MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no.	142696/AOH/2025
Date registered valid:	14 April 2025
Proposal:	Two digital 75 inch LCD display screen, one on each side of the single black digital communications totem.
Address:	Footpath on Ashton New Road opposite Grey Mare Lane junction, Manchester, M11 3FF
Ward(s):	Ancoats & Beswick Ward
Applicant:	Simon Warner BT Group Plc
Agent (if any):	Mr Martin Brown Telent
Case officer:	Sam Elliott Tel: 0161 219 2856 Email: sam.elliott@manchester.gov.uk
Recommendation:	Refuse
Date of recommendation:	**30/05/2025**

Application details

Type of application: Advertisement Hoardings Consent

Development type: Advertisements

Date of site visit: 2 May 2025

Standard consultations:
Printed: 28 April 2025 Expired: 20 May 2025

Neighbour notifications
Printed: 28 April 2025 Expired: 20 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: Not applicable

Tree Preservation Order:

Description of area

The proposed development site is on an area of footpath southeast of the Etihad Stadium on the north side of Ashton Road, located opposite the junction where Grey Mare Lane joins with Ashton New Road. Consequently, the site is located along one of Manchester's busy radial routes (Ashton New Road) and in close proximity to the intersection where Ashton New Road connects to a major orbital traffic route around the City fringe Centre (Alan Turing Way).

The street scene along Ashton Road predominantly features views of the stadium, is long and linear, lined with trees on both side and is relatively unpopulated by street furniture. The north side of Ashton Road in particular features long stretches of footway unoccupied by obstacles.

The site is also positioned north of the Grey Mare Lane regeneration area at a key junction into the masterplanned area and is south of the Etihad Campus Commercial Zone. Surrounding uses including sport and recreation, residential dwellings, supermarkets, shops, takeaways, a bar and car parking.

Description of development

Advertisement Consent is sought for 2 no. LCD screen adverts associated with the digital kiosk application 142695/FO/2025.

It is noted that the original address was listed as 'Footpath Outside 13 Grey Mare Lane, Manchester, M11 3DQ', however the proposed adverts would be sited on the north side of the footpath on Ashton New Road, along from the Stop A bus stop. The address has been amended to reflect this.

Each screen would measure 95cm wide by 167cm high and feature a tablet interface and digital HD screen. The proposed digital display screens would have a maximum night-time brightness of 600cd/m^2 and a maximum daytime brightness of 5000cd/m^2, displaying full colour static content at 10-second intervals.

The applicant's supporting statement acknowledges that the associated proposed kiosk forms part of a "strategic package" of similar devices. To this end, a number of applications for Smart Hubs and adverts have been received across the authority:

142693/FO/2025 & 142694/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside 527 Wilbraham Road, Manchester, M21 0UF.
142697/FO/2025 & 142698/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside 720 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2DW.
142699/FO/2025 & 142700/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside 293 Moston Lane, Manchester, M40 9WJ.
142701/FO/2025 & 142702/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside 346 Palatine Road, Manchester, M22 4HD.
142703/FO/2025 & 142704/AOH/2025: Footpath Opposite 961 Oldham Road, Manchester, M40 2FF.
142705/FO/2025 & 142706/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside 15 Oldham Road, Manchester, M4 5EQ.
142707/FO/2025 & 142708/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside 335 Hollinwood Avenue, Manchester, M40 0JA.
142709/FO/2025 & 142710/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside 1046 Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4PE.
142711/FO/2025 & 142712/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside 919 Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3PZ.
142713/FO/2025 & 142714/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside 661 Altrincham Road, Manchester, M23 9AA.
142715/FO/2025 & 142716/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside 347 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M14 6SS.
142717/FO/2025 & 142718/AOH/2025: Footway Outside 187 Hollyhedge Road, Manchester, M22 8UE.
142719/FO/2025 & 142720/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside Civic Centre, Simonsway, Manchester, M22 5HZ.
142776/FO/2025 & 142777/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside Sport City ASDA, Ashton New Road, Manchester, M11 4BD.
142778/FO/2025 & 142779/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside 64 Montmano Drive, Manchester, M20 2EB.
142780/FO/2025 & 142781/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside 931 Rochdale Road, Manchester, M9 8AE.
142782/FO/2025 & 142783/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside 59 Brackley Avenue, Manchester, M15 4FS.
142784/FO/2025 & 142785/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside 473 Kingsway, Manchester, M19 1NR.
142786/FO/2025 & 142787/AOH/2025: Footpath Outside 100 Brownley Road, Manchester, M22 8UD.

