



BATH
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Guidance Note

Broadband and Fibre Infrastructure Installation on Listed and Heritage Buildings

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1. Introduction

Most homes, including traditional, listed and heritage buildings require the fitting of broadband and fibre equipment to ensure adequate levels of internet connectivity. This applies to traditional buildings in both residential and non-residential use, particularly relevant in Bath where a high number of city-centre Georgian buildings are in office and retail use.

The associated benefits of this essential public amenity and technological access must be balanced against minimising any material and aesthetic harm to the significance of a listed building, or preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area. Where a building is unlisted, we continue to encourage that consideration is made to sustaining its significance (e.g architectural and historic value) as well as any positive contribution to the wider streetscape or townscape.

2. Best practice guidelines

- a. Where possible, principal and/or street-facing elevations should be avoided when installing fibre boxes or associated cabling.
- b. Installation should not 'cut through' or intrude upon architectural features or detailing.
- c. Low visibility areas are preferable for installation, such as on rear elevations, low down at the base of external walls, or concealed below the roof eaves where there is an overhang. Bath's terraced housing stock typically includes a lower ground floor lightwell which may be suitable for infrastructure installation at a lower level to minimise visibility.
- d. Any equipment should be in a colour to match the host elevation (eg. buff/Bath stone colour) to ensure a recessive appearance that blends in with its context.
- e. Wires should be pinned in place to prevent these from coming loose and resulting in a messy, unkempt appearance.
- f. When fixing equipment to historic elevations, care should be taken to minimise the number of fixings into stonework. It is encouraged that any existing fixing points are reused where possible, or new fixing points located within mortar joints which are considered more materially sacrificial. There is additional consideration as to how the proposed equipment may affect water run-off patterns and any potential for water retention, pooling, staining, or localised weathering and associated impact on historic fabric.
- g. Where possible, new cabling should follow existing rainwater goods to prevent further cluttering of the building façade.
- h. Where possible, fibre installation works should also include the removal of any non-essential cabling, with nail or drill holes filled with a suitable lime putty to prevent future material damage. In this way, potential impact to the building resulting from installation can be balanced against the heritage gains of decluttering the appearance of a listed building. There is an ongoing issue with the accumulation of defunct wiring and cabling as technology is upgraded, which may not have been installed with the appropriate permissions (eg. listed building consent).

3. Working on listed buildings

Under the [Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) Act 1990](#), listed building consent is required for any works “*which would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest*”. In cases where works may be considered too minor to require planning permission, often labelled *de minimis* works, these may still affect the character or appearance of a listed building and thus require listed building consent. Where works are undertaken without the relevant consent, these may be liable to enforcement action.

If you’re unsure, we recommend getting in touch with your Local Authority’s conservation team to discuss whether a listed building application is required. B&NES Council Local Planning Authority (LPA) encourages engagement with their planning and conservation team where installation of infrastructure, including structures such as cabinets and poles, would be a) close to/affecting the setting of a listed building; b) in historic surfacing; or c) in sensitive locations in the conservation area.

The conservation officer will be best-placed to assess the proposed **visual and physical impact** to a heritage building and how this could be mitigated. In order to initially assess the potential impact of a proposed installation (wire runs, boxes etc.) on the character of a listed building, it is again suggested that preapplication advice is sought. It may be that suitable mitigation measures may limit impact to the point where listed building consent is not required; however, the LPA recommends that this should be clarified with them.

4. Larger projects

For further guidance on larger infrastructure projects such as the installation of cabinets, poles, and associated mainframe networks, you are obliged to contact your Local Authority where above-ground works are proposed within a conservation area. The Local Planning Authority also operates as a statutory consultee for any, more general works for “*the installation, alteration or replacement of any electronic communications apparatus*”.

General parameters have been set by the LPA in relation to the expected appearance and finish of equipment such as cabinets within Bath; cabinets may be finished in a buff colour where it relates to a Bath stone wall within the sensitive historic centre, or a darker grey for historic surfacing. For other, greener locations, such as near parks, hedges or in a more rural area, as well as outside of the conservation area, a dark green finish is preferred.

5. Contacts

You can get in touch with a B&NES officer at conservation_andplanning@bathnes.gov.uk or call on 01225 394041.

Further advice from Bath Preservation Trust is available at conservation@bptrust.org.uk

Please visit our [website](#) for further planning advice and resources.