

An aerial photograph of a town, likely Oswestry, with a blue overlay. The image shows a dense residential area with a central river or canal. The text 'FUTURE OSWESTRY PLAN' is overlaid in white and orange.

FUTURE OSWESTRY PLAN

February 2022
CONSULTATION DRAFT



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1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Oswestry is an historic Shropshire market town located just 5 miles east of the Welsh border. The scene of many battles, whilst there is little visible evidence of the thirteenth century wall which once encircled to majority of the town, Oswestry Castle and the town's medieval street pattern remain.

The town centre boasts a diverse collection of historic buildings most of which are collected within the Oswestry Town Centre conservation area. The town's history as a Welsh border town and the largely intact nature of its historical commercial centre contribute significantly to its appeal for visitors.

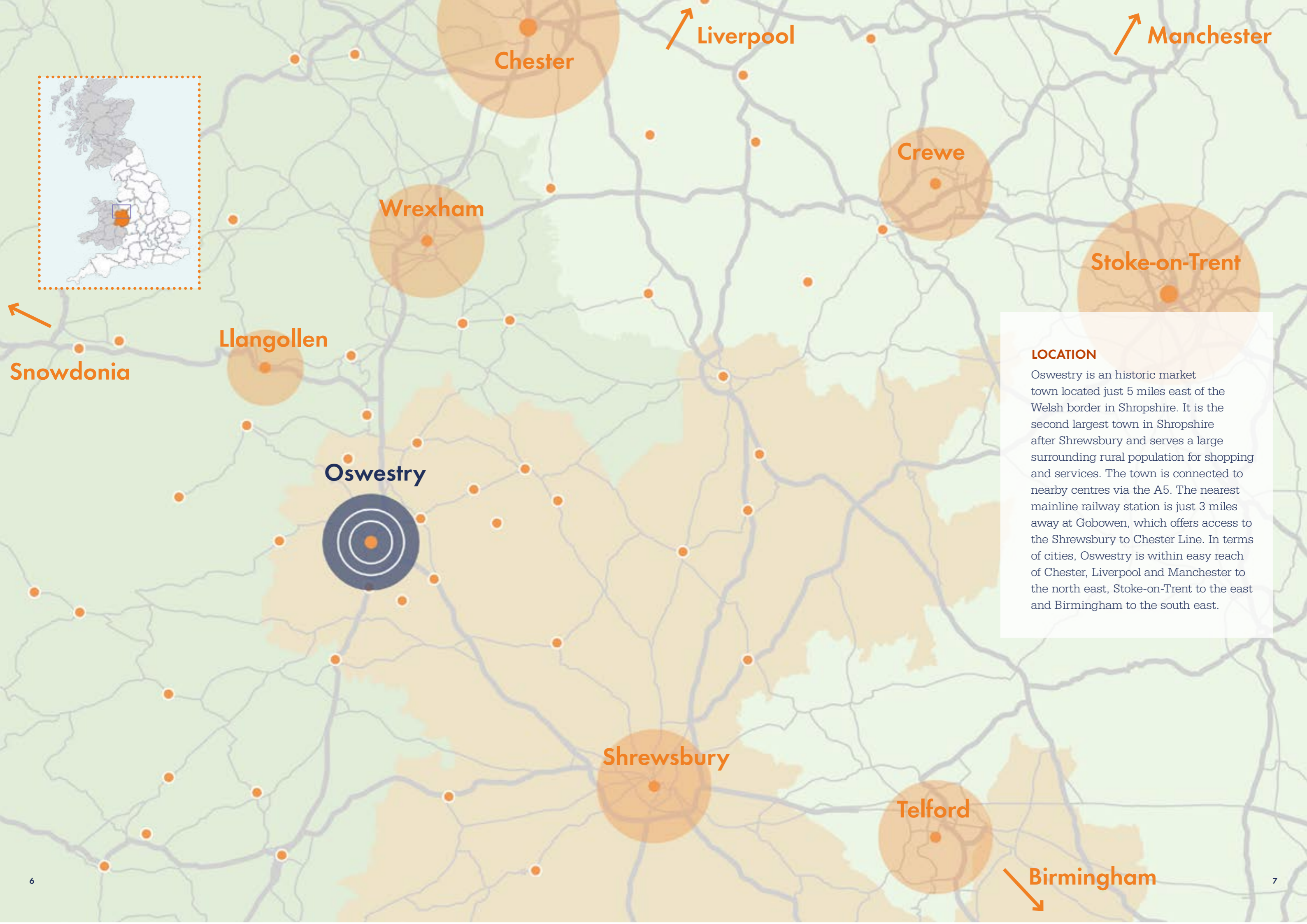
Oswestry is home to around 18,000 people and boasts a friendly, community atmosphere. The town supports surrounding villages and rural hinterland as a centre for shopping, services and community-life.

Looking to the future, Oswestry's current context poses opportunities and challenges. There are significant developments proposed around the Mile End roundabout which have the potential to contribute to the town's growth and prosperity; a coordinated approach is needed to make sure these changes benefit the town as much as possible.

In recent years, retail has declined nationwide with the rise of internet and out-of-town shopping. While Oswestry is well-placed with a high proportion of independent shops, the town will need to be creative in how to attract people into town, to compete with nearby centres and to fill vacant units.

The town's historic fabric is its greatest asset, but also requires significant investment for upkeep. The High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) funding is well timed to regenerate the historic core. And the Covid-19 pandemic has changed how people use the town. In this context, a coordinated approach is needed to support the town's recovery and future as a vibrant market town.

The Future Oswestry Plan seeks to set the agenda for local action, investment and change through an ongoing engagement and consultation process with local stakeholders, businesses, and residents. It seeks to bring together the ambitions of local stakeholders, coordinating action and investment towards a shared vision for the town's future.



LOCATION

Oswestry is an historic market town located just 5 miles east of the Welsh border in Shropshire. It is the second largest town in Shropshire after Shrewsbury and serves a large surrounding rural population for shopping and services. The town is connected to nearby centres via the A5. The nearest mainline railway station is just 3 miles away at Gobowen, which offers access to the Shrewsbury to Chester Line. In terms of cities, Oswestry is within easy reach of Chester, Liverpool and Manchester to the north east, Stoke-on-Trent to the east and Birmingham to the south east.

1.2 PURPOSE AND STATUS OF THE PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Future Oswestry Plan seeks to set the agenda for local action, investment and change through an ongoing engagement and consultation process with local stakeholders, businesses, and residents. It seeks to bring together the ambitions of local stakeholders, coordinating action and investment towards a shared vision for the town's future.

Policies, programmes and agendas continually evolve. As the national policy framework evolves, so local policies and programmes must be reviewed and updated. This process is continuous. The Future Oswestry Plan is part of this process.

Frameworks and vision documents like the Future Oswestry Plan are necessarily broad in their scope, reach and intended influence. They are high level documents, setting out a wide range of opportunities for short- and longer-term actions and priorities. They help to set the objectives for the future of a place. However, given their focus on place rather than any specific policy topic or theme, they are necessarily cross cutting.

When is the right time to prepare such plans? Perhaps they should be prepared to support the adoption of new Local Plans or Local Implementation Plan? Or perhaps they should be timed to align with a new political term. The answer is more straightforward.

Strategies and frameworks like the Future Oswestry Plan emerge from tangible local need. They emerge from a shared sense that local action is needed to ensure opportunities are taken and not missed – from a sense that more joined up thinking is required.

Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound and often devastating impact on many industries, it has also highlighted the importance of local communities, of local high streets and of local shops and services. There has therefore never been a better or more important time to prepare a vision and plan outlining the brightest possible future for the local town of Oswestry.

The Future Oswestry Group (FOG) is made up of representatives from Shropshire Council, Oswestry Town Council and Oswestry Business Improvement District (BID). The group was set up to help deliver activities and projects that will benefit the town, its residents and its businesses. The Future Oswestry Group have overseen the development of this Plan.

THE ROLE OF ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder and community engagement have played a fundamental role in shaping the Future Oswestry Plan.

The engagement process is outlined in more detail in Section 2 of the report and full details are available online.

The main phase of community engagement was led by the Future Oswestry Group and revolved around a series of stakeholder and community workshop sessions. These sessions were themed as follows to ensure the discussions were appropriately tailored to their target audience whilst leaving things open to ensure all and any views could be expressed at every stage.

- **Making Oswestry a better place to live;**
- **Making Oswestry a better place to do business; and**
- **Making Oswestry a healthier and more sustainable town.**

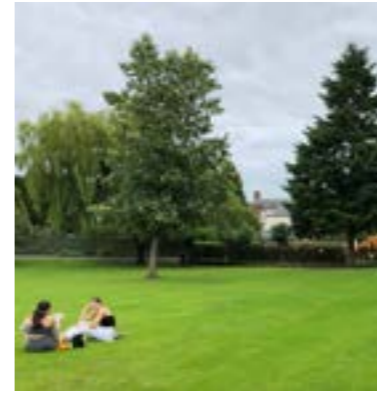
The outcomes of these discussions has informed the Future Oswestry Plan and its component strategies - (i) placemaking; (ii) movement; and, (iii) development.

STATUS OF THE PLAN

The Future Oswestry Plan has been prepared with the benefit of stakeholder and community engagement at every stage. Preparation of the Plan has been overseen by the Future Oswestry Group comprising Shropshire Council, Oswestry Town Council and Oswestry Business Improvement District (BID). The group work collectively to make Oswestry a town where businesses can thrive, where families want to live, and a place where tourists want to visit and enjoy.

In addition to inputs from the local resident and business community, preparation of the Plan has also benefited from inputs and discussions with representatives from many of the relevant Shropshire Council and Oswestry Town Council services whose policies and actions have a direct bearing on how Oswestry functions on a day-to-day basis.

The Future Oswestry Plan is not however a fixed blueprint. It marks the beginning of a process of collaborative working to deliver improvement and investment in and around the town. In that sense, the Plan helps to set an agenda for change rather than determining the precise changes that will be made. Each of the projects and opportunities identified within it will require their own processes of engagement and consultation should moves be made to progress them



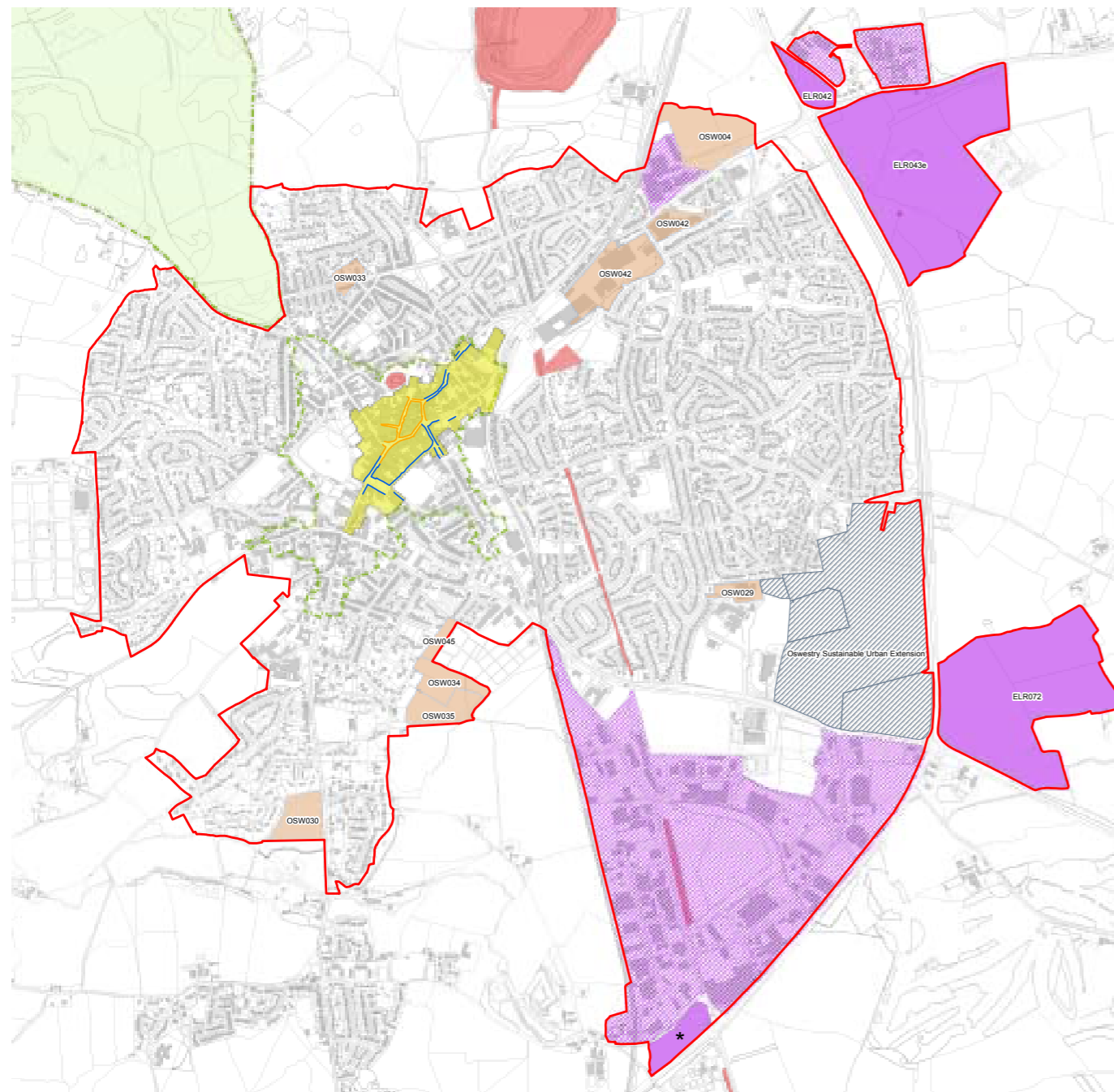


Figure 1 Oswestry's key Local Plan planning designations (source: Shropshire Local Plan proposals map, 2015)

Key	
	Housing
	Employment
	Protected Employment Area
	Sustainable Urban Extension Oswestry
	Primary Shopping Area
	Secondary Shopping Area
	Town Centre
	Conservation Area
	Scheduled Ancient Monument
	Development Boundary
	Registered Parks
	Employment Commitment



To help enable this to happen and to ensure the Plan has the status required for it to be used to coordinate change, the intention is for the Future Oswestry Plan to be formally endorsed by the relevant committees and boards of Shropshire Council, Oswestry Town Council and the Oswestry BID. This will take place following a final and more formal period of consultation on this document.

This process will enable the Plan to act and be used in a number of important ways, as follows:

- The Plan will help to implement local policies already in place as a material consideration – such as those associated with maintaining Oswestry's status as one of Shropshire's major commercial centres, and, capitalising on the regenerative benefits of the town's heritage assets through the ongoing High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) programme;
- The Plan will help to inform the emerging and future policy framework – such as the priorities being outlined in the adopted and emerging Local Plans;
- The Plan will inform decisions to be made by relevant authorities – and where appropriate

will be a material consideration in planning decisions on key areas of the town to help ensure the vision outlined in the Plan is delivered in the longer term.

