

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 142695/FO/2025

Date registered valid: 14 April 2025

Proposal: Installation of 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: Full Application Consent

Development type: Minor Other

Date of site visit: 2 May 2025

Standard consultations:

Printed: 25 April 2025 Expired: 17 May 2025

Neighbour notifications

Printed: 25 April 2025 Expired: 17 May 2025

Site notice

Posted: 2 May 2025 Expired: 24 May 2025

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

The development relates the installation of a new digital communications kiosk.

The applicant has indicated that they would remove 1no. existing telecommunications box from the footpath opposite 58 Darley Street (located in a residential area to the west) if permission is granted.

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

The proposed kiosk would be freestanding, rectilinear in shape though narrowing towards its base, have a depth of 35cm, a width of 1.23m and a height of 2.99m. It would be with a galvanised steel structure and feature a painted powder coated cladding. Each side would feature a tablet interface and digital HD screen. Proposed plans indicate that the digital totem is to be set back 500mm from the edge of the carriageway and 3.3m of footway is to be retained.

The digital boards would display full colour advertisements at 10-second intervals, though the advertisements for these boards are subject to a separate application 142696/AOH/2025.

The applicant's supporting statement acknowledges that the proposed kiosk forms part of a "strategic package" of similar devices. To this end, a number of applications for Smart Hubs 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 site notice and neighbour notification letters. No representations were received in response.

Highways Services: Do not support the proposed totem 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.

Environmental Health: No objections to totem structure.

City Centre Growth and Regeneration: Digital screens within the situated-on pavements create obstacles to pedestrians, with specific accessibility impacts for blind or partially-sighted people. Excessive street furniture detracts from the quality of spaces.

Digital Strategy Team: 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.

Design for Security at Great 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

The main issues for consideration relate to the acceptability of the proposal in terms of its impact upon visual amenity and public safety. 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

Places for Everyone

- JP-P1 – Sustainable Places

NPPF

- Section 12 (Achieving Well Designed Places)

Grey Mare Lane Regeneration Masterplan

Eastlands Regeneration Framework

Issues

Principle of Development

The application would see the installation of a digital kiosk on the public footway, for public use, within the City Centre. Due to the impact on visual amenity in the context of Eastlands regeneration, as well as public safety concerns, the proposed installation is not considered to be acceptable in principle.

Proposed Removal of Existing Telecommunications Box

The applicant's cover letter states that with the removal of existing telecommunications boxes, the addition of a proposed kiosk would minimise the impact of clutter on the existing street scene. In cases where a kiosk will replace an existing payphone not within the same street scape but in proximity to the proposed development site (as is the case for this application), this would minimise the impact within the same visual envelope.

Whilst the applicant's proposed removal of the 1no. existing telecommunications box on the footpath opposite 58 Darley Street is welcomed, it is noted that these telecommunications boxes are not within proximation to the vicinity of the proposed development site and are not seen in the same 'visual envelope'.

Moreover, as compared to existing traditional telecommunication booths, the proposed kiosk is solid, rectilinear in shape, opaque and black in colour, therefore having a more prominent appearance. It also incorporates illuminated digital screens for the purpose of advertisement display (which are to be refused separately as part of application 142696/AOH/2025).

Given that the proposed removal would not be visible within the Ashton New Road street scene, that Ashton New Road is a more prominent location, has a notably differing character, would be sited opposite a key node to the Grey Mare Lane development, and that the proposed kiosk has a more prominent visual appearance, the proposed kiosk is not considered a like-for-like replacement within the same visual envelope and is to be assessed on its own merits with regards to its particular impact on the street scene of Ashton New Road.

Siting, Scale and Appearance

The proposed kiosk is 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 location is also of strategic significance, being located on footway which surrounds the Etihad Campus and opposite the Grey Mare Lane regeneration area.

The importance of the two areas to the city of Manchester should not be underestimated. The campus is a major driver of spots led regeneration in partnership with City Council, Manchester City Football Club and other stakeholders (which now include COOP live). The area continues to undergo significant change and regeneration as vacant sites at the Campus are developed in line with policy. The stadium and arena combined, when events take place at the same time, result in in excess of 80,000 visitors at the campus (when the North stand extension is complete).

The Grey Mare Lane regeneration area is also an area of significant change. The masterplan for the area will see in excess of 1000 new homes developed in the area as part of a high profile estate regeneration.

