 83 houses?

Because the site assessment and selection processes establish which sites are suitable for development – and which are not - by examining a wide range of criteria; and concludes that Saham can sustain that number of new houses over the Plan period. Both processes were robust, comprehensive and objective and were undertaken without emotion or bias.

The site assessment and selection processes are the most rational and objective methods to decide which sites are suitable for development.

So, before you tell us the number is too high please first consider the alternate - which is to trust Breckland planners to manage development in an equally controlled way, and to believe they will adhere to their own target of 33 houses for Saham. Their plan also sets no controls on the timing of development. So, let's say they continue their current rate of approvals and allow 33 new homes in the first 3 years of the plan: do you believe they will refuse all further development for the next 13 years? We don't and some of the reasons why are:

- ☒ They've admitted to us they cannot apply such a hard and fast limit on development numbers.
- ☒ The minimum total of 33 new houses they specify has no logical basis and was arbitrarily set by planners without assessing a single factor relating to what might be suitable for Saham.
- ☒ Planners have approved 87 new homes in Saham in the last 8 years. At that rate they would approve another 185 homes by 2036. And the village would have little or no say in which sites were approved.
- ☒ 2 years ago, the Local Plan said there would be 205 more new homes in Watton up to 2036, and yet from March 2017 to March 2018 alone, planners approved 301 there.

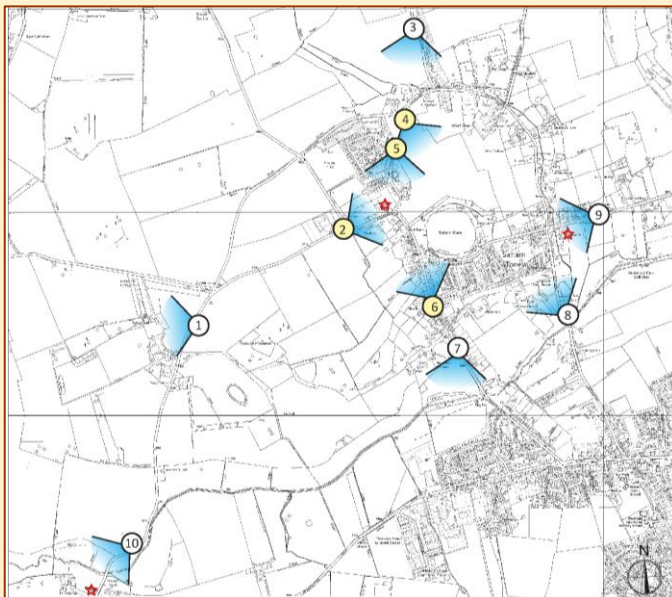
What else is new in the Plan?

1. Greater protection for landscape

The professionally prepared, 3-volume landscape assessment of the Parish told us where landscape has the greatest value in character and visual terms, and which areas would be most sensitive to change. As a result, the Plan now has a policy to preserve, and if possible, enhance those areas and to ensure all development takes landscape impact fully into account.



2. A redefined set of key views, as recommended by a professional landscape architect



3.A completely rewritten design policy

The policy sets out the main principles and is backed up by a detailed Village Design Guides, which sets out what will – and what will not be acceptable in design terms



Taken together, the revised policy and the Village Design Guide promote development that is in keeping with local character and distinctiveness

What else does the Plan tackle?

Infrastructure

STNP supports development where there is, or will be, sufficient social infrastructure to meet all requirements arising from that development. Preference is given to sustainable modes of transport (i.e. walking, cycling and public transport) over non-sustainable driving routes.



Housing Mix

Based on a village housing needs assessment, STNP requires a majority of new housing to have 1-3 bedrooms, to offset the present imbalance of larger houses and better serve the needs of those starting out on the housing ladder, or looking to downsize.

Housing density

Saham Toney has a unique character defined as much by its open spaces as its buildings. That would be harmed by closely-packed developments, so STNP sets guidelines for housing density appropriate to the area in which a site is located



The Rural Gap

Saham Toney has a separate and distinct identity, character and amenity to that of the neighbouring market town, Watton, and the two have always been physically separated. Definition of a rural gap ensures that separation will be maintained

Heritage

Saham Toney has a range of listed and non-listed buildings that make an important contribution to its character and hence STNP specifies how they will be conserved, along with archaeological sites and finds



Wildlife & Green Infrastructure

Saham Toney is rich in wildlife and biodiversity and STNP seeks to preserve them as they not only make such an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of villagers, but bring pleasure to many



THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN & FLOOD RISK

Many parts of Saham Toney are subject to surface water flooding, and we understand how much it concerns those affected, so STNP specifies what steps must be taken to prevent development adding to that risk

Can the Plan prevent floods? Unfortunately, in a word, **NO**

The Plan cannot solve existing flooding problems. Much of the surface water that flows through Saham Toney and Saham Hills originates north of the Parish in the Ashill area. The main parts of the village affected are along Pages's Lane, Chequers Lane, Bell Lane and Ploughboy Lane.

