

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no.	144110/FO/2025
Date registered valid:	30 September 2025
Proposal:	Installation of digital LED totem.
Address:	Outside H&M Brown Street, Manchester, M2 1DA
Ward(s):	Deansgate Ward
Applicant:	BT Telecommunications PLC
Agent (if any):	Mr Oliver Taylor Dalcour Maclaren
Case officer:	Sam Elliott Tel: 0161 219 2856 Email: sam.elliott@manchester.gov.uk
Recommendation:	Refuse
Date of recommendation:	19/11/2025

Application details

Type of application:	Full Application Consent
Development type:	Minor Other
Date of site visit:	10 October 2025
Standard consultations: Printed: 27 October 2025	Expired: 17 November 2025
Neighbour notifications: Printed: 8 October 2025	Expired: 29 October 2025
Site notice: Posted: 10 October 2025	Expired: 31 October 2025
Press advert: Published: 14 October 2025	Expired: 4 November 2025

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building

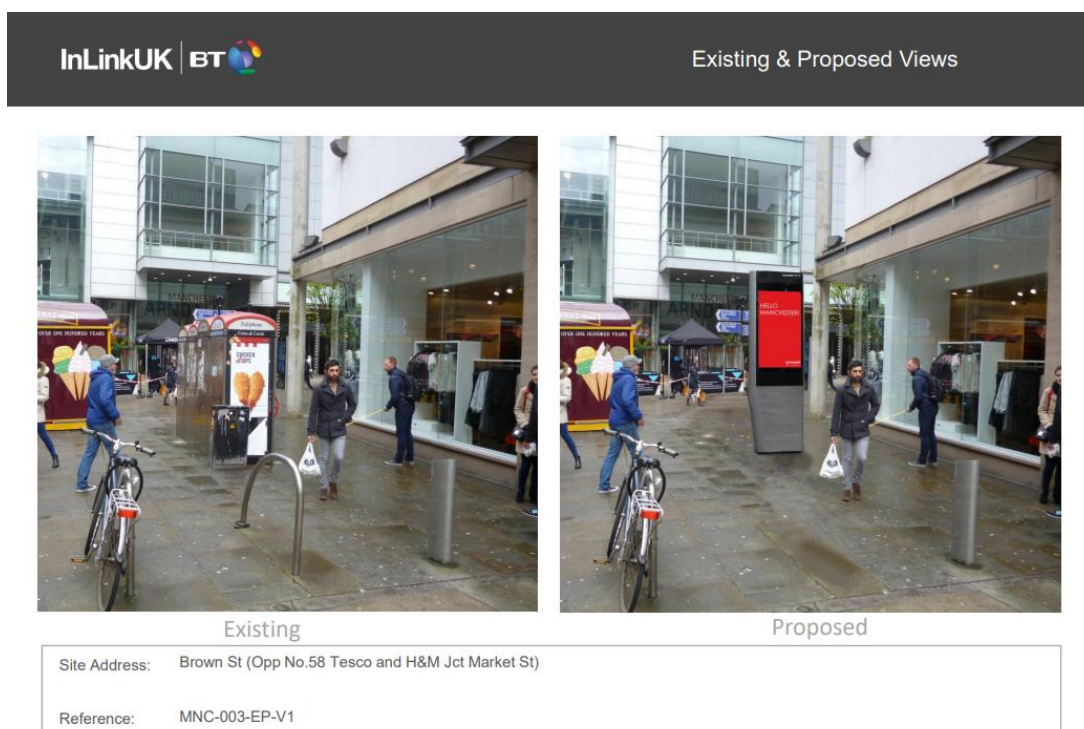
The application site relates to a section of pavement at the north end of Brown Street, sited near the junction with Market Street. Brown Street functions as an ancillary route between the commercial area of Market Street and King Street. This junction also features commercial entrances to large retailers Tesco Express and Slaters. To accommodate associated footfall, the footway at the junction is approximately 12.5m wide and is pedestrianised up until the junction with Norfolk Street.

In this location, there is an existing InLink totem with two advertisement screens that forms the subject of this application.



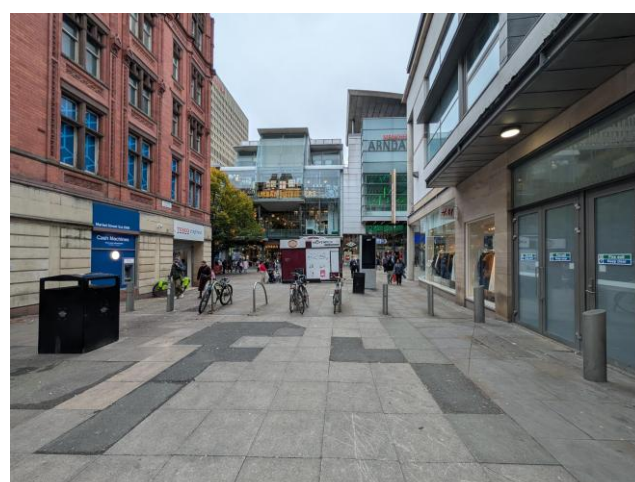
(Figure 1: Proposed totem)

Pursuant to the Council's strategy to improve the attractiveness of the City as a retail centre and to enhance the City's image more broadly, the Council has worked to declutter streets in this location, working to reduce the footprint and number of street furniture pieces and create stronger linkages to the Primary Shopping Area. To this end, 4no. telecommunications boxes were replaced with the smaller InLink totem.



(Figure 2: Site condition before implementation of 118642/FO/2017 scheme (left) and after (right))

Notwithstanding the above, the Council views that the street scene as a whole remains visually cluttered. There is a large stone column to the H&M unit, 1no. pole for hanging baskets, 1no. bulky food kiosk with associated non-fixed advertisements, 1no. wayfinding sign, 2no. electrical boxes, and the existing InLink totem. There are also several bollards, arched bike stands and 1no public bin.



(Figures 3-8: Remaining items of street clutter within the street scene)

Listed building:

Not applicable

Conservation area:

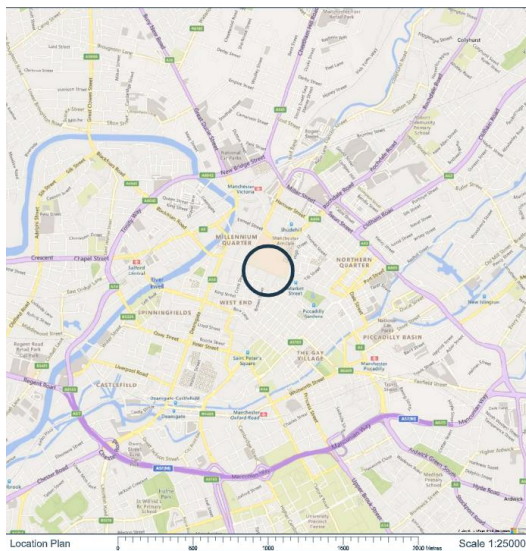
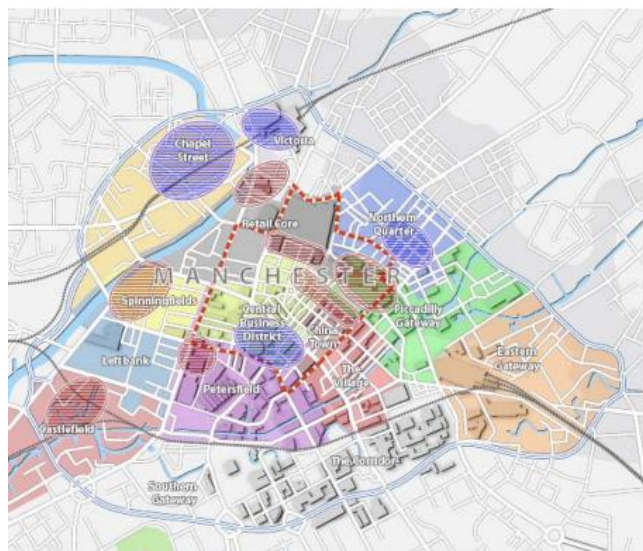
Upper King Street (Extension) Conservation Area 1985

