



Appeal Decisions

Site visits made on 13 October 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/25/3369508

Footpath outside 919 Stockport Road, Manchester M19 3PZ

- 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 142711/FO/2025.
- The development proposed is described as installation of 1no. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side unit.

Appeal B Ref: APP/B4215/H/25/3369510

Footpath outside 919 Stockport Road, Manchester M19 3PZ

- 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 142712/AOH/2025.
- The advertisement proposed is described as installation of 1no. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side 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 13 October 2025. A follow-up site visit was undertaken on 27 October 2025.

Main Issues

6. 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.

7. Whilst the Council's Decision notice in respect of the advertisement consent does not include a reason for refusal in respect of public safety, in view of the public safety issues raised in both parties' evidence this matter is a main issue in Appeal B. Consequently, 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

8. The appeal site relates to a section of pavement on the eastern side of Stockport Road (A6), within Levenshulme District Centre. The surrounding context predominately consists of two-storey properties of varying ages, with typical district centre commercial and retail uses at ground-floor level.
9. The appeal site occupies a prominent location within the district centre, opposite the Tesco store and close to the signal-controlled junction of Stockport Road and Alma Road which also provides a well-used signal-controlled pedestrian crossing point. During my visit I observed people walking directly past the appeal site, utilising the pedestrian crossing and accessing nearby commercial units, as well as people sat on the benches positioned on the opposite side of the highway.
10. Street furniture within the immediate vicinity of the appeal site includes lighting columns, traffic lights, road signs and a bin which are aligned in a linear arrangement with gaps between. As such, street furniture features prominently in the street scene adjacent to the appeal site.
11. The appeal proposal seeks to install an upstanding rectangular street hub unit with advertisement panels on either side. The proposed hub would house features that provide free Wi-Fi, free UK calls, USB charging, access to emergency services and other facilities.
12. By reason of a combination of its height and width, the hub would appear as a bulky and visually prominent structure in comparison to other existing items of street furniture in the immediate vicinity, which are mainly of a slimmer design. Furthermore, the hub would be sited within 1m of an existing signpost and would consequently disrupt the spatial gap currently provided between existing items of street furniture along this section of the footway. Its siting so close to an existing item would therefore not integrate well with the existing street furniture and add street clutter, to the visual detriment of the street scene in this prominent location.
13. In coming to the above view I am aware that the submission states that existing payphone kiosks would be removed from the pavement outside 974 Stockport Road and 1008 Stockport Road. Whilst the removal of these features would reduce street clutter in those locations, they are positioned on the opposite side of the highway and within a different footway that is unrelated to the pavement where the proposed hub would be sited.
14. Furthermore, I found that these two existing kiosks do not occupy as visually prominent a location as the appeal site, which is positioned close to a busy signal-controlled junction and pedestrian crossing. These matters therefore limit the weight I attribute to the removal of these existing kiosks in favour of the appeal proposal.

15. Being part of the district centre, and surrounded by commercial properties, I acknowledge that this area is not currently devoid of signage and advertising with nearby shops having a variety of fascia signs, projecting signs and window adverts.
16. Nevertheless, in the vicinity of the appeal site these adverts were generally confined to the buildings rather than being freestanding in the footway. As such, and within the context of these immediate surroundings, I find the incompatible and prominent siting of the proposed freestanding digital advertisements within the pavement, made more conspicuous by their illumination and changing images, would harm visual amenity.
17. The appellant has drawn my attention to advertisements on bus shelters. However, I do not consider the more strident and obtrusive visual impact of the freestanding appeal proposal, with rotating digital advertisements on both sides, to be comparable with the visual impact of the existing bus stops, which have paper advertisements.
18. I am also aware of larger advertisements attached to the gable elevations of buildings to the north of the appeal site. However, based on my observations on site these adverts are not viewed within the same street scene as the appeal site. Furthermore, they are attached to a building, rather than being freestanding on the footway, and thus are not comparable with the appeal proposal.
19. 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, EN1 and SP1 of Manchester's Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted 2012 and amended 2024) (CS), saved Policies E3.3, DC15.1 and DC15.2 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), 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; upgrades the appearance of major radial and orbital roads; and incorporates high quality in the design and finish of the public realm.
20. 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