Consultations & Notification Responses

Publicity: The application was advertised by neighbour notification letters. No representations were received in response

Highway Services advise they do not support the proposed adverts due to safety concerns with the constrained footway resulting in pedestrian overspill on match/event days associated with the Etihad Stadium and Co-op Arena, as well as obscuration of sightline visibility at the access of the parking area on Ashton New Road.

Should there be an approval, recommended a condition relating to moving images, duration of adverts, transition between adverts, light sensor to control brightness, black screen defaulting and controls on luminance levels during non-daylight hours/inclement weather.

Environmental Health advise that the maximum daytime brightness of 5000 cd/m^2 exceeds usual urban levels, though an auto-adjusting mechanism would control this throughout the day. No concern regarding cumulative light pollution due to the dusk-dawn restriction to 600 cd/m^2

Given that luminance has the potential to exceed 4000 cd/m^2, an International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection assessment would be required in the case on an approval.
In the event of a malfunction, the display should include a mechanism to blank the screen with a black background.
Conditions concerning the above would be added to any approval.

Design for Security at Greater Manchester Police No response received.

Greater Manchester Pedestrian Service No response received.

Cadent Gas No objections. Requested an informative be added to the decision notice.

Policy Context

Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007

The Local planning authority shall exercise its powers under these Regulations in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account—
(a)the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material; and
(b)any other relevant factors.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1)(b)—
(a) factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest;
(b) factors relevant to public safety include—
(i) the safety of persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome (civil or military);
(ii) whether the display of the advertisement in question is likely to obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air;
(iii) whether the display of the advertisement in question is likely to hinder the operation of any device used for the purpose of security or surveillance or for measuring the speed of any vehicle.

(3) In taking account of factors relevant to amenity, the local planning authority may, if it thinks fit, disregard any advertisement that is being displayed.

(4) Unless it appears to the local planning authority to be required in the interests of amenity or public safety, an express consent for the display of advertisements shall not contain any limitation or restriction relating to the subject matter, content or design of what is to be displayed.

The following policies are considered relevant to this application:

The Adopted Core Strategy for the City of Manchester

- C1 – Centre Hierarchy
- C2 – District Centres
- C4 – East Manchester District Centres – Eastlands, Gorton, Newton Heath and Openshaw
- CC9 – Design and Heritage
- CC10 – A Place for Everyone
- DM1 – Development Management
- EC5 – East Manchester
- EC7 – Eastlands
- EN1 – Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas
- SP1 – Spatial Principles

- T1 – Sustainable Transport

The Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester
- E3.3 – Environmental Improvement and Protection
- DC15 – Advertisements, Hoardings and Posters

Places for Everyone
- JP-P1 – Sustainable Places

NPPF
- Section 12 (Achieving Well Designed Places)

Grey Mare Lane Regeneration Masterplan

Eastlands Regeneration Framework

Paragraph 141

The quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. A separate consent process within the planning system controls the display of advertisements, which should be operated in a way which is simple, efficient and effective. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.

Issues

Amenity

As per PfE policy JP-P1, proposals should facilitate visually stimulating and interesting environments. Pursuant to Core Strategy policies DM1 and SP1, development should also be well-designed and have regard to the surrounding area. Specifically concerning development at the street level, Core Strategy policies EN1 and T1 outline that development should contribute positively to the experience of all at street level and improve the pedestrian environment. With regards to advertisements, saved UDP policies DC15.1(a) and DC15.1(b) outline that the Council will take account of an advert's location and impact on visual amenity, assessing whether its contribution is positive. DC15.2(b) continues that an advert should relate properly to the site.

