

Land-swap scheme unveiled

16/4/87

CRANLEIGH Parish Council has taken the lid off a "tit for tat" scheme it claims could have a dramatic effect on the village's future.

Chairman of the council Mr. Elwyn Williams has revealed the details of the plan not yet off the drawing board, which could open up the south of Cranleigh to developers.

A scheme which has been unveiled informally to the council's planning watchdogs includes:

- A new Royal British Legion headquarters
- 22 acres of extra recreational land
- A new rugby club headquarters
- A service road running behind Cranleigh High Street, and
- A small development of houses in Knowle Lane.

Mr. Williams told the *Advertiser* that local building consultant Mr. Gordon Thomas held informal talks with the parish council to determine its feelings.

No planning application has yet been made but one may be in the offing.

The land in question runs behind the Stocklund Square shops, to the south of Cranleigh and along part of Knowle Lane.

Although only seven homes in the £300 to £350,000 price range are proposed on land near South House, Mr. Williams said he believed plans for more extensive development would follow.

A service road would be built from Village Way, to take increasing traffic off the High Street and to serve the industrial estates.

A new Royal British Legion headquarters is planned on an

area of land near the allotments in Knowle Lane, immediately behind the Gateways Supermarket.

The owners of the land, who include Mr. Nick Vniland, head of West Cranleigh Nurseries, would hand over to the parish around 22 acres of recreation land, including the lower fields to Knowle Park. This could be used by Cranleigh Rugby Football Club or other sporting organisations.

Mr. Williams said although the scheme had not yet been formally considered by the council, his reaction was one of extreme concern.

"If there are public-spirited people in Cranleigh who want to give land for recreation, which the parish council desperately needs, we would welcome it, but with no strings attached."

Builder Mr. Thomas, who stressed he had no financial interest in the land, has long argued that a service road is desperately needed in Cranleigh.

He is also convinced that if it is linked with a small amount of "sensitive" development by Cranleigh businessmen and landowners, not large developers, then the village would thrive.

He said he believed residents should themselves create the place and environment they want to live in, not have it forced upon them by inspectors from the Department of the Environment.

It was apparent that the site for a new supermarket would not be decided by local planners but by the Government, he added.

Mr. Thomas said he believed the council was enthusiastic about the scheme. "If it is not,

then I believe it is being very short-sighted in its outlook."

He said the land on offer for recreational purposes was ideal and would provide a permanent barrier between it and the developed area between Knowle Lane and Alfold Road.

"We all know development will come — what I am trying so hard to achieve is a scheme which includes some low-key development that would be an asset to the village, instead of some high-pressure appeal foisted on us by large developers and the Department of the Environment, where the final say is taken out of our hands."

Some councillors were "paranoid" about development of any sort, and their minds were even closed to discussing schemes. That was why decisions were being taken out of the hands of local planners, he said.