MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no.	142719/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 Civic Centre, Simonsway, Manchester, M22 5HZ
Ward(s):	Woodhouse Park Ward
Applicant:	Simon Warner, BT Group Plc
Agent (if any):	Mr Martin Brown, Telent
Case officer:	Holly Wright Tel: 0161 219 6381 Email: holly.wright@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: 13 May 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/area

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: Not applicable

Tree Preservation Order: Not applicable

The application relates to a portion of pavement located outside Wythenshawe Civic Centre along Simonsway in the Woodhouse Park ward of Manchester. The site is located on the southern outskirts of the Civic Centre in relative proximity to commercial shopping facilities, bars, and restaurants, near to an existing bus stop.




ASDA
George






ASDA

Description of development

The applicant is seeking permission for the installation of a new BT street hub, following the removal of 5no. existing BT phone kiosks. 4no. of the kiosks to be removed are located within the pedestrian walkway opposite No. 13 Hale Top and the other 1no. kiosk to be removed is located on the footpath opposite No.2/304 Portway.

BT street hubs are free-standing structures featuring a fully accessible tablet interface and digital HD display screens on two sides. Overall, the dimensions of a BT street hub are: 2.98m in height, 1.236m in width (with a reduced, tapered base of 1.201m) and 0.35m in depth. The screens are to display commercial, community and council-based content at 10-second intervals with illuminance levels of 5,000cd/m2. Displays are set to automatically dim at night to 600cd/m2, following daylight hours. Each unit will also feature a video camera above each screen as well as one built into the tablet.

Each BT Street hub aims to offer:

- Opportunities for advertisements
- Ultrafast public and encrypted Wi-Fi
- Access to public services
- Free phone calls
- Multiple accessibility options
- Secure power-only USB ports for rapid device charging
- Free phone calls
- Direct 999 call button
- Useful real-time information (including community and emergency awareness messaging)
- Environmental sensors to measure air quality, noise, traffic etc.
- Maps and wayfinding

The supporting information states that noise emanating from the hubs should not exceed: 41dB at a distance of 3m during the day, 35dB at a distance of 3m during the night and operational volume should not exceed 60dB at a distance of 1m.

Associated applications

142720/AOH/2025 - Two digital 75 inch LCD display screen, one on each side of the Street Hub unit.

Consultations & Notification Responses

One letter of objection was received from one **local resident** in response to this application. Their concerns are summarised as follows:

- The proposal would be located near an exceptionally busy road crossing.
- It would distract car drivers and impede the visibility of pedestrians.
- The proposal could increase the risk of accidents.
- The kiosks to be removed are nowhere near the application site.

Highways Services noted that there is high footfall along Simonsway given the district centre location. Further to this, **Highways Services** highlighted their concerns that the proposed location of the totem may obscure pedestrian visibility at the existing pedestrian crossing point on Simonsway. Moreover, information on maintenance of the proposed communication totem including frequency of servicing/maintenance and vehicle parking arrangements is unclear.

TfGM made the following comments in relation to the proposal:

- The Site Plan indicates that the apparatus will be installed 2.7 metres from the edge of the carriageway.
- From the photomontages supplied, the position of the BT Street Hub is adjacent to an uncontrolled crossing point and there is the potential that the Hub could partially obscure pedestrians walking to the crossing point, (particularly vulnerable road users such as children).
- The proposed positioning could be likely to result in conflicts to the detriment of pedestrian and highway safety.
- The location of the proposed development is sufficiently remote from the operational Metrolink that we have no comments to make from a Metrolink perspective in respect of this application.

Greater Manchester Police made no comments in relation 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.

Policies

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 consideration relevant for this application:

attractive to potential visitors and investors.

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.

