

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 142711/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 919 Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3PZ

Ward(s): Levenshulme Ward

Applicant: Simon Warner, BT Group Plc

Agent (if any): Mr Martin Brown, Telent

Case officer: Ian Jarvis
Tel: 0161 234 4079
Email: ian.jarvis@manchester.gov.uk

Recommendation: Refuse

Date of recommendation: 5 June 2025

Application details

Type of application: Full Application Consent

Development type: Minor Other

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

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: No

Tree Preservation Order: No

The application site is located in Levenshulme District Centre, on the eastern side of a section of footpath on Stockport Road (between its junctions with Elbow Street and Delamere Road), a busy radial route to/from Manchester City Centre. The pavement is approximately 6 metres wide and, on this area of pavement there are 3 bus stops, traffic lights/pedestrian crossing and a pole-mounted traffic sign. The adjacent section of highway incorporates double yellow lines and the pedestrian crossing demarcation. Buildings, in the locality, are mostly 2 storey, although, adjacent to the site, former buildings have been demolished and the site is screened by a 1.8 metre high fence on which there is 'street graffiti'.

Adjacent to the traffic signpost and in front of the point where the fencing adjoins number 919 Stockport Road, it is proposed to install a BT Hub. These are modern digital units, intended to replace the old telephone boxes, with an upright rectangular configuration. The unit would have 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.

The proposed hub would sit close to the back of pavement, being set-back 500mm from the edge of pavement. The hub would be positioned perpendicular to Stockport Road, with the shorter side adjacent to the highway and longer sides facing either way along Stockport Road.

The submission also identifies that 2 existing nearby kiosks, in front of 974 and 1008 Stockport Road, are to be removed.

The application is accompanied by an application for advertisement consent for two digital 75 inch LCD display screen, one on each side of the Street Hub unit, subject of this application (142712/AOH/2025).

Consultations & Notification Responses

Local residents/adjacent occupiers - No comments received.

Highway Services - Make the following comments:

The proposed digital communication totem is to be located on the adopted footway of Stockport Road.

TfGM have been consulted, and comments are herein included.

Proposed plans indicate that the totem is to be:

- Set back 500mm from the edge of the carriageway; and
- Retaining 4471mm of footway width along Stockport Road.
- Plans indicate that a clearance distance of 920mm is to be provided from existing street signposts. A clearance distance of 2.0m from existing street clutter and street signs should be provided.

Although the proposed plans indicate that the totem sign is to be set back 500mm from the edge of the carriageway. Highways are concerned that the position of the proposed totem partly obscures the pedestrian crossing and could impact on pedestrians' and drivers' sightline visibility.

Transport for Greater Manchester - Makes the following comments:

The Site Plan indicates that the apparatus will be installed 0.5 metres from the edge of the carriageway. From the photomontages supplied, the position of the BT Street Hub partly obscures the pedestrian crossing and could impact on pedestrians' and drivers' sightline visibility. TfGM would recommend that the proposed location is amended further away from the pedestrian crossing, as it is considered that the proposed positioning could be likely to result in conflicts to the detriment of pedestrian and highway safety

Greater Manchester Police - No objections

Cadent Gas - No objections, subject to an informative being added to any planning permission.

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 (December 2024) - Sets out the Government's Planning Policies for England and how these should be applied. It states that the purpose of the planning

system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It states that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has 3 overarching objectives:

An economic objective - to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land, of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

A social objective - to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering 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; and

An environmental objective - to protect and enhance our 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

It states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term, but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visibly attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible, and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users, and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Section 10 'Supporting high quality communications' discusses the need to deliver advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure due 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 (Paragraph 119).

Section 12 'Achieving Well Designed Places' states that 'the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants. Communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process (paragraph 131).

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

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 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.

Policy SP1 identifies the City Council's Core Development Principles and states that development in all parts of the City should:-

Make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods of choice including:-

- Creating well designed places that enhance or create character
- Making a positive contribution to the health, safety and wellbeing of residents
- Considering the needs of all members of the community regardless of age, gender, disability, sexuality, religion, culture, ethnicity or income.
- Protect and enhance the built and natural environment

Minimise emissions, ensure efficient use of natural resources and reuse previously developed land wherever possible.

Improve access to jobs, services, education and open space by being located to reduce the need to travel and provide good access to sustainable transport provision.

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.

Policy DM 1 states that all development should have regard to the following specific issues for which more detailed guidance may be given within a supplementary planning document:-

- Appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail.
- Impact on the surrounding areas in terms of the design, scale and appearance of the proposed development. Development should have regard to the character of the surrounding area.
- Effects on amenity, including privacy, light, noise, vibration, air quality and road safety and traffic generation. This could also include proposals which would be sensitive to existing environmental conditions, such as noise.
- Accessibility: buildings and neighbourhoods fully accessible to disabled people, access to new development by sustainable transport modes.
- Community safety and crime prevention.
- Design for health.
- Adequacy of internal accommodation and external amenity space.

