MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

# Planning

# Growth & Development

# Delegated officer report for planning application

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| **Application no.** | 144120/FO/2025 |
| **Date registered valid:** | 30 September 2025 |
| **Proposal:** | Installation of digital LED totem. |
| **Address:** | Footpath Outside No. 11-13 Piccadilly, Manchester, M60 1AY |
| **Ward(s):** | Deansgate Ward |
| **Applicant:** | BT Telecommunications PLC |
| **Agent (if any):** | Mr Oliver Taylor, Dalcour Maclaren |
| **Case officer:** | Jack Naven<br>Tel: 0161 219 2095<br>Email: jack.naven@manchester.gov.uk |
| **Recommendation:** | Refuse |
| **Date of recommendation:** | **21 November 2025** |

## Application Details

**Type of application:** Full Application Consent

**Development type:** Minor Other

**Date of site visit:** 15 October 2025

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

**Neighbour notifications**
Printed: 7 October 2025 Expired: 28 October 2025

**Site notice**
Posted: 15 October 2025 Expired: 5 November 2025

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

**Departure from Development Plan:** No

**Environmental Statement:** Not required

## Description of Site/Area

**Listed building:** Not applicable

**Conservation area:** Smithfield Conservation Area 1987

**Tree Preservation Order:** Not applicable

The application relates to a site within Piccadilly Gardens in the City Centre. Piccadilly Gardens is a formally laid out square incorporating areas of grass, high quality glazing and a modern water feature. It was reconfigured in 2002 to designs by Tadao Ando. Parts of the concrete walls that were part of the design remain.

There is a modern mixed-use building at One Piccadilly Gardens, which has office accommodation on the upper floors and commercial units at ground floor level. There are also commercial units within the gardens that are within the curve of the concrete wall.

Piccadilly Gardens is also home to the Queen Victoria Monument, the Sir Robert Peel Statue, the James Watt Statue, and the Duke of Wellington Statue, which are all Grade II listed.

The Piccadilly Gardens Transport Interchange with bus and Metrolink services are located between the formal gardens and Piccadilly Plaza, which is a complex constructed in 1965 that includes a 30-storey office building currently named City Tower, the Mercure Hotel and a number of ground floor commercial units.

The Gardens themselves are not within a Conservation Area but are adjacent the Smithfield Conservation Area, the Stevenson Square Conservation Area and Upper King Street Conservation Area.

The City Council has made it publicly clear its intention to significantly regenerate the Piccadilly Gardens area in future, with LDA Design having been appointed to map out the £25 million regeneration. The most recent update on this regeneration was published in October 2025, with the intention to make Piccadilly Gardens an attractive world-class space.

The immediate plan will see Manchester City Council lead on a wide-ranging package of improvements to Piccadilly Gardens to make it more colourful, vibrant and inviting in the months ahead. Measures range from improving safety, enhancing CCTV and security, to decluttering and revamping the public realm around the Gardens.

The site is not located within a conservation area but it is immediately adjacent to the Smithfield Conservation Area. This listing for the Conservation Area notes that development control in Smithfield is aimed at encouraging development and activity which enhances the prosperity of the area, whilst paying attention to its special architectural and visual qualities.

The application site is located within the setting of the Grade II listed Peel Statue and 15 and 17, Piccadilly.

The immediately surrounding is primarily commercial in nature at ground floor, with some residential on upper levels.

Piccadilly Food Market is located right next to the site. This is a temporary use and not permanent fixtures.

Market Street is located directly to the west of the site and Mosley Street to the south. This is an area with a high amount of pedestrian food traffic as it is at a junction that connects Market Street and the main shopping district beyond it, with Mosley Street, the gateway to St. Peter's Square and the Town Hall, with Piccadilly Gardens and the Piccadilly Area beyond, as well as Oldham Street, which provides a gateway to the Northern Quarter.

## Description of Development

The proposal seeks planning permission for the installation of a digital LED totem.

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.

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.

