MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no.	144122/FO/2025
Date registered valid:	30 September 2025
Proposal:	Installation of digital LED totem.
Address:	Outside No.15 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 5AE
Ward(s):	Deansgate Ward
Applicant:	BT Telecommunications PLC
Agent (if any):	Mr Oliver Taylor Dalcour Maclaren
Case officer:	Emily Booth Tel: 0161 234 4193 Email: emily.booth@manchester.gov.uk
Recommendation:	Refuse

Date of recommendation: 24 November 2025

Application details

Type of application: Full Application Consent

Development type: Minor Other

Date of site visit: 13 November 2025

Standard consultations:
Printed: 27 October 2025 Expired: 17 November 2025

Neighbour notifications
Printed: 8 October 2025 Expired: 29 October 2025

Site notice
Posted: 13 October 2025 Expired: 3 November 2025

Press advert
Published: 14 October 2025 Expired: 4 November 2025

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: Not applicable

Tree Preservation Order: Not applicable

Description of the site

This application relates to the pavement on Oxford Street, adjacent 15 Oxford Court at 18,20 and 24-28 Oxford Street, which is a Grade II Listed Building that is currently used as offices. This section of pavement in front of the building at 15 Oxford Street is paved and accommodates a bin, 2 totems with digital advertising screens and a lamppost. There is a further advertising screen located on the opposite side of the road. There is also a bus stop outside the adjacent building approximately 35 metres away from the site.

15 Oxford Court was partly demolished with only the Oxford Street façade including chimneys remaining. It is also named Princes Buildings. The remaining facade dates from 1903. It is constructed of pale buff brick with matching terracotta ground floor treatment and dressings. It was built in the Art Nouveau style and was originally used as shops with offices above. The facade is dominated by an exuberant attic which has 5 bays of windows with semi-circular sunk parapets and 8 tall chimneys. Other features include giant 3-storey segmental arches, Lombard friezes and elaborate terracotta enrichment.

Description of area

The site is not within a Conservation Area but is adjacent the George Street and St Peters Square Conservation Areas. The St Peter's Square Conservation Area is only approximately 39 metres from the site. The George Street Conservation area is on the opposite side of the road.

Grade II* Listed Central Library is within the view at the end of Oxford Street as it meets St Peter's Square.

The surrounding area contains a large number of other listed buildings include the Grade II* Listed Churchgate House on Oxford Street, the Grade II Listed St James Buildings and Portland Buildings on Oxford Street. There are also non-designated heritage assets surrounding the site including Peter House on Oxford Street and 36-38 Oxford Street at the corner of Chepstow Street and Oxford Street.

The surrounding area contains a variety of uses including office, hotels, retail, bars, cafes, education and restaurants uses and the Town Hall Complex.

Oxford Street/Oxford Road is a highly trafficked route from South Manchester into the City Centre, is a particularly busy bus route that experiences extremely high footfall due to being between the universities, the train station and the City Centre.

St Peter's Square and its surroundings have received a high level of investment over recent years with a refurbishment of the Town Hall Complex Buildings, the redesign of St Peters Square and the construction of new office buildings, one of which has a large frontage on Oxford Street.

Site History

Application referenced 119885/FO/2018 was approved in 2018 and allowed the installation of 1no. 2.9m high InLink, following removal of 2no. KX100 telephone kiosks.

Application referenced 119886/AOH/2018 was approved in 2018 and allowed the installation of 2no. digital LED display screens to associated InLink

Associated Applications:

144066/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside No. 71 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 2BS.
144067/AOH/2025 - Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens at Outside No. 71 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 2BS.

144106/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside 51 Piccadilly Street, Manchester, M1 2AP.
144107/AOH/2025 - Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens at Outside 51 Piccadilly Street, Manchester, M1 2AP.

144108/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Footpath Outside 1 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 4AJ.
144109/AOH/2025 - Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens at Footpath Outside 1 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 4AJ.

144110/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside H&M Brown Street, Manchester, M2 1DA.
144211/AOH/2025 - Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens at Outside H&M Brown Street, Manchester, M2 1DA.

144112/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside No.98 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 4GX.

144200/AOH/2025 - Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens at Outside No.98 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 4GX.

144114/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside Deansgate Station, Whitworth Street West, Manchester, M1 5WY.
144115/AOH/2025 - Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens at Outside Deansgate Station, Whitworth Street West, Manchester, M1 5WY.

