

Draft Oswestry Shopfront Design Guide

Consultation Report

February 2025



1 Introduction and Methodology

The aim of the Oswestry Shopfront Design Guide is to encourage high-quality shopfront design, meeting the needs of business whilst conserving the historic nature and character of the town. The Guide is aimed at current and future shop owners, together with their architects and agents, but will also support decision-making through the Planning system. It provides additional guidance in relation to existing planning policies and is intended to inspire and raise the bar of good design. It has been created to act as a practical guide and includes examples, case studies and links to useful resources.

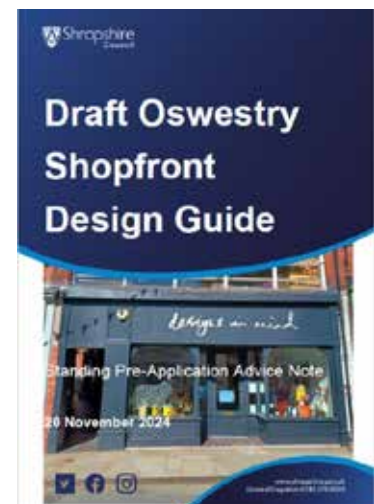
The draft Oswestry Shopfront Design Guide includes a foreword from the Oswestry Civic Society and an introduction from Shropshire Council. It sets out the importance of shopfronts and their components. Example shopfronts are used to explain the different historical appearance of shopfronts and how they can add to the character of the town. The draft guide includes principles for shopfront design and sets out how character may be improved using doors and entrances, windows, facias and cornices, corbels, consoles and pilasters, stall risers and signs. Awnings, blinds and canopies and other special features are also included. The draft guide suggests materials and colours, and other important considerations included in the draft guide such as permissions and consents, accessibility, security and the planning system.

The consultation on the draft Oswestry Shopfront Design Guide launched on 2nd December 2024 and closed on the 24th January 2025. The consultation was hosted on Shropshire Council's Get Involved webpages but also shared widely with partners including the Oswestry BID and Oswestry Town Council and publicised using Facebook and a range of other social media and communication methods. The consultation also included an option for people unable to feedback online to email, write or request alternative versions of the consultation survey.

Every effort was made to ensure shop owners, architects, designers, agents and residents had the opportunity to participate and share their views. A drop-in event co-hosted with the Oswestry BID and Oswestry Town Council was held from 3pm to 6pm on 15th January 2025 at Memorial Hall Oswestry. Approximately 15-20 people attended and expressed general support for the draft design guide.

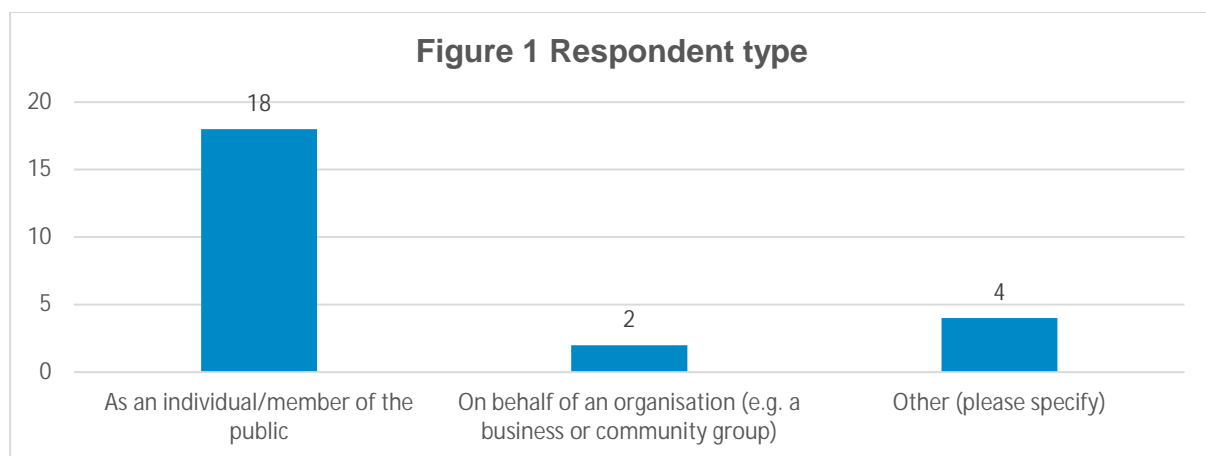
Despite Shropshire Council and partner organisations' efforts to promote the consultation only 24 responses were received. However, the responses were helpful, and the results of the feedback are considered within this report. Findings are set out within the following sections:

