

Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan

As I write this, I'm acutely aware that the Neighbourhood Plan is of no significance at the present time and the first thought of my group and me is for the health and well-being of all villagers and your family and friends

On the other hand, for me personally, continuing work on the plan is one way to maintain a sense of normality amidst the endless stream of bad news in a world that's been turned upside down. Hopefully in a very small way, keeping up to date with what we're doing may also help divert your minds briefly from all that's going on.

Over the last month we've made good progress with incorporating our consultant's comments on the updated plan and housing needs assessment, and in my opinion that has further improved both documents.

Other consultants have moved on to the next stage of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and in accordance with the regulations are now reviewing alternatives to what's in the plan regarding allocated sites. We've just received their report and are reviewing it, so I plan to update you on that next time. Once we've agreed that report and made any necessary changes to the plan, both the SEA and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will move onto their final stages. The first stage of the HRA resulted in a few minor changes to the plan, mostly concerned with ensuring greater protection to the Breckland Special Protection Area, which lies just to the south of the parish.

We've also received a transport study report from consultants, and its three main findings are:

- Safe access to and from all the allocated sites can be provided in accordance with Highway Authority standards.
- The cumulative increase in traffic resulting from all allocated sites will have a negligible impact on traffic flows in the village and queue lengths at key junctions will not increase.
- Local Highway Authority objections to sites that lack a footpath to the village school are not justified.

We just waiting for the Parish Council to formally accept the report, then we'll upload it to our site.

So we're now in a position where, barring any surprises, the only additional changes there might be to the Plan will be as result of anything that comes out of the final stages of the SEA and HRA, the 'health check' of the plan by a

qualified examiner, and final reviews by our policy consultant and the neighbourhood planning coordinator at Breckland Council.

While the present restrictions may delay any of those stages, for now we're working on the basis of getting everything finished if we can without thinking about all the 'what-ifs' of events we can't control. Then at least when life gets back to normal, we'll be ready. For now, our consultants are continuing to work, so we're on track to submit the plan around mid-late August.

Given all the changes and improvements we've made to the Plan since the consultation last autumn, in the normal course of events we'd be starting to think about preparing a village event to update you all. Obviously, a public meeting is out of the question for the foreseeable future, but in the next two or three weeks we hope to upload a series of slideshow presentations on our that will also have notes and where useful some simple commentary. First we need to finalise those and let the Parish Council have first look at them, but the work on them is coming on well, So keep an eye on our website for their publication.

On the subject of meetings, my group and I continue to meet weekly, but virtually by a 'Zoom' group video call, rather than in person of course.

On related planning matters, you may have seen that Breckland Council recently upheld the developer of Warwick Farm's request to waive the payment of around £40,000 to the Parish Council, even though that had been agreed in writing at the time the development was approved. Apparently Breckland's planning committee judged although their decision was suspect morally, it was legally correct. Naturally we think it wrong that our village has lost a large amount a money because of a loophole. While it's unlikely much can be done, since there is no right of appeal, we did provide a letter to Breckland Council for our parish council as a first step in possibly taking things further.

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!**

Chris Blow, STNP Work Group leader



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