Tree Preservation Order: Not applicable

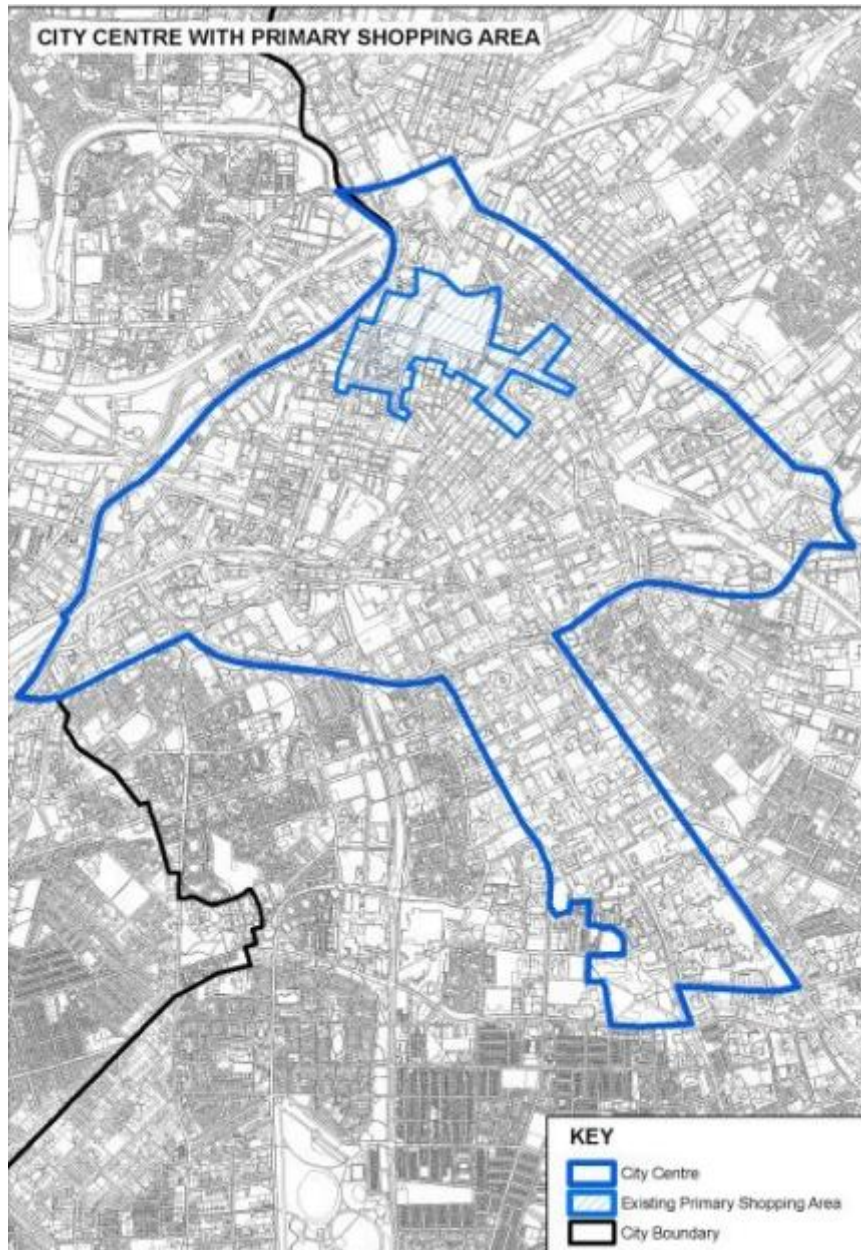
Description of area

The site is located adjacent to Market Street, a pedestrian priority zone within the City's Retail Core and Primary Shopping Area that is considered to be the main commercial street in the City Centre, linking Piccadilly Gardens to Cross Street and Deansgate.

For these reasons, the site at the northern junction experiences a high level of daily footfall and is a highly visible location within the City Centre.



(Figure 9-10: Application location plan (left) and map of Retail Core (right))



(Figure 10: Primary Shopping Area as per Core Strategy Policy CC2)



(Figure 11: Application site adjacent to Market Street, within Primary

Shopping Area/Retail Core)

The site is also within the Upper King Street Conservation Area, located at its northern edge. The buildings within this part of the Conservation Area on Market Street generally support frontages which incorporate commercial uses, primarily at ground floor level. While they are mixed in appearance and appear of varying ages, there is a unity as a result of the general use of brick or stone and a similarity of scale. Many of the buildings, including the adjacent 58-66 Market Street are considered non-designated heritage assets, which incorporate interesting detailing and positively contribute to the significance of the Conservation Area.



(Figure 12: Non-designated 58-66 Market Street)

Further south along Brown Street is the Grade II listed Barclays building which is a similar contributor along Brown Street to the character of the Conservation Area. Views of the building can be attained from Market Street.



(Figure 12: Barclays building adjacent to proposed application site)

Given the site's central location, the application site is a short walking distance from the Arndale Centre to the north, Piccadilly Gardens to the east, King Street to the south, St Peter's Square to the southwest and the Market Street retail area to the northwest. Against this backdrop, a high number of properties in commercial Class E uses populate the surrounding area, with cafes, restaurants, shops and offices being present throughout.

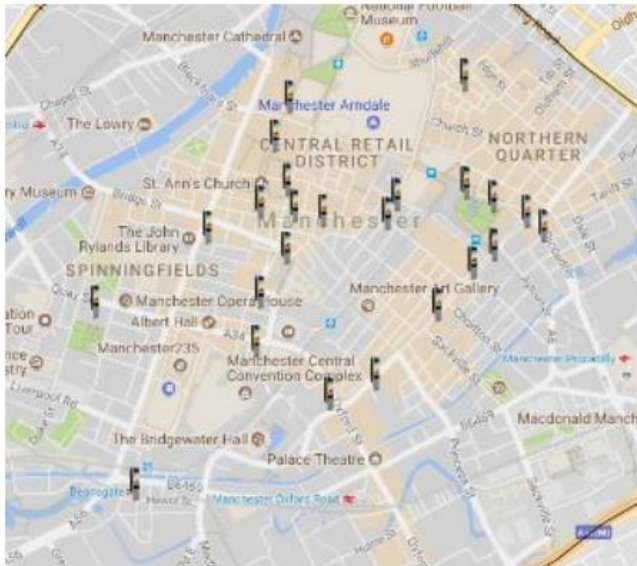
Background

Applications 118642/FO/2017 and 118643/AOH/2017 at the application site formed part of a series of applications received in 2017 for the installations of the Inlink model across the City Centre, now proposed to be replaced as part of the current application.

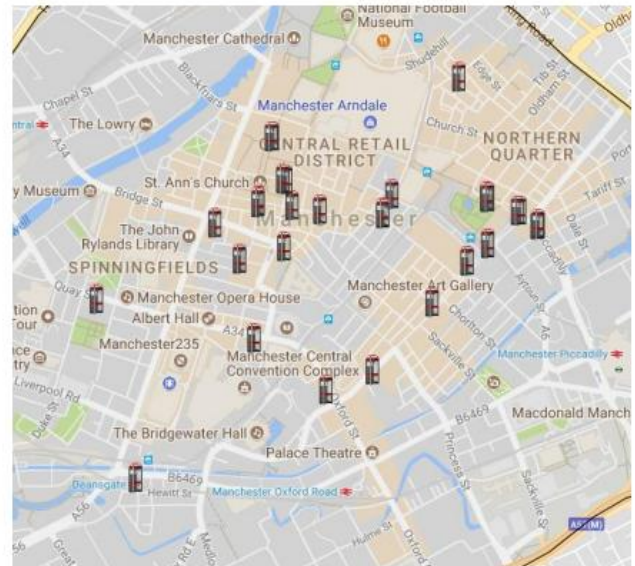
As part of the decluttering approach the Council has undertaken across the City Centre, and according to the planning statement submitted for applications 118642/FO/2017 and 118643/AOH/2017, this series of applications was premised on the existing Inlink model replacing former telecommunications kiosks to reduce the overall level of clutter around the City:

The application package... includes a rationalisation schedule, which sets out the locations of existing BT KX100 kiosks which are to be removed as part of the roll out of InLinks, either through conversion or by removing kiosks in proximity to new sites.

An InLink's footprint in comparison to an existing payphone kiosk covers 75% less surface area on the pavement... Through a collaborative approach with BT's payphones team we are looking to rationalise the current estate in Manchester which currently stands at 508; removing more payphones than InLinks being installed.



Proposed InLink Locations



Associated BT Kiosk Removals

(Figure 13: Image of proposed 2017 InLink totems and corresponding BT kiosk removals, from planning statement submitted for applications 118642/FO/2017 and 118643/AOH/2017)

At the application site, 4no. telecommunications boxes were removed and replaced with the Inlink unit, significantly reducing the number of distinct items of street furniture within the setting as well as their overall footprint.



Existing



Proposed

Site Address: Brown St (Opp No.58 Tesco and H&M Jct Market St)

Reference: MNC-003-EP-V1

(Figure 14: Existing and proposed render for 2017 InLink totem and corresponding BT kiosk removals, from MNC-070-EP-V1 document submitted for applications 118642/FO/2017 and 118643/AOH/2017)

This decluttering approach has been a consistent feature of the Council's regeneration strategy for the City Centre. 17no. applications were received for the installations of JCDecaux Communications Hubs across the City Centre, one of which was sited along Market Street in proximity to the application site.



(Figure 15: JCDecaux Communications Hubs model at Market Street in proximity to the application site)

Pursuant to the decluttering approach the Council has undertaken, and according to the planning statement submitted for application 127632/FO/2020, the proposal was also premised on the net reduction of street clutter across the City:

As part of the Proposal, notwithstanding the reduction in unit numbers, the applicant has agreed with the Officer recommendation to remove all of the 26 existing and outdated phone boxes in Manchester. The Proposal will result in a net reduction of nine phone boxes, with the currently occupied pavement being reinstated and brought back into public use.

Further to these efforts, application 137117/AOH/2023 was one of 9no. applications related to the installation of 9no. Ocean Loop totems across the City Centre, one of which is also in proximity to the site on Market Street (replacing an former totem approved under application 103207/AO/2013/C1).



(Figure 16: Ocean Loop totem model at Market Street in proximity to the application site)

As per Condition 5 attached to the decision notice for application 137117/AOH/2023, the express advertisement consent was limited to a period ending on the 30 June 2026, requiring the discontinuance of the unit and remediation of the land. Temporary consents were applied to allow the phasing out of totem infrastructure having regard to visual amenity and changing circumstances in the locality.

A new strategic package of similar devices is now proposed across the City Centre, with a number of applications for Street Hubs and associated advertisement consent application received to replace the existing InLink models:

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.

144122/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside No.15 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 5AE.

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.

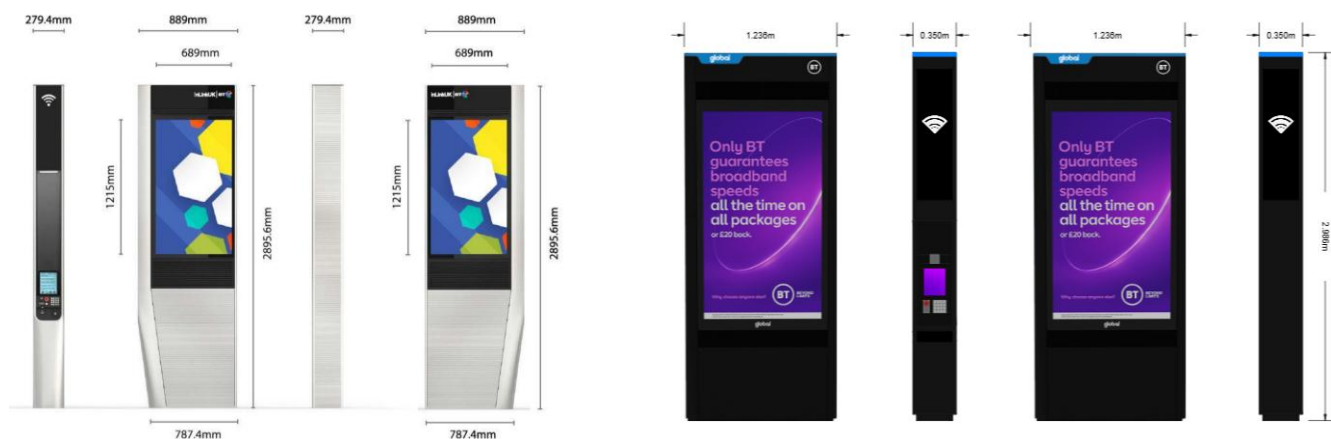
144338/AOH/2025 - Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens at Portland Street, Outside Piccadilly Hotel, Manchester, M1 4AL.

