

The Chimes, Uxbridge

External signage planning feedback

Feb 2025

High St Entrance 1 - High level glazed bricks

Planning feedback

The proposed signage is excessive, visually dominant, and obstructs natural light through the existing glazed bricks, diminishing the public realm both inside and outside the Chimes. The glazed brick contributes to a more seamless transition / visual connection between the interior and exterior, an important aspect of the building's original design and its relationship with the High Street.

We object to the number and arrangement of panels but may be open to reviewing a reduced scheme that better balances permeability and elevational design. For example, limiting advertisement panels to four squares - likely preferably the lower four - to maintain some natural light. We are also open to reviewing alternative arrangements, such as perhaps stacking panels vertically on the left-hand side, exploring a chequered pattern (albeit may be too visually disruptive) or other options with reduced amount of panel boarding. The top horizontal glazing should remain unobstructed. If a horizontal element is desired (e.g. "Come on in"), it may be more appropriate at the horizontal fascia element above the entrance.

In all cases, we recommend that each advertisement panel be set within the existing structural elements rather than being mounted directly onto the surface, ensuring a visual gap around it. In addition to the visual gap, we also recommend that a surround frame is introduced within each panel to create a more cohesive appearance, respecting the original building.

Response

- The current glass bricks have a solid wall behind them, so do not allow any light into the centre. Images to the right show the solid wall that blocks in this area with the bricks themselves sitting behind internal solid walls within the retail units. The glazing to the left (highlighted in red on the images to the right overleaf) as you look out lets all light into the centre and will remain uncovered. The proposal will therefore have no impact on natural light entering the building.
- The current proposal is set within the existing structural elements rather than being mounted directly onto the surface of the glass. The proposal has the signage trays applied in a 'sleeve' around each single section of steel frame that holds the glass bricks. The elevations drawing shows that these sleeves affix to the steel structure returns as close as possible, leaving the natural gap that already exists between the glass brick panels. This is possibly not clear from the visual because it is not face on, so we have adjusted this to emphasise the gap that will be there.
- The muted colour of the background design was chosen to ensure that the new signage was sympathetic to the surrounding frame and brickwork and not visually dominant. The smooth finish of the new facias was also selected to complement the smooth glass panels to the right of the dated glass brick panelling. Note: These signs are set back from the high street, so do not sit directly on the high street.
- Whilst a stacked or chequered design for the panels has been suggested, this would result in an overall design which looks 'part finished'. The current proposal, with signs to each existing panel, results in a scheme which appears more cohesive and aligns with the existing design of the building.

Solution

- As no natural light is blocked, it is proposed to retain the current panelling but reduce the size of the retailer logos to be less visually dominant. Ensure that new sign trays are as close as possible to the existing steelwork, retaining the visual steel gap between the current glass brick panels.



Internal - Upper Mall view



Internal - Lower mall view

High St Entrance 1 - Internal view



Existing



Original proposed



Alternative proposed



Original cap heights



Alternative Proposed cap heights

High Street Entrance 2 – Above door panels

Planning feedback

The proposed signage is very large and currently appears "stuck on" and poorly integrates with the building. Similar to Entrance A, introducing a surround frame could help better integrate it with the existing architecture. Introducing individual signs for the brands may be an option should they be removed from the shopping centre in future.

Response

- There is currently adhesive vinyl signage onsite covering the same area which was granted advertisement consent under ref. 42966/ADV/2020/71 in November 2020. This area was also previously covered with a busy and prominent INTU message as shown overleaf, therefore the principle of this scale of signage applied to this area has previously been accepted. Notably, the Officer Report of ref. 42966/ADV/2020/71 concluded of the existing 'Welcome' vinyl that "*the scale of the sign is considered appropriate given the significant set back of the sign from the public highway as shown below, beneath not only the building overhang but also the canopy extending over the pavement. Its location significantly reduces visibility of the sign from views from the High Street and wider Conservation Area - limiting it to only very limited number of vantage points on the approach immediately opposite the entrance. When viewed in this context, the sign should be viewed favourably.*" Given that the scale of signage is proposed to remain the same, it is considered that a similar stance should be adopted in this case.
- The new sign has specifically been specified as a signbox which has an outer box frame, as shown on the submitted Flex Box spec sheet. This will ensure it does not look 'stuck on' in the way the existing vinyl signage does, removing the need for the section breaks on the existing.
- The replacement of individual logos has been considered in the overall cost, if a logo needs replaced the complete flex skin graphic frontage would be replaced.

