

Check sound is set to laptop not projector before starting presentation

Slide 1: Welcome

Click Sound Good evening and thank you all for coming.

Slide 2: What I'm Going To Tell You About **Pause**

Before I start could I ask you all to put mobile phones on silent please?




If you don't already know me I'm Chris Blow, the leader of the neighbourhood plan work group, and with me tonight are my colleagues - Andrew Walmsley, Brian Mitchell and Chris Darge.


My presentation will last about seventy five minutes plus time for your questions.


Unfortunately our MP, George Freeman, has been unable to join us, as he's had to stay in Westminster for the Brexit debates, but he has sent a video message instead.


All being well, the slideshow and notes will be on our website over the weekend.

And I'll just add this presentation includes a couple of items of audience participation which I hope you'll all take part in.


   To start us off, George Freeman was going to give us his views on neighbourhood planning - but as I said we'll now have a virtual George doing that.


 In August I told you what we planned to do next, so I'll briefly outline what we've actually done since then.


 Next I'll move on to the main business of the evening, which is to update you on our site allocations process, and you'll have chance to give your initial thoughts on what you hear.


 After that I'll move on to this evening's other main topic - the village character study that has been recently carried out by our landscape consultant.

 That includes an objective reassessment of our key views



 And a village design guide based on the results of the character study.

 After that I'll outline what's coming next, including our latest thoughts on the timetable.

 Now maybe I haven't included something you'd particularly like to hear about? If so, if you tell me now, time allowing, I'll try to cover your topic at the end. Anybody?

 Finally you'll have chance to ask questions, but if you prefer to do that as we go along, feel free while things are fresh in your mind.


Slide 3: George Freeman MP

 **Pause** Okay so although for some strange reason George Freeman has decided to give priority to the Brexit debates at Westminster rather than our plan, he has kindly found time to record a short video message. If that does raise any particular questions let me know and I'll pass them on to George! So here's his video! 


DOES ANYONE HAVE ANY QUESTIONS FOR GEORGE?


Slide 4: What We've Done Since Last Time



At our August presentation I told you what we were planning to do next.


 This is how we've done.

 Our latest grant application to fund the village character study went through as expected.


 As did approval of a technical support package to carry out independent site assessments though red tape meant that took longer.

 We participated in the extra hearing sessions for the Breckland Local Plan. Just briefly, at the close of those Breckland Council planned to republish the plan for a 6 week consultation starting in early November, but they're running late. The Council's latest estimate is consultation from January till mid-February 2019; the inspector's report before the end of March; and their plan approved around the end of May next year.


 NBIS had promised to complete biodiversity maps for us by the end of October, but  some sort of major IT bug has hindered them and those maps now won't be ready till at least the end of this year.


 Our landscape consultant sent us her draft village character and landscape sensitivity assessment reports last month, and I'll tell you about the preliminary results of that later.


 In parallel she prepared a village design guide for us which I'll also tell you about.


 I told you last time we'd start the process of site allocations and we did that with a call for sites that ran from 17 August till 18 October. I'll tell you all about the results of that.


 We completed our history of village development and published it on our website.

 While not on our August 'to do' list, some villagers told us they'd like to know about planning applications, so we created a guide on how to respond to those on our website, where you can also find up to date information on applications for new houses currently being looked at.

 Meanwhile we continue to submit our comments to applications and to help the parish council understand the issues they raise.


 We finally persuaded the neighbourhood planning coordinator at Breckland to visit Saham in September, and after giving her a full tour of the village followed by a couple hours' conversation, she went away saying she understood a lot more about the issues we face, which will stand us in good stead.

 We are gradually updating the plan as the new work progresses and incorporating NPPF changes as we do that.

 And as we said in August all of this will lead us to a repeat Regulation 14 consultation, and I'll give you the latest timetable for that at the end.

Slide 5: Site Allocations Reminder

Just before I tell you about progress on the site allocations process, it's worth remembering why we're going through it.


 It will give us the main benefits you see on screen:

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. In doing so it should avoid Saham being part of the numbers' game it seems the Breckland Planning committee like to play.


SUSTAINABILITY: The Local Plan sets out entirely 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 can feel confident that those allocated will be sustainable.


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


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 us to make the slogan you see here a reality.

Slide 6: Site Allocations Process Reminder


 Before I tell you on what's been happening with site allocations it's worth reminding ourselves that it is a three - stage process.

 Stage 1 involves landowners putting forward potential sites;


 Stage 2 is the assessment of those sites to establish which are suitable for development;



 Stage 3 is selection of sites to be allocated in the Plan - this will be from the list defined as suitable by the assessments.


Here I will just point out that having been allocated in the Plan a site will still need to go through the normal planning application process, but that should be easier as all main points will have been agreed in advance.


 We have completed stage 1 and are part way through an independent assessment of sites.


Slide 7: Site Allocations - What's Been Done So Far


 So what's happened so far?


  As I mentioned we ran a call for sites over an 8 week period, with wide publicity and direct invitations to local landowners, and a long list of builders, developers and their consultants to participate. We deliberately set no controls on who could respond so that the process was fair to all. Equally each proposal will be judged on its merits and personalities will play no part in it. Hence although in some cases it may be obvious to you, I will not be identifying the people who put forward sites.