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

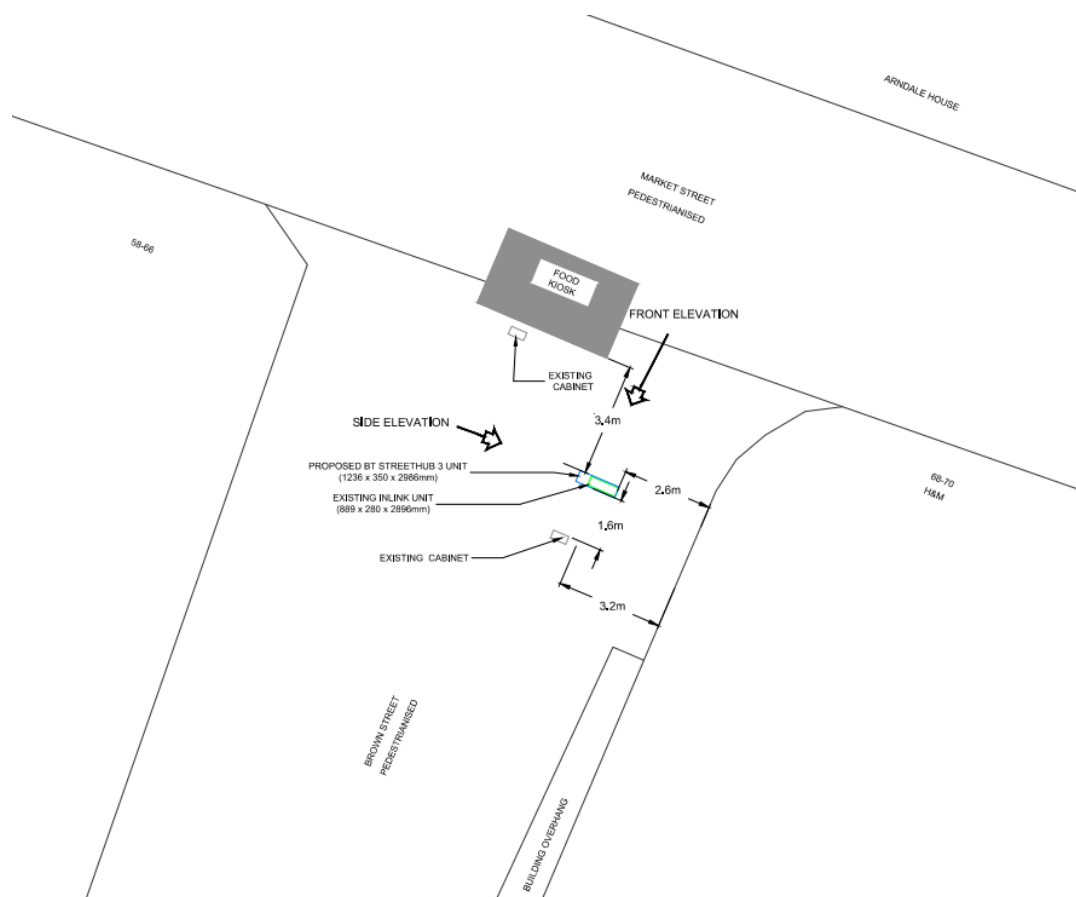
The proposed Street Hub 3 totem would be a replacement of the existing InLink model. It would be free-standing, rectilinear in shape and have a depth of 35cm, a width of 1.23m and a height of 2.99m.



(Figures 17-18: Existing totem to be replaced (left) and proposed Street Hub 3 totem (right))

Each side would feature a digital HD screen measuring 950mm x 1670mm. It would be with a galvanised steel structure and feature a black powder coated cladding.

It would be sited in the same location as the existing InLink model, though would be 346mm wider. It would be set approximately 2.6m in from the H&M unit's western façade.



(Figure 19: Proposed Street Hub siting)

The proposed installation would be an upstanding rectangular structure and would house features that provide free Wi-Fi, free UK calls, USB charging, access to emergency services and IoT sensors.

Consultations & Notification Responses

Publicity

Neighbour notification letters were sent to surrounding properties. At the time of writing this report, no representations have been received because of this publicity.

Advertisement

The proposal was advertised by site notice and in the MEN as affecting the setting of a Conservation Area. At the time of writing this report, no representations have been received because of this publicity.

Highways Services

Concerns raised:

- Application does not follow Council's decluttering approach to footways, does not contribute to rationalisation of street furniture, exacerbates issues with street clutter in a busy city centre environment
- Previous proposal approved on premise of rationalising telecoms estate.
- Increased totem footprint will impede pedestrian movement and accessibility in an area with significant pedestrian movement with other street furniture nearby.
- Market Street hosts Christmas Market events, contributing to congestion.
- The above will reduce pedestrian comfort, increase navigation/confusion and safety issues, particularly for those with accessibility needs.
- Given the surrounding TROs, it is unclear how safe servicing/maintenance will take place.

Environmental Health:

No objection, subject to condition.

- A condition is recommended to control noise from Street Hub/external speaker, requiring confirming of noise levels and verification.
- A condition is recommended to require a maintenance management plan to ensure noise is maintained as above.

Manchester Digital Strategy Team:

- No range cited for free public Wi-Fi provision.
- Success of public Wi-Fi through Wi-Fi devices depends on density of structures, becoming problematic for street clutter
- Concerns regarding cyber security as open Wi-Fi is more susceptible.
- Digital connectivity in city centre locations is notably hard to achieve well at scale, quality and cost for users
- Unclear what small cell capability is included, though height of totems does not appear to be optimal.
- Unclear if any proposed small cell solution in the Smart Hubs are neutral host and provide connectivity across more than one operator or if they are exclusively for the use of EE.
- There is potential for IoT environmental sensors within the Smart Hubs, however it is not clear how Local Authorities access this data or any associated costs or considerations. Additionally, there is no evidence to suggest that data from previous BT Smart Hubs – and other like solutions has been shared with MCC and it has not been made clear in the application that BT will share this data moving forwards.
- 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.
- It is not clear that the proposal meaningfully solves urban connectivity issues in the same way as other digital connectivity solutions do.
- The Manchester Digital Strategy is concerned with urban connectivity, and primarily the strategic focus is on addressing the provision of small cell infrastructure on street lighting as a first step to addressing urban connectivity challenges.

GMP:

No objection.

TFGM:

No comment.

Policy Context

The following policies are considered relevant to this application:

Places for Everyone

- JP-Strat2 – City Centre
- JP-C5 – Streets for All
- JP-P1 – Sustainable Places
- JP-P2 – Heritage

The Adopted Core Strategy for the City of Manchester

- SP1 – Spatial Principles
- CC2 – Retail
- CC5 – Transport
- CC9 – Design and Heritage
- T1 – Sustainable Transport
- EN1 – Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas
- EN3 – Heritage
- DM1 – Development Management

The Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester

- DC18 – Conservation Areas
- DC22 – Footpath Protection

NPPF

- Section 9 (Promoting Sustainable Transport)
- Section 12 (Achieving Well Designed Places)
- Section 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment)

Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990

- Section 72

Manchester's Streets for All Design Guide (adopted November 2023)

Principle of Development

The application would see the installation of a digital kiosk on the public footway, for public use, within the City Centre. Due to the impact on visual amenity, heritage and public safety, the proposed installation is not considered to be acceptable in principle.

Issues

Visual Amenity

Policy Context

Amongst other things and in general terms, Paragraph 135 of the NPPF, PfE Policies JP-Strat2, JP-C5 and JP-P1, Core Strategy Policies SP1, EN1, T1 and DM1 emphasise the 'movement and place function' of streets, requiring that development in the City Centre is has good design

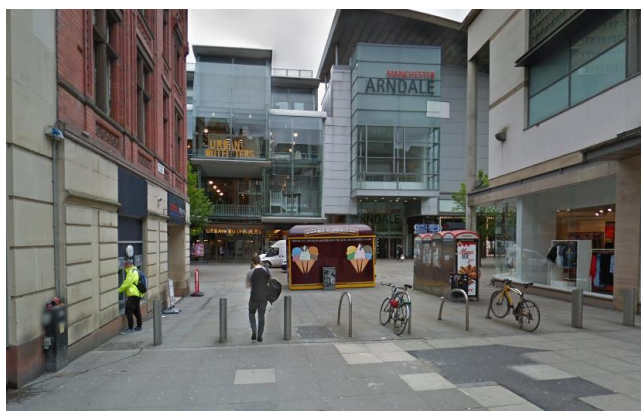
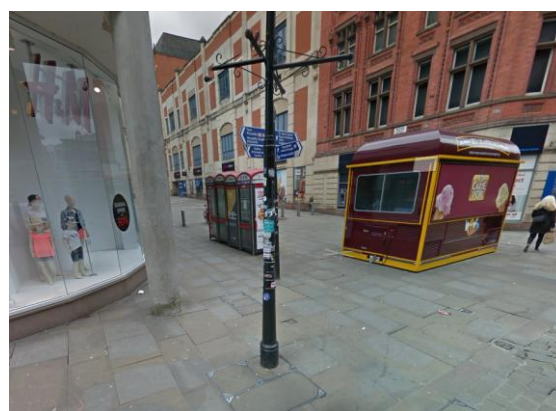
and is visually stimulating, improving the appearance of the area to create interesting environments, taking account of matters including siting, layout, form, massing, materials and detail. Pursuant to these policies, streets must be well designed to make a significant positive contribution to the quality of a place, minimising barriers and obstacles to movement. Accordingly, the Council will support schemes where they improve pedestrian routes and the pedestrian environment to ensure that they are welcoming to all.

