

**SOUTHWOLD AND REYDON SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2017**

Last month we wrote about the Planning Application to build 69 houses on a playing field at St Felix School in Reydon which we had strongly opposed. Sadly, the Waveney District Council Planning Committee approved it. In doing so, they chose to exempt the proposal from all the local and national planning policies protecting the countryside, especially places such as this which are in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and close to a County Wildlife Site. The proposal was judged to be an enabling development required to maintain the viability of the independent school. We disagree strongly. Firstly, the enabling development rule is aimed to protect historic assets for the public good and we do not see how this applies here. Secondly, the school's intended use of the £4m funds it hopes to raise appear to be largely for routine maintenance and refurbishment which should be funded by its continuing revenues, not by realising capital by selling its own assets.

A local residents' campaign group is working vigorously to challenge the decision. Known as RAGE (Reydon Action Group for the Environment), they believe that the Planning Officers' report did not adequately present the case made by over 150 objectors (individuals and organisations) and misinterpreted the rules concerning enabling applications. They also believe that the Planning Committee meeting was poorly managed and that its Members were confused about the decision on which they voted. Therefore, RAGE believes that there were significant flaws in the process, sufficient to require the decision to be set aside.

Southwold and Reydon Society fully supports the aims of RAGE. We feel that there is little point in having Planning Policies to protect the countryside if they can be so easily sidestepped. Ironically, Waveney are now consulting on the first draft of the new Local Plan which will govern planning policy 2018-2036. This proposes a significant expansion of Reydon with 250 new homes to be built on land west of Copperwheat Avenue.

We believe that it is extremely regrettable that this important consultation is taking place during the summer holiday period. The consultation closes on 22 September and the Society has asked our members for their views and, following our September Committee meeting, we will respond in depth to what is proposed.

There are many aspects of the draft plan to welcome. It proposes that 35% of new homes on larger developments should be affordable and that the mix of housing should include a good number of smaller houses and some that are suitable for the disabled. The density of the proposed development in Reydon will be low to allow for significant landscaping to reduce the impact on the countryside. We will keep members and readers of this column informed next month of how we respond to both the Reydon proposal and the plan as a whole. Provided the policies of the plan are stuck to, it will shape the future of our community and the wider district for the next twenty years. Nothing could be much more important for our Society whose aim is to preserve the amenity and character of Southwold and Reydon!

Philip O'Hear, Secretary