

Delegated Report	Analysis sheet	Expiry Date:	23/04/2025
	N/A	Consultation Expiry Date:	29/03/2025
Officer		Application Number(s)	
Matthew Kitchener		2025/0838/P 2025/0878/A	
Application Address		Drawing Numbers	
Outside No. 124 Theobalds Road London Camden WC1X 8RX		See draft decision notice	
Proposal(s)			
1. Planning application: Removal of an existing InLink Unit, and the deployment of a replacement Street Hub 3 unit. 2. Advertisement consent application: Removal of an existing InLink Unit, and the deployment of a replacement Street Hub 3 unit with 2 x digital screens.			
Recommendation(s):	1. Refuse planning permission 2. Refuse advertisement consent		
Application Type:	1. Full Planning Application 2. Advertisement Consent		

Informatives:				
Consultations				
Adjoining Occupiers:	No. of responses	00	No. of objections	00
Summary of consultation responses:	A site notice was displayed 05/03/2024 which expired 29/03/2024.			
	<p><b>Metropolitan Police Designing out Crime Officer</b></p> <p>The development falls within the policing ward of Holborn and Covent Garden. The top reported crimes for the month of January 2025 (taken from the police UK website) were theft from the person, other theft, antisocial behaviour and violence and sexual offences. Other offences of note for this area include shoplifting, burglary, criminal damage and drugs.</p> <p><b>I object to the proposal for the following reasons:</b></p> <p>In reference to the inlink devices some of these previous installations were involved with numerous and serious crime and disorder issues (one being the ‘free to call’ facility to mobiles being misused to purchase/acquire Class A and B drugs at that location). In some areas where the phone kiosk was replaced the ASB and crime increased which was not the intended effect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This area suffers with higher than average crime rates. Opportunistic crime such as theft from the person is prevalent. The location of the kiosk is in very close proximity to the carriageway. Due to the openness of the kiosk any mobile phones on display at this location (either on charge or in the person’s hand) will be vulnerable to the opportunist phone snatch.</li><li>• Many of these phone snatches are by persons on bicycles or scooters (electronic or otherwise).</li><li>• The pavement is not wide at this location and this could become a pinch point.</li><li>• The new product is larger than the previous model and as such creates a larger space for possible concealment. This means that a potential thief could hide behind the other side of the screen to wait for an opportunity to commit the offence. The other issue is that persons could walk out into the road from the concealment of this device. This would give the road user little to no warning and ability to avoid a possible collision. The advertising screens can also hamper the road user. It is noted that the advertising will be static with no moving images.</li></ul>			

## Site Description

The application site is an area of pavement on the north side of Theobalds Road outside No. 124. There is currently an In-Link hub on the site. The location is close to the junction to the east where Theobalds Road is bisected by New North Street/Old North Street. This junction is not protected by traffic signals. There is a bus shelter to the west approximately 7.0m away.

## Relevant History

### Application Site:

**2021/2115/P** - Installation of a new phone hub unit following removal of existing kiosk as part of wider proposals to replace Infocus telephone kiosks. **Refused 11/01/2022. Appeal Dismissed (APP/X5210/W/22/3291847 – see appendix X)**. The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and would be contrary to the development plan in this regard. The limited benefits outlined above would not outweigh this significant harm to the area.



**2021/3151/A** - Installation of a new phone hub unit following removal of existing kiosk as part of wider proposals to replace Infocus telephone kiosks. **Refused 11/01/2022. Appeal Dismissed.** The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and would be contrary to the development plan in this regard. The limited benefits outlined above would not outweigh this significant harm to the area.

**2017/2711/P** - Erection of freestanding BT panel providing phone and Wi-Fi facilities with 2 x internally illuminated digital advertisements. **Granted subject to a S278 Legal Agreement was granted 10/05/2018** (due to the site being located on the public highway) to secure the removal of 3 existing phone kiosks in close proximity to the application site prior to the implementation of this development. 2 would be outside No. 128 Theobalds Road and 1 at the junction of Theobalds Road and New North Street. The agreement includes a service management plan to ensure the structure and its features are maintained.