1. Introduction and Methodology
2. Respondent Characteristics
3. Views on the draft design guide
4. Summary and Conclusion



2 Respondent Characteristics

There were 24 responses to the consultation, 2 responses were on behalf of a business or organisation and 18 of these were from members of the public. 4 responses were other and of those there were 2 responses from members for Oswestry Civic Society, a sign writer and an anonymous other response. Figure 1 displays the response totals. The response numbers were low overall and despite extensive communications the target audiences were not all engaged. It had been hoped that responses would be obtained from shop owners, architects, designers and agents in addition to members of the public. Indeed, these audiences were invited to participate within the communications shared by both Shropshire Council and Oswestry-based partner organisations.



It is possible that response numbers were low because there was little to object to within the draft Oswestry Shopfront Design Guide (this theory is supported by the feedback collected at the drop-in event and the data collected and presented in the next section of the report). In general terms consultation response rates are higher when there are concerns or opposition to any proposals set out. When consultations set out issues that are widely publicly supported response rates can be low.

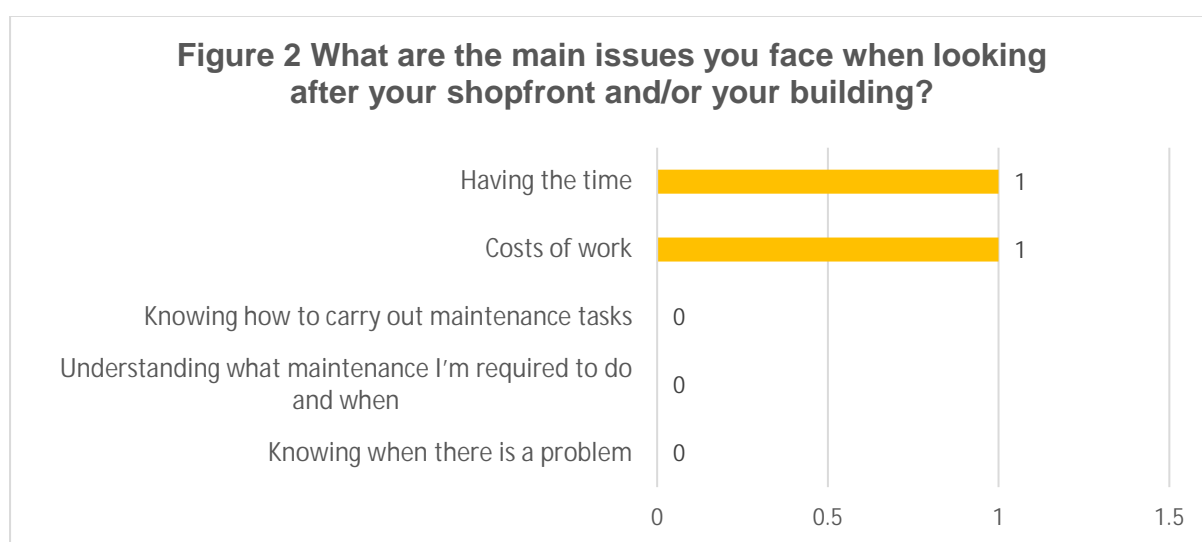
Despite this it is important for Shropshire Council to mitigate the risk of a low response rate, and as such the following action is suggested:

- Decision makers will be asked to agree a review period to allow further engagement at a later date (for example in 4- or 5-years' time). This will enable feedback on how the design guide is working, its impact and any further feedback from shop owners, architects, designers, agents and residents to be collected and used to further refine the document.

The drop-in session and survey feedback suggest risk of any concerns or objections is very low but continued joint working with partners including Oswestry BID and Oswestry Town Council will enable on-going engagement and comments to be fed back to Shropshire Council.

