

Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan (STNP) – November 2017

Where we are now: The follow-up meeting with Breckland Council we told you about last month took place in late September but didn't have any useful result; it's not worth saying more than that. Nevertheless work has continued as we get the Plan ready for its first public consultation. You may have seen us round the village taking photos and gathering other information to use as evidence for the policies. We've learned you can never have enough evidence!

We recently met some consultants with a view to them helping us by checking the Plan from an expert's point of view. Although that will set the timetable back again somewhat, we are going to take their advice that it's best done before the public consultation rather than after. Our approach throughout has been to write the best Plan we possibly can rather than stick rigidly to a target publication date, and we're sure that will prove to be best in the long run.

We were pleased to get some positive encouragement from the consultants that our approach to the Plan is a good one. They told us that some of the policies Breckland planning have objected to are actually exactly in line with what the government intends neighbourhood planning to achieve. As a reminder, in short, that is to let communities have a real say in managing development in their areas by highlighting the local issues that matter to residents as opposed to the dictates of bureaucrats in distant offices.

We've also set up a Neighbourhood Plan website, which we will launch publicly on 1st November. It gives us another way to keep you up to date, and also to get your feedback. Later when the Plan is published for consultation you'll be able to download the documents and questionnaire forms there. Of course when we have a firm date for the 6 week consultation to start we'll announce it on the site, and put up notices around the village.

Meanwhile you can see the site at www.stnp2036.org. Have a look and please send us any ideas about what else you'd like to see there, either by email to stnp2036@gmail.com or via the contact form on the site, and we'll see what we can do to include your suggestions.

Next stages: By the time you read this we will have met a second potential consultant, and decided which to hire. We'll seek Parish Council approval of our recommendation, and apply for a government grant to fund the consultant's work. Hopefully their review will be underway by the time this is published. When it's complete we'll include

their recommendations and publish the Plan for its first formal public consultation.

How you can help: In parallel with the consultant's review, we're keen for some interested villagers to read and comment on a preview version; we think that may point out improvements we're unaware of after so long working on it. But we warn you....there's a lot to read! Please email us if you'd like to take part.

When we do publish the Plan for consultation we're hoping as many of you as possible will tell us what you think about it, as that will strengthen it even more, and after all, it's your Plan, not ours! Our ambition is, modestly, to have the best written, best supported Plan in the country! To prepare for that we thought it was worth giving you a bit more information than usual this month.

The public consultation process: The "Regulation 14" consultation is a formal stage every neighbourhood plan must go through, by being made publically available for review and comment. As well as Breckland Council and a host of official bodies, it gives a chance for everyone who lives, works or runs a business in the parish to have their say on the Plan. The consultation will run for 6 weeks.

On day one we'll put up notices around the village announcing the publication and in the days following that we'll deliver an information note together with questionnaires and comment forms to every household. We'll also give a presentation to the village to give you more background on what the Plan is about. Much as we'd like to print a copy of the Plan for everyone, our budget won't allow that. Instead we'll leave copies at various public locations around the village where it's convenient for you to pop in and read them. The files will also be available for download from our site. Then during the consultation we'll hold sessions at least once a week at different venues where you'll be able to drop in, have a tea or coffee, read the documents, ask us questions and leave your comments.

How would you like to take part? These are our ideas, but we'd really like to hear yours, so please write to us at stnp2036@gmail.com or fill in the online questionnaire on our website and tell us:

- 1) Are you likely to read and comment on the Plan?
- 2) How would you prefer to see a copy of the documents:
 - At a public location? If so, do you have any suggestions where?
 - By downloading them from our site?

- By attending one of the drop-in sessions?
 - By receiving them in an email?
 - Some other way - please suggest?
- 3) Are you interested, but have mobility or other problems that may prevent you taking part? If so, how might we be able to help?
- 4) Which of the Plan's policies are you particularly interested in? (You can select more than one if you wish)
- The number of new houses that will be allowed?
 - The size, location and timescale for new developments?
 - Design rules for new houses?
 - Development of community facilities, business and tourism?
 - Keeping the village separate from Watton?
 - Safeguarding our historic buildings and places?
 - Safeguarding our open spaces, views and wildlife?
 - Preventing increased flood risk from new developments?
 - Using developer contributions to benefit the village?
- 5) Are you likely to attend a village presentation about the Plan?
- 6) Are you likely to attend a drop-in session to see and ask about the Plan? If so what would be a good location for you?
- 7) What else could we do to explain the Plan, get your interest, and make it easy for you to take part in the consultation?

Look out for more questionnaires on our site during November

Future stages: Jumping ahead, after the consultation we will review every comment and decide what we need to change as a result. We'll prepare two additional documents: one to explain about the process and results of the consultation, and a second to show the Plan meets the legal requirements. We'll then submit it all to Breckland Council for the "Regulation 16" consultation. That's another 6 week period, but only comments about the legality of the Plan are allowed at that stage.

Next, the documents and any comments from the second consultation are sent to an independent examiner who will decide if the Plan can go forward to a referendum and recommend any changes thought necessary before that. If that examination goes well Breckland Council will organise a parish referendum and if more than 50% of voters approve the Plan Breckland must accept it as a legal document that is part of their district plan. At that point we're home and dry!

Chris Blow, STNP Work Group Leader