## Relevant policies

### **National Planning Policy Framework 2024**

- Section 12 (Achieving well-designed places)

### **London Plan 2021**

- Policy D8 (Public Realm)
- Policy T2 (Healthy Streets)

### **Camden Local Plan 2017**

- A1 - Managing the impact of development
- C5 - Safety and security
- C6 - Access
- D1 - Design
- D4 - Advertisements
- G1 - Delivery and location of growth
- T1 - Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport

### **Draft Camden Local Plan**

The Council has published a new Draft Camden Local Plan (incorporating Site Allocations) for consultation (DCLP). The DCLP is a material consideration and can be taken into account in the determination of planning applications which has limited weight at this stage. The weight that can be given to it will increase as it progresses towards adoption (anticipated 2026).

### Camden Planning Guidance

- CPG Design (2021) - chapters 1 (Introduction), 2 (Design excellence) and 7 (Designing safer environments)
- CPG Transport (2021) - chapters 7 (Vehicular access and crossovers) and 9 (Pedestrian and cycle movement)
- CPG Advertisements (2018) - paragraphs 1.1 to 1.15 (General advertising guidance); and 1.34 to 1.38 (Digital advertisements)
- CPG Amenity (2021) - chapters 1 (Introduction), 2 (Overlooking, privacy and outlook) and 4 (Artificial light)

### Camden Streetscape Design Manual

Transport for London (TfL) - Streetscape Guidance (Fourth Edition, 2022 revision 2)

The Institute of Lighting Professional's 'Professional Lighting Guide 05: The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements Including Digital Displays (published 2023)

Safe and Healthy Streets – High Holborn and Procter Street – 2023 [construction-letter-high-holborn-and-procter-street---october-23.pdf](#)

## Assessment

### 1.0. Proposal

- 1.1 Planning permission and advertisement consent are sought for the removal of an existing InLink Unit, and the deployment of a replacement Street Hub 3 unit.
- 1.2 The proposed communication hub would be composed of galvanised mild steel, with a powder coated external grade aluminium exterior. Display panels will be made of tempered and toughened laminated glass.

Image 1, Proposed unit:



Image 2, Existing unit:



- 1.3 Two illuminated digital screens would be integrated into the proposed structure with advertisements displayed on both sides of the hub on its larger elevations. The digital screens measure 95cm wide x 167cm high.

- 1.4 In addition to advertisement displays, the communication hub would also provide free Wi-Fi and phone calls with charging facilities, wayfinding / mapping services, local information provision, 999 emergency service and safety buttons.
- 1.5 Planning permission and advertisement consent were approved in 2018 for the inlink panel currently in place. This was part of an overall package to reduce the number of kiosks, and a Section 278 agreement secured the removal of 3 kiosks. At that time, significant weight was given to their removal, as stated in the officer's report "on balance there are benefits resulting from the proposed removal of the 3x existing phone kiosk in terms of the reduction in clutter, design, crime and highway issues". At that time, this was the only way the Council was able to secure the removal of older kiosks. Since then the Council has been using A.2 of Part 24, Class A of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, "(2) Class A(a) and Class A(c), which states that development is permitted subject to the condition that any apparatus or structure provided in accordance with that permission shall be removed from the land, building or structure on which it is situated. Since 2022, over 20 kiosks have been removed in Camden following breach of condition notices being served. In 2018, considerable weight was given to the removal of older kiosks.
- 1.6 In addition to the removal, significant weight was given to the reduction in the size of the kiosk. In the Officer's delegated report it states that there would be an "an overall reduction of footprint of 150% and by reason of its design and significantly reduced footprint it was considered the structure would give a slender, elegant appearance.
- 1.7 Unfortunately, since their installation, there have been a number of issues in terms of the structure being an incongruous addition towering above pedestrians, ASB, poor maintenance and public benefits such as free calls having to be switched off, not materialising.

## **2.0 Assessment**

- 2.1 The principal considerations in the assessment and determination of the planning application are:
- the design and impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the immediate streetscene; and
  - the impact of the proposal on transport and public highway and security, crime and antisocial behaviour.
- 2.2 The principal considerations in the assessment and determination of the advertisement consent application are:
- amenity – the design and visual impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the immediate streetscene; and on neighbouring amenity (in so far as the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 allow consideration in this regard); and
  - public safety – the impact of the proposal on highway, pedestrian and cyclist's safety.

## **Planning Application**

### **2.3 Design and appearance**

- 2.4 The Camden Local Plan Policy D1 (Design) establishes that careful consideration of the characteristics of a site, features of local distinctiveness and the wider context is needed in order to achieve high quality development in Camden which integrates well into its



surroundings. As such, the Council will require all developments to be of the highest standard of design and to respect the character, setting, form and scale of neighbouring buildings, its contribution to the public realm, and its impact on wider views and vistas.