The site is located within the Primary Shopping Area outlined in Policy CC2, which further emphasises that development must make a positive impact on the built environment and the public realm, ensuring that new development is of the highest design quality, create strong linkages to the primary shopping area, especially on foot as part of the strategy to expand the City's retail offer.

Site Context

As outlined above, the application site is immediately adjacent to the City's main commercial street within the City's Retail Core and Primary Shopping Area, with pedestrian priority and pedestrianised footways extending along Market Street and to the north end of Brown Street. The site is therefore in a highly visible location within the City Centre by virtue of the high level of associated daily footfall where the pedestrian environment is highly prioritised.

The Council would reiterate that in previous years the area around the application site was significantly cluttered with a number of elements of street furniture. The immediate cluster of street furniture included 1no. pole for hanging baskets, 1no. bulky food kiosk with associated non-fixed advertisements, 1no. wayfinding sign, 2no. electrical boxes, the existing InLink totem, several bollards, arched bike stands and 1no. public bin. As a result, the street scene appeared lacking in any coordinated overarching design, with street furniture of disparate sizing, materiality and colour, as well as being sited haphazardly and appearing scattered along the footway in a highly prominent location. Along with the stone column to H&M, the visual clutter in this area creates a visual barrier to Brown Street, which is a key route into the Upper King Street Conservation Area and where entrances to retailers are located.



(Figure 20-21: Former site condition 2017 with clutter and visual barrier to Brown Street)

Pursuant to the Council's strategy to improve the attractiveness of the City as a retail centre and to enhance the City's image more broadly, the Council has worked to declutter streets in this location, working to reduce the footprint and number of street furniture pieces and create stronger linkages to the Primary Shopping Area. To this end, 4no. telecommunications boxes were replaced with the smaller InLink totem, reducing items of clutter and the visual barrier to Brown Street.



Existing



Proposed

Site Address: Brown St (Opp No.58 Tesco and H&M Jct Market St)

Reference: MNC-003-EP-V1

(Figure 22: Site condition before (left) and after decluttering efforts (right))

Notwithstanding the above, the Council views that the street scene as a whole remains visually cluttered. There is a large stone column to the H&M unit, 1no. pole for hanging baskets, 1no. bulky food kiosk with associated non-fixed advertisements, 1no. wayfinding sign, 2no. electrical boxes, and the existing InLink totem. There are also several bollards, arched bike stands and 1no public bin.





(Figure 23-28: Remaining cluster of visual/street clutter, impacting permeability to Brown Street and detrimental to appearance of area)

Proposed Totem

In this context, the proposal would see the replacement of the InLink model with the Street Hub 3 model.



(Figure 29: Render comparison of existing Inlink totem and proposed Street Hub totem)

As outlined above, the proposed totem would be similarly free-standing, though rectilinear in shape. It would have a depth of 35cm, a width of 1.23m and a height of 2.99m. As such, it would be deeper and taller the existing structure, moreover being wider and would not narrow towards the base, thereby having a larger footprint on the footway.

Each side would feature a digital HD screen that would also be larger, increasing from 689mm x 1215mm to approximately 950mm x 1670mm. It would be a galvanised steel structure and feature a black powder coated cladding.

Visual Impact

When viewed in the context of the street scene described above, the Street Hub totem would be larger and bulkier, 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, bulkier in its massing, appearing starker in its dark colour.

While in a different context within the City, 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.

In view of the above, it is not considered that the proposed Street Hub totem represents a like-for-like replacement within the street scene, having a more dominant visual presence than the existing InLink model. Its imposing appearance is considered to detract from the street scene, however it would moreover be seen in the context of the existing visual clutter. Particularly given the context of decluttering works that have occurred in this location, the proposal would have a harmful impact on the street scene and emphasise the prevalence of visual clutter.

While it is acknowledged that similar totems exist along Market Street, they are sited centrally along the route in line with trees and other items of street furniture to minimise their presence and integrate with the setting. By contrast, the proposal's position would not be rationalised, and when viewed from Market Street it would appear between the existing food truck and the H@M elevation. It is considered to appear awkward and haphazardly sited from this vantage, partially blocking the space to the side of the food truck and failing to appear as an integrated item of street furniture within a cohesive overarching street design.

By virtue of its more imposing presence and when seen together with existing clutter in this location, the proposal would further increase the visual barrier to Brown Street. It is noted that there is an ongoing application 144411/FO/2025 for Norfolk House in the vicinity of the site for a hotel use with elevational alterations. While not yet determined, there is clearly a wider development ambition for Brown Street which foresees greater use of the application site.



(Figures 30-31: Elevational alterations proposed to Brown Street in application 144411/FO/2025)

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 appearance of the City's main commercial area, with no factors outweighing the visual harm. The totem's emphatic appearance in the setting would be seen amongst the remaining clutter, highlight the remaining clutter and work to reverse improvements made thus far. As such, the proposed Street Hub totem is not considered to be acceptable in terms of visual amenity and contrary to PfE Policies JP-Strat2, JP-C5, JP-P2 and JP-P1, and Core Strategy Policies SP1, CC2, CC9, EN1, T1 and DM1 nor in line with Section 12 of the NPPF.

Heritage

Policy Context

The Street Hub totem is assessed with additional regard to Sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF, Development Plan Policies and the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 as they relate to heritage considerations, given its location at the northern end of the Upper King Street Conservation Area, its siting adjacent to a non-designated heritage asset which contributes

positively to its setting, as well as its featuring within some views of the Barclays Building attained from Market Street. The area surrounding the development site is one of special historic significance and high amenity value to the city, marking the entrance to the Conservation Area.

Accordingly, Paragraph 203 of the NPPF, PfE Policies JP-Strat2, JP-P1, and JP-P2; Core Strategy policies CC9, EN1 and EN3; saved UDP policy DC18; Section 66(1) of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990; and guidance contained in sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework the assessment of heritage assets and the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of the conservation area.

Impact on Heritage Assets

It is acknowledged that the existing InLink totem is already positioned in the immediate setting of the non-designated 58-66 Market Street and within the Conservation Area. However, it is viewed that the existing structure results in some level of harm to the heritage assets.

Despite this harm, the installation of the totem provided benefits to the setting as a result of the removal of the more visually harmful 4no. telecommunications boxes. The current Street Hub proposal includes no such benefit and is to be assessed in the context of recent decluttering works which have improved the setting. As outlined previously, the proposal by virtue of its bulkier build, its more obtrusive darker colour and its awkward haphazard siting instead would add to existing street clutter in the setting, with no net reduction in number or footprint.

The totem would also form an obtrusive modern element seen directly in conjunction with 58-66 Market Street which contributes positively to the Conservation Area and helps define its outer limit. Its minimalist design, with powder coated black matt cladding and blocky pillar structure, would contrast with the ornamental building façade of 58-66 Market Street. The proposal would appear conspicuously dark and blocky, reading as a more obtrusive modern element with no regard to the building's significance or architectural language. The resulting impact on the setting of a positive contributor would harm views into the Conservation Area.



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(Figure 32: Non-designated 58-66 Market Street)

In view of the above, the proposal would increase the existing level of visual harm to the setting of the Conservation Area, resulting in a medium level of less than substantial harm. Section 72 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 also requires that special consideration is given to the settings conservation areas. For the reasons outlined above, it is not considered that the proposal preserves the setting of the Upper King Street Conservation Area.

As required by 215 of the NPPF, the City Council must consider whether public benefits associated with the scheme that sufficiently outweigh this harm.

As noted above, unlike in planning application 118462/FO/2017 for the existing InLink model, it is noted that there would be no wider public benefits arising from decluttering of this location nor from decluttering taking place more elsewhere within the City Centre.

The Applicant's covering letter 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. It is acknowledged that the proposed Street Hub offers some public benefits in these regards, including free public Wi-Fi, free UK calls, USB charging, IoT sensors and emergency service access.

However, it is considered that these benefits are limited and are insufficient in themselves to outweigh the harm to the setting of the listed building and conservation area. With regards to public Wi-Fi, comments provided by the Manchester Digital Strategy Team highlighted that the range for the Smart Hub is not disclosed, and can thus be given little weight. It is also noted that as soon as a user leaves their range, they will lose Wi-Fi access. Therefore, the success of public Wi-Fi delivered in this way depends on density and frequency of similar Wi-Fi devices on

streets. As such, the hubs do not offer comprehensive coverage, and the benefits offered are limited.

The Digital Strategy Team go on to state that free public Wi-Fi provision is only one solution to urban digital connectivity. In their view, the proposed method of achieving digital accessibility via a dense and frequent number of kiosks does not meaningfully solve urban connectivity issues in the same way as other digital connectivity solutions do. By contrast, the strategic focus of City Council is primarily concerned with addressing the provision of 4G and 5G small cell infrastructure on street lighting, which does not require additional street furniture and can be placed at higher altitudes for better reception, as a first step to addressing urban connectivity challenges.

With regards to the range of services they may provide, Digital Strategy Team comments identify a further limitation in that a degree of knowledge of how Street Hubs work and what their functions are is needed for people to use them. It is not clear what resource BT will put into letting the public know the full functionality of the Street Hub.

With regards to the potential for IoT sensors to share information, Digital Strategy Team comments qualify that it is not clear how Local Authorities access this data or if there any associated costs or considerations. Comments note that there is no evidence to suggest that data from previous totems has been shared with MCC, and it has not been made clear in the application that BT will share this data moving forwards. Without confirmation of this, the public benefits are again limited.