- Refuse storage and collection.
- Vehicular access and car parking.
- Effects relating to biodiversity, landscape, archaeological or built heritage.
- Green Infrastructure including open space, both public and private.
- Flood risk and drainage.
- Existing or proposed hazardous installations.

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

Policy E3.3 relates to sites along radial and orbital routes, which includes Stockport Road, and seeks to ensure that all new development, along these routes, is of the highest quality.

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 this case the installation of the proposed hub would be contrary to these policies due to the identified harm to visual amenity and the character of the streetscene.

Places for Everyone - The approved Places for Everyone Plan is a Joint Development Plan Document, providing a strategic plan and policies, for nine of the 10 boroughs which make up Greater Manchester.

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. Securing higher densities in the most accessible locations is identified as helping to maximise the ability of people to travel by walking, cycling and public transport and reduce the reliance on the car.

Relevant policies of PfE in this instance are:

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:

Principle of the development - The application site is in a setting that incorporates street furniture. However, these features allow the retention of relative open views of the street scene and thereby maintain its character. The proposed development would introduce a disproportionately large and highly prominent 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. It is considered that the development would harm the character of the street scene and the visual amenities of the area and would thereby be unacceptable.

Scale and massing - The harm caused through the introduction of such a visual prominence of the hub would be emphasised by its excessive bulk and massing. The photomontages (and drawings) submitted with the application indicate that the proposed hub would be higher than neighbouring roller shutters to neighbouring shopfronts. 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. Apart from lighting columns and traffic lights and a traffic sign, there is no street furniture, such as telecoms cabinets, free-standing signs or items such as post boxes, on this stretch of Stockport Road. The height of the

proposed hub would thereby adversely affect the character of the location, which has largely open views up and down Stockport Road. The combined impact of the height and siting to the hub would therefore lead to the formation of an overbearing and oppressive relationship to the street scene, and the development would thereby be harmful to the character and to the amenities of the area.

Siting/highways - It is also considered that the prominence of the hub would be emphasised by its proximity to the outside edge of the pavement and it would thereby introduce an obtrusive structure, that in the absence of sightlines drawings to demonstrate otherwise, would present a distraction to the drivers of vehicles travelling along Stockport Road, which has further importance due to its proposed location so close to a pedestrian crossing. Both Highways and Transport for Greater Manchester have expressed a concern that, due to the proximity of the hub to the edge of the pavement, and pedestrian crossing, the siting of the hub may compromise the view of pedestrians when crossing Stockport Road. The development thereby compromises pedestrian safety. In the absence of details confirming sight lines within the vicinity of the nearby pedestrian crossing, it has not therefore been demonstrated that the siting of the hub would not harm its safe operation, and it is therefore considered that the proposal represents a potential danger to highway safety.

The development would also present an obstacle within the street, which may affect the movement of pedestrians, which would be particularly harmful to people with disabilities. The development would also add to clutter within the street to the detriment of the amenities of the area.

Noise - Given existing background noise levels associated with a busy, mixed-use location adjacent to an 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 - The proposed development would be inappropriately related to its context and would have an unacceptable and harmful impact upon highway safety, visual 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 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 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 the proposed development acceptable.

Condition(s) to be attached to decision for approval OR 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. The development would be harmful to the character and visual amenities of the area and be contrary to policies DM1, EN1 and SP1 of the Manchester Core Strategy for the City of Manchester , saved policies E3.3 and DC17.1 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 prevention of visual distraction of drivers arriving at and departing from the pedestrian crossing to the north west of the application site. The development would thereby be contrary to policies DM1 and SP1 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

2 Alma Road, Manchester, M19 3NW
4 Alma Road, Manchester, M19 3NW
6 Alma Road, Manchester, M19 3NW
The Presbytery, St Marys R C Church, Elbow Street, Manchester, M19 3PY
Flat 2, 919A Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3PZ
Flat 1, 919A Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3PZ
927A Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3PZ
Top Flat, 925 Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3PZ
923 Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3PZ
Flat Above, 994 Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3WN
Tesco, Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3NN
996 Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3WN
913 Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3PG
St Marys R C Church, Elbow Street, Manchester, M19 3PY
988 - 990 Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3WN
Ground Floor, 988 - 990 Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3NN
986 Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3NN
927 Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3PZ
925 Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3PZ
921 Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3PZ
994 Stockport Road, Manchester, M19 3WN

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: NORTH AREA