- 2.5 Extending Camden Planning Guidance (CPG) Design in Paragraph 7.37 states that, *'The design of streets, public areas and the spaces between buildings, needs to be accessible, safe and uncluttered'*.
- 2.6 This is supported by Paragraph 4.89 of Camden Local Plan Policy C5 (Safety and security) which states that *'Careful consideration needs to be given to the design and location of any street furniture or equipment in order to ensure that they do not obscure public views or create spaces that would encourage antisocial behaviour'*.
- 2.7 Section 12 (Achieving well-designed places) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) also recognises the importance of design in managing and improving spaces, including the quality of place. The NPPF states that the design of all built form, including street furniture, must be sustainable, functional, visually attractive and welcoming, safe, inclusive and accessible, encourage innovation, be sympathetic to local character and history, and promote health and well-being. The quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed.
- 2.8 The application site comprises an area of the footway on the north side of Theobalds Road outside No. 124.

Image 3:



- 2.9 The proposed hub structure is considered to be poor in design terms and appears to have been primarily designed around the inclusion of two large digital screens on each of the main

elevations. It would seem from the images of the proposed hub included within the application submission (see Images 1 and 2 above) that the size of the hub unit itself has been determined by the dimensions of the advertising panels. As such, the two illuminated digital advertising display screens occupy the majority of area available on each elevation of the structure (facing east and west along Theobalds Road respectively).

- 2.1 This is an unfortunate ordering of the characteristics and design approach, strongly indicating the primary importance of the larger digital screens in the design process and the more incidental nature of other elements (such as, wayfinding screen, charging points, etc.). As a consequence, these other facilities are restricted to the narrower side of the hub's structure in the design process with a significantly more limited surface area, when the unit might otherwise have been designed around these items in order to provide better access and greater public benefit, with the overall unit (and therefore any advertising screens) being as small as an alternative design might allow, so minimising any adverse visual impacts at the application site.
- 2.2 However, this has not been the case and the design approach has resulted in the creation of a large monolithic structure which gives the overall appearance as a large free-standing, advertisement panel rather than a structure for any other purpose.
- 2.3 The proposed hub would be located on the site of the existing In-Link hub, although the current hub is smaller in width and height. The current hub is monolithic in design and appearance and is not considered to add positive visual interest to the streetscene, Indeed it's very nature is non-permeable in appearance and this adds to highlight its presence.
- 2.4 It is considered that its replacement with an even larger hub, with a prominent advertisement panel would add to this sense of a monolithic presence within the public realm and remove the permeability from this area of Theobalds Road.
- 2.5 In contrast to the minimal street furniture in this area, the inclusion of two illuminated integrated digital screens as part of the current proposals would have a greater impact in the locality than the previously approved smaller In-Link hub. The simple and uncluttered arrangement of street furniture on the footway at the application site contributes to the streetscene. The large illuminated screens would serve to adversely heighten the presence of the proposed structure within the immediate setting, adding noticeable visual clutter and making it even more conspicuous, not least as a consequence of the large size of both of the display areas and the hub structure itself.
- 2.6 Therefore, while it is accepted that all advertisements are intended to attract attention, the introduction of the proposed hub structure with two integrated digital advertisement screens in this location is considered to be inappropriate, by reason of its siting, size, detailed design and method of illumination, as it would introduce a visually obtrusive and dominant piece of illuminated street furniture, so adding harmful visual clutter that would detract from the character and appearance of the area in which the application site is located, contrary to policy D1 (Design) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.
- 2.7 As mentioned previously, one of the Council's aims throughout the Borough in relation to street furniture and the public realm is to promote high quality physical environments through decluttering existing footways in order to enhance pedestrian movement and public realm. In this regard, Camden Local Plan Policy D4 (Advertisements) in Paragraph 7.84 states that, *'The Council aims to reduce visual street clutter, reducing the number of objects on the street, rationalising their location and limiting the palette of materials. Free standing signs and*

*signs on street furniture will not normally be accepted where they contribute to visual and physical clutter and create a hindrance to movement along the pavement or pedestrian footway’.*

2.8 There is no evidence in the application submission that any consideration has been given to these local aims and objectives, nor is there any indication within the application submission that any attempt has been made to integrate the Council's wider highway, urban realm and landscape objectives into the current proposals.

