

SOUTHWOLD AND REYDON SOCIETY

MAGAZINE ARTICLE, SEPTEMBER 2016

You may have seen the For Sale signs which have gone up outside the Police Station in Southwold. The good news is that the site will be developed to enhance the entrance to the town - something the Society has been advocating for some time. The development may also include a new library.

The bad news is that the police station will not be replaced. Instead policing will be done from Halesworth - nine miles away. When the sale of the site was first mooted three years ago, the Society asked what would happen to the existing police station. We were told then by the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner that police were investigating "alternative solutions for a smaller fit for purpose policing base in Southwold" - and they added "we have no plans to change the delivery of policing services in the town".

How times change. In their latest email to the Society the Commissioner says there are no plans for a new base in Southwold. Lets hope the CCTV cameras on Mights Bridge are working!

The Police station site is being offered for sale together with the former fire station site. The agents describe it as "Gateway" development site " and have imposed a deadline for bids of Sept 9. They also raise the prospect of a new library being built on the site. Suffolk County Council which owns the fire station part of the site has said it may be interested in an offer for "part payment in kind" if the purchaser is willing to provide a new library as part of the development.

Meanwhile on the other side of Mights Road planning permission has been granted for thirteen houses on the sites of the former Southwold Garage and work is expected to start shortly. We are glad that representations from, among others, the Society and Southwold Town Council have led to a design for this development which is generally felt appropriate to the entrance to Southwold and is a considerable improvement on earlier plans.

Another victory for local pressure is the recently announced decision by Network Rail to keep open the pedestrian level crossing at Halesworth Station. The crossing will be slightly relocated and have new barriers and signage to reduce the risk of an accident to pedestrians or cyclists, who will have to demount to cross. Network Rail stress, however, that they will continue to monitor incidents at or near the crossing and if a few reckless users continue to cross the line unsafely they will close the crossing altogether as they originally proposed. Nonetheless, the pressure from Halesworth residents (many of whom use the crossing in order to access the town centre) the local passenger group ESTA and the Society, all of which was supported by our local MP, has persuaded Network Rail to adopt the new solution to the safety risks of the current crossing. Those using the bus to reach the train from Southwold and Reydon will thus continue to have easy access to and from both platforms.

John Perkins, Chairman.