It will be necessary to keep the Plan under review. The economy and prevailing property markets will change, and decisions might be made which change the context within which the Future Oswestry Plan must be seen. The intention however is for the Plan to be a flexible, long term call to action – not determining specific projects or initiatives, but rather flagging a range of potential projects and opportunities on which further discussions should be had and local collaborative decisions be made.

1.3 POLICY AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

Local Plan

The Local Plan identifies that Oswestry will continue to act as a Principal Centre and contribute towards Shropshire's strategic growth objectives. The Plan supports exploring ways in which it can effectively fulfil its role as the largest principal centre. The plan allocates sites for development (as seen in Figure 2), balancing the need for additional housing and employment space. Shropshire Council is currently undertaking a Local Plan Review to extend the plan period to 2038 and expects to be in a position to adopt a revised plan in late 2022/ early 2023 following an Examination in Public in mid-2022.

Local Economic Growth Strategy

In addition to the policies contained within its Local Plan, Shropshire Council's work on economic growth and regeneration is guided by its Economic Growth Strategy 2017 – 2021. This sets a vision which recognises that the quality of the county's historic environment represents one of its key assets which can be harnessed to attract inward investment. The Strategy recognises the need to balance growth against the need to sustain the historic town centres and to regenerate the latter using the potential of their historic environments. Future Oswestry Plan supports this ambition, setting out ways the historic environment

can be regenerated to the benefit of the local economy.

Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy Review (2022-2027)

This plan will ensure Oswestry's future ambitions are captured within the Economic Growth Strategy Review (2022-2027), and its emerging key themes of Strategic Locations, Supporting Local Businesses and Employment and Skills.

Declaration of Climate Emergency

Shropshire Council and Oswestry Town Council have both declared a Climate Emergency with the target of becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030. Shropshire Council has set up the Climate Change Task Force to lead interventions which reduce carbon and a climate action workshop was held with stakeholders to help shape the strategy. Future Oswestry Plan will align with these ambitions and support a transition to become Carbon Neutral.

Oswestry Place Plan

Oswestry Place Plan identifies local infrastructure needs in the area. It sets out the need to enhance the public realm and shop frontages within the town centre and recommends Oswestry Town Council and Oswestry BID as key partners working through the Future Oswestry Group. The Plan is an intrinsic part of helping the Council to achieve growth within the



local economy, through the provision of public services and use of public assets. The Future Oswestry Plan will further develop these recommendations, providing additional design and implementation guidance.

Oswestry 2020

The Oswestry 2020 plan set a vision for change over the past ten years through collaboration between Shropshire Council and Oswestry Town Council. The Plan identified that the overall quality of the public realm, within the heart of the town centre, is deteriorating and needs investment. Future Oswestry Plan continues the conversation of how Oswestry should grow and evolve looking to the future. It will carry forward the insights from the Oswestry 2020 work and refresh the vision through conversations with local people to reflect the current context. Future Oswestry Plan will also set out an Action Plan to support funding and implementation of the key projects.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

The National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and provides a framework in which local plans are produced. The NPPF promotes the presumption in favour of sustainable development, meaning that

plans "should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area".

National Design Guidance (2019)

The new Design Guide provides some explanation to the definition of 'good design' for use by Local Planning Authorities. The document sets out characteristics of a well-defined place under ten themes: context, identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses, homes and buildings, resources and life-span. In terms of Oswestry's future, the National Design Guidance will serve as a policy tool as authority planning officers prepare local planning policy and guidance and assess the quality of planning applications.

Change in planning use classes (2020)

The Town and Country Planning Use Classes Amendment came into force on 1 September 2020. The main change is the introduction of Use Class E, subsuming A1, A2, A3, B1, D1, D2, into one single class E. This means that a change of a building's use between the following use classes will no longer require planning permission: retail; professional services; food & drink; business (office, research and development and light industrial process); non-residential institutions (medical or health services, crèches, day nurseries and centres); and assembly and leisure (indoor sport, recreation or fitness, gyms).



The changes are still relatively new and there is limited data on their impact, however it is anticipated that the extension of permitted development rights will have an impact in town centres and high streets, by allowing retail units to be converted more easily, allowing town centres to more flexibly adapt to changing circumstances.

Planning White Paper (2020)

In August 2020, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government published the The Planning for the Future paper for consultation. The objective of the paper is to streamline and modernise the planning process, 'cutting red tape not standards' and ensuring more land is available for development where it is needed.

Among other proposals, the paper puts forward a system where local authorities would zone all land in their areas for "growth", "renewal" or "protection". There is an emphasis on building environmentally friendly, sustainable homes, taking a digital-first approach to modernising the planning process, reviving town and city centres and improving the system of developer contributions towards infrastructure.

The consultation is now closed and it remains unseen if and when measures will be introduced.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT COVID-19

Covid-19 has added a further layer of complexity to the planning and designing of towns across the UK. A number of trends and opportunities have been identified since the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 which have implications for Oswestry.

Working patterns: Work patterns have been transformed and are unlikely to bounce back as companies and workers have discovered that many types of work can be done remotely.

Now people can work from anywhere, there may well be greater demand for flexible workspace, either in co-working spaces or at local cafes, libraries and pubs for people to escape the home for work without having to commute. These could be flexible spaces, with separate or spacious, open desk space, superfast broadband, bike access and coffee provision.

For Oswestry, the freedom of working in different locations is a real opportunity to attract new residents who no longer feel they must live in town or city centres in order to be close to workplaces.

Open spaces: Open space became a far greater priority during lockdown and generally with risk of transmission being

lower outdoors. Green and open spaces provide access to nature, the opportunity for exercise and recreation and a setting for socialising. In Oswestry, this translates as a crucial role for the parks, while also providing green routes to the countryside beyond the town's boundaries.

Streets and public spaces are critical for impromptu and informal catch-ups when people bump into friends and neighbours when out and about

Movement: A lower level of commuting as a result of the greater emphasis on working from home.

With initiatives to create the '10 minute town' based on walking and cycling – Oswestry's accessibility on foot and on bike is a boon to the town.

Funding available during 2020 for temporary improvements to increase space for social distancing while walking and cycling provided a good starting point for assessing these schemes. In Oswestry, one-way working on Church Street and restrictions on Cross Street were tested temporarily and have since been made permanent.

Property and economic activity: Shops, food and drink businesses and cultural and leisure venues have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic and need as much support as possible from town strategies and plans.

Shops are the heart of a town centre and provide more than a utilitarian service. Many provide identity and a sense of belonging for local residents. Independent shops are more nimble than large retail and Oswestry is very well placed for this.

Grimsey Review

In June 2020 an updated Grimsey Review was released, largely in response to the impact of Covid-19 on Britain's town centres. The report sets out three headline priorities of:

- A shift to Localism, with local people encouraged to redesign their own high streets and have a say on the businesses, services and amenities there.
- Fewer cars, more green space, with centres that are designed for people rather than the car.
- Local leadership by people with a broad range of skills which is valued and recognised.

A number of recommendations are then made to help achieve these three overarching goals which cover:

- Establishing participatory planning with high street Citizen's Assemblies, Community Value Charters, community right to buy and the establishment of

1.4 IMPROVEMENTS UNDERWAY

community trusts through the National Lottery Community Fund.

- Amending business rates, replacing the current system with a 2% sales tax that will level the playing field between online and offline retailers.
- Re-skilling for new employment sectors for those predominantly young and female workers likely to lose retail and leisure jobs in the future.
- Encouraging people to give up cars, introduce a pedestrianisation task force and pilot mobility hubs for sustainable transport modes.

The report also asserts that *“Markets are proven assets with town centres and communities. They are an important incubator to create high street retailers of the future and can support the regeneration of town and city centres through tourism and economic vitality.”*

Compared to many other town centres, Oswestry has fared relatively well despite changing shopping habits, likely due to its markets, independent shops, historic environment, and town centre supermarkets which attract people inwards. Nevertheless, the measures recommended in the Grimsey Review have the potential to keep the town centre resilient looking to the future.

CURRENT PROJECTS

While this Plan sets a vision for Oswestry and identifies potential opportunities, there are already projects and initiatives underway by the Future Oswestry Group partners which are contributing to its future as a better place to live; a better place for business; and a healthier and more sustainable town.

Oswestry High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ)

The Oswestry High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) has made a positive impact on the town of Oswestry since its start in October 2020. The HSHAZ scheme runs until March 2024, and has three main strands: a capital grants programme; public realm improvements; and a flagship project. The ambition of the HSHAZ project is to leave a lasting legacy, inspiring others to improve their properties and public spaces. The Historic England grant is for £832,595 with expected public and private match of £1.1m.

Through its grant programme the scheme has helped businesses and owners repair/reinstate historic shop fronts and brought empty properties back into use. Success stories of this grant include the Little Mall on Cross Street where a long term empty building was repurposed into new accommodation and retail units as well



Sketches showing design ideas for the alleyways as part of the HSHAZ project

installing a new shop front bringing the heritage of the building back. Another success story is the re-opening of Black Gate as the new home for a local artisan bakery, Niche Patisserie headed by semi-finalist of Bake Off: The Professionals, Adam Cleal.

Historic alleyways in the centre of town have been brought back to life making them inviting places to use. Ongoing public realm improvements to upgrade the historic alleyways within the town centre to celebrate their identity and make them more safe and interesting places to use, with interpretation explaining the history of the names and alleys.

As part of the Oswestry HSHAZ, a Cultural Consortium has been set up made up of interested organisations and individuals to promote culture in the town centre. Events including Love Oswestry have added value to the cultural offer in the town and grants provided by the Consortium have enabled organisations like Designs in Mind to work with adults with mental health issues to discovered more about the heritage of the town through art.

Community Engagement has given people the opportunity to get involved in the project through a series of activities including helping to shape the design of the public realm work. The HSHAZ scheme promotes opportunities for people to learn more about

the heritage of Oswestry through a series of events and exhibitions.

The HSHAZ is working with key providers to support an audit of the cultural offer within Oswestry, which will be used to identify opportunities to develop and support the combined cultural offer within the town

Co-working Space at Memorial Hall

Co-working space has been developed from initial start up funding from Shropshire Council at the Memorial Hall, launched in January 2022 in response to the change in working methods during the Covid-19 pandemic. The co-working space is run commercially by Hadleigh Management to provide a professional workspace for businesses in the centre of Oswestry.

Monthly membership is available to local businesses and entrepreneurs for desk space, meeting rooms and collaboration space, as well as access to members events and support programmes.

Ambitious plans to transform the Bus Service

Following consultation undertaken in 2021 to understand people's views on how services could be improved, a proposed Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) programme of bus investment has been developed by Shropshire Council in

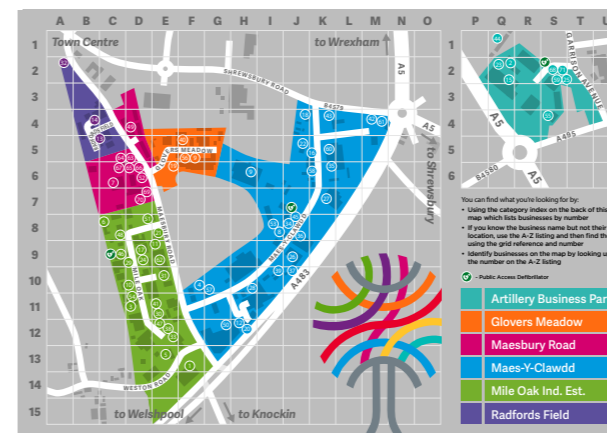
collaboration with local bus operators, local community transport groups and other stakeholders including Bus Users Shropshire. The ambitions of this programme for Shropshire's future in public transport, is to provide a greener, more active, fairer and economically successful network. The BSIP will be used to inform and evidence future funding bids for bus service improvements highlighted in the plan.

Shropshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

Following the planned consultation on the LCWIP in 2022 with key stakeholders, the LCWIP will identify a network plan for walking and cycling for Oswestry which identifies preferred routes and core zones for further development. The LCWIP will also provide a prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for future investment for Oswestry.

Oswestry Railway Station

Passenger services were withdrawn from Oswestry Station in 1966 as part of the Beeching Cuts, though the Grade II listed Station and much of the track remains in situ. Cambrian Railways Trust has reopened short sections of the line as a volunteer-run heritage line, operating alongside the Cambrian Railways Museum. There is a widely held ambition to reinstate services to Gobowen, with the main challenge



Pilot signage for the industrial estates, part of Oswestry Wayfinding Project



being the need for a crossing of the A5. Cambrian Railways Trust has been awarded funding to undertake the feasibility study to test the viability of reinstating services of a tram-train to Park Hall and Gobowen, where passengers could travel onwards with mainline services.

Oswestry Innovation Park

The site is owned and being promoted by Shropshire Council as a new commercial development, providing a range of businesses units, a hotel and small food and drink offer. The development will improve the gateway to the town (alongside Mile End Junction Improvements and Oswestry Sustainable Urban Extension).

Oswestry Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE)

The Oswestry Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) area will provide up to 900 new homes to the west of the A5, together with associated open space and community facilities. A masterplan was adopted for the area in 2013 and is being brought forward through a series of planning applications from developers.

