

Thorncombe Village Trust

URGENT ! URGENT !

When we approached members last July, Thorncombe was the subject of two major Planning applications of which your Committee strongly preferred the Quinn plan. No decisions were taken by the W.D.D.C. and, in the ensuing six months, there has been considerable controversy involving Permanent Officers, Councillors and the Water Authority, to such an extent that both applicants have launched Appeals because of non-determination.

'Priority' Village Status in the Structure Plan with development of 50 - 150 houses is generally agreed to have been an error but, until rescinded by the Secretary of State, remains legally binding. The Chief Planning Officer's local Planning Appraisal of 1986/87 decreed that expansion should be limited to the lower end of the range (i.e. about 50 houses). In this Appraisal, the C.P.O. also proposed that the Village Envelope be enlarged to accept a development by C.G.Fry & Sons of over 50 houses on a site off Chard Street, opposite the Village Hall. There was much opposition to this proposal and the Parish Council objected. Nevertheless, when the Public Inquiry was held into the Higher Farm application in 1988, the W.D.D.C. opposed it and called Mr E.Fry as one of their witnesses to support the viability of the Chard Street site. The Inspector refused the Appeal insofar as the major development was concerned, laying great stress on the need to preserve both the outstanding landscape and the character of the village; he stressed also that adequate sewage facilities should be provided. Negotiations regarding sewage were prolonged and S.W.W. have yet to provide a solution.

Following negotiations with the Planning Department, Messrs. Fry submitted (in the Spring of 1989) a revised application to build 52 houses on the Chard Street site. In the meantime, Mr P.J.Quinn had submitted a scheme to build about 40 houses on land between High Street and Gribb View. The Committee's comparison of the pros and cons of the two applications led to their preference for the Quinn plan - and this was also the decision of the Parish Council. The Planning Authority's failure to make a decision has led to the current Appeals.

The Planning Authority are concerned that the outcome of these Appeals could be detrimental and have recently evolved a completely new plan for consideration by the village. An early edition of the plan was leaked to an interested party and in consequence there already have been several alterations, so that the version attached may well be changed again before the presentation to the village at a Public Meeting to be held on Monday, February 5th. It is understood that acceptance of the Plan as a basis for negotiation could lead to the withdrawal of the current Appeals.

While the Committee recognises that the plan is an attempt to secure the sympathetic development of the village, its acceptance would mean an addition of 64 houses which, plus the 13 already permitted since 1987, gives a total of 77 dwellings instead of the 50 previously agreed by the Planning Authority. (50 was the maximum acceptable to the Highway Authority with the existing road network which remains unchanged). It would also conflict with the W.D.D.C.'s policy adopted only three months ago.

The location of the Fry development is on a very prominent and sensitive part of the landscape, and the great importance of preserving this was emphasized very strongly by the Inspector at the Higher Farm Inquiry. The road junction from St. Mary's Hill to Fore Street would be hazardous, and along Chard Street and Fore Street pedestrian access would be, as it is now, pathless.

With regard to the Quinn Section of the attached plan; the Committee doubts the viability of Back Street. This would involve demolition of a bungalow and construction of a roadway through a small private estate plus major alterations to the village playing field. The extension of Quinn Lane into Gribb View is already known to have aroused very strong local opposition.

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With all these factors in mind, the Committee still considers that the **ORIGINAL** Quinn plan best meets known village needs with minimum disadvantages; acceptance of the W.D.D.C. proposals would appear - so far as the Fry section is concerned - to offer the probability of further extensive building on the surrounding land on which Mr Fry has declared an option to purchase.

Alternatively it could be argued that the W.D.D.C. solution with modifications might be acceptable provided that it embodied unbreachable conditions preventing further development for, say, 15 years (the landowner of the Quinn Section would be willing to impose safeguards prohibiting such further development). If a compromise cannot be reached and both Fry and Quinn win their appeals, about 100 new houses could result, including the full development of the Chard Street site.

The Committee hopes that Members will make every effort to attend the Public Meeting at 7.30 pm on Monday, the 5th February and subsequently express their views in writing to the C.P.O. in Dorchester. You may find these notes and plan helpful at the Meeting.

The Committee wishes to stress that, to the best of their knowledge, this new plan was concocted by the W.D.D.C. without consultation with the Parish Council, Village Trust or any of the landowners involved.

M. S. S. S.
30 January 1990.

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