21. As mentioned, the proposed hub, with associated advertisements on either side, would be sited close to a signal-controlled junction which also provides a pedestrian crossing point.
22. As a result of its siting on the opposite side of the road I find the proposed hub would not distract drivers' attention as they observe and approach the traffic light located on the left-hand side of the carriageway when travelling from the south along Stockport Road.
23. When traveling along Stockport Road from the north, and when joining Stockport Road from Alma Road, the hub would be sited a reasonable distance beyond the traffic lights and thus would not distract road users' attention at this junction.
24. With regard to pedestrians using the crossing, I found that the existing lighting column and signpost situated to the south of this crossing currently impact upon

- pedestrians' views of approaching vehicles on the far side of the carriageway, which are approaching from the south. These existing items also obscure road users' views of pedestrians at this crossing.
25. Through a combination of its location in relation to this pedestrian crossing point, its width and its siting close to the edge of the pavement, the hub would inevitably result in views in this direction being further obscured.
 26. However, given that the existing lighting column is nearer to the pedestrian crossing than the proposed hub, the views that would be affected by the hub would be of vehicles that are further away from the crossing. As such, the proposal would not alter the point at which the closest vehicles are currently obscured from view at this crossing point.
 27. Additionally, whilst I observed on site that this crossing was well used, I also noted that the vast majority of pedestrians waited for the appropriate crossing signal, and associated noise, to cross the road safely once the traffic had stopped at the lights.
 28. Consequently, whilst I acknowledge that the hub would obscure views, these views are already obscured by existing furniture and pedestrians therefore take care when using this crossing. Furthermore, any further obscuring of views to the south does not fundamentally alter the main purpose of the crossing point which is to allow pedestrians to cross safely, as advised by the signals, when vehicles are held at the traffic lights.
 29. As such, and based on my observations on site, I find that the proposed hub would not have a harmful impact upon pedestrian safety at this crossing point.
 30. In terms of pedestrian movements along the pavement, the footway along this part of the district centre is wide and the submitted plans show that approx. 4.5m would be provided between the hub and the back of the pavement. This distance is sufficient to ensure unimpeded access would be provided for pedestrians of all mobility levels.
 31. In reaching this view I note that the hub would be sited within 1m of an existing item of street furniture. Whilst for the reasons given earlier I have found visual harm arising from the siting of the hub so close to an existing piece of street furniture in this location, I do not consider its proximity would create an obstacle or impact upon pedestrian movement given the amount of space that is available to the side of the hub.
 32. In view of all the above, I conclude that the proposal would not be harmful to highway, pedestrian and public safety. The proposal therefore complies with CS Policies DM1 and SP1, where they together seek to ensure, amongst other things, that development has regard to road and community 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.
 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. I note the Council's reasons for refusal in respect of the proposed hub refer to conflict with UDP Policy DC17.1. This policy states that applications for telecommunications developments will normally be approved if the Council can be satisfied that the development has been sited and designed to minimise its impact on residential amenity and in environmentally sensitive areas.
35. From my observations on site and the evidence that is before me, I find that the proposal would not result in any harm to the living conditions of nearby occupiers, and no evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the appeal site is within an environmentally sensitive area. As such I do not find UDP Policy DC17.1 to be determinative in respect of the main issues raised in this appeal.
36. Both parties have drawn my attention to a number of allowed and dismissed appeal decisions¹ for hubs and associated advertisements throughout the country. The appellant has also drawn my attention to decisions² of the Council whereby hubs with advertisements have been granted consent in commercial areas which the appellant considers to be similar in character to the appeal site.
37. Whilst the appellant has provided a street image of each of the two sites where the Council has granted consent for street hubs, I have not been provided with any plans and therefore I am not aware of where these hubs would be sited within these images or their proximity to existing items of street furniture.
38. In any case, 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.
39. 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. Consequently, these appeal decisions, and decisions of the Council, carry limited weight in my determination of this appeal.

Planning Balance

40. 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.
41. 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

¹ APP/Z5630/H/3209488; APP/N5090/Z/22/3296138; APP/N5090/D/22/3296141; APP/N5090/Z/22/3295689; APP/J2373/H/22/3305026; APP/J2373/W/22/3304941; APP/J2373/W/22/3305075; APP/J2373/H/22/3304942; APP/Z3636/W/25/3361981 & APP/Z3635/H/25/3361982

² Council Ref: 136215/FO/23 and 136213/FO/2023

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

42. 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 town centre.
43. 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.
44. 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.

Conclusion

45. I conclude that the appeal proposal would not harm pedestrian, highway and public safety. However, for the reasons given I have concluded that the proposal would have a harmful impact upon the character, appearance and visual amenity of the area.
46. 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.
47. Therefore, for the reasons given, both Appeal A and Appeal B are dismissed.

R Major

INSPECTOR