

From: Lorna Russell (Cllr)
Sent: 09 February 2025 08:23
To: Planning
Cc: Sam FitzPatrick
Subject: Objection to planning application - 2024/5808/P

Dear Sir/Madam,

As Highgate ward councillor, I write to object to planning application 2024/5808/P regarding the installation of telecommunications equipment on Crestview, on the grounds that it would cause substantial harm to the character and appearance of the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area, significantly impact the setting of the Grade II* listed St Mary Brookfield Church, and introduce an inappropriate and intrusive development on a highly visible skyline.

Harm to Dartmouth Park Conservation Area

Crestview is prominently located at the crest of Dartmouth Park Hill, making its rooftop highly visible from within and outside the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area. The proposed installation - comprising tall telecommunications masts, large safety railings, a bulky hooped CAT ladder, and multiple ancillary cabinets - would introduce an industrial and incongruous element that is entirely out of character with the surrounding built environment.

The Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Plan places great emphasis on preserving and enhancing the area's architectural heritage and roofscapes. This proposal contravenes these principles by introducing visual clutter that would dominate the skyline and harm the distinct character of the conservation area. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that any development within a conservation area should enhance or at the very least preserve its character and appearance; this proposal does neither.

Damage to the setting of a Grade II* listed building

St Mary Brookfield Church is one of the most architecturally significant buildings in the area and is recognised as a Grade II* listed heritage asset. This designation places it in the top 10% of all listed buildings in the country, highlighting its national importance. The church's landmark presence on the skyline is fundamental to its setting, and the proposed masts and associated infrastructure would severely compromise this.

The planning system has a duty to protect the setting of heritage assets from harm. The proposed masts, rising nearly three storeys above Crestview's roofline, would disrupt the church's silhouette and detract from its prominence in the landscape. This is not just a local concern; views of the church extend beyond Dartmouth Park, including from Parliament Hill and Hampstead Heath. The NPPF states that harm to the setting of a designated heritage asset must be justified by substantial public benefits; this application offers none that outweigh the damage caused.

Repeated attempts to circumvent previous refusals

This is the third planning application of its kind for this site. The last two proposals were rightly refused due to the unacceptable visual impact and harm to the conservation area and heritage assets. While the applicant has made minor modifications, the fundamental issues remain. The antennas may be fewer in number, but they are now taller, and the overall visual mass of the proposal - including the hooped CAT ladder, extensive railings, and associated equipment - is, if anything, more intrusive than before. The reasons for rejecting previous applications apply equally to this one, and it should therefore be refused.

Alternative locations have not been fully explored

The applicant argues that this installation is necessary for improved network coverage, yet they have not demonstrated why alternative, less sensitive sites have been dismissed. For example, permission was previously granted for a similar installation at Grangemill House, an eight-storey building less than half a mile away, yet this has not been implemented. Additionally, other locations outside conservation areas, such as Vantage Point in Archway, could be more appropriate and less visually intrusive.

Conclusion

This application would cause severe and unjustified harm to the character of the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area, the setting of a Grade II* listed building, and the wider skyline. It fails to comply with both local and national planning policies, and previous refusals set a clear precedent that this type of development is inappropriate for this site. I strongly urge Camden Council to reject this application once again and encourage the applicant to explore more suitable locations outside of conservation areas and away from heritage assets.

Kind regards,

Councillor Lorna Jane Russell

Highgate ward, Green Party