MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no.	142709/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 1054 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PE
Ward(s):	Clayton & Openshaw Ward
Applicant:	Simon Warner, BT Group Plc
Agent (if any):	Mr Martin Brown, Telent
Case officer:	Carl Glennon Tel: 0161 234 4530 Email: carl.glennon@manchester.gov.uk
Recommendation:	Refuse
Date of recommendation:	6 June 2025

Application details

Type of application: Full Application Consent

Development type: Minor Other

Date of site visit: 30 May 2025

Standard consultations:
Printed: 20 May 2025 Expired: 31 May 2025

Neighbour notifications
Printed: 20 May 2025 Expired: 31 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

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: No

Tree Preservation Order: No

Description of area

This planning application relates to section of pavement located on the southern side of Ashton New Road close to its junction with Howgill Street and approximately 10 metres from the eastern boundary with Tameside MBC. The adjacent street frontage comprises of back of pavement predominantly two storey retail and commercial units. Terraced housing is located to the south of these units. The northern side of Ashton New Road comprises a retail, commercial and terraced housing over two storeys. The surrounding area forms part of a local centre. The adjacent section of highway is protected by due yellow lines at the junction with Howgill Street but there are car parking bays adjacent to the site. This section of the highway is used by vehicles and Metrolink trams. Tram lines are incorporated into the surface of the highways and lighting columns incorporate cables that span Ashton New Road to facilitate the operation of trams).

Fig.1 – Views of the application site from Ashton New Road

Description of development

The hub would be sited within the footpath with a north to south orientation. It would be positioned 3309 mm from the principal elevation with 1054 Ashton New Road and offset from the outside edge of the kerb by 500 mm. It would also be positioned 10.88 metres from the junction with Howgill Street.

The development involves:

i. The installation of a street hub with an upright rectangular configuration and dimensions of 2900 mm (high) x 1236 mm (wide) and 360 mm (deep). The hub unit would comprise of a black aluminium cabinet with LED screens to the east and west elevations (displaying changing images, including advertisements. The hub would incorporate a wi-fi connection and an interactive tablet providing access to local information and services. A telephone would also be integrated into the side elevation of the hub.

ii. The hubs are intended to replace existing telephone kiosks. The applicant proposes to remove two existing telephone kiosks as part of the development (located at 1068 Ashton New Road and 540 Edge Lane).

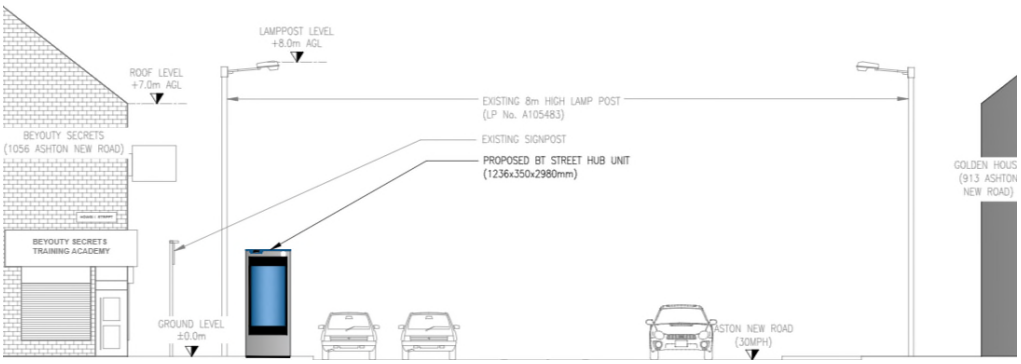

Fig.2 – Proposed hub in relation to the streetscene.

Site history

The application site has no history of applications seeking planning permission or advertisement consent. The proposed display of advertisement associated with the street hub is considered under advertisement consent application referenced:

142710/AOH/2025 - Two digital 75 inch LCD display screen, one on each side of the Street Hub unit

Footpath Outside 1054 Ashton New Road, Manchester M11 4PE

Consultations & Notification Responses

Local residents and businesses – No comments received.

