
2022/0423

Applicant: BMBC - Mrs Karen Buttery (Project Manager)

Installation of additional internal wifi access points to the Experience Museum, basement collections stores, breakout area, archives stores and basement office (Listed Building Consent)

Experience Barnsley Museum, Barnsley Town Hall, Church Street, S70 2TA

Site Description

The application site is in relation to two levels within Barnsley Town Hall – the ground floor level which is partially occupied by the Experience Barnsley Museum and the basement level which is occupied by a mix of uses including the archives stores, offices and staff breakout area. Barnsley Town Hall is a grade-II listed building located on Church Street in Barnsley Town Centre. The site is located within the Regent Street/Church Street/Market Hill Conservation Area with the surrounding area containing a mixture of different use types and services, fitting of the central location. The surrounding area has changed substantially in recent years, with the construction of the Barnsley College building to the South-West and the landscaped square, with water feature, seating areas and sculpture to the immediate South and South-East.

The Town Hall was constructed in 1933 and serves as the landmark building within the Town Centre and the wider borough as a whole. It is a large, rectangular-shaped building with the 'main' entrance into the building from Church Street – East facing, however there are various other entrances into the building, including from the South which leads immediately into the Experience Barnsley museum.





Historic England listing

Heritage Category: Listed Building
 Grade: II
 List Entry Number: 1151143
 Date first listed: 13th January 1986

Details:

SE3406NW BARNSELY CHURCH STREET SE3406SW (west side), Barnsley 8/10 Town Hall including 9/10 attached railings GV II Town Hall and attached railings. 1933 by Briggs and Thornely of Liverpool. Portland stone, brick infill panels at rear. Classical style. 3 storeys plus basement to front due to sloping ground. 21 bays by 10 bays with 2 internal courtyards. Symmetrical facade of 8, 5 and 8 bays. The central 5 bays break forward and are surmounted by a tall square tower. Rusticated ground floor with band above. Central square-headed portal with dentilled cornice surmounted by anthemion acroteria and a central cartouche with scroll support. Foundation tablets to each side. A giant, Corinthian distyle in antis loggia with clasping pilasters to each side on 1st and 2nd floors of the central 5 bays. 3 tall round-arched windows with glazing bars to the back wall. Iron balustrade. The single square-headed window to each side has a small cornice on console brackets and a large panel above. Windows to other bays are 20-pane casements, with 16 panes to the smaller 2nd-floor windows. Deep frieze and cornice and deep parapet which is balustraded over the central 3 bays. The 3-stage reducing square tower sits on a square base with corner urns. The 1st stage has a large niche to each face, and in each is set a square-headed window with fluted Doric colonnettes supporting a full entablature with urns. Below the niche on the facade side is a relief of the Barnsley County Borough coat of arms with its supporters: a miner and a glass-blower. Corner urns surmount the 1st stage. A clock face to each side of the 2nd stage which has a Doric entablature with anthemion acroteria. The final stage has a triple group of slender lights, a deep, swagged frieze with acroteria and stepped blocking courses. The rear elevation has 5 central bays with a 1st and 2nd floor giant order of square piers and pilasters with ornamental capitals. The centre 3 bays form a loggia whose lower part (1st floor) is infilled with tripled windows. Other windows are casements as before. The left and right return elevations have 8 central bays and wide corner bays which break forward slightly and are framed at 1st- and 2nd-floor levels by giant fluted Corinthian pilasters. 1st-floor windows to corner bays have cornices, the rest are 16 and 20-pane casements as before.

Interior: entrance hall with good central staircase with decorative cast-iron balustrade and bronze handrail and newels. Dentilled plaster friezes, decorated with anthemion. Glazed dome over stairwell. Terrazzo fluted piers. The Council chamber has walnut panels and fluted Corinthian pilasters, original fittings and good detailing.

Attached railings: square, Portland stone panelled piers, dwarf wall and heavy cast-iron railings are attached at front and continue around the building. Round, cast-iron fluted bars with square bosses, pineapple finials and round section rails. Two fluted, ornamental lamp standards with later lamp housings, to each side of entrance. The Town Hall was opened by H.R.H. Edward, Prince of Wales on 14th December 1933.

