



THE WORTHING SOCIETY

PRESIDENT: Robert Elleray A.L.A., F.R.S.A., F.L.S.

PLEASE REPLY TO:-

18 Mill Road
Angmering
West Sussex
BN16 4HT
Tel: 01903 783925

Mr Geoff Mee
Chief Director of Highways and Transport
County Hall
Chichester
PO19 1RR

Dear Mr Mee,

RE: Upgrading of Heritage Style Lamps in Conservation Areas e.g. Ambrose Place and Farncombe Road Worthing.

I am writing in my capacity as Chairman of the Worthing Society to register our serious concerns regarding the mis-management of the upgrading of street lights in the many Conservation Areas throughout the town. As you may be aware, the main aims of the Society are to conserve the architectural character of Worthing's Conservation Areas and the "setting" of our Listed Buildings. I refer in particular to the recent works in Ambrose Place, which is part of the Chapel Road Conservation Area and Farncombe Road, a Conservation Area in its own right. There appears to be a serious lack of communication and/or understanding between WSCC and the Contractors, SSE, regarding the identification of Conservation Areas and the correct procedures to follow in dealing sensitively with the street lighting in these areas. This situation could have been avoided if the contractors had given proper notice before work commenced. The lamp posts would not have been removed.

Because of Ambrose Place's location within a Conservation Area residents have to observe strict criteria for any work done and have even been denied the installation of Virgin Cable because of the precious pavement.

We have recently received a large number of complaints from our members and residents directly affected by these works. They have contacted the Worthing Society to express their outrage that the beautiful heritage lamps were being removed and replaced with a bland modern design. There was also the serious issue of damage to the associated paving in both areas, and the potential negative impact on the setting of the neighbouring Listed Buildings. Indeed, the red paving in Ambrose Place is referred to, and embedded in the Conservation Area description of Ambrose Place. Speaking with Ambrose Place residents I have called the works a 'Heritage Crime' – a term used by English Heritage themselves to describe such actions.

I should like to take this opportunity to remind you that under the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Conservation Areas are defined in Section 69 as "areas

of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to enhance.”

and

(Section 71) provides that local authorities have a clear duty to “preserve and enhance” these Conservation Areas.

and

(Section 66): When such works take place in Conservation Areas there is the likelihood that there will be a direct effect on the “setting” of any adjacent buildings which are protected by the Planning (Listed Buildings Act and Conservation Areas Act)1990 which states:

Local authorities have “a general duty as respects Listed Buildings in exercise of planning functions when considering the desirability of preserving the building or its setting.”

There is also detailed guidance issued by English Heritage to local authorities in the document HELM (Historic Environment Local Management) which advises on the management of Conservation Areas and their special characteristics such as street furniture or paving which contribute to the local scene.

There appears to have been no reference made to the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990 or the best practice guidance contained in the HELM document from English Heritage when preparing the current contract between WSCC and SSE.

I appreciate that the current situation has to some extent been improved by the intervention of Mr Glen Longley at the Engineering Department of WBC. We understand that the original lamps have been located. The Worthing Society and residents look forward to their reinstatement after any necessary refurbishment and repairs to damage caused by their removal.

If you would like to discuss any points raised in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me. You will see the copy recipients at the foot of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

David Sumner

Chairman

The Worthing Society

Copies for information to: Mr James Appleton, Head of Planning, Wellbeing and Regeneration, WBC; Mr Richard Small, Heritage and Conservation Architect, WBC; SSE Customer Services; Samantha Johnson, English Heritage Historic Adviser; Councillor Paul Yallop, Council Leader.