Highway Services – The following comments have been received:

i. The proposal also involves the removal of 2no existing BT telephone box - 1no. located on footpath outside No. 1068 Ashton New Road and 1no. located on footpath opposite No. 540 Edge Lane.
ii. The proposed plans show a retained footway width of 3309mm on Ashton New Road. However, a section of footway adjacent to No. 1054 Ashton New Road and neighbouring units appears to be unadopted.
iii. The retained adopted footway width at this location remains unclear.
iv. A minimum adopted footway width of 2.0m is needed to be retained to ensure pedestrian movements are unimpeded.
v. Highways have concern that the proposed hub may obstruct vehicular visibility at the Ashton New Road and Howgill Street junction. A visibility splay assessment is therefore requested for this junction.
vi. The submission indicates that the proposed digital totem is to maintain a clearance distance of approximately 4.6m from existing street furniture.
vii. Information on maintenance of the proposed communication totem including frequency of servicing/maintenance and vehicle parking arrangements is unclear.

Greater Manchester Police Design for Security – No objections

Transport For Greater Manchester - The following comments have been received:

i. The installation of the hub and related works to the footway should by undertaken in accordance with Council standards.
specifications.
ii. The submission indicates the hub would be installed 0.5 metres from
the edge of the carriageway. TfGM request that the siting of the hub secures satisfactory distance from the highway to reduce the risk of vehicle and maintenance of sight lines (for pedestrian, cyclists and vehicles).
iii. A minimum footway width of 2 metres (where the apparatus is positioned) needs to be retained to safeguard ensure pedestrian movement.
iv. Servicing arrangements associated with the apparatus should not impact upon the highway and result in traffic conflicts. Service vehicles should park appropriately and should not use bus lay-bys or footways.
v. A Construction Traffic Management plan should be employed as part of the proposals to reduce any likely impacts.

Metrolink - The proposed unit has a general traffic lane between it and the operational tramway. It would be sufficiently remote from the Metrolink tracks. Metrolink have no comments to make in respects of this application.

Cadent – No objection but request and informative (should planning permission be granted) advising of the need to safeguard gas infrastructure when implementing associated ground work.

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.

Issues

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - This Framework came into effect on 27th March 2012 and was amended most recently in December 2024. It represents key up to date national policy and is an important material consideration in determining the current application. The document states that the 'purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The document clarifies that the 'objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development. The NPPF states that, to achieve this, the following three overarching objectives need to be pursued mutually:

i. The economic objective – Development should contribute to sustainable development by building a strong, responsive and competitive economy that ensures sufficient and appropriate development and supports growth.
ii. The social objective - Development should o support strong, vibrant and healthy communities. It should foster well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.
iii. The environmental objective – Development should protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment. Including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy (paragraph 8).
The Framework states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making (paragraph 12). The following aspects of the Framework are relevant

Section 6: Building a strong, competitive economy

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 streetscene and visual amenities of the area.

Section 10: Supporting high quality communications

Paragraph 119 discusses the need to deliver advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure dues to its essential contribution to economic growth and social well-being. However, in this case, significant harm caused by the siting and appearance of the hub would take precedence over the above objectives.

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 (PPG) - On 6 March 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) launched this planning practice guidance web-based resource. The PPG seeks to both simplify and clarify planning guidance easier and simpler. It is intended to be read in conjunction with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and is relevant to key planning issues of significance to applicants and local authorities. The development has been assessed with reference to following aspects of the PPG, which have been positively responded to:

i. Consultation and pre-decision matters
ii. Determining a planning application
iii. Noise

Places for Everyone - The Inspectors' Report on the examination of the Places for Everyone plan was published on 15 February 2024. The Inspectors' Report sets out and justifies their recommendations in relation to the plan, and they have concluded that all legal requirements have been met and that with the recommended main modifications set out in the appendix to their report, the Places for Everyone plan is 'sound'. The nine constituent local authorities will now consider the Inspectors' Report and the adoption of Places for Everyone. The first Council meetings to approve the plan will be Salford and Wigan (28 February). The plan was considered at the Full Council meeting in Manchester on 20 March 2024, and was subsequently approved on 21st March 2024. Given the stage the Plan has reached, the Plan and its policies are now a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Plan and its policies must therefore be given full weight in the planning balance. The following policies are relevant:

Policy JP-P1 Sustainable Places - Discusses the importance of development on the character and identity of a locality in terms of design, siting, size, scale and materials used.

Policy JP-C2: Digital Connectivity -Encourages the provision of free, secure, high speed public wi-fi connections, particularly in the most frequented areas.