 A total of 16 sites were put forward and we think it's positive they all came from villagers or those with village connections, and that none were from developers.

 We've met all the landowners, mostly at their sites, and having done so, feel confident we can work collaboratively with them to come up with what's best for everyone.

 Approval for a company called AECOM to assess the sites was given by the Housing Ministry on 6 November.

 Following that we proposed some local assessment criteria to AECOM in addition to their standard list but AECOM have said they will not include those and instead advise us to undertake a second stage assessment of them when we select preferred sites.



 The assessments started on 16 November and will continue until 27 March next year. The AECOM consultant will visit each site as part of the assessments, so this is not just an office exercise.

 Since we're making landscape a key part of the plan, pending more discussion when we meet her next Monday, we may ask Lucy, our landscape consultant, to also assess the sites from that perspective. Such work won't duplicate AECOM's, because while they will tell us if a site is suitable or not; Lucy would tell us if so, how development could be implemented in a way that preserves and enhances important landscape features.

Slide 8: Site Allocations - What's Been Proposed

 First I want to stress that what I'm about to tell you is not a firm plan.


 It's a series of proposals.


  So there's no need to feel alarmed by any or all of the proposals. Rest assured my group and I will continue to work towards a plan that best serves the village. So I am not going to tell you our opinions of the sites because for now our only opinion is that they are all worthy of assessment. Likewise it is not our aim to make recommendations about this or that site this evening, that will come in stage 3. We are open-minded about all of the proposals and ask you to be likewise.


But before I tell you what's been put forward please just keep a few other numbers in mind  


 33: the minimum number of homes Breckland Council allocates to Saham in the draft Local Plan;

 48: The number of homes we proposed at the March consultation and which nobody objected to;

 81: Breckland Council has approved 81 new houses in Saham since 2011, 43 of which have been built so far;

 149: In 2015 Breckland Council defined Saham as a Local Service Centre and allocated us 149 new houses. At the same time they concluded there were actually sites available for 226 new houses.

 450+ If you remember the village development history we told you about in the summer, you'll know that at least 450 new homes were built in the village over a 25 year period towards the end of the last century..and the village didn't collapse under the strain of that.

 1010: This was the total number of potential houses put forward for the site assessments made by Breckland Council when Saham was a Local Service Centre. You can see the large difference between what was proposed - this number - and the number accepted after those site assessments - 149 as above. Which reinforces what I said a minute ago - a proposal does not automatically become a plan, so let's wait for the whole process to follow its course rather than make any knee-jerk reactions

🔊 16,630: The total number of new homes specified for the whole of Breckland up to 2036. Actually that number is yet to be accepted by the Inspector who must approve the Local Plan, and could yet rise by another 11-1200

🔊 300,000: The government set this target for new home building every year in England in the 2017 budget.

So now on to what's actually been proposed here

🔊 🔊 As I mentioned earlier a total of 16 sites were put forward.

🔊 **DRUM ROLL** 🔊 If they were all included in the plan as proposed they could deliver more than 200 new homes. Again I'll remind you that's the simply the total put forward in response to an open invitation, not the total accepted for allocation at this stage!

🔊 **Slide 9: Where Are the Sites Proposed?**

So, you'll be asking, where are the sites?

🔊 **Pause** 🔊 Don't worry if you can't take all that in at one glance, my colleagues will give out copies of the map for you and I'll be going through each site individually in a moment {GIVE OUT SITE MAP HANDOUTS} **Pause till that's done**

🔊 **Slide 10: Proposals In Context**

I understand your first reaction to the number of houses proposed, and perhaps also some of the locations as well, may be one of shock or concern.

I stress again: nothing is decided yet. The number of sites deemed suitable by the independent assessments may be far less; none of us can second-guess that. So when I say "if all those houses were built" please don't imply they will be **Pause**

But...**IF** 222 homes were built over the plan period, on average that would be about 12 each year.

🔊 Now compare that with the last 7 years...

🔊 Over which time 43 homes have been built

🔊 And another 38 have been approved.

Which equates to a little over 10 per year on average.

🔊 As a further comparison this map shows where those were. You can see the biggest concentration has been around Mill Corner.

And just to remind you, Breckland Council currently say there will be a minimum of 🔊 33 new houses in Saham from whenever the Local Plan is approved.


And at the consultation in the spring our Plan set a minimum total of 🔊 48 - something that nobody commented on so can be presumed to be acceptable.


Okay, now I'll go through each proposed site one by one, and tell you what we know so far. The site numbers are not significant - they are simply the order in which proposals were received. Please remember none of us are here tonight to assess the sites, but all the same if any initial thoughts occur to you please jot them down on the form on


the back of the map we've given out and let us have them back at the end (you can still take a spare map away with you if you want).


By the way I'm going to talk about site sizes in hectares so in case it's hard to visualise that, a hectare is about 2.5 acres... or just think of 1 hectare as approximately the size of a football pitch.

