

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 135480/FO/2022

Date registered valid: 15 November 2022

Proposal: Installation of 1no. new BT Street Hub, incorporating 75" LCD advert screens together with the removal of associated BT kiosks

Address: Pavement Outside 14A Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG

Ward(s): Woodhouse Park Ward

Applicant: Mr James Browne BT Telecommunications Plc Pp 8.05, Faraday Building, 1 Knightrider Street, London, EC4V 5BT

Agent (if any): Mr Josh Lee Solutions30 Regus - 82 King Street, Manchester, M2 4WQ

Case officer: Robert Griffin
Tel: 0161 234 4527
Email: robert.griffin@manchester.gov.uk

Recommendation: Approve

Date of recommendation: 09 January 2023

Application details

Type of application: Full Application Consent

Development type: Minor Other

Date of site visit: 6 December 2022

Standard consultations: Printed: 6 December 2022 Expired: 27 December 2022

Neighbour notifications: Printed: 29 November 2022 Expired: 20 December 2022

Site notice: Posted: 6 December 2022 Expired: 27 December 2022

Press advert: Published: 6 December 2022 Expired: 27 December 2022

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building/area

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: Not applicable

Tree Preservation Order: Not applicable

The application relates to a portion of pavement located outside No.14A Rowlandsway in the Woodhouse Park ward of Manchester. The site is located within a shopping district in Wythenshawe and is in relative close proximity to Wythenshawe Civic Centre.

Description of development

The applicant is seeking permission for the installation of a new BT street hub, following the removal of two existing BT phone kiosks. Both kiosks to be removed are located further south along Rowlandsway, roughly opposite No.17.

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 2500cd/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.

Each BT Street hub aims to offer:

- Opportunities for advertisements
- Ultrafast public and encrypted Wi-Fi
- Access to public services
- Free phone calls
- Multiple accessibility options
- Secure power-only USB ports for rapid device charging

- Free phone calls
- Direct 999 call button
- Useful real-time information (including community and emergency awareness messaging)
- Environmental sensors to measure air quality, noise, traffic etc.
- Maps and wayfinding

The applicant's supporting information indicates that all street hubs are powered by 100% renewable carbon-free energy and are inspected weekly, cleaned bi-weekly and monitored 24/7. Their LED-backlit LCD screens consume approximately 60% less power than Cold Cathode Fluorescent Tubes whilst their screen filters reflect light and reduce the need for high power, noisy cooling systems. Through utilising industrial-grade components, the street hubs are able to operate at high temperatures, thus reducing the need for cooling. The supporting information states that noise emanating from the hubs should not exceed: 41dB at a distance of 3m during the day, 35dB at a distance of 3m during the night and operational volume should not exceed 60dB at a distance of 1m.

Associated Applications

135481/AOH/2022 - Advertisement consent for the display of 2no. digital 75" LCD display screens.

Consultations & Notification Responses

Local residents, as per appendix 1 – no comments or objections received.

Environmental health made comments and recommended a number of conditions in relation to controlling the light, noise, and maintenance of the units.

GMP made the following comments:

- "We recommend that consideration is to be given to the potential of the unit attracting or increasing incidents of anti-social behaviour and loitering in these high footfall areas"
- "A strategy to disable the units if required in extreme circumstances (e.g., previous examples may include the Manchester riots and some incidents of extreme anti-social behaviour) should also be considered"
- "We would also comment that the security of the proposed unit is carefully considered. The proposed unit should be constructed to a robust and adequate standard and should also be securely fixed and vandal-resistant"

MCC's Development team had no objections to this proposal:

- "Under the Framework described above (*Development Framework for Wythenshawe Civic Centre*), Rowlandsway will be transformed into a 'green corridor' as part of the longer-term aspiration for Wythenshawe Civic Centre"
- "This will create a more cycle and pedestrian friendly space, with the introduction of greening and traffic calming measures"
- "We would like to make the applicant aware of future proposals and invite them to view the Framework but have no objection to this application"

Highways made the following comments:

- "MCC Highways do not object in-principle to these proposals subject to the final positioning of apparatus being sufficient to maintain the minimum desirable clearance of **3m** to any adjacent street furniture and the edge of carriageway"
- "For equipment positioned to the front of the footway an adequate clearance of a minimum of 450mm from the edge of the carriageway is required"

Corporate Property – no comments or objections received.

Policies

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

The Manchester Core Strategy – Development Plan Document 2012-2017 (“the Core Strategy”) was adopted by the City Council on the 11th of July 2012:

- Policy SP1 – Spatial Principles
- Policy DM1 – Development Management

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021)

- Chapter 7 – Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres
- Chapter 12 – Achieving Well-Designed Places

Design for Access 2 (Dec 2003)

- Chapter 3 – Footways, Pathways and Access Routes
- Chapter 4 – Street Furniture

For reasons to be outlined below, it is considered that the proposal accords with the principles of these policy documents.

