

**SOUTHWOLD AND REYDON SOCIETY
MAGAZINE ARTICLE MAY 2017**

Southwold and Reydon have a number of development sites which currently belong to the public sector and which are up for sale: the Southwold Hospital site, the Sole Bay Health Centre Care Home site, and the Southwold Fire Station and Police Station sites. The issues are slightly different in each case, but a common feature is that the relevant public sector body is, in the public interest, required to maximise the return on the site. On the other hand the community and organisations representing it like the Southwold Town Council, the Reydon Parish Council, the Southwold and Reydon Society and the Save our Southwold group, all want to argue that there should be a community benefit in the development of these sites. To achieve this, it may be necessary to accept that there would need to be an element of buildings for sale at market rates to subsidise the community element.

The tension between maximising the value of a site and the need for a community benefit is at its starkest for the Southwold Hospital site, where NHS Property Services Ltd (NHS Propco) are investigating the possibility of planning permission for ten dwellings at market prices on the site. If successful, this would probably bring only further second homes or holiday lets to Southwold. For the Sole Bay Health Centre care home site, NHS Propco have failed to find a purchaser willing to develop a care home and instead propose to sell the site for a retirement home village. While many of us would like to see evidence that a care home will not be needed over the next decade, at least this proposal brings additional permanent residents to the area.

Is it too much to ask that in each case there be a community benefit element to the development? For example, small business units and community facilities on the Hospital site, one or two of the units in the retirement home village to be reserved for local community care, and a section of affordable housing on the Fire Station/Police Station site. The return to the relevant public sectors could still be close to the open market value, but with the added benefit of the site continuing to serve the community as it did in the past. The Waveney District Council Planners have the means to play their part by refusing planning permission for schemes devoid of community benefit.

Tony Evans, Committee Member.