

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 144112/FO/2025
Date registered valid: 30 September 2025
Proposal: Installation of digital LED totem.
Address: Outside No.98 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 4GX
Ward(s): Deansgate Ward

Applicant: BT Telecommunications PLC
Agent (if any): Mr Oliver Taylor Dalcour Maclaren
Case officer: Emily Booth
Tel: 0161 234 4193
Email: emily.booth@manchester.gov.uk

Recommendation: Refuse
Date of recommendation: 24 November 2025

Application details

Type of application: Full Application Consent

Development type: Minor Other

Date of site visit: 13 October 2025

Standard consultations:

Printed: 27 October 2025 Expired: 17 November 2025

Neighbour notifications

Printed: 8 October 2025 Expired: 29 October 2025

Site notice

Posted: 13 October 2025 Expired: 3 November 2025

Press advert

Published: 14 October 2025 Expired: 4 November 2025

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: George Street Conservation Area 1985

Tree Preservation Order: Not applicable

Description of Site

This application relates to the pavement on Portland Street in front of 98 Portland Street, which is a modern red brick building with that is used as a hotel with restaurants at ground floor. This section of pavement is paved and accommodates a traffic sign, two totems with digital advertising screens and a lamppost. There is a further advertising screen located on the opposite side of the road. There is also a bus stop outside the building approximately 25 metres away from the site.

Description of Area

The site is within the George Street and adjacent the Whitworth Street Conservation Area.

The surrounding area contains a large number of other listed buildings include the Grade II listed buildings at 113 to 119 Portland Street; the Grade II Listed 127 Portland Street and the Grade II Listed 106 to 108 Portland Street.

113 to 119 Portland Street is opposite the site and is a former manufacturers' home trade warehouse and shipping warehouse, which was constructed between 1860-70. It was constructed of red brick with sandstone dressings as are all of the former warehouses listed above. It has a utilitarian design with Italian Gothic features, stone basement, sill-bands to all

floors and simplified Lombard friezes among the features. It forms a group with 103, 105 and 107, and 109 and 111, together comprising a complete block of former warehouses.

32 Dickinson Street/106 to 108 Portland Street is opposite the site and was constructed between 1860-70. It was constructed of red brick with sandstone dressings. It has features including a chamfered corner, channelled rusticated piers, brick and cornices at 2nd floor, and bracketed eaves cornice.

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

Portland Street is a highly trafficked route from Oxford Street into the City Centre and is a particularly busy bus route.

Site History

Application referenced 118459/FO/2017 was approved in 2017 and allowed the installation of 1no. 2.9m high InLink

Application referenced 118460/AOH/2017 was approved in 2017 and allowed the installation of 2no. digital LED display screens to associated InLink

Application referenced 143270/AOH/2025 was approved in November 2025 and allows signage at 113-119 Portland Street (Listed Entry Number: 1246957), 127-133 Portland Street (Listed Entry Number: 1246958); and Oxford Place (61 Oxford Street) (Listed Entry Number: 1246286) introducing a coherent signage proposal which is well designed and of high quality design and allows for the removal of redundant and inappropriate signs across the Cluster.

Related Applications

144066/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside No. 71 Piccadilly, Manchester, M1 2BS.

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

144106/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside 51 Piccadilly Street, Manchester, M1 2AP.

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

144108/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Footpath Outside 1 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 4AJ.

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

144110/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside H&M Brown Street, Manchester, M2 1DA.

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

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

144114/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside Deansgate Station, Whitworth Street West, Manchester, M1 5WY.

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

144116/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside Primark, Mosley Street, Manchester, M60 1AY.

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

144118/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside No. 8-10 Exchange Street, Manchester, M2 7EF.

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

144120/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Footpath Outside No. 11-13 Piccadilly, Manchester, M60 1AY.

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

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

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

144124/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Opposite No. 60 Sackville Street, Manchester, M1 3BU.

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

144144/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside No. 9 Stevenson Square, Manchester, M1 1DB.

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

144337/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Portland Street, Outside Piccadilly Hotel, Manchester, M1 4AL.

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

144339/FO/2025 - Installation of digital LED totem at Outside No. 48 King Street, Manchester, M2 6AF.

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

Description of Development

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

This totem would replace the existing BT InLink totem.

Advertisement consent is sought for the display of two 75" digital screens measuring 950cm x 1670mm on the front and rear of a digital LED totem as part of application referenced 144200/AOH/2025.

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.

GMP - CC Neighbourhood Policing - No response received

Highway Services -

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

Greater Manchester Police - Advised no objection

Issues

Policy

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

- Policy JP-Strat2 - City Centre
- Policy JP-P1 - Sustainable Places
- Policy JP-P2 - Heritage
- Policy JP-C5 - Streets for All
- Policy JP-C6 - Walking and Cycling

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

- Policy SP1 - Spatial Principles
- Policy CC5 - Transport
- Policy CC9 - Design and Heritage
- Policy CC10 - A Place for Everyone
- 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

Sections 16, 66, and 72 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 require that special consideration is given to the preservation of the significant fabric and setting of listed buildings and conservation areas.

The National Design Guide (January 2021)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Issues

Principle of Development

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

documents of Manchester City Council and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Transport for Greater Manchester provides advice to Manchester City Council.

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

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

Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage

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

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

Policy JP-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 do 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.

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

The St Peter's Square Conservation Area

The application site is also located within the setting of the Grade II listed buildings described above. As stated, the site is in the setting of many former warehouses built in brick with detailed stone features. Even the modern building it is located in front of was constructed in brick in respect of these listed buildings. Additionally, application referenced 143270/AOH/2025 was

approved in November 2025 and allows signage at these listed buildings on the opposite side of Portland Street introducing a coherent signage proposal which is well designed and of high-quality design and allows for the removal of redundant and inappropriate signs across the Cluster.