Issues

Principle – The principle of installing a BT street hub so as to provide opportunities for advertising as well as a range of services to the public (including free Wi-Fi, free phone calls, secure USB-port charging, useful real-time information, maps, and wayfinding) is acceptable, however consideration must be given to the proposal’s impact upon existing levels of visual amenity, residential amenity, and public safety.

Visual Amenity – The street hub would be located away from residential property, situated adjacent to Rowlandsway, on the pavement outside No.14A Rowlandsway. The unit will be made of galvanised mild steel, with a powder coated external grade aluminium exterior. Displays will be made of tempered and toughed laminated glass. There will also be RF transparent compartments. The dimensions of the unit will be 2.98m in height, 1.236m in width and 0.35m in depth, whilst the dimensions of the advertisement/advertisement screens will be 1.67m in height, 0.95m in width and 0.35m in depth. The maximum height of any individual letters and symbols will be 0.12m (120cm) with various colours of text and images against a black background. The advertisement will be internally illuminated, with static illuminance levels of 2500cd/m².

Considering the characteristics of the unit, the proposal is not considered to harm the visual amenity of the area as it would be situated in an area where a commercial precedent already exists (i.e., within Wythenshawe town centre).

Moreover, part of this proposal includes the removal of two existing BT phone kiosks (both of which are located roughly opposite No.17 Rowlandsway). These existing kiosks are outdated, tired, and neglected in appearance and so their replacement with an updated and more modern unit would arguably enhance the street scene and visual amenity of the area. Additionally, the fact that two existing kiosks would be removed, whilst only one would be replaced, would mean that visual clutter in this locale would be reduced overall as a result of the development.

The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable as it would have a minimal impact upon the existing visual amenity, would be in-keeping with the commercial precedent of the area and, overall, would result in reduced visual clutter in this locale.

Residential Amenity – The street hub would be situated at the edge of the pavement, near the public highway and would allow for the retention of a 5.359m wide footway. This pavement width accords with the dimensions specified under chapter 3 of the Design for Access 2 (2003) (of at least 2m) and is therefore considered acceptable as the unit would not act as a physical obstruction, reducing or limiting access for pedestrians and disabled users. Moreover, the street hub would occupy a footprint of 0.42m², whilst the removal of the two existing BT phone kiosks would return 1.58m² (per kiosk) of pavement to the public realm, thereby reducing physical clutter and street furniture.

One of the main features of a street hub unit is to provide free phone calls via a speaker and microphone system. Street hubs have been designed so that they create a 'sound cloud' for the person making a call with noise levels sufficient to make calls with background noise for the surroundings. Whilst this generates a reasonable conversational volume in proximity to the unit, it is intended to result in minimal to no noise being noticeable further away. The average volume settings are 65dB average at 3m distance from each street hub. Users may also choose to use headphones when making calls or using the tablet, which deactivates the speaker for the duration of their use.

The applicant has also provided a noise management plan which details how noise pollution and the unit's impact upon aural amenity would be managed. During daytime hours (7am-9pm), the unit would operate controllable volume levels. This would default to 50% at the start of any user activity during the day and can be increased and decreased based on the preferences of the user. During night-time hours (9pm-7am), the street hub would be governed so that the volume cannot be increased to greater than a maximum of 60% volume. Given these considerations, it is believed that the unit should not contribute to noise pollution that would exist to an unbearable degree, and thus, should not significantly harm the aural amenity of the area.

The street hub unit would also include an automated dimming feature, whereby screens would be automatically dimmed from daytime levels of 2500cd/m² to 600cd/m² between dusk and dawn. This accords 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 and should also not pose a significant threat or distraction to road users.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable as it would not reduce the availability of pedestrianised footways to a significant degree and would employ strategies that would reduce and mitigate its impact upon aural amenity, noise, and light pollution.

Public Safety – The proposal involves the removal of two existing BT phone kiosks, which are, at present, hubs for antisocial behaviour such as vandalism and substance abuse. Eliminating these enclosed areas and replacing them with a much more open and exposed unit should arguably reduce instances of antisocial behaviour as views of the site would be much less obscured.

The applicant has also provided an anti-social behaviour management plan whereby details of how these issues will be dealt with have been identified. This includes call restriction capabilities whereby phone calls and specific numbers are able to be blocked if they are identified as being

misused for illegal activity. Other measures also include reduction of call volume, restriction of calls at specific times and restriction of calls to mobile devices. The applicant also states that communicating and liaising with emergency services and local authorities should ensure that actions are able to be taken in areas where the units are being misused. Moreover, as the unit will be constructed of galvanised mild steel with tempered and toughed laminated glass, it is believed that the unit will be robust enough to withstand instances of attempted vandalism.