2.9 In the appeal decision in 2022 (see **APP/X5210/W/22/329184**) for the adjacent kiosk the Inspector dismissed a proposal to replace a kiosk with a digital hub structure, it was noted:

“Street furniture is limited in the area, and the wide uncluttered pavements with intermittent street trees are a positive feature that contributes to the appearance of this relatively modern infill area. Also, advertising in this area, is minimal, with the notable exception of the poster-style panel on the existing kiosk and the digital style advertising panel just north of the appeal site. Although the area immediate to the appeal site retains many of the positive features outlined above, this concentration of advertising at street level is relatively unusual and not characteristic of the wider area.”

“This strikingly different form of advertising panel would be positioned close to another similar panel a short distance north of the appeal site. In this regard, rather than visually assimilating into the area, the proposal would noticeably intensify a form of advertising that is at odds with the more low-key forms of advertising and signage that characterise this area”.

2.10 This decision establishes that such dominant structures are not characteristic and harmful to the area.

2.11 To the contrary, at a time of re-invention of the street, with widening of pavements and appreciation of generous public realm, these proposals are a disappointing reinstatement of pavement clutter. The proposal lacks the initiative that has been shown elsewhere in the Borough for creativity and reappraisal of streets and public spaces, and fails to create something that might otherwise be considered a genuine improvement and positive addition to the streetscene. There has been no evidence submitted as to the use of the existing InLink’s phone facilities or additional facilities to justify its ongoing retention of replacement with a larger structure.

2.12 An example of this approach by the Council is evidenced in the central London area around Tottenham Court Road which has been the subject of a major public realm renewal programme as part of the Council's ‘West End Project’ involving an investment of £35m intended to transform this part of the Borough. One of the objectives of the Project is to declutter the public highway and streets, and as such, significant works have already taken place over the last few years to realise these improvements in this location, including successfully securing the removal of 19 phone kiosks on Tottenham Court Road as part of a separate enforcement investigation.

2.13 The Council is continuing to undertake public realm improvement work building on the successes of the West End Project. This includes the ‘Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood’ project. This aims to transform Holborn into a place for people with attractive, healthy, accessible and safe streets for everyone, with cleaner air, more plants and trees, in new and



improved spaces. This includes public space improvements on Theobalds Road and exploring changing the stretch between Southampton Row and Procter Street to two way traffic, adding cycle lanes separated from traffic on both sides of the road.

- 2.14 This approach by the Council is noted as being in accordance with Policy D8 (Public Realm) of the London Plan which states in regard to the kind of development proposed that, *'Applications which seek to introduce unnecessary street furniture should normally be refused'*.
- 2.15 As such, the current application proposals are at odds with the broader, integrated approach of the Council to improve and rationalise the public realm throughout the Borough, and are contrary to its objectives which, amongst other aims, seeks to enhance the visual appearance of the streetscene and declutter pedestrian footways, rather than add additional street clutter.
- 2.16 The Overall, therefore, as outlined above, the proposal would fail to adhere to Local Plan Policy D1 (Design), Camden Planning Guidance (CPG Design), as well as, the core design principles as set out in Section 12 of the NPPF and Policy D8 (Public Realm) of the London Plan.

## 2.1 **Transport and public highway**

- 2.2 Local Plan Policy A1 (Managing the impact of development) requires development proposals to avoid disruption to the highway network, its function, causing harm to highway safety, hindering pedestrian movement and unnecessary clutter, as well as, addressing the needs of vulnerable users.
- 2.3 Local Plan Policy T1 (Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport) states that the Council will seek to ensure that developments improve the pedestrian environment, providing high quality footpaths and pavements that are wide enough for the number of people expected to use them, including features to assist vulnerable road users where appropriate. Camden Planning Guidance (CPG) Transport supports this in seeking to ensure that there is no adverse impact on the highway network, the public footway and crossover points.
- 2.4 Policy D8 (Public Realm) of the London Plan states that, *'Applications which seek to introduce unnecessary street furniture should normally be refused'*.
- 2.5 Policy T2 (Healthy Streets) of the London Plan states that *'Development proposals should demonstrate how they will deliver improvements that support the ten Healthy Streets Indicators in line with Transport for London guidance'*. It is considered that the application would fail to deliver any improvements in regard to some of the ten Healthy Streets Indicators; namely, 'People feel safe' (see Paragraphs 2.38 to 2.46 below for further details - 'Security, crime and anti-social behaviour').
- 2.6 Camden's Streetscape Design manual – Section 3.01 (Footway widths) states the following:
- 'Clear footway' is not the distance from kerb to boundary wall, but the unobstructed pathway
  - width within the footway:
  - 1.8 metres – minimum width needed for two adults passing;
  - 3 metres – minimum width for busy pedestrian street though greater widths are usually
  - required;
  - Keeping the footway width visually free of street furniture is also important, allowing clear
  - sightlines along the street.