144116/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside Primark, Mosley Street, Manchester, M60 1AY.
144117/AOH/2025 - Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens at Outside Primark, Mosley Street, Manchester, M60 1AY.

144118/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside No. 8-10 Exchange Street, Manchester, M2 7EF.
144201/AOH/2025 - Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens at Outside No. 8-10 Exchange Street, Manchester, M2 7EF.

144120/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Footpath Outside No. 11-13 Piccadilly, Manchester, M60 1AY.
144199/AOH/2025 - Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens at Footpath Outside No. 11-13 Piccadilly, Manchester, M60 1AY.

144198/AOH/2025 - Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens at Outside No.15 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 5AE.

144124/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Opposite No. 60 Sackville Street, Manchester, M1 3BU.
144197/AOH/2025 - Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens at Opposite No. 60 Sackville Street, Manchester, M1 3BU.

144144/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside No. 9 Stevenson Square, Manchester, M1 1DB.
144196/AOH/2025 - Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens at Outside No. 9 Stevenson Square, Manchester, M1 1DB.

144337/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Portland Street, Outside Piccadilly Hotel, Manchester, M1 4AL.
144338/AOH/2025 - Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens at Portland Street, Outside Piccadilly Hotel, Manchester, M1 4AL.

144339/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside No. 48 King Street, Manchester, M2 6AF.
144340/AOH/2025 - Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens at Outside No. 48 King Street, Manchester, M2 6AF.

Description of development

Planning permission is sought for the installation of a 2986mm (h) x 350mm (d) x 1236mm (w) galvanised steel totem powder coated black. It is designed to accommodate two screens measuring 950cm x 1670mm on the front and rear.

This totem would replace the existing BT InLink totem.

Advertisement consent is sought for the display of two 75" digital screens measuring 950cm x 1670mm on the front and rear of a digital LED totem as part of an associated application referenced 144198/AOH/2025.

Consultations & Notification Responses

Publicity - Neighbour notification letters were sent to surrounding properties. A site notice and local press advert were also produced. No representations have been received.

Ward Councillor's- An objection has been received from Councillor Johns, who stated that the advertisement totem is in a busy location, does not contribute to the Council's objective to reduce street clutter, reduces pavement space and sightlines and makes pedestrians feel more enclosed in locations where we should be prioritising pedestrians.

Highway Services - Advised that the proposal does not contribute to or align with Manchester City Council's ongoing de-cluttering strategy of the highway, fails to meet broader design standards and policies that promote inclusive access and safe, active travel, and have concerns that the increased footprint of the totem could impede pedestrian movement and inclusive accessibility and increase localised pedestrian congestion.

GMP - CC Neighbourhood Policing - No response received

Environmental Health - Requested that if the application were to be approved, conditions should be attached to control the light from the digital display screens, the noise from speakers on the street hub, and for a maintenance management plan to be submitted.

Greater Manchester Police - Advised no objection

Issues

Policy

The Places for Everyone Plan - Joint Development Plan Document, for nine of the 10 boroughs which make up Greater Manchester adopted on 21st of March 2024:

Policy JP-P1 - Sustainable Places
Policy JP-P2 - Heritage
Policy JP-C5 - Streets for All
Policy JP-C6 - Walking and Cycling

The Manchester Core Strategy - Development Plan Document 2012-2027 ("the Core Strategy") was adopted by the City Council on the 11th of July 2012:

Policy SP1 - Spatial Principles
Policy CC5 - Transport
Policy CC9 - Design and Heritage
Policy EN1 - Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas
Policy EN3 - Heritage
Policy DM1 - Development Management
Policy T1 – Sustainable Transport

Saved Unitary Development Plan for Manchester (1995) - The following saved UDP Policies are of relevance to this application:

Policy DC18 - Conservation Areas
Policy DC19 - Listed Buildings
Policy DC22 - Footpath Protection
Policy DC26 - Development and Noise

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024):

Chapter 12 - Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
Chapter 16 - Conserving the Historic Environment

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Sections 66, and 72 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 require that special consideration is given to the preservation of the significant fabric and setting of listed buildings and conservation areas.

The National Design Guide (January 2021)

Illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring, and successful can be achieved in practice. It forms part of the Government's collection of planning practice guidance and should be read alongside the separate planning practice guidance on design process and tools.

Greater Manchester's Streets for All Design Guide (2023)

Adopted November 2023 to ensure will ensure that streets are welcoming, green and safe spaces for all people, enabling more travel by walking, cycling, and using public transport while creating thriving places that support local communities and businesses.

The Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance (Adopted 2007)

This document provides guidance to help develop and enhance Manchester. In particular, the SPD seeks appropriate design, quality of public realm, facilities for disabled people (in accordance with Design for Access 2).

In Chapter 2 'Design', paragraph 2.7 outlines the City Council's expectations that all new developments should have a high standard of design making a positive contribution to the City's environment and encourages "the most appropriate form of development to enliven neighbourhoods and sustain local facilities.

Issues

Principle of Development

It should be noted that in the applicant's planning statement that Transport for London's (TfL) policy document 'Guidance for Digital Roadside Advertising and Proposed Best Practice - 2013' is a key document in relation to the proposed development. The site being considered is not within London. The Local Planning Authority does not consider that a Transport for London policy document is relevant to the development plans, policies, SPDs and other local guidance documents of Manchester City Council and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Transport for Greater Manchester provides advice to Manchester City Council.

It should also be noted that the planning statement also makes reference to Policy DEL1 Infrastructure and Service Delivery. Following check, it is confirmed that no such policy exists in the Places for Everyone Plan, Manchester Core Strategy, or Saved Unitary Development Plan for Manchester. As such Policy DEL1 is not relevant to Manchester City Council as LPA.

The application is for the installation of a digital totem on the pavement in the City Centre, for public use. It would replace an existing much smaller totem. Due to the impact on visual amenity, heritage and street clutter, the proposed installation is not considered to be acceptable in principle.

Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage

Policy JP-P1 states that development should respect and acknowledge the character and identity of the locality in terms of design, siting, size, scale and materials used. It is considered that the increase in size and scale of the totem, resulting in a taller and bulkier structure, as well as the dark appearance of the material, would be contrary to this policy.

Policy JP-C5 sets out a goal to ensure that streets are welcoming for all. The inclusive of a visually intrusive, taller, bulkier, darker structure in the street scene would not contribute to ensuring that the streets are welcoming for all and therefore be contrary to this policy.

Policy JP-C6 aims to create safe, attractive and integrated walking and cycling infrastructure, connecting every neighbourhood and community with reference to national and locally adopted design guidance, including ensuring routes are direct, easily navigable and integrated with the street and public transport network and increasing the capacity and quality of walking and cycling infrastructure in locations where significant growth in the number of short journeys is anticipated, and where quality of place improvements are proposed. The inclusive of a taller, bulkier, structure in the street scene would not contribute to increasing the capacity and quality of walking and therefore be contrary to this policy

Policy JP-P2 states that development proposals affecting a designated heritage asset and a conservation area should conserve those elements which contribute to its significance including those identified in any conservation area appraisal as making a positive contribution to the area. Harm to such elements will only be permitted where this is clearly justified and outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal. The proposals due not conserve elements which contribute to the significance of the heritage asset, as they will block views of important architectural features that contribute to the significance of the listed buildings and by extension, the conservation area, which the listed building contribute significantly to.

Policy EN1 advises that developer's will be expected to consider the City's heritage, including its listed buildings, conservation areas. The proposal is not considered to properly consider the City's heritage, by way of the introduction of this larger, bulkier structure into the setting of listed buildings.

Policy EN3 states that new developments must be designed so as to support the Council in preserving or, where possible, enhancing the historic environment, the character, setting and accessibility of areas and buildings of acknowledged importance, including listed buildings and conservation areas. This proposal would not preserve or enhance the character or setting of the listed buildings or conservation area, due to the introduction of a bulkier, taller, darker structure that contrasts to listed buildings in front of which it sits.

Policy CC5 states that proposals will be supported that improve pedestrian safety, improve air quality and increase the scope for accessible public realm improvements, for example improvements to create a new pedestrian priority zone initially the area bounded by Deansgate,

Peter Street / Oxford Street, Portland Street, Piccadilly North, Manchester Arndale, Corporation Street and Exchange Square. The introduction of a larger, bulkier, darker, intrusive structure is not considered to create accessibility improvements to the pedestrian environment indeed it would undermine the aims of this policy.

Policy CC9 advises that development in Manchester should preserve or enhance the heritage assets affected. The proposal, for the reasons outlined below the totem would not preserve or enhance the heritage assets affected.

Policy DM1 advises that all development should be appropriately sited, scaled, formed, massed, and detailed with appropriate layout and materials and should have regard to the character of the surrounding area and effects on built heritage. The proposal, for the reasons outlined below is not considered that there has been sufficient regard for the effects on built heritage.

