

# Draft Oswestry Shopfront Design Guide



Standing Pre-Application Advice Note

20 November 2024



## FOREWORD- OSWESTRY CIVIC SOCIETY

Oswestry and District Civic Society – reformed in the 1980s - exists to promote high standards of planning and architecture; educate the public in the geography, history, natural history and architecture of the area; and secure the preservation and improvement of the area’s historic buildings and public realm.

Oswestry has a long history. It has always been a centre for commerce for the northern Marches – that area between England & Wales where ‘the King’s writ did not run’. It was an important market town in the Middle Ages and today it is still the major northern market town in Shropshire.

Despite the economic challenges faced by town centres in the late 20th century, Oswestry retains many historic buildings and there is still a local ‘style’ of shop front, and this is what the Design Guide records & celebrates --courtesy of Shropshire Council & Historic England.

This guide will help to make the experience of using the town better through the subtle but significant coherence of design and build of the shop fronts. The competition to attract shoppers to the high street has never been so fierce. Any town that wants to flourish will have to work hard to make sure those that use it regularly or occasionally, are delighted by the experience of their visit. This design guide is an excellent contribution to this multi-faceted project and is enthusiastically supported by the Oswestry and District Civic Society.

The scheme to support a roll out of these traditional shop fronts will help to confirm the new identity of the town, as a tourist and commercial centre for the northern Marches.

## INTRODUCTION- SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

Oswestry is a town steeped in history. Its historic streets and traditional shopfronts are an important part of its development and we should ensure these are preserved, and where they have been lost reinstated, to celebrate the unique character of the town. This guide is a welcome addition to provide assistance to ensure that any forthcoming schemes consider how the special character of the town is preserved and enhanced.

Now more than ever it is important to attract shoppers to our town centres. We want them to have a positive experience which encourages them to return. Having streetscapes that are unique and celebrates its past is important and attractive shopfronts is an aspect of that. This guide will help to assist owners and tenants to create a shopfront that contributes to that historic feel whilst celebrating what is unique about the town of Oswestry.

The Oswestry Design Guide will be used to support the ongoing regeneration of the town. The guide has been produced for members of the public, owners and tenants, agents, consultants and developers to use to assist with the enhancement or design of shopfronts. This guidance will ensure that schemes are well considered and will raise the design quality of existing and new shopfronts.

Cllr Chris Schofield

Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services.

Cllr Mark Jones

Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Regeneration.

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The purpose of the Oswestry Shopfront Design Guide is to encourage high-quality shopfront design which meets the needs of modern businesses whilst conserving the historic character which makes the town special. The Guide is aimed at current and future shop owners and their designers and architects but will also support decision-making through the Planning system. It sets out to be aspirational rather than prescriptive, to inspire and raise the bar of good design. It is intended as a practical guide and includes examples, case studies and links to useful resources.

To learn more about how this Guide fits with the local planning system see [The Design Guide and the Planning System](#).

## WHY ARE HISTORIC SHOPFRONTS IMPORTANT?

Surviving historic shopfronts contribute to the locally distinctive character of Oswestry. Their details are often visually and historically interesting and help retain a 'sense of place'. Studies have shown that an attractive shopping area steeped in history provides a different experience to online retail and a characterful street can help boost a town's economy.

## WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF A SHOPFRONT?

A *'Shopfront'* is a general term used as a shorthand for the entrance, display windows, frame and signage of a retail property. Over time buildings may have been repurposed but kept the historic shopfront, and you will see examples in this Guide of shopfronts which no longer 'front shops' but are still an important part of Oswestry's character.

Figure 1 shows some of the key elements of a traditional shopfront which are referenced in this Guide.