- 2.7 All development affecting footways in Camden is also expected to comply with Appendix B of Transport for London's Pedestrian Comfort Guidance, which notes that active and high flow locations must provide a minimum 2.2m and 3.3m of 'clear footway width' respectively for the safe and comfortable movement of pedestrians.
- 2.8 Policy T1 of the Camden Local Plan states that the Council will promote sustainable transport choices by prioritising walking, cycling and public transport use and that development should ensure that sustainable transport will be the primary means of travel to and from the site. Policy T1 subsections a) and b) state that in order to promote walking in the borough and improve the pedestrian environment, the Council will seek to ensure that developments improve the pedestrian environment by supporting high quality improvement works, and make improvements to the pedestrian environment including the provision of high quality safe road crossings where needed, seating, signage and landscaping.
- 2.9 Paragraph 9.7 of CPG Transport seeks improvements to streets and spaces to ensure good quality access and circulation arrangements for all. Ensuring the following:
- Safety of vulnerable road users, including children, elderly people and people with mobility difficulties, sight impairments, and other disabilities;
  - Maximising pedestrian and cycle accessibility and minimising journey times making sites 'permeable';
  - Providing stretches of continuous footways without unnecessary crossings;
  - Making it easy to cross where vulnerable road users interact with motor vehicles;
  - Linking to, maintaining, extending and improving the network of pedestrian and cycle routes;
  - Taking account of surrounding context and character of the area;
  - Providing a high quality environment in terms of appearance, design and construction, considering Conservation Areas and other heritage assets;
  - Avoiding street clutter and minimising the risk of pedestrian routes being obstructed or narrowed, e.g. by footway parking or by unnecessary street furniture; and
  - Having due regard to design guidance set out in the Camden Streetscape Design Manual, Transport for London's (TfL) London Cycling Design Standards, TfL's Pedestrian Comfort Level Guidance and TfL's Healthy Street Indicators.
- 2.10 The Appendix B of 'Pedestrian Comfort Guidance for London (published by Transport for London) indicates that footways in high flow areas such as the application site should be at least 5.3m wide with a minimum effective footway width of 3.3m.
- 2.11 The stretch of pavement in the area of the application site is characterised by a footway width of 3.0m. The proposed new unit would be 347mm wider than the existing unit (measuring 1236mm wide compared to the existing unit at 889mm) and so would protrude slightly further into the area of free footway past the site. The proposed BT Street Hub 3 unit would leave a footway width of approximately 1.5m. Although there is currently a large area of hardstanding outside No. 124 that results in the available footway appearing wider in this area.
- 2.12 The close proximity of the application site to the highway, and introduction of a hub structure which significantly wider than any other existing furniture or features within this locality, raises concern as it would encroach onto the public highway and introduce an obstruction to pedestrian movement.

- 2.13 This situation would be worsened by virtue of the hub's design, given that all user facilities associated with the proposed hub (such as, free Wi-Fi and phone, wayfinding / mapping services, local information provision, 999 emergency service and safety buttons, etc.) are provided at the side of the structure which faces onto the public highway. Therefore, any members of public using the facilities will necessarily have to stand in an area beyond the hub structure itself, so further reducing the amount of pavement space available for pedestrians to comfortably move along the public highway and pass by. This would create an unacceptable additional obstruction to pedestrian movement as a result of the proposals.
- 2.14 The Council is continuing to undertake public realm improvement work building on the successes of the West End Project. This includes the 'Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood' project. This aims to transform Holborn into a place for people with attractive, healthy, accessible and safe streets for everyone, with cleaner air, more plants and trees, in new and improved spaces. This includes public space improvements on Theobalds Road.
- 2.15 Overall, therefore, taking into account all of the above, including the width and orientation of the proposed hub structure, the presence of existing street items, and the anticipated additional space required for individuals or groups to use the facilities, it is considered that the loss of available footway space as a result of the proposal would have an unacceptable impact on pedestrian movement and safety at the application site in an area where pedestrian footfall is high.

