Universities Superannuation Scheme

Design Statement

Proposed External Signage

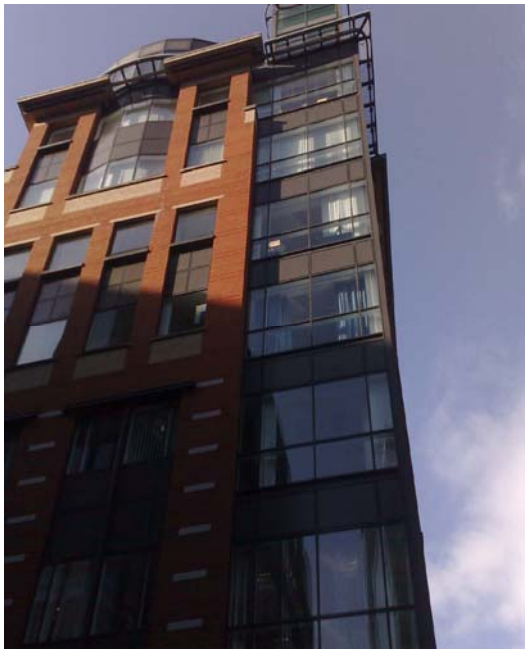
At

The Observatory
Chapel Walks
Manchester
M2 1HL

August 2009

Private and Confidential

File Ref: 3723/USS



DTZ
No 1 Marsden Street
Manchester
M2 1HW

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1 Introduction

This Design statement accompanies an application for the display of advertisements to the external structure and walls at The Observatory, Chapel Walks Manchester, M2 1HL

The Planning Application was submitted on behalf of Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). USS are a private landlord pension fund who are looking to develop / upgrade the quality of the entrance to the building.

The Observatory is an office building located in the City Centre on Cross Street but with its main entrance located to the rear (East of the site) at the junction of Cheapside, Marsden Street and Chapel Walks. The aim of the proposal is to improve the visibility of the main building entrance making it is easier to identify.

This statement was originally prepared in August 2009.

2 Site Context

This section describes the existing context of the site and its surrounding environment.

The existing site approximately measures 40m wide x 30m deep with a lettable area of 7055m^2.

As well as the office building, the Site also contains a Unitarian chapel located on Cross Street.



The existing site is positioned adjacent to Cross Street, and at the junction of Cheapside, Marsden Street and Chapel Walks. A selection of leisure amenities (bars and restaurants) are located to the North, with all other surrounding uses that are mainly office accommodation.

The existing 8-storey (plus basement) office block, built in the mid 1990's is situated centrally to the site. The Chapel occupies the prime retail space facing onto Cross Street and the Observatory office building entrance is located at the rear. The building is constructed from a concrete frame with sandstone, red brick cladding, granite detailing and aluminium curtain walling all under a flat roof.

The external areas are public realm comprising of hard landscaped paving areas with either tarmacadam, concrete flag or block paving finish.

OS Extract



Historically, there have been reasons for poor lettings within this property (currently 40% vacant) and one of the major reasons for this is that the property is not well known within Manchester city centre nor does it have any identity on the street. It is therefore important to raise the profile of the property.

The main building entrance is located on the corner of Chapel Walks and Cheapside. When considering the building location together with the main vehicle and pedestrian routes around the property, the building entrance is positioned remote from these 'Urban Grain' routes. A consequence of this is that the entrance is hidden and difficult to find. To compound the problem, the entrance has no street presence together with little identity even when viewed from close up.

Whilst a significant scheme for other further improvement and refurbishment is currently underway, including replacement of the dated entrance areas, it is felt that signage has an important part to play in addressing the problematic issues facing the building whilst also complimenting the other refurbishment works. The overall goal of which is to offer an newly refurbished, attractive and easily identifiable building.

3 Design Process

3.1 Physical

Due to the nature of the building location, the building requires a carefully considered, but clearly visible signage scheme to allow visitors, tenants and other users to find the building and its main entrance. The proposal will provide signage that can be clearly viewed from the main routes of Cross Street, King Street and also from the front entrance area.

3.2 Options

A number of schemes were initially prepared for the Client, The submitted proposal was chosen primarily due to the clear visual impact on the existing building in a direct attempt to resolve the current problems. Therefore this resulted in the submitted scheme being considered the most appropriate.

The site is not afforded any natural light onto the elevations around the building entrance and this has demanded the need for illuminated signage.

4 Design Proposals

The existing building design has significantly influenced the current proposal characteristics. The (somewhat) unusual building name will remain (the building is an office and has no connection to Astrology) and has been the inspiration for the 'O' logo incorporated into the signage.

The proposed external signage comprises of 3 main elements:

1. Internally Illuminated glass clad corner column including building name and Red 'O' halo.
2. Projecting internally illuminated 'Banner' signs to Cheapside and Chapel Walks.
3. Flat mounted internally illuminated sign to Cross Street.

New illuminated glass cladding and signage is located vertically on the existing external corner column. Branded building signage located around the immediate entrance will offer a focal point of attraction and presence and also help identify

the true entrance into the property. A Loading Bay is located immediately outside the entrance on the public highway and it is important to distinguish the signage above vehicles potentially obscuring the entrance.

Vertical projecting signs fixed to the existing building elevations will improve visibility from the main urban grain routes of Cross Street and King Street and assist to identify the building. There are a number of existing similar signs to other adjacent retail properties that are effective.

The orientation of the word 'THE' in relation to the word 'OBSERVATORY' is a direct reference from the rectangular proportions of the fenestration and brickwork on the building's elevations.

4.1 Layout and Scale

The size of the new column cladding is purposely designed to allow the original column cladding to protrude above the new glass cladding. The Red halo again provides a continuation of the red coloured 'O' design. We have also remained mindful of the problems with vehicles obscuring the new entrance and have elevated as much as we feel reasonable.

All other signs are sized and positioned according to the scale of the existing building and also the need for the signage to be able to be read from a distance as likely to be viewed by pedestrians.



Image of existing entrance and Chapel Walks

4.2 Appearance

The materials for the new signage will be coloured to complement the existing curtain walling/windows combined with Red as a contrasting colour that links into the internal signage scheme and hence overall combined 'one image' proposals and identity.

Projecting signs will be slim and mounted centrally and symmetrically in the existing vertical recess on the brickwork column. Fixings will be delicate to maintain sight of the detailed recess. This will enhance the existing ghranite detailing on the columns.

The overall solution was designed to correspond and compliment the existing building with a view to providing an enhanced overall solution.

5 Conclusion

It is considered that this proposal:

- Provides an attractive, functional and identifiable signage scheme for the building.
- Addresses the long term problems with the Building's location and identification.
- Reflects other signage on adjacent buildings
- Complies with the Design Guide for Commercial Frontages.

Taking into consideration the details as set out in this statement, it is considered that permission should reasonably be granted.