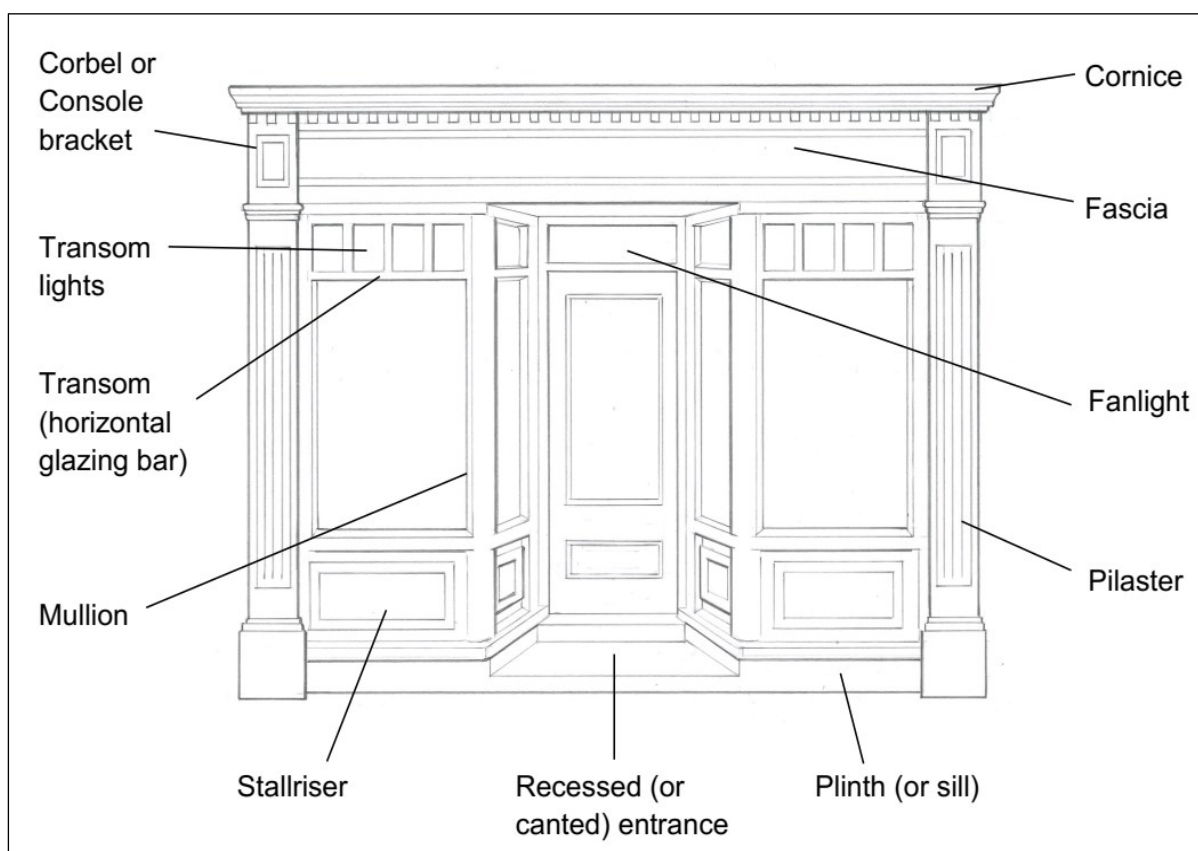


Figure 1 Typical elements of a traditional shopfront, based on 15 Church Street, Oswestry. Image © TDR Heritage Ltd.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY HISTORIC SHOPFRONTS?

*'Historic'* is a term which is generally used to describe all shopfronts up to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The older they are, the more remarkable and special their survival is likely to be. However, 1960s and later shopfronts of an innovative and architecturally interesting design and use of vernacular or quality materials can also be visually appealing and tell us and future generations a lot about Oswestry's retail history.





Figure 2 18th century style shopfront, Oswald Road.



Figure 3 Mid-19th century building and late 19th century shopfront, Leg Street. Henry Thomas.



Figure 4 7-9 Leg Street contains a 1930s shopfront in a 'traditional style' but constructed in metal rather than timber.



Figure 5 This superstore on Bailey Street was purpose built as Woolworths in the 1970s.

**18<sup>th</sup> century** or 'Georgian' (c1710-1830s) shopfronts established many of the key elements we know today including glazed display windows and use of fascias.

Generally, windowpanes were smaller with a greater number of fine glazing bars.

**19<sup>th</sup> century** or 'Victorian' (1830s-1900s) shopfronts are typically more ornate with decorative pilasters, consoles, corbels and recessed entrances.

Shopfronts built after 1840 tend to exhibit larger display windows with larger, paned sections.

A common feature at this time was retractable canvas awnings, concealed in a timber panel below the fascia.

Common features of **early 20<sup>th</sup> century** shopfronts include deeply recessed doorways, lower stallrisers and larger fascias.

There was more specialism in shopfront design according to retailer's business. Design details such as easy clean glazed tiles for butchers or deep window displays for jewellers appear at this time.

New styles such as Art Deco influenced designs as did new building materials such as chrome.

In the **mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century** national retailers such as Burtons, Boots, Woolworths and Littlewoods developed their own distinctive styles and architecture.

These buildings could be on a much larger scale to what had gone before and often used new materials and modern styles.

## OSWESTRY SPECIAL CHARACTER

Oswestry has been a market town for over 800 years. It's strategic location on the English and Welsh border means the town has a rich and varied history which is reflected in the buildings standing today. The town prospered in the Middle Ages and fragments of 14-15<sup>th</sup> century buildings still survive today in properties including The Old Fighting Cocks and Oswestry Grammar School. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries Oswestry was a sizable settlement with timber-framed residential, commercial and agricultural buildings. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was a busy coaching town with many inns and smart brick townhouses and shops. The population of the town grew significantly in the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century when it became the headquarters of the Cambrian railways. Many new properties were constructed and existing buildings were repurposed to meet growing demand for homes, shops and services. Oswestry continued to evolve in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as car travel, national brands and modern building materials influenced the shopping streets.

Oswestry's historic shopping area today is characterised by 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century rendered or brick two or three storey buildings with shops to the ground floor, arranged in terraces which line the tight-knit streets. Further out of the town centre are examples of warehouses, stables and agricultural buildings which have been repurposed for retail uses and include a range of shopfront styles and materials from the 18<sup>th</sup>-late 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, with late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century being the most prominent style. Shops are generally small, ground floor units, although there are some examples of stores with upper floor retail still in evidence such as 17 Cross Street. Elsewhere, such as 1 Willow Street, upper storeys have been converted to residential use. Painted timber is the predominant material for historic shopfronts.