### 3. Security, crime and anti-social behaviour.

- 3.1 Local Plan Policy C5 (Safety and security) requires development to contribute to community safety and security. In particular, Paragraph 4.89 states that 'The design of streets, public areas and the spaces between buildings needs to be accessible, safe and uncluttered. Careful consideration needs to be given to the design and location of any street furniture or equipment in order to ensure that they do not obscure public views or create spaces that would encourage antisocial behaviour'.
- 3.2 In regard to public realm and street furniture, CPG Design states in Paragraph 7.38 that, 'All features within public space and elements of street furniture should be designed to make a positive contribution to community safety and discourage anti-social behaviour. Careful consideration should therefore be given to their location and detailed design. Street furniture should not obstruct pedestrian views or movement or be positioned to encourage anti-social behaviour or concealed areas'.
- 3.3 In regard to community safety matters, it is noted generally that street furniture within the London Borough of Camden (including existing telephone kiosks and communication hubs) have in many cases become 'crime generators' and a focal point for anti-social behaviour (ASB). Specifically, in relation to the locations of the kiosks or hubs around Camden, there is a common theme among the crime statistics as confirmed by the Metropolitan Police; namely, major issues with street crime, and in particular ASB, pickpocketing and theft. This is the case within this part of the Borough. The development falls within the policing ward of Holborn and Covent Garden. The top reported crimes for the month of January 2025 (taken from the police UK website) were theft from the person, other theft, antisocial behaviour and violence and sexual offences. Other offences of note for this area include shoplifting, burglary, criminal damage and drugs.

- 3.4 The Council has experienced ASB from the existing BT link panels within Camden. Residents and members reported a rise in anti-social behaviour and crime as a direct result of these kiosks being installed. These activities include increased instances of loitering, as well as usage of the free calls facility to coordinate drug deals. This has been most apparently in areas such as Euston and Camden Town. Other boroughs such as Tower Hamlets and Islington have experienced similar issues and few boroughs are supporting the installation of more.
- 3.5 One of the public benefits to these kiosks were the ability to provide free calls. Initially the free calls had to be removed until an algorithm was created to identify abnormal call levels to a single number and then blacklists this number. The intention being that this would result in the facility being available for legitimate use but will prevent abuse of the free calls for illegal activities. A trial was undertaken in consultation with the Metropolitan Police and community safety team. As soon as the call facility was turned back on, the number of calls escalated very quickly, but very few numbers met the 'threshold' set by BT for call blocking. Data provided by BT and Link UK showed that the majority of calls were for less than 10 seconds.
- 3.6 Officers concerns with these panels were that it was not possible to successfully demonstrate that the panels could operate without creating a 'honey pot effect' for crime and ASB. Whilst a maintenance strategy is proposed for the application scheme, it is not considered sufficient to address the fact that ASB would be encouraged by the design and facilities provided by the kiosk. In an Appeal decision ref: APP/X5210/W/20/3253878 and 3253540) the Inspector noted 'the appellants' proposed maintenance regime would be likely to reduce the effects of such ASB. However, the form of the structure provides a degree of screening for such behaviour and would be likely to encourage ASB.
- 3.7 Having reviewed the current application proposal and supporting information, the Metropolitan Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor objects to the proposals due to concerns regarding public and community safety at the application site. These concerns are summarised as follows:
- 3.8 This area suffers with higher than average crime rates. Opportunistic crime such as theft from the person is prevalent. The location of the kiosk is in very close proximity to the carriageway. Due to the openness of the kiosk any mobile phones on display at this location (either on charge or in the person's hand) will be vulnerable to the opportunist phone snatch. Many of these phone snatches are by persons on bicycles or scooters (electronic or otherwise).
- 3.9 The new product is larger than the previous model and as such creates a larger space for possible concealment. This means that a potential thief could hide behind the other side of the screen to wait for an opportunity to commit the offence. The other issue is that persons could walk out into the road from the concealment of this device. This would give the road user little to no warning and ability to avoid a possible collision. The advertising screens can also hamper the road user. It is noted that the advertising will be static with no moving images.
- 3.10 Therefore, it is considered that the proposed Street Hub, by virtue of its inappropriate siting, size and design, would fail to reduce opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviour to the detriment of community safety and security, and compromise the safety of those using and servicing the hub, contrary to policy C5 (Safety and Security) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.