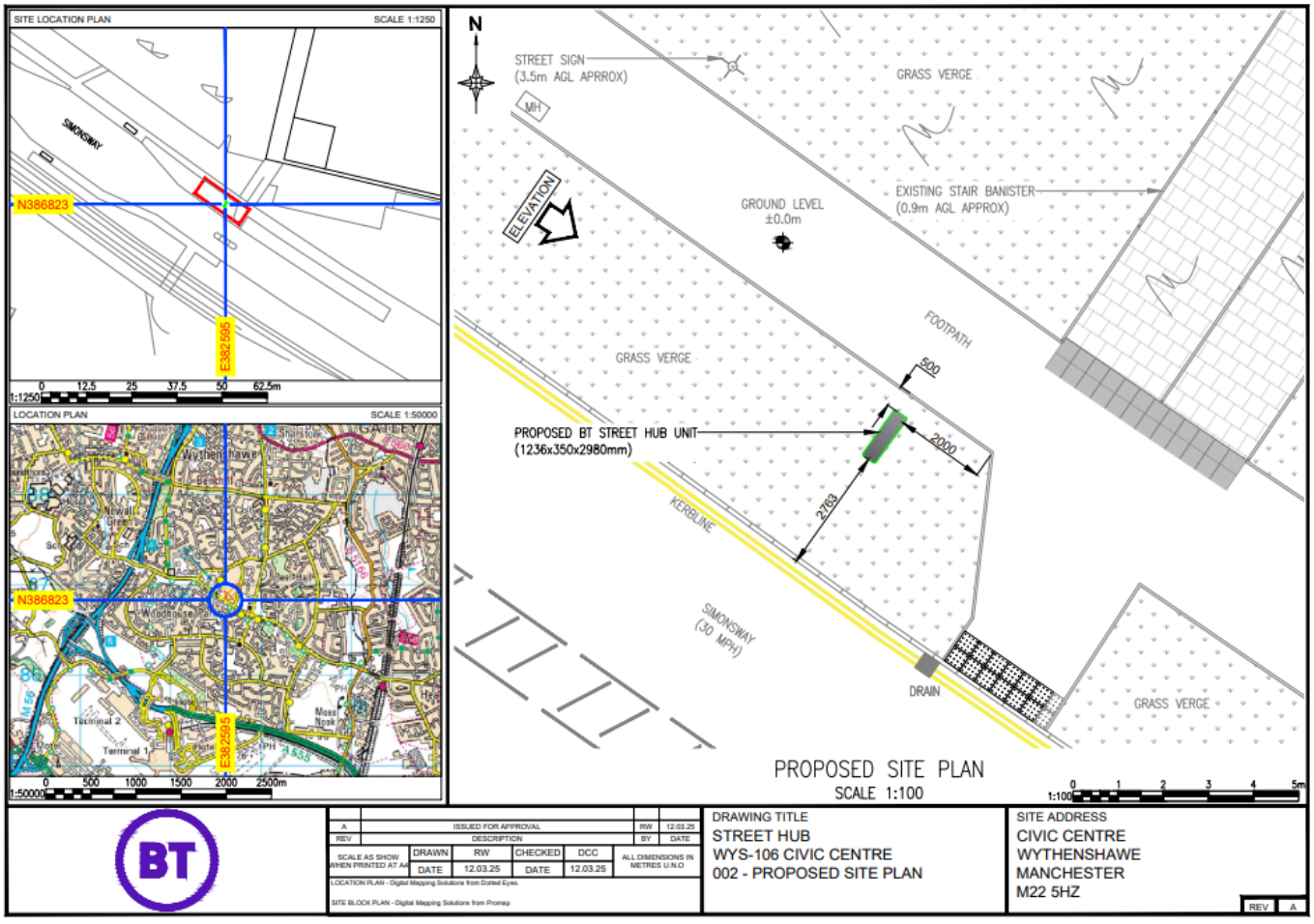
Section 10 (Supporting high quality communications) - Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks.

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.

