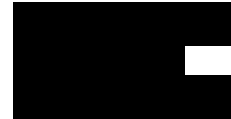


Chris and Jane Thomas



Planning Inspectorate (by email)

15 November 2012

SECTION 62A APPLICATION S62A/2025/0133 – BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL
STOKE LODGE, WEST DENE, BRISTOL BS9 2BH

I object to the proposed erection of CCTV cameras and associated infrastructure on the above site.

I have used Stoke Lodge for very many years (30+) mainly for play with my son and friends and for walking our various dogs. It was always a pleasure to use on the understanding that community use was welcome (as it appeared it was, despite a few ancient and misleading signs which seemed to be a lazy hangover from an unloved authority which had ceased to exist many years previously (Avon CC)). Latterly, the fence erected by Cotham School has totally destroyed the aesthetic pleasure (particularly for a “townie”) which my family and I enjoyed from just being in an open field surrounded by beautiful trees. The impact was so great that I stopped using what remained of the field left available to the public because of the fence.

Nevertheless, there remains available to the public the areas outside the fence, including the childrens’ play area and the arboretum, although these remain of much reduced value by the intrusion of the fence. I do not think that the school has any idea of the sense of intrusion that the fence creates. A farm-style post and rail fence, which may be wholly acceptable surrounding a field, is a different matter to a tall, industrial metal structure which has absolutely no aesthetic merit and entirely spoils the appreciation of one of the last green spaces in the area (the other playing fields to the south and east – Clifton High School and RTZ - have long since become housing developments; and even the Coombe Lane frontage to the University Grounds has been developed).

I know that this planning application has nothing to do with the fence. But the fence is a fact within the application. It already spoils the amenity of the field both visually and emotionally. Who wants to walk round a pleasant area from which they are physically barred? The proposed addition of 24 cameras on 8 poles plus their groundstations will only serve to increase the sense of intrusion. Whilst it might be said that the impact is to the enclosed area only, this is not so. The cameras’ 360 degree of view means that all the field (including areas outside the fence) will be under surveillance at will (and I very much doubt that any condition attached to a consent can effectively enforce the restriction of views).

Further, the application seeks to downplay the existence of the rights of way across the field. At this time, they are lawful and cannot be dismissed on the basis that they may not be confirmed. Why should such lawful rights of way be wholly under the surveillance of a school’s

employees? People lawfully using these footpaths cannot be controlled by the school (unless being used unlawfully which would apply to any land anyway).

The school's justification for both fence and cameras is pitiful. The cameras will not **prevent** any unlawful activity – they can only help identify what and who may be involved. The real reason for both fence and cameras is to **keep in** the schools' students and terrorise them into good behaviour! There are plenty of ways this can be achieved which do not involve turning the field into a prison enclosure.

As to visual amenity, the cameras will only detract further from the despoliation and urbanization of this parkland. The school's attempt to disassociate the field from the listed Stoke Lodge is totally disingenuous. Even the name of the field serves to tie it to the Lodge. Facts of the site (boundary walls, gates and tied cottages) are not features generally found in an isolated former agricultural field; rather, they are confirmation that the field was indeed considered to be the parkland attached to the Lodge and forming a distinct part of its message. Indeed, the parkland was included within the boundary of the listed Lodge until excluded by the Council for, let us say, "practical" rather than "planning" reasons. There was certainly no reason why the school could not have used the field even if it remained within the curtilage of the Lodge.

The Inspector will see many other objections to this proposal. I consider that amenity has many facets. Some are almost impossible to express in "planning" terms. But the foundation of the definition of amenity must be that which the majority considers to be acceptable (dictionaries usually say "pleasant things"). In this, emotion is also a factor. The adverse impact of the effective theft of the field on the emotion of the vast majority of the truly "local" community (Cotham School is 3 miles distant and has no interest in the amenity of the "local" community) is deeply embedded. What has already been done and what is now proposed for the Stoke Lodge parkland is distressing both visually and mentally. The community have no objection whatsoever to sharing the field (as is supposed to happen). But the total exclusion of the public (except for the rights of way and muddy unmaintained paths outside the fence) is completely unjustified. The CCTV cameras will only decrease the willingness of the community to use what remains. Who wants to spend their valuable leisure time in front of a battery of cameras to be seen by anyone the school wishes to permit?

Chris and Jane Thomas