#### **4. Advertisement consent application**

- 4.1 Advertisement consent is sought for a proposed display of illuminated content on two digital screens integrated within a new communication hub structure located on the public highway.
- 4.2 The two illuminated digital screens would be integrated into the proposed structure with advertisements displayed on both sides of the hub on its larger elevations. The structure would measure 2.98m high x 1.23m wide x 0.35m deep (see Images 1 and 2 above).
- 4.3 The display areas would both measure 1.67m high x 0.95m wide. Advertising content would be displayed by means of static images in sequence changing no more frequently than every 10 seconds. The proposed advertisements would not include moving elements, require close study, resemble traffic signs or embody directional or other traffic elements.
- 4.4 Luminance levels during hours of operation are proposed to be limited to 600 cd/m<sup>2</sup> (dusk to dawn) and daytime levels adjusted automatically up to a maximum potential brightness of 5000 cd/m<sup>2</sup>.
- 4.5 The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 permits the Council to consider amenity and public safety matters in determining advertisement consent applications.

**Amenity: Visual impact and impact on residential amenity**

- 4.6 Local Plan Policy A1 (Managing the impact of development) confirms that the Council will expect development to avoid harmful effects on the amenity of existing and future occupiers and nearby properties. Camden Planning Guidance (CPG) Amenity advises that artificial lighting can cause light spillage and glare, as well as, be damaging to the environment through having a detrimental impact on the quality of life of neighbouring residents and by changing the character of a locality.
- 4.7 Section 12 (Achieving well-designed places) of the NPPF states in Paragraph 141 that 'The quality and character of places can suffer when advertisements are poorly sited and designed'.
- 4.8 The CPG Design advises that good quality advertisements respect the architectural features of the host building and the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Local Plan Policy D4 (Advertisements) confirms that the "Council will resist advertisements where they contribute to or constitute clutter or an unsightly proliferation of signage in the area." (Paragraph 7.82).
- 4.9 More specifically, in regard to street furniture and the public realm, Policy D4 in Paragraph 7.84 (supported by CPG Advertverts) states that, *'The Council aims to reduce visual street clutter, reducing the number of objects on the street, rationalising their location and limiting the palette of materials. Free standing signs and signs on street furniture will not normally be accepted where they contribute to visual and physical clutter and create a hindrance to movement along the pavement or pedestrian footway'*.
- 4.10 In regard to potential impacts on public safety, Policy D4 in Paragraph 7.86 advises that advertisements will not be considered acceptable where they:
  - obstruct or impair sight lines to road users at junctions and corners
  - reduce the effectiveness of a traffic sign or signal
  - result in glare and dazzle or distract road users
  - distract road users because of their unusual nature

- disrupt the free flow of pedestrian movement; or
- endanger pedestrians forcing them to step on to the road

- 4.11 The integrated digital screens would display illuminated advertising on both sides of the proposed hub structure, which by design would appear as visually prominent and attention grabbing forms of display given the digital method of illumination, image transition and ability to display simultaneously in two directions. Both integrated digital screens would therefore serve to heighten the presence of the proposed structure, adding noticeable, visual clutter and making it even more conspicuous, not least as a consequence of the large size of both of the display areas and the hub structure itself, but also by virtue of the prominent corner site location that is otherwise absent of any form of illuminated signage.
- 4.12 As a consequence, the impact of a larger proposal would exacerbate the harm caused by the existing link structure. It is an incongruous addition which would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and contribute to the degradation of visual amenity within the streetscene in which the application site is located. As with the appeal decision for the adjacent kiosk (APP/X5210/W/22/3291847), the result of this proposal would, be an even more noticeable intensification of advertising that is at odds with the more low-key forms of advertising and signage that characterise the area. The Inspector noted that the large digital panel, replicated in this scheme would harmfully alter the appearance of this currently understated commercial street scene.
- 4.13 In a recent appeal decision (Ref: APP/X5210/W/20/3254037 and 3252962, see Appendix A) in relation to digital advertising proposed to be displayed on a telephone kiosk within the Borough, the Planning Inspector noted when dismissing the appeal that, 'The visual impact of the kiosk would be increased by the large illuminated advertising panel, which would be a dominating feature on the structure. The panel, close to the kerbline, would be a prominent standalone illuminated feature. The panel would be unrelated to the services provided by the adjacent commercial units and would appear prominent in views along the street both during the day and in hours of darkness'. It is noted that the current application proposals involve the introduction of two illuminated screens (rather than only one panel as in the appeal case) which would be displayed in two directions, and as such, the impact in the streetscene is considered to be greater.
- 4.14 In terms of the proposed screen's luminance levels, the supporting information confirms that this would not exceed 600 cd/m<sup>2</sup> (dusk to dawn) during hours of operation and daytime levels would adjust automatically up to a maximum potential brightness of 5000 cd/m<sup>2</sup>. While it is accepted that all advertisements are intended to attract attention and that certain aspects of the display can be controlled by condition should consent be granted (such as, luminance levels, transition, sequencing, etc.), the addition of two illuminated digital advertisement screens in this location would significantly raise the prominence of the proposed piece of street furniture. Moreover, notwithstanding that the applicant would consider powering off the screens between midnight and dawn, the screens would nevertheless be active throughout the majority of any 24-hour period, 7 days a week.
- 4.15 Overall, therefore, for the reasons set out above, the proposed introduction of two digital screens integrated within the hub structure would appear as incongruous and dominant illuminated features in this location, severely degrading the visual amenity of the area and streetscene, through the creation of conspicuous visual clutter. As such, the proposal fails to adhere to Section 12 of the NPPF, and Local Plan Policies D1 (Design) and D4 (Advertisements).



