



Highland Court — too large and too out of the way to be a mentally handicapped hospital — is to be sold.

## Half-empty hospital to go on market

HIGHLAND Court Hospital for the mentally handicapped at Bridge is to be put up for sale early next year.

The news follows a meeting of Canterbury and Thanet District Health Authority at which it was decided there was "no further requirement" for the hospital.

There has been a building on the site since the 1500s, but the present large country house dates mainly from 1928.

It stands in extensive grounds and is a Grade II listed building, used for "low dependency" mentally handicapped patients since 1972.

The hospital cannot be put on the market until the Community Health Council — the patients' watchdog body — gives its formal agreement after a three-month consultation period.

But the council's secretary, Mr Philip

Topham, said: "I think we would prefer to see it go."

He said there had been some discussion about the possibility of using the building for psychiatric patients.

### Homely

But he added: "That would just be moving patients from one institution to another."

The Health Authority intends to relocate the mentally handicapped patients now at the hospital in small homely units in the community.

But, says the Health

Authority: "With a secluded situation, overall size, large rooms, high ceilings and sweeping staircases, Highland Court does not meet such criteria."

In the last two years new opportunities for resettlement of mentally handicapped people in the community have become available and now less than half the hospital's 40 beds are being used.

The Blue Peter bungalow, which accommodates six mentally handicapped people in the hospital grounds, will stay open until its replacement is built elsewhere.