



01/01/2024

Planning Application Reference 136401/AOH/2023

Land Located At Deansgate Interchange, Chester Road & Chorlton Road Manchester

Installation of 4 freestanding digital advertisements, associated supporting structures, equipment and landscaping.

APPLICANT STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The application was originally submitted and validated 3 March 2023, but withdrawn 21 April 2023 in agreement with planning and the council's officers engaged with the project.

Following directives and guidance primarily arising from the road safety audit and assessment adjustments to the positioning and orientation of the advertisement displays was undertaken to meet the recommendations of the independent consultant and guidance given.

The application is resubmitted seeking express consent in respect of the above proposal supported by amended plans and drawings as applicable.

Ocean Outdoor in partnership with Manchester City Council (Neighbourhoods Directorate – Leon Phillip and Farhana Jahan) have as part of the current, commercial advertising agreement (commenced 1st October 2010) developed a digital advertising scheme at "Chester Road Roundabout" to replace the previous one (removed 2019).

The site previously had operated for close to 25 years, as an advertising location and was cited in a 2007 Guardian article as one of the UK's top Out of Home advertising sites.

Featuring traditional back illuminated 96 sheet advertising displays (x 4) the site provided the Council with a valuable income (rent and non-domestic rates). However, it became outdated and struggled against the quality and flexibility available as digital formats were developed in proximity and city-wide.

The then Media Operator submitted a number of proposals upgrading to digital screens but they were considered out of kilter with planning and stakeholders aspirations; deemed too big and disproportionate in design, failing to address potential light spill issues on neighbouring residential properties.

The proposals replicated the huge bridge span developments in neighbouring Salford and The Trafford Centre, something the Council was keen to steer away from.

In 2019 roadworks commenced to improve the traffic flow around Deansgate Interchange and in the absence of a viable proposal to update the advertising the Media Operator's contract was terminated, structures removed resulting in a considerable loss of income to the Council.

In consequence Ocean Outdoor, following the Council's clear design brief and expectations set to work to deliver an environmentally friendly, fully digitised replacement scheme that would provide valuable and sustainable long-term income for the Council. Crucially, screens had to be designed and located to mitigate the potential for any light nuisance.

In agreement with the Council, Ocean engaged renowned Manchester based architects Simpson Haugh, who designed the scheme at Mancunian Way (Two Towers, Manchester) so had experience in minimising the visual impact of supporting structures, undertaking public realm improvements, and mitigating light spill.

The design concept, associated plans, and drawings integral to this application are contained in the design statement prepared by Simpson Haugh.

Consultations and engagement with stakeholders were supported by Officers Leon Phillip and Farhana Jahan and in turn supported in principle from the then Deputy Leader and Cllrs for Hulme and Deansgate Wards, Highways and Planners.

The initial design concept was for 5 digital, landscape screens and supporting structures, with a manicured, labour-intensive landscaping scheme. Ocean were moving towards the submission of an application but was stalled by COVID-19 and the impact upon the Out of Home industry.

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As we emerged from the pandemic the project progressed, however due to significant construction and build costs coupled with limited remaining term under the contract, in December 2020 the Council's Advertising Board approved an application to the Finance Board to capitalise the project. Approval was granted for funding costed at £1.65 million.

This period of time also saw trading conditions change with increasing numbers of digital landscape screens in the city (specifically 48 sheet format), it was considered therefore that an alteration in formats and a reduction in the number of

screens from 5 to 4 would better serve the commercial viability of the site for the long-term benefit of the Council's investment negating over supply and watering down of revenues.

Further consultation was undertaken with stakeholders with the revised scheme maintaining all its integrity in respect of design and light spill. Guidance dictated changes to the landscaping originally proposed with agreement to retaining the current wildflower planting and introducing enhancements to the already established scheme.

PLANNING STATEMENT

Notwithstanding the application site has previously benefited from an advertisement consent (063296/AOH/South/01 refers) detailed and thorough consultation and pre-application advice has been sought working alongside Leon Phillip (NB: has since left the council) and Ocean is confident this application complies with guidance received compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework and Local Plan Policies in respect of advertisements with the conclusion that the Planning Committee will agree the scheme is non-contentious in respect of visual amenity and public safety. This declaration is made with due consideration to the original submission and further steps taken as a result of planning guidance.

The Design and Supporting Statement document prepared by Simpson Haugh contains all the required plans and drawings and modelling to support this application.

Land Management

Located on the south-east corner of the application site is an existing digital display erected in 2017 (application reference 111385/AO2016/S) It has been agreed to remove prior to completion of the newly proposed scheme.