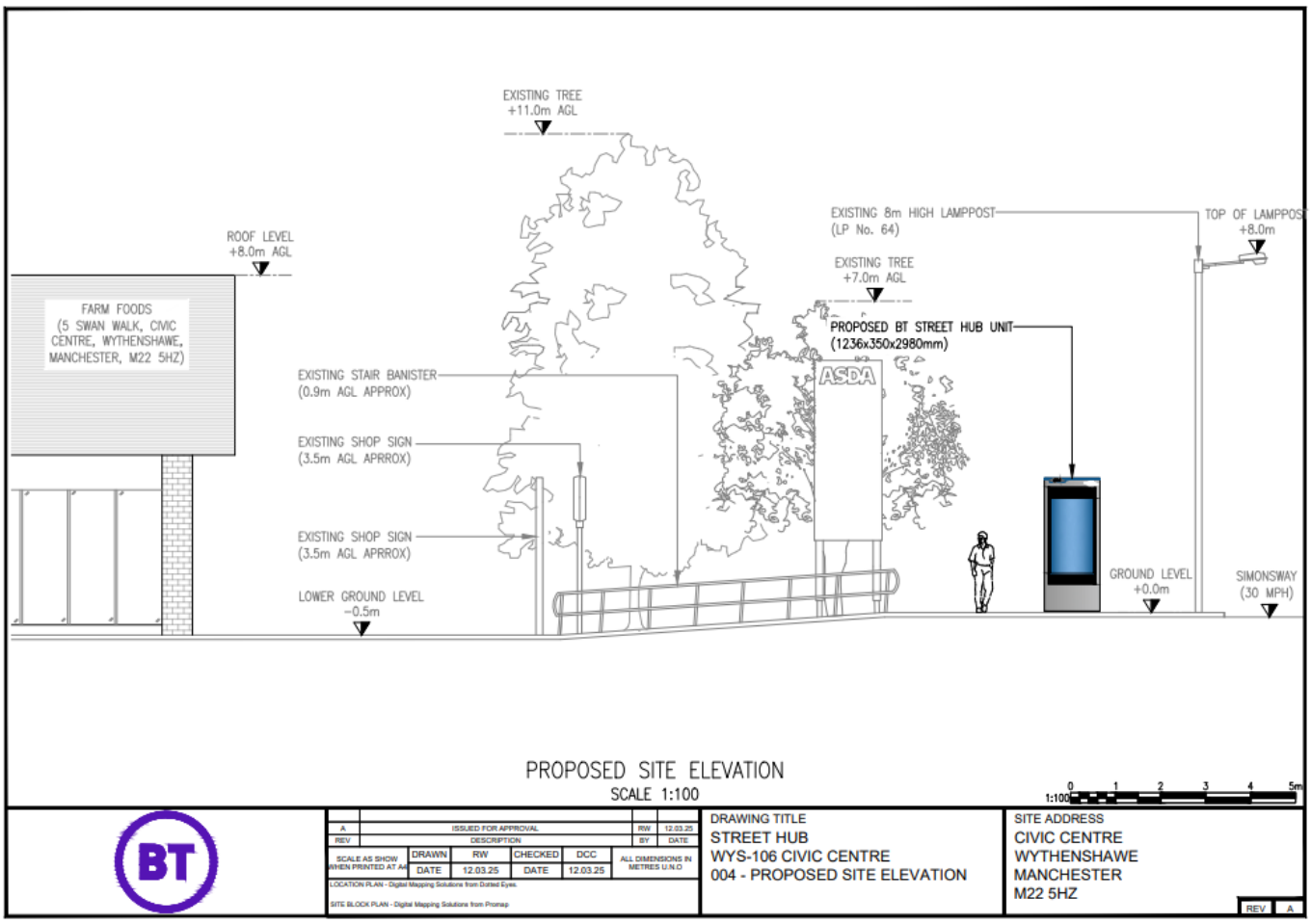
Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only

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.



Submitted proposed site plan



Submitted proposed site elevation

Issues

Principle – Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework reinforces this requirement in paragraphs 2 and 48, whilst paragraph 12 indicates that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not alter 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 considered unacceptable and cannot be supported as it conflicts with the development plan policies and associated guidance listed in the preceding section.

It is considered that the BT street hub would have an unduly harmful impact upon the visual amenity of the area on account of it introducing unnecessary visual clutter to an otherwise open and unobstructed area, whilst also causing harm to the public and highways safety of the area on account of its proximity to an existing pedestrian crossing.

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 street hub would be located adjacent to Simonsway, on the grass verge outside Wythenshawe Civic Centre. It would be made of galvanised mild steel, with a powder coated external grade aluminium exterior. Displays would be made of tempered and toughed laminated glass. There would also be RF transparent compartments. The dimensions of the unit would be 2.98m in height, 1.236m in width and 0.35m in depth, whilst the dimensions of the advertisement screens would be 1.67m in height and 0.95m in width. The maximum height of any individual letters and symbols would be 167cm with various colours of text and images which would change regularly. The advertisement would be internally illuminated, with static illuminance levels of 5,000cd/m^2.

Whilst the design and appearance of the unit is considered to be acceptable in isolation, the overall impact of the proposal upon the visual amenity of the area is unacceptable. This is on the basis that, at present, the area remains relatively clear and unobstructed by street furniture. Therefore, to add unnecessary visual clutter to an otherwise open and unobstructed view would be detrimental to the overall appearance of the street scene, thus incurring unduly harmful impacts upon the visual amenity of the area.

