

Oxford Covered Market Signage Strategy

Purpose of this document

The 2013 Oxford Covered Market Retail Strategy report clearly identified that the existing signage package is poor and ineffective. Given the market's adjacency to very busy retail locations, the market signage has a crucial part to play in directing customers to the market and in converting passers-by to entrants, as well as spreading footfall throughout and within the market.

This summary document contains the key findings and recommendations of a supporting Signage Strategy completed by The Retail Group in December 2014. It identifies the types of signage needed to help increase customer flow to the market, the number and variety of signs needed and indicative locations. Short, mid and long term priorities are identified, as is an estimated budget required to deliver a comprehensive new signage package for the market.

Why is new signage needed for the market?

The existing way-finding signage does not effectively direct consumers to the market. There is no remote signage directing consumers to the market from major approach roads or nearby footfall routes, such as Cornmarket and Turl Street. Furthermore, Queen Street and George Street are the second and third busiest footfall routes in the city centre, yet neither have signage to the market.

In terms of external signage, there are many different signage types on display when entering / exiting the market, yet few signs share the same colour palettes or font. Information signs are mixed in with promotional signs and rules and regulation signs are in high profile 'selling locations'.

Inconsistent signage means the market is easily missed; on the High Street, existing signs do not stand out and are difficult to see because of their colour / flush mounting, or in some cases they are hidden behind protruding retailer fascia boards. Given the need for strong external impact for the market, clear and effective signs are crucial. The retailer provided signs on Alley 4 are a step in the right direction but could be better quality. Much of the external facing signage on display has negative messages and these are often the first market related messages customers see.

The market has a poor sense of arrival; there are no "Welcome to Oxford Covered Market" physical messages. The internal signs are equally ineffective as there is no routing or awareness signage in the market. The four avenues are not signed, toilets are not signposted in the market, despite being an asset. Much of the internal signage on display is perfunctory or even in some cases negative.

Much of the retailer produced signage is poor quality and appears handwritten; there is no consistency in approach, format, type face or delivery and retailers don't reference the Oxford Covered Market as part of their external signage. There is a proliferation of A-boards in use with little consistency in their use and style; many use at least one, and circa 5 use two or more.

In summary:

- The market signage does not stand out and has very limited impact.
- Remote signage is poor or non-existent.
- External signage is poor, invisible, non-welcoming, negative, uninformative and jumbled together.
- Internal signage is almost non-existent, negative, dominated by retailer messages, in the wrong place, with the wrong information on it, with no differentiation between promotion and education.
- Retailer signage is inconsistent, and often sprawling, poorly prepared and poorly delivered.
- The market is not promoting itself or creating impact.
- Shoppers in Oxford City Centre are being presented with more effective messages tempting them to shop elsewhere in the city centre.
- Many shoppers are in the vicinity of the market and are walking past, totally missing it as a result.

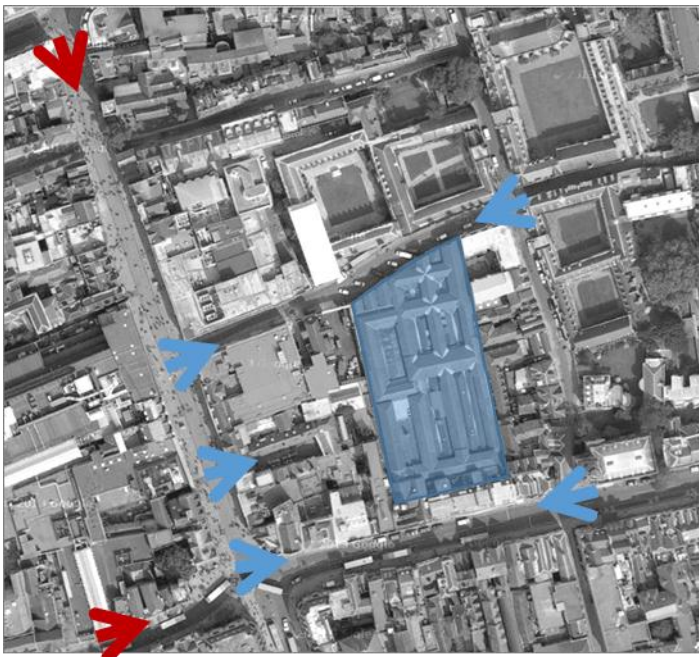
The lack of holistic, impactful and recognisable market specific signage is significantly reducing Oxford Covered Market's appeal and performance. The market is losing considerable custom as a result of the existing signage; both macro and micro signage are not currently working.