Slide 11: STNP1: The Piggeries, Chequers Lane


 If you live in the village you'll know where this site is


 It's almost 1 hectare of land.

 The proposal is to build 10 houses.

 The owner's current plan is for those to be 3-bed bungalows.


 Here's a site photo.


 In this case the owner has provided a preliminary site layout. I'll point out it provides a safe pedestrian route avoiding the Hills Road junction and there would be measures to alleviate flood risk in the area.


 And here you can see that site layout superimposed on an aerial view of the site.

Slide 12: STNP2: Disused Piggery, Hills Road


 This proposal is to demolish the piggery buildings behind the Croft, off Hills Road


 The site is half a hectare of land.

 The owner would like to build 4 homes there.


 Those would be 3-bed bungalows.


 Here's a site photo.


 Again the owner has provided a preliminary site layout. Site access to and from Hills Road already exists, as it previously served the piggery.


 Here is an aerial view of the site, with the layout sketch laid over it.

Slide 13: STNP3: Junction of Hills Road and Ploughboy Lane


 Again most villagers will be aware of this site's location

 It's about 0.25 hectares.

 The proposal is to build 4 houses.

 The owners initial thoughts are for those to be 3-bed detached homes, but like many of those who put forward sites, in principle they are willing to adapt to meet village needs.


 Here's a site photo.


 As yet there is no site layout drawing so this is just an aerial view of the site. I should add that a site drawing is not a necessity at this stage, so not having one yet doesn't count against a site in any way.

Slide 14: STNP4: Junction of Pound Hill and Page's Lane

 Anyone who knows Saham will know this site

 It's just over 0.8 hectares.


 Initial thoughts are that 12-15 houses could be built there.


 Those would be a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bed homes.


 Here's a site photo.


 And an aerial view of the site.


Slide 15: STNP5: Pound Hill East

 Immediately opposite the previous site a similar triangle of land has been put forward

 In this case its area is just over 1 hectare.


 Initial thoughts are that 12-15 houses could be built there.

 Again there would be a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bed homes.


 Here's a site photo.


 And an aerial view of the site.

Slide 16: STNP6: Page's Lane East

 Adjoining the previous site is a smaller plot of land off Page's Lane.

 It's just under half a hectare.

 The owner has suggested 5-6 houses.


 While the type of house hasn't been put forward yet, discussion with the owners suggest they would be sized to meet village needs.


 Here's a site photo.


 And an aerial view of the site.

Slide 17: STNP7: Page's Lane Farm

 Crossing the road from the last 3 sites, land put forward at Page's Farm includes some disused farm buildings.

 This is a somewhat larger site, measuring close to 2 hectares.


 Hence a larger number of homes have been suggested - 30 to 35 is the owner's initial thought.

 Being a larger site this would have a mix of 1 to 4 bed homes.


 This is a site photo.

 And an aerial view of the site.

Slide 18: STNP8: Hills Road South-West

 Another plot of farmland, on the left as you go up Hills Road from Page's Lane.

 This is the second largest site put forward, being over 2.5 hectares.


 40 to 50 homes have been suggested by the owners, which would also be one of the higher densities proposed.


 Again this would likely have a mix of 1 to 4 bed homes.

 This is a site photo.

 And an aerial view of the site.

Slide 19: Central Area - Overall

 Now before I move on to the remaining sites, I'm sure you've noticed that 6 of the 8 sites I've talked about so far are concentrated in an area around the Pound Hill, Page's Lane and Hills Road junctions - what I've called the central area.

 All six sites fall within a 700m circle and if all were fully developed that would account for 20% of the land in that circle.

Slide 20: Central Area - Proposed Houses


 To refresh your memories this shows how many houses have been suggested for each of the six central sites.


 To save you doing the arithmetic, that's a potential total of between 109 and 131 new homes.

The AECOM assessments will look at each site individually and may conclude all the sites are suitable.

 But they will not look at cumulative effects


Slide 21: Central Area - Threats and Opportunities


 So keeping in mind what I said about these being proposals not plans and the need to let the whole process run its course before jumping to conclusions, given the potential concentration and extent of development, it would be useful to hear your initial thoughts on the overall picture in this particular area.


 So here's where I hope you'll join in and give us your opinions. What do you think might be the positive aspects if all the proposed development went ahead? And the negative ones?


That's interesting, thanks / all done? / no-one?


In case you have other ideas as we go on, we'll give out a form now where you can note your ideas then just give them back to us at the end. **{Give out threats and opportunities forms} Pause till that's done**


 We're not making a judgement at present but naturally we've had some initial thoughts, which are as follows. The negative aspects are perhaps more obvious:

 Clearly there would be a good number of additional cars in the village, while major road improvements would be unlikely;


 While good roads could be provided on the sites themselves, access to and from them might be a problem bearing in mind the width and condition of our existing roads;


 If we take Breckland's average of 2.4 people per home there could be around 300 new villagers needing to use the already stretched doctor's surgery, school and other services;


 If all the sites were developed to the potential level suggested the landscape of that central area might be affected quite dramatically;


 And of course development of all six sites may result in years of disruption, noise and road closures etc.