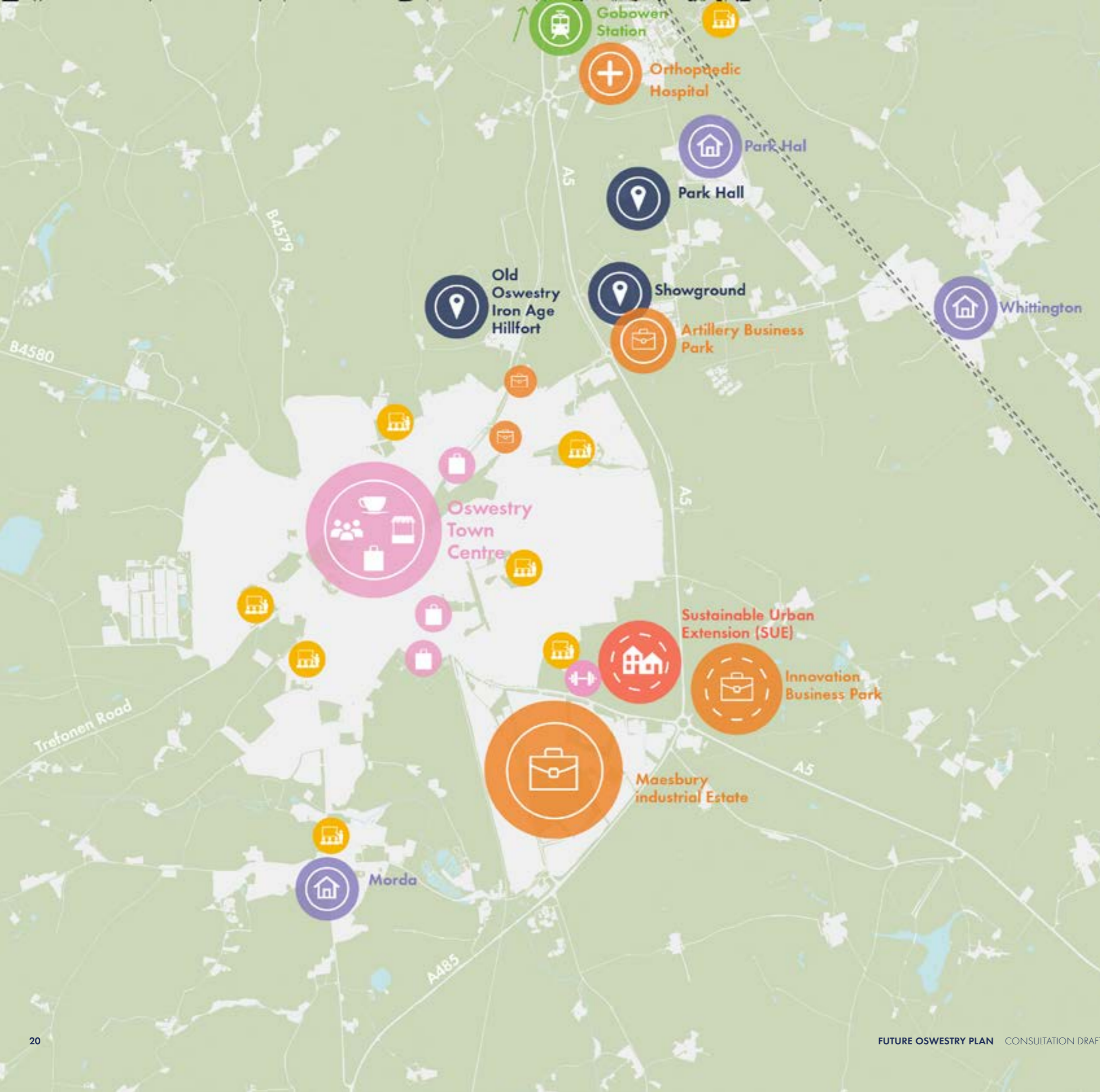
Oswestry BID Business Plan

Oswestry Business Improvement District was established March 2018 and based on extensive consultation with local businesses. The BID's Business Plan sets objectives including: the development and promotion

of Oswestry to prospective visitors and business investors; actively supporting the growth and development of existing local businesses; building upon Oswestry's multi-faceted heritage and cultural assets; and facilitating safe, functional and efficient access and navigation.

Oswestry Wayfinding Project

One of Oswestry BID's projects has been to review the wayfinding around Oswestry, which had been noted by many businesses and residents as very poor. This work identified three key projects: Town Centre, Oswestry Gateways and the Industrial Estates. The Industrial Estate is being targeted first to provide clearer signage for delivery drivers, suppliers and customers. Following workshops with key stakeholders and meetings with Shropshire Highways the plan has evolved with a pilot sign being installed in January 2022. Providing all stakeholders are happy with the pilot, signage will then be rolled out across the industrial estates, colour coding the areas with a new map and directory, giving clear directions for drivers and pedestrian alike.



1.5 WELCOME TO OSWESTRY

Oswestry is a market town in the Shropshire borderlands, near to the Welsh/English Border. Home to around 18,000 people, the town boasts a friendly, community atmosphere. The nearest villages are Morda, Whittington and Gobowen, where the nearest mainline rail station is located.

The historic town centre is the main focal point for shopping, civic uses, culture and community, with a growing cafe culture. The town also has four large supermarkets which help to attract people into town.

The employment areas are situated on the edges of the town: Maesbury Industrial Estate and Artillery Business Park, as well as a smaller provision of commercial space along the Gobowen Road corridor. To the north east of the town, The Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital is a significant employer. Oswestry has a long history as a place of education which endures today, with seven Schools and Colleges.

Just to the north of Oswestry are three destinations: the iron-age Oswestry Hillfort, Oswestry Showground which hosts agricultural shows dating back to 1862, and Park Hall countryside experience.

The following pages give a summary of Oswestry's history and key characteristics.

Oswestry's History



642

Battle of Maserfield fought between the Anglo-Saxon kings Penda of Mercia and Oswald of Northumbria. Oswald was killed in the battle and his body dismembered; according to legend, one of his arms was carried to an ash tree by a raven. Miracles were attributed to the tree, leading to a belief that 'Oswestry' was derived from 'Oswald's Tree'. A well subsequently appeared at this location, known as Oswald's Well. The holy well was reputed to have healing properties.

1233

Oswestry burned down by Llewellyn the Great

1400

Oswestry burned down by Owain Glyndŵr, earning the town the name Pentrepoeth or "hot village"

1407

Oswestry School founded as a 'free school' by David Holbache, making it the second oldest in the country, and subsequently occupied buildings opposite St. Oswald's Church

1776

Oswestry School moves to its present site on Upper Brook Street

1860

Railway reaches Oswestry

1862

First Oswestry & district Agricultural Society Agricultural Show, held at the Smithfield

1893

Birth of Wilfred Owen

1919

Park Hall is destroyed by a fire

1921

Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital moves to present site, between Oswestry and Gobowen

1966

Railway closes to passenger services

1975

Closure of Park Hall Camp

717 - 751

Construction of Wat's Dyke

1086

Earliest reference to Oswestry Castle, recorded in the Domesday Book

1272

Earliest reference to the town, recording a walled settlement

1644

Oswestry Castle rendered uninhabitable following a siege in the English Civil War

1848

Railway reaches Gobowen. Originally intended to pass through Oswestry, it was blocked by local landowners

1910

Opening of Cae Glas park

1939

Park Hall Camp established as a training centre for the Royal Artillery

1969

Livestock market relocates from Smithfield site to the edge of town following the 1967 foot and mouth

2006

Market Cross reinstated in the town centre

2007

Oswestry Borough Council buys Shelf bank as open space and wildlife area

2010

Opening of Wilfred Owen Green

250 BC - 43 AD

'Old Oswestry' hillfort constructed and occupied



1228

Oswestry granted its charter



1567

Oswestry badly damaged by a fire. Over 200 houses were destroyed

1398

'Oswestre' Castle was the scene of a parliament held by Richard II



1849

Smithfield and Horsemarkets open for business

1866

Oswestry becomes the headquarters of the Cambrian Railway and a locomotive works is constructed



Oswestry Today

Some of Oswestry's strengths are highlighted here. A Future Plan for Oswestry should look to embrace and celebrate these characteristics and assets.



Diverse historic buildings and street network

The town's long history is visible through the wealth of historic buildings and the medieval street pattern. The centre is designated a conservation area.



Independent shops and businesses

These businesses create a unique offer for visitors and have proven to be more resilient in the face of changing retail patterns.



Great access to the countryside

The best of both town and country. The relationship to the countryside is part of the town's identity and origins as a place of cattle trading. Now people enjoy the countryside for recreation.



A close knit community who support each other

Local people in Oswestry know and support each other. The town benefits from strong and active local charities, sports clubs, schools and community groups.



A walkable and compact town centre

The historic medieval street network remains largely intact. The compact town centre makes it easy and enjoyable to walk around with intimate streets and lanes.



Thriving employment areas and business community

including Maesbury Industrial Estate, Artillery Business Park and the proposed Innovation Park, providing job opportunities and growth.



World-class visitor destinations nearby

including Old Oswestry Hillfort, Unesco World Heritage site of Pontcysyllte Aqueduct*, Chirk Castle, Whittington Castle and Offa's Dyke.



Both Welsh and English

Sitting just five miles from the Welsh border, Oswestry has a long and tangled history with England and Wales and continues to be culturally both Welsh and English.



A busy calendar of markets and events

The town gained its market charter in 1228. The weekly indoor and outdoor markets continue to attract people today. The town also hosts annual events, notably Oswestry Balloon Carnival.



A well cared for and much loved town

Stewardship and management are strong in Oswestry. The Town Council, BID, Shropshire Council as well as local community groups play a role in caring for the centre and wider town.

2 - ENGAGEMENT

2.1 PROCESS AND ROLE OF ENGAGEMENT

The engagement and consultation for Future Oswestry Plan has been an iterative process, allowing the views of local people to shape the plan at every stage.

We sought to engage: people who live or work in Oswestry, local amenity groups, local businesses, and people who live or work in the surrounding catchment area. There was also a specific focus on engaging young people in setting a plan for the future of their town.

The engagement took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, which meant in-person activities were not possible in the early stages. During this time engagement was carried out through digital means (social media, an online survey, online workshop), while also offering a non-digital way of giving views (a postal flyer, a telephone line or postal address) to remain accessible to all. In-person engagement resumed towards the end of the programme, with a drop in installation at the library and a series of town centre pop up events.

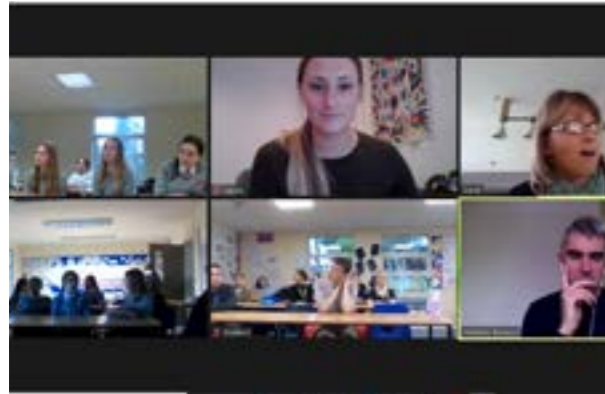
A - EARLY LISTENING ENGAGEMENT Autumn 2020

The first round of engagement was focused on listening and understanding people's views, before any propositions were formed. It sought to understand how people use the town, what the town's best characteristics and main challenges are, as well as local aspirations for the future of Oswestry.

Engagement in this stage was advertised through the Council's communications channels, as well as a flyer drop to all local postcodes. People could give their views through:

- Online Survey, 19 October - 13 November, 621 responses were made
- Telephone Survey, with the phonenumber open 20 October, 22 October and 5 November
- Stakeholder workshop (via Zoom), 29 October, 40 attendees
- Marches School workshops (via Microsoft Teams), 13 November, 30 attendees





B - TEST AND REVIEW March 2021

During the second round of engagement, we presented a summary of the feedback from the first round of engagement, alongside the emerging vision and key principles for Oswestry. Two workshops were held to test and get feedback on these emerging ideas:

- Local stakeholder workshop (via Zoom), 4 March 2021, 30 attendees
- Marches School workshop (via Teams), 2 March 2021, 30 attendees

The feedback was recorded on digital whiteboards and the vision and principles were updated in response to the findings.



C - VISION AND THEMES WORKSHOPS Spring 2021

The third stage of engagement sought to engage people further around the vision and three key themes. For each theme, an online workshop was held with local stakeholders:

- Better Place to Live, 10 June 2021 from 6:30pm - 8pm (public spaces, streets and investment)
- Better Place for Business, 24 June 2021 from 6:30pm - 8pm (opportunities, developments, linkages and connections)
- Healthy Town 8 July 2021 from 6:30pm - 8pm (healthier and people-friendly streets and junctions)

In addition, a static exhibition was held at the library and Marches School. People could drop in at their convenience, view the draft vision and ideas, and leave a comment:

- Library, public engagement: 20 May - 26 May 2021, 58 comments made



D - TOWN CENTRE POP UPS Summer 2021

Once restrictions were lifted, the team went out into busy locations in the town centre to raise awareness and capture more people's views. A pop up stall was produced, showing people the draft vision and ideas for improvement. 228 comments were made in total across the five pop up events:

- Wednesday 28 July 9am - 3pm, Bailey Head (Market Stall)
- Friday 30 July 9am - 3pm, Bailey Head (Market Stall)
- Saturday 31 July 9am - 3pm, Festival Square
- Wednesday 1 September 9am - 3pm, Bailey Head (Market Stall)
- Saturday 4 September 9am - 3pm, Festival Square

The following pages give a summary of some of the feedback from engagement.

 **8000+**
flyers delivered to local addresses

 **100+**
attendees at 5 local stakeholder workshops

 **60**
school children at 2 workshops

 **850+**
survey responses and written comments

 **12**
events in person or on-line for people to give their views

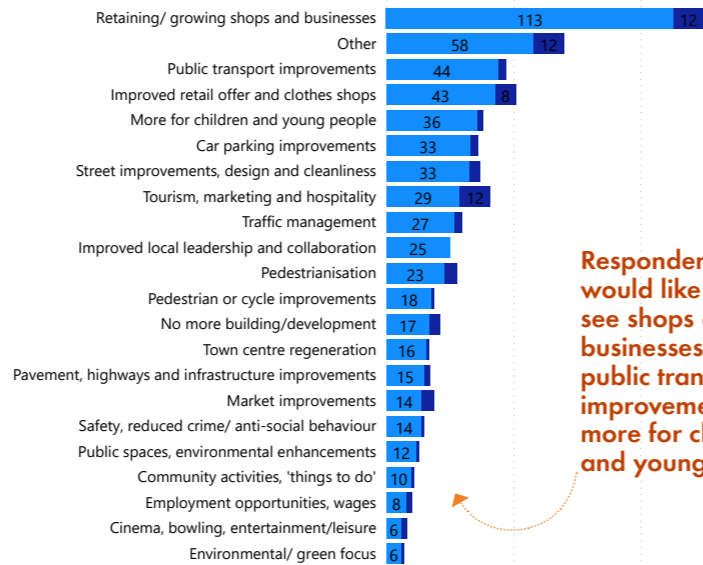
 **30+**
email and social media responses

? We asked:
What do you think is
Oswestry's best characteristic?



Respondents like the small-town community feel, the independent shops, and the town's heritage.

? We asked:
If you were in charge of Oswestry's future,
what one thing would you change?



Respondents would like to see shops and businesses grow, public transport improvements and more for children and young people.



? We asked:
Which of these locations would you prioritise for investment?
In relation to the previous question, how would you improve the area(s) you identified?



- Clean up, paint and renovate frontages
- Fill empty shops
- Attract businesses, range of retailers
- Business incentives, rent and rates
- Pedestrianise

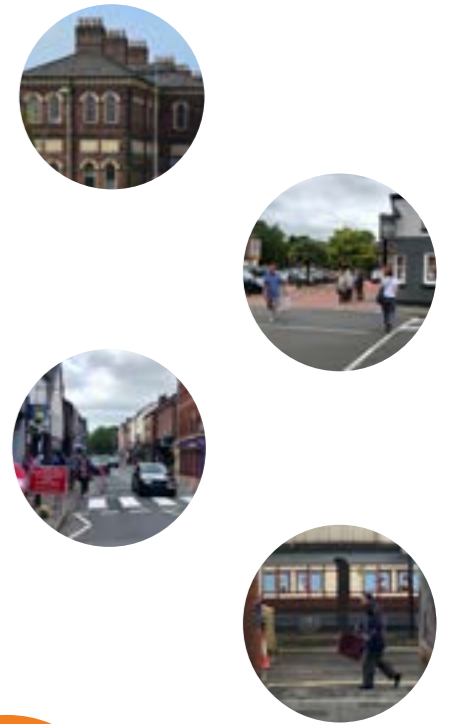


- Redesign and redevelopment
- Railway development/ museum
- Leisure and entertainment (cinema, bowling, gym)
- Small shopping units
- Create attractions for visitors



- Appearance, clean up with bins and paving
- Pop up events and activities
- Increase traders and shops
- Outdoor cafés like Europe
- Provide street furniture and flowers
- Improve goods sold at market

? We asked:
How do you move around Oswestry?

