

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no.	144337/FO/2025		
Date registered valid:	22 October 2025		
Proposal:	Installation of digital LED totem.		
Address:	Portland Street, Outside Piccadilly Hotel, Manchester, M1 4AL		
Ward(s):	Deansgate		Ward
Applicant:	BT Telecommunications PLC		
Agent (if any):	Mr Oliver Taylor Dalcour Maclaren		
Case officer:	Lea		Joseph
	Tel: 0161	227	3644
	Email: lea.joseph@manchester.gov.uk		
Recommendation:	Refuse		
Date of recommendation:	12 December 2025		

Application details

Type of application: Full Application Consent

Development type: Minor Other

Date of site visit: 24 November 2025

Standard consultations:

Printed: 30 October 2025 Expired: 20 November 2025

Neighbour notifications

Printed: 30 October 2025 Expired: 20 November 2025

Site notice

Posted: 24 November 2025 Expired: 15 December 2025

Press advert

Published: 4 November 2025 Expired: 25 November 2025

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area:

Tree Preservation Order:

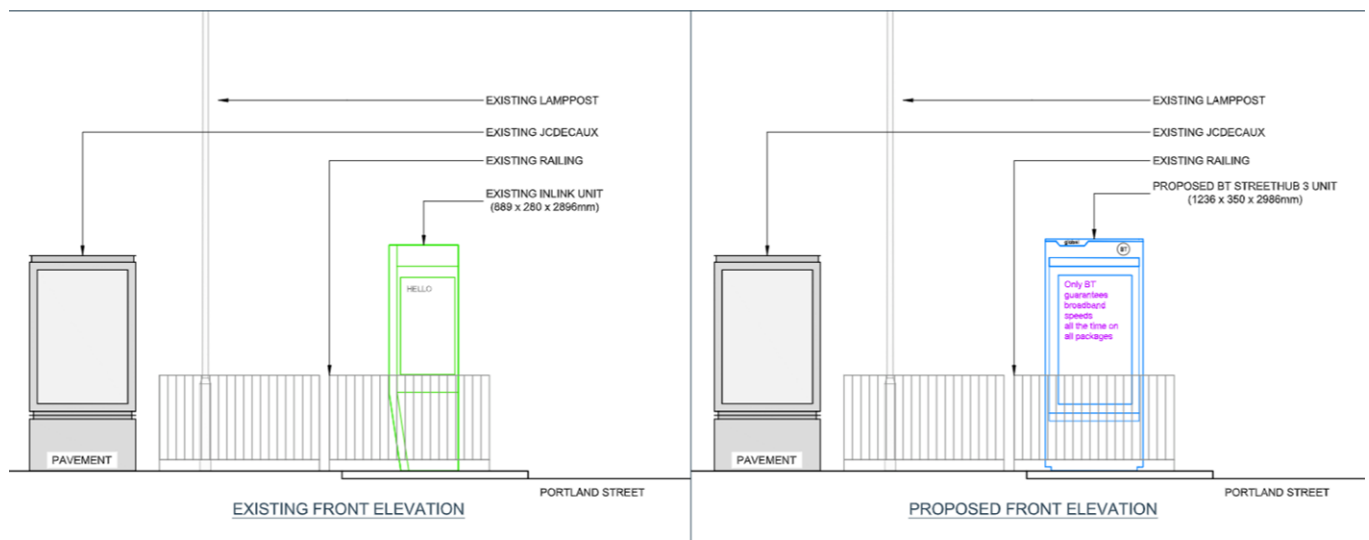
The application site pertains to an area of pavement on Portland Street, adjacent to the entry of Piccadilly Hotel. A modern 13 storey building, with ground floor shopfronts uses and a hotel and carpark on the upper storeys.

Description of area

The area is characterised by modern buildings and varying Class E uses including hotels, offices, bars and restaurants. Portland Street channels pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles moving between highly active areas of the City Centre such as Market Street, Piccadilly, Piccadilly Gardens Princess Street, Chorlton Street and Sackville Street. The area has a vibrant character and is composed of largely modern buildings. Chorlton Coach Station, Piccadilly Tram station, and Piccadilly Train Station are all in close proximity to the site.

Description of development

Full planning permission is sought for the replacement of a digital InLink totem with a BT Street Hub Unit.



