

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 142701/FO/2025

Date registered valid: 14 April 2025

Proposal: Installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit

Address: Footpath Outside 346 Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4HD

Ward(s): Northenden Ward

Applicant: Simon Warner, BT Group Plc

Agent (if any): Mr Martin Brown, Telent

Case officer: Janet Lawless
Tel: 0161 234 4535
Email: janet.lawless@manchester.gov.uk

Recommendation: Refuse

Date of recommendation: 5 June 2025

Application details

Type of application: Full Application Consent

Development type: Minor Other

Date of site visit: 5th June 2025

Standard consultations:

Printed: 30 April 2025 Expired: 22 May 2025

Neighbour notifications

Printed: 30 April 2025 Expired: 22 May 2025

Site notice

No site notice has been produced

Press advert

No press advert had been published

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building

The application site relates to an area of public footway situated to the western side of Palatine Road, to the frontage of number 386 Palatine Road. It is an attractive stretch of footway, with block paving ornamental bollards and attractive tree planting and planters. There is an iron bench, heritage style lamp posts and cycle stands, all within the footway.

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: Not applicable

Tree Preservation Order: Not applicable

Description of area

The area is located within the Northenden district centre, the centre is characterised by a variety of shops and services along with restaurants, bars and takeaways on the main frontage, with many of the properties having residential to the upper floors. The side roads leading off Palatine Road are of established residential properties.

Description of development

Planning permission is sought for the installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit. The unit measures 2986mm (H) x 1236mm (L) x 350mm (D)

Street Hubs are free-standing structures offering free Wi-fi, featuring digital HD display screens on two sides. The screens display content at 10-second intervals. The units are funded through the display of advertising via sponsorship from companies who would utilise the digital HD display screens on both sides of the unit.

The applicant states that the proposed unit is intended to allow for the relocation and upgrade 1No. existing BT phone box located to the south-east of the site by replacing it with a single

Street Hub unit at the proposed location. There is also a further kiosk to be removed which is located on the footpath outside 364 Palatine Road at its junction with Heyridge Drive.

The application is accompanied by an application for advertisement consent (Ref: 142779/AOH/2025) for the two LED screens to each side of the unit.

Planning History

No relevant history.

Consultations & Notification Responses

Local residents were informed- no representations have been received.

Highways- As a result of any of the installation and removal works, any affected footway will need to be reinstated in accordance with MCC's standards and specifications. There are no objections subject to the attachment of a condition requiring the submission of a construction management plan.

Greater Manchester Police Secure By Design- no objections to the proposal.

This application is one of 40 applications that have been submitted. Manchester City Council Digital Strategy team have made comments in relation to the applications as follows:

As a user leaves the 150m range, they lose WiFi access. Success of public Wi-Fi delivered in this way depends on density and frequency of similar Wi-Fi devices on streets.

Smart Hubs are an addition to connectivity in the city, but do not meaningfully solve urban connectivity issues.

The Manchester Digital Strategy's focus is on the provision of small cell infrastructure on street lighting rather than through free Wi-Fi installations such as the proposal.

Policy

Local Development Framework

The principal document within the framework is the Manchester Core Strategy which sets out the spatial vision for the City and includes strategic policies for development during the period 2012 - 2027.

'The Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012 -2027 ("the Core Strategy") was adopted by the City Council on 11th July 2012. It is the key document in Manchester's Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy replaces significant elements of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as the document that sets out the long- term strategic planning policies for Manchester's future development.

A number of UDP policies have also been saved until replaced by further development plan documents to accompany the Core Strategy. Planning applications in Manchester must therefore be decided in accordance with the Core Strategy, saved UDP policies and other Local Development Documents.'

The following policies within the Core Strategy are considered relevant:

Core Strategy policies

Policy SP1 (Spatial Principles) - refers to the key spatial principles which will guide the strategic development of Manchester together with core development principles. It is stated that developments in all parts of the city should create well designed places which enhance or

create character, make a positive contribution to the health, safety and well-being of residents, consider the needs of all members of the community and protect and enhance the built environment. Further, development should seek to minimise emissions, ensure the efficient use of natural resources, reuse previously developed land wherever possible, improve access to jobs, services and open space and provide good access to sustainable transport provision.