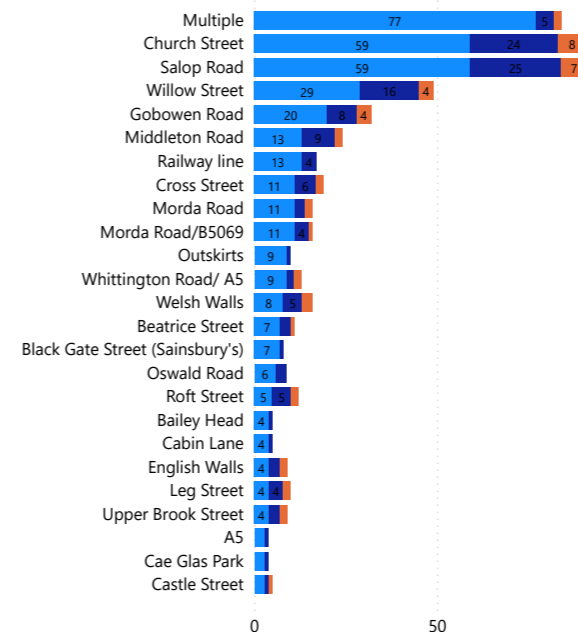


? We asked:
What would encourage you to walk, cycle or take public transport more often for short journeys?

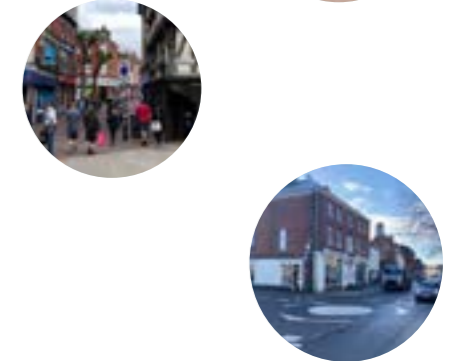
- 1 Cycle lanes and more priority for bikes
- 2 More bus routes/ improved information
- 3 Improvement to footpaths and crossings
- 4 Less traffic, more pedestrianisation



? We asked:
Please suggest locations for introducing new or improving existing routes and crossings for pedestrians and cyclists?



The priorities for improvements for walking and cycling are: Church Street, Salop Road, Willow Street, Gobowen Road, Middleton Road and the Railway line.



? Eight key messages from the first stage workshops:

1
The town benefits from its heritage, but needs investment in the public space and buildings

The town would benefit from shopfront improvements, tree planting and better way-finding

Cross Street should be a focus

Festival Square / Red Square are well-liked

The alleyways and courts are an opportunity

Create more public spaces where people want to spend time with more outdoor seating and activities

Young people go to Shrewsbury, Chester or Telford frequently for shopping and leisure

4
The town would benefit from more activities for young people

Would like more things to do: cinema, cheap food/drink, skate-park, trampoline etc

Young people like the park and access to the countryside

Need to attract people in

3
Support people coming into town from surrounding villages and countryside

Review bus routes to surrounding villages.

Difficult to get around without car, particularly in the evening

Need to make routes in and out of town safer for cyclists: lanes and priority at junctions

5
Events and promotion are key to bring more people into town

Oswestry Balloon Festival is a highlight

People would love to have more events

Promotion is key and the bid has been working on this

People are interested in experiences. Could create walking tours or package day trips

Change could enhance night-time offer

7
The Castle, indoor market and Bailey Head could be better used

The castle does not seem well used

Some felt the indoor market could be relocated - Home Bargains, Regal/BeWise were suggested

If redeveloped, people suggested the indoor market could be community or cultural space, a hotel, a food hall, a venue or a cinema.

6
The old Morrisons/ Railway area is a priority for development

People would like to see the railway re-opened

If redeveloped, some suggested high quality housing and public realm. Others felt the site could offer a cinema alongside food outlets.

With Morrisons gone, people felt this area could be developed.

The market building does not live up to its prominent position.

8
The town would benefit from investment in non-car modes of transport: rail, bus and bike

Strong support for opening the railway

A shame children aren't cycling to school - need to make routes safer

Buses are key to rural connectivity but could be better: review routes, make electric, provide live info, bike racks on bus

2
Movement in the centre should be rebalanced to make it better for pedestrians

The one way system favours cars

Support for more shared space in the centre, where pedestrians have priority

The streets surrounding the historic centre - Welsh Walls, Castle St, Salop Road, Oswald Road - are difficult to cross

? Key themes from the 228 market stall comments:

The most frequent message from comments was that people would like to see the entertainment, culture and visitor offer expanded in Oswestry



A better place to live

16% more entertainment, cultural and visitor economy improvements

13% improved public transport

12% general developments and improvements

Other themes: traffic management, pedestrian access, increased retail options, building renovations, car park changes and activities for young people.



A better place for business

26% more retail options

15% lower rents/rates or financial support for local businesses

10% business support

10% more entertainment, cultural and visitor economy improvements

Other themes: public transport, a focus on character, car parking and employment opportunities



A healthier and more sustainable town

21% improved pedestrian access and cycle lanes

16% Public realm and outdoor spaces

13% more entertainment, cultural and visitor economy improvements

Other themes: leisure/ gym services, traffic, road improvements, public transport, healthier retail options

Comments recieved under "any other comments?"

18% Keeping Oswestry's character and wanting sympathetic development

14% More entertainment, cultural and visitor economy improvements

13% Pedestrianisation and better cycle infrastructure

Other themes: concerns over proposals, outdoor spaces, affordable housing.

2.2 FEEDBACK AND IMPACT

Some of the main ways the feedback from engagement has shaped the Plan are summarised here.

You said that our early attempt at a vision statement did not reflect your ambitions for your town and that the strands were not clear enough.

We've done Reflected your changes to the vision statement and is centred around three key strands: A better place to live; A better place for business; A healthier and more sustainable town.

You said that our earlier visions for the former Morrison's site should promote a greater diversity of uses.

We've done The site is promoted for promoted for new development, with appropriate uses, including housing, commercial and potentially cultural uses.

You said that Oswestry town centre would benefit from a shift towards more food and drink uses and that the market was one of the centre's key assets.

We've done Festival Square (also known as Red Square) is promoted as a new key space in the town centre which will be cleared of parked cars and can host pop-up events including a food market.

You said that protecting Oswestry's heritage was fundamental to the town's long term success.

We've done The Plan seeks to celebrate Oswestry's unique and historic character. The Plan promotes the area around the Castle as a focus for improvement with scope to focus community and cultural uses connected by an improved public realm.

You said that buses are critical to ensuring the town remains accessible to the village and rural communities it supports.

We've done The document outlines opportunities to improve the quality of local bus services in the town - including the potential to review the provision of the current bus facility to a more convenient and accessible location.

You said that you were concerned about the idea of changing the operation of Oswald Road and Beatrice Street from one-way working to two-way streets.

We've done The Plan is more flexible on this opportunity - the introduction of two-way working is not specified.

The full spectrum of comments and feedback received throughout the various stages of engagement are gathered together in the supporting consultation statement which forms an appendix to the report.

3 - VISION AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 VISION STATEMENT

Local people love Oswestry's character as a small friendly market town, full of independent businesses with a unique history and heritage as both an English and Welsh town. Oswestry's successful past will be the foundation of its thriving future. The Future Oswestry Plan sets the route map for Oswestry to become:



A better place to live



A better place for business



A healthier and more sustainable town



A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE

Oswestry's cultural offer and evening economy will be boosted, offering a changing experience for local people and attracting more visitors from afar. Public spaces will be enhanced for day-to-day use and to host the town's active programme of events and markets. The town will better cater for young people, with public spaces, parks and recreation facilities which meet their needs.

Public transport will support local people's movement, with an improved bus service, better connections to key employment areas and a safeguarded future for rail services, should funding be secured. Improvements will be made so that walking and cycling become the obvious choice for shorter journeys.



Oswestry's historic character will be respected, renovated and restored. The town centre will be de-trafficked and focused on people. Vacant buildings will be brought back into use, adapting to respond to current and future demands. Investment in the shopfronts and public spaces will result in an attractive town centre that local people can be proud of. Sensitive infill developments will provide a contemporary yet contextual response to the historic environment.

New high-quality homes and streets will provide for local people and bring more footfall into town. Homes of different types, tenures and prices will meet the needs of everyone.





A BETTER PLACE FOR BUSINESS

Oswestry will support existing businesses and attract new ones, creating more jobs and better opportunities for local people.

The established employment areas at Maesbury Industrial Estate, RJAH and Artillery Business Park and proposed development at the Oswestry Innovation Park will be enhanced and better connected to support existing businesses, attract new investment, and encourage new business start-ups. Improved bus services and cycle routes to these key employment areas will decrease reliance on the car and improve accessibility for all. The Maesbury Road area will become a better place for business, with new workspace, a stronger identity and wayfinding and better streets and spaces.

The town centre will be easy to access for visitors. Routes will be improved, and traffic

calmed at key entry points into the town, creating a better arrival experience. Parking will be focused near the town centre arrival points to help reduce unnecessary vehicular movements through the town's historic core. Easy parking combined with a reduction of traffic in the historic town centre will make for an enjoyable experience visiting Oswestry.

Oswestry town centre will attract more visitors and commerce, from the surrounding rural area and beyond, helping town centre businesses to thrive. Oswestry's key attractions will be celebrated and connected by a more pleasant public realm, including characterful lanes and refreshed streets and spaces. The town's draw will be boosted with an enhanced community/cultural offer in the heart of town, with the town's markets remaining a focal point. New homes and workspace will play a key role in bringing more people into the town to support the local shops on a regular basis.

Additional business space will be created to support new start-ups, as well as enabling existing businesses to grow. Vacancies and development sites in the town centre will provide small, flexible workspace, encouraging different types of workers to make Oswestry their home.



A HEALTHIER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE TOWN

Oswestry will be a healthier and more sustainable town where people come first.

People will be encouraged to walk or cycle for short journeys instead of driving, both decreasing transport-related emissions and supporting a healthier lifestyle for residents. Streets, junctions and crossings will be designed to give more priority to people. Traffic levels will be better managed in the historic core to create a pedestrian friendly town centre. Routes to and from schools will be made more comfortable for families walking and cycling. Improvements will make walking and cycling around the town easier and more enjoyable.

The quality and reliability of bus services will be improved from surrounding villages, employment areas, and through the town itself. Better cycle routes to connect with public transport links, and improved connectivity with employment areas and key destinations will help people to get out of the car for their commute and to make exercise part of their daily routine. Electric vehicles

will be encouraged for longer journeys, through the integration of charging facilities.

Air quality will be improved in the town, by encouraging more pedestrian and cycle use.

New homes will be built in sustainable locations, with shops, jobs, public transport, and services accessible in 15-minutes on foot or by bike. Any new buildings will be designed to be highly energy efficient and to adapt flexibly over time. Lifecycle embodied carbon will be considered.

New and improved public spaces in the town centre will provide the backdrop for a vibrant social/community life. These spaces will include more trees, greenery and sustainable urban drainage, as well as places to support community activities which promote well-being. The town's parks and wider countryside will continue to support active, healthy lifestyles. Parks and green spaces will be better connected with green walking and cycling routes between them.

4 - BIG IDEAS FOR OSWESTRY

4.1 AREAS OF FOCUS

Reflecting on the three strands of the vision, which explore Oswestry as a better place to live, a better place to work and a healthier and more sustainable town, a wide range of opportunities - Big Ideas for Oswestry - emerge.

There are four areas of Oswestry where more signification change is anticipated: The Cambrian Gateway, Mile End area, The Castle Quarter and the Church Street Quarter.

For each area, a joined up vision is needed to make sure interventions work together resulting in a coordinated, positive place. This section brings together the relevant big ideas for each area and provides a spatial strategy as to how the areas could change in the future. The following section (4.6) further explores each of the 'Big Ideas', demonstrating how each relates to the vision, areas of focus and key themes.

Please note, the 'Big ideas' outlined below are ideas not proposals. So it should be noted that:

- No in-principle decisions have been made on whether specific projects or ideas will be implemented or actioned.
- Following approval of the Future Oswestry Plan, one of the key next steps will be to prepare a delivery plan.
- Further community and stakeholder engagement will play an important role in determining whether and how any specific projects are progressed.
- More detailed and, where necessary, technical work will be required to bring any of these or other projects forward.

