



Planning Supporting Statement

Our Ref.	ROC-104
Street Hub Address	Footpath outside 147 Yorkshire St, Rochdale
Postcode	OL12 0DR
National Grid Reference	E: 390049 N: 413835
Project Type	Installation
Conservation Area	Town Head
Statutory Listed Buildings	Yes

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Overview

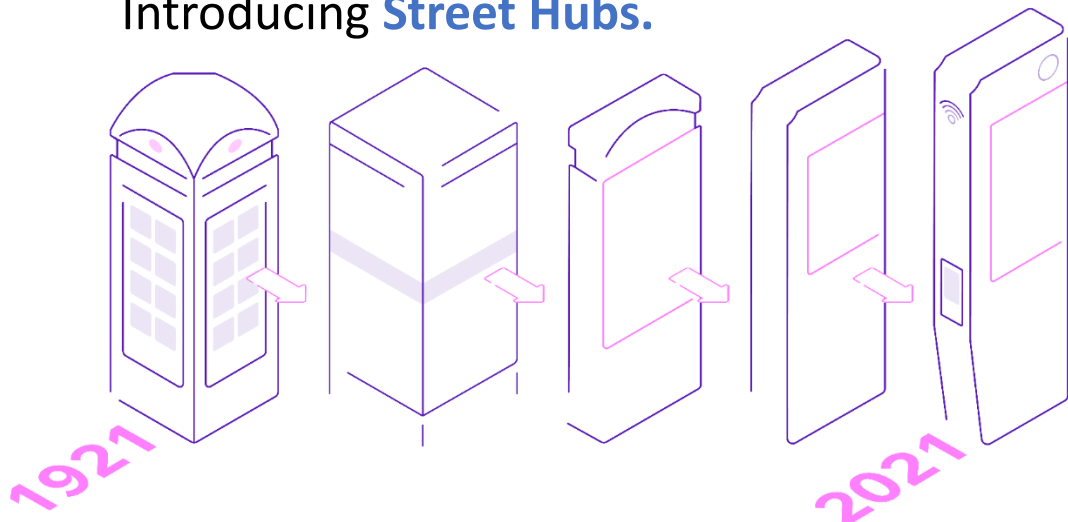
This Supporting Statement has been prepared by Telent on behalf of BT Group plc. The statement has been prepared in support of the planning application made to the Council for the installation of a 'Street Hub' and 2No. digital illuminated screens (one to each side of the unit) at the Footpath 147 Yorkshire St, Rochdale, OL12 0DR (E: 390049 N: 413835). This application is made under the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Regulations 2015 and express advertisement consent under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisement) (England) Regulations 2007. The right to install, operate and maintain communication apparatus is granted through Section 106 of the Communication Act 2003, due to BT's right as a Code System Operator.

The statement sets out the most relevant considerations in respect of the proposed development. Considerations of design and layout are informed by the context, having regard not just to any immediate neighbouring buildings but the immediate and wider townscape. The local pattern of streets and spaces, building traditions and materials all help to determine the character and identity of the development.

1.2 Purpose of Street Hubs

2021 marked the 100th anniversary of the original K1 kiosk. Public connectivity moved on with the deployment of InLink units first launched in 2017, and now, BT are further updating and evolving the payphone estate to better serve today's digitally connected converged-media society through the new improved BT Street Hub.

Introducing **Street Hubs**.



In 2017, BT started working as part of an exclusive partnership with InLinkUK to ensure communities in urban areas throughout the United Kingdom are well-served in the digital age through the roll out of 'InLink' units. These were developed and deployed

to replace and rationalize the existing network of payphones. A total of 494 InLink structures were rolled out in 23 cities throughout the U.K. offering 1Gbps free public Wi-Fi, free UK calls, USB charging, an emergency services button and a range of other digital services for those in the vicinity. HD displays on each side of the unit are used to carry advertising, which helped to fund the units, but the screens also allow Councils 5% of free screen time on each Street Hub unit annually to promote and educate, equivalent to 876 hours per unit or 438 hours per screen. This content would be scheduled and (where needed) developed in partnership with BT and Global, and can tell residents and visitors about local services, local events and news, as well as warnings and public notices.

Through collaboration with councils, BT helped in creating a service that revolutionized streetscapes and helped in providing a connected city solution that delivers the fastest and most robust free public Wi-Fi service in the UK. Councils across the UK have used the InLink units to meet key challenges head-on, upgrading local infrastructure, tackling the digital divide, and freeing the high street from unnecessary furniture.

Unfortunately, InLinkUK (who were supplying the units to BT within the partnership) went into administration in 2019, and, as such, the InLink product is no longer available. Since then, BT have been working on a new and improved unit - the 'Street Hub'. The Street Hub has all the existing benefits of the previous InLink unit, but has improved Wi-Fi range, environmental sensors, insight counting and small cell mobile connectivity. This addition of the 5G small cells to Street Hubs is very much in line with current UK Government's guidance on communications infrastructure and the National Infrastructure Strategy. Consequently, when installed, residents, local businesses and visitors will get a faster, more reliable connection for calls and internet access.

BT are continuing to push public connectivity forward with the move to Street Hubs – a sleek, modern answer to the demands of a digitally connected, converged-media society. To this end, BT have made great progress so far, with over 950 Street Hub units live across the UK. Local Authorities across the country use Streets Hubs to meet key challenges head-on such as upgrading local infrastructure, tackling the digital divide, and freeing the high street from unnecessary furniture.

With Street Hubs, BT are further transforming the payphone estate by making streets smarter, with ultrafast Wi-Fi, public messaging, and better mobile connectivity. We are making them safer with ready emergency services. Furthermore, BT are making them more sustainable, with sensors allowing for 'smart city' planning and reduced street clutter.

These new units will be monitored 24/7, with weekly inspections and a minimum of bi-weekly cleaning services to keep the unit to a high standard of finish within the existing streetscape. All units will be fitted with a direct 999 call button to aid in the efficiency of operations of the emergency services, with emergency (i.e., Police) awareness messaging shown via their advertising screens on either side of the unit. Furthermore, Street Hubs are powered by 100% renewable carbon-free energy, making them sustainable and durable for years to come.

In 2021, former BT head of street, James Browne, said:

“Street Hubs form part of BT’s plan to transform the UK’s streets with a digital communications service designed for the 21st Century.

I’m really excited that we’re now evolving the service even further with a newly designed Street Hub 2.0 unit which is more sustainable while delivering free public Wi-fi services and improved 4G/5G mobile coverage to local communities.

The free digital services provided by our Street Hub units can play an important role in helping to revive the UK’s high streets following the pandemic.

We are working closely with local councils and communities to introduce the new units to more parts of the country, enhancing the UK’s future digital infrastructure, and bringing benefits to residents, businesses and tourists alike.”

1.3 The Importance of Mobile Connectivity

The ability to access mobile data and voice services is an integral part of modern life. Mobile devices are relied upon by consumers and businesses. Mobile connectivity is no longer seen as a luxury: the ability to make calls, access the internet and receive e-mail and text is seen as a necessity. Businesses, large and small, need mobile connectivity to operate effectively and to compete in an increasingly global market. In an emergency, the public rely upon mobile devices to call for help and the emergency services rely upon mobile services to respond.

1.4 UK Government Policy on Mobile Infrastructure Deployment

The UK government has identified the need for greater investment in mobile infrastructure to increase the widespread availability and capacity of mobile voice and data networks.

