

## Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan

Almost all of our present work is focused on the site allocation process. I had hoped to be able to report completion of the independent assessments this month, but while we've had those from the highway authority, the local flood authority and Anglian Water, the Government appointed consultants AECOM are still working on theirs. We returned our comments a week early and we've had a long phone call with them to try and chivvy them along, but their latest forecast is that the full report will only be ready by around the last week of April, which is a month later than they first told us.

We do however have some idea of how they are rating the various sites, and like the other assessments, it seems likely that as a result all 16 will remain possible, subject to various constraints being resolved.

That's something we've started doing where the necessary information is available in the public domain, but in some cases inevitably only the landowners will be able to provide more information, if they choose to. Some may instead choose to withdraw from the process.

Now we are moving into stage 3 of the process which is the selection of sites for allocation. We can do quite a look of work on that even before the AECOM assessments are finalised. We've had a fresh look at a total number of houses and again come up with 48 – though by a different method. Keep in mind that's a minimum and the sites selected may in total provide a little more than that number. Also, we are leaving the door open for landowners to offer major village benefits in return for more houses, but at present only one owner has offered anything worthwhile in that respect.

In parallel with reviewing site constraints, we are developing a process to decide which sites are best from all those potentially suitable. Like much of this, that's a complex task that there's no space to go into here, but suffice to say it will be analytical, and based on facts, not opinion. It will rely on checking sites for compliance with the relevant policies of our plan; just as we do for any normal planning application. We're keen to share everything with you, so as soon as information is ready – first about the process, later about the results - we'll progressively add it to our website, and that will be your main chance to stay up to date. By the time you read this I'm expecting things to have progressed significantly. So do please visit the website.

Of course, the village will have its chance to have a say in all this, first by letting us know what you think of what you see on the website, but

most importantly during the next formal 6-week public consultation. I can't set a date for that yet as it's difficult to estimate how long it will take to complete the site allocation process. That in parallel with all the other changes we've made to the plan will then need a comprehensive review by our consultant, and no doubt some more refinements to the plan after that. But I hope the consultation can start in June or July.

### **Other main news**

We've updated the village housing needs assessment with the latest data, none of which changed the report's conclusions that most of all the village needs smaller, more affordable homes.

We submitted our comments on the Local Plan and had expected consultation on that to finish on 1 April. But perhaps that day was a poor choice on Breckland Council's part, as they've now extended it till 15 May for 3 particular topics. Although those don't concern us, another 6-week delay in Local Plan approval does: it begins to look like another well-known topic that never gets decided!

If you agree it's wrong to build 54 homes on land at Nilefields that often floods, would create a dangerous road junction, is home to a wide variety of wildlife, would merge Saham with Watton, and which offers no benefit to villagers, there's still time to object if you haven't already. There's a link to the application on our website.

And things are stirring development-wise at the golf club, on our side of the parish boundary as well as Watton's. Watch this space for more news on that as we get it.

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!***