The Plan cannot control Nature, so rainwater will continue to drain via existing watercourses. In extreme events, such as the one in June 2016, there is a high likelihood those will again be unable to cope with the volume of water running off the land.

This problem is further exasperated in Saham because groundwater levels are generally high, meaning there is less capacity for water to be held in the ground long enough to prevent overflow of the watercourses and the flooding that consequently occurs

Why might new development increase flood risk?

If new development, particularly in the areas of greatest risk, **happens without adequate control**, during heavy rainfall it might increase the rate of surface water run-off to the surrounding area, because permeable ground might be replaced with hard, impermeable surfaces. Although the amount of rainfall would not be changed by the development (that's in Nature's control), it would no longer be able to soak into the ground as it does now

Can the plan prevent increased risk of flooding? YES

When preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, we felt that the national and district planning rules were okay up to a point, but lacked sufficient rigour and clarity, thus leaving loopholes that some developers may (and do) exploit. We wanted to strengthen the good points in the planning rules, and make them more locally specific, while also eliminating loopholes.

HOW? Among other measures the Plan requires:

-  All sites at risk of flooding (as shown on Environment Agency maps) to submit a flood risk assessment with a planning application;
-  The assessment must prove the site causes no increased flood risk to the site itself or existing properties and infrastructure;
-  Sites must have on-site water storage to intercept, attenuate or store long-term surface water run-off up to a stated limit (a 100- year flood);
-  Applications for all sites in high or medium flood risk areas shall be reviewed by the Lead Local Flood Authority and Anglian Water (neither normally review sites with less than 20 houses); and
-  There is adequate capacity in the sewerage system to cope

In essence the Plan aims to make sure that measures are taken to ensure new development does not result in higher flood risk than existed before it was approved.

You can find more detail about the Neighbourhood Plan and flood risk on our website at **www.stnp2036.org**, including measures that villagers might take to address existing problems

Other policies in the Plan deal with:

- ❖ Affordable housing, with priority given to locals on the Housing Register
- ❖ Safe site access to and from main roads
- ❖ Parking standards
- ❖ The preservation of the village's dark skies
- ❖ Safeguarding community facilities
- ❖ Business and tourism-related development
- ❖ Protection of Local Green Spaces
- ❖ Preservation of trees and hedges

HAVE YOUR SAY!

We welcome all constructive comments.

You can find a very simple comments form on our website. It requires only a few details about you, then gives you 3 choices:

- To support the Plan, without comments.
- To support the Plan subject to comments you make.
- To oppose the Plan, and give reasons for doing so.

Subsequently a Consultation Statement will be prepared summarising all comments and stating how each was addressed in an update to the Plan. That statement will be available to all parishioners, businesses and other bodies at the time of the Regulation 15 submission to Breckland District Council

If you prefer to give your comments in paper, or don't have internet access, please contact us and we'll arrange a mutually convenient time to deliver and collect a form

To borrow a paper copy of the Plan; get a paper version of the comments form; or query something; or if any groups (be they organised or just a group of neighbours) would like us to come and discuss the Plan with you, let us know. Our contacts are:

or  stnp2036@gmail.com  @STNP2036

or  Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan

or Tel: Andrew 884759 Brian 889550
 Chris 885652 Trevor 884400

What else is still to be done?

Consultants will prepare example site layouts and street views for the larger sites / groups of sites, to help check how sites would best fit in with the village.

We have to prove in a separate document how the Plan meets national regulations.

We may have to prepare a strategic environmental assessment if a need for one is identified by specialist organisations during the consultation.

The Breckland Local Plan

The Local Plan has been repeatedly delayed and dates for its completion never seem certain. The latest information we have is that it will be approved in November, but that hinges on the Government Inspector confirming the plan is acceptable

This pamphlet is prepared and published by the Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan Work Group on behalf of Saham Toney Parish Council, and was printed by Barkers Print & Design Ltd