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**To:** [Section 62A Applications Non Major](#)  
**Subject:** Stoke Lodge  
**Date:** 04 December 2025 12:03:56

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It is proposed to site 8 poles each with 3 CCTV cameras on in the playing field of Stoke Lodge.

In considering this proposal, please note that there are not one but 3 heritage listings in the immediate environment as follows; Stoke Lodge House, the Old Post Office on Shirehampton Road and the gates of Parry's Grove.

I am opposed to this development as:

1 It will substantially harm a lovely site that was once the grounds/ curtilage of the architecturally important listed building 'Stoke Lodge.' The grounds form part of the curtilage of Stoke Lodge as well as its setting. It will also cause substantial harm to the setting of the other local listed buildings opposite Stoke Lodge / and the listed gates.

2 The use of cameras is disproportionate

3 The cameras will also be hugely intrusive/ impact privacy

4 It will impact trees and Cotham School is not well known for caring about trees ( Google Skanska Cotham 2006)

1 The cameras and their poles will harm the curtilage and setting of Stoke Lodge and other heritage assets

Until recently, the playing fields of Stoke lodge formed the associated grounds of Stoke Lodge House. This is a house that has a significant history and architectural merit. Within the grounds themselves there are many TPO trees and some fine specimen trees eg cedar trees and even a 500 year old oak tree. There is also now a huge beautiful wood carving that is marked on the Bristol map.

The grounds were historically important to the house as they were often used by the Mayor of Bristol to entertain visiting dignitaries. The last owner/ occupier acted as an escort/ consort to the Mayor of Bristol. They were also used by the succession of owners of Stoke Lodge to host community events eg fetes/ sports days.

Previous owners included the founder of the Red Cross, Mrs Georgina Budgett and also one of the significant directors of the Fry Chocolate family, Claude Fry.

The grounds and house are all encircled by a stone wall, with the then cottages for the cook and chauffeur of the then private resident owners on the opposite side of the field to the house. There is a driveway leading to the cottages buried under the field.

This building and grounds was sold during the 1940s for educational purposes to BCC who first allowed a school called Fairfax to use it in a sporadic way. It was also used for community sports days eg the young people's youth association. At one stage, during the early 2000's, the site was considered as a possible site for a new secondary school and as part of that process an analysis of the site was done where it was described as having a high visual amenity 'akin to parkland'.

These grounds were then reallocated to Cotham Grammar School. At this time the community continued to use it for walks, dog exercising and games etc.

As part of the Academy process the school was granted a lease in 2011 of the grounds subject to the 'all existing rights and use of the property, including use by the community'

The solicitor acting for Cotham Academy negotiated an unusual lease (differing from a standard playing field lease to an academy) in that it was agreed that the council would continue to pay for all the liabilities of the surrounding wall and all the trees on the land.

During these negotiations it was noted by the Academy's solicitor that 'other than the playing field use the land is public amenity land.' He therefore asked that BCC might consider mending the derelict wall surrounding all the grounds on that basis.

In 2016 Cotham Academy made a planning application for a fence which was met with considerable objection so that application was withdrawn. It is noteworthy that at this stage they felt the need to make a planning application as this land was deemed curtilage.

It was therefore a huge surprise to everyone in the community when in 2019 and without planning permission a huge fence went up around the listed building. This green steel 6 foot fence effectively divorced the listed building from its grounds. It is quite remarkable as normally you would expect to see heritage fencing on a site like this and it was odd to see that the schools preferred boundary treatment with this listed building was a green steel fence.

To allow for this, BCC almost overnight changed their stance on the extent of the curtilage of Stoke Lodge and determined that the field was not curtilage despite some of the field being very visible from the windows of Stoke Lodge house.

Since 2010 onwards there has been legal arguments on whether the land was a Town Village Green which the community lost. As you know the issue of TVG has very strict tests.

Sadly, the community never took to court the question of whether an ugly fence was built within the curtilage of the house or the extent of the curtilage as they were pursuing the TVG argument. Bristol City Council has yet to publicly define the exact area of curtilage.

