



Appeal Decisions

Site visits made on 13 October 2025 and 27 October 2025

by **R Major BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4th November 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/B4215/W/25/3369547

Footpath outside 64 Montmano Drive, Manchester M20 2EB

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Simon Warner of BT Group PLC against the decision of Manchester City Council.
- The application Ref is 142778/FO/2025.
- The development proposed is described as installation of 1no. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side unit.

Appeal B Ref: APP/B4215/H/25/3369548

Footpath outside 64 Montmano Drive, Manchester M20 2EB

- The appeal is made under Regulation 17 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) against a refusal to grant express consent.
- The appeal is made by Simon Warner of BT Group PLC against the decision of Manchester City Council.
- The application Ref is 142779/AOH/2025.
- The advertisement proposed is described as installation of 1no. BT Street Hub Unit and associated advertisement panels on either side unit.

Decision

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. The two appeals relate to the same proposal on the same site. Appeal A concerns the refusal of planning permission to erect a street hub unit (the hub). Appeal B concerns the refusal of express consent for advertisement panels on either side of the hub. I have considered each appeal on its individual merits, however, as they raise similar issues, I have combined both decisions into a single decision letter.
4. In respect of Appeal B, the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations) require that decisions are made only in the interest of amenity and public safety. Therefore, whilst I have taken account of the policies that the Council considers to be relevant, these have not been decisive in my determination of this appeal.
5. An initial site visit was made on 13 October 2025. A follow-up site visit was undertaken on 27 October 2025.

Main Issues

6. The main issue in respect of Appeal A is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.
7. The main issue in respect of Appeal B is the effect of the proposed advertisement on visual amenity.

Reasons

8. The appeal relates to a grass verge separating two sections of footpath on the eastern side of Princess Road (A5103), a busy five-lane radial highway. Directly to the east of the appeal site is a five-storey residential apartment block with a fence and row of trees situated along its boundary with the footway. On the opposite side of Princess Road is a cemetery with a row of mature trees fronting onto the highway.
9. Within the immediate vicinity of the appeal site the public realm is uncluttered, consisting of a bus shelter on the pavement, with a lighting column and highway pole on the grass verge. This limited amount of existing street furniture; the wide nature of the highway and footway areas; and the row of trees either side of the road, together all contribute to maintaining an open and verdant character and appearance along this section of Princess Road.
10. The proposal would see the introduction of an upstanding rectangular street hub, with advertisement panels on either side, in a prominent location adjacent to this busy highway. The hub would be sited on the grassed verge between two sections of pavement and would house features that provide free Wi-Fi, free UK calls, USB charging, access to emergency services and other facilities.
11. Due to a combination of its siting, height and width, the proposed freestanding hub, with its large digital advertisement panels on both sides, would represent a dominant and obtrusive feature in this location. It would also create visual clutter in an area that is largely free of street furniture, to the visual detriment of the existing open character of the street scene in this location.
12. In coming to this view, I acknowledge there is a bus shelter immediately adjacent to the appeal site. However, the rotating digital adverts on the proposed hub would be a more strident and incongruous feature in comparison to the paper adverts within this bus shelter.
13. Furthermore, whilst not visible from the appeal site, during my visit I did observe a larger digital display screen to the south of the appeal site, on the opposite side of the highway. However, this digital display is viewed against the backdrop of a busy car wash, within a cluster of commercial properties. Its context is therefore different from the appeal site which is located within a more residential aspect of Princess Street, adjacent to a residential apartment block.
14. I also acknowledge that the proposed hub would replace the existing telephone kiosk located to the north. However, this existing kiosk is situated around the corner on Cavendish Road, is set back from Princess Road and viewed against the backdrop of the trees directly behind it. I do not find the location of this existing kiosk to be as visually prominent as the proposed hub which would be sited on an open section of the grass verge adjacent to a busy highway.
15. The submission also details that an existing kiosk at no. 477 Princess Road would be removed, reducing street clutter in that location. However, that kiosk is sited in front of a parade of shops and therefore is within a more commercial setting than the appeal site. It is also a significant distance from the appeal site and is therefore visually unrelated.
16. The above matters therefore limit the weight I attribute to the removal of these existing kiosks in favour of the appeal proposal.

