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Chard & Ilm

# Action group will fight homes plan

**PRESSURE is mounting in the bid to halt large-scale development in Thorncome.**

An action group, calling itself the Thorncome Village Trust, has been set up to fight council proposals which could mean an extra 150 homes in the parish.

The hastily-launched Trust called a special meeting last week at which council officials were asked to explain their plans for the village.

And the meeting, attended by more than 90 people, also gave parishioners the chance to spell out their opposition to plans.

The controversy over Thorncome centres on a planning application submitted to West Dorset District Council by local councillor and farmer Jim Atyeo.

Villagers have already protested about the application to convert a listed building, Higher Farmhouse, into holiday homes, and build 25 houses.

Included in the plan are craft workshops, access road and new farmhouse buildings.

Ron Hawkes, clerk of Thorncome Parish Council, told last week's meeting there were indications of more applications in the pipeline.

Originally, there were fears that another 150 new homes were planned but chief planning officer Mr D. D. Derrien indicated that 50 homes, built over a ten-year period, would be more likely.

Mr Derrien confirmed that more than 50 letters of objection had been received to Mr Atyeo's application.

A petition to the district council has been signed by more than 100 people.

The meeting was told Mr Atyeo's application would be considered by the western area planning sub-committee on April 30.

Planners, and local councillors, will also be taking into account the views of the water authority, the highways department, and the Ministry of Agriculture before reaching their decision.

Villagers fear that more homes will spoil the peace and quiet of the rural community.

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John Whitbread, secretary of the Trust, said the doubling of the population would impose a strain on the community.

A spokesman for CoSIRA who attended the meeting, said he knew of small businesses which employed up to ten people.

At the end of the meeting, the Trust issued a statement saying that the scale of development in Thorncome "is of paramount importance."

It went on: "Very careful thought is required and this can only be achieved by a full and thorough appraisal of the village and surrounding area."

The parish council, which met after the public meeting, echoed the views of the Trust. It set up its own sub-committee to investigate the matter further.

Conservationist Ron Frampton, a member of the Trust, said after the meeting that it was important that any housing development should be earmarked for young families.

"It would be foolish to attract further numbers of retired people and, as it is, we have surplus holiday accommodation in Thorncome."

The proposals are likely to be discussed again when Thorncome Parish Council holds its annual meeting on April 9.

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