



Case Study - Commercial Office Signage

19 Cornwall Street

Sector	Discipline	Materials	Location
Commercial Office	Wayfinding & Interior Signage	Frosted Acrylic, Oak Veneer, Aluminium, Vinyl	Cornwall Street, Birmingham

The Client.

xsign worked with main contractor Kier Construction, to a design by Associated Architects, to deliver the complete interior signage and wayfinding scheme for 19 Cornwall Street: a 1990s Birmingham office building taken back to its frame by Kier Property and rebuilt as around 139,000 sq ft of Grade A workspace, completed in 2025 as one of the most sustainable offices in the city.

The scheme is led by a single wayfinding detail repeated seventeen times from ground to level six. Each panel is frosted acrylic with a high-polished edge, reverse-coated in black, with floor numbers, destinations and arrows cut clean through to an oak veneer panel behind, and one corner chamfered. All of them are carried on the patented Jigsaw modular rail, so any panel can be changed without touching the wall.



Reception is bespoke: a directory of machined aluminium shelves in bottle green with freestanding profile-cut letters in warm yellow, set against the curved fluted timber wall. Beyond that, the same language runs through door signage, 74 locker numerals, floor indicators, core glazing graphics, large-format car park signage and the statutory layer, so that every sign in the building reads as part of one scheme.

The Challenge.

A back-to-frame redevelopment gives signage far more surfaces to land on than a new build does. At 19 Cornwall Street the same family of details had to sit on smooth plaster in the cores, restored exposed concrete, brickwork at the roof terrace threshold, full-height glazing at both lift cores, oak-veneered joinery on every door, the fluted timber slat wall in reception, painted structure two levels below ground in the car park, and the fronts of 74 lockers. A detail that works beautifully on one of those can look like an afterthought on the next.

The building was also being let while it was being finished. When the specification was signed off, every line of the reception directory still read "tenant name to be confirmed", and the first occupiers were only added in a later revision. That ruled out a bonded graphic panel from the start: whatever went into reception had to be changeable by the building's own team, repeatedly, without leaving a mark.

Everything else firmed up late in the same way. The specification reached version 12 before anything went into production, and it kept moving after that. The locker schedule grew from 50 doors to 74, the reception palette was still unresolved when the drawings were issued, and the building's typeface changed once the identity settled. A site survey also picked up two ground-floor wayfinding positions that were not shown on the issued plans at all.



The Solution.

The primary wayfinding family is a single idea, repeated. Each panel is 3mm frosted acrylic with a fine matt face and a high-polished edge, reverse-coated in black, with the floor number, destinations and directional arrows cut clean through to an oak veneer panel behind, so the lettering reads as warm timber against black rather than as printed text. One corner of every panel is chamfered, which gives the family a signature without adding any decoration. Seventeen panels run from ground to level six, including the fifth-floor roof terrace.

Built to be re-let. Those panels are carried on xsign's patented **Jigsaw™** modular system, a concealed wall rail holding lockable, interchangeable panels. Nothing is bonded to the wall, and any panel can be swapped in minutes without touching the substrate or the fixings. The reasoning is simple: a wayfinding scheme in a multi-let building should survive its first re-letting.

Reception. Reception is the exception, and it is bespoke. The directory is built from machined aluminium flat bar finished in a bottle green at a low sheen, so the shelves read as part of the fluted timber wall rather than as an object hung on it. Freestanding letters, profile-cut from 5mm aluminium and coated in a warm yellow, sit in a rebate along each shelf and lift straight out by hand. Floors G to 6 and Suites A, B and C are all listed, and a tenant change is a set of letters rather than a new sign.

The working building. The same discipline carries into the parts of the building most schemes give up on: slim frosted acrylic door signs with crisp white lettering on the oak doors to the cycle store, drying room, studio, bin store and FM office; frosted acrylic numerals across all 74 changing room and cycle store lockers, in three sizes so they sit correctly on doors of different heights; large single-numeral floor indicators in the lift lobbies; tamper-resistant printed vinyl on the north and south core glazing, listing what sits beyond it; and large-format car park graphics up to 3.1 metres wide directing drivers to reception and out to Great Charles Queensway. The statutory layer, fire action, no smoking or vaping and no idling vehicles, was produced to the same black and white standard rather than bought off the shelf, so compliance does not undo the design.



The Installation.

The scheme was surveyed on site and installed in phases as the fit-out released each area, working to the Kier Construction programme. Setting out the reception directory across a curved fluted wall meant coordinating with the joinery package rather than resolving it at the wall, because every shelf had to land on the slats, sit level, and keep its anchors hidden. The core vinyls went onto glazing already installed in a live circulation route, and the car park graphics were applied at full size to previously painted structure two levels below ground.

xsign returned to site in 2026 for a second package as letting progressed. The reception directory was rebuilt with its first named tenants, the locker run was extended, and further car park signage was added, all using the original details and with no remedial work to the walls. The building reads the way it was designed to, and it will keep reading that way as its occupiers change.

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“The design language here is quiet and very precise, so the signage had to be the same. Every wayfinding panel is a single frosted acrylic face with the wording cut straight through to the timber behind it. There is nowhere to hide a soft edge or a fixing that is two millimetres out. Holding that one detail across plaster, concrete, brick, glass, joinery and a car park wall was the real job on this project.”

Mark Brinklow, Project Manager, xsign

Project Detail.



The reception directory is machined from aluminium flat bar and finished in a bottle green at a low sheen, so the shelves read as part of the fluted timber wall rather than as an object hung on it. The letters are profile cut from 5mm aluminium in a warm yellow and sit freestanding in a rebate along each shelf, so a tenant change is a set of letters rather than a new sign.



Each wayfinding panel is 3mm frosted acrylic with a fine matt face and a high-polished edge, reverse-coated in black, with the floor letter, destinations and arrows cut clean through to an oak veneer panel behind. The single chamfered corner gives the family its signature.



Seventeen panels run from ground to level six, including the fifth-floor roof terrace. All are carried on the patented Jigsaw modular rail: a concealed, lockable wall system that lets any panel be swapped without touching the substrate or the fixings.



Door signage on the oak-veneered joinery is a slim frosted acrylic plate just 45mm tall, reverse-coated in black with the wording printed in white and supplied on tape so that nothing penetrates the veneer. It is the same face and edge treatment as the wayfinding family, reduced to its smallest useful size.



Tamper-resistant printed vinyl on the north and south core glazing lists what sits beyond it, applied to the face of glass already installed in a live circulation route. The arrow device is drawn from the same family as the cut-through wayfinding panels.



Frosted acrylic numerals identify all 74 changing room and cycle store lockers, produced in three sizes so the numbers sit correctly on doors of differing heights. The same reverse-coated black finish as the wayfinding family holds the detail together.



Large-format graphics up to 3.1 metres wide direct drivers back to reception and out to Great Charles Queensway, applied at full size to previously painted structure two levels below ground. The statutory layer down here was produced to the same standard rather than bought off the shelf.