

NEW DEVELOPMENT IS CRITICISED AS TOO EXPENSIVE



■ **Unaffordable – councillors John and Christine Mason on the Clements Gate development, in Hawkwell, House, where the cheapest houses are being offered for more than £300,000**

Picture: AL UNDERWOOD BA85470_003

Hawkwell homes 'out of our reach'

A HOUSING development in Hawkwell has been slammed for pricing first-time buyers out of the market.

Three-bedroom homes on Christmas Tree Farm, now known as Clements Gate, will start at £330,000, with prices soaring past £500,000 for a five-bed home.

Rochford District Council needs to build 2,785 homes over the next decade and has called for 35 per cent of them to be affordable homes.

The council needs homes for younger and future generations in the district to encourage them to stay in the area, but some feel modest homes in excess of £300,000 won't help that cause.

Eddie Short, 66, of Ironwell Lane, has lived in Hawkwell for 30 years. He was part of the Hawkwell Parish Planning Group that opposed the developments from the start.

By NEIL HAWKINS
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He said: "People want to get on the ladder, and, if they choose to live in Hawkwell, £300,000 is absolutely ridiculous and is not going to allow that."

"The prices are unbelievable. What's going to happen is private landlords will come in, and then it will be let, let, let. As long as the council and developer get to build, they just don't care."

Richard Hill, chairman of the Christmas Tree Farm Development Action Group, said: "When we were protesting against the development I received a lot of e-mails from people saying these houses would be for their children, but could they afford these? It will put them off staying here."

"The starting prices for these houses won't be within reach of the people they were targeted at."

The Clements Gate site will have 175 homes, with 62 being made affordable through housing group Chelmer Housing Partnership.

Two-bed homes will be available through CHP, but prices won't be known until the properties are handed over to them by David Wilson Homes early next year.

Councillor John Mason, whose ward takes in the development site, said that the 2011 census showed the number of people aged up to 18 rose by only 186.

He added: "If they are for

our children, how can they afford it? How affordable is it for anyone else who doesn't want to go through a social landlord?"

"I've met some residents over the past few days, and one lady asked me 'how are children going to be able to stay in the area?'"

Councillor Keith Hudson, in charge of planning at Rochford, said he expected first time buyers would look to buy at the site, but would encourage people to use the shared ownership options available as a way of getting on the housing ladder.

He added: "It's an excellent way to get on the ladder. You share the burden with the housing association."

"You can have a shared equity situation where you can buy a percentage of the property, and then pay a smaller amount of rent."

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Concerns over staff numbers at hospital A&E

CONCERNS have been raised about the numbers of staff in Accident and Emergency at Southend Hospital, particularly with the extra demand that winter brings.

The staffing situation in the busy casualty department was discussed at last week's Clinical Commissioning Group meeting.

The hospital is on track to

meet the A&E standard of 95 per cent of patients seen within four hours this month, but Melanie Craig, chief operating officer for the group, said although performance was now good, winter could provide a challenge because of staffing levels.

She said: "There is an element of concern regarding the clinical cover in A&E. We are looking at

the urgent care recovery and improvement plan, contingency plans and the skills of staff."

The hospital has recently recruited more doctors for A&E.

Jacqueline Totterdell, chief executive, said: "We are pleased with the recent progress we have made in recruiting to our emergency department. We now have six consultants and the depart-

ment is benefiting from new ways of working using highly-skilled and experienced emergency nurse practitioners.

"This is reflected in our improved performance against the four-hour wait for the quarter July to September.

"We are continuing to recruit into remaining nursing vacancies."

Help if you have dystonia

A SUPPORT group for people affected by dystonia will hold a meeting next month.

The Dystonia Support Group, which provides support and information for anyone affected by the condition, will meet on Thursday, October, 31.

Dystonia is an incurable and disabling neurological disorder, resulting in involuntary muscle spasms affecting 70,000 men, women and children in the UK.

The meeting will be held at Rayleigh Elim Church, in Castle Lane, Rayleigh, and will take place from 10.30am until 12.30pm.

Invitation to harvest meal

AN annual harvest supper event has been organised by the South East Essex Women's Environmental Network.

The supper will take place on Saturday, October 12.

Soup and dessert will be available at the event, which will be held at St Mark's Church hall, Princes Street, Southend, from 6pm until 9pm.

All are welcome to attend. There will also be a quiz and apples for sale. Entry is £4 for adults, and £2 for children under 12.

Rock gig for the homeless

MUSIC lovers are invited to "Rock for the Homeless" to raise awareness for World Homeless Day.

The event has been organised by Southend charity, Harp, a leading provider of homeless services in Southend. It will take place in the Maritime Room, at the Cliffs Pavilion, in Westcliff, on Sunday, from 4pm until 10pm.

Tickets cost £10 and are only available in advance from Harp.

Call 01702 615000 for details.

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