Given the above, it is considered that while there are some digital benefits such as Wi-Fi provision within the City, they are limited. It is also noted that the existing totem has similar capabilities, and the limited digital benefits of this application are therefore a marginal improvement of the existing circumstance. When these limited marginal public benefits are weighed against the medium level of less than substantial harm, as well as their emphasising of the prevalence of street clutter, their visual amenity and highways impacts, it is not considered that the harm is outweighed and therefore the requirements of paragraph 215 of the NPPF have failed to be met.

In coming to this view, the Council takes note of recent appeal decisions for similar Street Hub 2 totems and advertising screens.

In an appeal decision for application 142705/FO/2025 (Appeal ref: APP/B4215/W/25/3369503) relating to the footpath outside 15 Oldham Road, the Inspector found that despite 'the largely commercial character of the area... [with] various signs and adverts on nearby buildings' the totem and advertisement's dominant and obtrusive presence, as well as the cumulative harm of further visual clutter would detract from the setting of the adjacent Grade II listed Midland Bank:

I find the above mentioned bulky and utilitarian appearance of the hub would not be in keeping with the traditional form and design of this listed building and would introduce an incongruous feature within its setting.

In weighing similar digital benefits, the Inspector concluded:

When taken together, I find that all the above-mentioned public benefits attract moderate weight in favour of the appeal proposal. However, these public benefits do not outweigh the considerable importance I must attach to the designated heritage asset.

As such, the City Council attests that the totem would by virtue of its siting, scale, and design result in a medium degree of less than substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation

Area. Moreover, the limited public benefits of the totem are not considered to outweigh that harm. The development would therefore be contrary to the Places for Everyone policies JP-Strat2, JP-P1 and JP-P2; Core Strategy for the City of Manchester policies CC9, EN1, EN3; saved UDP policy DC18; Section 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.

Pedestrian Environment

Policy Context

Paragraph 117 of the NPPF requires that proposals create attractive routes and avoid unnecessary street clutter. Core Strategy Policies SP1, CC5, T1 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, 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 site is located within the Primary Shopping Area outlined in Policy CC2, which further emphasises that development must make a positive impact on the public realm, ensuring that new development creates strong linkages to the primary shopping area, especially on foot and have an acceptable impact on the highway network to increase the City's retail offer.

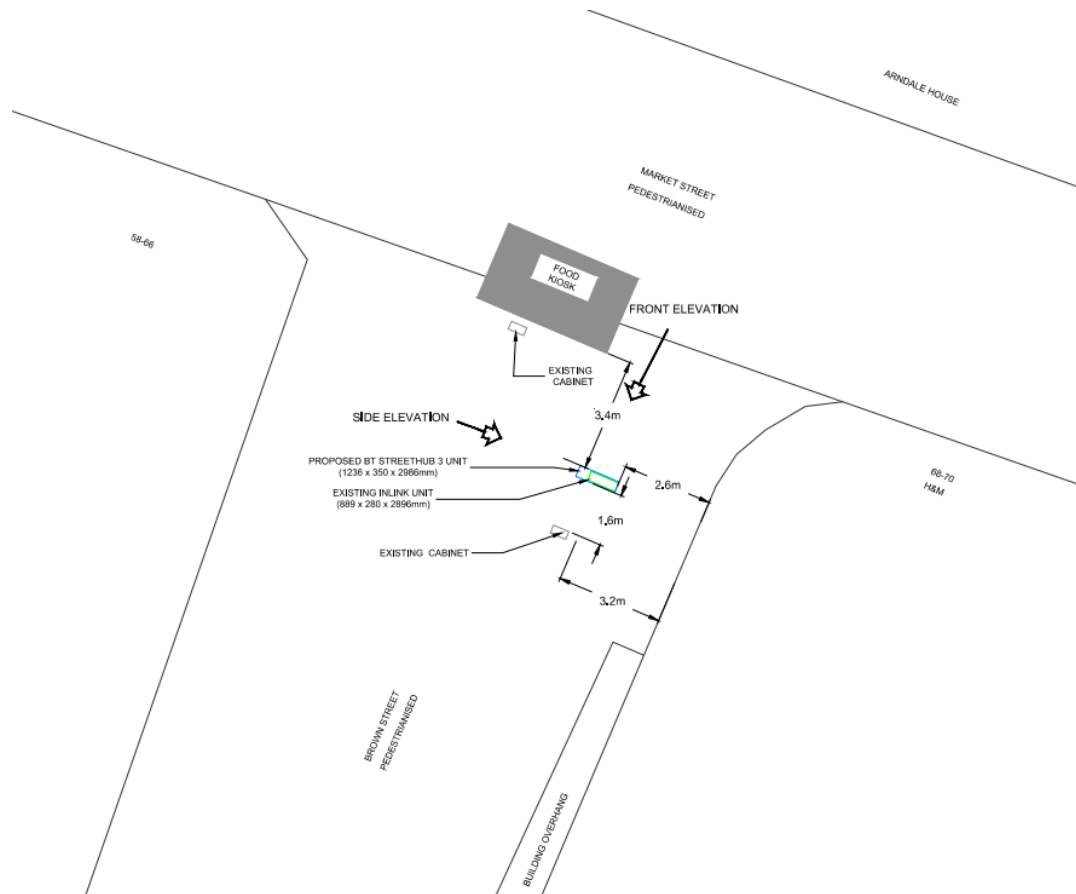
Site Context

By virtue of the site's location adjacent to the City's main commercial street within the City's Retail Core and Primary Shopping Area, with pedestrian priority and pedestrianised footways extending along Market Street and to the north end of Brown Street, the site experiences a high level of associated daily footfall. Along with public events year round, the footway is often highly congested. In particular, when Market Street hosts annual Christmas Markets, and around the holiday period more generally, there is an acute level of congestion.

No Waiting At Any Time, No Loading All Days midnight-6am and 10:30am-midnight and Prohibition of driving 24hr except loading unloading 6am-10:30am restrictions are in place around the site.

Impact on pedestrian movement

The proposed Street Hub would be sited in the same location as the existing InLink model, though where it is wider it would extend 346mm further into the centre of the footway. It would be set approximately 2.6m in from the H&M unit's western façade.



(Figure 33: Totem siting at junction with Market Street)

Due to the proposal's position within the street and the wide area filled with numerous items of street furniture, the proposal would add to and exacerbate the existing cluster of street clutter in an area where there is a focus on improving the pedestrian experience within the Primary Shopping District.

Comments from Highways note that the application site lies within a busy city centre area 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. As outlined previously, the City Council has worked to reduce street clutter in this location pursuant to the policy context outlined above to improve the pedestrian environment. Highways expect that applications would minimise physical footprint and visual clutter, support clear/unobstructed walking routes, enhance accessibility for all users (including those with disabilities) and demonstrate alignment with MCC's decluttering strategy and broader design standards and policies to promote inclusive access and safe, active travel.

Highways further note that previous approvals for digital infrastructure, such as the existing InLink Unit, were granted on the basis that they supported this strategy by rationalising the telecoms estate and reducing physical footprint, thereby contributing to a relatively more navigable and inclusive public realm. By contrast, the proposed digital totem has a larger footprint than the previously approved InLink Unit.

While only moderately increasing in footprint, there are concerns that the larger proposed Street Hub totem would add further visual barrier to Brown Street from Market Street, work to increase obstruction along the busy footway and ultimately worsen the pedestrian environment. This is of

particular concern at this city centre location adjacent to the City's main commercial street as the area regularly accommodates significant levels of pedestrian movement that already must navigate around other street-furniture located in close proximity, for example the food truck and bicycle stands. Given the footfall associated with this area, the proposal would contribute to localised pedestrian congestion, particularly during holiday seasons.

Highways view that the above issues would lead to reduced levels of pedestrian comfort, local pedestrian navigation confusion and potential safety issues particularly for those with accessibility needs.

Ultimately, the proposed replacement digital totem would not contribute to the rationalisation of on-street infrastructure. Instead, it would exacerbate issues associated with street clutter in an already busy city centre environment. As such, the proposal would detract from the quality of the pedestrian environment and the aim to create Streets for All, being inconsistent with MCC's decluttering strategy and failing to meet broader design standards and policies to promote inclusive access and safe, active travel.

On this basis it is considered that the proposal would not be designed to make a significant positive contribution to a major commercial street environment within the City's Primary Shopping Area. It would undermine the ability of pedestrians to navigate easily without delay, and fails to minimise barriers and obstacles to their movement. As such it is contrary to PfE Policies JP-C5 and JP-P1, Core Strategy Policies SP1, CC2, 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.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

In consideration of the above, the proposed Street Hub totem has been found to have an unacceptable impact on local visual amenity, heritage and pedestrian comfort, resulting in a medium level of less than substantial harm. As such, the proposal has been found to be contrary to Places for Everyone Policies JP-Strat2, JP-C5, JP-P1 and JP-P2; Core Strategy Policies SP1, CC2, CC5, CC9, T1, EN1, EN3 and DM1; saved Unitary Development Plan Policies DC18, and DC22; Sections 9, 12 and 16 of the NPPF; Sections 66 and 72 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990; as well as guidance contained within Manchester's Streets for All Design Guide. The application is therefore recommended for refusal.

Other Legislative Requirements

Equality Act 2010

Section 149 (Public Sector Equality Duty) of the Equality Act 2010 requires due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act and; Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The Equality Duty does not impose a legal requirement to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment. Compliance with the Equality Duty involves consciously thinking about the aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making.

Human Rights Act 1998 considerations

This application needs to be considered against the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. Under Article 6, the applicants (and those third parties, including local residents, who have made representations) have a right to a fair hearing and to this end the local planning authority must give full consideration to their comments.