The proposal would see a digital HD screen installed into a freestanding, rectilinear in shape totem (being considered under a separate planning application 142695).

It is acknowledged that adverts are intended to attract attention, however digital advertisement displays have a greater brightness than traditional poster boards and are by design highly visible in the street scene. Given the adverts' luminance, they would not blend into the street scene and would feature prominently.

The proposed kiosk is also considered with regard to its location at a key thoroughfare into the city centre along a major radial route (Ashton New Road) from a major orbital route (Alan Turing Way). The City Council has a robust position on new development along the key arterial routes leading into the city centre, pursuant to the longstanding strategy to upgrade their appearance. This is reflected in saved policy E3.3 of the UDP (1995) which seeks to improve visual amenity on these roads and encourage high-quality new development. Given the significant levels of footfall experienced along this section of Ashton New Road due to its siting between major venues

for sport and music events, maintaining and improving the visual appearance of the street scene in this location is of particular importance.

The street scene is characterised by being a relatively open and uninterrupted linear stretch of Ashton New Road, having wide footways, a long tree-lined boulevard and featuring prominent views of the stadium. The north side of Ashton Road particularly features long stretches of footway without advertisement. Advertisement is minimal in this location, and where it features it appears subservient, blending in with the setting.

In this context, the proposal would see the installation of a large illuminated digital element which would appear particularly obtrusive and conspicuous on a currently clear section of paving. This would add visual clutter and the illumination would appear bright and not commensurate with the residential community opposite and the ongoing residential regeneration of this area of the city.

In view of the above, the development would therefore be contrary to the provisions of policies DM1, EN1, SP1 and T1 of the Manchester Core Strategy (2012), UDP policies E3 and DC15 and PfE policy JP-P1 which require consideration of the impacts of development on visual amenity, and fail to comply with the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 where it relates to the general characteristics of the locality.

Public Safety

PfE policy JP-P1 requires that the city is easy to move around for those of all mobility levels, particularly by walking and cycling, with enjoyable routes free from obstacles and disorienting stimuli. Policy EC5 of the Core Strategy centres walkability as strategic element of the Eastland's regeneration, stating that new development must ensure major employment opportunities are connected via non-car modes to residential neighbourhoods within East Manchester and North Manchester, including Eastlands. Policy T1 of the Core Strategy also specifies that development will be supported where it improves pedestrian routes and the pedestrian environment. Core Strategy Policies DM1 and SP1 also outline that proposals must have regard to road safety. Regarding adverts specifically, the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 state that adverts must have regard for highway safety, where saved UDP policy DC15.2(d) similarly states that the Council will have regard for adverts injurious to public safety.

Planning Practice Guidance (Advertisements) (the PPG) does recognise that all advertisements are intended to attract attention. It clarifies that those proposed at points where drivers need to take more care are more likely to affect public safety. The PPG goes on to identify the main types of advertisement which may cause danger to road users. It includes those which, because of their size or siting, would obstruct or confuse a road-user's view, or reduce the clarity or effectiveness of a traffic sign or signal, or would be likely to distract road-users because of their unusual nature, or obstruct or impair sightlines at corners, bends or at a junction

Although proposed plans indicate that the digital totem will be set back 500mm from the edge of the carriageway and 3367mm of footway is to be retained along Ashton New Road, there is high footfall along Ashton New Road particularly during match days & event days associated with the nearby Etihad Stadium and Co-op Arena. Highways have raised a safety concern that the constrained footway will affect pedestrian movement along this route and contribute to overspill.

There is also an existing vehicular access/egress point off Ashton New Road to the parking area situated to the southeast of the Etihad Stadium. Highways have further concerns that sightline visibility may be obscured at the access of the parking area on Ashton New Road and similarly do not support the proposal as such.

City Centre Growth & Infrastructure comments are also acknowledged that digital screens within pavements create obstacles to pedestrians, having a significant impact on the movement of people around the city and contradicting the city's aspiration to prioritise active travel for those walking, wheeling and cycling

Given the safety concerns with the adverts' impact on overspill onto Ashton New Road and obscurement of sightlines for vehicles exiting the stadium car park, the proposal is considered to be inappropriately sited and impact upon road safety, failing to comply with saved policy DC15.2(d) which states that adverts will not be permitted where by reason of their position, size or design would be injurious to public safety. The proposal thereby also fails to comply with Core Strategy policies DM1, SP1 and T1, as well as PfE policy JP-P1 by virtue of its impact on road safety at the crossing, as well as the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 where it relates to the highway safety.