*Figure 6 An early 19th century house on Church Street.*



*Figure 7 18th-19th century warehouse and stables on Oswald Road.*



*Figure 8 Early 20th century corner building, Leg Street.*

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Below are some general principles to follow when refurbishing existing or designing new shopfronts. If you are a shop owner, these can be written into briefs for design work. If you are a designer they should inform your work, and if you are a Planner or decision maker you should consider how successfully proposals apply these principles:

- Aim to enhance the streetscape overall and harmonise with architectural design of neighbouring properties
- Work with - rather than against - the building. Take inspiration from the style, design and colours of the building as a whole
- Respect and maintain historic proportions, scale and form
- Retain and conserve (rather than replace) historic features wherever possible
- Use traditional materials (for example timber rather than plastic) wherever possible.

## ENHANCING THE STREETScape

Shopfront designs should consider the streetscape as a whole - Oswestry's shopping streets are varied and are characterised by a mix of building ages, styles and heights.

If a shopfront now spans several buildings it is important to consider its underlying character when designing the shopfront. Successful designs will adapt the shopfront to suit each building, taking care not to cover windows or detailing with one large fascia.



*Figure 9 It is important shopfronts keep the 'rhythm of the street' such as here on Bailey Street. Credit: Henry Thomas.*



Closer look:

In this example, the modern purple sign of the left hand shopfront is actually larger than the historic fascia, but this could be reversed and a more traditional, slimmer sign reinstated as per the neighbouring shop.



## THE BUILDING AS A WHOLE

Shopfronts, particularly in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries were influenced by principles of classical architecture which stressed symmetry and balance. Many of these elements are still visible today and should be retained where possible.



*Figure 10 Although the two shopfronts of this building on Church Street have been altered and simplified over time, they retain the harmony and balance of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century building as a whole. Credit: Henry Thomas.*

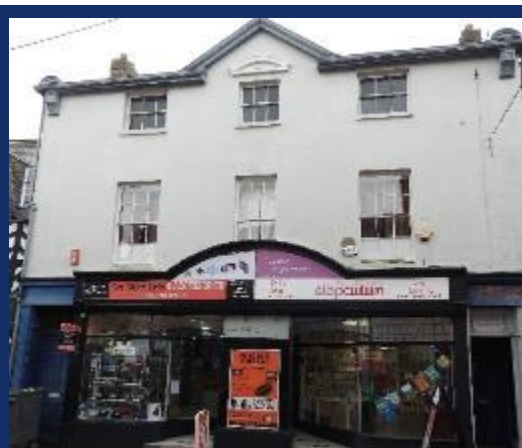
*Top Tip: Look Up!*

*It is important to consider how the shopfront relates to the building as a whole. Many buildings were designed to be symmetrical.*

Good design will retain balance across one building. Where more than one shopfront occupies a single building, all shopfronts should have similar proportions and be appropriate to the age and style of the property.



*Figure 11 This early 20<sup>th</sup> century shopfront on Bailey Street spanned the frontage of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century building. Cross Survey 1960, Shropshire Archives.*



*Figure 12 Today, the shopfront with its distinctive arched fascia board survives but the property has been split into two shops. The overall harmony has been lost. Credit: Henry Thomas, March 2023.*

The building should also avoid looking ‘top heavy’, so retaining individual units and strong verticals can be important. Generally, the shopfront should not rise above the floor level of the first floor as this can obscure the historic elevation above.

Oswestry has many listed buildings and it is important that any alterations or changes to a shopfront do not detract from the building as a whole.



*Figure 13 A townhouse on Willow Street dated 1707 with a late 19th-early 20th century shopfront inserted on the ground floor. Today we might opt for a design which doesn't obscure so much of the upper floors, but the large fascia and timber entablature is now part of the building's history.*



*Figure 14 The colour scheme of this 20th century shopfront is sensitive to this Grade II\* listed timber-framed former town house which dates from the early 17th century with later alterations and additions.*



## CONTEMPORARY DESIGN IN HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Modern shopfronts are generally constructed in plastic, metal and steel with large windows and wide entrances. High-quality contemporary design should always consider the host building and respond with sensitivity. There are already some good examples to take inspiration from!

National companies can successfully adapt their corporate style to better fit with the character of the street or town whilst still maintaining a recognisable brand.



Figure 15 Contemporary designs are effective when they replicate proportions and elements of traditional shopfronts to create a sense of balance. Salop Road. Samantha Jones.



Figure 16 National brands can adapt corporate 'house style' so it is appropriate to the building. Contemporary shopfront which keeps the glazing as the star. Church Street. Richard Banks.



Figure 17 This café on Bailey Street retains the 20<sup>th</sup> century glazing but has a contemporary colour scheme and sign. Importantly, the contemporary features including the window art and colour scheme are reversible interventions. Samantha Jones.

## SHOPFRONT DESIGN ELEMENTS

### DOORS & ENTRANCES

Some shopfronts have surviving historic doors and entrances which are rare survivors. They will usually be in proportion to the upper storeys of the building and their style, materials and fit with the character of the property as a whole.

**Recessed entrances** are a common feature of traditional shopfronts. They can be useful in bridging the level between the street and the shop floor and can incorporate fabulous detailing such as doorstep tiles or mosaics.