“The Government acknowledges that there has been a profound shift over the last decade in the way citizens approach and access digital communications. What was once seen as a luxury is now a basic need, and people expect to have access to fast broadband at home, irrespective of where they live, and use their mobile devices anywhere they go”. DCMS, May 2016.

The last few years have seen a number of UK-wide initiatives to improve coverage including:

- Coverage commitments in the 4G LTE spectrum awarded to Telefonica O₂ (February 2013) to deliver mobile broadband with 98% indoor premises coverage by the end of 2017
- National commitment by all four MNOs (December 2014) to deliver 90% geographic coverage by 2017
- Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP) – investment by DCMS of up to £150m (to March 2016) in towers to deliver connectivity in complete mobile not-spots.
- Changes to the Permitted Development rights afforded to communications code operators (such as WIG) to allow new networks to be rolled-out more efficiently.

- Changes to the Electronic Communications to Code (December 2017) to allow mobile operators to more easily roll-out new communications infrastructure.

Digital connectivity in 2024 is now considered to be a utility, and modern life is increasingly impossible without it. Connectivity drives productivity and innovation and is the physical underpinning of a digital nation. Being connected is fundamental to the success in our modern world and Street Hub provides a cost-free way for communities to get online and take advantage of available opportunities. The Government has committed that every individual and every business should have the skills and confidence to seize the opportunities of digital technology and have easy access to high-quality internet wherever they live, work, travel or learn.

1.5 National Support for Modern Communications

There is significant UK Government support for the delivery of 5G, particularly as this new connectivity will be a step change from earlier generations of mobile connectivity and will be critical to economic growth and sustainable communities. In the coming years, 5G mobile connectivity will underpin the UK Digital Economy and bring significant social, economic and sustainability benefits of advanced modern connectivity. It is essential that the planning system looks to support and facilitate 5G infrastructure improvements, such as the small cell capability of Street Hubs, to meet the Government's Digital Strategy. In addition, modern connectivity, such as 5G, will be essential to help the Government meet its wider sustainability and climate change targets.

Published in November 2020, the Government acknowledges in its National Infrastructure Strategy that investment in our infrastructure is critical as the UK seeks to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. The Strategy puts innovation and new technology at its heart, in which the BT Street Hub is at the forefront of this technological revolution. The Government's ambition is to support fast and reliable digital connectivity that can deliver economic, social and well-being benefits because new technologies have enormous potential to improve the environment and the daily lives of people across the UK. The BT Street Hub can contribute to this with its suite of features, including Wi-Fi and small 5G cells capabilities, air monitoring and much more.

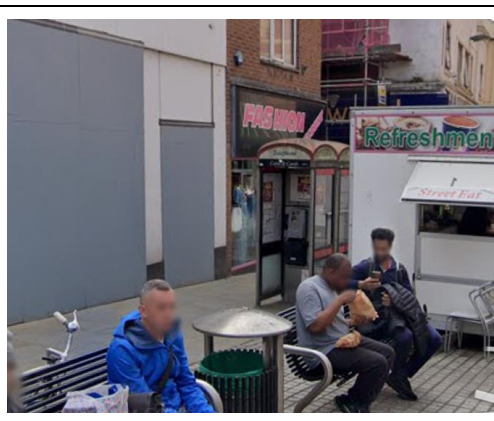
2.0 Proposed Development

2.1 Site and Proposed Development

The application site comprises a wide section of pedestrian footpath set within a commercial high street setting, with the A58 road located to the west of the application site. The street furniture around the area consists mainly of streetlamps, rubbish bins and road signs. The application site is located within proximity to the Town Head Conservation Area, with several listed buildings nearby as well.

The proposal would see the installation of a single Street Hub unit to be located on the section of footpath outside 147 Yorkshire St, Rochdale, OL12 0DR. The installation of a Street Hub will support the telephony and wi-fi coverage of the area within a structure of high build quality commensurate with the general street scene context of the locale. The associate advertisements would also be commensurate with the locale, in the commercial setting. Additionally, while the proposal is for a new installation in this instance, 4No. existing kiosks will be removed as a sacrificial in this instance, as identified below, that would be removed as part of this proposal to assist in achieving the advancement and decluttering of the council's streetscapes, in line with the UK Digital Strategy, the National Planning Policy Framework, and the relevant Development Plan for the area.

The existing kiosks to be removed are shown below.

Proposed Kiosks Removals	
Address Footpath outside 92 Yorkshire St, Rochdale OL16 1JX	Address Footpath outside 44-46 Yorkshire St, Rochdale OL16 1JW
	

The site is not located within any sensitive land designation, but is within proximity to Town Head Conservation Area.

The site location is shown on the image below, by way of a yellow star for context.



Aerial view of site

The below image, taken when surveying the site, shows the street view context and general location of the proposed Street Hub.



Street view of site

It should also be noted that the proposal for the installation of a new Street Hub will see with it the removal of existing, outdated and worn-down BT payphones (where

applicable), at no extra cost to the council. This would help in achieving the advancement and, where applicable decluttering, of the council's streetscapes, in line with the UK Digital Strategy, the National Planning Policy Framework, and the relevant Development Plan for the area.

2.2 Street Hub Design and Dimensions

Street Hubs are free-standing structures featuring a fully accessible tablet interface and digital HD display screens on two sides. Overall, Street Hub dimensions are 35cm deep and 123.6cm wide and a height of 298.6cm to maximize the Wi-Fi range without dominating the street. A narrow base limits the footprint while ensuring access to wheelchair users.

Street Hubs have been designed to be accessible to all users, regardless of their physical or technological capabilities. Street Hubs are free to use, fully accessible community assets connecting and improving local streets in urban areas. At no cost to taxpayers or end users, Street Hubs provide communities with an unprecedented suite of essential urban tools including:

- Ultrafast public and encrypted Wi-Fi
- Powered by 100% renewable carbon-free energy
- Inspected weekly and cleaned at least every two weeks, monitored 24/7
- Free phone calls
- Display community and emergency (i.e. police) awareness messaging
- Ability to house IoT sensors such as air quality, traffic etc.

The Street Hub unit will be funded through the display of advertising in conjunction with other council and community content, via sponsorship from companies who will utilize the digital HD display screens on both sides of the unit. The two screens automatically dim at night to 600cd/m², following daylight hours and in accordance with the levels set for this type and size of screen (those under 10m) by the Institute of Lighting Professionals, Professional Lighting Guide 05 2015: The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements - minimizing disturbances to residents in the evening.

The screens will display content at 10-second intervals, in the form of both the commercial content that funds the service, as well as a wide range of local community and council content. As such, the proposed Street Hub will provide 876 hours of free council advertising per year with the opportunity for discounted advertising for local business groups (such as BIDs and Chambers of Commerce) and their members through BT's Street Hub Partners Program.

This sponsorship will also cover the maintenance and servicing costs of the Street Hub. This is necessary to ensure the program remains financially sustainable. Displayed advertisements will comply with all advertising regulations and guidelines. Further detail is provided in the attached Street Hub Product Statement and associated documents.