But without saying we support development on this overall level one reason we're keeping an open mind is because there are always two sides to any story, and we can see several plus points:


 I've called it the central area because it is just that - central between Saham Toney and Saham Hills!


 So instead of seeing just 130 or so houses springing up perhaps this area could become a new hub for the village?

 With homes that are affordable for younger villagers who would then be able to stay and raise their families here;

 Who along with all of us, would want to stay here because some new amenities were provided;

 With landscaping done in such a way that was attractive and enhanced the character of the village;

 Done well, this might encourage more young families to move to Saham;


 Something that's much needed if the village isn't to slowly wither or become little more than a haven for we older folk.


In a nutshell it would seem to be a balance between setting a new housing number that's sustainable in the context of the constraints in our village, and ensuring growth that in the long run benefits the village.


Of course there would be a lot of hurdles to overcome before any of these things became reality, but I hope by playing devil's advocate I've opened your eyes to another way of looking at things.

Okay, I'll move on to the other sites proposed.

Slide 22: STNP9: Ovington Road

 A plot of unused land, just to the east of Millview.


 This site is a little less than half a hectare.

 3 homes have been put forward.


 There would be one 2 bed house, 1 3 bed and 1 4 bed.


 This is a site photo.


 A preliminary site layout.


 And an aerial view with the draft site layout superimposed.


Slide 23: STNP10: Behind 129 & 131 Hills Road


 A plot of unused land, off Hills Road but hidden from it.

 One of the larger plots put forward, being 1.6 hectares.


 20 homes have been suggested by the owners.


 A mix of 2 and 3 bed homes has been suggested.


 This is a site photo.


 And an aerial view of the site.



Slide 24: STNP11 & STNP15: Richmond Road


 There are two options; the first to use part of the garden; the second to demolish the existing house and use the entire plot.

 The first option is 0.15 hectares in area while the second is 0.4 hectares.


 The owners suggest 2 homes for the smaller plot and between 4 and 8 for the larger one.


 3 bed homes have been suggested for the smaller site. For the larger site option the owner is amenable to house types that would meet village needs.


  Here are 2 site photos.

  And aerial views of each option.

Slide 25: STNP12: Richmond Hall

 A plot just to the south of Richmond Hall.

 The plot size is 0.24 hectares.


 5 homes have been suggested by the owners.


 A mix of 1 to 4 bed homes has been suggested.


 This is a site photo.


 And an aerial view of the site.

Slide 26: STNP13: Hill Farm


 The plot is part of a field not currently in farming use.

 The plot is 0.2 hectares.


 4-5 homes have been suggested by the owner.


 While the house type and size has not yet been decided the owner supports them being in line with village needs.


 This is a site photo.


 And an aerial view of the site.

Slide 27: STNP14: Croft Field

 Just across the road this plot is part of a large field currently used to grow barley.

 The plot is 0.3 hectares.


 5 homes have been suggested by the owner.


 While the house type and size has not yet been decided the owner supports them being in line with village needs.


 This is a site photo.


 And an aerial view of the site.

Slide 28: STNP16: Richmond Hall Plot 2


 The plot is a large tract of residential land.

 By area this is the largest site put forward - the plot is 3.48 hectares.

 20-35 homes have been suggested.

 While the house type and size has not yet been decided the owner supports them being in line with village needs.

 This is a site photo.


 And an aerial view of the site.



A preliminary discussion with the owner indicates that if this option were allocated, he would not develop the other option - STNP12 - nor the 5 house site he already has planning permission for, immediately behind the nearby houses fronting onto Richmond Road.


Slide 29: Community Benefits From Allocated Sites



 The Breckland Local Plan specifies benefits from development in two ways: 

- If a site is for 11 or more homes, 20% of them should be "affordable";
- If a site is for 25 or more homes public open space should be provided as part of the site development. For smaller sites a financial contribution towards providing open space elsewhere is required;
- There was also a policy for housing development in villages like ours that specifically called for all developments to provide some form of community benefit, but following the Local Plan hearings the Inspector has asked for that criterion to be deleted. As has been the clause that limited site sizes to 5 houses.

 Our plan previously set out what community benefits were required. That focused on affordable housing with priority for locals. But so far Breckland Council has not accepted such priority, and more recently our thoughts have moved away from "affordable housing" in its formal definition, to "housing that is genuinely affordable for locals". This makes good sense to us as the point of a neighbourhood plan is to deliver local rather than district needs.


  Allocating sites gives us the best chance of doing that, because it is an opportunity to collaborate with site owners to develop schemes that meet both their aims and those of the plan. Discussions of this approach with the owners has shown they are all supportive of it in principle, so although of course more detailed discussions will be needed, this is cause for optimism. The beauty of this cooperative approach is that when we explore ways in which each development can benefit all parties there are no hard and fast rules as it comes down to case by case agreements. Regardless of the small print of the Local Plan we think there can be no reason for Breckland Council to refuse benefits that have been agreed with the site owners.

