MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

# Planning

# Delegated Officer Report

## Summary of application details

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| **Application reference:** | PLA-2026-001562 |
| **Application type:** | Consent to display an advertisement |
| **Proposal:** | Installation of 2 internally illuminated advertisement screens. |
| **Site address:** | Land Adjacent to 100 Exchange Square Corporation Street Manchester M4 3AJ |
| **Ward(s):** | Piccadilly |
| **Date application valid:** | 07 September 2026 |
| **Applicant name:** | Mr Martin Stephens |
| **Agent (if any):** | |
| **Case officer:** | John Forth-Walker |
| **Recommendation:** | Approve |
| **Date of recommendation:** | 19 October 2026 |

## Description of site, building and/or area

On a footway on Exchange Square, The Site is 12.5m clear of Withy Grove, 7m clear of Corporation Street, and 5m clear of the closest retail unit which is just to its south. The Site is within one of Manchester's busiest commercial areas, with the surrounding area characterised mostly by hospitality and retail units. The Site is directly adjacent to the Arndale Centre, and Exchange Square also includes one of Manchester's most-used tram stops. The surrounding buildings are multi-storey, exhibiting a mix of modern and more traditional styles.

The Site is not within a conservation area, although it is adjacent to the boundaries of the Shudehill Conservation Area to The Site's east and the Cathedral Conservation Area to The Site's west.

The Site is adjacent to the Grade II-listed Former Corn and Produce Exchange.

The Site must be considered in the context of its adjacent conservation areas and listed buildings.

## Description of development

The proposal seeks Advertisement Consent for 1no. advertisement totem to replace an existing unit in the same location.

The totem would have a height of 2.95m, width of 1.34m, and depth of 0.25m, with a luminance of 300cd/$m^2$, intermittent with advertisement transitions. The outer casing would be made of

steel and alloy with glass facing to each of the two screens. The totem would be larger than the unit currently in place, which is 2.42m high and 1.26m wide. However, the proposal has a depth of 0.25m in comparison with the current unit's 0.37m, and most of the increased height comprises the unit skirt rather than the advertisement screens. Moreover, the proposed totem would be closer in height to and less wide than the 2013 unit which the current totem replaced. The 2013 totem was 2.62m high and 1.55m wide.

This is one of five applications submitted in tandem to install new JCDecaux units, replacing existing totems formerly operated by another outdoor contractor. These totems received planning approval in 2013 and 2023 (with the exception of the unit on the junction of Nicholas Croft and High Street). As well as commercial advertisements, the totems have displayed public service information and council events.

## Relevant planning history

**137112/AOH/2023 –** Replacement of an existing interactive totem with a 2.42m x 1.27m totem including full motion LED display of digital advertising. Approved 18 August 2023.

**103204/AO/2013/C1 –** installation of interactive totem including display of digital advertising. Approved 3 October 2013.

**Related applications to replace advertisement totems**

**PLA-2026-001560 –** Land adjacent to 8 St Ann's Square, M2 7HA

**PLA-2026-001561 –** Land opposite New Cathedral Street, M1 1AD

**PLA-2026-001563 –** Land outside 90 Market Street, M1 1PD

**PLA-2026-001565 –** Land adjacent to the junction of Nicholas Croft and High Street, M4 1EY

## Consultation, notification and publicity responses

**Publicity -** Neighbour notification letters were sent to surrounding properties. A site notice and local press advert were also produced. At the time of writing this report, no representations have been received.

**Highway Services** and **Environmental Health** both requested conditions be added regarding luminance, advertisement duration, advertisement transitions, special effects, and fault contingency. These have been added to the decision.

**Highway Services** also requested informatives be added regarding licensing, hoardings / scaffolding, and skips, and temporary arrangements.

**Metrolink** requested an informative be added regarding safe working near Metrolink.

**Counter Terrorism Policing** advised that they had no objections or comments to make regarding the application.

## Relevant policies

The proposal has been considered under the following criteria:

**Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007**

(1) A Local planning authority shall exercise its powers under these Regulations in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account—

(a) the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material; and

(b) any other relevant factors.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1) (b)—

(a) factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest;

(b) factors relevant to public safety include—

(i) the safety of persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome (civil or military);

(ii) whether the display of the advertisement in question is likely to obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air;

(iii) whether the display of the advertisement in question is likely to hinder the operation of any device used for the purpose of security or surveillance or for measuring the speed of any vehicle.

(3) In taking account of factors relevant to amenity, the local planning authority may, if it thinks fit, disregard any advertisement that is being displayed.

(4) Unless it appears to the local planning authority to be required in the interests of amenity or public safety, an express consent for the display of advertisements shall not contain any limitation or restriction relating to the subject matter, content, or design of what is to be displayed.

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

- Policy JP-P1 - Sustainable Places
- Policy JP-P2 – Heritage

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

- Policy SP1 - Spatial Principles
- Policy CC9 - Design and Heritage
- Policy DM1 - Development Management

**Unitary Development Plan for Manchester (UDP) (1995)** - for the reasons outlined below, the following saved UDP Policies are of relevance to this application:

- Policy DC15 - Advertisements, Hoardings and Posters
- Policy DC18 - Conservation Areas
- Policy DC19 - Listed Buildings

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2026)**

- Chapter 14 - Achieving well-designed places
    - DP3 - Key Principles for Well-Designed Places

- Chapter 20 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
    - HE4 – Securing the conservation of heritage assets
    - HE9 – Conservation Areas

**Sections 16, 66, and 72 of the Planning (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.

## Assessment

The main issues for consideration relate to the principle of the proposal, as well as, in accordance with the advertisement regulations, the acceptability of the proposal in terms of its impact upon visual amenity and upon public safety.

