

## **Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan**

Last month I described work being done by consultants on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Plan.

Since then the first stages of both assessments - a scoping report for the SEA, and a preliminary assessment for the HRA – have been completed, and we anticipate receipt of comments from various expert organisations by the time you read this. We'll discuss those with the consultants and decide if any changes to the plan are needed. The next stage for both SEA and HRA is then likely to start around the end of April.

Meanwhile we've just received rather extensive comments from our policy consultant on the plan itself and the main documents that accompany it, as well as a professional review of the village housing needs assessment. We are digesting the comments at present, but already realise the recommendations made will mean some changes to the documents, which although they will take some time to implement, will strengthen the plan.

At the end of February another consultant undertook a week of traffic data measurements around the junctions at each end of Pound Hill. Those were measuring the number of vehicles as part of a study to assess the potential impact of new housing sites on traffic in that area. The consultants are now interpreting the data with the aid of their specialist software, prior to providing us with a draft report for review towards the end of March. Hopefully the full study will be complete in time for me to summarise its results in the May Saga.

Completing each of the assessments, reviews and studies noted above will go a long way towards helping us finalise the plan. Because of the way the various documents relate to one another, we'll need to go about that in a careful, methodical way, so it won't be an overnight job, but we remain on course to have the final reviews and 'health check' (a dummy run of the examination of the plan that will follow) made during June and July, prior to making our final submission of the plan to Breckland Council around mid-August. At some point in that process we'll give another village presentation, to bring you up to date before we make that submission.

Planning applications in the village are now being assessed against the approved Local Plan, and it was pleasing to see the first was decided strictly in accordance with the policies of that plan, and since it contravened some of those, it was refused. Nevertheless from other applications and planning appeals being considered at present, it's clear that certain developers are

already trying to discredit and get round Local Plan policies, so we have to hope the Breckland planners will stick to their guns and continue to apply their policies to the letter.

Outside of the plan, one of our consultants told us they can also undertake flood risk and mitigation studies, so we asked them for a quote for such a study into existing problems in the village. They estimated a cost between £4,500 and £5,500. We've passed that on to the Parish Council for their consideration, but if anyone else thinks this might be a useful study and has any ideas of how to fund the cost, please get in touch.

With all this talk of consultants, it's probably a good time for a reminder that all the work they do for us is funded by grants from the Ministry of Housing and Breckland Council (via grants it also receives from Central Government specifically to help fund neighbourhood plans). No parish or Council Tax money has been used to fund the Neighbourhood Plan.

As usual, if you have any comments or questions on any of this, or anything else to do with the Neighbourhood Plan, or if you'd like to be added to our mailing list, please get in touch with me.

**Chris Blow, STNP Work Group leader**



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