
Committee Date:	06/08/2015	Application Number:	2015/05347/PA
Accepted:	30/06/2015	Application Type:	Full Planning
Target Date:	25/08/2015		
Ward:	Edgbaston		

New Chamberlain Halls Residence, Off Church Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 3AG

Installation of 9 no. antennas and associated ancillary development

Applicant: Wireless Infrastructure Group
Cornwall House, Blythe Gate, Blythe Valley Park, Solihull, B90 8AF,
Agent: Neale Property Services
Holly House, Anstey, Buntingford, Hertfordshire, SG9 0BP

Recommendation

Approve Subject To Conditions

1. Proposal

- 1.1. Planning permission is sought for the installation of 9no. telecommunications antennas (sub-divided into three sets, each of 3no. antennas) and associated infrastructure mounted on top of the main roof level (which is 56m high) at the north east, north west and south west ends (behind the parapet wall) of the New Chamberlain Halls of Residence for students. The new Halls of Residence, currently being built, follows wholesale demolition of previous Halls, granted planning permission in 2013 under Planning Permission 2012/07252/PA. The new building incorporates an equipment room on top of the main roof.
- 1.2. There currently exists a temporary telecommunications mast (46.85m high) located adjacent to Chamberlain Halls (just 15m away) which was erected in order to provide continued mobile phone coverage and network connectivity, whilst the original Halls of Residence (on which the equipment was installed) was demolished and rebuilt. The above rebuilding is now sufficiently advanced, that the Applicant intends to dismantle this temporary structure and erect a new permanent installation on the new Halls building. This would require the mounting of 9 antennas on the roof of the new building. There would also be some ancillary works and cabling, but the majority of associated equipment would be installed internally within the equipment room.
- 1.3. The antennas would each measure 2m in height. They would be coloured light grey and installed on a 2m x 2m steel platform, which would result in a maximum height of 2.4m above the main roof level.
- 1.4. The Applicant confirms that the proposal is ICNIRP-compliant (International Commission for Non-Ionising Radiation Protection).

[Link to Documents](#)

2. Site & Surroundings

- 2.1. The application site is the tallest block (21 storeys) amongst the New Chamberlain student accommodation redevelopment buildings, with access from Church Road, and which falls within The Vale.
- 2.2. The Vale is a Grade II Listed Registered Historic Park and Garden and is located within Edgbaston Conservation Area. The Vale has a parkland setting with buildings arranged around the edges that sit amongst the trees, providing a subtle and defused perimeter around the site. To the south, beyond the site there is an area of land subject to a group Tree Preservation Order (625).
- 2.3. The wider area of the Vale includes a Site of Interest in Nature Conservation (SINC) site at its centre (including the lake and surrounding land) and its designation stops just short of the south west boundary of the application site. Also a Site of Local Interest in Nature Conservation (SLINC) is located to the south of the site including Aiken Wing and its surroundings. A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Edgbaston Pool) is located 200m south of the site and includes the Chad Brook which also runs through the lake in The Vale.
- 2.4. To the immediate north, south and west of the application site lies other blocks of students' accommodation and institution buildings. To the immediate east along Church Road (including a group of Grade II Listed Buildings 10; 11; 12; 13; 14 Church Road), are detached large residential dwellings set within a leafy area.

[Location Map](#)

3. Planning History

- 3.1. 09/02/2006 – 2005/07798/PA – Installation of 6 antennae and ancillary equipment on existing plant room balcony –Approved by the Planning Committee subject to conditions.
- 3.2. 24/01/2013 – 2012/07252/PA – Erection of new student accommodation consisting of 725 bed spaces within four new buildings ranging in height from 5 storeys to 21 storeys, associated landscaping, car parking and access via Church Road. Wholesale demolition of site including Eden Tower, Hampton Wing, Chelwood Wing, Central Kitchen and Eden Wing domestic building (collectively known as Chamberlain Hall and consisting of 623 bed spaces) and removal of protected trees. Approved.
- 3.3. 24/01/2013 – 2012/07253/PA – Conservation Area Consent for the proposed demolition of Eden Tower, Hampton Wing, Chelwood Wing, Central Kitchen and Eden Wing domestic building (collectively known as Chamberlain Hall). Approved.
- 3.4. 14/11/2013 – 2013/07081/PA – Installation of temporary 46.85 metre telecommunications mast during the redevelopment of Chamberlain Halls. Approved for a two year temporary period.

4. Consultation/PP Responses

- 4.1. Local MP, Ward Councillors, Residents, and Resident Associations consulted. Advertised by site notice and press notice. An objection has been received from no.12 Church Road on the basis of health concerns, the excessive height of the building, and the likely visual obtrusiveness of the antennas.