Moreover, all Street Hubs are powered by 100% renewable carbon-free energy, with energy efficiency prioritized throughout the design process. This is most evident in the following features:

- A state-of-the-art LED-backlit LCD screen that consumes approximately 60% less power than Cold Cathode Fluorescent Tubes
- Screen filters reflect light reducing the need for high power, noisy cooling systems typically seen in competing solutions
- Industrial-grade components designed to function at high temperatures lower the need for cooling without compromising performance
- Passive design for cooling, i.e. aluminium casing for better thermal dissipation
- High-efficiency power supplies providing 80% or better efficiency, compared to 65-70% of typical components.
- Noise from cabinet and equipment should not exceed: 41dB at a distance of 3 metres during day, 35 dB at a distance of 3 metres during night, Operational volume should not exceed 60dB at a distance of 1 metre.

2.3 Application History

Having checked the Councils online planning search, there are no planning application relevant to the application site.

2.4 The Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council Rollout and Pre-application

This application is part of a wider scheme of Street Hub deployment across the Council area. As stated previously, one location has been identified for the installation of a Street Hub in the Council area.

In terms of roll-out, where possible and practicable, it is proposed to install Street Hubs either as a direct replacement for existing BT payphones, or in very close proximity to such payphones. As these existing payphones will be removed it should minimise impact on existing streetscenes by reducing street clutter, or at least not adding to it at particular locations. Whereby a new Street Hub is proposed, BT payphones will be removed, again where possible and practicable from the same streetscape, same visual envelope or nearby streets, again to try to minimise impact on visual clutter. The proposed Street Hub is either directly replace, or are close to existing payphones for removal, but in some instances a new site is required and subsequent sacrificial kiosks offered for removal (if applicable), although in some instances the proposal will be for a new installation with no nearby existing kiosks available for removal. The proposed Street Hub's will help to deliver a comprehensive network of connectivity within the borough whilst decluttering, where applicable, existing streetscenes.

No pre-application consultations were undertaken for this proposal.

3.0 Planning Policy

This section sets out the most relevant national and local planning policy concerning the proposed development.

3.1 National Planning Policy and Guidance

Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended)

The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) set out the Government's advertisement control planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied and is considered to be a material consideration for the Express Advertisement Consent application. The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) state the following specifically in relation to advertisement control:

PART I – Section 3

Powers to be exercised in the interests of amenity and public safety

3.—(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.

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)

Planning policy is provided at the national level by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It is a material consideration in planning decisions. The NPPF is pro – development with a ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ seen as a golden thread, running through both plan making and decision taking’. The thrust of this guidance is positive and a reminder to LPAs that we need to build the requisite infrastructure to enable economic growth.

In this regard the Framework can be summarised as follows:

- Government policy is to support high quality communications infrastructure and systems as essential for sustainable economic growth;
- Government policy is to keep the inevitable environmental impact associated with electronic communications development to a minimum;
- The best way to minimise environmental impact is to avoid the unnecessary proliferation of new radio masts and sites;
- The starting point for planning new networks or the expansion of existing networks is therefore to use existing electronic communications sites as and when applicable;
- The emphasis on minimising environmental impact is greater per the sensitivity of the site. The emphasis on exploring and utilising site sharing opportunities is consequently higher in these circumstances;
- Best practice encourages a consultative approach and one that seeks to minimise potential visual impact and
- Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in certain specified designated landscapes, e.g. National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Conservation Areas, etc.;

The NPPF as a whole is aimed at encouraging a more positive approach to town planning. While the NPPF builds environmental protection into the definition of sustainable development, there is also a very clear emphasis that local planning authorities should be looking for ways to help development come forward and not reject applications simply on environmental grounds. This is emphasised in paragraph 10 of the NPPF, which states that in order that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable

development. The NPPF recognises that this is especially relevant where a development might have other significantly important benefits such as being essential to meet, for example, enhancement and improvement to existing communications infrastructure.

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF state that for ‘decision-making’, the presumption in favour of sustainable development means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- i. *the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- ii. *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.*

As such, development proposals that accord with the provisions of the Development Plan should be approved without delay. In respect of this guidance, the following sections of this statement demonstrate that the proposed development accords fully with all relevant Development Plan and NPPF policies and, therefore, permission should be granted for the development.

The importance of the proposed development in providing the upgrading and enhancement of the existing public phone kiosk network is clearly an important material planning consideration as it directly supports sustainability and is also precisely the type of new digital infrastructure that the NPPF is seeking to support. The development proposed is comparatively small scale, sited where the principle of telecommunications development has been long established and therefore accepted, designed in a way that is predominately consistent with the existing infrastructure setup and so should be acceptable in every respect.

However, for completeness we still highlight some of the key points within the NPPF as they help demonstrate why the application should be permitted:

Paragraph 7 advises that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It then states that: *“At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” [our emphasis];*

Paragraph 20 advises that strategic policies should *“make sufficient provision for.....telecommunications” and that it should “be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances”*

Paragraph 38, on “decision-making” states that authorities should “*work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible*”.

The NPPF builds on the aspiration to build a strong, competitive economy. Paragraph 85 states: *‘Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking in to account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken, should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation⁴⁴’...*

Footnote 44 of the NPPF states: *‘The Government’s Industrial Strategy sets out a vision to drive productivity improvements across the UK, identifies a number of Grand Challenges facing all nations, and sets out a delivery programme to make the UK a leader in four of these: artificial intelligence and big data; clean growth; future mobility and catering for an ageing society. HM Government (2017) Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future’.*

As highlighted previously, the NPPF directly addresses the need for enhanced wireless communication services, first mentioned in paragraph 20, which states that an LPA’s strategic policies must make sufficient provision for:

“b) *infrastructure for transport, telecommunications (our emphasis), security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat)*”

Leading on from this, paragraph 118 states that “*Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections. Policies should set out how high quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time.....*”. This wording echoes guidance set out in paragraph 42 of the 2012 version of NPPF. However, unlike the previous version it also includes the importance of reliable communications infrastructure for both economic growth and social well-being.

While supported, paragraph 119 of the NPPF retains the requirement to minimise the number of installations consistent with the efficient operation of the network but also includes being consistent with the needs of consumers and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion.

Paragraph 122 retains the guidance set out in previous versions of the NPPF version and states that “*Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning*

grounds only. They should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for an electronic communications system, or set health safeguards different from the International Commission guidelines for public exposure”.

As can be seen from the above, the NPPF clearly acknowledges the benefits of modern electronic communications and seeks to encourage such development as being essential due to their role in supporting a modern economy, contributing to sustainable objectives, and enhancing local community access to a range of goods and services. Local planning authorities are advised to respond positively to proposals for electronic communications development and this must include an understanding of the associated special problems and technical needs of developing and upgrading communications networks.

Public benefits are defined within the NPPF and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress. Benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits.

In addition to the above, paragraph 141 highlights that *“the quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. A separate consent process within the planning system controls the display of advertisements, which should be operated in a way which is simple, efficient and effective. Advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts”.*

In the case of this proposal site, the installation of the Street Hub unit would provide a modern, multifunctional alternative to the traditional ‘mast’ that would act as a communication hub within a dense urban area, while ensuring that the character of the area is not significantly adversely impacted upon in respect of matters relating to amenity and public safety.

Specific guidance relating to advertising developments and on the interpretation of the Regulations is contained within the **Communities and Local Government Planning Practice Guidance** (“PPG”), which contains the current guidance on this subject. Section 8 of the PPG explains in greater detail the criteria for considering amenity issues in advertising proposals. More specifically, on the matter of scale the guidance suggests that advertisements should respect the scale of the surroundings.