The applicant has also provided details of a maintenance plan. Street hubs will be visited every two weeks for cleaning, during which the units will be checked for damage and functionality of the tablets and screens. In-field quality inspection teams will also be deployed every two weeks to perform checks for damage, graffiti, and black screens as well as functionality checks on the tablet to test calls, maps, 999 and USB-charging. Faults are also able to be detected through remote diagnostics (if the unit is offline, Wi-Fi shows alerts, tilt sensor activated, internal computers show alerts) or members of the public reporting. This strategy therefore mitigates concerns over vandalism and unit maintenance.

The applicant has also provided a certificate of conformity with ICNIRP public exposure guidelines.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable as it does not raise significant concerns regarding public safety due to the elimination of existing BT phone kiosks, inclusion of an anti-social behaviour management plan and maintenance plan and its conformity with ICNIRP public exposure guidelines.

Conclusion – Given the above issues it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in terms of its impact upon visual amenity, residential amenity, and public safety as it accords with policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy, chapters 7 and 12 of the NPPF, and chapters 3, 4 and 23 of the Design for Access 2.

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: Approve

Article 35 Declaration

Officers have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with the planning application. No significant problems have arisen during the consideration of this application and the application has been determined in a timely manner, in accordance with the policies with the Development Plan.

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

1) The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of permission.

Reason - Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and Country Act Planning Act 1990.

2) The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the drawings labelled 'Generic Drawing Elevations', 'Existing and Proposed Elevations', 'Site Location Maps' and 'Proposed Site Plan', stamped as received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on the 15th November 2022.

Reason - To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans, pursuant to Policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy.

3) a) The intensity of the illuminance of the advertisement shall be no greater than 600Cdm² during hours of darkness to accord with the recommendations of the ILP publication 'PLG05 The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements' (2015)

b) The luminance level of the digital sign shall be controlled by a light sensor to adjust the screen brightness to reflect the ambient levels during the daytime and set to a maximum brightness of 600Cdm² during hours of darkness to accord with the recommendations of the

ILP publication 'PLG05 The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements' (2015). In the event of breakdown or malfunction the screen will automatically switch off

c) The advertisement shall display no special visual effects of any kind during the time that the advertisement is displayed or on transition between advertisements. The displayed image shall not include animated, flashing, scrolling, intermittent or video elements and the transition between successive images shall not include fading, swiping or other animated transition method.

d) The minimum display time for each piece of content on the digital display screens shall be 10 seconds

e) The interval between each piece of content on the digital display screens shall take place over a period no greater than one second; the complete screen shall change with no visual effects (including swiping or other animated transition methods) between displays

f) Should a fault be detected or reported with the screen or advertisement, the screen will be programmed to automatically switch to a blank screen with black background

Reason - In the interests of the amenities of the occupiers of nearby premises pursuant to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester

4) a) The development hereby approved must be built and maintained at all times thereafter in accordance with the details specified within the document labelled 'Street Hubs Noise Management Plan', stamped as received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on the 15th November 2022.

b) Once the unit has been installed, a verification report will be required to include sound testing to confirm compliance with agreed noise limit.

Reason - In the interests of the amenities of the occupiers of nearby premises pursuant to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester.

5) The development hereby approved must be built and maintained at all times thereafter in accordance with the details specified within the document labelled 'Street Hubs maintenance plan', stamped as received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on the 15th November 2022.

Reason - In the interests of visual amenity pursuant to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester.

6) Prior to the installation of the hereby approved BT Street Hub, the BT telephone kiosks, as specified in the document labelled 'BT Street Hub - Manchester - Removal Kiosk Site Plans', stamped as received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on the 15th November 2022, shall be removed.

Reason - In the interests of visual and residential amenity pursuant to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Highway Services
Environmental Health
Corporate Property
Greater Manchester Police
Corporate Property
Environmental Health
Greater Manchester Police

First Floor, Alpha House, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
Wythenshawe Initiative Partnership, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
Seventh Floor, Alpha House, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
Second Floor And Third Floor, Alpha House, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
McDonald's, 13 Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
KFC, 15 Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
14C Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
14B Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
14A Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
Unit 5, Alpha House, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
First Floor, Alderman Gatley House, Hale Top, Manchester, M22 5RQ
Second Floor, Alderman Gatley House, Hale Top, Manchester, M22 5RQ
Centron House, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5QZ
16A Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
16 Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
Sixth Floor, Alpha House, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
Alpha House, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
Fourth Floor, Alpha House, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
Ground Floor, Alpha House, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG
Fifth Floor, Alpha House, Rowlandsway, Manchester, M22 5RG

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - Removal Of PD Rights Change Of Use From Class C3 To Class C4
Aircraft Safeguarding Zone - Aircraft Safeguarding Zone - All Exceeding 15M
Area Team Boundary - Name: SOUTH AREA