 There's another aspect to this; one we've already mentioned to the site owners, so I'm not going behind anyone's back here: Because the number of houses put forward in the 16 proposals greatly exceeds the 33 required by the Local Plan, subject to the site assessments, we may be in a position of choosing preferred sites to meet whatever overall number is considered to be right for Saham. This means some sites may be assessed as suitable but not selected as preferred. This effectively means **COMPETITION** for allocation. That said all suitable sites may be allocated so we're not going to play one site off against another or act in a negative way, because that's not what collaboration is about. But if some sites offer more benefits than others of course that will be one factor we'll take into account if and when sites are selected.

  We don't pretend we have all the best ideas. Nor can we read minds. So it would be great to hear your ideas on what might constitute a benefit to the community when a site is developed. Any ideas please! We'll be happy to discuss them with the landowners, so remember...if you don't ask, you don't get! **Pause for audience participation** Okay thanks, if any other ideas occur to you please jot them down on the form on the back of the threats and opportunities one we gave out when we looked at the central area sites and let us have it back at the end.

Slide 30: Proposed Development Timetables


In response to a specific question on the proposal form, in most cases site owners have suggested a timescale for development should their site be included in the plan.


 Those responses can be seen here, with the number of houses proposed also shown to give some context. In the interests of staying open minded I'm not going to make any comment on the fact that there could potentially be 72 new houses in the next 5 years if all those sites were allocated, other than to say we're well aware of concerns that would raise and if it actually arises we'll address it fully at the appropriate time.


Slide 31: Site Allocations Q&A



If you have any questions about site allocations now's your chance.


Slide 32: Village Character Assessment


 Now I'll move on to the other main topic of the evening, the village character assessment. Firstly I should point out that we are still in discussion with our landscape consultant about our review of her draft reports and so what I'm presenting is based on her preliminary findings modified by comments we have made to date, plus various subsequent discussions with her. We're meeting our consultant on Monday to resolve the outstanding points, so there may be some changes when the final reports are published.


 The assessment was done by Lucy, the landscape consultant who previously checked our communal views. When doing it we deliberately kept her in the dark about sites coming forward for allocation, so that they didn't influence her findings in any way.


 I'll quickly describe how the assessment was done.


  It had two main parts: to define landscape character areas and then to assess their sensitivity to future development.


 Lucy initially divided the parish into 5 rural areas and 4 settlement areas, but we felt the latter should be further sub-divided so there are now 6 of those, and for clarity we've renamed them village areas.


 Her first report describes the main characteristics of each area.


 The term "settlement fringe" is used for the areas where countryside meets the built-up parts of the village. Those fringes form the landscape setting for the village areas.


 The overall settlement fringe was initially divided by Lucy into 10 individual areas, but after discussion that has been rationalised to 8.


 The sensitivity of each area was then assessed.

 Thanks to Lucy's work it's likely we'll be able to enlarge the gap to Watton from what is shown in the plan at present as she considers that can be justified on the basis of landscape sensitivity.


 Lucy also looked at our protected views with a more expert eye and recommended those she thinks should be in the plan, including some new ones; and those that should no longer be included.

 During her work she established what she calls the vernacular for the village, which in plain English means traditional design features.

 That leads on to a village design guide.


 Now our job is to incorporate the key points of Lucy's work into policies in the plan so that they'll get used day to day on the right basis by planners, developers and others.

Slide 33: Village Character Area Maps: 1


 As I mentioned 4 settlement areas were originally proposed by Lucy, as you see here, based on the Breckland settlement boundary. **Indicate with pointer** Likewise Lucy used her professional judgement to divide the countryside into these 5 rural areas, each with a broadly distinct character. **Indicate with pointer**

Slide 34: Village Character Area Maps:2


The next two maps show how Lucy's proposed maps have been modified following our reviews and discussion, with final tweaks to be agreed with her on Monday.

 When we reviewed Lucy's maps, we felt that the Breckland settlement boundary, which is just a rather arbitrary line on a map, does not relate directly to the character of an area. We also felt that village rather than settlement areas would be a better name to avoid confusion because some settled parts of the village fall outside Breckland's settlement boundary and lie in rural areas. Of course no one area is completely uniform, but we feel our version better reflects the way in which various parts of the village have a different feel. As you can see we felt the area at

the lower end of Hills Road and Chequers Lane is not part of Saham Hills in terms of character, but instead warrants its own distinct area assessment. **Indicate with pointer** We also felt that the Bell Lane estates do not belong in the same character area as Richmond Road. **Indicate with pointer** So as a result of our comments, as you can see, there are now 6 village character areas.


 Following on from that we felt that rural areas should extend to the edges of the actually settled areas, and that the eastern part of the land adjacent to the Watton boundary should be in the same character area as the western part, as it all forms the strategic gap. With some further refinement by Lucy around Ovington Road and Pound Hill, that led to this revised version of the map. By the way don't be concerned that the eastern part of Chequers Lane is not part of a village area. That's because it's less built up than other housing areas and so more vulnerable to future development. Putting it in a rural area ensures its sensitivity is assessed.