Ashton New Road is also a major arterial routes leading into the city centre and where the City Council has a long standing desire through saved policy E3.3 of the UDP to improve the 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 obstacle. Where there is street furniture it is minor, appearing subservient and blending in with the setting.

The proposed kiosk would be freestanding, rectilinear in shape though narrowing towards its base, have a depth of 35cm, a width of 1.23m and a height of 2.99m. It would be with a galvanised steel structure and feature a painted powder coated cladding. Each side would feature a tablet interface and digital HD screen.



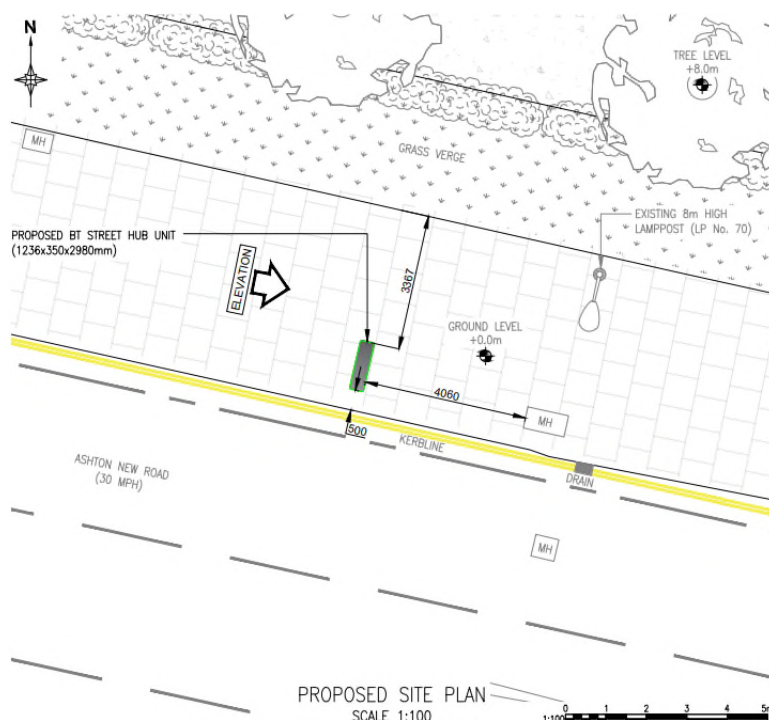
Elevations of the proposed hub

The hub would be positioned in a prominent and busy location along Ashton New Road and would be seen in the context of the wider regeneration at both the Campus and Grey Mare Lane.



Streetscene view with the South Stand of the Etihad Stadium visible to the right and the Grey Mare Lane to the left

The proposal would see the installation of the kiosk in a currently clear section of paving.



Proposed site plan

The kiosk would for a large and obtrusive feature within the street scene in an area where there is no such advertisement clutter. The streetscene is currently clutter free and in summer there is a pleasant green setting to the campus providing by the existing tree coverage. Both in summer and winter months the totem would be highly visible within this setting which is not commensurate

with the high quality developments which are expected in and around the Campus, Grey Mare Lane and along Ashton New Road.

The structure is predominantly black (within the exception of its digital screen) and covered in a black matt cladding. Its solid, dark and blocky appearance and materiality, combined with its siting, would make the structure highly prominent meaning its unattractive and low quality appearance is more visible, particularly on a currently clear section of paving. By virtue of its design, scale, massing and features it is therefore considered to be an overly prominent addition to the street scene.

City Centre Growth and Regeneration comments have expressed concerns about the clutter from these installations along with other street furniture.

The proposal would be a negative contribution to the locality, fail to improve the street level experience and the pedestrian environment, would not be well-designed, relate to its surroundings or contribute to a visually stimulating environment to the detriment of the experience at the street level. As such, it would be contrary to the provisions of Core Strategy policies EN1, DM1, SP1 and T1 and PfE policy JP-P1. Moreover, it would run contrary to the Council's aim to improve the appearance of its major radial routes, outlined in saved policy E3.3 of the UDP.

Regeneration

The proposal would be located within the Eastland's Strategic Employment Location and is subject to Core Strategy Policy EC7, which outlines the aim to support the continued social, economic and physical regeneration of East Manchester. Importantly, EC7 specifies that development within this area must 'consider wider design and layout objectives, taking advantage of important frontages such as Alan Turing Way and Ashton New Road'. As such, the totem, which is considered obtrusive and overly prominent, would be to the detriment of a key strategic frontage along Ashton New Road.