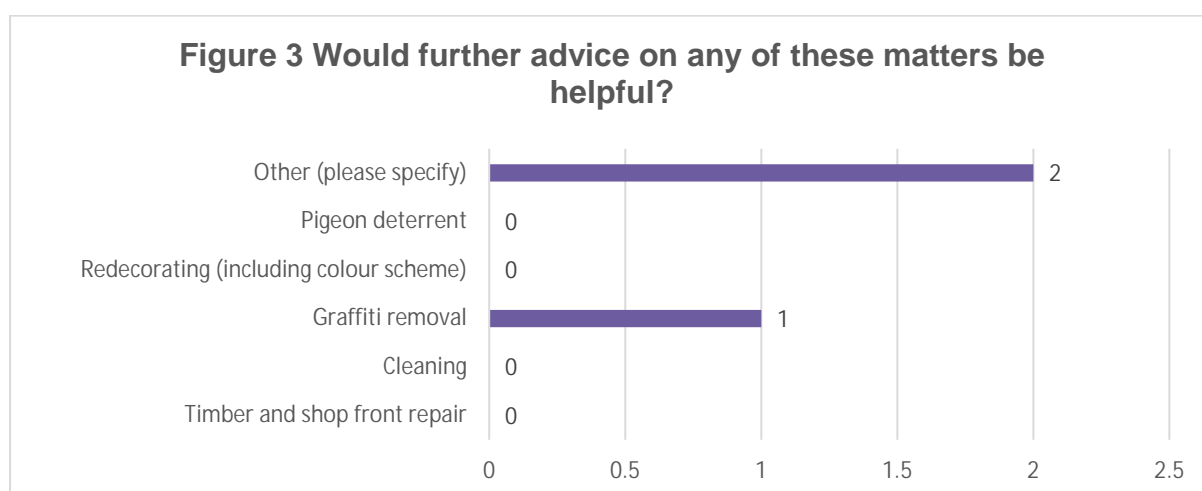
3 Views on the draft design guide

Survey respondents were asked a series of questions relating to shopfront design and the design guide. Owners of businesses were asked ‘Does your business or organisation maintain a shop front in Oswestry, or do you plan to do so in the near future?’ There were no responses to the question, and it is assumed that the 2 organisations that responded to the survey (business or community organisations) do not currently have any immediate plans to work on their shop fronts (if they have one). Some feedback was received for the next question, which read ‘What are the main issues you face when looking after your shopfront and/or your building?’ Only 2 issues were identified, and these were having the time and cost of work. Figure 2 displays the response.



A few comments were added within the ‘other suggestions’ comment box available and these were from people explaining that they are not occupiers of buildings with shopfronts.

The next question within the survey asked whether advice would be helpful and listed the type of advice that could be made available. Figure 3 displays the result.



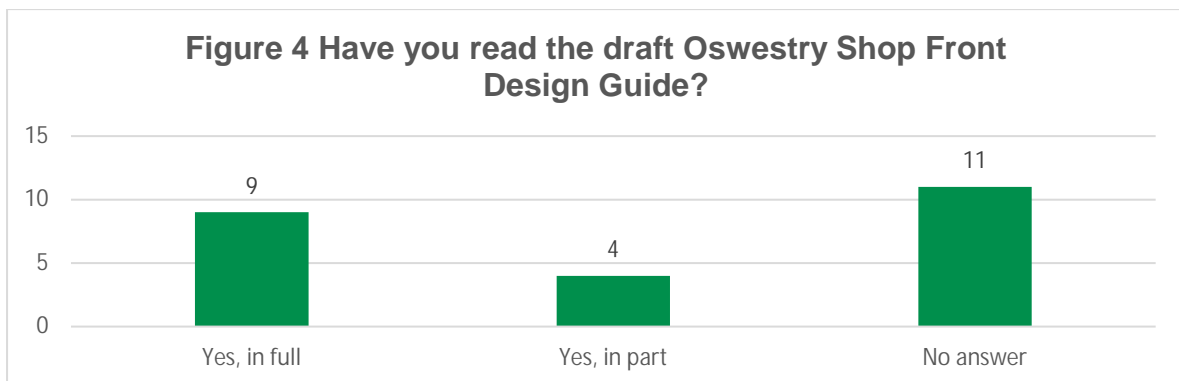
Graffiti removal advice was requested but the other category comments did not link to advice, one commented that they do not have a shopfront and the other was a helpful suggestion and has been picked up later in this section.

The next question was used to check preferences for accessing the finalised Oswestry Shopfront Design Guide. The following options were presented and survey respondents asked to rank them with top choice first:

- Posted on the Shropshire Council website
- Posted on the Oswestry Town Council website
- Delivered alongside online or in-person training

The organisational respondents had different views on the options presented (members of the public were not required to answer this question) however there was a slight preference for hosting on Shropshire Council's website (ranked first or second by all respondents to this question). There were no other suggestions for how the guide should be accessed.

