

# Wanted To Sell Plot To Supplement Pension

## 78-year old Man Appeals Against Planning Authority's Decision Christchurch Times 1959

For many years Mr. Walter Parrott cultivated as a market garden a plot of land off Sandy Lane, St. Catherine's Hill, Christchurch, which he bought for £60 in 1921.

He and his wife lived on the land sleeping in a paraffin lit caravan and using a small hut as a dining room. There they brought up a family. Mr. Parrott earned his living by selling flowers and vegetables he grew. But the time came when he could no longer carry on working the land. He decided to sell it for building purposes, retain the portion where he lived and use the money to keep him and his wife comfortable for the rest of his life. Mr. Parrott, aged 78, told his story to Mr. C. G. Sturt, a Ministry of Housing and Local Government officer, who was conducting an inquiry at Christchurch Town Hall last week into Mr. Parrott's appeal against the refusal of Hampshire planning authority to permit the erection of three dwellings on his land.

### PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

Mr. John Richardson, for the appellant, said permission was refused for the reason that the proposed development did not accord with the provisions of the Christchurch town map showing that the land was within an area to be held as a public open space.

After the refusal, Mr. Parrott had not appealed immediately but had approached the local authority to see if they were interested in taking the land over. Negotiations had been unsuccessful and unsatisfactory. It was agreed, he said, that the land was a public open space but the appeal was logical because the land was a small wedge on the perimeter of the open space backed by a roadway. Development had been permitted on land 100 yards from Mr. Parrott's site.

### REFUSAL SEEMED UNJUST

There were two reasons why the refusal seemed unjust. The land was bounded by a roadway which geographically did not seem to make it part of the open space and Mr. Parrott had seen lots of other houses being erected not far from his plot and have wondered why his could not be allowed. Mr. Parrott told Mr. Sturt that he had been living on the land since 1921 having bought it to £60, he had cultivated crops there. It was good land and well looked after. It became impossible for him to carry on with the market garden and the asked for permission to appeal because it was useless to him as it was.

### HELP WITH PENSION

“There were other buildings nearby and I thought I would put it on the market because I had not any income at that moment. I thought it would help along with my old age pension”, he said. At one time there have been two houses on this land and there was a roadway running by which was used by tradesmen from time to time. It had been his intention to continue to live in the caravan on a small portion of his land. Buildings were going up very near on the St. Catherine's estate on land which was very similar to his. In fact his site was more level and as a result of his continued work it was better land for cultivation.

### SPECULATIVE MEASURE

Questioned by Mr. Sturt, Mr. Parrott said he and his wife had their meals in the hut which was used as a dining room. He agreed that it was a speculative measure to sell the land and live in the same place. He did not want a better house to live in himself. Mr. John Arnell, of “Mayflower”, St. Catherine's Hill, told the officer he had owned property on the hill for 40 years and was one of the oldest residents there. He agreed with Mr. Richardson that he knew every “hole and corner” on the hill. Mr. Arnell said that he had appealed

some time ago against a refusal to allow building on his land but he thought Mr. Parrott's case was different altogether. "I wanted to put extra buildings on my land but he only wants to rebuild", he pointed out.

#### OTHER APPLICATIONS

For the planning authority Mr. J. Macfadyen, Town Clerk said that on three other occasions there have been applications to build "on some of these old plots which are scattered about the common on the side of St. Catherine's Hill" and Minister had supported the planning authority's views each time. There was no doubt that Mr. Parrott's land was open space. It was near to other development but there had to be a boundary somewhere. The roadway which had been mentioned was more in the nature of a footpath and did not constitute a clear boundary. There did not seem to be a great deal to distinguish this appeal from other appeals that had been heard, he submitted, and if the Minister allowed Mr. Parrott's appeal it would be very difficult to reject further applications for other sites on the common. Mr. H. J. Mills, deputy planning officer for south west Hampshire, said that the site was to the rear of existing residential development which fronted onto the Fairmile Road. Apart from the western boundary which adjoined the residential development the site was surrounded by open space. The appeal site was shown to be included within the area held or to be held as a public open space as set out on the Christchurch town map.

#### EXTENSIVE VIEWS

St. Catherine's Hill, he said, was a most important open space feature with a large number of archaeological remains some of which had been scheduled as ancient monuments. It was visible from all parts of the town map area and extensive views could be obtained from its summit.

Although privately owned most of the area had been open to the public for a long time and was visited by large numbers of people especially during the holiday season. In addition to its local and historic importance, considerable amenity value was afforded to the residents of Christchurch.

To the east of the appeal site on the common were a number of scattered dwellings which had been in existence for many years on island sites similar to the appeal site.

The local planning authority had consistently withstood attempts to split sites and build additional dwellings and three such applications had been the subject of past appeals to the Minister all being dismissed.

"This development referred to in the grounds of appeal within 100 yards of the site has been confined to the lower land and obviously the area for development must be limited in its extent. It is considered that the present boundary line is as satisfactory as possible", Mr. Mills continued.

#### WOULD ADD MORE TRAFFIC

In the event of permission being given it would seem unreasonable to refuse permission to subdivide many of the nearby island sites. This would add more traffic to the very inadequate gravel tracks which at present serve the properties and would result in an undesirable increase in the number of cesspools. Mr. Sturt later visited the appeal site. The Minister's decision will be made known later.