



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

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) been developing a digital advertising scheme at Chester Road Roundabout to replace the previous one (removed 2019).

Having been operational for close to 25 years, the location 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 However, it became outdated and struggled against the quality and flexibility available as digital formats were developed in proximity and city-wide.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 Media Operator submitted a number of proposals to update to digital but they were out of kilter with Planning and Stakeholders aspirations:- deemed too big and disproportionate in design, and failed 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 the junction 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.

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 had worked on 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 received support 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.

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), and it was considered 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 that already established.

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 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.

The Design and Supporting Statement document prepared by Simpson Haugh contains all the required plans and drawings 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 this will be removed prior to completion of the newly proposed scheme.

In line with Ocean's land management policy, it is proposed creating a small safe haven for flora and fauna upon removal in this space, expanding on 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

Key is connecting 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.

Please see supporting document.

Lighting and Luminance

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

Accompanying the application is a full and detailed assessment from BDP Lighting Specialists.

Consultations was undertaken with property developers, Reneker responsible for the high-rise developments surrounding 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 negating any issue in this regard.

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.

The screens have in built Photocell Control allowing luminance levels to adjust automatically to address ambient light conditions related to general district brightness.

The screens will be switched off between 2300hrs and 0600 hours.

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.

Screens are remotely monitored daily and operatives are present daily in The City inspecting all Ocean's enabling a fast response to any issues that may arise, ensuring expected performance levels but in particular illumination is being met.

Transportation Statement

Planning have advised a Transportation statement is not required for this application.

LED Screens

Specification included in planning bundle.

All Ocean's electricity is sourced and paid for is 100% green from sustainable suppliers.

Conclusion

This scheme enhances this Public Space that 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.

Sue Fleming
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