

Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan

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We have now completed our initial assessment of the consultation responses, the health check of the Plan and our landscape consultant's recommendations. As a result we understand there is still a lot to do before the Plan is ready for its final submission. Additionally, as a result of attending the hearings for the Breckland Local Plan it seems highly likely that document will have to change in ways that will also affect our Plan.

The principal things to reconsider and improve are:

- Our approach to housing for locals; since Breckland planners do not accept what the present policies say on that. We need to strike a better balance between "affordable housing" in its formal definition of homes for people on Breckland's housing register and homes that are affordable for locals. We've started discussions with Breckland's housing department on this.
- The size limit for new sites, because it's been pointed out that small sites do not lead to affordable housing.
- The number of new homes over the plan period - now that Breckland planners have published their own proposals there may be an opportunity to reduce this.
- We need to compile more evidence to justify the gap with Watton in areas away from Cley Lane and Richmond Road.
- Broaden the communal view policy to encompass landscape and village character preservation in general. This will be quite complex so if we can get an additional grant we will hire a consultant to help.

Rest assured we will stick to the principles you supported in the consultation version of the Plan, keep you informed about any significant changes, and seek your opinions about them.

All of this has prompted us to think again about when our Plan might be completed. After careful thought we've concluded that we should not finalise it before the Breckland Local Plan, even though that may not be approved before next spring, as there would be more risks than benefits in doing that.

In essence we're maintaining our principle that the quality of the final plan is more important than its publication date.

However we will still have the flexibility to reconsider that decision should events dictate. The examiner's report on the Local Plan is due in November and when published we will decide if it is likely to result in further delay to that plan. If it does we will reconsider our decision on timing for our final version.

I recently attended a meeting between some homeowners, the parish council, and drainage specialists from Anglian Water and Norfolk County Council to look into problems at their property some things that came up could apply to the village as a whole and we will try to address them in the Plan. I will also write to our MP to see if he can help ensure some key improvements are made to planning rules about drainage, and I encourage villagers who are concerned about drainage to do the same.

We're still trying to improve our wildlife map, so if anybody has information about places they regularly see particular species please let us know.

Finally I'd like to correct any misunderstanding that may have resulted from the item about the cost of the plan in last month's issue. Some unfortunate editing made without my knowledge may have left some with the impression that the four of us preparing the plan are receiving between £40,000 and £250,000 for doing so. In fact nothing could be further from the truth - the deleted text went on to say that our time (more than 4000 hours and counting between us) is **FREE!**

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



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