Planning History

B/84/1659/BA – Installation of new chimney to gas boiler (Historic)

B/94/0463/BA/LB – Listed Building Consent granted by the Government Office for internal alterations to provide refurbished members accommodation and refurbished opposition workroom (Historic)

B/94/1032/BA/LB – Internal alterations to provide refurbished office (Phase D) (Historic)

B/95/0852/BA/LB – Installation of new external and internal doors (Historic)

2006/1579 - Internal alterations to form new accommodation, public reception area, Cabinet Office, accessible toilet, mother and baby room and Cabinet Officers' Office. Installation of secondary double glazing to 7 ground floor windows. Alterations to Lancaster Gate entrance doors to provide automatic operation. (Listed Building) (Approved with conditions)

2008/1329 - Change of use of ground floor and basement of Town Hall to a museum comprising internal and external alterations. (Listed Building Consent)

2008/1338 - Change of use of ground floor and basement of Town Hall into a museum (Approved with conditions)

2010/0942 – Internal alterations to first and second floors (LBC) (Approved with conditions)

2010/0953 – Replacement of external windows (LBC) (Approved with conditions)

2020/0370 - Internal alterations consisting of relocation of doors and formation of a shielding lobby (Listed Building Consent (approved with conditions)

2020/0371 - Internal alterations consisting of relocation of doors and formation of a shielding lobby (Approved with conditions)

2021/0914 – Installation of roof top Solar PV panels and 3 x no air source heat pumps (Approved with conditions)

2021/0919 – Installation of roof top Solar PV panels and 3 x no air source heat pumps (Approved with conditions)

Proposed Development

The application is part of a series of BMBC-related developments which seek to upgrade communications and connectivity provision in several BMBC-owned buildings. The proposed development in this application seeks to gain Listed Building Consent to install numerous WIFI access points (APs) in various positions in two floors (Ground floor and Basement level) of Barnsley Town Hall. Specifically, the development seeks consent to install x 2 internal WIFI APs on the ground floor serving the Experience Barnsley Museum and x 7 WIFI APs. The chosen APs have the following dimensions

W – 21.6cm

L – 21.6cm

H – 4.3cm

Internal AP

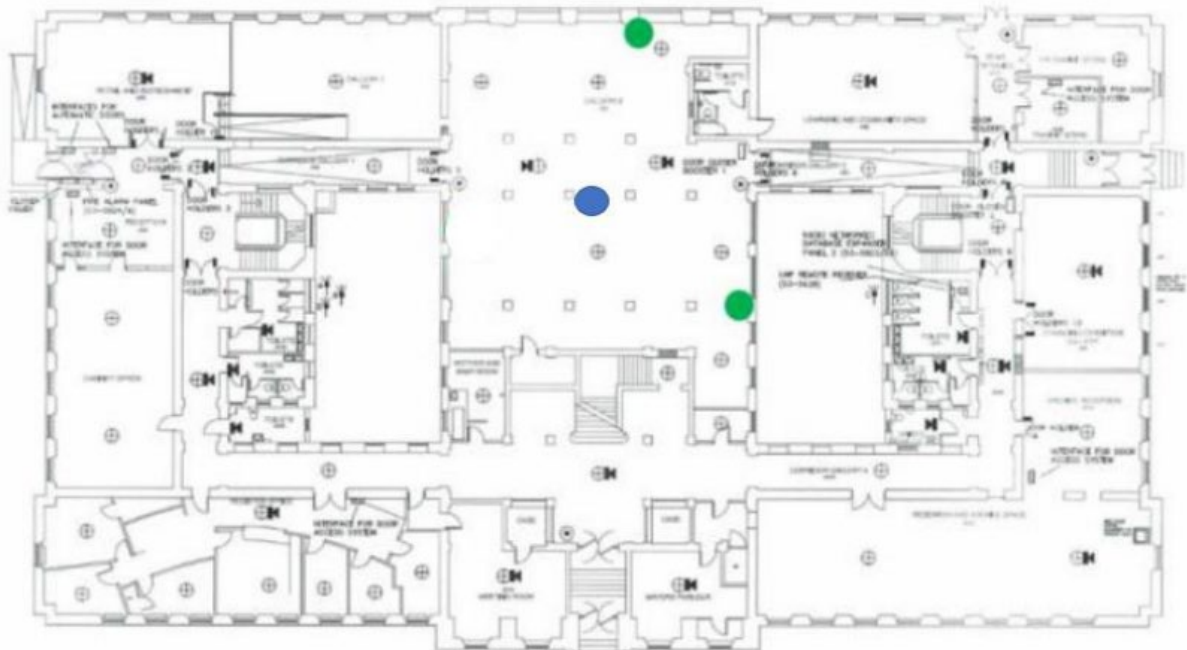
The Cisco Catalyst 9120AX Series Access Points are the next generation of enterprise access points. They are resilient, secure, and intelligent.



Access point (without mounting brackets): C9120AXI: 21.6 x 21.6 x 4.3 cm
Mounting bracket is invisible behind the AP and is attached to the wall/ceiling by four screws.

