

Southwold and Reydon Society, Magazine Article for October 2015

There are two major issues currently of concern to the Society. The first is the application for outline planning permission from St Felix School for the development of 71 new houses on their rugby pitch between St George's Square and Lakeside in Reydon. The bid is detailed for an outline application and shows the precise layout proposed and sets out measures to reduce the visual impact, retain wildlife and replace the lost sports facilities, including the creation of an all-weather pitch on the main school site with some community use. 24 of the new houses will be affordable (some rented and some shared ownership). It is stated that realising the value of this asset is necessary for the future of St Felix.

We have been given an extension on the deadline for responses until October 9 and assume this will apply to anyone else wanting to respond. We will decide our response at our Committee on October 2nd but it is already clear that the application poses significant challenges. Firstly, it breaches key elements of Waveney District Council's current planning framework in that the land is Designated Open Space, part of the Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is outside the boundary of the built settlement of Reydon. As with our stance on the recent application to extend Reydon Business Park into the adjacent field, we believe that the AONB should be preserved and that there is a great danger in allowing one-off proposals to encroach on the AONB without exceptional justification. Other challenges include issues of access to the Halesworth Road for the new traffic from the development and the thorny problem of trying to ensure affordable housing meets local need in the short and longer term.

The second issue is the "temporary" closure of Southwold Hospital. Whilst we accept that the decision was due to lack of adequate staffing to keep it open safely, we feel that this problem should have been foreseen and forestalled given the longer term plans to close the hospital permanently. The abrupt and unexpected temporary closure undermines the consultation on the new community health strategy which promised no closures before replacement services were established. Currently, the absence of the hospital is putting pressure on our GP practice and the Sole Bay Care team which is a local charity meant to supplement the NHS not fill in for its gaps. On October 2nd, we will meet Jonathan Williams, Chief Executive of the Health Trust which runs Southwold Hospital. We will ask whether the hospital will re-open when the temporary closure period ends in mid November and what is being done in the meantime for those needing community healthcare.

We will keep members informed of any developments on both issues.

Finally the closing date for nominations for our Awards for Excellence is the 31st October and entry forms can be obtained from Barbrooks and the Library or downloaded from our website.

Philip O'Hear, Secretary Southwold and Reydon Society