Protocol 1 Article 1, and Article 8 where appropriate, confer(s) a right of respect for a person's home, other land and business assets. In taking account of all material considerations, including Council policy as set out in the Core Strategy and saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan, the Director of Planning, Building Control & Licensing has concluded that some rights conferred by these articles on the applicant(s)/objector(s)/resident(s) and other occupiers and owners of nearby land that might be affected may be interfered with but that that interference is in accordance with the law and justified by being in the public interest and on the basis of the planning merits of the development proposal. She believes that any restriction on these rights posed by the recommendation given is proportionate to the wider benefits of and that such a decision falls within the margin of discretion afforded to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

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.

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

Visual Impact

The proposed totem by virtue of its siting, scale, design, materiality and appearance would result in an overly dominant and obtrusive item of street clutter awkwardly sited on the footway at a junction to a prominent and highly visible location in the city centre. This would form clutter with other street furniture and form a further visual barrier to Brown Street in an area of the city centre where significant efforts to declutter the streetscape to improve the public realm and place making and pedestrian experience have been made. The proposal would also impact on the setting of the non-designated heritage asset and views within the Upper King Street Conservation Area. The totem would be read as a dark, modern and incongruous structure in the setting of the 58 - 66 Market Street building which positively contributes to the Conservation Area, forming an unduly harmful juxtaposition to the non-designated heritage asset's detailing and a low quality addition to the character of the conservation area. The proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area 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-Strat2, JP-C5, JP-P2 and JP-P1, and Core Strategy Policies SP1, CC2, CC9, EN1, EN3, T1 and DM1, saved UDP policy DC18; Section 72 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990; and guidance contained in Sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Streets for All

The proposed totem by virtue of its location at a junction to a prominent and active commercial district along a footway which experiences high levels of daily footfall, as well as its scale, footprint, position on the footway and siting adjacent to other items of street clutter would be to the detriment of pedestrian environment, forming a further obstruction along the footway and

failing to minimise barriers and obstacles to movement. The proposed totem would therefore be contrary to Places for Everyone Policies JP-C5 and JP-P1, Core Strategy Policies SP1, CC2, 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
Counter Terrorism Policing North West (CTPNW)

Cafe Opposite 31, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M4 2HU
68 - 70 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PW
Unit 7 Halle Place, Arndale Centre, Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PT
First Floor, 58 - 66 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PW
Basement, 49 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1WR
58 - 66 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1PW

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
Conservation Area - Upper King Street (Extension) Conservation Area 1985
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -
Area Team Boundary - Name: CENTRAL

Appeal Decisions

Site visits made on 29 September 2025 and 27 October 2025 **by R Major BSc (Hons) MSc**

MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4th November 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/B4215/W/25/3369446 Footpath on Ashton New Road opposite Grey Mare Lane junction, Manchester Easting: 396877 Northing: 398332

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Simon Warner of BT Group PLC against the decision of Manchester City Council.
 - The application Ref is 142695/FO/2025.
 - The development proposed is described as installation of 1no. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
-

Appeal B Ref: APP/B4215/H/25/3369448 Footpath on Ashton New Road opposite Grey Mare Lane junction, Manchester Easting: 396877 Northing: 398332

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) against a refusal to grant express consent.
 - The appeal is made by Simon Warner of BT Group PLC against the decision of Manchester City Council.
 - The application Ref is 142696/AOH/2025.
 - The advertisement proposed is described as installation of 1no. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.
-

Decision

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. The two appeals relate to the same proposal on the same site. Appeal A concerns the refusal of planning permission to erect a street hub unit (the hub). Appeal B concerns the refusal of express consent for advertisement panels on either side of the hub. I have considered each appeal on its individual merits, however, as they raise similar issues, I have combined both decisions into a single decision letter.
4. In respect of Appeal B, the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) require that decisions are made only in the

interest of amenity and public safety. Therefore, whilst I have taken account of the policies that the Council considers to be relevant, these have not been decisive in my determination of this appeal.

5. An initial site visit was made on 29 September 2025. A follow-up site visit was undertaken on 27 October 2025.
6. The description of the site address was altered during the Council's consideration of the planning and advertisement consent applications. The description of the site address in the above banner heading is therefore taken from the appeal form.

Main Issues

7. The main issues in respect of Appeal A are the effect of the proposal on:
 - the character and appearance of the area; and
 - highway and pedestrian safety.
8. The main issues in respect of Appeal B are the effect of the proposed advertisement on amenity and public safety.

Reasons

Character, appearance and visual amenity

9. The appeal relates to a section of pavement on the northern side of Ashton New Road (A662), opposite the junction with Grey Mare Lane. This highway is a busy radial route which connects to the major orbital traffic route of Alan Turing Way (A6010) to the east of the appeal site.
10. The surrounding area has a mixed-use character with views on the northern side of this section of Ashton New Road dominated by the Etihad Stadium. Further to the north is the Co-Op Live Arena. On the south side of Ashton New Road the properties are predominantly in residential use within the Grey Mare Masterplan area, which is identified for residential led regeneration.
11. The appeal proposal seeks to erect a street hub unit with advertisement panels on either side. The proposed installation would be an upstanding rectangular structure and would house features that provide free Wi-Fi, free UK calls, USB charging, access to emergency services and other facilities.
12. The section of pavement upon which the proposed hub would be installed is wide. Apart from lighting columns, which are set back from the vehicular carriageway, there is limited existing street furniture within the immediate vicinity of the appeal site. This creates a clear and welcoming area for pedestrians, and the adjacent grassed verge and row of trees only add to the pleasant and open aspect of this important frontage along this part of Ashton New Road.
13. 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. It would also create visual clutter to the detriment of the existing open character of the street scene.

14. In coming to this view, I acknowledge that there are bus shelters and road signs elsewhere along Ashton New Road. However, the nearest bus stops are served by bus laybys which result in the bus shelters being set at the back of the footway, close to the grassed verge and trees. Whereas the proposed hub would be set close to the edge of the carriageway which increases its visual prominence in comparison to these shelters. The rotating digital adverts on the proposed hub would also be a more strident and incongruous feature in comparison to the paper adverts within these bus shelters.
15. With regard to nearby road signs, these are erected on poles with the signs raised above ground and eye level. As such, the road signs do not obstruct the long and pleasant views which are currently afforded along this section of Ashton New Road in the same way as the proposed hub would with its solid appearance from top to bottom. I find that the proposed hub would therefore represent a more discordant and imposing presence in comparison to the existing items of street furniture within the wider area.
16. The appellant has referred to an existing freestanding sign at the junction with Alan Turing Way. However, this is located around the corner and is not viewed in the same context as the appeal site. Furthermore, I observed that this sign was not digitised and it is set back from the carriageway on a grassed verge, rather than on the pavement. The appellant also draws my attention to a sign on the side of no. 286 Ashton Road. Again however, this sign is not digitised, is attached to a building and is therefore set back from the edge of the carriageway used by vehicles.
17. I therefore find these existing signs are not comparable to the proposed hub which would feature rotating digital images and would be located on the footway, close to the edge of the carriageway.
18. The appellant also refers to the removal of an existing phone kiosk at no. 58 Darley Street. The Council however state that this kiosk has already been removed and this has not been disputed by the appellant. Furthermore, at the time of my visit there was no kiosk in the location shown on the photographs provided within the appellant's evidence.
19. In any case, I found this location at Darley Street is not visible from the appeal site, is not as visually prominent and the character of the area is more residential. Thus, I find the appeal site and the location at Darley Street are visually unrelated and not comparable. The above matters therefore limit the weight I can attribute to the removal of this phone kiosk in favour of the appeal proposal.
20. In view of all the above, I conclude that the proposed development would harm the character, appearance and visual amenity of the area. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policies DM1, EC7, EN1, SP1 and T1 of Manchester's Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted 2012 and amended 2024) (CS), saved Policies E3.3 and DC15 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (1995) (UDP) and Policy JP-P1 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (2024) (PfE), where they together seek to ensure, amongst other things, that development is appropriate, respects and acknowledges the character and identity of the locality in terms of design, siting, size, scale and materials used; incorporates high quality in the design and finish of the public realm; improves the pedestrian environment; upgrades the appearance of major radial and orbital roads; and considers wider design objectives and takes advantage of important frontages.
21. The proposal would also fail to accord with the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework), which have similar aims.

Highway, pedestrian and public safety

Visibility

22. The carriageway along Ashton New Road in this location is predominantly two lanes wide. However, adjacent to the appeal site the highway has three lanes, with the middle lane used for vehicles turning right into Grey Mare Lane. To the west of the appeal site is an existing access into a car park. This car park was operational at the time of my visit and I observed vehicles entering and leaving.
23. The proposed hub would be located relatively close to this access point and given its siting close to the edge of the carriageway I find the proposed hub could negatively impact upon the sightlines of vehicles leaving this access to join Ashton New Road.
24. As part of their appeal submission the appellant has shown a left-hand visibility splay on the location plan to demonstrate the achievable visibility at this access point. This location plan is however provided at a large scale and lacks specific detail in respect of the road layout and lanes.
25. Additionally, the left-hand visibility splay appears to be drawn to the centre line of the carriageway as opposed to the near side of the carriageway which is advised within the manual for streets¹ when approaching vehicles from the left can cross the centre line. It is not explained why the visibility splay has been drawn to this point and during my first visit I observed a vehicle overtaking another and therefore crossing the centre line in the vicinity of the appeal site and the visibility splay.
26. In view of the above, based on the information before me and my observations on site, it has not been adequately demonstrated that the proposed development would not harmfully impact upon the visibility of road users as they leave this access point to join Ashton New Road, particularly when turning right out of this access.