Historic timber doors can be well crafted and secure. Glazed doors are an opportunity to include a logo, street number or decorative feature, but should be used sparingly so as not to conceal or clutter. Posters and stickers applied to the doors or shopfront glazing generally will look cluttered and detract from the attractiveness of the shopfront and should be avoided.



*Figure 18 Windows clear of stickers and signs are most appropriate for traditional shopfronts. This property on English Walls uses stick on lettering in the upper panes to good effect.*



*Figure 19 This entrance on Church Street has a simple etched logo. Stickers occupy only a small proportion of the window. Samantha Jones.*



*Figure 20 Contrast the clear window of the cafe on the right with the abundance of stickers to the door and shop window of the left hand property. These detract from the traditional shopfront and the overall appearance is less visually appealing. Leg Street.*

**Fan lights** above the door are attractive features and often highly decorative with stained glass, etching or glazing bars which adds to the character of the shopfront.

Design tips:

- Recessed entrances are special and should be retained. Typically they should be set back from the frontage by at least 850mm.
- Shop door kick plates will look better if they are at a similar height to the stallriser.

*Top Tip: Give shoppers a warm welcome. Details such as traditional door handles, brass rails, letterboxes and bells are special survivors which add character to the building.*



*Figure 21 Well preserved entrance on Albion Hill.*



*Figure 22 Attractive recessed entrance. Church Street.*



*Figure 23 Entrance retains symmetry and classical features. Leg Street.*



*Figure 24 Recessed doorways are part of the character of traditional shopfronts. Details such as door panelling, mouldings and letterboxes can be retained and enhanced, as can tiled or decorative stallrisers.*



## WINDOWS AND GLAZING

The size and style of shop windows including glazing bars, mullions and transoms, should be in scale and proportion to the shopfront and the property as a whole to retain the historic character of a building. Consider how new shopfront designs can keep vertical lines consistent throughout the building for best effect.

Curved glass is an attractive feature of corner buildings, drawing the eye- and the shopper- in to recessed entrances. This effect is greater when windows are free of stickers and posters and allows shop displays to have a greater visible impact. Personalising shop windows can be done using company names, street numbers and even opening hours through etching, if this is in keeping with the style of the building.

Traditional window frames are usually timber and often incorporate beautiful mouldings and finishes which cannot be replicated in aluminium or modern composites.

### Design tips:

- Window stickers and posters should occupy less than 10% of the window and should be as unobtrusive as possible.
- Keep to the edges of the window where possible. What is within will be more visible!
- Timber window frames don't have to be draughty or cold. Well maintained frames will keep draughts out.



*Figure 25 Mullions provide visual continuity with the upper storey windows to this property on Bailey Street.*

*Minimal stickers allows the craftsmanship of timber frames and the wares beyond to be the star of the show.*

## FASCIAS AND CORNICES

**Fascias** are prominent components of a shopfront and usually carry the shop signage. The dimensions and material of the fascia have a big impact on the overall appearance of the property. Historically, fascias were slimmer, although there are some examples of deeper fascias in particular areas of Oswestry, for example on Cross Street and Leg Street.

### Design tips:

- Ensure fascia design is appropriate to the character and appearance of the building.
- Fascia boards should not conceal architectural features or extend beyond the shopfront surround or onto shopfront glazing.
- Unless there is a historic precedent, boards should not exceed 380mm in depth.
- New boards should not be placed over existing fascia.
- Hand-painted timber signs will usually be more appealing and appropriate to character of a historic building.
- Small individual non-illuminated letters may be considered.
- A visual gap should be left between the first floor windowsills and the top of the fascia in most cases.
- Where a shop spans two buildings, ideally whilst the fascia could be one, the retention of separate details should be retained to ensure the visual appearance and 'rhythm of the street' remains intact.



Figure 26 Traditional narrow fascia on Salop Road (above) and wider fascia Cross Street (below).



**Cornices** provide horizontal division between the shopfront and the upper floors of the building. They were designed to keep rainwater from the walls of the building, creating a projecting ledge. In Oswestry, cornices were traditionally constructed in timber and are often decorated with 'dentil' detailing on the underside.

Design tips:

- Retain traditional cornices
- Don't obscure cornices with a large fascia or modern signage

*Top Tip: Bigger isn't always better. Large fascia boards with oversized lettering can obscure the historic shopfront and be unappealing.*



Figure 27 A deep cornice with chamfered mouldings, The Cross.



Figure 28 A narrow cornice with dentils on an early 20<sup>th</sup> century shopfront, Oswald Road.

## CORBELS, CONSOLES AND PILASTERS

**Corbels** and/or **console brackets** support the cornice either side of the shopfront. Oswestry has some highly decorative stone corbels and timber console brackets which should be retained and enhanced wherever possible as they are special evidence of high-quality craftsmanship.

**Pilasters** are the vertical columns to either side of the shopfront, usually of timber construction. They are a common feature in Oswestry with a variety of decorative styles which add character to the town.

Design tips:

- Within the conservation area and on listed buildings, where original corbels, consoles and pilasters remain these should be retained and repaired. Missing features should be reinstated to match the existing style.
- Each pilaster on either side of the shopfront should be treated the same to retain the overall aesthetic of the shopfront.