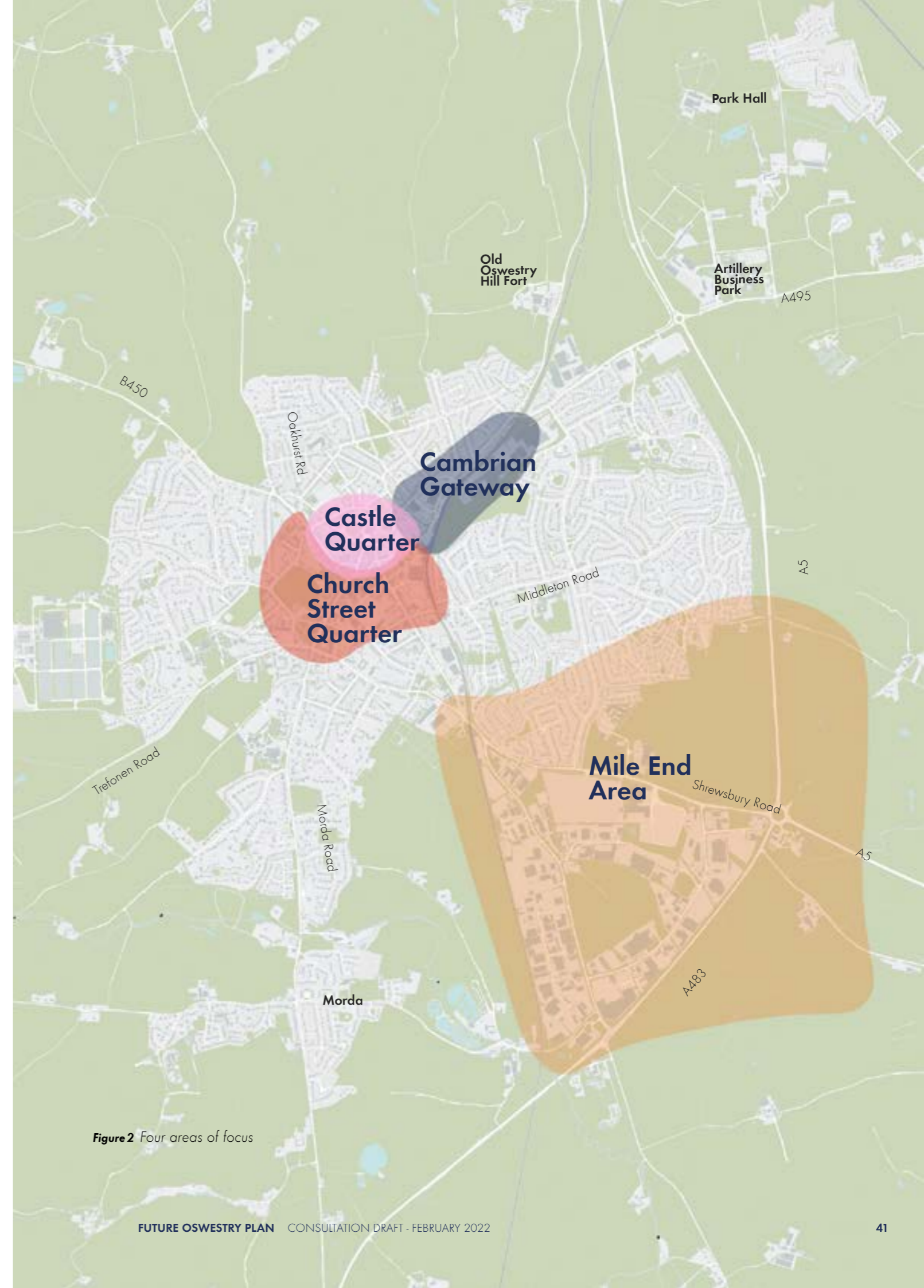


Figure 2 Four areas of focus

CAMBRIAN GATEWAY
An integrated neighbourhood and better arrival experience

This Cambrian Gateway area is a key arrival point into town from the north east, this area of town has huge potential. Currently it is the wide road corridor, expanses of tarmac and vacant buildings which greets the visitor, creating a very poor first impression. With the Morrisons supermarket relocated, a large site is available for redevelopment. In addition, there is potential to widen the scope of ambition and consider possible changes to the bus station, the Aldi site, the former Railway Station building and the car / coach parks alongside.

Whilst reinstating regular rail passenger services between Oswestry and Gobowen remains a long-term ambition, there is an increasingly urgent need to coordinate the many other more immediate opportunities presented in the Cambrian Gateway area. Doing so would deliver very significant improvements to the town centre for all users – making it a better place in which to live, to work and, overall, a healthier place.

In the short to medium term, the creation of a public transport hub through the relocation of bus facilities to a more convenient location and with scope to bring life back to the old Station building could have immediately transformative impacts. Improvements could allow for high quality interchange to onward travel

BIG IDEAS IN THIS AREA

- Create a public transport interchange hub**
- Strengthen north east connections**
- Enhance Wilfred Owen Park**
- Redevelop the former Morrisons site**
- Refurbish the Railway Station building**

on foot, bicycle and connecting bus services. Improved waiting facilities and information could help create a better visitor and user experience.

Redevelopment of the large former Morrisons site present opportunities to re-establish a permeable network of streets and create active frontage, knitting the sites into the surrounding neighbourhoods. New homes of mixed types and tenures could be an appropriate part of a mixed-use scheme. The site would also be suitable for other commercial leisure, employment and community uses. Improved streets, crossings and greater pedestrian priority will help improve local routes with potential to improve access to Wilfred Owen Green. Overall, the Cambrian Gateway could be transformed from a tarmac-dominated area, to a high-quality neighbourhood that feels a more integrated and vibrant part of Oswestry.

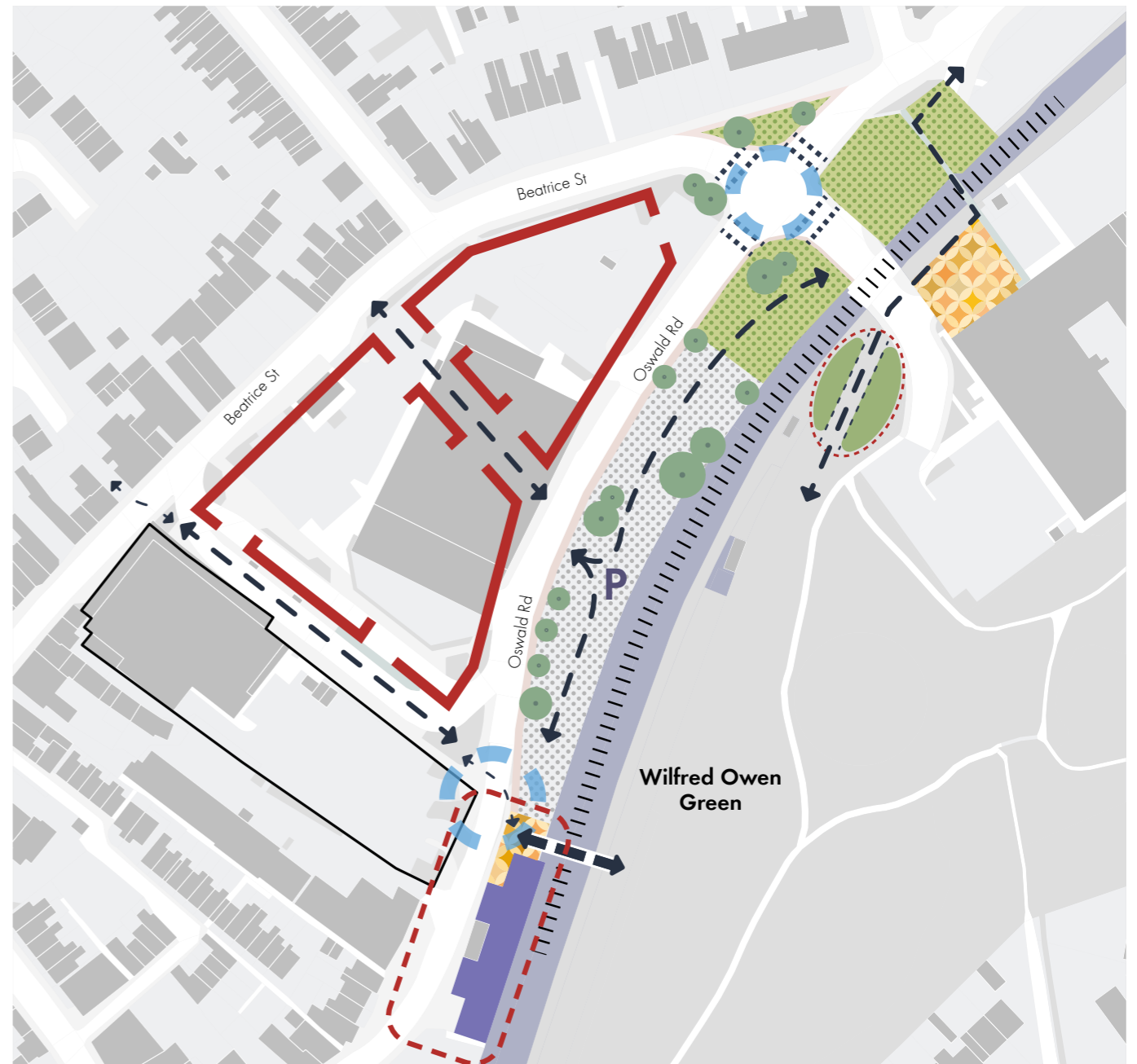


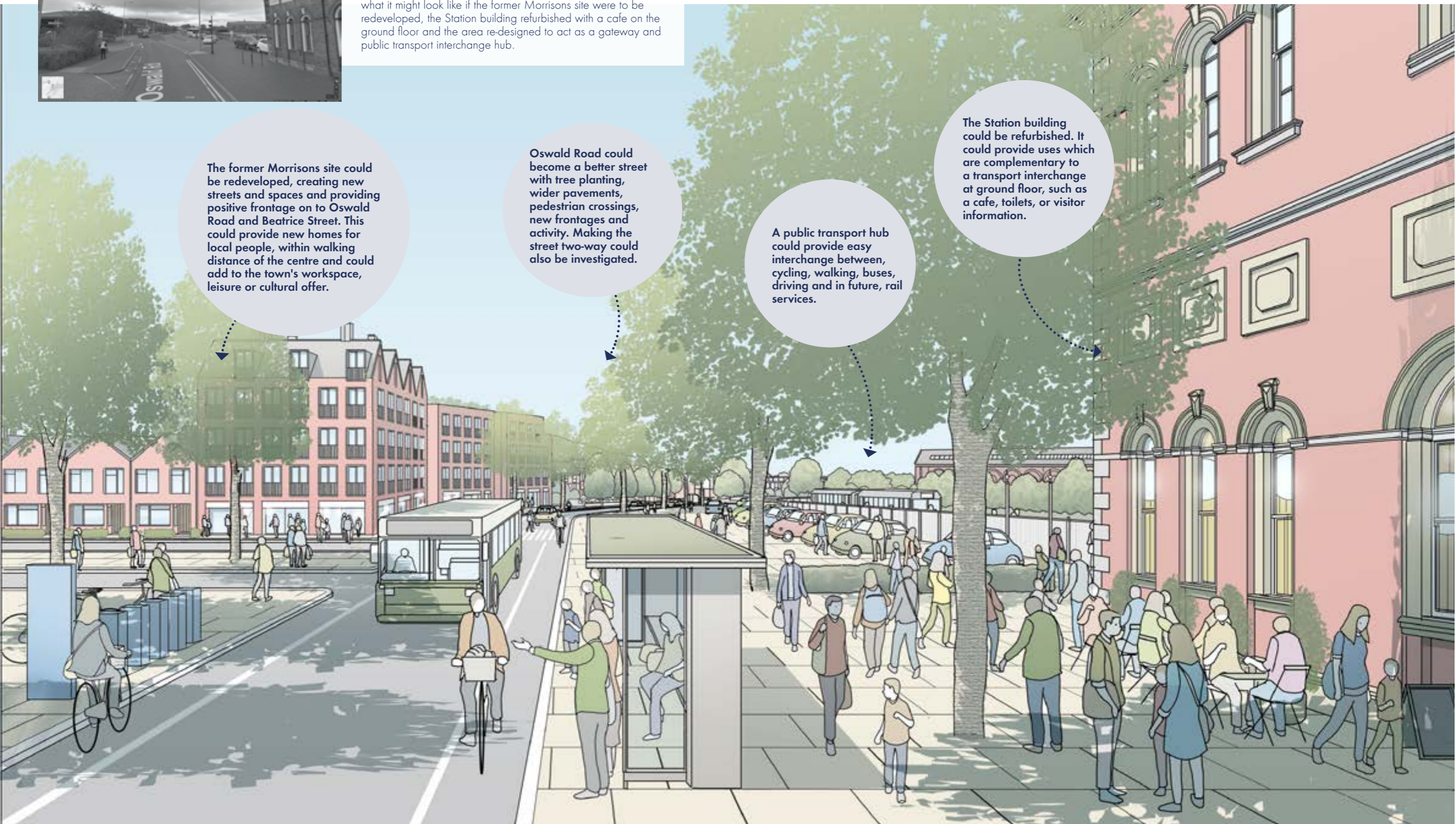
Figure 3 A map of big ideas for the Cambrian Gateway area





An artist's impression of Oswald Road

This illustration has been drawn to help visualise how the Big Ideas identified in this Plan could transform the area. This illustration is looking north east along Oswald Road and shows what it might look like if the former Morrisons site were to be redeveloped, the Station building refurbished with a cafe on the ground floor and the area re-designed to act as a gateway and public transport interchange hub.



The former Morrisons site could be redeveloped, creating new streets and spaces and providing positive frontage on to Oswald Road and Beatrice Street. This could provide new homes for local people, within walking distance of the centre and could add to the town's workspace, leisure or cultural offer.

Oswald Road could become a better street with tree planting, wider pavements, pedestrian crossings, new frontages and activity. Making the street two-way could also be investigated.

A public transport hub could provide easy interchange between, cycling, walking, buses, driving and in future, rail services.

The Station building could be refurbished. It could provide uses which are complementary to a transport interchange at ground floor, such as a cafe, toilets, or visitor information.

CHURCH STREET QUARTER

Home of independent shops and cafes, supported by better streets and spaces

The Church Street Quarter of Oswestry has been growing in popularity with a good selection of independent shops and services, Cae Glas Park and an emerging cafe culture, notably fronting on to Festival Square. From engagement, we learnt that local people would like to see this area of town's success be compounded with better streets and public spaces.

Festival Square could be expanded as a public space, on a temporary or permanent basis, providing a focal point for activity and for people to spend time. This expanded space could support outdoor dining, seating, and an exciting programme of pop-up events to help attract younger people to the centre and add vibrancy to the evening economy. Vehicular traffic could be reduced in the historic core and the shopping streets - Church Street, Willow Street and Cross Street - could be redesigned to be better places for people.

Further improvements to the alleys between Central car park/English Walls and Church Street, like those at Old Chapel Court, will ensure better connections between the retail area and improved bus services and public parking. Similarly, improved links to Cae Glas Park,

BIG IDEAS IN THIS AREA

- Manage car parking
- Alleyway improvement
- Festival Square public space
- Make the town centre shopping streets more attractive
- Bringing vacant properties back into use
- Rethink deliveries

particularly from Willow Street will ensure the Park's benefits are more widely felt. As opportunities arise, improvements to key junctions around this area would pedestrians and bicycles more priority.

The Central car park could be made greener and have two-way access from Salop Road, so that visitor car parking remains convenient. The Church Street Quarter can attract more people as a shopping and day-out destination supported by better streets and spaces.