Pedestrian movements

27. With regard to pedestrian movements, the submitted plan shows a distance of approx. 3.3m would be provided on the footway between the proposed hub and the back of the pavement which is defined by a grassed verge.
28. This gap of 3.3m would meet the recommendations contained within the inclusive mobility guidance document². However, this is only guidance, and I acknowledge that given the volume of pedestrians that use this footway during events at the nearby stadium and arena, a wider pavement is often required in this particular location.
29. Nonetheless, I observed several bus shelters along this section of Ashton New Road. As mentioned, these bus shelters are set back from the carriageway and are often served by a bus layby. Consequently, where these bus shelters are located the useable pavement reduces to a significantly narrower width than that which would be provided adjacent to the proposed hub. I have not been provided with any evidence to demonstrate that the narrower sections of footway resulting from these existing bus shelters causes any pedestrian safety issues during events.
30. Additionally, due to its slim depth the proposed installation would narrow the footway for a shorter period than these nearby bus shelters.
31. As such, even allowing for substantial increases in pedestrian movements along the footway during events, given my observations of sections of footway widths in the wider area, I find that sufficient space would remain to allow for unimpeded access

¹ Manual for Streets – Department for Transport (2007)

² Inclusive Mobility – A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure. Department for Transport (2021)

along the pavement for users of all mobility levels. Pedestrians would not therefore be required to leave this pavement because of the appeal proposal and could negotiate the area without being unduly impeded. As such the proposal would not result in a harmful impact upon pedestrian movements and I therefore find no conflict with the provisions of CS Policies T1 and EC5, and PfE Policy JP-P1, where they together seek, amongst other things, to provide opportunities for walking and cycling, and ensure that areas are easy to move around for those of all mobility levels.

Summary on highway, pedestrian and public safety

32. Whilst I have found that the proposal would not have a harmful impact upon pedestrian movements, for the reasons given earlier, it has not been demonstrated that the proposed installation would not obscure visibility for vehicles joining Ashton New Road from the nearby access point to the west. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be harmful to highway and public safety in conflict with CS Policies DM1 and SP1 and UDP Policy DC15.2, where they together seek to ensure that development has regard to road, public and community safety. The proposal would also be contrary to the highway safety provisions of the Framework.
33. In coming to my conclusion, I have also taken into consideration paragraph 141 of the Framework in so far as it is material in respect of its aim of controlling advertisements in the interests of public safety.

Other Matters

34. The appellant has drawn my attention to allowed appeal decisions³ for hubs and associated advertisements throughout the country. Whilst I have had due regard to these decisions, issues relating to the impact of a proposal upon the character, appearance and visual amenity of an area are matters of planning judgement based on the site-specific circumstances and surroundings.
35. In this regard, I have been provided with limited information in respect of these appeal decisions that would enable me to draw any direct comparisons with the appeal site and scheme before me. These decisions therefore carry limited weight in my determination of this appeal.

Planning balance

36. I have had due regard to the benefits of the proposal. In respect of Appeal A, paragraph 119 of the Framework states that an advanced, high quality and reliable communication infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. The Framework also seeks to support the expansion of electronic communication networks. The hub would therefore support the Government's aim of improving digital infrastructure.
37. The proposal would include ultrafast public and encrypted wi-fi, 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, and environmental sensors to measure air quality, noise and traffic. The hub would also provide improved 5G coverage to local communities through the installation of small cell mobile connectivity providing

faster and more reliable connection for calls and internet access, as well as free screen time for council advertising.

³ APP/Z5630/H/3209488; APP/N5090/Z/22/3296138; APP/N5090/d/22/3296141

38. The hub would also provide some indirect lighting and be powered by 100% renewable carbon-free energy, which is an environmental benefit. I also note the appellant's view that the proposed unit could assist in encouraging shoppers to return to the town centre.
39. Nevertheless, when taken together, I find that all the above-mentioned benefits do not outweigh the harm I have identified that the proposal would have upon the character, appearance and visual amenity of the area, and highway and public safety.
40. In respect of Appeal B, the Regulations require that decisions are made only in the interest of amenity and public safety. As such, most of the proposed benefits put forward by the appellant cannot be taken into consideration in my decision for Appeal B. Nonetheless, even in a scenario whereby I accepted that use of the advertisement to display emergency messages and public messaging campaigns was a public safety matter relevant to the control of advertisements, the benefits derived from it would not overcome the harm I have identified to visual amenity and public safety.

Conclusion

41. I conclude that the appeal proposal would have a harmful impact upon the character, appearance and visual amenity of the area. It would also cause harm to highway and public safety.
42. Appeal A therefore conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, to suggest the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Appeal B would harm visual amenity and public safety.
43. Therefore, for the reasons given, both Appeal A and Appeal B are dismissed.

R Major

INSPECTOR

Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 27 October 2025 by **R Major BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13th November 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/B4215/W/25/3369503 Footpath outside 15 Oldham Road, Greater Manchester M4 5EQ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Simon Warner of BT Group PLC against the decision of Manchester City Council.
- The application Ref is 142705/FO/2025.
- The development proposed is described as installation of 1no. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.

Appeal B Ref: APP/B4215/H/25/3369504 Footpath outside 15 Oldham Road, Greater Manchester M4 5EQ

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) against a refusal to grant express consent.
- The appeal is made by Simon Warner of BT Group PLC against the decision of Manchester City Council.
- The application Ref is 142706/AOH/2025.
- The advertisement proposed is described as installation of 1no. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side of the unit.

Decision

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. The two appeals relate to the same proposal on the same site. Appeal A concerns the refusal of planning permission to erect a street hub unit (the hub). Appeal B concerns the refusal of express consent for advertisement panels on either side of the hub. I have considered each appeal on its individual merits, however, as they raise similar issues, I have combined both decisions into a single decision letter.
4. In respect of Appeal B, the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) require that decisions are made only in the interest of amenity and public safety. Therefore, whilst I have taken account of the policies that the Council considers to be relevant, these have not been decisive in my determination of this appeal.

5. The appeal site is located within the setting of the Grade II Listed Buildings known as the Former Midland Bank and the Crown and Kettle Public House. In determining Appeal A I have a statutory duty, under Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of these listed buildings, and any features of special architectural and historic interest which they possess.
6. An initial site visit was made on 13 October 2025. A follow-up site visit was undertaken on 27 October 2025.

Main Issues

7. The main issues in respect of Appeal A are the effect of the proposal on:
 - the character and appearance of the area, including its effect upon nearby listed buildings and conservation areas; and
 - highway and pedestrian safety.
8. The main issues in respect of Appeal B are the effect of the proposed advertisement on amenity and public safety.

Reasons

Character, appearance and visual amenity

Character, appearance and significance of heritage assets

9. The appeal relates to a wide section of pavement located to the northwest of the busy junction of Oldham Road, Swan Street and Great Ancoats Street, at the northern end of Manchester's Northern Quarter. The site is situated along one of the City's major radial and circulatory routes, and is within a predominantly commercial setting, consisting of a range of food and drink establishments, offices, and car parks, as well as residential apartments.
10. There are various items of existing street furniture within the immediate vicinity of the appeal site, including lighting columns, a CCTV column, bins, street cabinets, railings, bollards, and columns housing pedestrian crossing signal boxes. The presence of street furniture is therefore an established characteristic of this area, and I found the balance between the proliferation of items on the pavement and a clear and welcoming area for pedestrians to be delicately poised.
11. Additionally, due to the largely commercial character of the area I observed various signs and adverts on nearby buildings, and directly adjacent to the appeal site is a large LED advertising display, set at the back of the pavement.
12. Immediately to the southwest of the appeal site is the Former Midland Bank at 2 – 4 Swan Street, which is a Grade II Listed Building. This listed building occupies a prominent location at the corner of the junction and is visible from long distances along both Great Ancoats Street and Oldham Road. Its visual prominence is accentuated through its Portland Stone finish which stands out amongst the surrounding building materials. These long views along these busy highways positively contribute to this listed building's setting.
13. Furthermore, this listed building has a distinctive curved front façade, with round headed windows, in a regular arrangement, at ground floor-level. At first floor level the windows

are square headed, with decorative stonework features above, and its roof is concealed behind a balustrade parapet. These are features of architectural interest and collectively contribute to, as does the building's visual prominence on the street scene, the significance of this designated heritage asset.

14. To the southeast, on the opposite corner of Oldham Road and Great Ancoats Street, is the Grade II Listed Building of the Crown and Kettle Public House. This hipped roof property has a buff brick finish with stone dressings. Whilst two-storey in height the building has very tall ground floor windows which include gothic tracery and linked hoodmoulds above. These features of architectural interest contribute to the significance of this listed building. However, due to the street layout, I observed that views of this listed building are somewhat limited to its immediate locality.
15. The appeal site is not located within a conservation area, however the boundaries of the Smithfield Conservation Area (SCA), Stevenson Square Conservation Area (SSCA) and Ancoats Conservation Area (ACA) all lie immediately adjacent to the appeal site. The SCA and SSCA are situated on the other side of Swan Street and Great Ancoats Street, with the ACA positioned on the other side of Oldham Road. These are relatively large conservation areas consisting of buildings of varying use, scale, form and character. I found that the significance of these CAs in-part derives from their reflection of the prosperity, evolution and industrial success of the city of Manchester.

Effect of the proposal

16. The appeal proposal seeks to erect a street hub unit with advertisement panels on either side. The proposed installation would be an upstanding rectangular structure and would house features that provide free Wi-Fi, free UK calls, USB charging, access to emergency services and other facilities.
17. The proposed hub would be relatively utilitarian in its appearance and through a combination of both its height and width would represent a visually intrusive and bulky addition to this section of the footway in comparison to other existing items of street furniture in the immediate vicinity, which are mainly of a slimmer design. Furthermore, it 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.
18. I therefore find that the proposal would be visually detrimental to this section of the pavement and would cause harm to the character, appearance and visual amenity of the immediate surrounding area.
19. The proposed hub would also be prominently sited in front of the adjacent listed Former Midland Bank building, especially when viewed from Oldham Road and Great Ancoats Street, which both afford long, straight views of this listed building and its distinguishing curved frontage. The siting of the proposal would therefore affect this listed building's significance through its setting. Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
20. I find the above mentioned bulky and utilitarian appearance of the hub would not be in keeping with the traditional form and design of this listed building and would introduce an incongruous feature within its setting. Additionally, as a result of its siting in front of this listed building the proposal would impede and dominate views of its distinctive, curved front elevation, as well as obscure and disrupt views from Oldham Road of its defining round-headed ground floor windows. Furthermore, I find the frequently

changing digital advertisement images on the hub would compete with the visual prominence of this listed building on the street scene.

