

‘GROT SPOT’ OWNER IS FINED / OWNER TOLD TO IMPROVE ‘GROT SPOT’

Date: 09.12.05

The owner of a building highlighted *as* one of Tunbridge Wells' top 10 "grot spots" has been fined £1,000 for not cleaning it up.

Stephen Perfect of Goods Station Road, was issued with a Section 79 enforcement notice on September 22, last year, but ended up in Sevenoaks Magistrates Court on Thursday last week, after failing to comply with it.

The graffiti-daubed property - 18 Victoria Road - is located behind the Royal Victoria Place Shopping Centre and has its windows and doors boarded up.

Mr Perfect was found guilty of failing to comply with the notice, and now has three months to undertake a timetable of work or face further prosecutions.

The legislation, under Section 79 of the Building Act, gives a local authority the power to order the owner to repair, or restore, or even demolish a building, which is in a ruinous or dilapidated condition and is seriously detrimental to the amenities of the neighbourhood.

If the property is not cleaned up the council will also have the right to implement work and bill the landlord accordingly.

But the council's head of legal services Lois Howell said Mr Perfect had already started work on improving the building and had agreed a three month time scale was adequate.

A Section 215 notice was also issued to Mr Perfect in September 2004, but it had expired by the time of going to court.

The prosecution was hailed as "good news" by Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum member Daniel Bech, who recently took the Kent and Sussex Courier on a tour of the town's eyesores. He said: "I am very glad to hear that the council has done something about this. Hopefully the fact it has made a successful prosecution will make other landlords realise it is a serious issue and frighten them into doing something about their properties."

RAMSHACKLE:

Number 18 Victoria Road in Tunbridge Wells is situated near the Royal Victoria Place Shopping Centre