Figure 29 Floral stone corbel.



Figure 30 Figures carved into stone capital.



Figure 31 Plainer timber capital with roundels Church Street.



Figure 32 Ornate console bracket, Bailey Street.



Figure 33 Glazed tile pilaster, Leg Street. Richard Banks.



Figure 34 Decorative pilaster on Oswald Road.



## STALL RISERS

Stall risers are the elements below the shop window which provide protection from wear and tear. They need to be hardwearing and are usually constructed in brick or timber on a brick plinth. They can include decorative panelling or grilles which add architectural interest. Oswestry has many examples where shop names have been stencilled onto the stallriser. They are sometimes rendered or have glazed tiles for extra protection. They can be low or high depending on the style of the shopfront, but they are an indispensable element of historic shopfront design.

### Design tips:

- Keep and enhance historic stall risers, particularly features such as panelling, signwriting and grilles
- Avoid repairing or over panelling stallrisers with materials such as marble or tile where there is no historic precedent for that effect
- Optimum height for practical and aesthetic effect is 300mm-700mm
- Cast grilles and airbricks improve air circulation, especially where there are unventilated cellars below, and should be retained or reinstated.



*Figure 35 Early 20th century panelled stallriser on Leg Street.*



*Figure 36 Large metal grilles Church Street. Oswestry Civic Society.*



*Figure 37 Metal grilles are both practical and decorative. They have been effectively incorporated into this modern shopfront on Church Street.*



## SIGNS

Signs are controlled under the Town and County Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007. You will need to familiarise yourself with the different classes of deemed consent to determine if Advertising Consent is required:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/outdoor-advertisements-and-signs-a-guide-for-advertisers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/outdoor-advertisements-and-signs-a-guide-for-advertisers).

Planning Permission or Listed Building Consent may also be required. New or altered signage on a listed building will always require Listed Building Consent and may also require Advertisement Consent. In considering applications for listed buildings Shropshire Council must have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Within the Oswestry Conservation Area, Shropshire Council must take in to account the need to *preserve or enhance the area's special character* when deciding whether to grant permission.

The fascia is usually the main sign for a shop, but other options are available and can, when sensitively done, enhance the historic character of the street such as hanging signs.

Top Tip: Permission and consents for advertising is complex, so do your research and leave plenty of time to obtain permissions. Appropriate, impactful signage prioritises quality over quantity.

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*An advertisement is “any word, letter, model, sign, placard, board, notice, awning, blind, device or representation, whether illuminated or not, in the nature of, and employed wholly or partly for the purposes of, advertisement, announcement or direction”.*

*s336 Town and Country Planning Act 1990.*

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## SIGNS PAINTED DIRECTLY ONTO A BUILDING

Signwriting directly onto side elevations or upper storeys was common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today, few examples remain so retaining and enhancing those that survive is important to help them continue to contribute to the town's character. Appropriate lettering, size and colour schemes should be used. Archive photos can help here.

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## HANGING SIGNS

Hanging signs are typical features of traditional shops in Oswestry, and many iron brackets for hanging signs can be seen throughout the town. Wherever possible brackets should be retained, restored and reused as a practical and attractive means of signage.

Where new brackets need to be installed, they should be at fascia level at one end of the fascia board and not above it. Take care not to obscure any architectural features. Painted timber with hand-painted lettering will be most in-keeping with the character of the area and is most likely to be approved in the conservation area or on a listed building, particularly where there is evidence of a previous sign.



*Figure 38 Hand painted wall sign, Leg Street.*



*Figure 39 Hanging signs with decorative wrought iron brackets are a traditional feature of Oswestry's shopping area.*



*Figure 40 Hanging sign in Chapel Court successfully brings a contemporary feel using a traditional feature.*



*Figure 41 Oswestry retains many hanging sign brackets which could be successfully reused.*

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## A-BOARDS

Hanging signs are recommended instead of A-boards and freestanding signs as they are more traditional. Where they are used, A-Boards and freestanding signs should be thoughtfully designed to fit within the streetscape, taking care to avoid creating obstacles for pedestrians or visual clutter.

Shropshire Council provides further guidance on installing A-boards: [www.shropshire.gov.uk/street-care-and-cleaning/a-boards/](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/street-care-and-cleaning/a-boards/).

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## ILLUMINATED SIGNS

Internally illuminated signs can be particularly harmful to the special character of historic shopping streets. All illuminated signs **always require advertising consent within the conservation area** and will generally be resisted. If external lighting is proposed it should be minimal and discrete, using spotlights or small trough lighting.

Flashing lights, cathode ray tubes, neon lighting and internally illuminated signs are unlikely to be permitted.

## AWNINGS, BLINDS AND CANOPIES

Awnings, canopies and retractable blinds were common in 19<sup>th</sup> century shopfronts to protect items in a window display from sun damage. There are many examples in Oswestry where the hinges and blind box survive or have been reinstated. These are interesting features, part of the historic character of the shopfront, and should be retained and repaired where possible.