Moreover, in view of the above the proposal is considered to further fail to meet accessibility requirements required by PfE policy JP-P1 and policies CC10, DM1, SP1 and T1 of the Manchester Core Strategy, which broadly outline the Council's aim to ensure the city is easy to move around for those of all mobility levels and that development will be supported if it has high standards of accessibility across spaces in the City Centre.

Lighting

Regarding the illuminance of the LED screens, the product specification document states that the intensity of the illumination of the two digital display screens shall not exceed 600 cd/m^2 between dusk and dawn. While the product would have a maximum daytime brightness of 5000cd/m^2, there would be an auto-adjusting mechanism depending on ambient light levels. Environmental Protection do not object to the proposed luminance levels on this basis.

Had the proposal been recommended for approval, a condition ensuring this restriction is attached to any approval would have been applied.

It is also recommended that a condition regarding malfunctions specifies that the display will include a mechanism to blank the screen with a black background in the event of a malfunction, rather than to freeze the image.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

In consideration of the above, the proposed adverts have been found to have an unacceptable impact on local visual amenity in a location of strategic regeneration, as well as having an impact on highway safety. As such, the proposal has been found to be contrary to the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007, Core Strategy Policies C1, C2, C4, CC10, DM1, EC5, EC7, EN1, SP1 and T1, saved UDP policies DC15 and E3.3, as well as Places for Everyone Policy JP-P1. The application is therefore recommended for refusal.

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

Reasons for recommendation to refuse

1) The proposed advertisement would by virtue of its siting, scale, design, appearance and means of illumination would be obtrusive, incongruous and form overly dominant feature located in a prominent location adjacent to radial entry routes into and throughout the City Centre to the detriment of the street scene and pedestrian experience. The advertisement would also introduce advertisement clutter into the street scene in an area which is sensitive to change including the residential led regeneration opposite the site at Grey Mare Lane together with undermining the wider regeneration efforts at the Campus. The proposed advertisements would therefore be contrary to the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007; the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester, in particular policies DM1, EC7, EN1 and SP1; the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester policies E3.3 and DC15; and Places for Everyone policy JP-P1 and the NPPF.

2) The proposed advertisement would by virtue of its poor siting, constrain a footway which experiences high levels of footfall and contribute to overspill. Moreover by virtue of its siting adjacent to the existing vehicular access/egress point off Ashton New Road to the parking area situated to the southeast of the Etihad Stadium impact upon sightline visibility. Therefore the proposed adverts would impact upon highway safety and be contrary to Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007; the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester, in particular policies DM1, EC5, SP1 and T1; the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester saved policy DC15.2(d); and Places for Everyone policy JP-P1 and the NPPF.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Highway Services
Environmental Health
Greater Manchester Police
Greater Manchester Pedestrians Society

Tonys Stadium Chippy, 13A Grey Mare Lane, Manchester, M11 3DQ
Flat At, 13 Grey Mare Lane, Manchester, M11 3DQ
1 Jenkyn Walk, Manchester, M11 3UR
3 Cowper Walk, Manchester, M11 3UJ
7 Jenkyn Walk, Manchester, M11 3UR
7 Cowper Walk, Manchester, M11 3UJ
5 Cowper Walk, Manchester, M11 3UJ
1 Cowper Walk, Manchester, M11 3UJ
5 Jenkyn Walk, Manchester, M11 3UR
3 Jenkyn Walk, Manchester, M11 3UR

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - Removal Of PD Rights Change Of Use From Class C3 To Class C4
Coal Authority - Development High Risk - Name: DEVELOPMENT_HIGH_RISK_AREA
Coal Authority - Surface Coal Resources - Name: Coal bearing strata at surface
Area Team Boundary - Name: CENTRAL