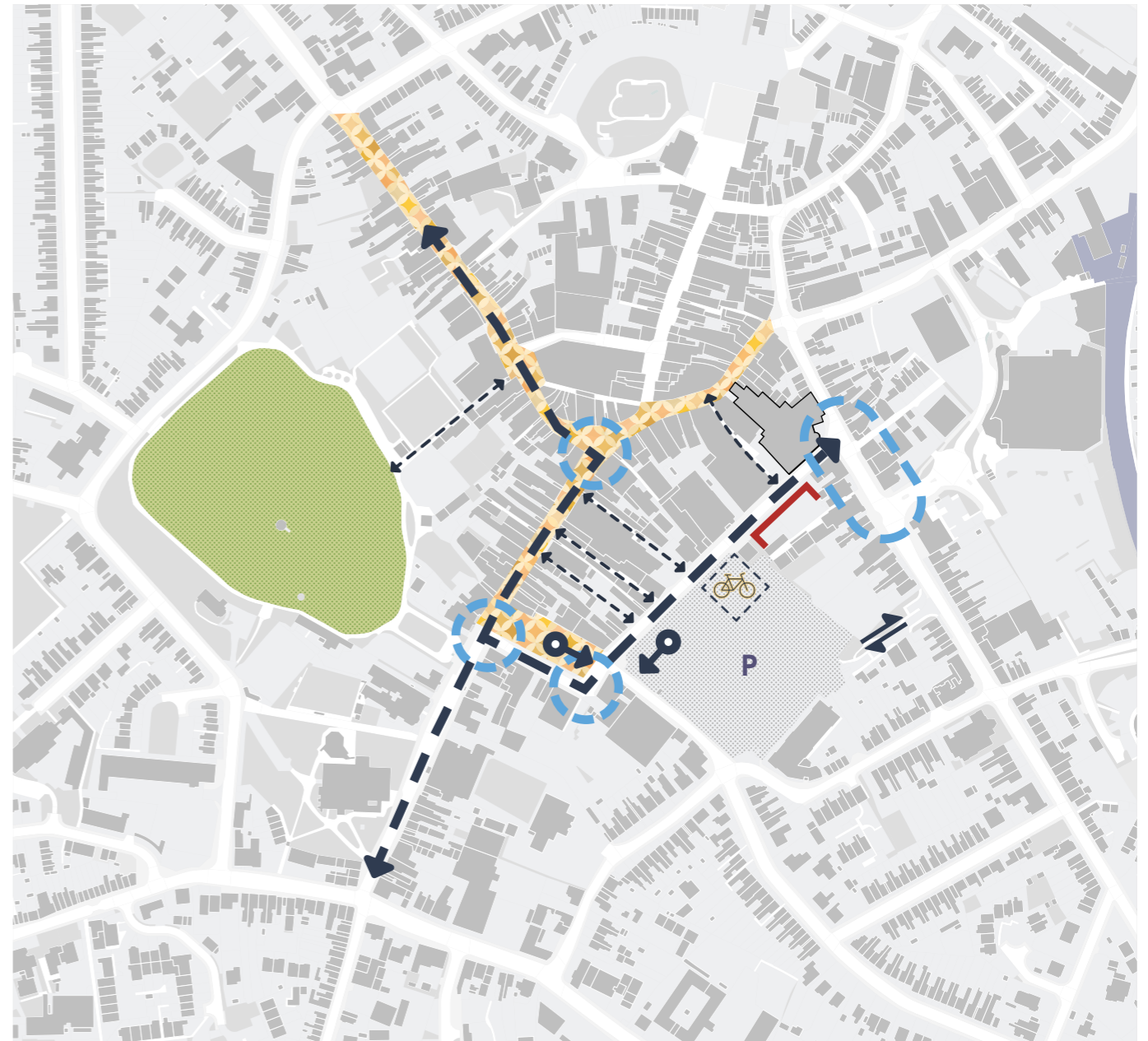


Figure 4 A map of big ideas for the Church Street Quarter

- public realm/streetscape improvements
- major pedestrian route
- hopper bus route
- key junction improvements
- proposed bicycle parking
- proposed active frontage
- vacant building for refurb
- improve access to Central Car Park
- new bus stop (direction of bus)
- improve alleyways



An artist's impression of Church Street and Festival Square

This illustration has been drawn to help visualise how the Big Ideas identified in this Plan could transform the area. This illustration is looking north to Festival Square and along Church Street. It shows what it might look like if Church Street were redesigned as a one-way street with wider pavements, more pedestrian priority catenary lighting and outdoor dining. It also considers different ways to activate the Square - with pop ups, events and seating.

Vehicular movements could be reduced in the historic core. Church Street and other shopping streets could be redesigned to give pedestrians more priority. This could include wider pavements, level surface, greenery, higher quality paving and feature lighting.

Festival Square could be expanded and activated with pop ups, events and activities, alongside seating, play space and outdoor dining.





An artist's impression of Festival Square

This illustration has been drawn to help visualise how the Big Ideas identified in this Plan could transform the area. This illustration is to Festival Square from Smithfield Street/English Walls . It shows what it might look like if Festival Square car park was changed into a public space. The drawing also shows possible improvements to make the streets better for people walking, cycling and taking public transport.

A new orbital bus route could provide drop offs and high quality bus stops very near to the town centre, while reducing vehicles in the historic core.

The Festival Square car park could be transformed into a public space, expanding the existing public space and providing a place for outdoor seating, events, pop-ups and play.

A new crossing on English Walls could provide safer access for people parking in Central Car Park as they enter the town centre.



CASTLE QUARTER

A lively area with more to see and do in the daytime and the evening

The Castle Quarter is focused around Bailey Head, the town's main market square and the main entrance to site of Oswestry Castle. Oswestry's medieval Castle Hill, the Town Council offices, Oswestry museum, Oswestry library, Kinokulture Cinema, Attfield Theatre and Hermon Chapel Arts Centre all form a cluster of cultural and community uses. Linked by an improved public realm and a shared and coordinated programme of events and activities, these important and complementary facilities could more effectively coalesce to form a 'Cultural Quarter'.

The Castle Quarter could become the town's cultural heart. The public space from Bailey Head and in front of the Castle Hill could be redesigned, creating high quality space with improved landscaping, paving and lighting so as to support a range of activities, drawing people naturally through to surrounding destinations.

Initiatives could be taken to strengthen the town's centres offer in terms of entertainment, culture, evening and leisure activities.

The indoor market is a key community and retail asset for Oswestry. The building itself however is underused despite its very prominent location. Redevelopment of the site could accommodate replacement market space if the facility were not to be relocated. New development on this important site could add

BIG IDEAS IN THIS AREA

Bailey Head/Castle View public realm improvements

Strengthening the cultural offer

Potential redevelopment of Bailey Head indoor market hall

Manage car parking

Alleyway improvement

much more life and activity to Bailey Head, and improve the setting of the Guildhall and other important historic buildings. Whilst it would take some time to coordinate, given the existing cluster of public sector sites in and around Bailey Head, redevelopment of the market hall building presents a valuable longer-term opportunity for mixed commercial and residential uses which could incorporate a new public sector hub facility.

The site presents a range of options and opportunities, but improvements to the space which might include reinstatement of Bailey Head's long lost water feature should be considered.

The area has enormous potential to emerge as Oswestry's cultural heart, where improved pavements and pedestrian spaces connect key facilities to help support existing and new cultural and community uses and activities.



Figure 5 A map of big ideas for the Castle Quarter

- proposed green space
- public realm
- car parking
- cultural facility
- pedestrian crossing
- potential development site
- major pedestrian route
- improved alleyways
- proposed active frontage
- proposed bicycle parking
- tree
- entrance/exit
- improved step access to castle

The indoor market hall could be redeveloped, creating active frontage and activity on the square. New buildings could provide a mix of uses - cafe, restaurant, leisure, or cultural facilities with workspace or new homes above.



Bailey Head could be redesigned to support different activities at different times of day. This could include, outdoor seating, play, feature lighting, a water feature, while still keeping space to host the market and events.



MILE END AREA

An expanding area for business space and new homes with better connections and a stronger identity

The Mile End area is planned for growth, supported by an upgraded Mile End roundabout. Home to Maesbury Industrial Estate, the area has long been a strategic location for business and employment. The development of Oswestry Innovation Park will provide a high quality commercial gateway to Oswestry. The area is also growing as a place to live, with Oswestry Sustainable Urban Extension creating new homes adjacent to existing neighbourhoods, the College and Leisure Centre. The development of housing and new employment land is key to support the role of Oswestry as a service centre to the local population and wider hinterland.

With improvements already being made and lots of further investment planned, improved connections between the Mile End area and the town which will really unlock its full potential. This area is just over one mile from the town centre, yet feels much further, in part because of its 'out-of-town' character and because of its dependence on car-based transport. High quality, continuous walking and cycling routes could make commuting by foot or on bicycle more convenient.

BIG IDEAS IN THIS AREA

- Strengthen south east connections**
- Better bus services**

Central to this will be thinking about the crossing of the Shrewsbury Road, the connection across the bridge to Salop Road and an easy connection to the Coney Way greenway. New or extended bus connections could also help to connect this area into the town and beyond.

Shrewsbury Road is a key connector and gateway to the town. Currently, Shrewsbury Road lacks character and a sense of arrival. Future development as part of the SUE and the former livestock site could change the character of this route with development along its length to help transform this road corridor into a street.

Branding and wayfinding improvements to the employment areas will help improve the quality of these areas, improve their profile and identify and make them more attractive to new businesses.

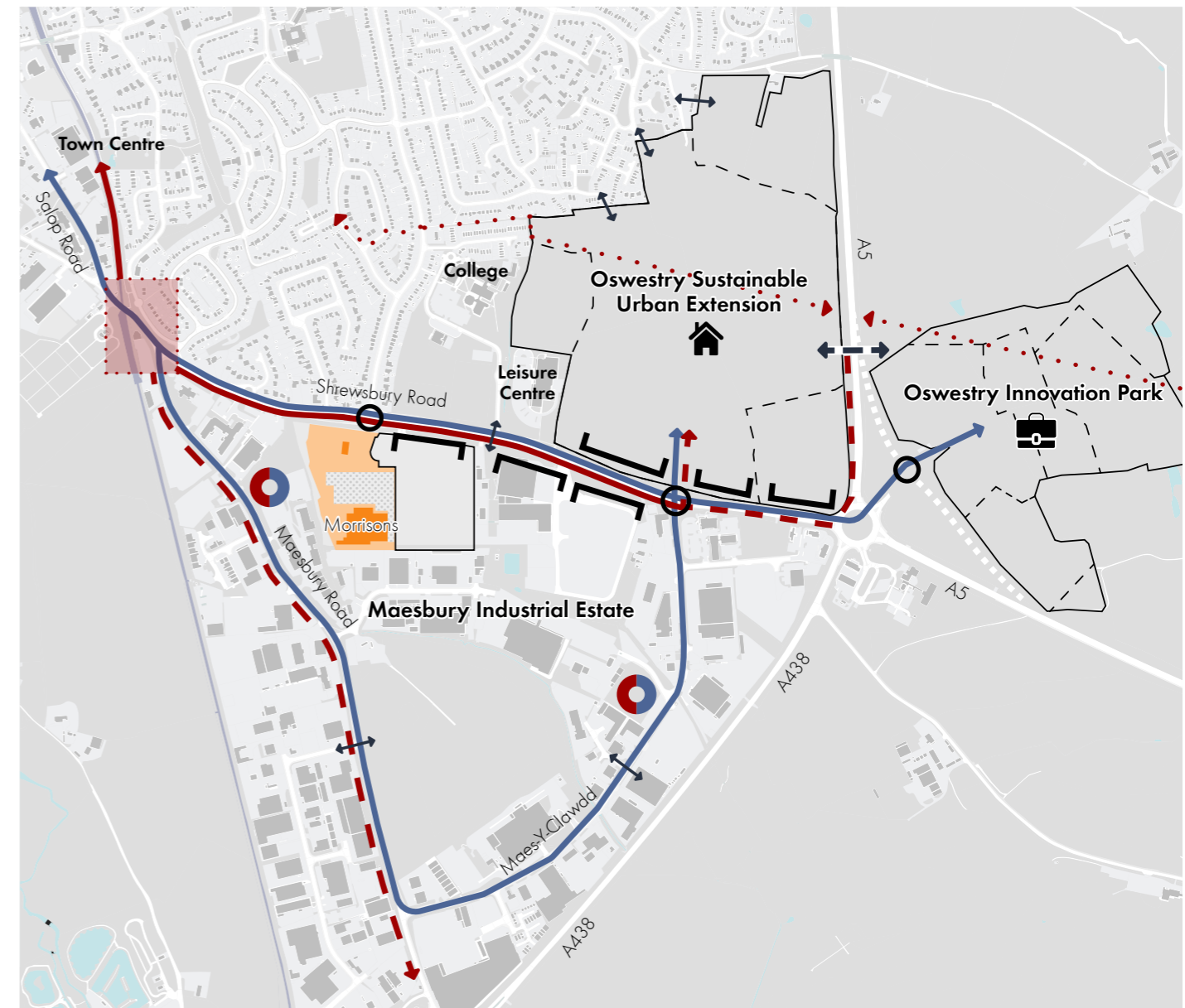


Figure 6 A map of big ideas for the Mile End area

- improved cycle priority measures
- development site
- possible cycle / transport hub
- existing / proposed roundabout
- proposed bus route
- existing cycle path
- proposed cycle path
- existing footpath
- active frontage
- proposed pedestrian link
- proposed pedestrian/cyclist bridge
- proposed site of employment
- proposed residential site

4.2 IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES

Within each of the four Areas of Focus, multiple opportunities are identified. These "Big Ideas for Oswestry" are outlined further in this section.

The opportunities identified relate to a series of cross-cutting objectives which relate to movement, placemaking and development. These three themes are helpful because they broadly align with how relevant public sector partners are organised. The highways, planning and property services of relevant local authorities are well placed to respond to these opportunities. The fact that these opportunities emerged through a process of extensive engagement with local people and analysis of the town's existing social, environmental and economic context provides an important foundation.

The table on the facing page provides an overview of the identified opportunities and highlights their respective relevance to the three strands of the vision. The table also locates these opportunities spatially in the town.

Please note, the 'Big ideas' outlined below are ideas not proposals, subsequently:

- No in-principle decisions have been made on whether specific projects or ideas will be implemented or actioned.
- Following approval of the Future Oswestry Plan, one of the key next steps will be to prepare a delivery plan.

- Further community and stakeholder engagement will play an important role in determining whether and how any specific projects are progressed.
- More detailed and, where necessary, technical work will be required to bring any of these or other projects forward.

Three strands to the vision



A better place to live



A better place to work



A healthier and more sustainable town

Three themes

- Movement
- Placemaking
- Development

Four areas of focus

- CQ Castle Quarter
- ME Mile End area
- CG Cambrian Gateway
- CS Church Street Quarter



A better place to live



A better place for business



A healthier and more sustainable town

Area of focus

		A better place to live	A better place for business	A healthier and more sustainable town	Area of focus
Movement	1 Public transport hub	🏠	💼	🌳	CG
	2 Strengthen north east connections	🏠	💼	🌳	CG
	3 Better bus services	🏠	💼	🌳	
	4 Strengthen south east connections	🏠	💼	🌳	ME
	5 Rethink deliveries		💼	🌳	CQ CS
	6 Manage car parking		💼	🌳	CQ CS
	7 Make walking and cycling safer and more enjoyable	🏠	💼	🌳	
Placemaking	1 Bailey Head/Castle View public realm	🏠	💼	🌳	CQ
	2 Strengthening the cultural offer	🏠	💼	🌳	CQ
	3 Enhance Wilfred Owen Park	🏠		🌳	CG
	4 Make the town centre shopping streets more attractive	🏠	💼	🌳	CQ CS
	5 Festival Square public space	🏠	💼	🌳	CQ CS
	6 Alley improvements and placemaking	🏠	💼	🌳	CQ CS
Development	1 Former Morrisons site	🏠		🌳	CG
	2 Bailey Head indoor market hall	🏠	💼		CQ
	3 Refurbish the Railway Station building	🏠	💼	🌳	CG
	4 Bringing vacant buildings back into use	🏠	💼	🌳	



4.3 BIG IDEAS FOR MOVEMENT AND TRANSPORT

THE EXISTING CONTEXT

Walking and cycling - Town centre streets are largely designed around the private vehicle. Poorly laid out junctions, extensive lines, signs and markings impact on pedestrian access and the quality of the pedestrian experience. The cycle network is fragmented and poorly signposted. There is a lack of cycle parking.