Solutions

- Keep the current design as a single signbox but reduce the retailer logo sizes to be less prominent.

High Street Entrance 2 – Alternative proposed



Existing



Original Proposed



Alternative proposed



Original historic signage



Original cap heights



Alternative Proposed cap heights

Market Square Entrance - High level glazing

Planning feedback

Given its central and sensitive location - being the key piazza in Uxbridge town centre and within the conservation area - we strongly object to the proposed signage in this location. The excessive coverage obstructs important visual links between the outdoor public realm, the High Street, and the internal public realm within The Chimes. It also significantly reduces natural daylight entering the main entrance hall, which in turn diminishes the quality of the public realm both inside and out. In this location, we may be open to a more restrained signage approach that respects the visual permeability and daylight qualities of the entrance. Any signage should:

- *Be minimally intrusive, ensuring clear views in and out.*
- *Maintain a sense of openness, reinforcing the connection between the street and the interior.*
- *Avoid blocking upper-level glazing, preserving daylight penetration.*
- *Be well-integrated within the architectural composition rather than appearing as an afterthought.*
- *Align with the rationalisation principles applied to other entrances, ensuring consistency.*

A more subtle, carefully designed solution - such as signage positioned within existing framework elements or restrained use of transparent/semi-transparent materials - could be explored to maintain the integrity of this key entrance while accommodating branding needs. Details/samples of materials would be beneficial.

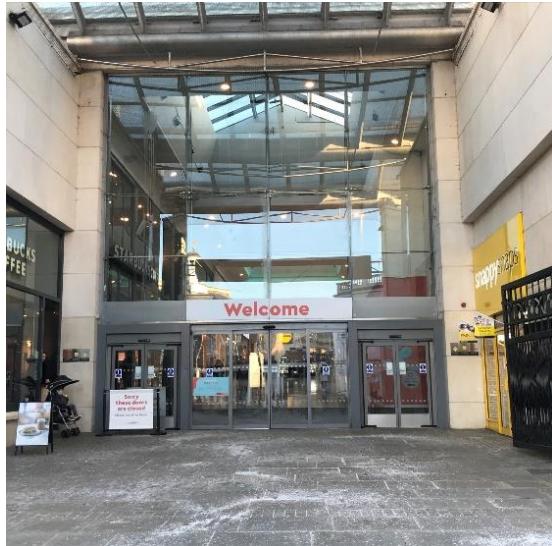
Response

- The base section (Come on in) covers the internal floorplate so is not obstructing visual links or daylight but is hiding the unsightly floor joists. This area already has graphic content in place.
- The use of semi - transparent materials (contravision) was discounted as this would look unsightly from the inside (It cannot be printed double sided).
- The current location was designed to only cover the lower central section of the frontage, allowing light in at both the sides and the top.
- It is noted that the current external The Chimes illuminated sign which is situated on the outer pillars obscures part of the sightline out the centre from the inside.

Solutions

- Adjust the design to reduce the coverage, size and height of the current retailer logos and move these up to create a pillarbox window, retaining clear glazing above and below for visual links between the internal and outdoor public realm. When viewed internally, the logo signs will sit in line with the existing external 'The Chimes' illuminated sign so would not have significant impact on light or visibility.
- The top of the logo signs will be aligned with the framing of the glazing to integrate with the building architecture.

Market Square Entrance - External view alternative proposed



Existing External



Original Proposed external



Alternative Proposed External



Original cap heights



Alternative Proposed cap heights

Market Square Entrance - Internal view alternative proposed



Existing Internal



Original Proposed Internal



Alternative Proposed Internal



Original cap heights



Alternative Proposed cap heights