4.2. Transportation – No objection.

4.3. Regulatory Services – No objection.

4.4. Historic England – No objection.

4.5. Garden History Society – No objection.

5. Policy Context

5.1. Birmingham UDP (2005), Draft BDP, Telecommunications Development: Mobile Phone Infrastructure SPD, NPPF (2012), Edgbaston Conservation Area and Character Appraisal (1998), The Vale Registered Historic Park and Garden (Listed Grade II), Grade II Listed Buildings on Church Road.

6. Planning Considerations

6.1. The NPPF states that “..local planning authorities should take into account ...the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (for Conservation Areas)” (para 126). The NPPF also sets out the importance of supporting high quality communications infrastructure, for economic growth and community facilities and services, whilst also considering how various site options and design have been evaluated and compared. Paragraph 3.27, of the adopted UDP, states that “..development [within conservation areas] should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area...the removal of trees or other landscape features which make a positive contribution to the area’s character or appearance will be resisted.” Paragraph 3.29 seeks for planning proposals to respect the historic park and gardens and to take full account of the historic significance.

6.2. The Telecommunications Policy (Paras. 8.55-8.55C) in the Birmingham UDP (2005) and the Telecommunications Development SPD state that a modern and comprehensive telecommunications system is an essential element in the life of the local community and the economy of the City but that in assessing applications for telecommunications equipment, account will be taken of the impact of radio masts, antennae and ancillary structures on existing landscape features, buildings and the outlook from neighbouring properties. In respect of new tall buildings, the Council’s SPD advises that the less sensitive ones should be specifically designed to incorporate telecommunication equipment, where telecommunications equipment should be sited and positioned to minimise the obtrusiveness against the skyline including views from the neighbouring properties and the street. Screening and backdrop opportunities should be maximised and supporting frames should be below the parapet level where possible.

6.3. The principle of re-locating the telecommunication antennas to the rooftop of the new replacement building, on a permanent basis, was established by the previous planning approval (reference 2013/07081/PA). This temporary planning consent enabled the provision of continued mobile phone coverage and network connectivity, whilst the permanent location (Chamberlain Halls) of the telecommunications equipment was redeveloped. Therefore the proposal is acceptable in principle subject to further consideration of visual impact.

6.4. Alternative designs and locations of the antennas (including positioning the antennas further back from the parapet wall or considering other elevations and

rooftops) have been explored by the Applicant during the pre-application discussions. The current location behind the parapet wall would offer the best combination in terms of height and the critical technical requirement in order to ensure a minimal visual impact. The alternatives explored have been detailed in the Applicant's planning statement. Photomontages for the chosen location are submitted as part of this application.

- 6.5. I consider that the proposed antennas would have a limited visual impact on the new building and the surrounding historic context especially noting that the previously demolished tower had broadly similar equipment on the rooftop. In addition, the height of the new tower would mean that views of the rooftop from the adjacent Church Road houses or any other distant tall buildings' across the city would be effectively lost in the wider skyline. The proposed antennas would be painted light grey colour (blending in with the sky) and installed on a 2m x 2m galvanised steel platform, which would result in a maximum height of 2.4m above the main roof level. This would be just above the height of the equipment room.
- 6.6. I therefore do not consider that the number and height of antennas would be materially different from the previously approved antennas on the old Chamberlain Hall, or substantiate a reason for refusal on visual amenity grounds given the national policy support for modern telecommunications systems.
- 6.7. My Conservation Officer supports the re-location of telecommunication antennas to the new location and understands the rationale for the proposed positioning. He states that there are no objections to the positioning of the antennas on this building as it would result in the removal of the existing temporary mast and they would now become integral to an existing tall structure, thereby consolidating utilities.
- 6.8. I concur with the comments made by my Conservation Officer and Historic England and find the proposed antennae acceptable. It is therefore considered that the character and appearance of Edgbaston Conservation Area and that of the Registered Historic Park and Garden would be preserved, as would the setting of adjacent listed buildings on Church Road.
- 6.9. One objection to the proposal has been received from No.12 Church Road on the basis of health concerns, the excessive height of the building, and likely obtrusiveness of the antennas. The visual impact of the proposal has been addressed above. The building's height is not a subject of the current application, as this matter was previously considered under Planning Permission 2012/07252/PA.
- 6.10. In respect to telecommunications equipment and health it is the Government's firm view that the planning system is not the place for determining health safeguards and that in their view if a proposed mobile phone station meets the ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure, it should not be necessary for a Local Planning Authority to consider further the health aspects and concerns about them. The Applicant confirms that the proposal is ICNIRP-compliant (International Commission for Non-Ionising Radiation Protection).