Slide 35: Village Character Area Maps:3

 This map shows the latest version of the fringe areas. These don't have hard and fast boundaries; instead they blend into the rural areas and also include open land within the village areas, such as gardens. They are the areas where development is most likely to be proposed in future. If any of you are eagle-eyed enough to spot it, the extent of the village areas on this map differs from that on the previous slide. That's simply because as we continue to discuss things with her, Lucy has still to update that aspect on this particular map.

Slide 36: Village Area Main Features

I don't propose to go through each area in detail; we will put Lucy's reports on our website when all the i's and t's are dotted and crossed; and I will just say don't take the area names too literally, they're just to give a little more identity than simple numbers. So just briefly:


 The Richmond Road area is largely one plot deep along the road with a mix of older and newer buildings. There are views of the church from much of the area that provide a strong focal point.


 The area we've named Pound Hill is of course principally an area of houses and bungalows built between 1970 and 1995 that Lucy feels are now a well integrated part of village character. Similarly with the Bell Lane area.


 Like the Richmond Road area, Mill Corner mixes old and new, but has a quieter, more rural feel

Slide 37: Village Area Main Features (continued)

And to continue, the remaining areas are as follows:

 Buildings in the Chequers area are sometimes more set back from the road, generally older, more widely spaced and screened from view, resulting in a different character.

 Hills Road is another mostly linear area of settlement with older buildings scattered amongst more modern development, but with its own unique character.


 Here are the main vernacular features I mentioned earlier - the design guide will go into more detail, but Lucy clearly felt that some more modern development had moved away from a traditional village look, and we hope the design guide will promote what's most in keeping with the overall character of the village, rather than just repeating the off the shelf designs of more recent times.


 In summary Lucy concluded Saham's overall character is as noted here:


A rather widely scattered village with important open spaces between different areas, given most distinctiveness by the older buildings and the interplay of buildings and open space. So preserving the best of those features is important if we want the village to retain its character. Which reinforces the need for the neighbourhood plan to manage and direct development so that what comes in the future remains sympathetic to what's gone before.

Slide 38: Rural Area Main Features


Again I won't go through these in great detail, but if you want to know more, do take time to look at Lucy's reports yourselves when we publish them on the website.


 The Watton Brook area is formed by the valley of the brook. Lucy has highlighted that such valleys are almost always important in landscape terms, and of course in our case the land along the brook forms the bulk of the gap to Watton which has been seen as important to protect since the very first village consultations on the plan. Lucy's report supports our view that development should not be allowed in the gap.


 Called western estates for want of a better name this is the land north of the Brook's valley and west of Saham Toney, around Saham Hall and beyond to the parish boundary. It is arable farmland with interspersed woodland, with very little settlement, although Lucy considers it may be able to sustain a little development if that was well blended in.


 North of that the area has been named Page's Manor to reflect historical association. While it has some similarities to the previous area, it is more open and on rising land so warrants being treated separately.

Slide 39: Rural Area Main Features (continued)


 The area called Ploughboy farmlands is a mix of pasture and arable farmland on gentle slopes. It has some long views across to the Hills Road area and woods on the horizon add to its character.




 Passing beyond the disused rail embankment brings you to this area which has more of a managed estate feel with prominent views to Saham Wood. This is the highest part of the parish so has its own character.


 Now I'll touch on the settlement fringe areas.

 As I said these are where village and countryside meet and are the areas where development is most likely to happen in future - (a) because it's natural for a village to expand from its present limits, and (b) because that's what the Breckland Local Plan dictates. Hence Lucy concentrated most on these areas when making her sensitivity assessment. Two things I should note is that for this study we didn't ask Lucy to look at individual sites - though that may come later - and these areas do not have hard and fast boundaries where they meet the rural areas, but instead blend into those.

Slide 40: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

 The sensitivity of an area basically tells us the extent to which development would impact on its landscape character. Although we're still discussing this aspect with Lucy, we think ultimately an area has to be defined as having high, medium or low sensitivity because there has to be an overall conclusion that everyone can understand. But in fact no one area is uniformly of one sensitivity class, nor are different parts of the same area necessarily sensitive in the same way, because a range of different factors are used to measure sensitivity, as I'll come onto. We've learned from Lucy that there are many nuances involved and are still grappling with how we can best reflect that in the plan in a way that doesn't leave room for different interpretations by different people - something we'll be discussing with Lucy when we meet her on Monday.

Landscape sensitivity is judged against two main aspects -  landscape  and  visual impact - and for each of those Lucy looked at the five main factors as shown here.

 But that wasn't all. In order to examine all the nuances the main factors are sub-divided, resulting, subject to final agreement with Lucy, in 31 factors to be assessed in all. Realising that we were obviously glad we decided to let an expert do the work! Guidelines for each factor dictate where an area falls on the sensitivity scale for that particular factor. No area scored all high or all low and in most cases scored high on some factors, low on others and moderate for the rest. So perhaps you can begin to see how complex interpretation of the results might become and why we want to lean on Lucy's expertise for that.