Policy EN1 states that wherever possible, the opportunity should be realised to enhance existing areas of meaningful open space. The introduction of a larger, bulkier, darker, intrusive structure is not considered to enhance of the existing area of this very important and meaningful open space and is therefore contrary to this policy.

Policy T1 advises that the Council support proposals that improve pedestrian routes and the pedestrian environment and take account of the needs of road users according to a broad hierarchy consisting of, in order of priority: 1. pedestrians and disabled people 2. cyclists, public transport, 3. commercial access, 4. general off-peak traffic, 5. general peak time traffic. The proposal would adversely impact on a pedestrian route and the wider pedestrian environment.

Saved UDP Policy DC18 states that the Council will give particularly careful consideration to development proposals within Conservation Area and will seek to preserve and enhance the character of its designated conservation areas by carefully considering; the relationship of new structures to neighbouring buildings and spaces; and the effect of major changes to the appearance of existing buildings. The proposal, for the reasons outlined below would not preserve or enhance the character of the designated conservation area.

Saved UDP Policy DC19 states that the Council will seek to preserve and enhance the setting of listed buildings by appropriate control over the design of new development in their vicinity. The proposal, for the reasons outlined below would not preserve or enhance the setting of affected listed buildings.

The adoption of the Streets for All Design guidance by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority in November 2023 reinforces the position on reducing street clutter, recommending that in reviewing existing situations, street furniture should be rationalised wherever possible, and clutter removed. As the proposal fails to rationalise street furniture or remove clutter, instead exasperating the street clutter issues in the area, it is therefore not compliant with the Streets for All Design guidance.

Section 12 of the NPPF attaches great importance to the design of the built environment, stating that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. It is considered that this intrusive feature would have a negative visual impact upon the built environment and not contribute to positively making a better place for people in this significant area of public realm and is therefore contrary to Section 12 of the NPPF.

Paragraph 213 of the NPPF states that any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset from development within its setting should require clear and convincing justification. It is not considered that a clear and convincing justification has been provided.

Paragraph 215 of the Framework requires that where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. This shall be fully detailed in the section below.

George Street Conservation Area is principally a busy commercial district but the range of uses has recently expanded to include shops, restaurants, banks and housing. It is best known as the location of Manchester's China Town. It contains a number of former warehouses that are listed. Its imposing appearance is considered to detract from the street scene. Both Georgian and Victorian architecture exists in the conservation area, when designing new structures nearby such buildings, the basic design principles of an over-large ground floor, a middle portion and a top part which creates a varied skyline, must be respected if the harmony of the area is to be retained.

St Peter's Square conservation area is an area which contains a mixture of commercial, cultural and civic buildings. The name derives from St. Peter's Church, which stood in the centre of St Peter's Square from 1788 to 1907.The main characteristic of St Peter's Square conservation area is primarily one of civic grandeur, but it also contains some commercial property. The earliest building in the conservation area is the Friends' Meeting House on Mount Street, designed by Richard Lane and completed in 1830. The Central Library and the Town Hall Extension were designed at the same time, and together they form a single composition with a walkway between them. New and refurbished buildings in the area should be neither diluted nor superficial reflections of historic buildings. Bland copies would make no positive contribution but would simply devalue the historic character of the area.

The application site is also located within the setting of the Grade II listed building named 15 Oxford Court described above. As stated, the site is located directly in front of this building and greatly contrasts with the pale buff brick and matching terracotta and the highly detailed elevations.

The proposed totem would be a replacement of the existing InLink model. It would be free-standing, rectilinear in shape and have a depth of 35cm, a width of 1.23m and a height of 2.99m. It would be a Street Hub 3 model.

Each side would display signage on a digital HD screen measuring 950mm x 1670mm. It would be with a black power coated galvanised steel structure and feature a black powder coated cladding. The structure itself would be relatively simple and utilitarian in its appearance. The existing totem that it would replace is a significantly smaller totem with significantly smaller screens and is of a less standard shape and a less intrusive colour.

The proposed totems would add an intrusive structure in a location close to two conservation areas and surrounded on two sides by listed buildings that would negatively impact upon the setting of these heritage assets, as they would see the introduction of large, bulkier, and darker structure in the public realm, which would not be visually appealing and will be seen in context with the pale elevation of the beautiful listed building adjacent the site.

It would also affect an important view at the end of Oxford Street of the Grade II* listed Central Library and the St Peter’s Square and George Street Conservation Areas due to its closeness to these heritage assets.