The totem would increase the level of clutter, which works against these improvements.

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

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

The proposed totems would add an intrusive structure in a location within a conservation area and surrounded on two sides by listed buildings that would negatively impact upon the setting of these heritage assets, as they would see the introduction of large, bulkier, and darker structure in the public realm, which would not be visually appealing and will be seen in context with the brick and stone of the surrounding buildings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

203 and 208 of the NPPF and sections 66 and 72 of the Planning Act in relation to preservation and enhancement.

Public Benefits

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Even so, small cells can also be installed on existing street furniture that is more fundamental 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.

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:

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

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

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

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

of pedestrians waiting/queuing in the vicinity of the site and as such, localised congestion would likely be heightened.

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

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

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

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:

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

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 due to noise associated with the telephone use owing to the unenclosed nature of the totems and light pollution from the digital screens.

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

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

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

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

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

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

Any residential amenity 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 the concerns outlined above on the impact upon visual amenity and nearby heritage assets, 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.

The proposal is therefore refused.

Other Legislative Requirements Equality Act 2010

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

Human Rights Act 1998 considerations

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

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

Recommendation: Refuse

Article 35 Declaration

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

Reasons for recommendation to refuse

1) The proposed totem is substantially larger than the existing totem that it would replace and would by virtue of its siting, scale, design, materiality and appearance would result in an overly dominant, overly large and obtrusive item of street clutter incongruously sited along the footway in a prominent and highly visible location in the City Centre. It would form clutter with other street furniture in an area of the City Centre where significant efforts to declutter the streetscape, rationalise existing street furniture, and attract investments to improve the public realm and place making and pedestrian experience have been made. The proposal would impact on the setting of the Grade II listed buildings at 113 to 119 Portland Street; the Grade II Listed 127 Portland Street and the Grade II Listed 106 to 108 Portland Street and the George Street and the adjacent Whitworth Street Conservation Areas. The totem would be read as a dark, modern and incongruous structure in the foreground of these brick and stone built historic

former warehouses forming an unduly harmful juxtaposition and low-quality addition to the setting of the listed buildings and the character of the conservation areas. The proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of these designated assets and the required public benefits do not exist to outweigh the harm identified. The proposed totem would therefore be contrary to Places for Everyone Policies JP-Strat2, JP-C4, JP-C5 and JP-C6 and JP-P1, and Core Strategy Policies SP1, CC9, EN1, EN3 T1 and DM1 , saved UDP policies DC18 and DC19; Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990; and guidance contained in Sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

2) The proposed totem by virtue of its location along a footway which experiences high levels of daily footfall and is part of a busy bus route, as well as its scale, footprint, and position on the footway would be to the detriment of pedestrian environment, forming a further obstruction along the footway and failing to correspond to the positioning of adjacent street furniture including the traffic sign, existing totem and the lamppost and having a larger footprint than the existing BT screen, thereby failing to minimise barriers and obstacles to movement. The proposed totem would therefore be contrary to Places for Everyone Policies JP-C4 and JP-P1, Core Strategy Policies SP1, CC5, T1 and DM1 and saved UDP Policy DC22; Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework; as well as guidance contained within the Streets for All Design Guide 2023.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

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

Frankies Toasties, 98A Portland Street, Manchester, M1 2GX
111 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
96 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 2GX
Exchange Food & Drink Lounge, 102 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 4GX
Second Floor Office 211, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
Third Floor, 113 - 115 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DW
Fourth Floor 4C, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
OPERATIONS ABROAD WORLDWIDE, Third Floor 301, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
Second Floor 212A, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
Fourth Floor 4B, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
Flat 102, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Flat 504, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Flat 405, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Flat 202, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Flat 307, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Flat 101, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Basement And Ground Floor, 113 - 115 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DW
Fifth Floor, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
First Floor 1C, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
Second Floor Room 210, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
Flat 103, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Third Floor 308, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
Flat 604, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Flat 301, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Flat 403, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Flat 303, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
First Floor, 113 - 115 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DW
Flat 204, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Flat 106, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Third Floor 307, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
Ibis Hotel, 96 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 4GX
Flat 206, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Flat 407, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Flat 205, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Fourth Floor Right, 113 - 115 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DW
Third Floor 303, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
First Floor 108, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
Flat 603, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
Flat 104, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
First Floor 111, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
Second Floor, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
Third Floor, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
109 - 111 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
Suite 4B Fourth Floor, 113 - 115 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DW
Fourth Floor Suite 4C, 113 - 115 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DW
First Floor 1B, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN

Third Floor 302, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 First Floor 112, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 Second Floor 208, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 Second Floor 206, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 Second Floor 205, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 Second Floor 207, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 First Floor 105, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 Third Floor 305, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 Second Floor 212, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 Basement And Sub Basement, 111 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 Second Floor, 113 - 115 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DW
 Ground Floor Left, 113 - 115 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DW
 First Floor 106, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 Second Floor Room 209, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 Second Floor 214, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 THE LOANS SUPERMARKET LIMITED, First Floor 107, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 First Floor Office 102, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 OAK TREE THERAPY, Third Floor 306, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 First Floor 101, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 Third Floor 304, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 First Floor, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 Flat 507, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 306, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 602, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 506, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 401, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 501, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 203, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 502, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 402, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 207, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 503, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 302, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 201, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 305, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 304, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 404, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 601, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Fourth Floor 4A, Gainsborough House, 109 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6DN
 Flat 406, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 505, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA
 Flat 105, Basil House, 105 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 6AA

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 - George Street Conservation Area 1985
 Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -

Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -
Area Team Boundary - Name: CENTRAL