

DELEGATED DECISION CHECKLIST AND REPORT

APPLICATION NO.	CASE OFFICER	DATE
24/01247/ADV	Hamish Rigg	17/02/2025

Address: Pavement behind Tram Stop, Smith Street, Rochdale, OL16 1BE

Proposal: Internally illuminated advertisement display within integrated communication hub

PUBLICITY	Weekly list expired?	Y	Site notice expired?	Y
	Neighbour letters expired?	Y	Press Notice expired?	n/a

DELEGATION	Significant departure from local plan?	N	Contrary to national policy?	N
	Applicant a Council Member or officer?	N	Contrary to previous decision?	N
	Major with 10 or more objections and recommending approval?	N	Called in or Planning Panel objection?	N

COMMENTS	Planning Panel comments received?	N
	Neighbour comments received?	N

EIA	Screening opinion completed and saved to Onbase?	n/a
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CONDITIONS	Pre-commencement conditions proposed?	n/a
	Pre-commencement conditions agreed (or notification period expired)?	n/a

RECOMMENDATION	Refuse
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CHECKED AND SIGNED OFF BY: RK

DATE: 24/02/2025

SITE

The application relates to the pavement at the eastern end of the Metrolink tram stop on Smith Street, Rochdale. The site falls within Rochdale Town Centre, as per UDP Policy G/S/1, located in a pedestrianised and paved public space. The site is surrounded by

Rochdale Interchange to the south, Rochdale Riverside Shopping Centre to the north, Number One Riverside to the east, and the Lviv Bridge and River Roch to the south.

PROPOSAL

Planning permission is sought for the installation of a 'communication hub' branded as the 'Digital 86" Smart City Unit', comprising an 86" LCD screen on one side, and a telephone and defibrillator on the other. The screen would display a rotation of static advertisements and public information messages. The hub also offers free public WiFi, free phone calls, and device charging.

The proposed unit would measure 2.6m (height) X 1.3m (width) X 0.9m (depth).

This application sits along an associated application for Advertisement Consent ref. 24/01246/FUL which is to be determined concurrently with this application.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Sub-Regional

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE)

The Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan was adopted and became part of the statutory development plan for each of the 9 authorities covered by the plan on 21st March 2024. The following policies are relevant:

JP-P1 Sustainable places

Local

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

SO3 – Improving design, image and quality of place
P2 – Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage
P3 – Improving design of new development
DM1 – General Development Requirements

Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/1 – Defined Urban Area

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

None

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

None

REPRESENTATIONS

In line with the Council's Publicity Code for Applications, no direct publicity was undertaken and no representations have been received. However, in relation to the accompanying planning application, a site notice was displayed and neighbour letters were delivered.

ANALYSIS

This section should be read alongside the analysis section of the Officer's report for the corresponding application for full planning permission ref. 24/01246/FUL.

Paragraph 141 of the NPPF states that quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed, whilst also noting that advertisements should be subject to control for planning purposes only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.

The quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed. As such, with all applications for advertisements an assessment should be made as to the impacts on visual amenity and to accord with policy P3 of the Core Strategy; signs should be compatible with the surrounding area and protect the character and appearance of the street scene. In addition, Policy DM1 sets out the Council's general development requirements and establishes that proposals should not adversely impact on highway safety.

Visual amenity:

The Riverside development which surrounds the site- including Riverside Shopping Centre, the Bus Interchange, and Number One Riverside- has been at the forefront of the town centre's redevelopment in recent years, and together with the paved area along Smith Street and Lviv bridge, create an attractive and cohesive area with well-considered street furniture. The street scene is open and neat, and looking westwards, set against the backdrop of the historic town centre and Grade I Listed Town Hall.

Given the intention of a digital display is to draw attention, their impact on the street scene can be harmful. In a setting such as this, where there isn't a strong presence of advertising hoardings and street clutter, a digital display would appear incongruous and garish. The proposed display would therefore be considered detrimental to the areas visual amenity, and would detract from the overall appearance a popular pedestrianised area, which offers open views along the River Roch corridor and of landmark buildings within the town centre.

Of note in respect of this application is that in 2022 six BT 'communication hubs', primarily comprising advertising displays on two sides, were approved by the LPA within Rochdale Town Centre. In the immediate vicinity of the proposed hub there are two extant planning permissions for BT communication hub units, one proposed on the pavement opposite Number 4 Smith Street (24/00445/FUL) and one proposed the north side of the front entrance of Number One Riverside (24/00489/FUL). Whilst neither of these units has been installed to date, the planning permissions remain extant until 14th July 2025 and 19th August 2025 respectively. Were either or both of those permissions to be enacted, there would result a clear over proliferation of digital display boards in a very small area of the town centre which would be particularly harmful to the street scene and the character and appearance of the area.

Therefore, in light of the above assessment, it is considered that the public benefits of the ancillary telephone and internet communications functions of the proposal do not outweigh the harm visual harm to the street scene in that would arise in this particular location both as a result of the proposed siting of the hub and the risk of over proliferation. On this basis, proposed development would fail to comply with adopted Places for Everyone joint development plan policy JP-P1, policies DM1 and P3 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, the National Planning Policy Framework.

Safety:

Policy DM1 sets out the Council's general development requirements and establishes that proposals should not adversely impact on highway safety. Whilst it is accepted that the purpose of an advertisement is to attract attention, it is important to consider whether such adverts would have the potential to have an adverse impact on road safety.

The proposed display would be in pedestrianised area which is not regularly accessible for vehicles. As such, it would have no impact on highway safety and capacity, in accordance with policies DM1 & T2 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy framework.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION for the following reason:

1. The proposed digital display, by virtue of its siting, design and illumination, would be harmful to the character and appearance of Smith Street and the paved area over Lviv Bridge, and would detract from the town centre's recent regeneration, as well as views of landmark buildings and the River Roch Corridor. The communication hub would also be considered an incongruous and garish feature in an otherwise cohesive and open setting. On this basis, the proposed development would fail to comply with adopted Places for Everyone joint development plan policy JP-P1, policies DM1, & P3 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Procedure Statement

The proposal would not improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area nor does it comply with the development plan and therefore does not comprise sustainable development. There were no amendments to the scheme, or conditions which could reasonably have been imposed, which could have made the development acceptable and it was therefore not possible to approve the application.

Notes for Applicant:

INFORMATIVES:

1. For the avoidance of doubt, this decision relates to the following plans and supporting documents:
 - Hub Detail – New Sites
 - Site Plan and Images
 - Power of the Public Screen supporting report
 - Planning Statement (JCDecaux, 18 December 2024)

- Hub Unit Appendix D
- Unit Management Plan
- Community Channel – Examples of Campaigns
- NHS England / OHCA Charities Advisory Committee / Letter of Community Heartbeat Trust Charity Letter of Support
- Defibrillator Product Specification

Report Author Hamish Rigg