Oxford Covered Market Signage Strategy contd.

Recommended Signage Strategy

Given the weaknesses and improvement areas identified, the objectives of the Signage Strategy are:

1. Inform consumers where the market is, what's in it, when to go, why to go, what to expect
2. Direct more consumers to the vicinity of the market
3. Convert more passers-by to entrants
4. Route consumers through all four Avenues and all parts of the Market
5. Create a professional and appealing impression of the market
6. Clearly communicate the strengths / main components of the market offer, both externally and internally
7. Enable the market to obtain a share of voice within the city centre
8. Set the standards for all signs, seek support of city stakeholders.



New Remote Signs Needed

New signs are required on all major approach / access routes as shown below.

They need to be consistent, clear and easy to see, both integrated into other multi-destination directional signs and where possible separate from other signage.

At major arrival and access points, station, car parks, bus terminus, etc.

The message needs to be directional and informative for example: "Historic Covered Market this way".

Options include finger posts, external props or free standing boards (not A-boards).

Urinals could be an option, inclusion in City Guides and on street maps.

- Integration into existing signage.
- Could a sign be mounted on the access bollard at junction of Market Street / Cornmarket?
- Short term option is two daily erectable signs on Market Street, on road, in front of market entrances (Avenues 1 & 4).

Oxford Covered Market Signage Strategy contd.

New External Signs



At each entrance, there needs to be a “Welcome to the Oxford Covered Market” sign, high quality and illuminated. The market needs a recognisable, high quality brand. Each entrance also needs an information sign, showing opening hours and contact details for the market, an easy quick win could be mounted QR code links to the website.

Internal Signs

Each Avenue should be clearly signed, in different colours. Each entrance needs an aspirational, clear and high quality layout plan, if space permits, or at least a list of retailers, including highlighting those that are on the respective Avenue. There needs to be clear signs to Market Street and the High Street. The toilets should also be clearly signed, given they are a major asset to the market.

Retailer Signs

Retailers need clear guidance on external signage; by exception A-boards may be permitted, projecting themed signage, story boarding, demountable wall signage, internal and illuminated signage should all be explored first. More detailed direction on promotions is contained in the Retailer’s Handbook.

Oxford Covered Market Signage Strategy contd.

Indicative Costing for New Signage Package

An outline and indicative costing has been estimated and provided for the creation and installation of the new signage package. This has been obtained through initial and confidential discussions with design and signage agencies, in light of the findings of the Signage Strategy. Preliminary estimates of the costs are shown in the table below. These will need confirmation later in the implementation phase as detailed in the indicative timescales also shown below.

Design and Project Management	£35,000
Remote signs x 5	£2,000
External signs x 2 (big)	£13,000
External signs x 10 (small)	£25,000
Internal welcome signs x 10	£40,000
Internal hanging signs x 10	£7,000
Internal info boards x 3	£6,000
Contingency	£20,000
Potential Budget Requirement	£140-£160k

Priority / Indicative Timescales

And finally, the table below provides suggested timescales for implementing the Signage Strategy.

	Short term	Medium term	Long term
Conduct preliminary discussions with Planning - 'Art of the Possible'; agree scope and objectives. Launch Signage Implementation Group	✓		
Identify opportunities for 'quick win' and temporary signs	✓		
Develop daily erectable boards for Market Street	✓		
Declutter entrances in terms of plethora of existing disparate signs	✓		
Develop the theme for the signage programme	✓		
Install new 'Welcome to OCM' signs	✓		
Identify location and mounting points for 3 tiers of signs		✓	
Continued discussion with Planning		✓	
Develop new branding package		✓	
Develop tender for manufacture and installation		✓	
Provide guidelines to retailers		✓	
Install remote and external signage package			✓