Bus and rail - The existing bus station is tired and disconnected from the town centre. Bus services are infrequent and impacted by the one-way systems. The nearest mainline Station is at Gobowen north east of the town. Whilst Oswestry station is currently not operational it feels disconnected from the town centre.

Traffic management and gateways - Vast expanses of highway and large junctions impact on the arrival experience at the Cambrian gateway and the approach from Mile End.

Car parking - The sense of arrival at key car parks is poor. The parking locations also result in increased traffic within the historical core impacting on the pedestrian environment and local air quality.

Deliveries and servicing - Due to the historic nature of the town centre it is difficult for large vehicles to service the retail units, pubs and restaurants without impacting on other road users.

BIG IDEAS

The movement section of the plan explores ways to:

Preserve the historic core - Reduce and manage the impact of vehicles. Retain and enhance the quality of the historic town centre.

Make walking and cycling an easier choice - No matter where you are in Oswestry, you're never more than a 10-minute cycle or 25-minute walk from the centre. Redefine roads and junctions as high-quality streets and places for people and cyclists.

Strengthen wider connections via walking, cycling and public transport - Better integrate bus and cyclist routes and wayfinding to the surrounding employment areas, key destinations and growth sites on the outskirts of the town centre. Possible provision of new cycle hub facilities within employment areas.

Coordinate parking - Intercept those driving into town at the edge of the centre to reduce vehicles driving through. Improve the arrival experience and make parking user friendly.

The plan seeks to highlight, examine and illustrate a range of small and larger scale opportunities and potential projects, allowing for implementation over time.

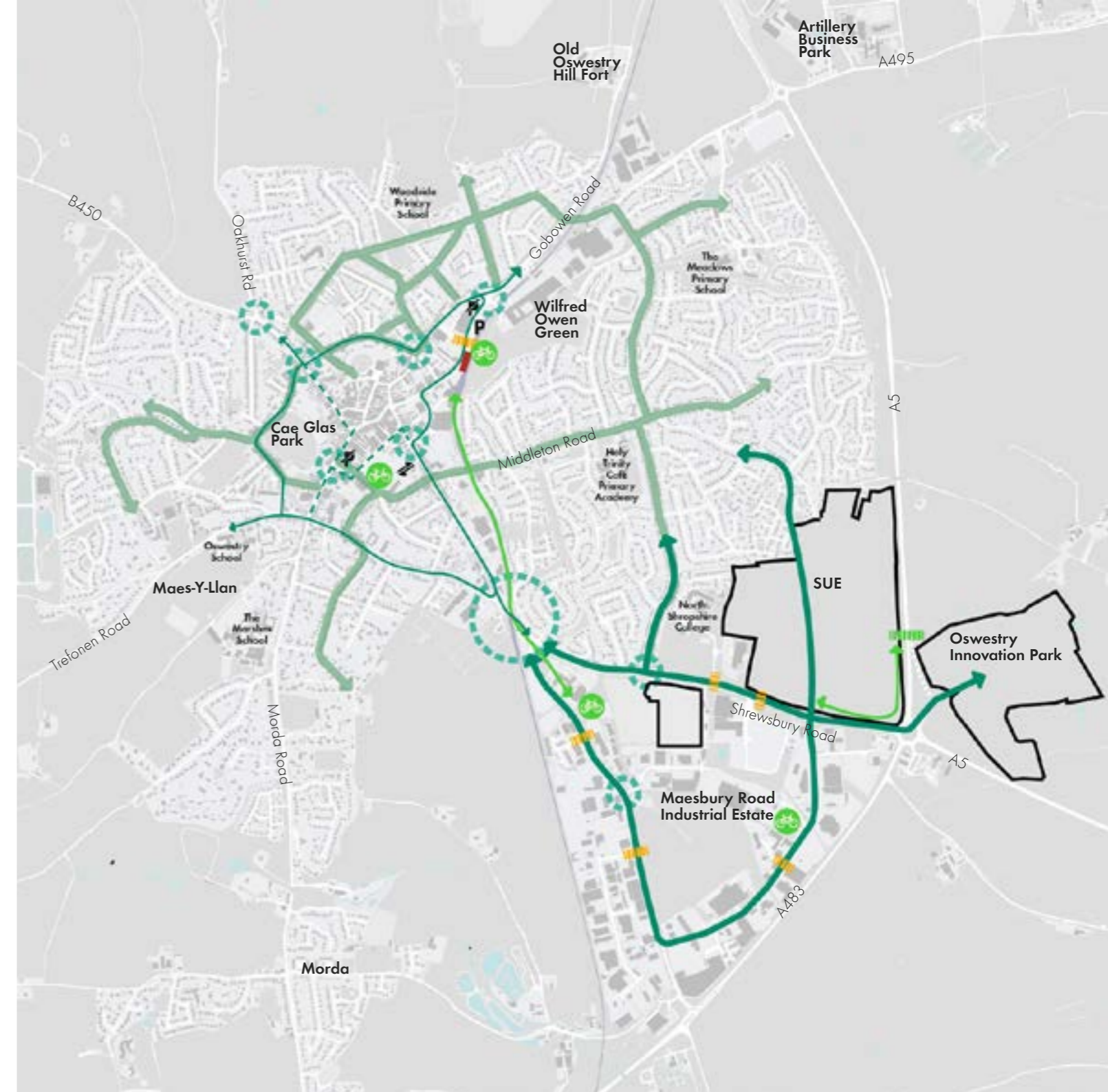
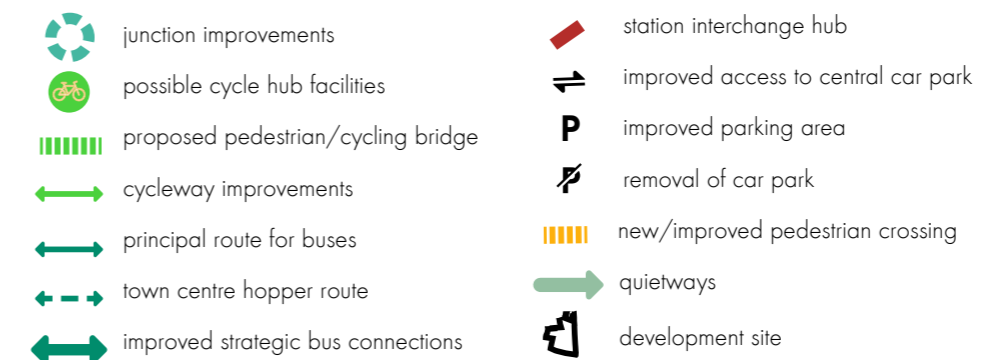


Figure 7 A map of big ideas for movement and transport



Create a public transport interchange hub

There is an opportunity to improve sustainable transport uptake and the arrival experience to Oswestry by creating a multi-modal transport hub near Oswestry Station building. This could improve the passenger experience by bringing together bus stops, coach and taxi rank, cycle facilities and visitor information. This hub would also help future proof plans to reinstate rail services to Gobowen from Oswestry Station.



Project could include:

- Replacing the existing bus station with on-street bus facilities and a new waiting area in front of the Station building to improve accessibility and take up. Changes would require a detailed study to identify design options and assess the potential impacts of changes.
- Providing bus, coach and taxi parking within the car park beside the Station.
- Improve the arrival point into the town and the interchange experience at the Station building



Good practice precedent: A transport hub

The North-West Transport Hub in Derry-Londonderry has been in operational use since October 2019. The hub involved renovating a disused historic building and bringing together rail, bus, cycle, taxi and parking facilities for easy interchange.

with live information, signage and improved footpaths to onward modes.

- Undertaking a study to identify design options and assess the impacts of changes to Beatrice Street, Oswald Road and King Street. The study should look to provide greater bus, pedestrian and cyclist access and station integration into the town centre.
- Renovating the Station building and re-purposing the ground floor to complementary uses, for example, a cafe or convenience shop with toilets.
- Improving junctions and streets for cyclists, providing a cycle hub/parking and linking to onwards cycle routes.
- There may also be an opportunity for cycle or scooter hire.
- An application for funding has already been submitted to develop the business case to reinstate rail services between Oswestry and Gobowen Station.

Strands of the vision it relates to:



Strengthen north east connections

Within three miles from the town centre to the north east, there is a cluster of key destinations for the town's residents: the nearest mainline rail services at Gobowen Station; Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital (RAH); Derwen College; Artillery Business Park, Showground, Park Hall and Oswestry Hill Fort. Access to these locations is currently mostly undertaken by private vehicle as they are poorly served by public transport and the roads are not well designed for cyclists with fast-moving traffic and little infrastructure.



There is an opportunity to strengthen these connections so that people can easily make the trip by public transport or bicycle.

Projects could include:

- Improving the National Cycle Route 455 and other key routes with better signage and junction improvements so cyclists can transition from the cycle network to other roads.
- Provide regular and reliable bus services to Gobowen Station, the Hospital and Park Hall.
- The arrival and interchange experience at Gobowen Station could be improved in with information, signage and bus interchange facilities, as well as a cycle hub. Engagement with relevant stakeholders would be required.
- An application for funding has already been submitted to develop the business case to reinstate rail services between Oswestry and Gobowen Station.
- Improving traffic flow at other key junctions such as Gobowen and Whittington Road to reduce delays and pollution.



Some of this work is already underway through the proposed Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and the Shropshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

Strands of the vision it relates to:



Better bus services

Currently, the bus station is separated from the town centre and could do with upgrading. Due to the one-way system and historic nature of the streets, bus journey times, bus legibility and accessibility are impacted. Equally buses also impact on the constrained environment within the historic core.

There is an opportunity to create an excellent bus service with good quality passenger waiting facilities and information. A service and facilities that enable more frequent and fully accessible access and sustainable movement in town and within the surrounding villages and employment areas.

Projects could include:

- Replacing the existing bus station with on-street bus facilities to improve accessibility and take up. Creation of a multi-modal transport hub near to Oswestry station, safeguarding its use as a transport interchange should funding for rail services be secured.
- Creating a two-way orbital bus network and bus stops around the town centre. Bus stops should be located close to the historic core, next to junctions or crossings and excellent links into the town centre created. This would encourage greater take up of buses and improve reliability.
- Trial an on-demand hopper bus that enables local neighbourhoods, employment hubs, hospital and currently isolated villages to access the town centre by public transport.
- Improve online information to aid better understanding of the bus services, routes and fares available including easy to read maps and live journey time information



- Improve existing bus stop waiting areas to ensure the facilities are in line with contemporary bus stop design, including accessible kerbs, good quality shelters, maps and information

Strands of the vision it relates to:



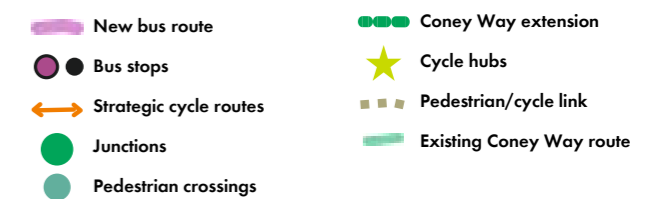
Strengthen south east connections

Maesbury Road Industrial Estate is a major employment area, with more workspace being added at the nearby Innovation Park. The area is also home to the leisure centre will be the location of up to 900 new homes from the Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE). This area is just over one mile from the town centre, a distance which should be very manageable for walking, cycling or public transport - yet it feels 'out-of-town'. There is an opportunity to strengthen connections to this growing area, making walking, cycling and public transport an obvious choice.



Projects could include

- Extending existing bus services or introducing a new bus service that encompasses Maesbury Road, Maes-Y-Clawdd, Shrewsbury Road and connects with the Sustainable Urban Extension and Innovation Park developments. Introduce local bus stops and bus interchange stops with sheltered waiting areas, live passenger information and cycle stands nearby.
- Connecting the Shrewsbury Road cycle lanes to the greenway.
- Extending the Coney Green link south alongside the rail line.
- Enhancing the cycle route to Maesbury Industrial Estate
- Improving the streetscape of Shrewsbury Road so that it feels like a street and provides a better arrival experience to the town, with crossings, footpaths, tree planting and active frontage from new development.



- Provide greater pedestrian and cyclist priority at junctions including traffic calming measures and pedestrian crossings.
- Introduce electric charging points

Some of this work is already underway through the proposed Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and the Shropshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

Strands of the vision it relates to:



5 Rethink deliveries in the town centre

There is an opportunity to change the way deliveries are made to and from town centre businesses to decrease the impact of vehicles on the historic environment, decrease emissions and improve the visitor/customer experience.



Projects could include:

- Working with local businesses to consolidate and shift to more sustainable deliveries and servicing.
- Piloting different options with local businesses to reduce the number or limit the time of deliveries in the centre, reducing the impact of large vehicles on the historic core.

Strands of the vision it relates to:



6 Manage car parking

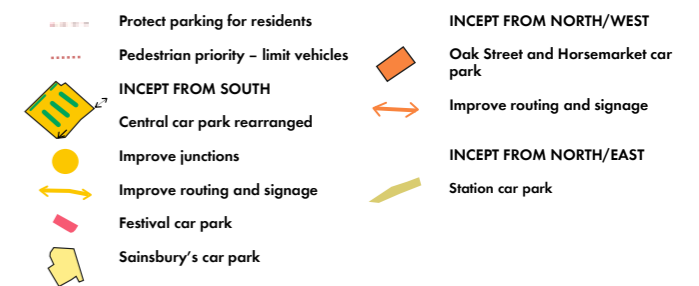
The car parks in town are under different ownerships - the Town Council, Shropshire Council and private ownerships - and operate separately, with different hours, payment arrangements and availability. At times this results in people driving around town to find the parking which suits them. A new way of managing parking, making use of smart technology, could make parking in the town coordinated, integrated and user friendly, while also reducing town centre traffic movements.



Projects could include:

- Oswestry Town Council and Shropshire Council developing a coordinated parking strategy and management approach.
- Rearranging car parking signage and access to intercept vehicle visitors at the edges of the town centre at their arrival point to reduce traffic travelling through the town centre.
- Improving the access and aesthetics of the central car park to reduce the impact of circulating vehicles and anti-social behaviour on the local community. Measures could include changes to the existing access arrangements (making the Salop Road access two-way), greening and public realm improvements as well the introduction of a cycle hub near Welsh Walls.
- Considering re-purposing Festival Square car park for public realm or time restricted space for events.