The AP points will be positioned solely on the ceiling of the Experience barnsley museum (ground floor) and a mixture of ceilings and walls on the basement level, in various positions throughout each floor which is reflected on the plan provided below:

Ground Floor (Experience Barnsley museum):



Blue dot = existing AP

Green dot = proposed AP

Basement Level (mixed use):



Green dot = AP

Policy Context

Planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise and the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. The Local Plan (adopted January 2019), alongside the Joint Waste Plan and relevant neighbourhood plans, form the statutory development plan for Barnsley. It establishes policies and proposals for the development and use of land up to the year 2033 and will be used when considering planning applications and to coordinate investment decisions that affect the towns, villages and countryside of Barnsley. The Local Plan supersedes the remaining saved policies from the Unitary Development Plan (adopted in the year 2000) and the Core Strategy (adopted in 2011).

Local Plan

In reference to this application, the following policies are relevant:

Relevant Local Plan policies include:

GD1: General Development – Development will be approved if there will be no significant adverse effect on the living conditions and residential amenity of existing and future residents.

D1: High Quality Design and Place Making – Development is expected to be of a high quality design and will be expected to respect, take advantage of and reinforce the distinctive, local character and other features of Barnsley.

BTC18: Westgate/Churchfields - Within the Westgate/Churchfields District we will give priority to office development . We will also allow residential, shops, leisure and entertainment uses.

HE1: The Historic Environment – we will positively encourage developments which will help in the management, conservation, understanding and enjoyment of Barnsley's Historic environment, especially of those assets which are at risk.

HE2: Heritage Statements and general application procedures – Proposals that are likely to affect known heritage assets or sites where it comes to light there is potential for the discovery of unrecorded heritage assets will be expected to include a description of the site and its setting.

HE3: Developments affecting Historic Buildings – Proposals involving additions or alterations to listed buildings or buildings of evident historic significance such as locally listed buildings (or their setting) should seek to conserve and where appropriate enhance that building's significance.

NPPF

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. At the heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development proposals that accord with an up to date development plan should be approved without delay. The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.

General design principles in the NPPF are specified from paragraph 126 onwards with specific reference to how applications should be decided on by Local Authorities outline in paragraph 130 (general design considerations) and paragraph 134, which state that 'permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions'.

Paragraph 199 states When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 202 states where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Supplementary Planning Documents/SPGs

Heritage Impact Assessments

Consultations

Conservation Officer – This proposal is the result of a wider project to improve the wifi connectivity to a number of our sites including Cannon Hall, The Cooper Gallery, The Town Hall, Elsecar and Worsbrough Mill. I have been briefed early in the project by Karen Buttery and Glynn Shore and we have had a number of meetings (including site meetings) to discuss this matter. We discussed in detail the various sensitivities we have at each of our historic and designated sites and the need to balance the enhancement of the wifi provision without harming the heritage significance of the building or the place it serves. In relation to the Town Hall, I explained that the basement and stores areas were obviously of much less sensitivity in terms of services and new kit installation (such as AP's) due the extensive wiring and pipe runs already in situ and the generally functional nature of the spaces. Consequently, I see no issues whatsoever with this part of the installation. Regarding the museum space and the main Experience Barnsley Exhibition room, there is already a single AP, and visually similar items of modern paraphernalia including security lights, lighting tracks, power sockets and the like on show. I would also note the obvious presence of the museum display cases and artefacts associated with Experience Barnsley that lend their own modern character to the rooms. Essentially, this is an already heavily altered space which was extensively changed (including the removal of partition walls) and refitted during the museum fit out. These works also involved the making good of a number of walls and ceilings and so fabric is unlikely to be original. Consequently, the installation of the additional AP's and the associated Cat6 cabling will likely be intrusive (minor) but on a relative scale I would not see this as harmful or unjustified. Even if there were some degree of harm, I feel the justification is adequate in terms of the wider benefit of connectivity for visitors to the building and the works are reversible. Overall, I raise no objections but would request that additional cabling be accommodated (wherever possible) within existing trunking / risers / conduits etc. and that the AP units themselves are decorated (or match) the ceiling they are attached to.

Ward Councillors – No comments

Representations

Neighbour notification letters were sent to neighbouring properties and a site notice was placed nearby; no comments were received.