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. I consider that the siting and appearance of the proposed telecommunications equipment would not be detrimental to the visual amenity of the area and would preserve the character and appearance of the Registered Historic Park and Garden and Edgbaston Conservation Area, and the setting of adjacent listed buildings. In

the context of national and local planning policies, and given the previous approval on the site, there would be no substantive grounds to refuse this application. The proposal is a shared venture, which would assist in updating the mobile telecommunications network in a sustainable manner, and therefore the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

8. Recommendation

8.1. That Planning Permission be approved subject to conditions.

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| 1 | Requires the scheme to be in accordance with the listed approved plans |
| 2 | Requires prior submission of details of the external colour finish of the antennae |
| 3 | Limits the approval to 3 years (Full) |
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Case Officer: Stephen Ssejjemba

Photo(s)



View of the application site from the south



View of the application site from Church Road

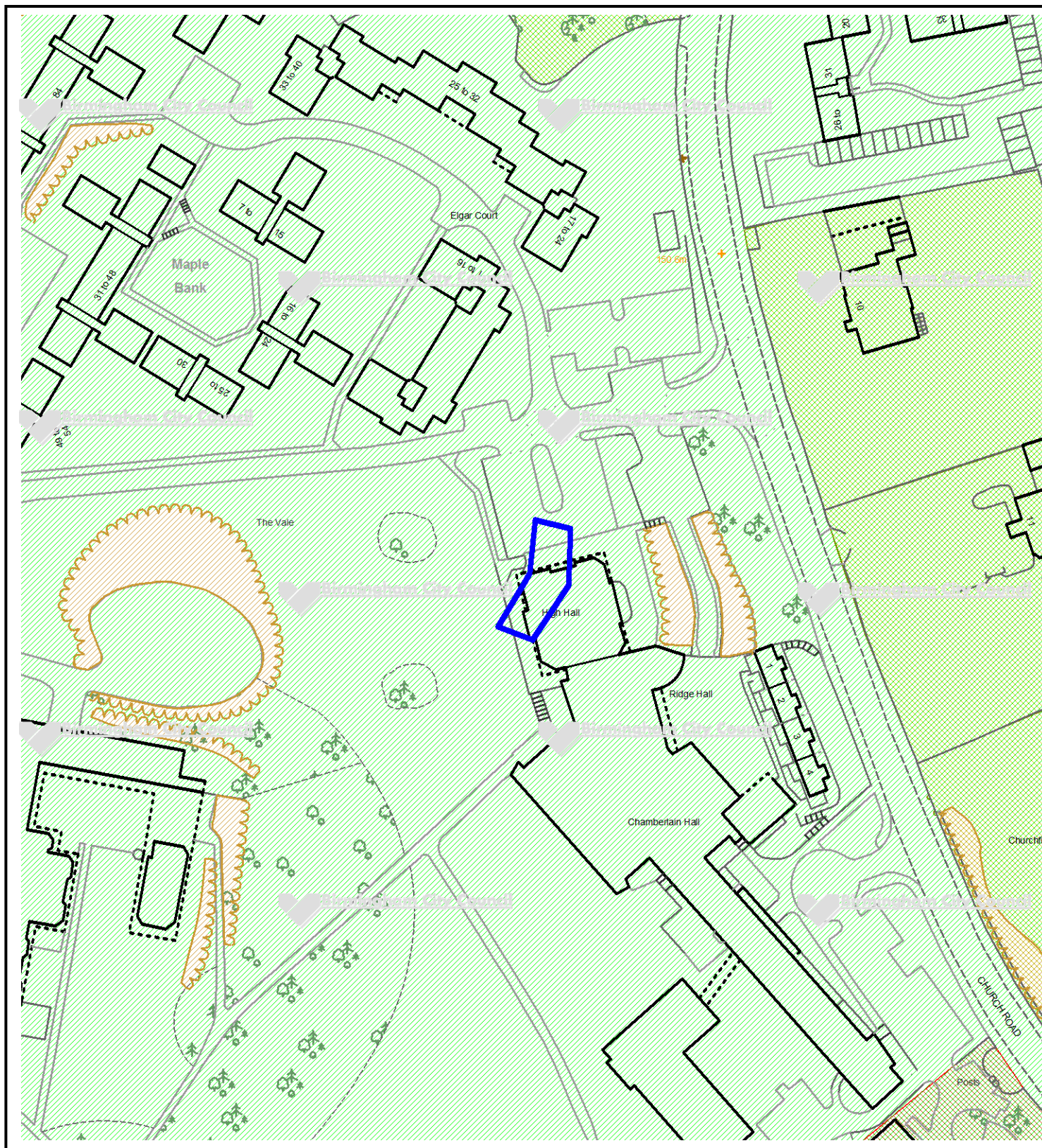


View of the application site from the Lake (The Vale)



View of the application site from Edgbaston Park Road

Location Plan



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