



Historic England

The installation of telecommunications equipment, including broadband and mobile, in churches and other listed places of worship

Introduction

This note offers congregations and installers advice about Historic England's involvement with proposals to install telecommunications equipment.

It explains Historic England's role, what information we need before we can offer informed advice and the key issues about which we might be concerned.

We would normally expect the church's architect or surveyor to be involved in assessing and advising on the proposals to ensure that appropriate methods and materials are used, damage to historic fabric avoided and access either maintained or improved.

Our involvement

1.1 Why is Historic England involved?

We are the statutory adviser to local authorities and the listed five denominations in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 and the [Ecclesiastical Exemption Order 2010](#).

This means that if the installation will make changes to historic fabric that could affect the character or significance of a listed building we have to be consulted, whether you are seeking permission through your denominational advisory body or the local authority.

1.2 What do we need to see to offer you relevant advice?

Before offering any advice we need some basic information so we can understand the proposals and the impact on the building. You can provide this information in paper or digital format. Once we have all the relevant details we aim to provide advice on applications within 21 days. Every case is assessed on its merits.

- Statements of Significance and Need. Remember that [our guidance](#) on making changes to historic churches states 'the more harm the proposed changes are likely to cause to the significance of the building, the more they will require justification in terms of the public benefits they will bring.'
- The specification for the installation, including drawings showing location of any equipment, cable routes, access, etc.
- A plan of the church and churchyard, showing (depending on the nature of the installation) routes for cables, position of cabinets and any trenching.
- Photographs of the equipment, with an indication of size.
- Photographs of the church from the inside, marked to show where equipment will be located.
- Photographs of the church from the outside, marked to show the impact of any external equipment eg antenna or dishes.

1.3 What issues will be of particular concern to us?

1. What will be the impact of the installation on the outside of the building?

- Antennae, dishes or boxes may have an impact on the appearance or setting of the building. They may also change its setting in the wider landscape, which is an important part of the building's significance. Further guidance on setting can be found [here](#).
- Is it possible to minimise the impact, so that key views of the building are not spoiled, eg by lowering the height of equipment.
- If it is necessary to remove louvres then we expect that the installer will seek out the best possible alternative in the light of the contribution that these make to the significance of the building.
- Details of proposals for storage in a safe and secure location should be provided. Photographs of the original louvres in place before being removed will help when they are reinstated when the equipment is taken away or technology changes.

2. What are the impacts of the installation inside the building?

- What impact will fixings, fittings, cables and control equipment have on the interior of the building?
- Is it possible to minimise the impact so that historic fabric is not damaged?
- Will the work require the insertion of new steel beams to support cabinets?
- Where will the cable runs be routed and how will they be secured?

3. Access to the equipment and the rest of the building

- Will the equipment make it more difficult to access the roof, bells or bell frame for maintenance and repairs?
- Does the installer expect to keep the area locked to prevent unauthorised access to its equipment?

4. Safety

- Is the structure of the building, where the equipment is to be installed, strong enough to take the additional weight?
- Will the roof covering be breached by wires, creating a leak hazard, or how will the installation avoid this?
- Will fixings for antenna or other equipment avoid breaching the lead or blocking drains?

5. Archaeology

- Are there any archaeological implications, especially in cases where external cabinets are to be installed outside the church itself?

1.4 Further information

Further information can be found from the following websites:

- Church Buildings Council: <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/churches/open-sustainable/telecoms>
- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings: <https://www.spab.org.uk/advice/conservation-advice/telecommunications-installations/>

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HistoricEngland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/places-of-worship/making-changes-to-your-place-of-worship/

Contact email: Diana.Evans@HistoricEngland.org.uk

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