Assessment

Principle of Development

Barnsley Town Hall is a landmark building located on Church Street in Barnsley Town Centre. The Town Hall is a grade-II listed building, located within the Conservation Area and the Westgate Churchfield town centre district and therefore assessment against the following planning policies is necessary:

TC1: Town Centres
BTC 5: Landmark Buildings
BTC18: Westgate/Churchfields
HE2: Heritage Statements and general application procedures

Policy TC1 relates to planning decisions retaining Barnsley Town Centre as the dominant town centre within the Borough. The proposed development does not change the use of the Town Hall, improving its usability for staff, visitors and general users. The proposed development is in line with this policy.

Policy BTC 5 indicates Barnsley Town Hall as the key Landmark building within the borough, but this policy is largely related to neighbouring developments which are required to protect the setting of the landmark building as well as views onto the building. The proposed works are entirely internal and have no/very little impact on the setting of the landmark and how it relates with the surrounding area.

Local Plan Policy BTC18 states that within the Westgate/Churchfields District, the Council will give priority to office development, but residential, leisure and entertainment uses are permitted. The proposed development is to support the existing building which is mixed use containing elements of all of the above (except residential) and it is considered this policy has been complied with.

A heritage statement has been provided by the applicant which provides substantial justification and background to the scheme, following pre-application collaboration and advice from the Conservation Officer. Further assessment in terms of visual amenity and the impact on the Historic Environment will be made below but the requirements of Policy HE2 are considered to have been met.

Assessment against other relevant local and national planning policies will be made below but the policies associated with the principle of development are considered to have been complied with and the principle of development is acceptable.

Visual Amenity and Impact on the Historic Environment

The Town Hall is a Grade-II listed building and acts as the main landmark building within the Town Centre and in the wider borough as a whole – as outlined in Local Plan Policy BTC5. The site is also located within the Conservation Area and therefore, the site is clearly very sensitive, and the highest quality of design is expected to justify the development to the building and how it impacts on the area. The development, by its nature, seeks to partially modernise the building which naturally creates a conflict in that it will change and impact some of the historic elements of the building. However, it is considered that there is sufficient background justification provided within the Supporting Information document which highlights the benefits of the scheme and why it is required for the building. The Conservation officer has been involved with the project at an early stage and prior to the application being submitted, met with the applicant numerous times to guide the development. The scheme includes the addition of 2 x WIFI Access Points (APs) to the museum area on the ground floor and the addition/installation of 7 x APs to the basement area which is mixed use. The APs are similar in design to the ones used in the existing building – see photograph below – and are situated within the building and the position of such have been advised and guided by the Conservation Officer.

As part of the application, the Conservation Officer has further assessed the scheme and stated that the basement and store area is of much less significance to the building due to the extensive wiring and pipe runs already in situ – see photograph below. The development may require some additional cabling/trunking but the existing will be re-used wherever possible. Consequently, there are no concerns raised with installation in the installation in the basement. The Case Officer also undertook a site visit, and it was clear that the additional APs would clearly not look out of place in the basement area, which is not freely open to the public which the photographs below help to indicate. The benefits of installing 7 APs in the basement area is considered to outweigh the minimal harm caused to the historic asset, which has already been substantially disrupted by modern paraphernalia.



There is already a single AP in the museum space and main Experience Barnsley exhibition room as well as other visual examples of modern paraphernalia. This area is open to the public and is therefore much more visible to a wider range of people. However, essentially the museum area is an already significantly altered space where the new WIFI APs will not form an overly intrusive impact. The APs are proposed in a similar area to the existing (in the same room) on the ceiling. The new APs exactly match the existing AP in the museum and will largely blend in to the existing visualities of the museum. Again, existing cabling/trunking will be re-used wherever possible to minimize the impact on the fabric of the building. Again, it is appreciated that there is some minimal harm to the historic fabric of the building, but this is minimal and is outweighed by the benefits to increase connectivity to users, visitors and staff. Numerous accompanied site visits have taken place with the Council's Conservation Officer and the Planning Officer both attending site meetings around the relevant parts of the Building. It is clear that the basement area (which is not open to the public) has already seen previous development of a similar nature to which is proposed with cabling/trunking and other modern paraphernalia such as emergency lights and gas meters etc.

The above assessment is in line with NPPF paragraph 202 which states that where there is less than substantial harm to the heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this case, it is felt that there is some very minimal harm to the fabric of the building as it is effectively introducing modern features into arguably the most important Historic/Listed Building within the Borough. But this has been substantially justified, with clear public benefits as it will allow the building to be more usable for both staff and visitors. The impact on the wider conservation area is considered to be extremely small (if any) considering that all of the works are internal. It is therefore in line with Local Plan Policies HE1, HE3 and D1 and is acceptable in terms of visual amenity and its impact on the Historic Environment.

Residential Amenity

No Impact on residential amenity.

Recommendation

Grant listed building consent subject to conditions: