

PLANNING**GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT****DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT FOR PLANNING APPLICATION**

Application no. 142714/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 661 Altrincham Road, Manchester, M23 9AA

Ward(s): Baguley Ward

Applicant: Simon Warner, BT Group Plc

Agent (if any): Mr Martin Brown, Telent

Case officer: Joshua Lee
Tel: 0161 219 2851
Email: joshua.lee@manchester.gov.uk

Recommendation: Refuse

Date of recommendation: 05 June 2025

APPLICATION DETAILS

Type of application: Advertisement Hoardings Consent

Development type: Advertisements

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

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: Not applicable

Tree Preservation Order: Not applicable

Description of site/building

The application relates to a portion of pavement located outside 661 Altrincham Road.

Description of area

The site is in a mostly residential part of the Baguley ward of Manchester outside a McDonalds Restaurant and opposite a Pharmacy. Residential properties sit close by.

Description of development

The applicant is seeking Two digital 75 inch LCD display screen, one on each side of the Street Hub unit.

The proposed plan indicates that the digital communication totem is to be located on the adopted footway, set back circa 2.6m from the edge of the carriageway on Altrincham Road.

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.

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

It is understood that 2no. existing telephone kiosk will be removed - 1no. at footpath opposite No.661 Altrincham Road and 1no. at footpath outside No.89 Floatshall Road.

PLANNING HISTORY

142713/FO/2025

Description: Installation of 1No. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit

Decision: Pending consideration

CONSULTATION, NOTIFICATION & PUBLICITY RESPONSES

Consultations

Manchester City Council Highways Services

Highways are concerned that sightline visibility may be obscured at the nearby fast-food drive-thru access/egress junction from Altrincham Road.

Transport for Greater Manchester (TFGM)

TFGM has no objections to the proposed development ceding to the local highway's authority (Highway Services) regarding road safety.

Greater Manchester Police

Greater Manchester Police were consulted on this application and had no objections.

Cadent Gas

Cadent Gas identified their assets in the local area and after a Desktop Risk Assessment advised that planning is unaffected but any works should be undertaken in line with relevant guidance and the applicant should consult LSBUD as recommended for any below ground works.

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.

Notifications

Local Residents

No representations received.

Policies

The following policies are considered relevant in the consideration of this application.

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

Policy DC15 (Advertisements, hoardings and posters) - requires that applications for advertisements be considered only in the interests of amenity and public safety. In determining applications for free standing hoardings and wall mounted posters the Council will take account of a number of matters in assessing these interests: The main matters to be considered in the context of this application are:

- The general location of the proposed advertisements and the effect of visual amenity.
- The number of advertisements in the locality and their cumulative effect on visual amenity.

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.

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 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.

Paragraph 141 states that 'The quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. A separate consent process within the planning system controls the display of advertisements, which should be operated in a way which is simple, efficient and effective. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts'.

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.

Principle

In this case, it is considered that the proposed advertisements would be visually intrusive and would present a negative feature in the street-scene contrary to The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) and the aforementioned development plan and policy.

Visual Amenity

The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations), the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) require that decisions on advertisements be made only in the interests of amenity and public safety.

This is reflected within City Council Development Plan policy in the form of saved policy DC15 of the Unitary Development Plan and policies DM1 and SP1 of the Manchester Core Strategy which seek to guide the general location of advertisements, with close regard to the impact upon visual amenity and the character of an area. Policy E3.3 also seeks to improve the appearance of the city's major radial routes.

These policies form important material consideration in the determination of advertisement applications.

In terms of national planning guidance, paragraph 141 of the NPPF advises that ‘the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed’.

In this case, it is considered that the proposed siting, dimensions of the advertisements to each side of the associated street hub, would form prominent, visually intrusive features, noticeable from many vantage points. The impact would be heightened by the vertical emphasis of the proposed advertisements, their location in the middle of the footway and the digital means of illumination, which would be unduly intrusive and insensitive, particularly during the hours darkness.

Advertisements by their very nature are intended to attract people’s attention, but in this case, it is considered the proposed advertisements are poorly placed and would form discordant features and be excessively large, disproportionate with the immediate surroundings.

The advertisement in this instance would only serve to add to advertisement clutter in the area and form overbearing and conspicuous features, harmful to visual amenity.

The City Council are striving to improve the appearance of its radial routes and proposed advertisements would only serve to introduce negative and visually intrusive features which would conflict with this objective.

Accordingly, the siting and appearance of the proposed advertisements would be harmful to visual amenity.

Public Safety – the agent has confirmed that the internally illuminated advert will have an illuminance level of 5,000cd/m², dimming to 600cd/m² between dusk and dawn, and LED-backlit LCD screens with reduced glare. These specifications accord with the guidelines set out by the Institute of Lighting Professionals in the ‘Professional Lighting Guide 05: The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements’ and is thus considered acceptable as the units should not cause an unreasonable amount of light pollution during hours of darkness.

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 142713/FO/2025.

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.

CONCLUSION

The proposed installation of a BT Street Hub with dual digital display screens at 661 Altrincham Road has been assessed against local and national planning policies. While the design of the unit is acceptable in isolation, its siting in a predominantly residential area would introduce unnecessary visual clutter, negatively impacting the character and visual amenity of the street scene. Given these concerns, the application is not supported and is recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE

Article 35 Declaration

The application has been determined within the statutory timescale. In this instance the principle of the application proposal 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 them acceptable. The applicant's agent was informed of these concerns prior to the determination of the application.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION TO REFUSE

1. Visual amenity harm

The proposed advertisements, by reason of their position, size, appearance, means of illumination and method of display, would create visually intrusive features in the street-scene along a key arterial route, which would be harmful to the visual amenity of the area, whilst contributing towards advertisement clutter in the locality, contrary to saved policies DC15 and E3.3 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester, policies DM1, EN1 and SP1 of the Manchester Core Strategy, policy JP-P1 of Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.

APPENDIX 1 – LIST OF CONSULTEES & NEIGHBOURS NOTIFIED

Highway Services

Greater Manchester Police

Transport For Greater Manchester

Park Medical Centre, 434 Altrincham Road, Manchester, M23 9AB

434A Altrincham Road, Manchester, M23 9AB

The Bideford Centre, Bideford Drive, Manchester, M23 0QN

Mcdonalds Restaurant, 643 Altrincham Road, Manchester, M23 9AA

436 Altrincham Road, Manchester, M23 9AB

641 Altrincham Road, Manchester, M23 9AA

639 Altrincham Road, Manchester, M23 9AA

8 Spark Road, Manchester, M23 1DR

6 Spark Road, Manchester, M23 1DR

4 Spark Road, Manchester, M23 1DR

2 Spark Road, Manchester, M23 1DR

10 Spark Road, Manchester, M23 1DR

16 Spark Road, Manchester, M23 1DR

14 Spark Road, Manchester, M23 1DR

12 Spark Road, Manchester, M23 1DR

APPENDIX 2 – PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

Article 4 Direction - Removal Of PD Rights Change Of Use From Class C3 To Class C4

Area Team Boundary - Name: SOUTH AREA