However, what is surprising is that the original 6 foot green steel fence was plainly visible from the windows of the listed building. It seems that the curtilage of the building was deemed to be exceptionally small.

The relevance of all this history is that, in my opinion, the proposed development will clearly impact not just the settings but also the curtilage of an important historical house that was once the home of the founder of the Red Cross. BCC should have produced expert historical building advice to justify their change of stance but none has been forthcoming. They had a barrister's opinion but a barrister is not an expert on curtilage (which is a matter of historical fact).

Moreover this development will substantially harm the setting of a listed building contrary to section 66 (1).

It is not remotely discreet but instead overt and oppressive. It's will have a very negative visual impact on the setting of a listed building. It will make the field seem more prison like as opposed to forming part of the grounds of an historical house.

This is not an ordinary playing field as it was once described by BCC as akin to 'parkland' in its visual amenity.

The lands are essential to the house and provide a remarkable country like atmosphere in an urban setting. Stoke Lodge overall provides a lovely green relief to the adjacent main road due to the presence of very large trees and the old building. All together it provides a delightful and remarkable setting when so close to the city.

Also, there is a listed building directly opposite the field and this will impact its setting and appearance. This building is called the old Post Office which is a stunning residential home with lovely character.

Within the immediate area there is also the listed gates of Parrys Grove opposite the upper end of the field.

These ugly poles will reduce the monetary value/harm Stoke Lodge and the other historical assets.

Stoke Lodge is a council asset worth a few million pounds. Has BCC done an impact assessment on the reduction in value of this council/ public owned asset? Who will compensate for that?

The settings of all these historically significant assets would be impacted by the poles / CCTVs which are far too industrial/ urban for the overall area.

The proposed poles and cameras are not discreet and do not blend in with the surroundings.

So what mitigation steps have been taken to prevent this harm?

As far as I can see there has been no real and proper attempt to enhance the visual amenity of the setting with this development. Instead, the setting of all the listed buildings/ gates will be further harmed by the school. Painting steel green does not mitigate the huge levels of harm.

The school has shown itself to be utterly unsympathetic to the environment of the listed building of Stoke Lodge and indeed the other listings. They should have used heritage fencing around the boundary but did not do so.

At every opportunity, they have demonstrated little respect at all for the historical building and its grounds.

If anything they seem to want to conveniently forget that their playing field forms the grounds of this listed house. They seek to diminish this.

Isn't any development meant to safeguard and enhance the listed asset? When they managed to get the council to change its stance on curtilage did they act honourably and do the right thing with their choice of fence?

Their behaviours in regards to the fence says it's all. They knew that planning would never allow that fence unless it was a heritage fence. Can they be trusted to act reasonably with CCTV when their behaviour to date has resulted in this damage to a listed asset? I think that no amount of planning conditions will stop them causing harm ( see what happened in 2006 re Trees and their contractors on the main school site)

It would be an absolute tragedy if this behaviour is further compounded by the erection of several large CCTV poles.

The belief within the community is that the school wishes to deliberately degrade the site to allow for future intensive development. Each development will justify the next by uglifying the site.

Loss of Amenity : It's is not just the local people walking the perimeter, the rights of way across the field and the students at Stoke Lodge Adult Education Centre that will be impacted.

At present, the view from the field across to the arboretum is glorious despite the fence. This is also a pleasure for the pupils to experience.

Cotham Academy have made much play about their pupils having the opportunity to access a beautiful green space for sports away from their urban environment. Having large CCTV cameras on poles will be oppressive to them and make them feel like they need to be watched all the time and/ or are in prison.

The cameras will be glaringly apparent and the pupils will surely feel as if they are exercising in a prison court yard.

This is not conducive to good behaviour and will not allow for an enjoyable PE experience.

What is their clear and convincing justification for all this as required by Section 193?

