

Southwold and Reydon Society

Magazine Article for July 2016

This month, we focus on planning issues. First, we can report that the Planning Inspectorate upheld the decision of Waveney's Planners to refuse permission for Global Chair Components to extend Reydon Business Park into the adjacent field by building a major warehouse. Our Chairman, John Perkins, attended the appeal and reiterated the Society's strong objection to this intrusion into the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We are very glad that this view prevailed.

Secondly, we have finalised our response to the options for Waveney's new Local Plan which will set the rules for planning in the area from 2018-2036. We believe that any approach to planning must begin with our vision. Southwold is a vibrant town dominated by tourism and our brewery but with a lively high street and a range of successful small businesses. Reydon, closely interlinked with Southwold, has a growing population and services of its own, notably the health and fire services it shares with Southwold, its own businesses and three shops. A growing proportion of housing is used as second homes or holiday lets and many residents are retired; the area contains the most elderly population in the local health area. We are surrounded by a special environment, made up of coastline, estuary, reedbeds, heathland, woods and open countryside – designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Our vision is to preserve the character and amenity of our community and environment but this cannot be achieved by standing still. There are challenges in balancing the needs of visitors and residents, including ensuring enough younger people live here to support the ageing population and that those raised here can find housing and work to sustain a viable life. Balance, too, is needed so that there are opportunities in the "knowledge" economy as well as in tourism and related services. We need to find a balance in key aspects of the local infrastructure, especially transport, parking, drainage and sewerage – all of which are beyond their capacity at peak periods. The protection of our natural environment must be balanced with the need to accommodate a growing population and the creation of wider employment. Failure to meet these challenges will result in an unsustainable community and thus undermine the features we wish to preserve.

To preserve this balance, our response to the Local Plan Consultation included the following points:

1. Limiting further expansion of housing in Southwold and Reydon to the lower end of what is proposed, which would require only a modest number of new houses (48-103) after those already built or agreed after 2011 are taken into account
2. Prioritising affordable housing and smaller units of housing in small-scale developments within or on the edge of the current settlements of Southwold and Reydon
3. Allowing other small-scale development for business, especially to attract "knowledge-based" employment, using unallocated business space in Reydon and retaining mixed uses of sites in Southwold such as the former hospital
4. Protecting the character of Southwold High Street
5. Discouraging or preventing overdevelopment
6. Developing Design Principles to encourage design compatible with our environment and avoid pastiche styles

7. Rejection of all the large sites proposed for development locally in the consultation as unsuitable for development, not least because of significant weaknesses in the infrastructure, especially sewerage.

Our full response is available on our website www.southwoldandreydonsociety.org.uk

Philip O'Hear, Secretary