“....for example, if the locality where the advertisement is to be displayed has important scenic, historic, architectural or cultural features, the local planning authority would consider whether it is in scale and in keeping with these features.”

It further advises that; *“This might mean that a large poster-hoarding would be refused where it would dominate a group of listed buildings, but would be permitted in an industrial or commercial area of a major city (where there are large buildings and main highways) where the advertisement would not adversely affect the visual amenity of the neighbourhood of the site.”*

On matters of Public Safety, the PPG states that:

“All advertisements are intended to attract attention but proposed advertisements at points where drivers need to take more care are more likely to affect public safety. For example, at junctions, roundabouts, pedestrian crossings, on the approach to a low bridge or level crossing or other places where local conditions present traffic hazards. There are less likely to be road safety problems if the advertisement is on a site within a commercial or industrial locality, if it is a shop fascia sign, name-board, trade or business sign, or a normal poster panel, and if the advertisement is not on the skyline.”

3.2 Development Plan Policies

Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended, requires planning applications and appeals to be determined having regard to the provisions of the Development Plan and other material considerations, and section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications and appeals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

For the purposes of Section 70, the current adopted Development for Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council comprises of the following documents;

- Core Strategy
- Unitary Development Plan (1996-2016)
- The PfE joint development plan (2024)

The PfE joint development plan is a long-term plan of nine Greater Manchester districts (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan) for jobs, new homes and sustainable growth. All nine Councils considered the Inspectors' recommendations and adopted PfE with effect from 21 March 2024 which means that the Plan is now part of the statutory development plan for each of the nine PfE authorities.

The Core Strategy is the lead document of the Rochdale Borough Local Plan. It provides an overview of the objectives for the whole of the borough. All other plans and policies must fit with the developments laid out in the Core Strategy.

The Unitary Development Plan from 1996-2016 Local Plan is still in place until the Allocations Development Plan is adopted.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) are currently available to provide guidance on the implementation of the policies of the Local Plan. SPDs and SPGs are adopted by the council following public consultation. SPDs and SPGs are not part of the statutory Development Plan but are a material consideration in determining planning applications.

Relevant PfE Policies: Unitary Development Plan (1996-2016)

CF/6 Telecommunications

Applications for planning permission or for prior approval (as required under Part 24 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995) for telecommunications masts, satellite and terrestrial microwave antennae on masts, and satellite and terrestrial microwave antennae on a building or structure will be permitted where the following requirements are met:

- a) In the case of satellite and terrestrial microwave antennae on a building or structure the equipment is not detrimental to the character and design of the building or structure, to the character of the local street scene or to the visual amenity of the area;
- b) In the case of telecommunications masts the development is not detrimental to the character and appearance of the local street scene or to the visual amenity of the area;
- c) The opportunity is taken to share sites or erect telecommunications equipment on an existing mast, building or other structure, unless this would be unacceptable in terms of increased height or visual clutter.;
- d) An applicant provides evidence of compliance with the Government guidelines on health impacts of telecommunications use;
- e) The equipment is sited and designed so as to minimise its visual impact subject to technical and operational considerations; and
- f) The operator removes any apparatus when it becomes redundant. The Council will use conditions and, where necessary, legal agreements to secure the above.

In the case of developments affecting landscape character, sites and features of nature conservation value, sites of archaeological importance, a Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings or their settings, applications will not be permitted unless the Council is satisfied that:

- i. the siting, scale or proliferation of facilities are not likely to injure significantly the special character or appearance of such areas, or that
- ii. for technical and operational reasons, no alternative location is suitable and the proposed development is sited so as to minimise any injury to that special character or appearance.

BE/2 Design Criteria For New Development

Development proposals will be required to demonstrate good design by:

- a) Ensuring that they are compatible with or improve their surroundings by virtue of their scale, density, height, massing, layout, materials, architectural style and detail and means of enclosure;
- b) Creating visual interest in areas or buildings lacking character;

- c) Taking opportunities to retain, enhance or create views, landmarks and other townscape features which make a material contribution to the character of the area and reveal such features to public view;
- d) Retaining and enhancing the architectural or historic qualities and features of buildings of character;
- e) Appropriate treatment of open spaces between and around buildings, including the provision of landscaping as an integral part of the development layout;
- f) Retaining key natural features, including trees, as part of the landscaping of the site;
- g) Providing for safe and convenient access and circulation;
- h) Minimising opportunities for crime against people or property;
- i) Making adequate provision for natural light within and between buildings;
- j) Minimising the potential environmental impact of and on the development, including noise, air and water pollution.

Rochdale Core Strategy, Adopted October 2016

SO1 - To deliver a more prosperous economy

- 1. Identifying quality employment sites and areas to increase the number and range of jobs and employment levels;
- 2. Developing the rural and visitor economies particularly in the northern Pennine fringe;
- 3. Establishing strong thriving attractive town centres, particularly Rochdale town centre;
- 4. Ensuring good transport accessibility to jobs and markets within and beyond Greater Manchester;
- 5. Supporting provision of educational facilities to improve skills; and
- 6. Building on the borough's assets and improving its image to attract investment.

SO3 - To improve design, image and quality of place

- 1. Raising design quality and promoting sustainable developments;
- 2. Improving gateways into the borough and main transport corridors to improve the image of the borough;
- 3. Protecting and enhancing our heritage and natural assets, the special character of our towns, our countryside, open spaces, river valleys and water features; and
- 4. Creating new identity and character where it is lacking (e.g. inner areas and road corridors)

SP3/R - The Strategy for Rochdale

Transform Rochdale town centre (Policies SO1,SO2,SO3,SO4,SO5) by:

- Focusing growth and major retail, leisure and office developments which will maintain and reinforce the centre as the main town centre (Policies E1,P1);
- Delivering major new retail led development in the Rochdale town centre east area that is well integrated with the existing centre and surrounding area (Policy E1);
- Supporting major transport works and improvements to deliver a high quality public transport interchange (Policy T1);
- Promoting opportunities to improve and create distinctive local places through in the town centre through excellent design of buildings and the public realm, valuing heritage, identity, cultural assets, the River Roch and the natural environment (Policies E1,P1,P3,T1); and
- Delivering the regeneration of the town centre and surrounding areas in line with the adopted Rochdale Town Centre Masterplan or Rochdale Town Centre SPD (Policies E1 & P1).

E1 - Establishing thriving town, district and local centres

We will focus retail, leisure, cultural, office, residential and other development to promote the viability and vitality of all the borough's town centres to maintain them as thriving and sustainable centres and the preferred shopping and leisure destinations for people living, working and visiting the borough. We will also ensure the provision of a hierarchy of accessible district and local centres and shops that meets people's daily shopping needs. To do this we will:

- Maintain and promote the following hierarchy of retail centres in the borough:
 1. Rochdale town centre - which is the borough's principal town centre and a centre of sub regional significance
 2. Middleton town centre - second largest centre;
 3. Heywood town centre - third largest centre;
 4. Littleborough town centre - fourth largest centre;
 5. Milnrow district centre - meets local daily convenience shopping needs;
 6. Castleton local centre - to be promoted as a district centre to meet local daily convenience shopping needs.
- Promote a scale of retail and leisure development in the above centres which is appropriate to their size, catchment and role taking into account the most up to date retail capacity figures.
- Promote and protect existing and new market areas and areas of specialist shopping;
- Support meeting local shopping needs in existing local centres where there is an opportunity for appropriate development;
- Identify new local centres through the Allocations DPD in the following locations:
 - o Kingsway Business Park, Rochdale - in an accessible location to meet the needs of employees and residents; and
 - o Royal Barn Lane, Rochdale.

