

Southwold and Reydon Society

Firstly, we wish to congratulate the Town Council and Hastoe Housing Association on the development of affordable housing in Blyth Road. Southwold has leased the land to Hastoe for one 3-bed and one 2-bed houses together with two 2-bed flats which are due for completion this summer. These will be rented to people with a Southwold connection and will never be for sale.

Secondly, we are considering the proposed Southwold Neighbourhood Plan which will affect how the town develops. Responses are requested on ten issues and our thinking currently is:

Local Design: The eclectic mix of building styles should be allowed to continue in the future but high quality modern design and detail should be encouraged to counteract “pastiche” solutions.

Infill: There are few gaps left for genuine infill and applications involving substantial demolition should generally be resisted. Where acceptable, the replacement should fit the street scene but not be dictated by it. Proposals to build a new house within an existing garden should not be permitted.

Street Scene: We hope the exploration by the Town Council into traffic and parking will identify ways to improve the street scene, including the use of powers to avoid excessive signage.

Demolition / Extension: Total demolition should generally be resisted and any extension limited to 50% of the site area. Whilst many older properties exceed this, we do not want Southwold to become more densely built.

Extending the Conservation Area: The simplest solution is to extend the conservation area to the whole town, but high quality contemporary design should be allowed.

Historic Integrity: Historic elements of Southwold: the Church, the Georgian houses, the Greens, the Common, the Market Place, the High Street, the Harbour, the Lighthouse, etc. should be preserved.

Materials Used: Whilst the existing palette of materials should be maintained, the acceptance of new/contemporary and energy efficient materials should be encouraged.

Size of Building: New buildings should not be higher than three stories nor significantly alter the skyline of the town.

Environmental Impact: Climate change and sea level rise are major issues for Southwold so carbon reduction should be integral to all development. Current planning and conservation regulations restrict the use of energy efficient technologies: a better balance is required between conservation and the need for these technologies. A pro-active role is needed when the Shoreline Management Plan and Blyth Estuary Plan come up for review. The waste-water management scheme in Southwold and Reydon needs overhauling.

What is the 'unique character' of Southwold in terms of Planning?: This is difficult to define: is it what we want to keep and how any development should fit in? Based on visitor responses to the Town Plan survey, it is most important to preserve the High Street, Common, Greens and Harbour.

We would encourage all residents to respond individually to the Town Council’s consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan.

Philip O’Hear