Planning History

097474/TEL/2011/C2 | PRIOR APPROVAL for the installation of a payphone kiosk. (Refused September 2011)

118467/FO/2017 | Full Planning Permission for the installation of a 2.9m high 1no. InLink unit following the removal of 2no. KX100 telephone kiosks. (Approved June 2018)

Relevant nearby applications:

118467/FO/2017 | Full Planning Permission for the installation of a 2.9m high 1no. InLink unit following the removal of 2no. KX100 telephone kiosks. (Approved June 2018)

144108/FO/2025 | Installation of digital LED totem. (Refused November 2025)

Consultations & Notification Responses

Publicity

Notification letters have been sent to surrounding properties and a notice was posted at the site. No representations have been received.

Metrolink - No comments

Environmental Health - No objections. Requirements for control of potential amenity impacts would be required with conditions related to noise, totem maintenance, and light from digital display screens.

Transport for Greater Manchester - No objections. Any alterations to the public highway caused by installation would need to be made good. An absolute minimum footway width of 2 metres (where the apparatus is positioned) needs to be retained to ensure pedestrian movements are unimpeded. Sightline visibility for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians needs to be maintained and should not be impinged upon by the siting of the apparatus. Servicing arrangements associated with the apparatus should not impact upon the highway and result in traffic conflicts. Service

vehicles should park appropriately and should not use bus lay-bys or footways. A Construction Traffic Management plan should be employed as part of the proposals to reduce any likely impacts.

Greater Manchester Police - Would not support the application. Piccadilly Gardens area is an area of high concentration of drug dealing, robbery, and other criminal activity. The proposed development would give people legitimate reason to loiter in the area which could facilitate such offences and could leave legitimate users vulnerable to criminality. Street cluster limits the availability of space on the footpath which can allow pickpockets and similar criminals greater opportunity. Several existing damaged totems are present in the area and have not been repaired, this damaged appearance can increase the pedestrian fear of crime and deter legitimate use of the area.

Highways - No objections but noted a number of concerns. The increased footprint of the proposed totem is contrary to the Council decluttering strategy and broader street design standards. Highways are also concerned the proposal would impair pedestrian movement and inclusive accessibility on a busy high street. The totem's scale could decrease the ability of pedestrians to navigate the pavement and impede pedestrian comfort particularly for disabled users. Finally, the site is under a Traffic Regulation Orders which designate No Waiting At Any Time and No Loading At Any Time kerbside restrictions. A Servicing/Maintenance Plan has not been provided, and it is unclear how this would be accomplished safely.

Greater Manchester Police Counter Terrorism Unit – No objections or comments.

Policy

Manchester Core Strategy

EN1 City Centre Strategic Character Areas

SP1 Spatial Principles

DM1 Development Management

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan

JP-Strat2 City Centre

JP-C5 Streets for All

JP-P1 Sustainable Places

Saved Unitary Development Plan Policies

DC22 Footpath Protection

Other Material Considerations:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024):

- Chapter 12 - Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- Chapter 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities

Issues

Principle of Development

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



Siting, Scale, Appearance and Impact on visual amenity

The proposed Totem would have an increased footprint of 347mm in width, 90mm in height and 71mm in depth. The size of the advertisement screen would also significantly increase. 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.

Section 12 of the NPPF gives significant weight to the design of the built environment, stating that high-quality design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and that developments should contribute positively to making places better for people. The larger, bulkier, darker materiality of the structure is not considered to have regard for the character of the surrounding area nor is it thought to enhance the attractiveness of the street scene and is therefore contrary to this policy.

In contrast to the existing, the proposed would have a greater footprint on the highway, while also increasing in its height and width. The totem would be a galvanised steel structure and feature a black powder coated cladding. Each side of the totem would feature a digital HD screen measuring 0.95m x 1.67m. The overall appearance of the structure is considered to be practical.

In 2017, permission was granted for the installation of the existing InLink totem. At the time, the proposed units were considered to be a rationalisation of existing street clutter, which consisted of two phone boxes that were removed as part of the permission. The proposed change in totem's would not have the same justification as its public benefits would be negligible and its proposed scale would undermine the goals for the rationalisation and reduction of street clutter in the area.

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. This would therefore result in a more prominent presence within the street scene than the existing totem, 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.

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.

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.