- Protect and safeguard the core retail function of Primary Shopping Areas through restricting certain non A1 retail and retail uses within Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages.
- Define the boundaries of town, district and local centres, along with Primary Shopping Areas (PSA), Primary Shopping Frontages (PSF) and Secondary Shopping Frontages (SSF) and other such areas through the Allocations DPD;
- Identify and allocate suitable locations and opportunities for new retail, leisure and other town centre uses through the Allocations DPD to ensure sufficient supply of sites over the plan period;
- Only consider out of centre development when there are no suitable sites in, or on the edge, or well connected to, the town centre, district centres or local centres and the proposal would cause no significant overall impact on the existing centres vitality and viability;
- Support the expansion of the evening economy through a number of mixed uses such as restaurants/bars/ theatres and quality housing on appropriate sites, or through conversion of upper floors, which will enhance the vitality of the centre, making it a more vibrant, active and safer place in the afternoon and evening;
- Seek appropriate contributions, for the improvement and enhancement of town centres, from any major developments that may otherwise have impact on town centres (Policy DM2); and
- Ensure routes to and from local areas and local transport nodes and across the centre are convenient, attractive and feel safe, creating them or enhancing them where necessary. In considering proposals for main town centre uses we will:
 - a) Require the application of the sequential approach, where the application site is not in an existing centre and not in accordance with an up to date development plan;
 - b) Require an impact assessment for retail, leisure and office where the proposed application exceed the locational requirements floorspace thresholds set out in the reasoned justification below. This should include an assessment of the proposals within a defined catchment area and wider depending on the size of the application;
 - c) Seek to ensure that the number of non A1 retail uses at ground floor level in Primary Shopping Frontages does not exceed 20% of its total length;
 - d) Seek to ensure a high proportion of A1 retail uses in the Secondary Shopping Frontages whilst accommodating, where appropriate, a wider range of other retail and town centre uses
 - e) Support a change of use of a vacant retail unit (marketed for at least 6 months for retail use) in a Primary Shopping Frontage and Secondary Shopping Frontage where applicants can demonstrate that the use will clearly assist, and not harm, the vitality and viability of the centre; and

- f) Support the provision of small scale shops and services to meet local needs outside centres, including in Employment Zones, where:
 - i. They are in a location that is not, or will not be, reasonably served by an existing or proposed centre or local shop;
 - ii. There are no suitable vacant shops nearby; and
 - iii. They will be accessible to local residents / workers on foot.

P1 - Improving image

We will require high quality design in all new developments, and this will be particularly important in the following areas, which are crucial to the image of the borough:

1. Key gateways into the borough (see Spatial Strategy key diagram and Township delivery diagrams);
2. Local gateways to centres, communities and attractions;
3. Local Improvement Corridors and those stretches of main transport corridors which are currently characterless or unattractive (see township delivery diagrams);
4. Town centres; and
5. Prominent sites, regeneration areas and key visitor attractions. We will ensure new development improves the image of the borough by:
 - a) Requiring design which is of a high standard, demonstrating innovation and originality;
 - b) Working with developers of major developments to incorporate public art in the design of buildings and spaces or contribute to public art projects as appropriate;
 - c) Helping to 'green' the urban environment, for example by securing tree planting on sites and along streets and roads;
 - d) Promoting the development and re-use of under-used land and buildings, maximising the potential for heritage assets to provide a sense of place and image; and
 - e) Creating people-friendly, safe, vibrant, uncluttered public areas.

P3 - Improving design of new development

We will require all new developments, including associated landscaping, regardless of location in the borough, to adhere to high standards of design.

The following design principles should be adhered to wherever relevant:

- Enhance the borough's identity and sense of place, by respecting context where it is positive and having regard to the scale, density, massing, height, layout, landscape, materials and access of surrounding buildings and areas in general;
- Ensure that buildings contribute positively to the townscape, and are well proportioned;

- Incorporating design measures that design out crime and ensure developments and spaces are safe to use and access (including lighting as appropriate);
 - Provide an appropriate mix of uses and consider the needs of all sections of society;
 - Ensure a development is easy to move through and get around, especially for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, disabled people and emergency service vehicles;
 - Provide a hierarchy of routes, streets and spaces, relating positively to visual connections between the development and its surroundings;
 - Ensure that the intended functions of buildings and spaces are easily understood, and their entrances appropriately located and visible;
 - Ensure buildings can be easily adapted to meet future/alternative needs of occupants;
 - Minimise impact upon the environment, and help adapt to the impacts of climate change, including by re-using existing buildings and materials (maximising the benefits of existing embodied energy) and utilising sustainable drainage (Policies G1 and G2);
 - Design buildings and spaces so that quality and appearance can be maintained over time; and
 - Reduce the monotony and visual impact of car parking areas by using substantial and well integrated landscaping. All developments should have regard to the principles outlined in the following documents (or equivalent documents which replace them), which set out in detail the Council's design expectations for new development:
 - Urban Design Guides SPDs, September 2007 o Urban Design Guide SPD, September 2007; o Residential Design Guide SPD, September 2007; o Public Realm Design Guide SPD, September 2007;
 - Littleborough Town Design Statement SPG, 2005;
 - Shopfronts and Security Shutters SPD, 2012; and
 - Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development SPD, 2016.
- Design and access statements and design briefs must include demonstration of how these design principles have been taken into account in the design of development proposals.

3.3 Planning Assessment

Modern cities require to provide both residents and visitors with digital connectivity to enable their day to day living and enjoy recreational activities, all of which contributes to the vitality of the city and its economic and social sustainability.

The aim to replace existing BT payphones with the improved Street Hub units will generally enhance the public realm and many streetscapes, whilst providing free digital connectivity and other services at no cost to the Council, to enrich the users experience of moving through this public realm. The advantage in terms of advertisement will remove the display of many adverts with deemed consent on existing phone boxes, replacing them with modern LED digital displays to which the Council will benefit from

5% free screen time (circa 438 hours a year per display or 876 hours per unit), all of which will be properly maintained and can be controlled through the requirement for express consent. The adverts will help support this function and as such are in intrinsic part of the development, which given the commercial context of the locale would not be considered as being overly visually incongruous and are such pieces of equipment that are now more commonplace within streetscenes throughout the country.

Siting

The locations of the Street Hubs have been primarily identified to replace existing BT payphones, where possible and practicable, although it may see a relocation from the existing payphone site or a new site (with existing kiosks nearby removed when possible but not always), but also to provide seamless fast, free Wi-Fi service throughout the key commercial, retail, and pedestrian areas within the council, whereby residents, visitors and businesses can all use this service, together with the additional benefits of the Street Hub. In addition, Street Hubs are proposed in areas whereby tourists enjoy recreational facilities, and as such services will enhance the overall tourist/resident experience of the city.

At the conception stage, we have tried to focus on pursuing direct conversions of existing kiosks wherever practicable. Also, we have looked for locations with wide pavements, and where a sites relationship with existing street furniture avoids undue proliferation of clutter, along with further consideration in respect of siting. It should be recognised that BT's legacy estate of payphones has grown up organically over the years, in which the whereabouts of BT kiosks can sometimes sit in environments that have changed dramatically around them. In some instances, the BT Street Hub project has been seen as an opportunity to improve the pedestrian environments by removing awkward BT kiosks (where possible or practicable) and repositioning the new unit to a more in keeping spot in the street scene.

