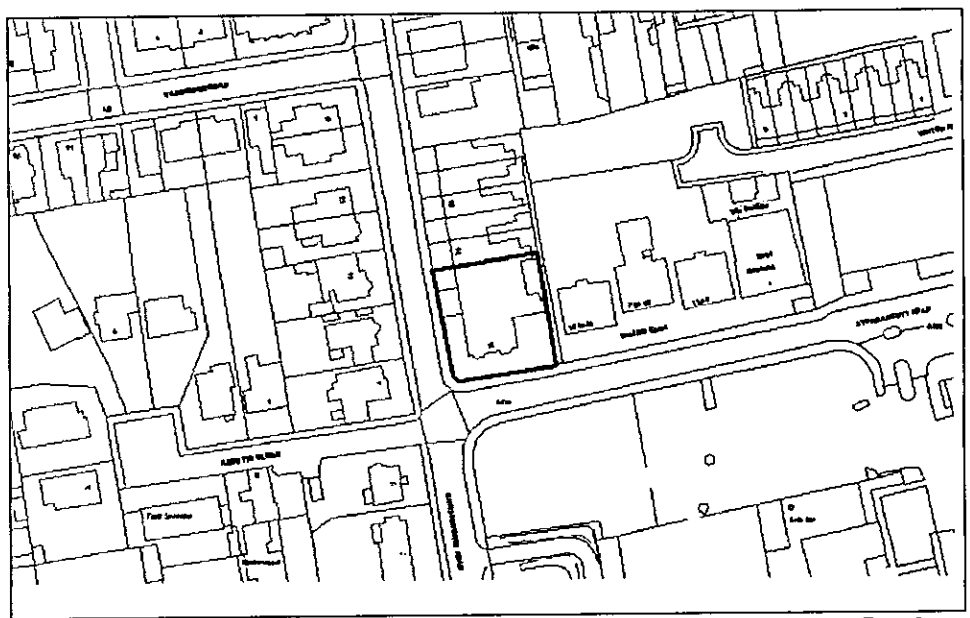
Application No: WB/11/0218/FULL	Recommendation – Refuse
Site	12 Stoke Abbott Road
Proposal:	Retrospective application for the provision of timber trellis above boundary wall fronting Christchurch Road.



Not to Scale

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1. THE PROPOSAL AND THE SITE

This application seeks retrospective approval for an L-shaped length of trellis and support posts some 14 metres in length and 1.8 metres high, outside of the Centre of English Studies in Stoke Abbot Road.

The Centre of English Studies occupies a distinguished period villa on a corner plot, with a very attractive flint and brick perimeter wall to Christchurch Road. For this reason it is a Heritage Asset for the purposes of Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment.

Christchurch Road is a popular pedestrian route from Worthing Central train station into the town centre. The surrounding area exhibits a good historic character and appearance, consisting predominately of late Victorian villas and early Edwardian properties.

2. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING LETTER

The applicant has submitted a supporting letter summarised as follows:-

- *Absolutely no intention of flouting planning rules, simply the case nobody realised would need permission in the first place.*

- *Prior to this redevelopment happening that part of our garden was rather unkempt, unsightly and in state of poor repair and maintenance. Decided should undertake some remodelling using professional landscapers. This would benefit our students, but also enhance look of surrounding area and street in general. In previous state it did tend to attract unwelcome additions (beer cans, rubbish etc.). With redevelopment this has largely stopped.*

- *As an international English Language school, we attract thousands of fee paying students to Worthing every year and these students spend considerable sums of money in the town. We did therefore feel it was incumbent upon us to provide facilities that are of a suitable level and standard.*

- *Intended as an outdoor seating area in which students can relax and eat, particularly during summer. The trellis has been erected to provide support for plants to grow. These have been positioned to provide privacy for our students from (on occasion) unwanted comments. By the same token, it will hopefully cut down any unwanted intrusion from students into the street.*

3. CONSULTATIONS

None

4. REPRESENTATIONS

None

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

The principle issues raised by this application are:-

i) its effect on business viability of the English Language School;
ii) the character and appearance of the street and the buildings within it.

As such the proposal should be mainly considered against Worthing Core Strategy Policy 16, Saved Local Plan Policy H18, South East Plan Policies CC1, CC6, and BE1, and Government guidance in the form of Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development, PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth, and PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment.

Viability

The Centre of English Studies is a business with quasi-community overtones, and its continued presence is of benefit to the town. PPS4 instructs a positive and constructive approach towards planning applications for economic development.

The enhanced outdoor space has improved student facilities. Nonetheless PPS4 requires a proposal secure a design that has taken the opportunity to improve the character and quality of the area (Policy EC10.2c). It is on this matter that the application fails.

Character and appearance of street

The Centre of English Studies building and its wall are very prominent in the street scene, and contribute in an important way to both the character and appearance of the street scene. The trellis is therefore prominent too.

It is inappropriate and out of keeping in this attractive street scene, where it is seen as an alien addition. It is poorly finished and of an incongruous style that has little reference to surrounding urban form, especially when compared with the fine quality of the historic garden wall and the period terrace that sits behind it. Because there is only a small gap between the trellis and the historic wall below, it is of equal prominence to the wall so distracting from the wall's fine quality jarring against the delightful traditional historic wall which reflects local distinctiveness. Also because of its position atop the wall the finely preserved detail of the striking period terrace behind, including original timber vertical sliding sash windows, is partly concealed at eye-level so diminishing the public's apprehension of this Heritage Asset.

The trellis serves only to harm the appearance of the historic wall and terrace behind, and because of that, to detract from the special historic character and appearance of the area. In the recent past this area has been nominated for inclusion within a newly designated Conservation Area. This is testament of its strength of historic character and the well preserved traditional appearance of the buildings within it, including the application property.

Clearly the harm its intrusive and offensive nature it causes cannot be ameliorated by staining or painting. Whilst it might provide a very limited amount of additional privacy, but only above the wall, it does so at the cost of considerable harm to the appearance of the street. This character includes particularly its open and spacious frontage facing Christchurch Road, and the important views of the settings of the buildings, including their attractive front gardens.

The trellis is clearly not high enough to prevent overlooking and other items being thrown over it, and it would be wholly unacceptable to introduce a fence which sought to do that, as it would cause untold harm to the special character of the area. The overall value of the quality and open character of the area is an important value to be cherished, preserved and conserved.

7. CONCLUSION

The local planning authority recognises the benefits to the facilities of the language school that have come about from the trellis screen. However, this has to be balanced against the duty to safeguard the established character and appearance of the area.

For the reasons previously set out the trellis fails to preserve the character as well as the appearance of the street. It fails to accord with Worthing Core Strategy Policy 16 and fails to heed national policy in PPS1 and PPS5.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse on the grounds that:-

1. The length of trellis and support posts would, by reason of its incongruous style and finish and intrusive prominence, detract from the finely preserved detail of the period terrace and its historic boundary wall to the detriment of the setting of this Heritage Asset and the locally distinctive historic character and appearance of the street. As such the proposal would conflict with Worthing Core Strategy Policy 16, South East Plan Policies BE1, BE6 CC1 and CC6 and the guiding principles of PPS1 and PPS5.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

20th July 2011

[redacted]

8/7/11