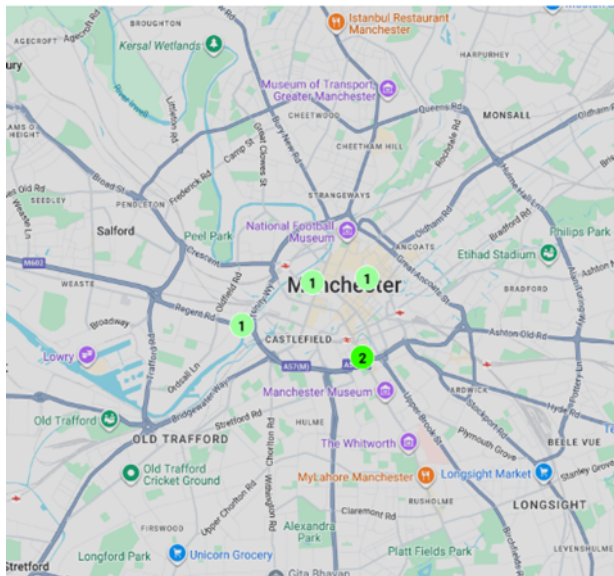
The adoption of the Streets for All Design guidance by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority in November 2023 reinforces the position on reducing street clutter, recommending that in reviewing existing situations, street furniture should be rationalised wherever possible, and clutter removed. As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

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, as the proposed would have more dominant visual presence than the existing InLink model. Its imposing appearance is considered to detract from the street scene.

Public Benefit

It is acknowledged that the applicant has set out in supporting documents, the purported public benefits of the advertisement totem. This relates to its function as a telephone unit; it's signposting to third sector organisations, it's data collection (i.e. pedestrian footfall and air pollution) and it's provision of free Wi-Fi.

As can be seen in the below image, the City Centre is currently well served by air pollution monitoring devices that measure at a daily and monthly monitoring. One of these monitors is located a short distance away from the application site in Piccadilly Gardens.



Existing daily air quality monitoring units within the City Centre.

Mobile phone ownership is widespread, as such it is not expected that many residents will seek out this benefit. Wi-Fi and calling could be provided by a simple pole system, the depth and bulk of the proposal are solely to fulfil its purpose as an advertisement screen which does provide any public benefit. The impact on visual amenity therefore cannot be rationalised by these additional services.

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

Highways Impact/ Accessibility / Pedestrian Safety



The pedestrian environment plays an essential role in the Council and National Policy Guidance on street design and sustainable transport.

Paragraph 117 of the NPPF requires that proposals create safe, attractive routes and avoid unnecessary street clutter while responding to local character. Policy DC22 notes that development proposal that would result in 'unacceptable inconvenience' to local pedestrian movement should not be allowed. Policy SP1 outlines the need for development proposals to 'make a positive contribution' to the safety of residents and 'consider the needs of all members of the community'. This is echoed in policy CC10 which mandates 'high standards of accessibility' across space in the City Centre.

The proposed totem would be sited along a main pedestrian thoroughfare that channels Piccadilly bus interchange passengers and connects pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles to Chorlton Coach Station, Piccadilly Tram station, Piccadilly Train Station, the core Retail Area, Kampus, Chinatown and St. Peter's Square.

The Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the Manchester City Council Transport Strategy to 2040 contain the most up to date thinking and strategy for the ongoing enhancement and integration for the Policy JP-C5 and JP-P6 require walking routes are easy to navigate 'safely and without delay, and minimising barriers and obstacles to movement' and are attractive and 'create an incentive to walk and cycle'. The Transport Strategy outlines the Council's goal for walking to be the primary form of transport in Manchester's City Centre. It identifies business, accessibility, pavement width and congestion as challenges. The proposed change in scale would have a negative impact on pedestrian movement and comfort on the footpath. It would minimise the space provided for pedestrians, worsening congestion during peak times. In addition, when in use the hoarding's obtrusiveness on the pavement would be further compounded by the user, who would add to the width of the totem and further obstruct the footpath. This would hinder the flow of movement and negatively impact the site's accessibility.

MCC's Environmental Health team have reviewed the scheme are satisfied that with conditions to control visual and aural amenity as well maintenance of the unit they have no expected concerns around public safety. As these elements could be mitigated via the way of conditions, concerns over these amenity impacts are not sufficient to warrant a refusal on public safety grounds.

Public Safety and Crime

Policy JP-P1 requires that development proposals consider safety and 'design out crime' by reducing potential for anti-social behaviour. Paragraph 96 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires that developments are safe and accessible and that crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime form part of the development considerations. Policy DM1 requires that development proposals have regard to community safety and crime prevention.