Policy DM1 (Development Management) states that new development should have regard to more specific issues for which more detailed guidance may be given within supplementary planning documents. Issues include: the appropriate siting and appearance of development, the impact upon the surrounding area, the effects on amenity, accessibility, community safety and crime prevention, health, the adequacy of internal accommodation and amenity space and refuse storage/collection.

Policy EN1 (Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas) - All development in Manchester will be expected to follow the seven principles of urban design, as identified in national planning guidance and listed above and have regard to the strategic character area in which the development is located. Opportunities for good design to enhance the overall image of the city should be fully realised, particularly on major radial and orbital road and rail routes.

Saved UDP policies

DC17 (Telecommunications) - Applications for telecommunications developments will normally be approved if the Council can be satisfied that the development has been sited and designed to minimise its impact on residential amenity and in environmentally sensitive areas. Wherever possible, the Council will expect the potential of existing buildings and masts, including the sharing of such facilities, to be fully explored before agreeing to additional separate development.

Policy DC26 (Noise) states that the Council intends to use the development control process to reduce the impact of noise on people living and working in the City. In particular, consideration will be given to the effect of new development proposals which are likely to be generators of noise.

Policy E3.3 (Environmental Improvement and Protection) - refers to the Council looking to upgrade the appearance of the city's major radial routes.

Places for Everyone Greater Manchester Joint Development Plan (March 2024)

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan was published in March 2024 and has been produced by Greater Manchester Combined Authority to provide a long-term plan for jobs, new homes, and sustainable growth for nine of Greater Manchester's districts.

The Plan and its policies form part of the development plan and are now a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Plan and its policies must therefore be given significant weight in the planning balance.

The Plan identifies the essential aspect of the efficient and effective use of land with the preference to be given to making as much use as possible of suitable previously developed brownfield land and vacant buildings when meeting development needs.

The following policies are considered relevant for this application:

Policy JP-P1 (Sustainable Places) - seeks to raise the quality of all places in a way that is sustainable in the long-term, to enhance the wellbeing for residents, as well as making Greater Manchester more attractive to potential visitors and investors.

Policy JP-C2 (Digital Connectivity) - Enabling the roll-out of latest generation mobile technology and full fibre to the premises connectivity, in a way that maximises coverage whilst protecting townscape quality and ensuring an ability to respond to updated/changing technology.

The Guide to Development in Manchester (SPD) (2007)

The Guide to Development in Manchester is a supplementary planning document which contains core principles to guide developers. The document offers design advice and sets out the City Council's aspirations and vision for future development and contains core principles to guide developers to produce high quality and inclusive design. The principles that development should seek to achieve, include, character and context, continuity, and enclosure, ease of movement, quality of the public realm, diversity, legibility and adaptability.

National Planning Policy Framework

The central theme to the revised NPPF is to achieve sustainable development. The Government states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: an economic role, a social role and an environmental role.

Section 4 (Decision Making) provides guidance on the decision-making process and mirrors legislation in stating that planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Section 6 (Building a strong, competitive economy) states at paragraph 85 states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. In this case, the benefits of the proposed infrastructure investment would be outweighed by the harm caused by the siting of the development on the character of the street scene and visual amenities of the area.

Section 10 (Supporting high quality communications) - Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks.

Applications for electronic communications development (including applications for prior approval under the General Permitted Development Order) should be supported by the necessary evidence to justify the proposed development.

Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only.

Section 12 (Achieving Well Designed Places) provides guidance on achieving well designed places to ensure new development functions well and adds to the overall quality of the area.

Planning Practice Guidance - The Government produced a suite of documents to act as a live resource which set out advice and best practice on a wide range of planning issues following a detailed review of planning policy guidance as a way of streamlining policy.

Issues

Principle

Section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that decisions are to be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The NPPF at paragraphs 2 and 47 reinforces this requirement and at paragraph 12 states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as a starting point for decision making, and that where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, permission should not normally be granted.

In the case of this application, the principle of the proposal is not considered acceptable and conflicts with the aforementioned development plan policy and associated guidance.

It is considered that the proposed development would have a visually intrusive impact within the wider streetscape with all the existing street furniture being low level and unobtrusive when viewed within the context of the surroundings and would impede access arrangements for pedestrians along the footway.

The main issues in this case are outlined further below.