Moreover, though the proposal would also involve the removal of 5no. existing BT phone kiosks (4no. located outside No.13 Hale Top, 1no. located opposite No.2/304 Portway), arguably these kiosks are more appropriately sited in areas where a precedent for visual clutter and street furniture already exists. Removing these existing kiosks from more suitable positions whilst adding a unit to an inappropriate location is therefore considered to be unacceptable as it would negatively affect the visual amenity of the area, creating a visually discordant and obtrusive feature in the street scene to the detriment of the area's appearance.

The proposal therefore conflicts with policies SP1 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy, DC17 and E3.3 of the Unitary Development Plan, JP-P1 OF Place for Everyone and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Highways Safety – the street hub would be sited along the grass verge adjacent to Simonsway, with a gap of 2.763 maintained to the edge of the highway. The adjacent footway, measuring to 3m in width, would be unaffected by the proposal.

Highways Services and TfGM highlighted that they were significantly concerned that pedestrian visibility at the existing pedestrian crossing along Simonsway may be impeded by the proposed street hub. The unit's proximity to the edge of the public highway and existing pedestrian crossing therefore raises significant concerns for the safety of road users and pedestrians alike as the unit may act as a physical and visual obstruction for members of the public, reducing visibility in and around the area, which could give rise to an increase in traffic collisions, near-misses, and accidents.

The proposal therefore conflicts with policies T1, SP1 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy, which state that consideration must be given to the effects of development on road safety and traffic generation, with all development making a positive contribution to the health, safety and wellbeing of residents.

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 – for the reasons specified above, it is considered that the proposal is unacceptable due to its detrimental impact upon the visual amenity and public and highways safety of the area. Policy DM1 states that the City Council must give consideration to the 'protection of amenity and local character, environmental standards and practical matters such as access and safety', however, this proposal is considered to cause undue harm to the visual amenity and public and highways safety of the area, thus acting against the principles set out in the aforementioned policies, hence the proposal cannot be supported by the City Council.

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 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.

2) The proposal, by reason of its size, height, and relationship to the existing pedestrian crossing and highway would reduce the pedestrian, cycle, and vehicle visibility of the area to the detriment of highway and pedestrian safety and, as such, is contrary to policies T1, SP1 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy, 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
Heritage & Urban Design

1 Swan Walk, Wythenshawe Civic Centre, Simonsway, Manchester, M22 5HZ
Halo Hairdressing And Beauty, Kiosk 1 Adjacent Car Park Entrance, Wythenshawe Civic Centre, Simonsway, Manchester, M22 5HZ
Subway, Kiosk 2 Adjacent Car Park Entrance, Wythenshawe Civic Centre, Simonsway, Manchester, M22 5HZ
2 Swan Walk, Wythenshawe Civic Centre, Simonsway, Manchester, M22 5HZ
Civic Centre, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
70 Robinswood Road, Manchester, M22 0BX
68 Robinswood Road, Manchester, M22 0BX
Unit 4, Co-Operative House, The Birtles, Manchester, M22 5RE
ASDA, Swan Walk, Wythenshawe Civic Centre, Simonsway, Manchester, M22 5HZ
William Temple Vicarage, Robinswood Road, Manchester, M22 0BU
25 Hale Top, Manchester, M22 5RN
19 Hale Top, Manchester, M22 5RN
21 Hale Top, Manchester, M22 5RN
5 Swan Walk, Wythenshawe Civic Centre, Simonsway, Manchester, M22 5HZ
4 Swan Walk, Wythenshawe Civic Centre, Simonsway, Manchester, M22 5HZ
3 Swan Walk, Wythenshawe Civic Centre, Simonsway, Manchester, M22 5HZ
67 Robinswood Road, Manchester, M22 0BU
65 Robinswood Road, Manchester, M22 0BU
62 Robinswood Road, Manchester, M22 0BU
Argos, 23 Hale Top, Manchester, M22 5RN
Civic Centre Service Station, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
72 Robinswood Road, Manchester, M22 0BX
69 Robinswood Road, Manchester, M22 0BU
66 Robinswood Road, Manchester, M22 0BU
64 Robinswood Road, Manchester, M22 0BU

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