## Related Applications

**144109/AOH/2025 -** Installation of 2no internally illuminated digital display screens.
***To be refused in tandem with this application.***

## Consultations & Notification Responses

**Publicity -** Neighbour notification letters were sent to surrounding properties. A site notice and local press advert were also produced.

One objection has been received, from a Local Ward Councillor, who stated that the advertisement totem is in a busy location, does not contribute to the Council's objective to

reduce street clutter, reduces pavement space and sightlines and makes pedestrians feel more enclosed in locations where we should be prioritising pedestrians.

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

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

**Transport for Greater Manchester / Metrolink** – Have no objection.

**Greater Manchester Police (Design for Security) –** Expressed reservations with the application because of the with the space between the rear of the hub and the food shed, particularly in this area, including that this could be exploited by criminals targeting passersby or by people antisocially (i.e. public urination or drug taking). They did not formally object to the application however and advised that if the application were approved, mitigation measures should be considered to deter misuse of this space, such as lighting to this area.

**Counter Terrorism Unit (North West) -** Raised no issues.

**Greater Manchester Police (Operational Policing) -** Were consulted but no consultation response was received.

**Policy**

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

- Policy JP-Strat2 - City Centre
- Policy JP-P2 - Heritage
- Policy JP-C5 - Streets for All
- Policy JP-C6 - Walking and Cycling

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

- Policy SP1 - Spatial Principles
- Policy CC9 - Design and Heritage
- Policy EN1 - Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas
- Policy EN3 - Heritage
- Policy DM1 - Development Management

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

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

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024):**

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

**Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990**

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

**The National Design Guide (January 2021)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Issues**

**Principle of Development**

Each development is considered on its own merits.

It should be noted that in the applicant's planning statement that Transport for London's (TfL) policy document 'Guidance for Digital Roadside Advertising and Proposed Best Practice – 2013' is a key document in relation to the proposed development.

The Local Planning Authority fails to see how a Transport for London policy document is relevant to the development plans, policies, SPDs and local guidance documents of Manchester City Council and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Transport for Greater Manchester are the relevant consultee for Manchester City Council on these matters, not a London based authority.

It should also be noted that the planning statement also makes reference to Policy DEL1 Infrastructure and Service Delivery. No such policy exists in the Places for Everyone Plan,

Manchester Core Strategy, or Saved Unitary Development Plan for Manchester. This appears to be a policy of East Herts District Council as it not relevant to Manchester City Council.

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 and heritage which are discussed in detail below, the proposed installation is not considered to be acceptable in principle.

**Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage**

Visual Amenity

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.

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 relatively utilitarian in its appearance.




***Existing (left) and proposed (right) totem sizes and design***

The City Council has set out in public it publicly cits intention to significantly regenerate the Piccadilly Gardens area in future, with LDA Design having been appointed to map out the £25 million regeneration. The most recent update on this regeneration was published in October 2025, with the intention to make Piccadilly Gardens an attractive world-class space plans being drawn up by the City Council currently.

The immediate plan will see Manchester City Council lead on a wide-ranging package of improvements to Piccadilly Gardens to make it more colourful, vibrant and inviting in the months ahead. Measures range from improving safety, enhancing CCTV and security, to decluttering and revamping the public realm around the Gardens.

The proposed totems would add intrusive structures in place that would negatively impact upon the plans to regenerate Piccadilly Gardens, as they would see the introduction of large, bulkier, darker structures in the public realm, which will not be visually appealing and will detract from any forthcoming efforts to make Piccadilly Gardens an attractive world-class space.