It is appreciated that streets are ever-evolving environments, amidst society's changing connectivity demands. BT has a universal service obligation with Ofcom to provide a street level phone service, so the selection process of kiosks to be removed had to cater for this, however there is a recognition that the use of phone boxes has dramatically changed since kiosks were first conceived, whilst now the need for Wi-Fi and mobile coverage has increased massively. In this respect we have tried to build a sequence of Street Hub sites wherever possible, so that this can improve the user connectivity experience as they travel through an area.

Likewise, as Street Hubs can provide the Council with valuable data as each unit has environmental sensors that can monitor air, sound and light, in most instances it is beneficial to plan a sequence of Street Hub sites along key routes, so that the information gathered can be better analysed. This free environmental data has its own dashboard and can assist the planning system actively manage patterns of growth in support of national air quality objectives and will be a useful source of real-time data in the delivery of the Council's own green agenda. In a similar vein, Street Hubs have the capability to monitor pedestrian, cyclist, and vehicle movements and so can help the Council to monitor and, where practicable, develop travel plans for the area.

Like all development, the introduction of anything new within a particular environment will always be, to some degree, a noticeable addition or change to those residents, businesses and regular passers-by found closest. However, it should be appreciated that the visibility of something that is new or the change in form of something that has an established presence on-site, like the removal of an existing or nearby a telephone kiosk and installation of a new Street Hub unit, does not automatically result in an overwhelming adverse harm occurring, irrespective of any potential land designations. The starting point and fundamental principle applied by the applicant is always to replace existing BT call boxes with Street Hub units where they will be in-keeping with their existing surroundings. In this regard it is seen as an opportunity to help future proof the high street making them smarter, safer, and more sustainable.

In progressing new Street Hub sites, so far as practicable we have sought to minimise the contrast between the development itself and its immediate environment through appropriate siting and design. The siting of each Street Hub has been considered having regard to the available footpath widths, the whereabouts of the existing payphones to be removed (i.e. more visually prominent locations than that of any potentially relocated location in heritage sensitive areas) and the visual character of that particular street scene where the new Street Hub is proposed. With regards to its associated advertisement screens, thought has been given to its immediate context and public safety in terms of pedestrian and vehicular movements. These criteria have been adjusted where necessary on a site-by-site basis to account for local context and policy requirements when reassessing the site's suitability to accommodate a new Street Hub unit.

Justification for the siting and appearance of the proposed Street Hub has been assessed against up to date national and local planning policies and any other material considerations. As a result, assessment would focus on whether the removal of the existing BT call boxes, when balanced against the replacement of new Street Hub at the application site or in close proximity to the site, or indeed the installation at a new location, creates a significant visual harm that would outweigh the public benefits in this instance.

Proposed Location

In this instance, the proposals would see the removal of a total of 4No. existing and run-down telephone kiosks 2No. on the footpath outside 44-46 Yorkshire Street, and 2No. on the footpath outside 92 Yorkshire Street, and the installation of 1No. Street Hub at the relocated location on a section of footpath outside 147 Yorkshire Street.

When considering the above siting criteria, the site would remain in an existing commercial setting, meaning that the proposal would not be viewed as being visually incongruous at this point, this as well as the application site having a wide section of footpath meaning that matters relating to free flow of pedestrians or potential desire line, as well as general highways safety at this locale, would not be impacted upon. To this end, the development would not result in any unnecessary proliferation of

development at this point, particularly as the proposal would see the removal of existing phone kiosks further south of the application site.

The images below show the existing, commercial context within the immediate and surrounding locale.



Commercial context east to A58.

The site location in this instance has been selected due to the commercial context of the streetscene, therefore any proposal at this point would not be viewed as being visually incongruous within the immediate or surrounding streets.

The fact that there are no other nearby existing advertisement of similar nature on the existing pavement does not mean that it would be seen as being out of keeping with the general locale, or considered as proliferation at this point, to such a degree that would merit refusal. This is a position the planning authority has clearly taken in approving very similar proposals within the Council area, whereby there was no existing freestanding advertisement on the footpath and still considered acceptable given the street scene context.

It is considered that with the proposed site, given the surrounding street scene and context, the proposal would therefore not have any significant impact in terms of the existing public realm or street scene setting, and would not be viewed as being visually incongruous at this location.

Furthermore, the proposal has a very sleek style and vertical emphasis that reiterates its modern design and appearance, and has a floor area of circa 0.43 square meters when compared to old phone kiosks which are 0.8 square meters. There is also a difference in the overall density of the Street Hubs compared to these old kiosks, whereby the Street Hub is circa 1.3 cubic meters, and the older kiosks are circa 1.75 cubic meters. As such, it is considered that siting in this instance would represent a suitable location, while introducing an acceptable standard and form of development to the locale and street scene. Additionally, in considering the 4No. identified kiosks to

be removed as part of this proposal, this would again declutter additional streets and see the removal of run-down kiosks elsewhere along Yorkshire Street.

Appearance

The proposed BT Street Hub unit is an advanced, modern development which has been designed following significant improvements in technology and digital content over recent years. It can promote the image of the authority as a vibrant place, and we believe it will improve the quality of the immediate streetscape for residents, businesses and visitors.

The proposed design is slimmer and takes a more compact profile than the existing BT payphone boxes that it would replace (or introduce a new structure) in terms of infrastructure. The user interface is located at a low level and is a similar height to an existing BT payphone unit to ensure that it is accessible to all users.

The appearance of the BT Street Hub unit has a vertical emphasis and by reason of its reduced footprint would give a slender more elegant form of development when compared to an existing payphone kiosk. The appearance of the structure is not considered to be harmful to the wider street scene at this locale, especially when taking into account the nature of the existing phone kiosks and the consideration above. We believe the appearance of the area and street scene will not be compromised by the proposed new BT Street Hub.

The new structure will be set within a strong commercial setting at this point, in an area well used by pedestrians accessing the adjacent shops, and as such the area is well-lit throughout the day. While it is accepted that the BT Street Hub advertisements will be more visible during the hours of darkness or in dull conditions, its appearance would not be out of keeping with the general locale which is well lit by streetlights, window displays and other light emission. In this context, the BT Street Hub design would not appear detrimental to the surrounding local or amenity of the streetscene setting.

It is concluded that the design of the proposed Street Hub is justified, and its appearance is an improvement when compared to the phone kiosk to be removed. Therefore, it is considered that the appearance of the proposed Street Hub is acceptable and is in accordance with national and local planning policies, particularly as it would enhance and promote sustainable streets and places, while facilitating the provision of free, secure, high speed public wi-fi connections in areas that see heavy footfall.

Heritage Statement

It is accepted that there will always be challenges faced in finding a balance between limiting any visual harm created by the siting of development upon heritage assets when weighed up against the public benefits it will bring to the area. It should also be considered that streets within conservation areas, like all streets, will always be subject to change through time, changing demand, and users expectation. This is of particular

relevance when considering advertisement and telecommunication within street scenes throughout the country with a focus on sustainable and connected cities.

Paragraph 205 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should take into account the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, in order to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposed development.