Visual Amenity

The proposed street hub is a freestanding structure which would be positioned along the footway between planters, benches, cycle racks and streetlights. All the street furniture within the vicinity of the site is low level apart from the slim line heritage style streetlamps. The tree canopies are kept at high level to provide an open and attractive vista. There are currently no telecommunications equipment including poles or cabins along this footway, nor is there any signage either illuminated or non-illuminated other than that which is on the businesses such as decals and fascia signs.

The applicants have stated that part of the reasoning behind the introduction of the Hubs is to consolidate advertising which is on various phone boxes and replace these with the advertising on the single hub, however this cannot be taken as a direct comparative replacement, as the advertisements on phone boxes are non-illuminated. In addition, the Hubs are not proposed in an identical location but are proposed in a more prominent position so as to be viewed more readily within the street scene from a pedestrian and vehicular perspective, in what would be an attempt to maximise the views of the advertisements, as it is the revenue from these that would maintain the hub. It is therefore considered intentional to site these in a more visually prominent position, and in this case introducing illuminated signage into an area where this has been resisted due to its detrimental impact.

There is concern in this case that the proposed design and position of the proposed hub would form a visually strident feature in the locality, which would be harmful to visual amenity.

Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy states that amongst other matters states that new development should have regard to the appropriate siting and appearance of development, the impact upon the surrounding area and the effects on amenity, accessibility.

The more strategic policy of SP1 advocates that all development in the city should make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods of choice including creating well designed places that enhance or create character.

Saved policy DC17.1 of the Unitary Development Plan states that such development will only normally be approved if the Council can be satisfied that the development has been sited and

designed to minimise its impact upon residential amenity and in environmentally sensitive areas.

Saved Policy E3.3 looks to upgrade the appearance of the city's main radial and orbital routes which is similarly reflected within policy EN1 of the Core Strategy which states that opportunities for good design to enhance the overall image of the city should be fully realised, particularly on major radial and orbital road and rail routes.

Policy JP-P1 of Places for Everyone seeks to raise the quality of all places in a way that is sustainable in the long-term, to enhance the wellbeing for residents, as well as making Greater Manchester more attractive to potential visitors and investors.

Further to this The Guide to Development in Manchester (SPD) states at paragraph 2.42 that:

'Badly designed and positioned street furniture can create clutter and confusion; we will, therefore, look to minimise the provision of unnecessary street furniture and encourage coordination of function'.

The proposed hub at nearly 3 metres high, along with its appearance and other physical dimensions, coupled with the presence of existing street furniture, including several 10 metre high lamp posts, bollards and planters / trees, would introduce another item of street furniture at a different scale in the immediate area, which would lead to excessive clutter along the host footway, on a prominent section of highway and gateway to Northenden District Centre and Village.

Whilst the applicant states that the proposed hub would replace an existing BT phone box to the other part of the pavement that lies to the front of 346 Palatine Road, it would add to the street furniture along the western side of road. The removal of the existing phone box on the opposite side of the split footpath would not represent a material improvement to the area of footway subject to this application. It would be inserting a feature at a level where there is currently nothing within the eyeline at that height.

The need to safeguard visual amenity in the area aligns with the Council's regeneration objectives, development policy and guidance. It is maintained therefore that the proposed hub would only add to the concentration of street furniture in the immediate locality and cumulatively result in an increasingly cluttered appearance to the pavement and wider street-scene and due to its size, would obstruct vistas looking east and west along Palatine Road. This impact would be magnified in the hours of darkness where there is no other illuminated signage along this section of footway making it a more obtrusive feature.

Accordingly, the siting and appearance of the proposed hub would harm the character and appearance of the area, which would also be accentuated by the associated, illuminated advertisement panels in an area where there is no existing illuminated features.

Access

The applicant states within their submission that the proposed hub would be set back 500mm from the edge of the carriageway along Palatine Road.

The proposed digital communication Hub is to be located on the adopted footway on Palatine Road.

TfGM have been consulted, and comments are herein included.

It is understood that 2no. existing telephone kiosks will be removed - 1no. at footpath opposite No.342 Palatine Road and 1no. at footpath opposite No.364 Palatine Road.

