

Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan

Examination of the Plan started on 11 January. As a result of fundamental differences between ourselves and Breckland Council about our policies, the independent examiner has raised some initial questions and will hold an online hearing to discuss the main issues.

The Parish Council has approved the work group to prepare written answers to the questions and to lead discussions at the hearing on its behalf. The hearing will be on Wednesday 17 February, with our written answers to be submitted 2 days before that. By the time you read this you should be able to watch a recording of it on Breckland Council's You Tube channel, should you wish.

Since Saga's print deadline is on 11 February, I can't write here about how the hearing went, but you can find our written answers and opening speech from the hearing on our website at <https://www.stnp2036.org/examination-documents.html>, and you will hopefully see that we have rigorously defended the plan against pressure from Breckland to dilute / delete its policies and make it a charter for uncontrolled development in the village. Make no mistake, while Breckland Council seems intent on persuading the examiner to remove the most important provisions of the Plan, leaving it weak and ineffective, we are determined not to let that happen.

Our entire approach to the hearing is to stress why the Plan is not only good for the village, but that it also complies with all the relevant regulations, and we can only hope the examiner will be sympathetic to our case. The examiner will not make any decisions on the day of the hearing, and will not even give any indication of how he views the opposing cases made by ourselves and Breckland. Instead he will privately consider what he hears as part of his wider review of the entire plan to decide if it meets the regulations.

After completion of the exam and any necessary updates to the Plan, Breckland Council will be responsible for organising a village referendum on the Plan. Under the regulations, they have a maximum of 5 weeks from the date of the examination report to decide on whether to hold a referendum or not (they could refuse if the examiner decides the plan fails the regulations). The Council has recently advised that it now thinks it unlikely it will be possible for that to held on 6 May 2021 to tie in with local elections. If that's the case, the regulations state they must hold one within 8 weeks of making a formal decision to allow a referendum. Hence, we know there

should be a referendum within 13 weeks of an exam report being published, but cannot yet give any idea about when the examiner will publish his report, particularly as he must wait for the lifting of Covid restrictions before he can visit the village, which is an important aspect of his review.

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!***