Frankly. I find all this ridiculous as my [REDACTED] son who was at RGS ( a different state school) and [REDACTED] was able to exercise on Wednesday enrichment days on the Downs with just teacher supervision and no fence. His school did not have the funds to transport their pupils to their school playing field for Wednesday enrichment afternoons so they used the Downs ( a public park). Some 15 kids and the teacher would jog to the Downs and play sports there and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and OFSTED still called RGS an 'outstanding school'.

So what is this all for? BS9 is an affluent area with a general low crime rate. The surrounding roads are all in Stoke Bishop not known as an area of high crime. The people who live here are often in their late 50s or 60s plus many local families. There is a huge community feel in the area.

The pupils have to get from the top of West Dene to the field. Have the teachers guarded them carefully from the coach along West Dene to the field? No, the teachers never seemed to worry that much about the pupils absconding as the pupils tended to race freely ahead of the teachers to the entrance of the field. They were not lined up, holding hands, walking slowly and properly escorted. They usually charge down the road in drips and drabs determined by friendship groups. What security do they have along those roads? Where is the CCTV there?

## 2 The application is disproportionate.

It seems that all this is to protect a few blades of grass and a fence. The whole thing is disproportionate.

Who is going to be manning these cameras 24/7 to stop some destruction or check for intruders. Who will man the CCTV at night when presumably any damage might occur?

How much will all this cost? Again is this proportionate?

Would it not be easier and cheaper to pay an LSA to be on the field to do perimeter checks if they are that angst? Surely staff are better than remote CCTV!

I think it is good and relevant to understand the psyche of the school and its leadership to understand their mindset and why they feel the need to take disproportionate action :

This is a school that featured in a national newspaper for banning their pupils from going to shops AFTER school hours and for having their teachers patrolling the streets to stop this. A shop owner actually had to call the police as teachers barricaded his shop to stop pupils entering whilst dishing out detentions! The shop keeper said 'they were intimidating the students and intimidating my normal customers' A local resident said 'you have got 2 senior teachers standing outside a shop like bouncers' (The Independent)

This is a school that refused to let girls on periods go to the toilet during lesson times. (more news headlines). A girl was described as traumatised as she was denied a toilet pass whilst bleeding. The girl returned home twice having bled through her clothes (Bristol Live)

Cotham Academy has far more things to worry about in their main school building site than notional ideas of kids being attacked or absconding from a playing field.

They have earned a national yet alone local reputation for being overly zealous/ over controlling.

Will it benefit the pupils? Research in the Guardian from ACLU suggests that CCTV is not good for pupils and does more harm. It can negatively harm the mental health of pupils. The pupils will feel watched all the time and this has been shown to be contrary to well being. Should hundreds of kids be subjected to this? Below is an extract from the article in the Guardian:

*The ACLU commissioned YouGov to complete a*

*national survey on student's perceptions towards surveillance tech in their schools. More than 500 students ages 14-18 were asked about their experience in school regarding this technology and almost one-third of students reported this technology makes them feel like they are always being watched.*

*When it comes to education technology surveillance in their schools, students reported heightened anxiety, unease and fear. Students also reported a degraded level of trust towards their teachers and school administrators. An analysis of plots against schools conducted by the United States Secret Service showed that students themselves often play an important role in reporting dangerous or self-harm behavior and plots to staff.*

*"It's going to make it less likely that students are going to reach out for help," said Amelia Vance, the president of the Public Interest Privacy Center. This constant monitoring has a demonstrated chilling effect on students and makes it less likely that they will seek the sometimes life saving help they and other students need, Vance said.*

*The ACLU report also offers recommendations to school districts and state level decision-makers about which tools are proven to work. These tools include mental health counselors, guidance counselors, hall monitors, doors that lock from the inside and other proven techniques that benefit student safety.*

*“I think the problem is much of what we’re doing when it comes to student surveillance technology only makes us feel safer,” Marlow said. “But it doesn’t actually make the kids any safer ... and it’s hurting our kids in the process.”*

*Source ( The Guardian)*

Any crime away from the main school site is not going to be prevented by CCTV

These cameras on poles are suitable for an out of town shopping centre maybe. They might be suitable for a series of warehouse sites. They are not suitable for an area that has a ‘green’ feel and has 2 listed buildings directly present as well as a listed gate.

