

Villagers object to plan for housing scheme

RESIDENTS in the West Dorset village of Thorncombe reaffirmed their opposition to a housing development on land owned by their district councillor when area planners met for a public site visit.

By Margery Hull

Around 50 villagers gathered at the site meeting attended by members of the district's Western Area Planning Sub-committee on which Thorncombe representative Mr. Jim Atyeo sits as vice-chairman.

But farmer Mr. Atyeo, who has already declared an interest in the application by his agent, Bridport surveyor Mr. Michael Fearn, was not at the meeting.

Area Planning Officer Mr. Derek Price outlined the proposed scheme for 26 new houses, craft workshops, a new Higher Farm, Thorncombe.

He explained that it was in line with County Structure Plan policy which had designated Thorncombe as a priority location for housing — meaning 50 to 150 new dwellings by 1996.

But Mr. Price added that because of Thorncombe's rural position and access roads, somewhere near 50 homes would be more appropriate than 150.

Problems

And to overcome problems with sewage, the applicant was willing to contribute towards improving the existing system or provide a new one for the development.

Marshwood Vale county councillor Lt.-Col. Hugh Gibson, speaking for the villagers, declared: "I think it's unfortunate that when the Structure Plan was drawn up, the general public of Thorncombe didn't realise what was going on.

"It's only this application that has brought the realisation of what a priority village means."

And he drew attention to what he felt was inconsistency on the part of the planners, who had turned down applications for single houses nearer the village centre.

Choke

Parish Council chairman Mr. Bert Vickery said: "We are in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This is a skyline development and these houses will show up considerably.

And conservationist Mr. Ron Frampton, a member

of parish appraisal sub-committee, said: "We're not against development but major development. I believe this application is the thin edge of the wedge.

"I think it would have far reaching environmental problems and the village would choke on its own traffic."

● The application is due to be discussed by the area sub-committee on June 12 before going to the Development and Planning Committee for determination.



Sheep graze on the hills above the picturesque village of Thorncombe, near Bridport, which has been rocked by controversial development proposals on land owned by parish and district councillor Mr. Jim Atyeo. A total of 26 new houses, craft workshops and eight holiday units in old farm buildings are planned at Higher Farm at the top left of the picture. (ES)



West Dorset Area Planning Officer Mr. Derek Price (centre) outlines development proposals at a public site meeting on land owned by parish and district councillor Mr. Jim Atyeo at Higher Farm, Thorncombe, near Bridport. (EJG).