In a different area of the City Centre, it is noted that in an appeal decision for application 142695/FO/2025 (Appeal ref: APP/B4215/W/25/3369446), the Inspector described a similar Street Hub 2 totem model as such:

Due to a combination of its height, width and freestanding position close to the edge of the carriageway, the proposed hub, with its large digital advertisement panels on both sides, would represent a dominant and obtrusive feature on the pavement.

When viewed in the context of the street scene described above, the proposed totem would be larger and bulkier than the existing, particularly when viewed from the front and back. It would also be dark, being predominantly covered in a black matt cladding, with the exception of its digital screen. It would therefore have a more prominent presence in the street than the existing totem, occupying more space, being bulkier in its massing, appearing starker in its dark colour, and contrasting more strongly with the colour of the listed building and the lighter paving stones of the footway.

In view of the above, it is not considered that the proposed totem represents a like-for-like replacement within the street scene, having a more dominant and imposing visual presence than the existing InLink model.

In consideration of the above, and in the context surrounding the current application whereby there are material differences between the circumstances of the InLink and Street Hub totem applications, it is viewed that the proposal would be visually detrimental to the street scene with no factors outweighing the visual harm.

The harm has been judged to be a moderate level of less than substantial harm due to the impact on the setting of the nearby listed buildings, in particular the building closest to the site and the contrasting appearance and larger size meaning that views of the listed building would be more cluttered. The important view down Oxford Street of the Grade II* Listed Central Library and the St Peter's Square Conservation Area would also be affected.

Public Benefits

The Applicant has stated that there are public benefits associated with the installation of the totems. The Applicant's planning statement submitted with the application highlights the national policy context encouraging investment in mobile infrastructure and 5G provision. The Council has also published the Manchester Digital Strategy 2021 - 2026, outlining its goal to invest in digital infrastructure.

The applicant has stated that the phone service provided in the totem would provide access to public services, multiple accessibility options, secure power-only USB ports for rapid device charging, free phone calls, a direct emergency call button, community and emergency awareness messaging. All of which are currently provided by the existing structure.

The applicant has submitted some BT usage data, which covers the entire BT InLink and Street Hub estate, from the period of 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, detailing the number of calls made to various charities and services.

The data submitted covers all BT units across the country. There is no data provided as to the specific existing InLink Unit to demonstrate how many calls have been made from this unit that could demonstrate the public benefit it has, nor is there an average provided to show how many calls are made yearly per totem unit.

The City Council's does not dispute that free public Wi-Fi can have benefits for visitors and residents who wish to connect to the internet for free, however, the quality of the service depends on range to the Wi-Fi source. The range quoted for the updated Smart Hub is not stated, it is not clear what range a user has access to for Wi-Fi, and therefore the public benefit cannot be accurately determined.

The success of public Wi-Fi delivered in this way depends on density and frequency of similar Wi-Fi devices on streets - this could quickly become problematic for street furniture clutter. As such, the hubs do not offer comprehensive coverage, and the benefits offered are limited.

There are concerns with public Wi-Fi when it comes to cyber security and the security of the network, the smart solution requires an email to access the service and has several measures in place to control what potentially harmful material is viewed online. However, as the nature of public Wi-Fi is to be open, it is more susceptible to cybersecurity concerns for users than home or business Wi-Fi connections.

Digital connectivity in city centre locations is notably hard to achieve well at scale, quality and cost for users. Whilst free public Wi-Fi is one solution, it is not the only solution available on the market. For example, 4G/5G small cells to increase mobile capacity and user experience or public mesh networks.

It is not clear whether small cell capability is included in the Smart Hub as standard, and if the technology will be activated.

Even so, small cells can also be installed on existing street furniture that is more fundament to the public highway, such as streetlights. The installation of small cells on such existing necessary street furniture would be a less visually harmful manner to provide better digital connectivity that would also have a less harmful impact upon the setting of heritage assets.

In addition, when small cells are placed at higher altitudes, such as on street lighting, they achieve better reception. It is not clear if the height of the screens is optimal for small cell network coverage.

It is also not clear if any proposed small cell solution in the Smart Hubs would be a neutral host and provide connectivity across more than one operator or if they are exclusively for the use of EE. A neutral host small cell would be preferable for the city's needs.

If the small cells were only to host EE, MCC's Digital Strategy Team have advised that mapping capacity data shows that EE does not currently encounter significant capacity problems in the Piccadilly area. If the small cells were only to serve EE, the public benefits would be limited.