In respect to the above, the proposed site is located in close proximity to the boundary of the Town Head Conservation Area. Unfortunately, the Council do not appear to have an accessible character appraisal available online that outlines the significance of the Conservation Area and as such, assessment of the impact of the Street Hub proposal has been considered in line with general guidance provided by Historic England.

In considering whether a proposal would have any impact in respect of the setting of any heritage asset, Historic England's website provides a definition of what would be considered as the 'setting' of any heritage assets as follows;

- 1) *"The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral."*
- 2) *"The surroundings in which a place is experienced, its local context, embracing present and past relationships to the adjacent landscape."*
- 3) *"The setting of a heritage structure, site or area is defined as the immediate and extended environment that is part of, or contributes to, its significance and distinctive character. Beyond the physical and visual aspects, the setting includes interaction with the natural environment; past or present social or spiritual practices, customs, traditional knowledge, use or activities and other forms of intangible cultural heritage aspects that created and form the space as well as the current and dynamic cultural, social and economic context."*

Additionally, in *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2008)* English Heritage sets out the four key aspects which contribute to the overall significance of a historic building or landscape:

- **Evidential:** *"The potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity."*
- **Historic:** *"The ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present."*
- **Aesthetic:** *"The ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place."*
- **Communal:** *"The meaning of a place for the people who related to it, or for whom it figures in their collective memory."*

In this instance, the following listed building is located approximately 40m south of the proposal and has therefore been considered as part of the heritage statement:

Name: 192 AND 194, YORKSHIRE STREET, 188A, 190 AND 190A, YORKSHIRE STREET

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1084227

Date first listed: 12-Feb-1985

Listing Description:

“Terrace of houses, now flats and other uses. c.1800. Brick with stone dressings and stone slate roof. Numbers 190A, 192 and 194 were formerly one house, two rooms wide, with central entrance and stair. Number 190 and 188A are each single rooms in width with doors to right and left respectively. All are two rooms deep. The houses were (from left to right) of 4, 3 and 2 bays. Doors have stuccoed cornice and surround and overlight. Sash windows have flat brick arches, keystones and stone sills. No glazing bars survive. Rear elevation of number 190 has two- storey octagonal bay window with tripartite windows. Dog- leg staircases remain internally.”

Whilst the site is located in close proximity to the aforementioned listed building and the boundary of the Conservation Area, in assessing any proposal consideration has to be given as to the existing streetscene setting. In this regard, there are numerous examples of street furniture of a similar nature to that being proposed, which should be considered when assessing any potential impact on the setting and/or appearance of any heritage assets. As a result, the character of the Conservation Area in this instance, with particular regard to street level, is not exclusive of similar structure to that being proposed and therefore the proposal in this instance should not be considered as being visually incongruous within the existing streetscene setting or that of the wider Conservation Area. This was covered in a recent appeal decision (*Appeal Ref: ADA-180-2017, 40 High Street, Dundee*), whereby the inspectorate outlined that:

“I do not agree with the council’s view that the proposed illuminated advertisements would have an adverse impact on amenity. I observe that the area’s character is heavily influenced by the busy retail and commercial environment at street level, featuring information boards and other street furniture, a number of existing advertisements, and shopfronts with illuminated signage and display windows with internal lighting, including in the adjacent Primark store. I do not consider that the introduction of the proposed digital advertisement displays would be at odds with this character. The size of the proposed advertisements is broadly comparable with others in the area. Although the site’s busy city centre location means the proposed advertisements would be seen by large numbers of pedestrians, their positioning between two street trees means they would not be overly prominent in the street scene. The advertisements would generally be viewed in context with the modern Overgate shopping centre nearby, with its illuminated signage and window displays, and would not appear obtrusive in that setting. I therefore do not consider there would be any harm to the amenity of the area, including the character or appearance of the conservation area, which I am satisfied

would be preserved. I also do not consider there would be any adverse impact on the setting of any of the listed buildings in the area.”

Furthermore, within a separate appeal in Blackpool (Appeal Ref: APP/J2373/H/22/3305072, Whitegate Drive, Blackpool), the inspectorate determined that:

“The appeal site falls within the Raikes Hall Conservation Area (the RHCA) whose significance is partly derived from the largely unaltered original grid street pattern of attractive suburban residential properties. Whitegate Drive is one of the main routes through the RHCA and contains an array of businesses, including the retail unit and café immediately adjacent to the appeal site. This gives the locality a strong commercial character. The appeal site makes a neutral contribution to the RHCA.”

However, if the Council consider that there would be some harm to the setting of the heritage assets in this instance, any such harm would be, at worst, considered as being ‘less than substantial’, whereby the NPPF under Paragraph 202 states that ‘Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including.....’. Such benefit is clearly set out within the supporting documents submitted in support of this application.

When seen in perspective within the street scene, it is considered that the proposed siting and orientation of the BT Street Hub, will not appear incongruous or have a significant material impact on the setting or views of the Conservation Area. It is ultimately considered that any minor harm upon the aforementioned heritage assets would be outweighed by the significant public benefits of the Street Hub in what is a vibrant part of the city.

In considering the above, the proposed location would represent the best solution in terms of material planning considerations in this instance.

Advertisements

Amenity impact concerns an assessment of the character of the local area, which includes the nature and type of surrounding land uses and the existing built form within the locality where the proposed advertisement is to be displayed. It is the impact upon local character and any feature of interest in the local environment that the proposed advertisement is assessed. In respect of public safety, the primary consideration is the likely effect an advertisement display would have on drivers and pedestrians and whether the display of an advertising in the position and manner is likely to prejudice public safety.

It is recognised that the purpose of advertising is to be seen but this does not mean advertisements are likely to present a distraction. Advertising is characteristically part of the fabric of commercial centres and are often located alongside main transport

routes where drivers and pedestrians are highly likely to see a range of commercial images.

When seen in the overarching context of the street scene, it is considered that the location, size and height of the digital advertisement panels would, on balance, be acceptable in what is a commercial context with similar development within the general locale, including similar advertisements at nearby bus stops and streets. As previously discussed, it is believed that the siting and appearance of the BT Street Hub would not create significant harm to the amenity of the area that would outweigh the public benefits and other material factors of consideration.

In terms of public safety, the site of the BT Street Hub and the display of digital advertisements on its sides will allow for the continued safe movements of pedestrians as highlighted. In this regard, as previously concluded its presence within the street scene would not endanger public safety of those people who are taking reasonable care for their own and others' safety.

It is recognised that all advertisements are intended to attract people's attention, however in this case their siting and size would not create an untoward feature within the existing commercial street scene and general locale. The position where the BT Street Hub is to be located in relation to the road would not cause any interference with nearby road signs and or navigational lights. Viewed within the street scene setting, the digital advertisements would be partially seen by passing motorists but would not create confusion nor influence the behavior of drivers to such a degree that they would cause a hazard by reason of their presence. Furthermore, given its location it would not give rise to any potential impact on visibility splays or sightlines. When viewed within the street scene context of the wider environment, it is not considered that the Street Hub would appear as an untoward feature to passing motorists.

Regarding pedestrian safety, the proposed street hub would be located on a section of footpath that has existing street furniture, and as such would not impact in terms of pedestrian desire lines as it would leave the footpath unobstructed. With the Street Hub in-situ, the existing vacant section of footway between the safety railing and the grass verge will remain unoccupied by street furniture and as such will not worsen the free flow of pedestrians utilizing this section of footway adjacent Yorkshire Street. Given that the remaining footpath width will not be negatively impacted, it is not considered that the proposal would have any detrimental impact on the free flow of pedestrians at this point, nor impact of desire lines given the remaining footpath width.