3 The Cameras will be intrusive

There will be 3 cameras on each pole which are able to provide a 360 degree view of not only the field but the surrounding roads, private roads and homes. The cameras will be hugely intrusive and impact the privacy of the surrounding houses as they will be able to see into the back bedroom windows especially at night when people are getting changed. The cameras will also be able to peer down into the bungalows that are used to house vulnerable and disabled people as well as see into these bungalow gardens. The cameras will also look over public amenity land ( the arboretum and Stoke Lodge car park) not forming part of Cotham’s lease where for instance I once walked my disabled son with complex needs. This is hugely intimidating to someone with significant neurodiversity who already gets paranoid.

The cameras will be able to identify unmasked people who are lawfully going about their business. This is not in keeping with a peaceful / relaxing walk.

The cameras will also be able to look into the children’s play park which will be off putting to parents using this resource. This does not provide a relaxing environment for a children’s play park.

The applicant will even be able to use infra red and see people [REDACTED] at night in their own back bedrooms with their partners or lovers. This is a shocking invasion of privacy.

How will people know what is being captured and indeed what might one day appear on the dark web?

The whole thing seems tantamount to harassment of the locality for no reasonable or proportionate purpose.

In my opinion the presence of these cameras might result in litigation as they could contravene Article 8 of the HRA. If not properly controlled there could be litigation for harassment.

Who are we meant to trust to respect people's privacy and stop this type of intrusion? What training will they have? Are they trained by MI5 or just some small one week training course? Who will keep a record of who is surveying the footage? How will that data be stored and who will view it?

Will it be a temporary agency office worker doing holiday cover looking at the cameras in the school reception?

Cotham argues that these security measures are necessary to prevent crime. However, there has already been existing CCTV and this has not stopped a few fence panels being taken down.

Impact on me: I have a [REDACTED] who is already challenged by the fence. The use of CCTV will increase his fear of 'Big Brother' watching him and make him less likely to want to use the perimeter of the field for our dog walk. In this regard, it will act to drive the locals away but this is our immediate green space. Is this what the school wants?

I think that all this measure will do will be to make the site seem more prison like and I suspect further alienate the local residents. If I owned a house in the immediate vicinity I would be incandescent with anger about having surveillance cameras pointed at my home. It's a horrible feeling being surveyed all the time.

If I was in a house adjacent to the field I would certainly want to have shown to me all footage of my home on a regular basis to see all the data. I would want to see the details of every staff member with access and frankly, would be contacting my home insurers to see if they would provide cover to take legal action against the school under Article 8.

Meta analysis shows that surveillance both decreases and increases crime. It really only works with active monitoring of the live footage when combined with high lighting. (college of policing) Success seemed linked to public support (which they don't have here)

Unless CA intend to have 24/7 surveillance rooted entirely on the cameras the cameras are a complete waste of time to prevent any vandalism. even were an operative to see vandalism in process the police aren't exactly quick to react.

If any thing I suspect that the atmosphere they create will lead to more vandalism and that is not pleasant for anyone. People might vandalise to prove a point that the CCTV cameras are worthless.

On Stoke Lane we have a small supermarket and even with live security cameras and staff on site watching the shoplifting happening and a security guard on the door nothing stops the thieves. Tik Tok is awash with recorded videos of crime and how does that stop it?

What exactly is the point of these cameras, what purpose do they serve and what good do they do?



4 The development will require groundwork and tunnelling and Cotham has a terrible reputation when it comes to trees. I believe that they began the work on the original fence without a tree surgeon report. As they did not need planning they had no method statement. The tree forum had to get involved so the council had to insist on hand digging etc. On their main school site in 2006 their contractors knocked down TP0 trees. ( you can google Skanska Cotham 2006 trees)

### Conclusion

The whole thing seems excessive and Big Brotherish.

All this will do is denigrate the site and pave the way to intense development.

Sharon Smithen 

Sent from my iPhone