Slide 41: Sensitivity Assessment Form


I'm not expecting you to read the small print on this form - which is our adaptation of Lucy's version - but hopefully it will give you some idea of the way in which we expect it to be used. This is just the first page of the form, looking at a couple of the five main landscape factors. So on the left you see the main factors, then their sub-divisions. The shaded part of the right is where results are recorded. So taking just the first line, it looks at whether there any officially designated features in an area - such things as county wildlife sites and listed buildings. Looking at the Watton gap area as an example there are no such designations so it scores low on the sliding scale. Which immediately shows you the need to avoid conclusions that are too black and white; because we're talking about the strategic gap which is completely protected from development, although that could not be justified on the basis of just this one factor. Again we are still to agree the final form of this table and its use with Lucy.

Slide 42: Landscape Sensitivity Results


Again you can see all the final detail in Lucy's report when we publish it on the website, but this chart summarises her overall findings so far. I would just add, this is based on an interim version of the map as Lucy has still to update her findings to suit the agreements made about the areas. But I'll remind you of the difficulty of summing up 31 factors in one result, and indeed here you can see that landscape and visual sensitivity do not always match - in fact more often than not, they don't.

Slide 43: Using The Results


  In due course the assessment results will be set out in the Plan in a way that explains how they must be used.


 Initially the results will also be taken into account in the independent site assessments.


 Longer term they will be an important factor when any planning application is considered.

 Because the impact of development on landscape is not actually as black and white as just high, medium or low the results will also be used to decide if and what mitigations might protect the character of an area if development went ahead.

But particularly where there is high sensitivity the results will help us justify and gain acceptance for aspects yet to be agreed by Breckland Council:



 The full extent of the Watton gap, not just those parts of it along Richmond Road and Cley Lane.


 And the view across to the Mere from Pound Hill.

 At this point we haven't fully understood exactly how to turn two 40 page documents into a concise policy in the Plan but on Monday we are meeting with Lucy and our main consultant on the plan and will get their advice on that.

 Ultimately the results will help us achieve that aim I keep repeating - the right homes in the right places


Slide 44: Gap to Watton

  As we speak Lucy is still working on this, but she's told us her recommendation will be to increase the extent of the gap to match that of rural area VRA-1. She understands the importance of having her expert evidence to justify the gap and subject to seeing her evidence for that, if the case she makes is strong enough, we'll be happy to follow her recommendation.

 So the gap is likely to look something like this - hopefully you can make out the previous outline ([Show with pointer](#)).


Slide 45: Key Views - How Selected?

As with the character assessment we are still discussing our comments on her draft key views report with Lucy, so some details of what follows may change as we reach agreement on the final report, but for now this is what we expect to see in the final report.

 You may remember the Plan that went out for consultation in the spring included 11 protected communal views, but Breckland Council said we hadn't justified them well enough.


During the consultation villagers suggested others that might be added.

In parallel Lucy reviewed our proposals and thought we should start with a better definition of what made a key view and use different criteria for assessing them. That led us to decide it would be better if Lucy herself did that work.

 She has used the criteria listed here

Slide 46: Key Views - Where?

Since we're still discussing the report's conclusions with Lucy, and there may be some changes to which views are finally selected, I don't intend to go into a lot of detail now, but we will make sure the final report fully describes why the agreed key views were chosen, and why others were not.

 This a map from Lucy's draft report, which also includes photos of each view. I know the text will be difficult to read so let me quickly read it out.

View 1 is from the Threxton road across park land at Saham Hall

View 2 is along the northern part of Richmond Road, looking east to the church

View 3 is looking down from the southern end of Hills Road towards the church. It takes in one of the sites put forward for allocation.

View 4 is from Pound Hill across to the Mere. As with the previous view this one includes a potential site.

View 5 is looking south along Pound Hill to the church

View 6 is looking north along Richmond Road to the church

View 7 is from the drive at Broom Hall south across the meadows

View 8 is looking north from the entrance to the village at the Cley Lane bridge

View 9 is west along Ovington Road to Bristow's Mill



And View 10 is of Threxton church near the south-west boundary of the parish



Five of these were in the Reg. 14 plan, the five others are new



Slide 47: Key View Photos

Again just to say we are still reviewing Lucy's conclusions and discussing them with her. For now I'll just show you the five new views she has suggested

 Coming east towards the church - a sequence of views rather than a single one 


 Coming north towards the church - also sequence of views rather than a single one 



 Coming south along Pound Hill towards the church - again a sequence of views 

 To Bristow's Mill from Ovington Road 

 And to Threxton church approaching the parish boundary 



Slide 48: Design Guide Highlights

 Frankly speaking we were disappointed with Lucy's draft document and have been adding a lot more information to it and working with her to improve it. As I've noted here we may end up taking over the guide ourselves with an acknowledgement to Lucy for her initial work. She has defined what they call the village vernacular - that's traditional materials and styles to you and I and her are her photos depicting some of that:

 The red brick and flint walls 


 Grey quoins setting off brickwork 

 Red pantile roofs 

 And ornate chimneys 

We have asked Lucy to provide more details on other aspects of traditional design, for example door and window types.


Slide 49: Village Character Q&A


 If you have any questions about Lucy's studies and how we will use them in the plan please ask.