***Existing totem on site***

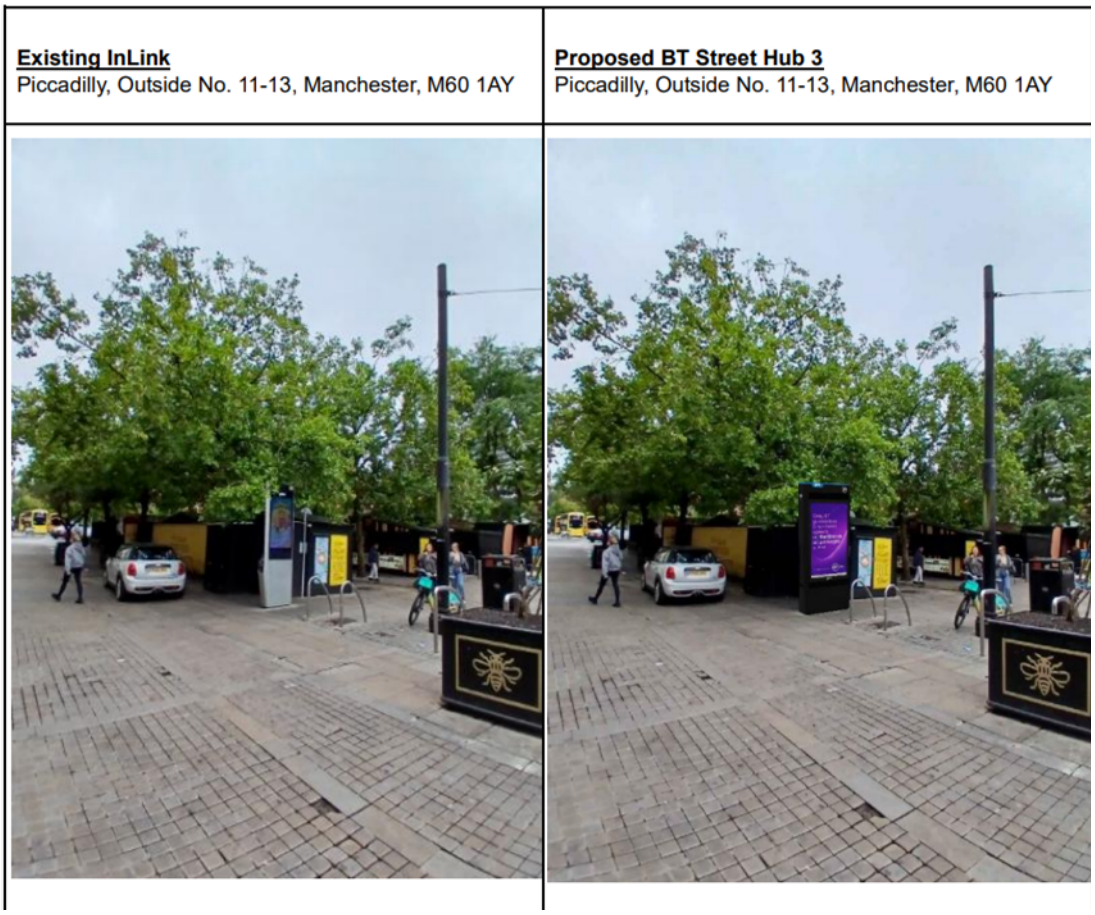



***View of totem from north side***

The proposed replacement digital totem does not contribute to the rationalisation of on street infrastructure. Instead, it exacerbates issues associated with street clutter in an already busy city centre environment. As such, the proposal is inconsistent with MCC's decluttering strategy and fails to meet broader design standards and policies.

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

The applications in 2017/2018 for the existing InLink totem to be installed saw a strategy for the removal of many telephone boxes that were not replaced by InLink units, thereby contributing to a reduction in the amount of visual street clutter in the public.




***Render comparison of existing Inlink totem with advertising screen and proposed Street Hub totem with advertising screen***

Unlike these proposals, the current proposals do not have the benefit of contributing to a reduction in the overall visual clutter of street furniture in the public realm.

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. Occupying more space, being bulkier in its massing, appearing starker in its dark colour, and contrasting more strongly with the lighter paving stones of the footway, it would therefore have a more visually prominent presence in the street compared with the existing totem.

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

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.

Unlike the existing InLink model application approved in 2018, the proposal would not include any removal of neighbouring clutter and provide no visual benefit weighing in favour of the scheme.