Traditionally blinds would have been canvas and in plain colours, which was both practical and muted, and sometimes incorporated signage for the shop. Highly patterned canopies and awnings, particularly Dutch canopies, can obscure historic fascia and features and detract from the special character of the street. Canopies and awnings should not protrude into the road as they can be a hazard for tall vehicles.

Planning permission will usually be required for new awnings, canopies and blinds. Within the conservation area Dutch awnings are unlikely to be approved unless there is historic evidence for them.



Figure 42 Traditionally retractable blinds were functional and unobtrusive. Cross Survey, 1960. Shropshire Archives.



Figure 43 An example of a suitable awning which harmonises with the red brick and green fascia and also serves a practical purpose. Church Street. Henry Thomas.



Figure 44 Here, a Dutch canopy has been installed instead of utilising the boxed blind which is still in place. Upper Church Street. Henry Thomas.

## SPECIAL FEATURES

Oswestry's shop buildings contain a wealth of historic features which can also tell us much about their history: from the date a building was constructed to its former occupants and uses. They range from initialled doorsteps to date stones, commemorative plaques, letter boxes and safes. Examples include the date engraved in the fan light of the Post Office on Willow Street and the hanging clock above Oswestry Goldsmiths on Church Street. Below is just a selection:

Design tips:

- Special features are often well crafted and should be viewed as assets to any shop. Wherever possible retain and enhance them, even if the use of the building has changed.
- The [Useful Links](#) section provides guidance on repairing and maintaining historic buildings including how to care for historic ironwork and other materials.

*Top row left to right: Dated hopper, Leg Street, Henry Thomas. Date engraved in fan light tells us when the post office was constructed, Willow Street. Terrazzo doorstep with company initial, now The Butchery on Church Street. Terrazzo is a common material in flooring and wall tiles in Oswestry,*

*Bottom row left to right: Classically styled entablature, decorative fanlight and night safe are important features of this early 20<sup>th</sup> century bank, Church Street. Restored wall painting denotes the former fishmongers on Cross Street, Henry Thomas. Hanging clock doubles as an advertisement, Church Street.*





## MATERIALS

Timber, stone and some metals are traditional materials for shopfronts. They can be durable and long-lasting if they are kept well maintained. Recommended materials are listed below:

Shopfront element	Recommended material	Materials to avoid
Fascia	Hard wood, hand painted	Vinyl plastic, unpainted wood, metal sheeting
Stall riser	Brick, hardwood timber on brick plinth, glazed tile, stone	Timber at ground level (it will degrade quickly), synthetic tiles, fibreglass, uncoated aluminium
Pilasters, corbels, console brackets	Hard wood timber, stone, faience	Plastic, GRP or fibreglass
Doors	Painted hardwood timber	uPVC, floor to ceiling glass, aluminium
Window frames	Painted hardwood timber	uPVC, aluminium
Gutters, downpipes, hoppers	Lead, painted cast iron, painted aluminium (sometimes)	Plastic



Figure 45 This restored shopfront on Church Street uses traditional materials including a hard wood timber fascia and stallriser on a stone plinth. Henry Thomas.

## COLOURS

The colour palate of historic shopfronts was influenced by the predominant building materials, local traditions and fashions at the time, as well as the availability of certain colours. For example, 'brilliant white' did not exist until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, so off-white, cream and stone are more traditional colours. Shopfronts were generally painted in a single dark colour with a hand painted sign on the fascia in a contrasting colour.

**If you are considering changing the existing colour scheme contact [Shropshire Council's Conservation Officer](#) for advice.**

### Design tips

- Dark and muted tones tend to be most appropriate in the historic shopping area and help draw the eye into the shop window.
- Bright, modern colours on traditional features can look distracting and visually confusing.
- Consider the building as a whole and what colours complement the walling materials.
- Many paint companies provide a 'heritage', 'period' or 'historic' colour range which will be most appropriate for traditional shop fronts.
- Modern paints generally last five years if well maintained.

*Top Tip: Consider your neighbours!  
Choose colour schemes which harmonize  
rather than clash with adjoining shopfronts.*

The colours below have been used successfully in the conservation area. RAL is a universal colour matching system and the numbers below define standard colours for paints. Suggested paint suppliers are listed in the [Useful Links](#) section.



RAL 6000

Patina green



RAL 5024

Pastel blue



RAL 5010

Gentian blue



RAL 4012

Pearl blackberry



RAL 7021

Black grey



RAL 8019

Grey brown



RAL 7013

Brown grey



RAL 1019

Grey beige



RAL 3007

Black red



RAL 7005

Mouse grey



RAL 3031

Orient red



RAL 7009

Green grey



RAL 7026

Granite grey



RAL 5001

Green blue



RAL 6004

Blue green



RAL 5003

Sapphire blue



RAL 4007

Purple violet



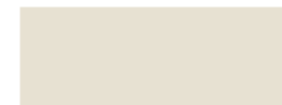
RAL 1013

Oyster white



RAL 1015

Light ivory



RAL 9001

Cream

## PERMISSIONS AND CONSENTS

Although some small changes to shopfronts do not require **planning permission**, most alterations will.

Planning permission is not required for repair work and routine maintenance which does not change the character of the shop. Planning permission **is** required if the change to the shopfront will “materially” alter the appearance of the building within the street scene. If you are in any doubt, you should always speak to Shropshire Council’s Planning team to find out if permission is needed.