The Eastlands Regeneration Framework (ERF) contains the most up to date thinking and aspirations for the future of East Manchester as part of supporting economic growth, particularly at the Etihad Campus and its environs. The 2019 draft ERF provides some key principles for consideration, among which are the aims to enhance the area's street image to realise the potential of its streets to create a future urban environment that is distinctive and characterful and will underpin a sense of place and community longevity.

This ambition is reflected most clearly in the Stadium Campus development directly adjacent to the proposed development site, which underpins the regeneration of the area. Manchester City Football Club is currently on-site constructing an expansion to the North Stand of the Etihad Stadium, to increase its capacity to 60,000+ with completion anticipated in 2026. The works will see an enhanced commercial offer on the Etihad Campus, delivering to the aspirations of the ERF in making the Campus a year around attraction. Application 126/431/FO/2020 relating to the Co-op Arena development furthermore included improvements to the principal walking routes along the canal, City Link and Ashton New Road.

There is also a masterplan for the Grey Mare Lane regeneration, which identifies the junction where Grey Mare Lane joins with Ashton Near Road as an opportunity to landmark the Grey Mare Lane development and establish its relationship to the stadium. The proposed kiosk would be sited directly opposite this junction, occupying a prominent landmark position with a high-amenity value where the first impression made by residents and visitors would be formed. Additional to this are the objectives to improve the street environment with play streets, provide active travel to and from the area, and increase the permeability of the site. The adopted masterplan emphasises the need to open up Grey Mare Lane and encourage visibility into and from the site in order to

connect it into the wider area. The masterplan moreover identifies the wider development potential for a corner plot between Ashton New Road and Alan Turing Way to provide a potential 55 units, in close proximity to the proposed development site. The proposed kiosk would therefore occupy a prominent position along Ashton New Road where the early sense of arrival to the Grey Mare Lane development would be formed, directly across from anticipated high-quality development, as well as being on the critical route connecting the regeneration area to public transport and amenities.

It is also noted that there is an ongoing application 142453/FO/2025 for the erection of a six-storey building to form 82 residential dwellings with associated landscaping and boundary treatment along Ashton New Road.

In this context, it is considered that the installation of an obtrusive, unsightly and unduly prominent element in view of at an important frontage along Ashton New Road and opposite a key access node into the wider Grey Mare Lane development would significantly undermine the City Council's aims to enhance streets as part of the regeneration of Eastlands and Grey Mare Lane. The proposal therefore fails to support the aims and objectives of Core Strategy policies C1, C2, C4 and EC7.

Highways

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.

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. Highway Services 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. Highway Services 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.

Due to the concerns over clutter, as well as the safety concerns with the kiosk's impact on the Ashton New Road, the proposal is considered to be inappropriately sited and to impact upon road safety. The proposal therefore fails to comply with Core Strategy policies DM1, EC5, SP1 and T1, as well as PfE policy JP-P1 by virtue of its impact on road safety at the crossing.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

In consideration of the above, the proposed totem has 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 Core Strategy Policies, C1, C2, C4, CC10, DM1, EC5, EC7, EN1, SP1 and T1, saved UDP policy 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 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

Officers have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to matters arising in relation to dealing with the planning application. Pre application advice has been sought in respect of this matter where officers advised that the proposal would unlikely be supported. The applicant has also been made aware of concerns during the course of this application. The proposal has been determined in timely manner.

Reasons for recommendation to refuse

- 1) The proposed kiosk would by virtue of its siting, scale design, appearance and materiality would have a detrimental impact on visual amenity, constituting an obtrusive, incongruous and overly dominant feature sited in a prominent location in an area of strategic regeneration and on a major radial entry route into the City Centre, to the detriment of the street scene and pedestrian experience. The proposed kiosk would therefore be contrary to the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester in particular policies DM1, EC7, EN1, SP1 and T1; the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester policy E3.3; and Places for Everyone policy JP-P1 and the NPPF.

- 2) The proposed kiosk would by virtue of its siting constrain the footway potentially contributing to overspill during high-footfall events and impact upon highway safety. Additionally, by virtue of its siting adjacent to the vehicular access/egress point off Ashton New Road to the parking area situated to the southeast of the Etihad Stadium the proposed kiosk would obscure sightline visibility and impact upon highway safety. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester, in particular policies DM1, EC5, SP1 and T1, 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