

Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan

Since I last wrote, final consultation on the Plan has been completed. Breckland Council has again made an extensive range of comments, which you can find on our website. Those will be considered by the examiner, John Slater, who is due to start the exam on 11 January: if we get any ongoing updates on his progress we'll post them on our site.

We are very much at odds with most, if not all of Breckland's comments, which in our opinion threaten the integrity of the Plan, particularly with regard to maximum housing numbers, the density and phasing of development, the strict requirements allocated sites must meet, and the policies designed to ensure no increase in flood risk. Our overall view is that Breckland Council wishes to 'cherry-pick' aspects of the Plan to foster ever higher levels of development, with a lack of appropriate controls and without the key protections that ensure new development is carefully balanced by the preservation and enhancement of the local environment.

We can but hope the examiner will understand the carefully thought out balance the Plan aims to achieve, whereby it delivers more homes than the Local Plan dictates, but does that in a way that is sustainable and maintains those aspects of landscape, heritage, green space, wildlife and habitats, that are most valued by the village.

As many of you will be aware, after prolonged rain in the run-up to Christmas, unfortunately some villagers were again affected by flooding. This only reinforces our hope that the examiner will understand the vital importance of the Plan's flood risk policies, rather than accept Breckland Council's comments that the policies should be radically edited and reduced in scope. After being contacted by several affected villagers, in an effort to prompt real action to address existing problems, one of our group wrote to the 'powers that be' on the subject, and you can see that letter on our website. We can but hope that 2021 will be a year in which action will speak much louder than words in terms of dealing with long-standing flood problems.

To date Breckland have not provided the Parish Council or ourselves with copies of any comments it received on the Plan from other parties. We feel this is unreasonable and have to hope the examiner will make those public in due course.

There is no set time for examination of a plan to be completed. Other Breckland village plan examinations have taken 2-3 months, but our is

significantly longer and more complex, with a lot more supporting evidence, so may take longer. We'll keep you posted on our website as far as possible, but there is no guarantee we'll be kept informed about progress.

Nevertheless, we remain hopeful a village referendum on the Plan will be held on 6 May 2021 to tie in with local elections, providing the Government allows local elections and referendums to go ahead.

WHY WE THINK YOU SHOULD SUPPORT THE PLAN

- ✓ It gives the village certainty about what development can – and cannot – happen over the next 16 years.
- ✓ It means developers must comply with a rigorous set of criteria in order to get new housing or other development approved.
- ✓ It balances a controlled level of development with strict requirements to protect and enhance village landscape, heritage and wildlife habitats, guards against any increase in flood risk and seeks to ensure adequate infrastructure is in place to support new development.
- ✓ It sets out a timetable for the phasing of development so that the village and its infrastructure isn't overwhelmed by too much new building in too short a period.

Without a Neighbourhood Plan, everything would rely on the Breckland Local Plan, but that does none of the above.

If you agree the Plan is worth having, when a referendum on it is held, please vote 'YES'



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!**

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