Alterations to a listed building may also require **Listed Building Consent**. You can find out if your property is listed here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/> and you can speak to the Council’s Conservation Officer at the earliest opportunity, to check if Consent will be required.

Much of Oswestry town centre is a **conservation area**. This means permission is required for partial or total demolition of any un-listed building within the conservation area and may include shopfronts or features which give character to the building.

**Advertising Consent** is required for the majority of advertisements or signs.

## ACCESSIBILITY

Goods and services in shops should be accessible to everyone. Historic buildings **can** be modified to allow inclusive access whilst retaining their traditional character, for example ramps added to recessed entrances.

There is a wealth of national and local advice available, notably:

Historic England: Easy Access to Historic Buildings: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/easy-access-to-historic-buildings/>

Oswestry and District Access Group: <https://shropshire-disability.net/access-group-oswestry/>

National Register of Access Consultants: <https://www.nrac.org.uk/>

## SECURITY

Where historic gates and grilles survive they should be restored and maintained, often they are ornate and display fine craftsmanship as well as serving a useful purpose.

If security shutters are necessary, opt for solutions which will have as little visual impact as possible. Removable mesh grills and sold or external roller shutters prevent visibility into the shop and can contribute to a shopping area feeling closed or units empty and unwelcoming when they are in use. They are not appropriate within the conservation area and are strongly discouraged elsewhere.

Laminated glass is preferable. Internal grills do not require permission unless the building is listed. The grills should be as unobtrusive as possible and housing concealed behind fascia or shop windows. CCTV cameras should also be carefully positioned to minimise visual impact on the building.

*Timber shutters with padlocked iron bars were still used until the 2020s at this jewellers on Church Street (Left). Cross Survey, 1960. Shropshire Archives.*

*Traditional gates can be practical and decorative, such as these on Leg Street (Centre).*

*Internal shutters can be inobtrusive (right). Samantha Jones.*





## CASE STUDY: 17 CROSS STREET

Cross Street sits on one of the main shopping streets in the town centre. It is one of Oswestry's oldest streets, established in the medieval period and redeveloped in the late 19th century when dilapidated buildings on the western side were acquired and demolished, the street widened, and new premises built on a larger scale, with grand shopfronts.

For some years the top two floors of number 17 have been occupied by Designs in Mind, a Community Interest Company (CIC) which uses art to help adults with mental health issues. In 2020 Designs in Mind secured the ground floor, enabling them to provide a fully accessible workshop, a quiet room and a much needed high street shop to bring in revenue.

Designs in Mind initially planned to reuse the existing glass and timber elements to make a new shopfront. The CIC approached the HSHAZ Project to see if any financial assistance was available. We were able to work with them to come up with a shopfront that was more suitable for the building, as well as supporting the refurbishment and bringing the ground floor back into use.

In Oswestry we are lucky to have an archive of shopfront images from 1960. Unfortunately, the historic shopfront at 17 Cross Street had been replaced by then, so we had no images to guide us. Instead, we worked with Designs in Mind and the architects to study the surrounding buildings. The shopfront was brought forward so it was in line with the rest of the building and pavement and the angled entranceway made square with the frontage. The shopfront now fit well with the surrounding streetscape, and the internal footprint of the shop increased, a double win!

Design inspiration for the ground floor glazing was taken from the distinctive first floor windows. The dentils under the cornice mirror those at the top of the building. The stall riser and fluted pilasters were designed to match other historic shopfronts on Cross Street.

Archive images of other shopfronts along Cross Street suggested wider fascias were a traditional feature. Keeping the wide fascia was also necessary to cover a structural steel joist which was required.

There is no external lighting and simple signage and company logo.



Figure 46 17 Cross Street before the work began. Samantha Jones.



Figure 47 Reinstated shopfront, 2023. Samantha Jones.

## THE DESIGN GUIDE AND THE PLANNING SYSTEM

The Oswestry Shopfront Design Guide is a **Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**. It builds on policies in Shropshire's **Local Development Documents** which, when adopted, will form part of Shropshire's Local Plan- a vision and framework for the future development of Shropshire to 2038. As a SPD, the Oswestry Shopfront Design Guide is not part of the statutory development plan. However, it is an important consideration in determining planning applications.

The Design Guide provides more detailed guidance to support policies in Shropshire's Local Development Documents and should be read in conjunction with them. The most relevant principles and policies for readers of this Guide are highlighted below:

[Shropshire's Core Strategy](#), specifically: **CS6: Sustainable Design and Development Principles**

*All development protects, restores, conserves and enhances the natural, built and historic environment and is appropriate in scale, density, pattern and design taking into account the local context and character, and those features which contribute to local character.*

Shropshire Council [Site Allocation and Management of Development \(SAMDev\) Plan](#):

**Policy MD2: Sustainable Design** supplements policy CS6 by ensuring that for development proposals to be considered acceptable they should contribute to and respect locally distinctive or valued character by reflecting locally characteristic architectural design and details, such as building materials, form, colour and texture of detailing, taking account of their scale and proportion.