The applicant states that there is potential for IoT environmental sensors within the Smart Hubs, however, it is not clear how Local Authorities would access this data or any associated costs or considerations.

There is no evidence to suggest that data from previous BT Smart Hub - and other like solutions has been shared with MCC. It has not been made clear in the application that BT would share this data moving forwards. Without confirmation of this, the public benefits are again limited.

The planning statement notes that the digital screens can be used by the Council as there is 5% free screen time allocated on each BT Street Hub unit. There is no detail as to how this would be provided in practice.

In order for people to use the Smart Hubs a degree of technical knowledge of how they work and what their functions are is needed. It is not clear what resource BT will put into letting the public know the full functionality of the Smart Hub and how they can easily replace phone booths.

To conclude, given the above, it is considered that while there maybe be some public benefits, they are limited. It is also noted that the existing totem has similar capabilities, and the limited public benefits of this application are therefore a marginal improvement of the existing circumstance.

The totem does not provide the public benefits that many other items of street furniture do, such as the introduction of cycle hubs, which supports the active travel objectives of the City Council.

In addition, many of potential public benefits mentioned by the applicant in their submission cannot be currently accurately determined, due to a lack of substantial and concrete information provided in the submission as to what coverage precisely would be provided, how data collected would be provided to the Local Authority, and definitive strategies confirming how many of these public benefits would be actually be delivered.

Further clarity would be required detailing the precise extent of these public benefits and outlining how these public benefits would actually be provided. Otherwise, there is no assurance that many of these public benefits would be delivered.

On this basis, the City Council cannot accurately determine that the extend of many of the public benefits, it can only be determined that limited marginal public benefits will be provided.

When these limited marginal public benefits are weighed against the moderate level of less than substantial harm, as well as their emphasising of the prevalence of street clutter, impact upon visual amenity and heritage, it is not considered that the harm is outweighed as advised above.

The City Council can see no further benefits that are not already provided by the existing totems and other totems nearby (further details below), this means that there is no benefit provided by the totem to outweigh the moderate level of less than substantial harm caused to the setting of the affected heritage asset by the above-described works.

Sections 66 and 72 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 require that special consideration is given to the preservation of the significant fabric and setting of listed buildings and conservation areas. For the reasons outlined above, it is not considered that the proposal preserves the setting of listed buildings or the setting of the adjacent conservation areas.

By virtue of the development’s adverse visual impacts discussed above, as well as the lack of proven public benefit that would be brought about via the implementation of the proposed works, it is considered that the proposal is contrary to Places for Everyone Plan Policies JP-P1 and JP-P2, Manchester Core Strategy Policies SP1, CC9, EN1, EN3 and DM1, Saved Unitary Development Plan Policies DC18 and DC19, and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which collectively seek to preserve and enhance the visual appearance of the local environment and areas of historical significance.

Highways Impact, Public Safety and Accessibility

Paragraph 117 of the NPPF requires that proposals create attractive routes and avoid unnecessary street clutter. Core Strategy Policies SP1, CC5 and DM1 and saved UDP Policy DC22 require consideration of the impact on existing pedestrian routes, pedestrian safety and the pedestrian environment more broadly.

Pursuant to these objectives, the Council has had a longstanding decluttering strategy that has been strengthened since the adoption of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, in which Policies JP-C5 and JP-P1 further emphasise the 'movement and place' function of

streets, requiring that development is designed to make a significant positive contribution to the quality of a place, ensuring that streets are welcoming for all, support high levels of walking, is safe, easy to move around for pedestrians, and free from obstacles.

The adopted of the Streets for All Design Guidance by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority in November 2023 reinforces this position on reducing street clutter, recommending that in reviewing existing situations, street furniture should be rationalised wherever possible, clutter removed, and clear pedestrian routes provided throughout, achieved via clear and legible zones for pedestrian routes and street furniture.

The adoption of Places for Everyone and the Streets for All Design Guidance is an important change in policy since the applications for the InLink totems were determined in 2018.

The application site lies within a busy city centre location, subject to Manchester City Council's ongoing decluttering strategy, which aims to:

- Remove barriers caused by excessive or poorly placed street furniture.
- Improve accessibility and pedestrian safety; and
- Enhance and encourage active travel for all users.