The proposed Hub will have the following dimensions 2986mm (H) x 1236mm (L) x350mm (D). Proposed plans indicate that the Hub is to be set back 500mm from the edge of the carriageway. This is acceptable in principle from a Highways perspective. Observation indicates that circa 3.0m of footway/verge is to be retained. This is considered to be acceptable in principle. Plans indicate that a clearance distance of circa 1357mm is to be provided from existing street clutter. This is acceptable in principle from a Highways perspective.

Whilst it may be considered acceptable from a highways perspective it is considered to be contrary to policy JP-P1 of Places for Everyone which amongst other matters, seek for new development to result in well -designed places which enhance or create character, make a positive contribution to the health, safety and well-being of residents, improve accessibility and community safety, as well as paragraph 2.42 of the Guide to Development in Manchester (SPD) which looks to minimise the provision of unnecessary street furniture.

Noise

Given existing background noise levels associated with a busy, mixed-use location adjacent to a main east/west arterial route and with reference to the technical data supplied, it is not anticipated that there would be any undue noise impact. Any impact can be effectively controlled through the use of a planning condition in relation to noise limits.

Lighting

Any impact can be effectively controlled through the use of a planning condition in relation to appropriate light levels.

Conclusion

Whilst Development Plan policy and the National Planning Policy Framework advocates the use of high-quality communications infrastructure, it is not considered that proposed site has been selected to minimise the impacts of the installation and would result in a visually incongruous feature, harmful to the character and appearance of the area.

Whilst the public benefits of a greatly enhanced communications network for businesses, residents and visitors alike in this location would qualify as a considerable positive, the detrimental impact to visual amenity, and character of the area as a consequence of the proposed hub is considered to outweigh these factors in this case.

Other Legislative Requirements

Equality Act 2010

Section 149 (Public Sector Equality Duty) of the Equality Act 2010 requires due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act and; Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The Equality Duty does not impose a legal requirement to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment. Compliance with the Equality Duty involves consciously thinking about the aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making.

Human Rights Act 1998 considerations

This application needs to be considered against the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. Under Article 6, the applicants (and those third parties, including local residents, who have

made representations) have a right to a fair hearing and to this end the local planning authority must give full consideration to their comments.

Protocol 1 Article 1, and Article 8 where appropriate, confer(s) a right of respect for a person's home, other land and business assets. In taking account of all material considerations, including Council policy as set out in the Core Strategy and saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan, the Director of Planning, Building Control & Licensing has concluded that some rights conferred by these articles on the applicant(s)/objector(s)/resident(s) and other occupiers and owners of nearby land that might be affected may be interfered with but that that interference is in accordance with the law and justified by being in the public interest and on the basis of the planning merits of the development proposal. She believes that any restriction on these rights posed by the recommendation given is proportionate to the wider benefits of and that such a decision falls within the margin of discretion afforded to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

Recommendation: Refuse

Article 35 Declaration

The proposal would not improve the social and environmental conditions of the area, nor does it comply with the development plan and therefore does not comprise sustainable development. There are no conditions which could reasonably have been imposed, which would have made the development acceptable, and it is therefore not possible to approve the application.

Condition(s) to be attached to decision for approval OR Reasons for recommendation to refuse

1. The proposed installation, by virtue of its siting and appearance, would form a visually intrusive and incongruous feature within the street scene and add to the street clutter in the locality to the detriment of visual amenity. As such, the proposal is contrary to policies DM1, EN1 and SP1 of the Manchester Core Strategy, saved policies DC17.1 and E3.3 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester, policy JP-P1 of Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, The Guide to Development in Manchester (SPD) and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Highway Services
Greater Manchester Police
Transport For Greater Manchester

Flat 4, 2 Brett Street, Manchester, M22 4EX
Flat 3, 2 Brett Street, Manchester, M22 4EX
Flat 2, 2 Brett Street, Manchester, M22 4EX
Flat 1, 2 Brett Street, Manchester, M22 4EX
341 Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4FY
GODFREY HOLLAND LIMITED, Ground Floor, 341 Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4FY
342 Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4HE
343 Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4FY
340 Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4HE
345 - 347 Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4FY
4 Brett Street, Manchester, M22 4EX
340B Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4HF

340A Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4HF
343A Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4FY
350A Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4HD
348A Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4HD
346A Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4HD
344B Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4HD
344A Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4HD
Betfred, 344 Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4HE
350 Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4HD
348 Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4HD

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - Removal Of PD Rights Change Of Use From Class C3 To Class C4
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -
Area Team Boundary - Name: SOUTH AREA