Design and Access Statement

Listed Building Consent Application

Buckden Towers (St Claret Centre), Buckden, Cambridgeshire

Grade I Listed Building

Applicant: Openreach (on behalf of BT Wholesale)
End Customer: Claretian Missionaries Trust
Proposal: Installation of a new Ethernet fibre optic cable connection to a second-floor server room

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1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of an application for Listed Building Consent for the installation of a new Ethernet fibre optic service at Buckden Towers (St Claret Centre), a Grade I listed building occupied by the Claretian Missionaries Trust.

The proposal will provide a modern, high-speed telecommunications connection required to support the ongoing operational needs of the building and its users. The design has been carefully developed to minimise visual impact, avoid unnecessary disturbance to significant historic fabric, and ensure the continued functionality of the building.

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2. Site and Heritage Context

Buckden Towers is a Grade I listed building of exceptional historic and architectural significance. The building forms an important heritage asset and remains in active use as a religious and community facility.

The proposed works are limited in scope and are intended to facilitate modern communications infrastructure while respecting the special character and significance of the listed building. The installation has been designed around existing service routes wherever possible to minimise intervention within the historic fabric.

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3. Design Principles

The primary design objective has been to provide a fibre optic connection using the least intrusive route available while maintaining the operational requirements of the customer.

The proposal incorporates the following principles:

- Utilisation of an existing BT service duct to avoid new below-ground works.
- Routing alongside existing drainage pipework to reduce visual impact.
- Use of a small-diameter black fibre cable that will visually blend with existing building services.
- Positioning of the cable beneath an existing projecting ridge feature to minimise visibility.

General

- Limiting penetrations of historic fabric to a single small entry point.
- Concealing internal cable routes beneath existing floorboards where possible.
- Ensuring that the installation is largely reversible should future removal be required.

The proposed design seeks to preserve the building's special architectural and historic interest while enabling necessary technological improvements.

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4. Description of Proposed Works

The proposed works comprise:

External Works

- Existing BT ducting located at the front of the building will be exposed where currently covered by accumulated soil and debris.
- A new black fibre optic cable will be installed from the existing duct.
- The cable will run vertically up the external wall to second-floor level.
- The route has been selected to follow existing drainage pipework, allowing the cable to blend with existing services and minimise visual impact.
- At second-floor level, the cable will continue horizontally beneath the underside of an existing white projecting ridge feature.
- A small penetration will be formed through an existing gap within the brickwork/mortar joint to provide cable access into the building.
- A temporary hoist will be used to facilitate safe access during installation.

Internal Works

- Once inside the building, the cable will be routed beneath existing floorboards within the second floor.
- The cable will terminate at the proposed communications cabinet within the server room.
- Termination equipment will consist of a white Fibre Distribution Point (FDP6) installed at the base of the communications cabinet.

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5. Impact on the Listed Building

The proposal has been designed to minimise any impact on the significance of Buckden Towers.

The external cable route follows existing service infrastructure and avoids prominent architectural features. By attaching the cable alongside existing drainage pipework and beneath the projecting ridge, the installation will be largely unobtrusive when viewed from ground level.

Internally, the cable will be concealed beneath floorboards and routed through existing service areas. No historic fixtures, decorative finishes, significant architectural features, or structural elements will be removed or altered.

Only a single small penetration through the external wall is required to facilitate installation. Where possible, this will be formed through a mortar joint or existing gap between masonry units to minimise impact on historic fabric and allow future reinstatement.

As a result, the works are considered to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade I listed building.

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6. Access Considerations

Construction Access

Access to the external elevation will be achieved using a temporary hoist suitable for undertaking the installation works safely and efficiently.

The use of a hoist will:

- Minimise physical contact with the building fabric.
- Avoid the need for extensive scaffolding.
- Reduce the duration and extent of on-site works.
- Allow precise installation of the fibre cable along the approved route.

All works will be undertaken by suitably trained Openreach engineers in accordance with health and safety requirements.

Operational Access

Following installation, the fibre optic connection will improve telecommunications capability within the building and support current and future digital requirements.

The works will not affect existing pedestrian or vehicular access arrangements and will not alter public access routes within the site.

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7. Materials

The following materials will be used:

- Black external-grade fibre optic cable.
- White Fibre Distribution Point (FDP6).
- Standard Openreach fixing components appropriate for listed building installation.
- Existing BT duct infrastructure.

The colour, size and routing of the cable have been selected to ensure the installation remains as discreet as possible.

8. Conclusion

The proposed fibre optic installation at Buckden Towers represents a modest and carefully considered intervention that will enable the continued effective operation of the St Claret Centre while safeguarding the significance of this Grade I listed building.

The scheme utilises existing service routes, minimises intervention in historic fabric, limits visual impact through sensitive cable routing, and remains largely reversible. The proposal balances the need for modern telecommunications infrastructure with the conservation requirements of an important heritage asset and is therefore considered appropriate for Listed Building Consent.

General