21. The proposal would therefore harm the setting of this listed building, and features of architectural interest which contribute to its significance. Paragraph 213 of the Framework states that any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset from development within its setting should require clear and convincing justification.
22. In this regard, I note the appellant refers to the removal of 2no. kiosks outside no.30 High Street. The Council however state these kiosks have already been removed and this has not been disputed by the appellant. Furthermore, at the time of my visit there appeared to be no kiosks in the location shown on the photographs provided within the appellant's submission.
23. In any case, this location on High Street is not visible from the appeal site and is therefore visually unrelated to it. The above matters therefore limit the weight I can attribute to the removal of these phone kiosks at High Street in favour of the appeal proposal's effect on the immediate surrounding area and the setting of the listed building.
24. The appellant has drawn my attention to the large, digitised advertisement directly adjacent to the appeal site, which was allowed at appeal⁴⁵. This existing advert is however set at the back of the pavement and does not obscure views of this listed building from Oldham Road. I find its siting is therefore not comparable to the appeal proposal which seeks to install a hub on the section of pavement to the front of this listed building.
25. Additionally, when allowing that appeal I note the previous Inspector's decision specifically states that "*...its relationship to the road means it would not be readily appreciated when approaching the city centre...*". I do not consider the same can be said of the scheme before me, as a result of its prominent siting close to the edge of the carriageway.
26. Moreover, it is clear from that decision letter that the permitted advert replaced an existing advertisement. With the Inspector commenting that its relationship with the listed building "*...would be notably improved...*" as a result of alterations to a fence which would provide a greater separation between the display panel and the listed building.
27. In the appeal before me however, the hub would introduce a new and additional feature to the street scene, which for the reasons given earlier, would cause harm to the setting of this listed building, as well as the character and appearance of the immediate surrounding area in general.
28. Furthermore, I also find the addition of the rotating digital images on the proposed hub, in conjunction with the rotating images on this existing advert, would result in cumulative visual harm from digital advertisements within the immediate locality, as both screens would be visible at the same time from various vantage points.
29. The appellant has also referred to hubs that have been approved by the Council close to the appeal site, outside 6 – 14 Great Ancoats Street and 61 Great Ancoats Street², as

⁴ APP/B4215/H/13/2189817

⁵ /AOH/2023

well as other decisions⁶ of the Council for hubs in commercial areas, and appeal decisions⁷ from elsewhere in the UK.

30. Whilst I have had due regard to these decisions, issues relating to the impact of a proposal upon the character, appearance and visual amenity of an area, and

designated heritage assets, are matters of planning judgement based on the sitespecific circumstances and surroundings.

31. In this regard, I have been provided with limited information in respect of these decisions that would enable me to draw any direct comparisons with the specifics of the appeal site and scheme before me, including any potential relationship those proposals shared with any nearby listed buildings.
32. Furthermore, in respect of the nearby hubs on Great Ancoats Street, I observed on site that these are located at the side of a straight section of the highway and their siting is therefore not comparable to the appeal proposal which would be prominently located on the corner of a busy junction. Additionally, I have also not been provided with any details of the existing hubs on Great Ancoats Street relationship with any adjacent listed buildings.
33. Consequently, the above referenced appeal decisions, and decisions of the Council, carry limited weight in my consideration of this main issue.
34. In view of the above, I do not find that the removal of the kiosks at High Street; the existence of the adjacent advertisement hoarding; and the various decisions referenced by the appellant, provide clear and convincing justification for the identified harm that would be caused to the significance of this designated heritage asset from the proposed development within its setting.
35. With regard to the proposal's impact upon the listed building at the Crown and Kettle Public House and the nearby CAs, I note that the Council expressed no concerns regarding the effect of the proposal on the significance of the CAs and setting of this listed building.
36. I nonetheless observed on site that the proposal would be visible from these nearby CAs, and this listed building. However, given the size of the proposed hub, and the separation distance created by it being located on the other side of the wide highway, I found that the proposal would not harm the significance and/or setting of the Crown and Kettle Public House. Furthermore, during my visit I saw similar hubs and digital displays within parts of these nearby CAs and the proposal would not therefore harm the significance of these CAs.
37. Consequently, I find that the proposal would have a neutral effect upon these nearby CAs and this particular listed building. The proposal would therefore preserve their significance as designated heritage assets.
38. Nevertheless, for the reasons given earlier, I conclude that the proposal would have an unacceptable impact upon the character and appearance of the immediate surrounding area and cause harm to visual amenity. Furthermore, the hub would cause harm to the significance and setting of the listed Former Midland Bank.

⁶ Council Ref: 136215/FO/23 and 136213/FO/2023

⁷ APP/J2373/H/22/3305072; APP/N0590/Z/21/3287174; ADA-180-2016 and ADA-180-2017

Public benefits and conclusions

39. In view of the above, I find the proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance and setting of the Former Midland Bank listed building, with the level of harm being at the middle to lower end of that spectrum. Nevertheless, mindful of my statutory duty, I give this harm considerable importance and weight.
40. 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.
41. In respect of Appeal A, paragraph 119 of the Framework states that an advanced, high quality and reliable communication infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. The Framework also seeks to support the expansion of electronic communication networks. The hub would therefore support the Government's aim of improving digital infrastructure.
42. The proposal would include ultrafast public and encrypted wi-fi, 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, and environmental sensors to measure air quality, noise and traffic. The hub would also provide improved 5G coverage to local communities through the installation of small cell mobile connectivity providing faster and more reliable connection for calls and internet access, as well as free screen time for council advertising.
43. The hub would provide some indirect lighting and be powered by 100% renewable carbon-free energy, which is an environmental benefit. I also note the appellant's view that the proposed unit could assist in encouraging shoppers to return to the city centre.
44. When taken together, I find that all the above-mentioned public benefits attract moderate weight in favour of the appeal proposal. However, these public benefits do not outweigh the considerable importance I must attach to the designated heritage asset.
45. In respect of Appeal B, the Regulations require that decisions are made only in the interest of amenity and public safety. As such, most of the proposed benefits put forward by the appellant cannot be taken into consideration in my decision for Appeal B. Nonetheless, even in a scenario whereby I accepted that use of the advertisement to display emergency messages and public messaging campaigns was a public safety matter relevant to the control of advertisements, the benefits derived from it would not overcome the harm I have identified to visual amenity.
46. I therefore conclude on this main issue that the proposal would have an unacceptable impact on the character, appearance and visual amenity of the area. Furthermore, it would harm the significance and setting of the nearby listed Former Midland Bank building.
47. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policies DM1, EN1, EN3, CC9, SP1 and T1 of Manchester's Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted 2012 and amended 2024) (CS), saved Policies E3.3, DC15 and DC19 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (1995) (UDP) and Policies JP-P1 and JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (2024) (PfE). These policies together require amongst other things, that development is appropriate, respects and acknowledges the character and identity of the locality in terms of design, siting, size, scale and materials used; incorporates high quality in the design and finish of the public realm; improves the pedestrian environment; upgrades the appearance of major radial and orbital roads; preserves heritage assets, the historic

environment and the setting of listed buildings; and that the heritage significance of a site is considered in accordance with national policy.

48. The proposal would also fail to satisfy the relevant sections of the Framework and, in respect of Appeal A, the requirements of the Act.

Highway, pedestrian and public safety

49. To the northeast of the appeal site is a signal-controlled pedestrian crossing point allowing pedestrians to cross Oldham Road. I observed that this crossing point was well used.
50. All vehicles travelling through this crossing point, on this side of Oldham Road, do so via Great Ancoats Road. Due to a combination of the curved nature of the highway, the road layout and the proposed hub's distance from this crossing point, I find that the proposal would not impede or obstruct pedestrians' views of vehicles on the carriageway as they use this crossing. Additionally, the siting of the hub would ensure that road users views of pedestrians using this crossing are also not obscured.
51. I acknowledge that the proposed hub would potentially obstruct views between some pedestrians and road users for a brief period as they approach this crossing point from the southwest. Nevertheless, based on my observations on site, given the perpendicular orientation of the hub to the carriageway and the curved nature of the road for approaching vehicles, as well as the distance between the proposed hub and the crossing point, I find there is sufficient time and distance for pedestrians and road users to both safely react before they reach the crossing point once visibility is restored.
52. Furthermore, given the distance between the proposed hub and the signal-controlled crossing to the southwest, as well as the road layout, I also find that the proposal would not unacceptably impact upon visibility between road users turning onto Swann Street from Oldham Road and pedestrians using this crossing point.
53. The Council has also commented that there is a large night-time economy in this area, and pedestrians may cross without use of the crossing point and under the influence of alcohol. Be that as it may, it is unclear how this proposed hub would create any more of a danger in this respect in comparison to other similar hubs I observed within the city. Furthermore, I have been provided with no evidence that other existing hubs elsewhere have caused a highway safety danger for the reason suggested by the Council.
54. In view of all the above, based on the information before me and my observations on site, I conclude that the proposal would not be harmful to highway, pedestrian and public safety. I therefore find no conflict with CS Policies T1, DM1 and SP1, UDP Policy DC15, and PfE Policy JP-P1, where they together seek to ensure, amongst other things, that development is safe and easy to move around; has regard to road and community safety; and would not be injurious to public safety. The proposal also accords with the provisions of the Framework where it states that development should only be refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety.
55. In coming to my conclusion, I have also taken into consideration paragraph 141 of the Framework in so far as it is material in respect of its aim of controlling advertisements in the interests of public safety.

Conclusion

56. I conclude that the appeal proposal would not have a harmful impact upon highway, pedestrian or public safety. However, for the reasons given, I have concluded that the proposal would harm the significance and setting of the adjacent Former Midland Bank

listed building, and would cause harm to the character, appearance and visual amenity of the area.

57. Appeal A therefore conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, to suggest the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Appeal B would harm visual amenity.
58. Therefore, for the reasons given, both Appeal A and Appeal B are dismissed.

R Major

INSPECTOR