The remaining questions within the survey could be answered by all respondents. The first question in this set sought to determine if those participating in the consultation had had time to read the draft document. The response is shown in Figure 4.



9 of the 24 respondents had read the document in full, 4 in part and the remainder didn't say, suggesting that perhaps they had not yet reviewed the document. The survey respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the draft (see Figure 5).

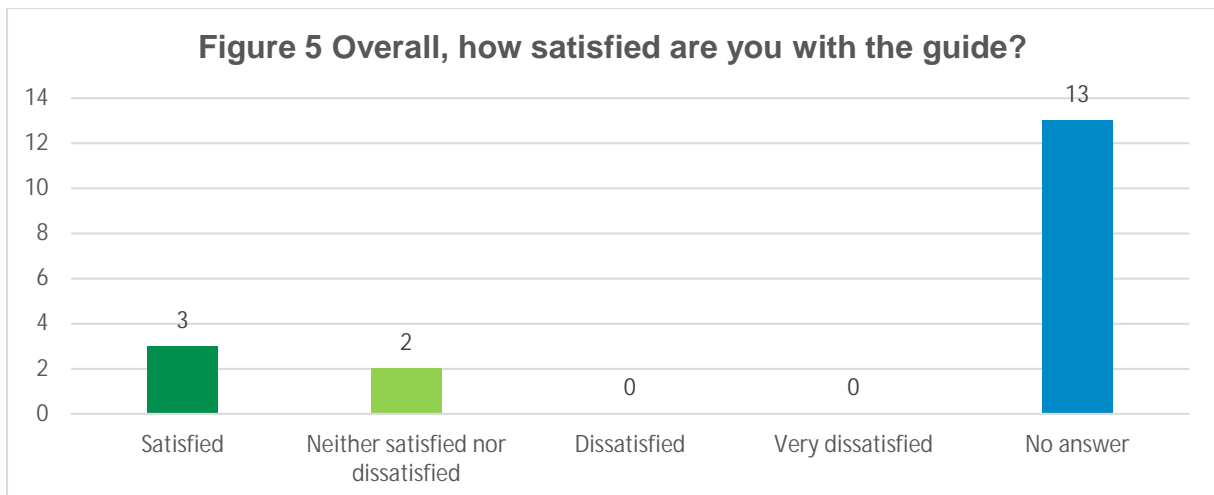
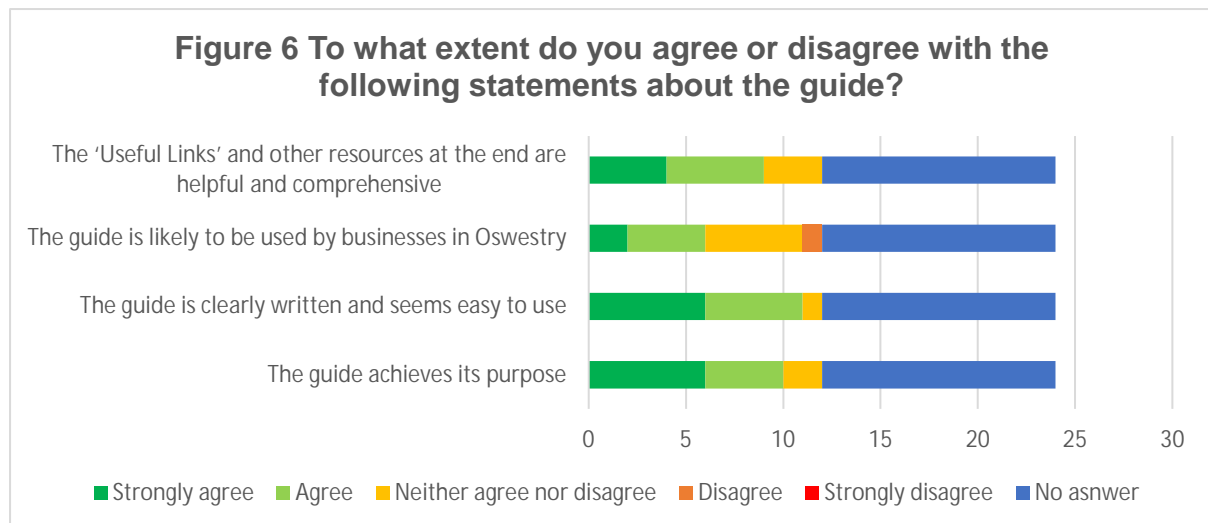


Figure 5 highlights that none of the respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the draft document. 13 didn't respond to the question but this links to the previous question suggesting that many had not taken time to read the document.