Greater Manchester Police have noted multiple concerns related to crime for the proposed totem installation.

The Piccadilly Gardens has a high incidence of crime such a dealing of illicit substances, robbery and other criminal activity. The proposed upgraded totem is considered to be a negative addition to the streetscape as it would encourage loitering in an unsafe area, potentially making users of the totem's services more vulnerable to being victimised. The increased footprint could enable crime as it 'funnels' pedestrians into a smaller space, thereby creating opportunity for pickpocketing and similar offenses. Further, as noted by the Police, existing totems in the area have been poorly maintained, structures that are damaged or otherwise compromised could create a feeling of fear for pedestrians thereby deterring 'legitimate' uses from the area.

The National Planning policy paragraph 102 sets out the importance of ‘anticipating and addressing possible malicious threats’ particularly in areas where high concentrations of people are expected to congregate. The proposed totem structure would not meet the requirements of this policy as it would enhance vulnerability of pedestrians to crime in an area with a high quantity of crime and disorder. For the reasons outlined above the proposed totem is likely to enable crime and anti-social behaviour in the area, undermining Council and local Police goals to create a safe environment. The proposed totem would therefore be contrary to policies SP1, JP-P1 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Residential Amenity

The totem could potentially be a source of disamenity to nearby occupiers, particularly of the adjacent hotel, through issues with noise and light nuisance.

Environmental Health advised the luminance levels of the structure could be controlled through a planning condition. This would ensure that the luminance level of the digital display screens can 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.

Also, the condition would require in the event of breakdown or malfunction, the screen would automatically switch off, and specify that any 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.

In respect to noise, the totem could impact on nearby residents during telephone calls as the totem is not enclosed. To address this, a noise management plan was submitted 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 policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy, and DC26 of the UDP.

Conclusion

As detailed above the installation of the replacement totem would not result in any significant concerns to warrant refusal grounds in respect to residential amenity, highways impact and access, or crime and anti-social behaviour. However, a combination of its height, width, materiality, and appearance, the proposed hub, with its large digital advertisement panels on both sides, would represent a dark, dominant and incongruous structure within the setting busy highway. The proposed digital LED totem is therefore unacceptable and refused on the basis of its impact on visual amenity. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the provisions of

policies JP-C5, JP-P1 and JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone Plan, policies SP1, EN1, and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy (2012), saved policy DC22 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (1995), section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

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

In assessing the merits of a planning application, officers will seek to work with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner to seek solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with the planning application. All such issues have been resolved due to the discussions within the applicant and the conditions.

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 reduce street 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. The proposal would therefore result in an unduly harmful impact on local visual amenity, and the character of the street scene. The totem is therefore contrary to the provisions of policies JP-C5 and JP-P1 of the Places for Everyone Plan, policies SP1, EN1, and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy (2012), saved policy DC22 of the

Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (1995), and section 12 of the NPPF.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

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

Third Floor, Bank Chambers, Faulkner Street, Manchester, M1 4EF
Ground Floor, Bank Chambers, Faulkner Street, Manchester, M1 4EF
Huxters, Minshull Street, Manchester, M1 3EF
Ninth Floor, Westminster House, 11 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 3BH
Fourth Floor, Westminster House, 11 Portland Street, Manchester, M60 1HY
Third Floor, Westminster House, 11 Portland Street, Manchester, M60 1HY
PaddyPower, 44 Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester, M1 4AJ
10 New York Street, Manchester, M1 4JD
Seventh Floor, Westminster House, 11 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 3HU
Edwards, Westminster House, 11 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 3HU
The Thrift Shop, 45 - 50 Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester, M1 4AJ
First Floor, Westminster House, 11 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 3PL
Fifth Floor, Westminster House, 11 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 3HU
First Floor, Bank Chambers, Faulkner Street, Manchester, M1 4EF
Second Floor, Bank Chambers, Faulkner Street, Manchester, M1 4EF
Britannia Hotel, 35 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 3LA
4 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 4GS
Eighth Floor, Westminster House, 11 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 3BH
Second Floor, Westminster House, 11 Portland Street, Manchester, M60 1HY
Ground Floor, Westminster House, 11 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 3PL
Dawsons, 30 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 4GS
Second Floor, 4 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 4GS

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

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