The applicant has referenced previous approvals for the existing totems in 2017. Part of the justification for these structures being approved was that larger, bulkier telephone boxes, that contributed to anti-social behaviour, were being replaced by smaller units that reduced the physical footprint of the structures, as well as a rationalisation of the telecoms estate, which saw a strategy for the removal of many telephone boxes that were not replaced by InLink units, thereby contributing to a more navigable and inclusive public realm.

The current proposals do not contribute to a reduction in the overall number of these units, and the proposal totem has a larger footprint than the existing InLink Units, therefore, the proposal does not align with the decluttering strategy's principles. The totem would work against the decluttering and rationalisation of street furniture that has occurred in this location, constituting a bulkier, more visually dominant item of street furniture which occupies more space than the existing InLink model.

Highway Services have advised that they have concerns that the increased totem footprint will impede pedestrian movement and inclusive accessibility, which is of particular concern at this City Centre location as the area regularly accommodates significant levels of pedestrian movement with other street-furniture located in close proximity, and increase localised pedestrian congestion. Surrounding crossing facilities and bus-stops already give-rise to groups of pedestrians waiting/queuing in the vicinity of the site and as such, localised congestion would likely be heightened.

The proposed replacement digital totem does not contribute to the rationalisation of street furniture. It exacerbates issues associated with street clutter in an already busy City Centre environment with high footfall and bus stops. As such, the proposal is inconsistent with MCC's decluttering strategy and fails to meet broader design standards and above local and national policies.

Excessive street furniture detracts from the quality of spaces, and the increased size of the totem would contribute to an increase in street clutter that would detract from the quality of the public realm, making this busy pedestrian route a less pleasing place to walk and a less accessible pavement for disabled people.

Most of the other existing items of street furniture in the immediate vicinity are off a slimmer design and do not create as significant an impact as the proposed totem.

The totem would add further visual clutter, making this busy pedestrian route a less pleasing place to walk, and its siting close to the edge of the carriageway would only exacerbate its visual prominence and dominance at this busy junction.

Highways officers have advised that the above issues could lead to reduced levels of pedestrian comfort, local pedestrian navigation/confusion and safety issues particularly for those with accessibility needs. It should also be noted that congested areas can result in pedestrians stepping out onto the adjacent live carriageway which is an obvious safety concern.

In addition, digital totem screens situated-on pavements can create obstacles to pedestrians, with specific accessibility impacts for blind or partially sighted people.

In conclusion, while only moderately increasing in footprint, there are concerns that the larger proposed Street Hub totem would work to increase obstruction along the busy footway, impeding pedestrian movement and inclusive accessibility. This is of particular concern at this City Centre location as the area regularly accommodates significant levels of pedestrian movement that already must navigate around other street-furniture located in close proximity.

The City Council recognises, however, that the existing structures do present similar challenges and that the change in totem design is not significant enough to warrant a refusal on the grounds of Highway Safety and Accessibility.

On the above basis the proposed totem would be contrary to Places for Everyone Policies JP-C4, JP-C5 and JP-C6 and JP-P1, Core Strategy Policies SP1, CC5, T1 and DM1 and saved UDP Policy DC22; Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework; as well as guidance contained within the Streets for All Design Guide 2023.

Residential Amenity

The totem could potentially be a source of disamenity to nearby occupiers due to noise associated with the telephone use owing to the unenclosed nature of the totems and light pollution from the digital screens.

These elements are of concern to MCC's Environmental Health team, who requested control via conditions of both the digital display content and illuminance.

The conditions would ensure that the luminance level of the digital display screens 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 600cd/m2 during hours of darkness, that in the event of breakdown or malfunction the screen would automatically switch off, that excessively animated, flashing, scrolling, intermittent or video elements and similar transitions are not allowed, and that the minimum display time for each piece of content on the digital display screens shall be 10 seconds.

A noise management plan was submitted with the application and the findings of this have been accepted by MCC's Environmental Health team. A verification element report would still have to be conditioned in order to confirm compliance with agreed noise limit.

MCC's Environmental Health team also requested that a management plan shall be submitted to demonstrate how the units will be maintained to ensure the agreed light levels and noise levels are maintained and not exceeded.

Subject to these being resolved satisfactorily via conditions attached to an approval decision, it is considered that there would be sufficient mitigation of any concerns regarding residential amenity and that in residential amenity terms, the proposal would be in accordance with polices SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy, and DC26 of the UDP.

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

Greater Manchester Police (Design for Security) were consulted on the application and had no objection.

Greater Manchester Police (Operational Policing) were consulted and did not provide a response to the consultation request.