Instead, it would work against the decluttering and rationalisation of street furniture that has occurred in this location, constituting a bulkier, more visually dominant item of street furniture which would occupy more space than the existing InLink model. In so doing, a more imposing structure would be added to the street scene.

In an appeal decision for application 142705/FO/2025 (Appeal ref: APP/B4215/H/25/3369504) relating to the footpath outside 15 Oldham Road featuring high levels of advertisement and street clutter, 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 would add further visual clutter and result in cumulative harm:

> *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.*

The application site is considered to be a similar largely commercial character.

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

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

Policy SP1 states that development should make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods of choice including creating well designed places that enhance or create character and protects and enhances the built and natural environment. The nature of this intrusive, taller, bulky, darker feature in the public realm is not considered to make a positive contribution to the neighbourhood or enhance the build environment and is therefore contrary to this policy.

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

Policy DM1 states that all development should have regard for appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail, impact on the surrounding areas in terms of the design, scale and appearance of the proposed development, and have regard to the character of the

surrounding area. The larger, bulkier, darker materiality of the structure is not considered to have regard for the character of the surrounding area and is therefore contrary to this policy.

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

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

In consideration of the above, and in the context surrounding the current application whereby there are material differences between the circumstances of the InLink and Street Hub totem applications, it is viewed that the proposal would be visually detrimental to the street scene with no factors outweighing the visual harm. It would impact upon the forthcoming regeneration of Piccadilly Gardens, to which a significant amount of money and resources will be spent on in order to make the gardens as a whole a more welcoming and visual appealing public space.

As such, the proposed Street Hub totem is not considered to be acceptable in terms of visual amenity and contrary to Places for Everyone policies JP-Strat2, JP-C5 and JP-P1, and Core Strategy policies SP1, EN1, and DM1, nor in line with Section 12 of the NPPF.

Impact on Heritage

This site is located adjacent to Smithfield Conservation Area. Historically, the predominant building type was food markets. Few of these are still standing, and those that are have been converted to other uses. The south-west part of the Conservation Area is composed of large buildings.

The listing for this conservation area notes that development control in Smithfield Conservation Area is aimed at encouraging development and activity which enhances the prosperity of the area, whilst paying attention to its special architectural and visual qualities.

The significance of this Conservation Area in-part derives from a reflection of the prosperity, evolution and industrial success of the city of Manchester.

The application site is located within the setting of the Grade II listed Peel Statue and Grade II 15 and 17, Piccadilly.



***Grade II listed Peel Statue***

The Peel Statue is a monument to Sir Robert Peel from 1853. It is ashlar pedestal with bronze statuary, with a plinth of 3 steps, a bronze female figure seated at each end of the top step, and a central pedestal surmounted by a standing figure of Sir Robert Peel.



***Grade II listed 15 and 17, Piccadilly***

15 and 17, Piccadilly is clad in sandstone ashlar with a slate roof. It is in eclectic style with some Gothic features, with chamfered piers to most upper floors, panelled friezes between 1st and 2nd floors, stylised Lombard friezes over 2nd floor, bracketed cornice over 3rd floor, ramped parapets over 4th floor, steeply-pitched roof with gable dormers; square corner oriel tiered above 1st floor and finished as a small turret with slated spirelet.

The taller and bulkier advertising totem would be prominently sited in front of the adjacent listed buildings mentioned above, which, especially when viewed from the surrounding public realm and road at Piccadilly, afford long, straight views of these listed building. The increase in size, scale, and bulkiness of these structures would negatively impact upon the views of the listed buildings. It would also impact on views into the conservation area.

The proposal, would have a bulkier build, be more obtrusive darker colour and have an awkward haphazard siting. These factors would emphasise the prevalence of street clutter in the setting, with no net reduction in number or footprint. With the circumstances of the current application, the proposed Street Hub is therefore considered to detract from the settings of the listed buildings and Conservation Area by virtue of adding to and compounding an impression of clutter.

Additionally, the totem would form an obtrusive modern element seen directly in conjunction with the Grade II-listed heritage assets. Its minimalist design, with powder coated black matt cladding and blocky pillar structure, would be seen directly contrasting with the ornamental façades and would not be in keeping with the traditional form and design of the listed buildings.