Each survey respondent was asked to give a view on a series of statements about the draft document. These read:

- The guide achieves its purpose.
- The guide is clearly written and seems easy to use.
- The guide is likely to be used by businesses in Oswestry.
- The 'Useful Links' and other resources at the end are helpful and comprehensive.

Figure 6 displays the response to each statement and shows that those who had considered the draft were supportive of its content. The only concern was expressed by one person who did not have confidence that the design guide would be used by local businesses.



All consultation respondents were asked if there were any gaps in the draft design guide. All comments are included below:

- *“Advice regarding thermal insulation and security.”*
- *“How much it would cost individual shops to implement the plans.”*
- *“Shop names add to the tone of a town's shopping centre. "Boozed Up" for an off-licence in Oswestry, gives off a somewhat down-market impression. Fun and jokey is one thing but it can reflect on the expectations of a town council.”*
- *“The guide should recommend masonry or tiled structure for the lowest 150mm. There are a number of places where timber has been used; quite soon it gets damaged by rainwater splashback or impact from street-cleaning machines and can look very scruffy. I can forward photos if required.”*
- *“Would like more enforcement...it's a guide; existing business aren't required to fall in line.”*

The next question asked if anything needed to be changed and the responses are shown below:

- *“Document should recommend NOT to extend timber shopfront down to footway level. I have photos of examples where damage has been caused by rainwater splashing and street-cleaning machines. Instead stonework/tiling/ render should be used.”*
- *“Colour Chart.”*
- *“I would like the introduction of some kind of enforcement of the new guidelines, as opposed to the being guidelines. Future proposal once in effect perhaps.”*
- *“Should never have been written as it will just cause more shops to close with the added expense.”*

A space was also included for any other comments:

- *“Keeping our heritage and history is vital, keeping the historic character of Oswestry is something I feel strongly about, I hope we keep up with our tradition.”*
- *“If adopted, it must be enforced.”*
- *“Would like this to have teeth rather than being a guide. Council should have / get some powers of enforcement.”*
- *“The guide should ensure that shop fronts such as the recent vaping shop development on Cross Street (former Time Invaders/Baby Bird cafe) are not permitted. The use of neon signs, particularly flashing signs is not appropriate at all for this heritage location.”*
- *“Waste of public money.”*

The comments suggest a few key themes, and these are explored in the next section of the report.



4 Summary and Conclusion

The Oswestry Shopfront Design Guide aims to promote high-quality shopfront design while preserving the historic character of the town. It provides guidance for current and future shop owners, architects, and agents, and supports decision-making through the Planning system. The guide includes principles for shopfront design, examples, case studies, and links to useful resources. It covers various components of shopfronts, such as doors, windows, facias, and signs, and addresses materials, colours, accessibility, security, and permissions.

The consultation for the draft guide was conducted from 2nd December 2024 to January 24th 2025. It included both a drop-in event in Oswestry and an online survey feedback option. Despite extensive promotion, only 24 responses were received. The feedback suggests overall support for the draft guide.

The suggestions that were made include the provision of advice on graffiti removal, thermal insulation and security; taking care when using timber at floor level due to the potential for damage from water and street cleaning machines; and queries over the appropriateness of some shop names and very modern looking street signs. The top concerns relate to whether the guide can be enforced and will be adopted in a way that ensures compliance, and the potential cost implications for business owners.

The draft Oswestry Shopfront Design Guide has been well-received, with general support from the consultation respondents. The low response rate may indicate a lack of objections to the draft guide. To ensure continued engagement and feedback, it is recommended to review the guide periodically and maintain collaboration with partners including Oswestry BID and Oswestry Town Council. The guide's success will depend on its practical application and the ongoing involvement of stakeholders in refining and improving the document.



February 2025

Analysis and reporting by:
Feedback and Insight Team, Legal and Democratic Services
Shropshire Council
Email: TellUs@shropshire.gov.uk

Shropshire Council Lead Department: Policy & Environment Service



Shropshire
Council