

'GREAT DEMAND' FOR BUSINESSMEN'S CLUB IN TOWN CENTRE —Inquiry told

C.T. June 30, 1967

ONE of the objectors to a proposal for a restaurant and club at The Old Barn, Millhams Street, Christchurch, told a public inquiry at Christchurch Town Hall, on Thursday that when a club was run in the same premises some years ago, he could not sleep for the noise so he joined the club "in self-defence".

The objector, Mr. Percy Lumley Skelton, a retired aircraft technician, of 10, Castle Street, Christchurch, said he complained "bitterly" about the noise on numerous occasions, but in the end it was a case of "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em".

He anticipated that whatever was done with the property it would be difficult to prevent the noise being heard in his flat because The Old Barn was between 200 and 300 years old and there was no plaster on the walls and no sound-proofing. He could touch the entrance door with an eight foot stick from his back window.

The inquiry was into an appeal by Mr. Jeffrey M. Sparrowe against the council's refusal to allow the change of use of The Old Barn from residential to a restaurant and club.

NOT SATISFACTORY

Permission was refused on the grounds that the development would interfere with the privacy of nearby dwellings and the proposal did not provide satisfactory accommodation within the site for parking of vehicles.

Mr. Skelton and three residents of Millhams Street—Mrs. Margaret Clark, Mrs. D. W. Rook and Miss R. Mooring Aldridge, were all represented by Mr. F. H. Battcock. Representing Mr. Sparrowe was Mr. Ian Baird,

Mr. Sparrowe, of Riverside, Willow Way, Christchurch, said he owned the appeal property and it had been necessary to seek permission for a change of use because when the previous club closed he took up residence there and asked for the designation of the property to be residential rather than as club premises.

He said that membership of the club would be for business and professional people basically and he only envisaged serving meals and drinks in the lunch hour and then closing during the afternoon. He proposed closing the club in the evenings in accordance with licensing hours.

People would be leaving certainly before midnight and because of the size of the club only between 30 and 40 people would be there at any one time. There would certainly be no more than 25 cars involved because some of the people who lived nearby would walk to the club.

Taking into account that there was unrestricted parking in Christchurch after 6 pm and the fact that there were excellent car parking facilities in the neighbourhood, he did not consider there was any problem with car parking.

Dealing with the question of brewery deliveries during the day when Millhams Street was restricted for parking and unloading, Mr. Sparrowe said, he could make arrangements to have them picked up.

He said that the part of Millhams Street where the club was proposed was a business area. There were warehouses, shop premises and light industry.

SNACKS

Mr. Sparrowe said he proposed putting on a cold buffet and snacks. He had applied for a licence in June, 1966, and although the licence was not granted on that occasion because planning permission was necessary first, there were no objections from the police.

Cross-examined by Mr. John Macfadyen, town clerk, appearing for the council, Mr. Sparrowe said most of the members would be of mature age. "This is not going to be a jive club, but a club for responsible, respectable people", added Mr. Sparrowe.

Cross-examined by Mr. Battcock, Mr. Sparrowe said he was unable to say whether it would be a proprietary club or a members' club, but it was his desire that it should be a proprietary club, and this was what he would apply for to the licensing justices.

HIGH CLASS

Mr. William Scott Atkinson, of 118, Hurn Road, Christchurch, said he supported the club proposal. He understood it would be a high class club and not the type of place that would cause a nuisance to neighbours. There was a great demand for a club of that nature in the centre of the town.

Mr. Baird told the inquiry inspector, Mr. W. J. N. Oswald, that his client had also received the support of 11 people in Millhams Street and Castle Street.

Mr. Macfadyen said that in the evenings Millhams Street became a "quiet backwater" in which the residents enjoyed certain amenities. "I know they are disturbed when major functions are held at the King's Arms Hotel and other places in the town centre, but these are odd occasions and should not be used as an excuse for increasing the occasions".

There had been a certain amount of "hedging" by the appellant. Clearly from the original application this was supposed to be an exclusive diners' club and one would imagine from that it was a place where substantial meals would be served, probably attracting connoisseurs of food and wine. "We now know that is not so and the intention is to serve simple food".

The deputy area planning officer, Mr. R. G. Smith, said that although the present proposal related to a restaurant and club for members of an exclusive diners' club, approval would lead to the establishment of a non-residential club and the local authority would have little or no control over a change to a less exclusive, busier and more noisy non-residential club to the detriment of nearby dwellings.

RESTRICTION

As there was a total restriction on parking in that section of Millhams Street, members were likely to park for long periods in nearby residential and town centre streets.

The lack of any parking facilities within the appeal site would result in all visitors arriving and departing on foot, which could lead to a conflict of vehicular and pedestrian movement in this narrow street with no proper footpaths.

An alternative parking arrangement put forward by Mr. Sparrowe at the Christchurch Yacht Company was felt to be too far away to be convenient, as were the existing public car parks at Bridge Street, the Priory and at the rear of the Town Hall, and were not likely to be extensively used if roadside parking space was available nearer to the site.

After the inquiry was completed, the inspector visited the site. The Minister's decision will be made known later.