

Storm over village proposals

VILLAGERS in Thorncombe are up in arms over a planning application to convert an historic building into holiday homes and build 25 houses on land owned by a local councillor.

Dozens of objections to the proposals had been received this week by West Dorset District Council.

The planning application will go before the council's planning committee today (Thursday). Discussion will be deferred until planning officials have looked into it further.

on the matter to West Dorset District Council's planning department.

The council's Western area planning officer, Mr Derek Price, confirmed that Mr Fearn had applied on behalf of Mr Atyeo. "It is usual for

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Villagers believe that the development, if approved, will ruin the quiet West Dorset village, which is in an official area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The application has been submitted by Bridport surveyor Michael Fearn, who is acting as agent for Thorncombe farmer and councillor Jim Atyeo who owns the property named on the plans.

Mr Fearn was not available for comment when contacted.

His secretary said that because of "professional etiquette" he did not feel able to comment on the application. She was referring calls

VILLAGE PLAN STORM

new farmhouse buildings, access road, and conversion of existing farmhouse — a Grade II listed building — into eight units of holiday accommodation.

people say the development is following a special meeting held in the village.

Mr Atyeo is a Conservative member of both the parish council and the district council. On West Dorset council, he is a member of the planning committee, and is vice-chairman of the western area planning sub-committee, which covers Thorncombe.

Parish council chairman Bert Vickery said the council felt it had been misled by prior information about the application, given to it by Mr

many villagers claim it's the first they have heard of it.

At least 40 letters of objection have been sent to West Dorset District Council. Thorncombe Parish Council

emergency meeting of villagers, he commented: "I appreciate their feelings, but this is a family matter which does not rest entirely with me."

"I declared an interest, which was why I was not at the meeting."

● A petition has been launched, calling on the district council to refuse planning permission. It is calling itself the "Thorncombe Village Trust".

Atyeo. Mr Atyeo told reporters that conversion of the farmhouse would not alter the building's appearance.

On being told about the emergency meeting of villagers, he commented: "I appreciate their feelings, but this is a family matter which does not rest entirely with me."

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the owner, or developer of the land, to submit the application, but there is absolutely nothing wrong for it to be done this way".

Mr Price said he had received a vast number of letters about the application.

proposed development is totally out of keeping with the character of the village. And they fear that if allowed, it will open floodgates for more development.

There are rumours of other proposals are in the pipeline, for the development of at least 150 homes.

What is certain is that Thorncombe is earmarked as a priority area for development in the structure plan for West Dorset — although

"We are not ready for it to be discussed. I hope it will be ready when the western area planning sub-committee meets in Bridport on April 10", he said.

The next step will be on April 30 when the planning committee meets in Dorchester. "It is not usual for the main committee to over-rule the sub-committee's recommendations", said Mr Price. The application is for 25 dwellings, craft workshops,