

Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan

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We have continued to develop our strategies to deal with the issues I told you about last month. With our work group we have agreed the need to focus on two new aspects in order to improve the Plan:

1) We need to better understand and define the character of the village, by which we mean its landscape, its buildings and street layout and its history, because all of those are important features of its character. We are currently preparing a scope of work for our landscape consultant to do this work. The end result will be a report that divides the parish into character areas and defines for each its landscape value - not in money terms; but in terms of sensitivity to development.

Before the consultant's study starts we are collating information for her on how the village has developed over more than 2000 years. When complete we will publish this for all to read. Ironically it is some of the most recent developments where there are gaps in our knowledge. So if anyone has information on when any of those were built, why they were built where they are and what prompted people to move into them, please send us anything you have to stnp2036@gmail.com, particularly if you know about properties in Page's Lane, Neville Close, The Oval, Mill View, St. George's Close, Bellmere Lane, Dolphin Crescent, Amys Close and Hall Close.

2) Subject to parish council agreement we will undertake work to identify potential sites, assess them and then allocate suitable housing sites in the Plan. This will have a number of advantages:

- a) It will give certainty to villagers, landowners, developers and Breckland Council as to where new housing will - and will not - be allowed.
- b) It will be done on a purely objective basis and not subject to emotion or individual preferences.
- c) It will protect the Plan from the loophole offered to developers by the rule that means if Breckland Council doesn't have enough housing land for the homes needed in the next 5 years policies in both its Local Plan and our Neighbourhood Plan can be ignored. Once we allocate sites we become subject to only a 3 year rule, which makes a big difference.

- d) Allocating sites allows for a timetable of development to be applied so that the village doesn't get all of its new housing in the first few years of the plan.
- e) For each site selected there will be a policy in the plan, setting out the criteria for its development - i.e. how many houses and with what conditions, etc. - so that any later changes to that would not be allowed.

The first step in allocating sites is to collect information on all potential sites. This is known as a call for sites and we expect to publish that during August. Look out for it on our website, and if you know landowners, their agents, developers or others who may be interested in submitting a potential site, but who don't live in the village and so may be unaware of the call for sites, please let them know about this.

The call for sites will be open for at least 6-8 weeks and only when it closes will all sites be assessed. We are in the very early stages of deciding how and by who that assessment will be made, so I can't go into detail yet, but as our ideas develop we will be consulting the village, probably by means of a public meeting at the WCCC.

As usual, if you have any comments or questions on any of this, or anything else to do with the Neighbourhood Plan, please get in touch with me.



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