17. In view of all the above, I conclude that the proposed development would harm the character, appearance and visual amenity of the area. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policies DM1, EN1 and SP1 of Manchester's Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted 2012 and amended 2024) (CS), saved Policies E3.3, DC15.1 and DC15.2 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (1995) (UDP) and Policy JP-P1 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (2024), where they together seek to ensure, amongst other things, that development is appropriate, respects and acknowledges the character and identity of the locality in terms of design, siting, size, scale and materials used; upgrades the appearance of major radial and orbital roads; and incorporates high quality in the design and finish of the public realm. The proposal would also fail to accord with the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which have similar aims.
18. I have also had regard to the principles to produce high quality and inclusive design set out within the Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance (2007) (SPD). Given that I have concluded that the proposal would harm visual amenity for the reasons detailed above, I therefore conclude the proposal would also conflict with this guidance.

Other Matters

19. The Council's reason for refusal on the decision notice in respect of the planning permission for the proposed hub refers to conflict with UDP Policy DC17.1. This policy states that applications for telecommunications developments will normally be approved if the Council can be satisfied that the development has been sited and designed to minimise its impact on residential amenity and in environmentally sensitive areas.
20. However, the reason for refusal, as well as the Council's statement of case, refer to the impact of the proposal on the character, appearance and visual amenity of the area. They do not specifically draw my attention to any harm to living conditions of nearby residents. As such, I do not find UDP Policy DC17.1 to be determinative in respect of the main issue raised within the Council's reason for refusal relating to the planning permission.
21. Notwithstanding the above, I note the Council's officer report in respect of the planning application does briefly refer to the impact of the hub on the level of residential amenity that could reasonably be expected to be enjoyed by occupants of nearby apartments. Furthermore, interested parties have also raised concerns in respect of the impact on the appeal proposal on their living conditions.
22. As such, had I been otherwise minded to allow this appeal I would have gone back to both the main parties and sought further comments in respect of the potential implications of the appeal proposal on the living conditions of occupiers of nearby residential properties. However, as I am dismissing the appeal on the main issue raised in the reason for refusal on both the planning permission and advertisement consent applications, I have not pursued this matter further.
23. Interested parties have also raised concerns relating to the impact of the proposal on highway safety. However, the Council, including the Highway Service, has not suggested the proposal would affect public safety and given the set back of the proposal from the carriageway and its distance from any nearby traffic signals, I see

no reason to disagree. I therefore find the proposal would not have a harmful impact upon public or highway safety.

24. Both parties have drawn my attention to allowed and dismissed appeal decisions¹ for hubs and associated advertisements throughout the country. Whilst I have had due regard to these decisions, issues relating to the impact of a proposal upon the character, appearance and visual amenity of an area are matters of planning judgement based on the site-specific circumstances and surroundings.
25. In this regard, I have been provided with limited information in respect of these appeal decisions that would enable me to draw any direct comparisons with the appeal site and scheme before me. These decisions therefore carry limited weight in my determination of this appeal.

Planning Balance

26. I have had due regard to the benefits of the proposal. In respect of Appeal A, paragraph 119 of the Framework states that an advanced, high quality and reliable communication infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. The Framework also seeks to support the expansion of electronic communication networks. The hub would therefore support the Government's aim of improving digital infrastructure.
27. The proposal would include ultrafast public and encrypted wi-fi, access to public services, multiple accessibility options, secure power-only USB ports for rapid device charging, free phone calls, a direct emergency call button, community and emergency awareness messaging, and environmental sensors to measure air quality, noise and traffic. The hub would also provide improved 5G coverage to local communities through the installation of small cell mobile connectivity providing faster and more reliable connection for calls and internet access, as well as free screen time for council advertising.
28. The hub would provide some indirect lighting and be powered by 100% renewable carbon-free energy, which is an environmental benefit. I also note the appellant's view that the proposed unit could assist in encouraging shoppers to return to the town centre.
29. Nevertheless, when taken together, I find that all the above-mentioned benefits do not outweigh the harm I have identified that the proposal would have upon the character, appearance and visual amenity of the area.
30. In respect of Appeal B, the Regulations require that decisions are made only in the interest of amenity and public safety. As such, most of the proposed benefits put forward by the appellant cannot be taken into consideration in my decision for Appeal B. Nonetheless, even in a scenario whereby I accepted that use of the advertisement to display emergency messages and public messaging campaigns was a public safety matter relevant to the control of advertisements, the benefits derived from it would not overcome the harm I have identified to visual amenity.

Conclusion

31. I conclude that the appeal proposal would have a harmful impact upon the character, appearance and visual amenity of the area. Appeal A therefore conflicts with the

¹ APP/Z5630/H/3209488; APP/N5090/Z/22/3296138; APP/N5090/D/22/3296141 & APP/Z3636/W/25/3361981

development plan taken as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, to suggest the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Appeal B would harm visual amenity.

32. Therefore, for the reasons given, both Appeal A and Appeal B are dismissed.

R Major

INSPECTOR