Against this backdrop, the proposal would appear conspicuously dark and blocky, resulting in further harm to the setting and reading as a more obtrusive modern element with no regard to the listed building's significance or architectural language.

The proposal would therefore harm the setting of this listed building, and features of architectural interest which contribute to its significance.

Whilst the view of Peel Statue from where the totem is sited, currently has Piccadilly Food Market located within its setting, it must be noted that this is a temporary fixture, it does not have permanent planning permission granted. Therefore, any harm versus public benefits for this development would have been on the basis of the structures being temporary and not permanent. Whereas the proposed totem would be on a permanent basis.

Decisions on the future of the Food Market will be made in conjuncture with future regeneration plans for Piccadilly Gardens as a whole.

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

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

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

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

Policy CC9 advises that development in Manchester should preserve or enhance the heritage assets affected. The proposal, for the reasons outlined in the section above, would not be considered to preserve or enhance the heritage assets affected.

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

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

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

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

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

Public Benefits

The proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the setting of heritage assets. As required by paragraph 215 of the NPPF, it is necessary to consider whether any public benefits exist to outweigh this harm.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In addition, there is already a significant air quality monitoring structure in place in Piccadilly Gardens and so there is not more requirement for air quality monitoring in this particular area.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When these limited marginal public benefits are weighed against the medium level of less than substantial harm, as well as their emphasising of the prevalence of street clutter, impact upon visual amenity and heritage, it is not considered that the harm is outweighed and therefore the requirements of paragraph 215 of the NPPF have failed to be met.

As such, the proposed Street Hub totem is not considered to be acceptable in terms of visual amenity and contrary to Places for Everyone policy JP-P2, Core Strategy policies EN1,EN3, CC9 and DM1 and Saved UDP Policies DC18.1 and DC19.1 nor in line with Section 12 of the NPPF.

**Highways Impact, Public Safety and Accessibility**

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

Pursuant to these objectives, the Council has had a longstanding decluttering strategy that has been strengthened since the adoption of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, in which Policies JP-C5 and JP-P1 further emphasise the 'movement and place' function of streets, requiring that development is designed to make a significant positive contribution to the quality of a place, ensuring that streets are welcoming for all, support high levels of walking, is safe, easy to move around for pedestrians, and free from obstacles.

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

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

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

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

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

The current proposals do not contribute to a reduction in the overall number of these units and the proposal totem has a larger footprint than the existing InLink Units, therefore, the proposal does not align with the decluttering strategy's principles.

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

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

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

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

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

**Residential Amenity**

The totem could potentially be a source of disamenity to nearby occupiers.

This could come from both noise associated with the telephone use owing to the unenclosed nature of the totems and light pollution from the digital screens.

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

The conditions would ensure that the luminance level of the digital display screens be controlled by a light sensor to adjust the screen brightness to reflect the ambient levels during the daytime and set to a maximum brightness of 600cd/m2 during hours of darkness, that in the event of breakdown or malfunction the screen would automatically switch off, that excessively animated, flashing, scrolling, intermittent or video elements and similar transitions are not allowed, and that the minimum display time for each piece of content on the digital display screens shall be 10 seconds.

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

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

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

**Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour**

Greater Manchester Police (Design for Security) and Counter Terrorism Policing North West (CTPNW) were consulted on the application and had no objection.

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

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

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

**Conclusion**

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

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

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

**Other Legislative Requirements**

**Equality Act 2010**

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

**Human Rights Act 1998 considerations**

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

Protocol 1 Article 1, and Article 8 where appropriate, confer(s) a right of respect for a person's home, other land and business assets. In taking account of all material considerations, including Council policy as set out in the Core Strategy and saved polices of the Unitary Development Plan, the Director of Planning, Building Control & Licensing has concluded that some rights

conferred by these articles on the applicant(s)/objector(s)/resident(s) and other occupiers and owners of nearby land that might be affected may be interfered with but that that interference is in accordance with the law and justified by being in the public interest and on the basis of the planning merits of the development proposal. She believes that any restriction on these rights posed by the recommendation given is proportionate to the wider benefits of and that such a decision falls within the margin of discretion afforded to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

**Recommendation:** Refuse

**Article 35 Declaration**

Officers have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to matters arising in relation to dealing with the planning application. No pre application advice was sought in respect of this matter. The application has been assessed against policy and the comments received. There would be conflicts with policy which could not be resolved through amendments to the scheme. The application is determined in a timely manner.

