

Villagers to air views

RESIDENTS of Thorncombe are to be given a chance to air their views on the proposed scale of development for their village which has split the community in recent months.

West Dorset District Council's chief planning officer, Mr Des Derrien, is recommending his authority make available a report on an appraisal of potential development sites in the area to all interested parties and to hold a public meeting in Thorncombe on 10th September to discuss the findings of the appraisal.

The decision to undertake the appraisal was taken by council planners in June of last year after they were faced with a number of large-scale applications to develop land in the village.

Applicants have argued that their proposals should be allowed in keeping with the Dorset structure plan which identifies Thorncombe as a priority village for growth.

In his latest report however, Mr. Derrien stresses that although no priority village in West Dorset has experienced such a low rate of development as Thorncombe since the introduction of the structure plan, the inadequacy of the area's road network has even led to the county surveyor recommending the lower end of the suggested 50-150 new dwellings range.

The district council report, which is also to be sent to the parish council for its comments, comes out against the two large applications which have already been submitted which would each

mean more than 25 houses being built.

Mr Derrien suggests that a 'cooling-off period' may be suitable such as the authority have already introduced at both Litton Cheney and Broadmayne / West Knighton communities.

"It could take the form of delineating a village envelope beyond which there would be a presumption against development and the identification of other areas and features within Thorncombe which it is desirable to retain," he said.

Mr Derrien calls a proposal by former district councillor Mr Jim Atyeo to build 25 dwellings, a farmhouse and craft workshops at his Higher Farm property inappropriate as it would be "a conspicuous extension of the village into open countryside in an area of outstanding natural beauty and general landscape value".

He adds that, should drainage problems be overcome, another scheme to build one dwelling and convert farm buildings to eight holiday units on the site may be acceptable.

Developers hoping to build in the area could be faced with finding over £400,000 to finance a new sewage treatment works and pay for improvements to the drainage system.

Mr Derrien is more optimistic about the chances of a scheme to develop land opposite the village hall and Gribb View, although he again opposes the present proposal as unacceptable as it "represents a harsh, wedge-like outline" which fails to make best use of the site.

He said that some use of the area to build between 50-60 homes, including the proposed low-cost starter homes being suggested for the site, may be considered more suitable.