Slide 50: What's Coming Next?


  As I always seem to tell you at these meetings, there's still plenty to be done


  We naturally await the results of the site assessments with great interest and a certain degree of impatience


 While those assessments are made we plan to continue informal discussions with those who have proposed sites, with the aim of reaching good mutual understanding and agreement on how each site would be dealt with in the plan if it is subsequently allocated.

 That will lead us into early drafts of individual policies for each allocated site. Our very initial thoughts on those policies is that they'll include a preliminary site layout map, definition of how many houses can be developed, in general terms of what type and size, when they might be built, and any specific criteria that would need to be observed when a planning application was made. We will then aim to get Breckland Council's agreement, such that later when a planning application is made for a site, if it fully complies with its policy, it should gain approval with ease. This will give the village the certainty and control I talked about earlier, and it will also offer protection against an unscrupulous developer buying a plot and applying for development on a larger scale and/or without whatever community benefits have been agreed for it. I want to stress that even if a site is allocated it will need to gain permission via the normal planning process and the opportunity to comment on its planning application will remain the same as usual. However no-one should expect to use the application review process as a chance to overturn allocation policies in the neighbourhood plan, so should you have concerns it's vital you raise them at the next formal consultation on the plan.


 Based on Lucy's work we will prepare a new overall landscape policy, rewrite the design policy to reflect the village design guide and update the strategic gap and views policies in accordance with Lucy's recommendations.



 While all this goes in parallel we are making other necessary updates to the plan and its supporting evidence, either to address comments we received in the last consultation or because changes are required as a result of site allocations or the village character work.


 In doing that we'll be making a thorough check that the Plan complies with all the new requirements of the updated national planning rules. We'll also be closely watching progress on the Local Plan and making sure our policies conform to any changes in that. Incidentally a new consultation on the final draft of the Local Plan is expected early in the New Year and we will be reviewing that version and contributing comments.


 Throughout our work we'll continue to keep you informed and involved and we'll also continue our productive dialogue with our friends at Breckland planning.


Slide 51: Latest Timetable

 We're still subject to outside factors, but for now this is how we see the timetable for completing the plan.


  We now think we'll have the plan ready for a second Regulation 14 consultation by mid-June of next year. That will give everyone chance to have a formal say on the sites allocated, the changes relating to the village character work and all the other changes we make to the plan. As last time we will run a series of events during that process, probably including another presentation to give you all the background before you review the new version of the plan.


 Depending how many comments we receive and how complex they are, we'd then hope to update the Plan in accordance with consultation comments by early September.


 From what we know at present we think the final version of the Local Plan may be approved by the end of May. If that's the case we'll pick up any final changes in it when we finalise our plan's update for a new consultation.


 Then, as long as the Local Plan is formally adopted by then we'll make the final submission of our plan to Breckland Council, who take over from that point. But there is a threat to that if we have to carry out something called a strategic environmental assessment because it's deemed an allocated site has a significant environmental


impact. I'm not in a position today to tell you how likely that is nor precisely how long one might take - though between 18 and 56 weeks has been mentioned to us. But we aim to come up with a contingency plan between now and next summer to avoid such any such delay.


 There's no exact timetable for what they must do, but based on what we know from other village's experiences, first Breckland Council must organise a final 6 week consultation. If they act quickly that could be complete by mid-October.

 When that's complete they simply have to collate all the comments and send them to an independent examiner - and we get a say in who that is. On average examinations seem to take about 2 months. Unlike the Local Plan, there's rarely a need for public hearings, so optimistically we could know the results of the examination by the end of next year. There would then be a period to go through any changes the examiner recommends with Breckland planners and agree any final revisions.

 In the hope there's nothing contentious in that, we will be pushing the Council to organise a parish referendum on whether to approve the plan or not.

 If villagers vote to support the Plan, Breckland Council has some red tape to go through before they declare our Plan approved - or made to give it the correct term - and it becomes a legal part of the Breckland planning rules. We wouldn't expect that to take more than a month at worst, taking us to around the end of February 2020.

 That's two months later than I told you in August, and since at each meeting I seem to tell you the finish date will be later, this is the time to hiss and boo! I do hate to blame others but in this case the site assessments are going to take six weeks longer than we first expected and the Local Plan has been delayed by about 2 months, so unless we abandon site allocations - which is a BAD idea!- it really isn't our fault.

 But as I've said before we're feel certain that what matters most is the quality of the final plan so that it will last the test of time right up to 2036.

ADDRESS ANY VILLAGER REQUESTS

Slide 52: Final Questions & Discussion

So that's all I have to tell you, but if there's anything else you'd like to know please just ask or stay behind for a chat with us.

Also before you leave if you'd like to jot down any initial comments on the sites that have been proposed, please do that on your way out - or as ever write to us at stnp2036@gmail.com or call me.

Slide 53: Thanks for Coming

Well I hope this has been useful. We'll keep you updated by all our usual means.

All that remains on behalf of the four us is to wish you and you loved ones a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year!

And look out for our next presentation sometime in the spring or early summer

 **Click Sound**