Aligning with Ocean's land management policy, we propose creating a small safe haven for flora and fauna in this space, enhancing the existing wildflower planting on the roundabout and developing insect, butterfly and bee environments. Consultation already undertaken with stakeholders:

William White, Neighbourhood Officer, Ground Maintenance –
Barry Noble, Delivery Team Lead, Ground Maintenance –
Luke Nolan, Recycle Bees

We will connect with individuals in the community, a school, college, or community group to work with Ocean and the Council developing this project in a meaningful and socially valuable way.

Care and consideration will be given to the trees planted across the traffic island. The trees are represented within the site plans.

Ocean will work with guidance and recommendations received from the Council's arborists. The trees present will be protected whilst works are on-going. The Council's relevant stakeholders will be consulted through the development program and any decisions taken with regard to planting/replanting and enhancement of the wildflower planting and finishing works will be in consultation and with approval.

Ocean also undertake to oversee the area and work with the Council to ensure it retains its look and is clean, tidy and undertaking regular litter picks. This is an area of concern for City Gate Directors and Ocean as provided assurances of their commitment in this regard.

Lighting and Luminance

Simpson Haugh's statement discusses in detail the concept and design to mitigate light spillage from the digital screens.

Consultation was undertaken Reneker, developers responsible for developing the properties around the application site. Reneker's only concern was the possibility of a shiny finish to the cladding housing the screens producing unwanted glare. However, a matt finish has been planned to negate any issue in this regard.

Accompanying the application is a full assessment from BDP Lighting Specialists examining the light spill from the advertising screens and structures and potential impact upon the surrounding residential properties. In summary BDP findings are that the design, location and orientation mitigate light spillage and do not impact the surrounding residential properties.

With reference to controls to be exercised around luminance levels and times of operation the protocols outlined below will be applied and also operate within the parameters of the lighting report submitted:

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- Screens will have in built photocell control allowing luminance levels to adjust automatically to address ambient light conditions related to general district brightness.
 - Screens can be operated remotely to manage luminance controls if required and if the automatic operation fails.
 - The screens will be switched off between 2300hrs and 0600 hours.
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- The transition between adverts will be smooth and non-abrupt. The rate of change will be limited to once every 10 seconds.
 - The screens will display static adverts only.
 - Daily inspections will ensure luminance and performance levels are being met and a rapid response if faults or failures are experienced.

Transportation Statement

Upon receipt of planning guidance, a full independent road safety audit and subsequent highways assessment was undertaken and forms part of the planning submission. As a result of that guidance adjustments were implemented to the location and orientation of the screens specifically the screens referenced B, C and D on the plans.

Heritage Impact Assessment

A Heritage Impact Assessment has been undertaken by an independent body to address potential heritage concerns. The assessment concludes that the proposals would not materially impact upon the significance of any designated heritage asset.

Sustainability and Social Value

The digital screens are energy efficient. Ocean use a green tariff energy supply across the whole of its business. The energy efficiencies of this site will be maximised with the automatic adjustment of the screen's resolution meeting ambient light levels together with restricted operating hours enabling a reduction in the energy required to power the screens.

The screens will be available (in line with our existing agreement with the Council) for use for public/emergency messaging as and when required.

As mentioned under Land management, it is proposed that the area occupied by the existing screen when removed will be re-purposed developing the flora and fauna of the locality. The initiative will offer engagement to a local school or community group and Ocean will work to achieve a lasting positive outcome. This aligns with Ocean's rewilding initiative creating habitats of native species to encourage the return of wildlife and act as educational focus points for schools in the area. Ocean are creating safe havens for species that can act as stepping stones for both flora and fauna across our cities.

Ocean's sustainability policy, action to reduce green-house emissions and environmental initiatives are available for all to view on our website <https://oceanoutdoor.com/sustainability>

Additional Consultation

On 13th December 2024, Ocean's representative Sue Fleming met with Giles Grover – of The City Gate Directors. Upon request a briefing note was subsequently provided with top line information regarding the proposal together with Sue Fleming's contact details affording residents direct contact is desired to discuss issues/concerns. To date nothing further received from Giles Glover or query from any one individual resident.

Sue Fleming will advise City Gate Directors when this application is processed.

Conclusion

The scheme proposed enhances this public space which has seen significant development over the last 2- 3 years.

From the outset every consideration has been given to the design, future proofing for the long term with special thought to the history of the location and its environmental impact.

Henry Royce started an electrical and mechanical business in 1884 making his first car, not too far from the application site in Hulme and subsequently forming an alliance with Charles Rolls in Manchester's Midland Hotel. The rest is history!!

This scheme celebrates those exemplary standards of concept and design delivered by this development and trust will receive full support.

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Sue Fleming
Key Contracts Officer
Sue.fleming@oceanoutdoor.com

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