

# Parish misled over development

A SECOND parish meeting was held in Thorncombe on Wednesday over a controversial development proposal.

On Thursday the West Dorset District Councils area planning committee considered the proposal, but it was deferred without debate until April.

No decision will be taken until 30th April on the application submitted by Mr Jim Atyeo — the parish's district council planning representative.

Mr Atyeo, through surveyor Michael Fearn, wants to build 25 houses, a farmhouse, workshop and convert a farm — once the village workhouse — into holiday flats. Other planning applications are believed to be following.

The scheme has caused a storm of protest in the village and the parish council feels it was misled into thinking the scheme was part of the rural development project.

Scores of residents wrote to the planning committee following the last parish meeting, repeating their concern. They say the scheme was a displaced over-development; it was outside the village limits; it encroached into the green belt; the road was backland; drainage systems were inadequate;

and the holiday accommodation was surplus to requirements.

A village trust has been set up, with the promise to fight to defend the village's character and heritage.

But at Wednesday's meeting the single issue that over-shadowed was the revelation that the village could have up to 150 new houses by 1996 because the structure plan designates it as a priority village. At present the beautiful, quiet and isolated village has 120 houses, with 220 in the parish as a whole.

"The fact the village was a priority and was covered by the structure plan was not known by any of the parishioners I was in contact with," said John Whitebread, secretary of the new village trust, before the meeting began.

Rural Development Area committee chairman Capt

George Best had arranged for a team of officers to be at the meeting to explain why Thorncombe had this designation, and what would happen to Mr Atyeo's application.

There had been consultation with the parish council, said county planning officer Stan Scardifield, when the structure plan was drawn up five years before.

The parish council had decided not to have discussion groups as other villages had, he said.

"Quite a lot of villages in

this area had these groups. That was one of the main things that influenced the county council's view".

Faced with no controversial issue there had been apathy in the village towards the plan, said parish council chairman Bert Vickery. That was why no discussion group had been formed.

## Unwanted

Priority village status would mean security for existing village facilities, said CoSIRA spokesman James Hamriding.

"The people who don't want it to happen are people from other areas, the immigrants," he said. "People come and buy the house, and think they have bought the view for 50 miles around".

West Dorset chief planning officer Desmond Derrien said large population increases, such as might be expected with 50 to 150 new homes

could guarantee a village's security but he agreed it could also split a community, if not handled well.

In the background is a threat to school standards and its very existence. Said Capt Best: "When you lose young people, you lose children, you lose the school".

The answer to that is to build low-cost starter homes for young first-time buyers.

If the new houses were started they would have been looked on more favourably by many in the audience.

That could not be guaranteed, said Mr Derrien, but planning conditions could stipulate the estate must be of mixed houses, which would mean at least some low-cost houses.

It was also possible for the district council to subsidise the building to increase the number that would be available to first-time buyers.

"If the parish council presses strongly for that then we may be able to prompt our colleagues to do the right thing. "Keep pressing us, and hopefully we'll be able to do something".

## Survey

Capt Best and RDA field officer Miss Kath Barnett agreed with suggestions that a complete survey of the village and a firm plan for its future development should be drawn up.

An RDA team could do a

survey on the village, they said. That would involve everyone getting a questionnaire, and a village envelope marking the limits for development would be drawn.

After the meeting Mr Derrien said the planning application had to be dealt with within eight weeks but Mr Atyeo's application might be considered in light of this survey.

Although the promise of a survey answered many people's questions, not everybody was satisfied with the way things had been done.

beauty; pa  
overdevelo  
sewage sys