In determining the above, consideration has also been given to the fact that the Department for Transport Manual for Streets (2007) confirms that there is no minimum width for footways. It suggests that in lightly used streets, the minimum unobstructed width for pedestrians should generally be 2000mm, and that in areas of higher pedestrian flow the quality of the walking experience can deteriorate unless sufficient width is provided. Inclusive Mobility (2002) advises that ideally the width of the footway should be 2000mm to facilitate two people in wheelchairs to pass each other comfortably. Where this width is not possible, a clear width of 1500mm should be provided, with an absolute clear minimum width of 1000mm in exceptional cases. The

phrase 'clear' refers to the effective width taking into account permanent obstacles on the footway such as street lamp standards, trees, telegraph poles, bus shelters for example. Furthermore, the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) itself recommends a minimum footway width of 1200mm. In this instance, the existing footway width between the grass verge and safety railing is 1860mm and will remain so as a result of the implementation of the proposed Street Hub.

The area surrounding this specific site is visually busy, and the proposal would be an addition to the ground elevation in context with the general locale and land use.

The proposed usage for the screens has been set in accordance with Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007:

1. 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.
2. No advertisement shall be sited or displayed so as to—
 - (a) endanger persons using any highway, railway, waterway, dock, harbour or aerodrome (civil or military);
 - (b) obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, railway signal or aid to navigation by water or air; or
 - (c) hinder the operation of any device used for the purpose of security or surveillance or for measuring the speed of any vehicle.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.

The Transport for London's (TfL) policy document 'Guidance for Digital Roadside Advertising and Proposed Best Practice – 2013' [the TfL Guidance] has also been a key document in the design and site selection process.

In addition to the above conditions, each Street Hub location has been assessed against and would comply with the following additional criteria from the TfL Guidance.

- There would be no conflict with any traffic signs, signals, crossing points, schools, hospitals or low bridges.
- No sightlines or clearances would be affected.
- The TfL guidance states that 'Static digital advertising is likely to be acceptable in locations where static advertising exists or would be accepted.' There is

existing traditional advertisement on similar sections of the respective roads in many cases.

- The geometry of the roads is not complicated, and the driving conditions are not considered to be demanding or complicated.
- The advertisements would not be experienced by a driver in conjunction with any other similar digital advertisements.
- As per the TfL guidance, the advertisements would be located as close to the driver's natural eye line as possible and facing as head-on to the traffic as is practical. The lighting levels noted above are within the levels set for this type and size of screen (those under 10m²) as set by the Institute of Lighting Professionals, Professional Lighting Guide 05: The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements (2015). A copy of this document is appended for clarity.

Noise Management

As one of many features, Street Hubs provide free phone calls via a speaker and microphone system. Information submitted in support of this application identifies the steps taken to ensure that these calls, like all the features of the Street Hub, help improve the amenity of a local area whilst also respecting the expectations of local community over time. It should be noted that the noise management plan refers specifically to the noise from the Street Hub. Noise from pedestrians, users of the Street Hub, or from other nearby sources are not included and would typically be considered matters for the Police and other authorities who have the appropriate and relevant powers to act on such issues if necessary.

The Street Hub has been designed so that they create a 'sound cloud' for the person making a call with noise levels sufficient to make calls with background noise for the surroundings. Whilst this generates a reasonable conversational volume in proximity to the Street Hub, it is intended to result in minimal to no noise being noticeable further away. The average volume settings are 65dB average at 3m distance from each Street Hub. Users may also choose to use headphones when making calls or using the tablet, which deactivates the speaker for the duration of their use.

It is worth noting that the Street Hub are situated on public streets, in the most part close to roads where high volumes of traffic will be seen, examples of background noise experienced on streets are details below:

Noise Level, dB	Example
60-70	Conversational Speech
70-80	Average traffic on Street Corner
80-90	Heavy lorries at 6m

Daytime (07:00 – 21:00)

Street Hub have controllable volume levels. This will default to 50% at the start of any user activity during the day and can be increased and decreased based on the preferences of the user.

Night Time (21:00 – 07:00) Between the hours of 21:00 to 07:00 all Street Hub will be governed so that the volume cannot be increased to greater than 60% of the maximum volume.

Exceptional Circumstances

Noise is managed by exception based on feedback from users and the local community. If feedback is received that the Street Hub may be causing detrimental environmental impact, the following actions are taken:

1. Understand the reason for the issue and any extenuating circumstances. At this point BT will separate out any Police or community safety matters and work directly with the relevant authorities, and support the local residents in raising these issues through official channels where appropriate.
2. Verify the evidence provided against the Street Hub's call history and other operational data as required. This will allow an understanding of the the number, time, and frequency of outbound calls being made and better understand the severity of the reported situation.
3. Once the situation has been verified, BT will typically look to apply local bespoke volume governor controls appropriate to the situation. We have found that reducing the Street Hub 's maximum volume to 40% during relevant periods tends to resolve issues where they have been identified.

In addition to the above, BT will continue to monitor the situation and listen to ongoing feedback from the community as we do take matters seriously. BT continue to learn as part of their roll out as to how Street Hub are fitting in to the community. To date, there has been no issues in respect of matters relating to potential noise nuisance.

4.0 Conclusion

BT Street Hubs have the potential to significantly enhance the provision of local community communications facilities and services. It is precisely the type of high-speed digital infrastructure that the government is seeking to support as part of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It will deliver social, economic, and environmental benefits by providing a suite of essential urban tools/services, including free ultrafast Wi-Fi to residents, businesses and visitors in this area. Overall BT Street Hubs will help future proof the high street making them smarter, safer, and more sustainable through their adaptable design and function.

The proposed BT Street Hub structures are of a high quality, accessible design that would be a significant improvement when compared to the existing payphone kiosks. Modern signage which is interactive and multi-faceted in its use has become more acceptable on the street scape due to its functionality, clean and modern look. We consider the proposal in this case to be appropriately sited; to reduce street clutter, to improve available footway widths, not to negatively affect heritage assets nor adversely affect amenity or public safety.

We believe this statement has demonstrated that the BT Street Hub proposal is in accordance with national policy set out in the NPF4 and local development plan policies, in which we would hope that this application can be supported by your Council.

4.1 Proposed Schedule of Operating Conditions

To give assurance each Street Hub will operate as intended, we recommend the following conditions (or a version there of) as previously suggested, be included as part of any advertisement consent:

- a. *Within three (3) months of development commencing, the existing BT payphones indicated for removal, shall be removed in their entirety and the land made good to the same condition as the adjacent land.*
- b. *The intensity of the illumination of the two digital display screens shall not exceed 600 candelas per square metre (cd/m²) between dusk and dawn in line with the maximum permitted recommended luminance as set out by 'The Institute of Lighting Professional's 'Professional Lighting Guide 05: The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements'.*
- c. *The digital display screens shall not display any moving, or apparently moving, images (including animation, flashing, scrolling three dimensional, intermittent or video elements).*
- d. *The minimum display time for each piece of content on the digital display screens shall be 10 seconds.*

- e. *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 and the display will include a mechanism to freeze the image in the event of a malfunction.*
- f. *No content on the digital display screens shall resemble traffic signs, as defined in section 64 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.*