Crime and anti-social behaviour are very much prevalent concern on Oxford and there are concerns regarding the proposed structures providing a vantage point for anti-social behaviour. Ideally there would be lighting measures installed to deter misuse of the space.

Given that the existing structures in place present similar concerns and issues and given that the Local Planning Authority have received no objections from Greater Manchester Police, there is not enough evidence to suggest that the new structures will have a significant enough impact upon crime and anti-social behaviour in the area in order to warrant a refusal on these grounds.

Conclusion

Any noise and luminance concerns or crime, highway safety, access and anti-social behaviour concerns relating to the proposed digital LED totem are not significant enough to refuse on these grounds.

However, due to a combination of its height, width, materiality, and appearance, the proposed hub, with its large digital advertisement panels on both sides, would represent a dominant and obtrusive feature on the pavement that would add further visual clutter, making this busy pedestrian route a less pleasing place to walk, with its siting close to the edge of the carriageway would only exacerbate its visual prominence and dominance at this busy junction, within the setting of heritage assets.

Therefore, the proposed digital LED totem is refused on visual amenity and impact on heritage grounds, as the public benefits do not outweigh any less than substantial harm caused to heritage assets, and due to the proposal being contrary to the provisions of policies JP-Strat2, , JP-C5, JP-C6, JP-P1 and JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone Plan, policies SP1, CC5, CC9, EN1, EN3, T1 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy (2012), saved policies DC18, DC19 and DC22 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (1995), sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, and Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990.

The proposal is therefore refused.

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 polices 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. No pre application advice was sought in respect of this matter. The application has been assessed against policy and the comments received. There would be conflicts with policy which could not be resolved through amendments to the scheme. The application is determined in a timely manner.

Reasons for recommendation to refuse

1) The proposed totem is substantially larger than the existing totem that it would replace and would by virtue of its siting, scale, design, materiality and appearance would result in an overly dominant, overly large and obtrusive item of street clutter incongruously sited along the footway in a prominent and highly visible location in the City Centre. It would form clutter with other street furniture in an area of the City Centre where significant efforts to declutter the streetscape, rationalise existing street furniture, and attract investments to improve the public realm and place making and pedestrian experience have been made. The proposal would impact on the setting of the Grade II listed buildings at 15 Oxford Court, 18-20 and 24-28 Oxford Street and the adjacent George Street and St Peters Square Conservation Areas. The totem would be read as a dark, modern and incongruous structure directly in the foreground of this highly detailed light buff brick and terracotta built historic listed building forming an unduly harmful juxtaposition and low-quality addition to the setting of the listed buildings and the character of the conservation areas. The proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of these designated assets and the required public benefits do not exist to outweigh the harm identified. The proposed totem would therefore be contrary to Places for Everyone Policies JP-C5, JP-P1 and JP-P2, and Core Strategy Policies SP1, CC9, EN1, EN3 T1 and DM1 , saved UDP policies DC18 and DC19; Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990; and guidance contained in Sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

2) The proposed totem by virtue of its location along a footway which experiences high levels of daily footfall and is part of a busy bus route, as well as its scale, footprint, and position on the footway would be to the detriment of pedestrian environment, forming a further obstruction along the footway and failing to correspond to the positioning of adjacent street furniture including the traffic sign, existing totem and the lamppost and having a larger footprint that the exiting BT screen, thereby failing to minimise barriers and obstacles to movement. The proposed totem would therefore be contrary to Places for Everyone Policies JP-C5 and JP-C6 and JP-P1, Core Strategy Policies SP1, CC5, T1 and DM1 and saved UDP Policy DC22; Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework; as well as guidance contained within the Streets for All Design Guide 2023.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

GMP - CC Neighbourhood Policing
Highway Services
Environmental Health
Greater Manchester Police

Advertising Right JC DeCauxOutside 33 - 35, Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 4BH
34 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 5EL
Eden & Co Solicitors, 26 Oxford Court, Manchester, M2 3WQ
The Paramount, 33 - 35 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 4BH
Third Floor, 15 Oxford Court, Manchester, M2 3WQ
11 Oxford Court, Manchester, M2 3WQ
31 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 4BH
16 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 5AE
15 Oxford Court, Manchester, M2 3WQ

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - City Centre PD Restriction - Class B1(a) To C3
Article 4 Direction - Removal Of PD Rights Change Of Use From Class C3 To Class C4
Coal Authority - Development Low Risk - Name: DEVELOPMENT_LOW_RISK_AREA
Area Team Boundary - Name: CENTRAL