In Oswestry there is a presumption in favour of retail (A1) proposals in ground floor premises within the primary shopping area. For more information about changes of use consult: **Policy MD10a: Managing Town Centre Development.**

**Policy MD13: The Historic Environment** sets out specific guidance on the protection of Shropshire's historic environment, including the requirements that need to be met for those development proposals which are likely to have an impact on the significance, including the setting, of a heritage asset.

For more information about the Oswestry Town Development Strategy for Oswestry see Settlement Policy **S14: Oswestry Area.**

The draft [Shropshire Local Plan \(2016-2038\)](#) identifies a vision and framework for the future development of Shropshire to 2038; addresses needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the local economy, community facilities and infrastructure; and seeks to safeguard the environment, enable adaptation to climate change and helps to secure high-quality and accessible design.

Due to the significant progress undertaken by Shropshire Council on their Local Plan it is important to consider the updated policies that relate high quality design and the historic environment

**SP1 The Shropshire Test:** This includes raising design standards and enhancing the area's character and historic environment.

**SP5 High Quality Design:** This policy is intended to ensure new development will deliver high quality design, taking account of the need to maintain and enhance the character, appearance and historic interests of settlements, street scenes, groups of buildings and the landscape.

**DP23 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment:** This sets out specific guidance on the protection of Shropshire's historic environment.

## USEFUL LINKS

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### PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND ADVICE

<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/>

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/planning/>

UK Government, Outdoor advertisements and signs: a guide for advertisers:  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/outdoor-advertisements-and-signs-a-guide-for-advertisers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/outdoor-advertisements-and-signs-a-guide-for-advertisers)

Oswestry town centre conservation area map:

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/1681/oswestry-town-centre.pdf>

Repair and maintenance of historic buildings:

[Looking After Historic Buildings | Historic England](#)

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### ENERGY AND CARBON EFFICENCY

Historic England have published guidance on how historic buildings can be adapted to improve their energy and carbon efficiency: -

[Historic England Advice Note 18 \(HEAN 18\): Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency](#)

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### CHOOSING PAINTS

There are many paint suppliers, below is just a selection of those which have 'heritage' or equivalent ranges:

[www.crownpaintsprofessional.com/colour/find-a-colour/?collection=ct-historic](http://www.crownpaintsprofessional.com/colour/find-a-colour/?collection=ct-historic)

[www.duluxheritage.co.uk/en](http://www.duluxheritage.co.uk/en)

[www.farrow-ball.com/paint-colours](http://www.farrow-ball.com/paint-colours)

[www.littlegreene.com/paint/collections/colours-of-england](http://www.littlegreene.com/paint/collections/colours-of-england)

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## FURTHER READING HISTORIC SHOPFRONTS IN OSWESTRY

<https://wooliesbuildings.wordpress.com/2020/02/25/oswestry-store-487/>

To learn more about the history of shopfronts watch this webinar from Historic England:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/training-skills/training/webinars/recordings/webinar-on-talking-shop-an-introduction-to-historic-shopfronts/>

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## PROJECT INSPIRATION

How a good shopfront can transform your business by Edinburgh World Heritage:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JPu5eiEPYXs>

## HOW TO RESEARCH YOUR SHOPFRONT

There are many sources you can use to find out more about the history of your shopfront, ranging from historic photos and maps to archival sources and books. Many of these sources can be found online.

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## STARTING POINTS

Shropshire Council have produced an extremely helpful **Oswestry Research Guide**: <https://www.oswestry-tc.gov.uk/oswestry-archives.html> which gives an introduction to the variety of sources for the town available at Oswestry Town Council Archive, Shropshire Archives and Oswestry Library as well as some of the main national archives.

It is also useful to look up the planning history for a building or site using the [Shropshire Council](#) website or the [Planning Portal](#). Previous and current applications may include building plans, photographs, maps or even planning and heritage statements which could give you some interesting and useful background information.

The Oswestry Conservation Area appraisal provides a detailed assessment of the area's character and appearance and is available from the Conservation Officer at Shropshire Council.



## GLOSSARY

**Blind Box-** Originally used to conceal a roller blind.

**Cill-** This tops and projects the stallriser, diverting rainwater away from the building

**Bracket/ Console-** Often found at the top of a pilaster. Frames the fascia and the blind box. Typically 's' shaped with the upper part larger than the lower part.

**Corbel-** Also found at the top of a pilaster, a more general term for a structural piece of timber, stone or metal which support the fascia and cornice above.

**Cornice-** Provides a horizontal divide between the shopfront and the upper floors.

**Fascia-** Primary place that a shop displays its sign, running horizontally above the shopfront.

**Mullion-** Vertical pieces of timber which divide the windows into smaller panes.

**Pilaster-** A decorative element, usually in timber on shopfronts. They frame the shopfront vertically and are found either side of the windows. They provide visual support to the fascia above.

**Stallriser-** The panel below the window. Raises the window from ground level, protecting it, and provides a visual base for the rest of the shopfront.

**Terrazzo-** A composite material, poured in place or precast, which is used for floor and wall treatments. It consists of chips of marble, quartz, granite, glass, or other suitable material, poured with a cementitious binder.

**Threshold-** The recessed entrance lobby leading to the door that allows more window display area.

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