For the reasons set out in this report, it is considered the development would be harmful to the character of the areas surrounding the applications site. This harm would prevent the positive delivery of the objectives of the above policies.

Manchester's Local Development Framework: Core Strategy - The Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012 -2027 (`the Core Strategy') was adopted by the 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 been saved until replaced by further development plan documents to accompany the Core Strategy. Planning applications in Manchester must be decided in accordance with the Core Strategy, saved UDP policies and other Local Development Documents. The development has been assessed with regard to the following policies.

Policy SP 1 (Spatial Principles) - Specifies the Core Development Principles for parts of the City. In this case the relevant principles relate to the extent to which the development:

- Makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods of choice including the creation of well designed places that enhance or create character; making a positive contribution to the health, safety and well-being of residents, considering the needs of all members of the community regardless of age, gender, disability, sexuality, religion, culture, ethnicity or income and to protect and enhance the built and natural environment.

The development would significantly harmfully affect the character of the street scene. It would affect the movement of pedestrians within the street. The development would thereby fail to accord with policy SP1.

Policy DM 1 (Development Management) – States that all development should have regard to the following issues:

i. Appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail. Regard should be given to the potential impact on surrounding areas in terms of the design, scale and appearance of the proposed development. Development should have regard to the character of surrounding area.

The identified harm demonstrates that the above objections would not be accorded with, and the development would thereby be contrary to policy DM1.

Policy EN 1 (Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas) – Discusses the need to respond positively to opportunities for good design and the enhancement of the overall image of the City. In this case, the development would introduce an incongruous structure that would poorly be related to its context and harmful to the character of the streetscene. Policy EN1 would not, therefore, be accorded with.

Unitary Development Plan saved policies – The following saved policies are relevant to the consideration of the development:

Policy DC17.1: Telecommunications – States that 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 amenity. In case the installation of the proposed hub would be contrary to policy DC17.1 due to the identified harm to visual amenity and the character of the street scene.

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) - Is relevant as the application site is situated on a City Centre radial route. Policy E3.3 confirms the council will upgrade the appearance of the city's major radial and orbital roads and rail routes. It is not considered that the advertisement signage would contribute positively to the character of Ashton New Road (as a radial route to and from the city centre). It would also introduce of and overly prominent and visually obtrusive structure, incorporating illuminated signage, to the street scene. The resulting harm to amenity would be contrary to policy E3.3.

Positive and proactive engagement with the applicant - An amendment to the DMO, which came into effect on 1st December 2012, requires every decision notice relating to planning permission and reserved matters application to include an explanation as to how the local planning engaged with the applicant. In this case, the principle of the application proposals is contrary to the adopted development plan and are not considered to improve the economic, social or environmental conditions of the area. It is not considered, in this instance, that amendments could be made that would make them acceptable. The applicant's agent was informed of these concerns prior to the determination of the application.

Principle of the development – The application site is located in a section of the street that is affected by the presence of overhead cables associated with the operation of Metrolink. Unusually, lighting columns are centrally positioned within the pavement. Whilst this arrangement is necessary to facilitate the operation of Metrolink it has led to visually clutter within the streetscene. That the bulk and massing other proposed hub would add to the sense of clutter through the introduction of a disproportionately large and bulky structure to the street The impact of its siting would be emphasised by its orientation, which would result in a significant reduction in the width of the footpath. The impact of the structure would be further exacerbated by the incorporation of highly prominent LED screens and related display of changing images. The development would thereby harm the character of the streetscene and the visual amenities of the area, which would be unacceptable.

Scale and massing - The harm caused through the introduction of such a visually prominence of the hub would be emphasised by its excessive bulk and massing. The impact of the height of the proposed structure would be significant due to the proximity of neighbouring shopfronts. The submission indicates that the proposed hub would be higher than roller shutters to neighbouring shopfronts (Fig. 3). This relationship demonstrates the significant impact of the introduction of a structure of disproportionate scale and its failure to relate existing built form within its immediate vicinity. The combined impact of the height and siting to the hub would lead to the formation of an overbearing and oppressive relationship to the streetscene. The development would thereby be harmful and character and to the amenities of the area.