In judging this, the provisions of the development plan and any other relevant factors, so far as they are material, must be taken into account.

### Principle of the Proposal

A totem in this location has been established by the 2013 and 2023 consent. The only matter to be considered is the changes proposed, which are minimal and therefore could be acceptable; the assessment is set out below.

### Visual Amenity

The proposed totem would replace a unit in the same location, which was found acceptable in terms of visual amenity in 2013 and 2023. In line with UDP Policy DC15.1(a) and DC15.2(b), the increased size would not render the totem unacceptable in terms of visual amenity in its location. Furthermore, the increase in size is sufficiently small for the totem to integrate with its surroundings, so that the proposal is consistent with NPPF Policy DP3.

Given the modest differences in size between the current totem and the proposed replacement, it cannot be said that the revised totem design would be excessively large. The scale is considered to meet the requirements of Core Strategy Policy DM1 and UDP Policy DC15.

It is judged that the proposal would preserve the setting of the adjacent conservation areas and listed buildings. The proposal is therefore in line with UDP Policies DC18 and DC19, Core Strategy Policy CC9, and PfE Policies JP-P1 and JP-P2. The proposal would not affect the significance of the heritage assets, including the setting of the conservation area, so that the requirements outlined in NPPF Policy HE4 are not applicable. In line with NPPF Policy HE9, the proposal conserves all elements of the adjacent conservation areas which make a positive contribution to the area.

On the above basis, the proposal is consistent with UDP Policies DC15, DC18, and DC19; Core Strategy Policies DM1 and CC9; PfE Policies JP-P1 and JP-P2; and NPPF Policies DP3, HE4,and HE9.

**Public Safety**

The luminance levels of the signage are 300cd/$m^2$, which is within an acceptable range to not cause any distraction to passing pedestrians or road users, or to cause a disturbance to any nearby residents or commercial occupiers. In this sense the proposal is in line with UDP Policy DC15.2(d).

A condition has been added to ensure that the proposed luminance levels are controlled and complied with.

All signage complies with headroom and carriageway clearance requirements.

Highway Services made no objection and it is considered that the replacement totem would have no adverse impact on pedestrian movement. The proposal therefore aligns with Core Strategy Policies SP1 and DM1, and UDP Policy DC15.2(c).

Overall, there are no public safety concerns with the proposed signage.

## Conclusion

Given the above, the proposal is considered to be consistent with PfE Policies JP-P1 and JP-P2; Core Strategy Policies SP1, DM1 and CC9; UDP policies DC15, DC18, and DC19; and NPPF Policies HE4, HE9, and DP3.

## 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**: **Approve**

**Conditions attached to this decision**

1) (a) No advertisement is to be displayed without the permission of the owner of the site or any other person with an interest in the site entitled to grant permission.

(b) No advertisement shall be sited or displayed so as to:

i. endanger persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome (civil or military);

ii. obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air; or

iii. hinder the operation of any device used for the purpose of security or surveillance or for measuring the speed of any vehicle.

(c) Any advertisement displayed, and any site used for the display of advertisements, shall be maintained in a condition that does not impair the visual amenity of the site.

(d) Any structure or hoarding erected or used principally for the purpose of displaying

advertisements shall be maintained in a condition that does not endanger the public.

(e) Where an advertisement is required under these Regulations to be removed, the site shall be left in a condition that does not endanger the public or impair visual amenity.

2) The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents received by the City Council as Local Planning Authority on 7 September 2026:

- PROPOSED FORUM CIP Unit July 2026.pdf
- A03084 SITE PLAN Exchange Square Manchester M4 3AJ.pdf

Reason - To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans pursuant to Places for Everyone Policy JP-P1 and Core Strategy Polices SP1 and DM1.

3) a) The luminance level of the digital display screen shall 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 to

accord with the recommendations of the 'The Institute of Lighting Professional's 'Professional Lighting Guide 05/23: The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements including Digital Displays. In the event of breakdown or malfunction the screen will automatically switch off.

b) The advertisement shall display no special visual effects of any kind during the time that the advertisement is displayed or on transition between advertisements. The displayed image shall not include animated, flashing, scrolling, intermittent or video elements and the transition between successive images shall not include fading, swiping or other animated transition method.

c) The minimum display time for each piece of content on the digital display screens shall be 10 seconds.

d) The interval between each piece of content on the digital display screens shall take place over a period no greater than one second; the complete screen shall change with no visual effects (including swiping or other animated transition methods) between displays.

Reason - To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans pursuant to Places for Everyone Policy JP-P1 and Core Strategy Polices SP1 and DM1.

4) a) The express advertisement consent hereby granted is limited to a period ending on 23 October 2031.

b) On the date of the expiry of the express consent period on 23 October 2031, the advertisement hoardings and all associated development shall be removed, any use of the land/building authorised by this consent shall be discontinued, and the land/building shall be reinstated in accordance with a scheme previously approved.

Reason - To enable the City Council to consider the acceptability of the continuance of the display of the advertisement hoardings at the site on the expiry of the period of express consent, having regard to visual amenity and changing circumstances in the locality pursuant to Places for Everyone Policy JP-P1 and Core Strategy Polices SP1 and DM1.

**Informatives**

1) The applicant is required to discuss and agree any requirements for licensing, hoarding / scaffolding, and skips with MCC's Highways Licensing Team via Email to: highwaylicences@manchester.gov.uk.

2) The applicant is required to discuss and agree any requirements for temporary pedestrian and traffic management with MCC's Event and Traffic Management Team via Email to highwaynetworkmanagement@manchester.gov.uk.

3) The details of working safely near Metrolink can be found on the Metrolink Website at: https://tfgm.com/public-transport/tram/working-safely .