

Seven-village seminar decides

Planners remote and out of touch

THE future of West Dorset villages was being decided by planners who were too remote and did not understand local problems.

This was the feeling of many attending a seminar organised by the Thorncombe Village Trust, with six other villages taking part.

Planning officers faced a double pressure, from the developers and the structure plan policy, Trevor Jones told the seminar.

It was vital to influence

district councils with individual written statements about planning applications, he added.

He called for the system to be changed so applications were decided at a far more local level.

Mr Harris, an architect, said it was important for local plans to be done by the Parish.

All too often, planning decisions were being

made by councillors who lived far distant from the area of the proposed de-

velopment. They could not know in detail the characteristics of the village or the problems the community had to deal with all year round, said Thorncombe Trust secretary John Whitbread.

The offer of low-cost building land in Thorncombe, made by a local

farmer, was a 'golden opportunity' for the village, he said. It would provide starter homes for young people of the area and bring a balanced age mix of the village population.

"Representatives" from the seven villages wanted to 'step up the fight' against over-development of their communities. A follow-up meeting was planned for November, Mr Whitbread said.