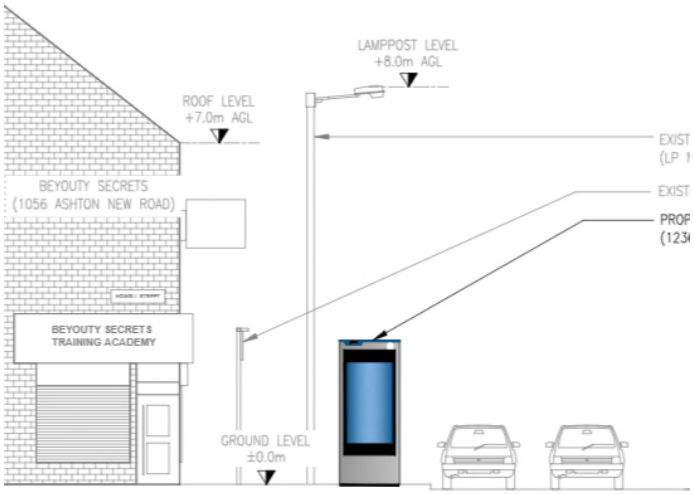

Fig.3 – Height of the hub in relation to adjacent shopfront on Ashton New Road

Siting – In addition to the harm caused by the reduction of the footpath, it is also considered that the prominence of the hub would be emphasised by its proximity to the outside edge of the pavement. The siting of the proposed hub combined with the central positioning of lighting columns with the pavement would add to a sense of visual clutter and undermine the formation of legible pedestrian routes along the adjacent street. The development would increase obstacles within the street, which may affect the movement of pedestrians. This would be particularly harmful to people with disabilities. The development would thereby be harmful to the amenities of the amenities of the area.

Crime and Security – Greater Manchester Police do not raise any objection to the scheme proposed.

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.

Highways Issues – The submitted drawings do not accurately indicate the position of double yellow lines on the adjacent section of highway, i.e., the lines extend are shown as extending to a position outside No 1054 (Fig.4). However, the lining terminates outside No1056. This is significant as the siting of the hub, within 500 mm of the kerb, may affect the operation the adjacent car parking bay, i.e., constraining passenger egress from and access to a parked vehicle.

Fig.4 – Demarcation of double yellow lines

There is concern that, due to the proximity of the hub to the edge of the pavement, the siting of the hub may compromise the view of pedestrians, drivers and other road users when negotiating the Ashton New Road / Howgill Street junction. In the absence of details confirming sight lines within the vicinity of the junction would be maintained, it is considered that the development would potentially compromise highway safety.

Conclusion - The proposed development would be inappropriately related to its context and would have an unacceptable and harmful impact of residential amenity and the character of the area.

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 polices 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 principle of the application proposals is contrary to the adopted development plan and are not considered to improve the economic, social or environmental conditions of the area. It is not considered, in this instance, that amendments could be made that would make them acceptable. The applicant's agent was informed of these concerns prior to the determination of the application.

Reasons for recommendation to refuse

1) The proposed development would, by virtue of its scale, siting and appearance, would introduce a disproportionately large, bulky and overbearing structure to the street scene. The development would thereby have a visually intrusive and incongruously relationship to its context, including neighbouring shopfronts. The development would thereby be harmful to the character and visual amenities of the area and be contrary to policies SP1, DM1 and EN1 of the Manchester Core Strategy for the City of Manchester, 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 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

2) The proposed development has not been supported with satisfactory details to demonstrate that the siting of the proposed hub would not harm or compromise pedestrian and highway safety, including the prevent of visual distraction of pedestrians, drivers and other road users. The development would thereby be contrary to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy for the City of Manchester, saved policy DC17.1 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Highway Services
Greater Manchester Police
Transport For Greater Manchester

911 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PB
909 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PB
907 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PB
1044 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PE
Top Flat, 907 - 909 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PB
Top Flat, 911 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PB
Top Flat, 913 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PB
Top Flat, 1052 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PE
Top Flat, 1046 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PE
Flat, 1056 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PE
Top Flat, 1054 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PE
1054 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PE
1048 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PE
913 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PB
907 - 909 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PB
905 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PB
903 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PB
1056 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PE
1052 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PE
1050 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PE
460 Droylsden Road, Manchester, M11 4PE

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - Removal Of PD Rights Change Of Use From Class C3 To Class C4
Coal Authority - Development Low Risk - Name: DEVELOPMENT_LOW_RISK_AREA
Historic Landfill Site 50m Buffer -
Area Team Boundary - Name: NORTH AREA