4.16 Finally, in regard to amenity considerations, there are no concerns to neighbouring residential properties as a result of this proposal given the site location and context.

## **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 The proposal would result in unacceptable street clutter, harmful to the character and appearance of the streetscape and the loss of additional footway for unnecessary clutter, as well as, creating issues with safety. The advertisement would also serve to harm the visual amenity of the area. The proposal is therefore considered to be unacceptable in compliance with the aforementioned policies.
- 5.2 The proposal, by virtue of its inappropriate siting, size and design, would fail to reduce opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviour to the detriment of community safety and security, and compromise the safety of those using and servicing the hub.
- 5.3 Whilst weight is given to some of the benefits, for the reasons they do not outweigh the harm caused to the character and appearance of the streetscene, public safety and the loss of footway and the impact on the public realm is not justified. Whilst permission was approved in 2017, the material benefits that were secured, such as a wider replacement are not realised in this scheme. Furthermore, the structures as built have resulted in ASB and have considered to harm the streetscene in terms of their design adding unnecessary clutter to the streetscene.
- 5.4 If the applications were considered to be acceptable, the Council would seek an obligation attached to any planning permission for the applicant to enter into a legal agreement to ensure that the smart hub is well maintained and that the advertisement is only in place whilst the telephone element is in operation.

## **5. Recommendation:**

- 5.1 It is therefore recommended that **(1) Full Planning Permission be refused** for the following reasons:
- 1. The proposal, by reason of its location, size and detailed design, would add harmful visual clutter and detract from the character and appearance of the street scene, contrary to policy D1 (Design) and D4 (Advertisements) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.
  - 2. The proposal, by virtue of its location, size and detailed design, and adding unnecessary street clutter, would reduce the amount of useable, unobstructed footway, which would be detrimental to the quality of the public realm, cause harm to highway safety and hinder pedestrian movement and have a detrimental impact on the promotion of walking as an alternative to motorised transport, contrary to policies G1 (Delivery and location of growth), A1 (Managing the impact of development), C6 (Access for all), D8 (Public Realm) and T1 (Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.
  - 3. The proposal, by virtue of its inappropriate siting, size and design, would fail to reduce opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviour to the detriment of community safety and security, and compromise the safety of those using and servicing the hub, contrary to policy C5 (Safety and Security) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.

4. In the absence of a legal agreement to secure a maintenance plan for the proposed Street Hub, the proposal would be detrimental to the quality of the public realm, and detract from the character and appearance of the streetscene, contrary to policies D1 (Design), G1 (Delivery and location of growth), A1 (Managing the impact of development), C6 (Access for all) and T1 (Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport) of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017, and policies 2 (Design & character).

5.2 It is also recommended that **(2) advertisement consent be refused** for the following reasons:

1. The proposed advertisement, by virtue of its location, scale, prominence, method of illumination, would add harmful visual clutter, detrimental to the amenity of the streetscene, contrary to policies D1 (Design) and D4 (Advertisements) of the Camden Local Plan 2017.