**Reasons for recommendation to refuse**

1) The proposed totem, by virtue of its siting, scale, materiality, and appearance, would form an overly dominant, incongruous and visually obtrusive feature within the street scene. In addition, the totem would also add to clutter, alongside other street furniture and fixtures, within a prominent and highly visible location in the City Centre. The proposal would have a negative effect upon current efforts by the City Council to de-clutter, regenerate, and improve the public realm and adopted highway within the City Centre environment in the interest of optimising the pedestrian environment and public realm, such as the future proposed regeneration of Piccadilly Gardens. The proposal would therefore result in an unduly harmful impact on local visual amenity, the character of the street scene, and the setting of nearby listed buildings and the adjacent Smithfield Conservation Area. The totem would be read as a dark, modern and incongruous structure in this setting forming an unduly harmful juxtaposition and low-quality addition to the setting of the listed buildings and the character of the adjacent conservation area. This would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets and the required public benefits do not exist to outweigh this harm. The totem is therefore contrary to the provisions of policies JP-Strat2, JP-C5, JP-P1 and JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone Plan, policies SP1, CC9, EN1, EN3 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy (2012), saved policies DC18, DC19 and DC22 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (1995), sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, and Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990.

**Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified**

Highway Services
Environmental Health
Greater Manchester Police
Transport For Greater Manchester
Counter Terrorism Policing North West (CTPNW)
Metrolink
GMP - CC Neighbourhood Policing

EE PICO CELL (1587302), Communication Station Outside 7, Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LZ
132 Market Street, Manchester, M60 1AY
Unit 3, 11 - 13 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LY
Royal Buildings, Mosley Street, Manchester, M2 3AB
7 - 11 Oldham Street, Manchester, M1 1LG
122A Market Street, Manchester, M1 1WA
130 - 132 Market Street, Manchester, M60 1AY
GREGGS, 7 - 9 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LZ
Superdrug, 7 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LZ
11 - 13 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LY
Royal Buildings, 2 Mosley Street, Manchester, M2 3AN
Flat 18, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 17, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 16, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 15, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 14, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 13, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 12, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 11, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 10, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 9, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 8, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 7, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 6, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 5, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 4, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 2, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 1, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Flat 3, 15 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LT
Unit 1, 11 - 13 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LY
Ground Floor And First Floor, 8A Tib Street, Manchester, M4 1PQ
First Floor Suite 3, Royal Buildings, 2 Mosley Street, Manchester, M2 3AN
2A Mosley Street, Manchester, M2 3AN
124 - 126 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1WA
First Floor, 17 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LS
First Floor, Royal Buildings, 2 Mosley Street, Manchester, M2 3AB
11 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 2HY
8A Tib Street, Manchester, M4 1PQ
Unit 2, 11 - 13 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LY
Second Floor, Royal Buildings, 2 Mosley Street, Manchester, M2 3AN
Third Floor, Royal Buildings, 2 Mosley Street, Manchester, M2 3AN
128 Market Street, Manchester, M1 1WA
1 - 3 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LZ
17 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LS

Fourth Floor, Royal Buildings, 2 Mosley Street, Manchester, M2 3AN
Halifax, 5 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 1LZ
First Floor Commissionaires Room, Royal Buildings, Mosley Street, Manchester, M2 3AB
Mezzanine Floor, 11 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 2HY

## 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 - Smithfield Conservation Area 1987
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Middle) -
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Middle) -
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (More) -
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (More) -
Area Team Boundary - Name: CENTRAL