MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no.	142712/AOH/2025
Date registered valid:	14 April 2025
Proposal:	Two digital 75 inch LCD display screen, one on each side of the Street Hub 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: Advertisement Hoardings Consent

Development type: Advertisements

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 planning permission for the installation of the hub itself (142711/FO/2025) and the subject of this application is the digital advertisement displays on either side of the hub, The screens will display advertisements at 10 second intervals as well as allowing for 876 hours per year of Council and community based content. The submitted photomontages show that the digital display would cover most of the area of the sides of the hub, although an actual display size has not been provided.

Consultations & Notification Responses

Local residents/adjacent occupiers - No comments received.

Highway Services - No specific objections to the impact of the display.

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

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

Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 - States that:
(1) 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.

National Planning Policy Framework - This Framework came into effect on 27th March 2012 and was amended most recently in December 2024. It sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It defines the government's requirements for the planning system `only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so'. It provides a mechanism through `which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities'.

The Framework re-iterates that planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The statutory status of the development plan remains as the starting point for decision making. However, paragraph 11 states that `at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development' and, in `decision-taking', this means that development proposals should accord with the development plan should be approved without delay unless: any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole or specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

National Policy Framework has been related to the proposed development, with particular emphasis given to the following:
Core planning principles - Within the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play, a set of core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan making and decision-taking with the following specific policies being particularly relevant to the proposed development:

Section 12. Achieving well-designed places - States that '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' (paragraph 131). With regard to advertisement signage Chapter 12 states: 'the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed (paragraph 141). It notes that 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' (paragraph 141).

In this case, it is not considered that the development would positively contribute to the street scene and would harmfully affect the visual amenity of the area. It is considered that the nature of the signage would materially and harmfully change the relationship of the site to the street scene. It is therefore considered that the proposals would not accord with the NPPF.

Planning Practice Guidance - 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. In considering this application consideration has been given to the following aspects of the PPG:

Advertisements - This section specifically refers to, amongst other things:

i. Considerations affecting public safety;
ii. Considerations affecting amenity.

In this case, it is considered that the displayed signage is unduly prominent and harmful to visual amenity and therefore is inappropriately related the relevant PPG.

Places for Everyone - The approved Places for Everyone Plan is a Joint Development Plan Document, providing a strategic plan and policies, for 9 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.

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.

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 EN1 relates to Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas. It states that all development in Manchester will be expected to follow the seven principles of urban design, as identified in national planning guidance 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.

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
- Existing or proposed hazardous installation.

UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
The site is unallocated within the Manchester City Council Unitary Development Plan.

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.

Saved policy DC15.1 states that the Advertisement Regulations require that applications for advertisements be considered only in the interests of amenity and public safety. In determining such applications, for free standing hoardings and wall mounted posters the council will take account of the following matters in assessing these interests:
a) the general location of the proposed development and the effect on visual amenity
b) the scope for posters and hoardings to make a positive contribution to the locality
c) the design of the structures, and the relationship with any premises on which they are located
d) the effect of the proposal on permanent redevelopment of the land
e) public safety resulting from the positioning of the design of the display
f) the ease with which the structure is capable of being satisfactorily maintained
g) the use of hoardings to screen vacant sites or buildings during development, or where development is known to be imminent
h) the use of hoardings as part of a scheme to prevent access by unauthorised users onto land pending development
i) the use of hoardings to disguise or improve the appearance of unsightly features, operations or activities
j) the number of advertisements in the locality and their cumulative effect on visual amenity

DC15.2 In assessing the interests of amenity and safety the council will take account of the following criteria:
a) developments of this kind should not harm the character of architectural features of a building, nor interfere with its proper use
b) they should be in scale with the locality and relate properly to the site on which they stand
c) they should be unobtrusive and should not intrude into residential neighbourhoods and areas of high amenity value
d) a proposal which would be injurious to public safety or adversely effect the flow of traffic, by reason of its position, size or design will not be permitted

DC15.3 Where having regard to the preceding policies, the council considers the proposed development to be acceptable in principle, conditions may be imposed in order to protect safety and amenity.

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 the street, with the impact of the structure 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 visually prominence of the hub, and associated display, 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, and associated display, 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.

Public Safety

Whilst there are no safety concerns regarding the proposed advertisements, issues surrounding highway safety have been raised in relation to the supporting structure. This is referred to in the accompanying application referenced 142711/FO/2025.

Conclusion - The proposed development would be inappropriately related to its context and would have an unacceptable and harmful impact upon the visual amenity 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

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

1) The proposed advertisement display by reason of its size, location, design, appearance, means of illumination and method of display, would create an unduly obtrusive and over-dominant feature in the street-scene, and would form an incongruous feature within the street scene. The proposed display would thereby appear out of context with its location, on a busy radial route to/from Manchester City Centre and would have an unacceptable and detrimental impact on the visual amenity of the area, contrary to policies EN1, SP1 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy, saved policies E3.3, DC15.1 and DC15.2 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.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Highway Services
Greater Manchester Police
Transport For Greater Manchester

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
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

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