- Considering the introduction of controlled parking zones within the town centre to protect residents' parking from indiscriminate visitor car parking.
- Improving the visitor experience and wayfinding through improvements to public realm
- Improving wayfinding and signage to Sainsbury's car park.
- Redesigning the Oswestry Station car park to serve as part of an interchange hub, maintaining some visitor car parking, alongside coach, taxi and bus standing
- Improving signage and access to Oak Street and Horsemarket car parks. Introducing electronic payment systems.
- Introducing electronic payment systems and trialling smart systems for coordinating and managing parking throughout the centre.
- Integrating electric car charging points.



Good practice precedent: Parking app
Parking apps can help manage parking more efficiently using live data, reducing the number of vehicles driving through town to find a space.

Strands of the vision it relates to:



Oswestry is a compact town - most of the town is within a 25-minute walk of the centre, and you're never more than a 10-minute cycle from the centre. Encouraging less reliance on cars and promotion of walking and cycling is a major opportunity to relieve congestion and reduce emissions, while also supporting an active and healthy lifestyle.

The Shropshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is already in preparation and will identify a network plan for walking and cycling for Oswestry which identifies preferred routes and core zones for further development. The LCWIP will also provide a prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for future investment for Oswestry.

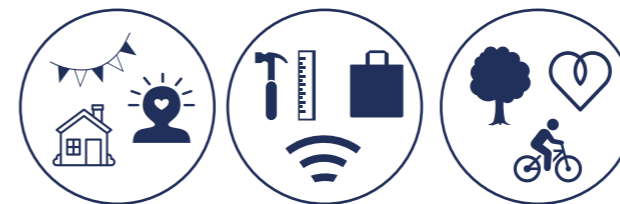
Projects could include:

- School streets and quietways - making a pleasant network of quieter walking and cycling routes for less confident cyclists and families. Measures could include dropped kerbs, footway repairs, footway widening, traffic calming measures, modal filters, tree planting, parking relocation and signage.
- Strengthening strategic cycle routes with junction improvements, traffic management, on-cycle lanes and signage. It is important to ensure facilities are consistent, convenient, safe and in line with National Cycle Design Guidance.
- Introducing cycle hubs -secure sheltered parking - at key locations including near the station, in car parks and at schools These could include

cycle hire and cycle repair stations in the longer term. Upgrading on-street cycle parking and considering neighbourhood cycle hangers to provide for residents who do not have private space to store a bicycle securely.

- Upgrading key junctions to provide greater pedestrian and cyclist priority.
- Encouraging the take up of walking and cycling, through initiatives such as free cycle training, bike maintenance courses, community cycle clubs and try-a-bike loans for residents.
- Working with schools to bring in travel plans, or to restrict traffic on school streets.

Strands of the vision it relates to:



Good practice precedent: A pedestrian-priority street
A narrow carriageway and level surface help to communicate to drivers to slow down and give pedestrians more space and priority.



Good practice precedent: A level crossing
Junctions and crossings should give more priority and provide a continuous smooth surface for people walking and cycling.



Good practice precedent: A quietway and modal filter
This quietway provides a pleasant environment for people walking and cycling. The modal filter allows bicycles and pedestrians through while stopping cars.



Good practice precedent: A cycle hanger
In the space to park one car, a cycle hanger can provide secure and convenient storage of six bicycles, encouraging uptake of cycling.

4.4 BIG IDEAS FOR PLACEMAKING

THE EXISTING CONTEXT

Oswestry's greatest asset is its history and heritage - the town centre benefits from an array of historic buildings, many of which are listed and the centre is protected by a conservation area designation.

There are two main squares in the town: Bailey Head and Festival Square. The balance of activity has shifted south in the town centre towards Festival Square - the town would benefit from reactivation of the north of the centre.

Bailey Street is pedestrianised, and traffic restrictions (one-way, restricted time access, etc) have been tested for the other shopping streets (Church Street, Cross Street and Willow Street) looking to strike the right balance between supporting movement and pedestrian activity.

This town centre serves as a the retail core and continues to be home to the weekly indoor and outdoor markets. A number of supermarkets have opened on the edge of the centre as well as car parks for people to easily access the town.

The town's schools generate lots of local trips during term time and are generally well located. There is a good relationship between residential neighbourhoods and core retail area. The town's main

employment area Maesbury Industrial Estate, is out of centre with scope for further improvements and investment.

The town is well served by wonderful Cae Glas Park and benefits from good access to the countryside. Wilfred Owen Green near the Station building could be better linked and better used.

A number of lanes, shuts and alleys provide pedestrian connections between the main streets in the historic centre.

BIG IDEAS

With the rise of online and out of town shopping, people are using town centres differently than they used to. Research shows that people are seeking experience and leisure.

Oswestry already has many strengths in this regard - independent businesses, a growing cafe culture, markets and events and the unique historic environment. There is an opportunity to build on its environment and offer, in order to attract more people to the town adding to its vibrancy and resilience.

The plan seeks to identify and illustrate a range of small and larger scale opportunities and potential projects, which could be implemented over time.



Figure 8 A map of big ideas for placemaking

- new/improved public space
- improved park access
- improved park
- new street
- strengthened cultural offer
- junction improvements
- improved pedestrian-priority street
- streetscape improvements

1 Improving the public realm around Bailey Head/Castle View

There is an opportunity to transform the Bailey Head area, making it more lively at different times and making a feature of the Castle. While Bailey Head is busy on market days, the space lacks versatility and at other times it feels empty.



Though its a significant historic landmark for the town, the Castle does not feel very prominent at the moment and the a space at the entrance of the Castle feels like a 'back' for servicing rather than a 'front'. There is potential to make more of the medieval Castle hill.

Projects could include:

- Re-imagining the space in front of the Castle as one public space, which frames the Castle entrance and makes it feel like a front rather than a back.
- Using paving or lighting to create a sense of continuity between the Castle, Arthur Street, Castle Court, Albion Hill, Chapel Street and Castle View.

- Upgrading the Bailey Head (in conjunction to any improvements to the Castle space), to adapt flexibly to different uses at different times - supporting markets and events and providing a place for people to sit and socialise at other times. Integrating planting, seating and lighting.
- Installing feature lighting of historic buildings and in the key routes and spaces to help support the evening economy.

Improvements are already underway; as part of the HSHAZ work, proposals are being progressed to improve the alleys and the Castle in this area.



Good practice precedent: Improved public realm
Altrincham invested in upgrading their streets and public spaces, and have seen more people coming into town to shop and spend time as a result.

Strands of the vision it relates to:



2

One of the main points of feedback from the engagement was that people would like to see Oswestry's cultural, entertainment and evening offer expanded. The area around Bailey Head has a number of cultural assets - the indoor and outdoor markets, an art house cinema, a music venue, pubs, the museum, theatre and the library. There is an opportunity to bring together and add to this offer, creating a lively cultural offer for the town.

CQ

Projects could include:

- Creating a network of local cultural organisations to coordinate and promote programming of what's on in Oswestry.
- Creating a grant scheme to fund initiatives led by local cultural organisations and businesses, which add to the town's cultural and entertainment programme. Funding should prioritise proposals which cater for young people and older people alike, attract people into the centre, and can adapt to demand in terms of timing rather than being pegged to traditional retail business hours.

- Identifying gaps in culture/leisure provision and seek to attract these into town as part of upcoming developments. In particular, any new provision should look to cater for young people. For example, through the engagement process, people identified a lack of cinema and a new mid-sized venue or performance space (which could be used flexibly at different times).
- Programming events and activities in the public space such as an outdoor cinema night, outdoor theatre, busker performances, pop-up food markets or live music. Hosting these activities in the public spaces helps to keep them visible and accessible to all, activating the streets and spaces.

As part of the Oswestry HSHAZ, a Cultural Consortium has already been set up made up of interested organisations and individuals to promote culture in the town centre and actions are already underway to strengthen the town's cultural offer.

Strands of the vision it relates to:



Good practice precedent: Culture in the public realm
Backyard cinema holds outdoor film nights which increases town centre footfall in the events and makes a feature of the historic buildings and public space.

3

Through the engagement process, local people told us that despite investment Wilfred Owen Park is not well used and at times feels dangerous. Changes could be made to the park to increase its use, making it the heart of the community in this area of Oswestry.

CG

Projects could include:

- Improving the entrance and prominence from Oswald Road/Thomas Savin Road. This could be done with signage and a linked green space visible from Oswald Road. It would also benefit from a direct pedestrian crossing to the possible new development on the Former Morrisons site providing direct access to any future residents or workers.
- Improving the entrance and prominence from Coney Green, with an enhanced footpath and signage from the town centre.
- Increasing the recreational facilities in the park and activities for young people, for example by incorporating a skate park or outdoor table tennis tables would help draw more people, in turn making the park feel safer.
- Creating a pavilion in the park, which provides community space, while creating natural surveillance by windows and doors looking on to the park.
- Any future development around the edges of the park should face on to the green space, giving the park more of a feeling of being watched over and cared for.



The existing entrance to Wilfred Owen Park across the railway at Coney Green.

Strands of the vision it relates to:



4

There is an opportunity to make the town's shopping streets - Bailey Street, Cross Street, Church Street and Willow Street - more attractive to visitors and residents alike.



The big ideas in the movement section look to decrease vehicular traffic in the historic core. In tandem with these proposals, there is an opportunity to re-imagine the streets as pedestrian-priority spaces.

Potential projects:

- Declutter the public realm removing extraneous signage, bollards, posts, street furniture.
- Now that the one way system on Church Street has been implemented and lower speed limits have been brought in on Church Street, Willow Street and Cross Street, there is an opportunity to transform the streetscape to give greater priority to pedestrians.



Good practice precedent: a high-quality street
Paving in Westbury Dublin gives a sense of pedestrian priority and improves the streets for shoppers, while still allowing access to vehicles as required.

- Improvements to key streets should be agreed, programmed and delivered through a co-ordinated, heritage-led townscape initiative.
- Installing feature lighting along this historic stretch of commercial frontage to help support the evening economy.
- Considering installations, temporary street closures and pop up activity to create activity and interest at different times of the day, week and year.
- Considering the surfacing and paving, to create a higher quality space, all the while remaining fully accessible.
- Art installations which create a sense of intrigue and reinforce Oswestry identity. These would need to be robust and durable to withstand being outdoors.
- Considering how bins, servicing and access are managed, so as to de-clutter the space.

Strands of the vision it relates to:



5 Festival Square public space

Festival Square is a popular public space at the corner of Church Street and Smithfields Street with mature trees, public seating, a sculpture, and cafes spilling out. Adjacent to the space is Festival Square car park, a relatively small car park in Shropshire Council ownership. Through the engagement process, local people expressed support for idea of converting Festival Square car park into an expanded public space. It is also adjacent to the much larger Central Car Park, which could continue to provide access to this part of town. This could include:



- In the short term, trial the closure of Festival car park to host activities and events.
- In the medium term, parking could be removed and the space could be converted in a temporary manner as a pilot. This could offer a lower-budget solution and be a quick-win for the town. This could help capture the collective imagination about what the space

could be in the future. There is also potential to carry this out as a design competition engaging people within the community.

- In the longer term this could be made permanent, and the space could be resurfaced taking in both the car park and existing public space. The space could provide trees, a small events spaces, benches, elements of play for children and teenagers, as well as additional outdoor seating for the adjacent cafe and pub.

Strands of the vision it relates to:



Good practice precedent: Broad Meadow, Oxford

A wide street and small amount of on-street car parking has been transformed into a temporary park in the city centre. The space was used to host an extensive programme of community events and the Council has been consulting the public on whether Broad Street has the potential to become permanently pedestrianised.



Good practice precedent: Public space Altrincham

Altrincham invested in their public realm including a complete redesign of their public square including new high quality paving sets, tree planting and lighting. The lay out creates distinct areas for different use - seating, play, events and outdoor dining.



6 Alley improvements

As has been done elsewhere Oswestry, the town's alleyways are an opportunity to create intimate and characterful spaces which make navigating the town a joyful experience. Improvements are being progressed through the HSHAZ for the:



- Herbie Roberts Way/Castle Court
- Clawdd Du
- Star Alley/Passage
- and the alleyway between Willow Street and Cae Glas Park.

Possible interventions could include:

- Installing feature lighting to add to the character of the laneways and promote their use into the evening.

- Rethinking the laneways' signage and wayfinding to make people aware of the lanes and to draw people through them.
- Considering the surfacing and paving, perhaps drawing inspiration from the town's past (e.g. historic materials), to create a higher quality space, all the while remaining fully accessible.
- Art installations which create a sense of intrigue and reinforce Oswestry identity. These would need to be robust and durable to withstand being outdoors.
- Considering how bins, servicing and access are managed in the laneways, so as to de-clutter the space and change people's impression.
- Showcasing any historic features in or around the laneways through providing a better setting, restoration, or incorporating feature lighting.



Good practice precedent: An enhanced laneway
Old Chapel Court has been enhanced with planting, candelary lighting and signage which make it a characterful space and preferred route for pedestrians.

Strands of the vision it relates to:



The existing conditions of Herbie Roberts Way/Castle Court



Sketches showing design ideas for the alleyways as part of the HSHAZ project

4.5 BIG IDEAS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT

CONTEXT

Retail and leisure play an important role in the local economy. The town centre has a strong retail sector with a particularly good range of independent outlets. Demand from national multiples is likely to be greater for convenience retail floorspace, rather than comparison. As major sites in and around the centre come forward, it may be appropriate to consolidate the retail area into a smaller, more focused, central area.

Independent retail with supporting restaurants, coffee shops and bars have an important role to play in the town's future. Vacant premises provide opportunities for pop-up space to help re-focus and diversify the town centre offer. A new town centre hotel could benefit the visitor economy and strengthen Oswestry's appeal to visitors.

Office space could be provided in a mix of small units offered on flexible lease terms to attract a range of local occupiers. Repurposing existing buildings would help provide the flexible space on affordable terms.

Whilst the town centre will always be a focus for investment and development, the main area of planned development in Oswestry is around town's south eastern approach at Shrewsbury Road. Improvements to the junctions and access arrangements required to support new development here are already being delivered.

Oswestry Innovation Park is proposed to bring new commercial space for a range of businesses, as well as a hotel and small food and drink offer. A masterplan was adopted for the area in 2013 for Oswestry Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) which will provide up to 900 new homes to the west of the A5, together with associated open space and community facilities.

There is a strong residential market in Oswestry with good sales values. While a significant number of new homes are planned as part of the SUE, new town centre homes could help to add to footfall into the town centre.

BIG IDEAS

There are three sites in Oswestry in public ownership which could be considered for redeveloped to meet the town's needs and promote its vitality: the Former Morrisons site to the north-east of the town, the indoor market building at Bailey Head, and the former railway station building on Oswald Road. In addition, there are other sites in private ownership which are vacant or under-used and could be promoted for investment or redevelopment. The historic building stock within the town centre provides a great opportunity to provide visually interesting, desirable and attractive business locations for occupiers.

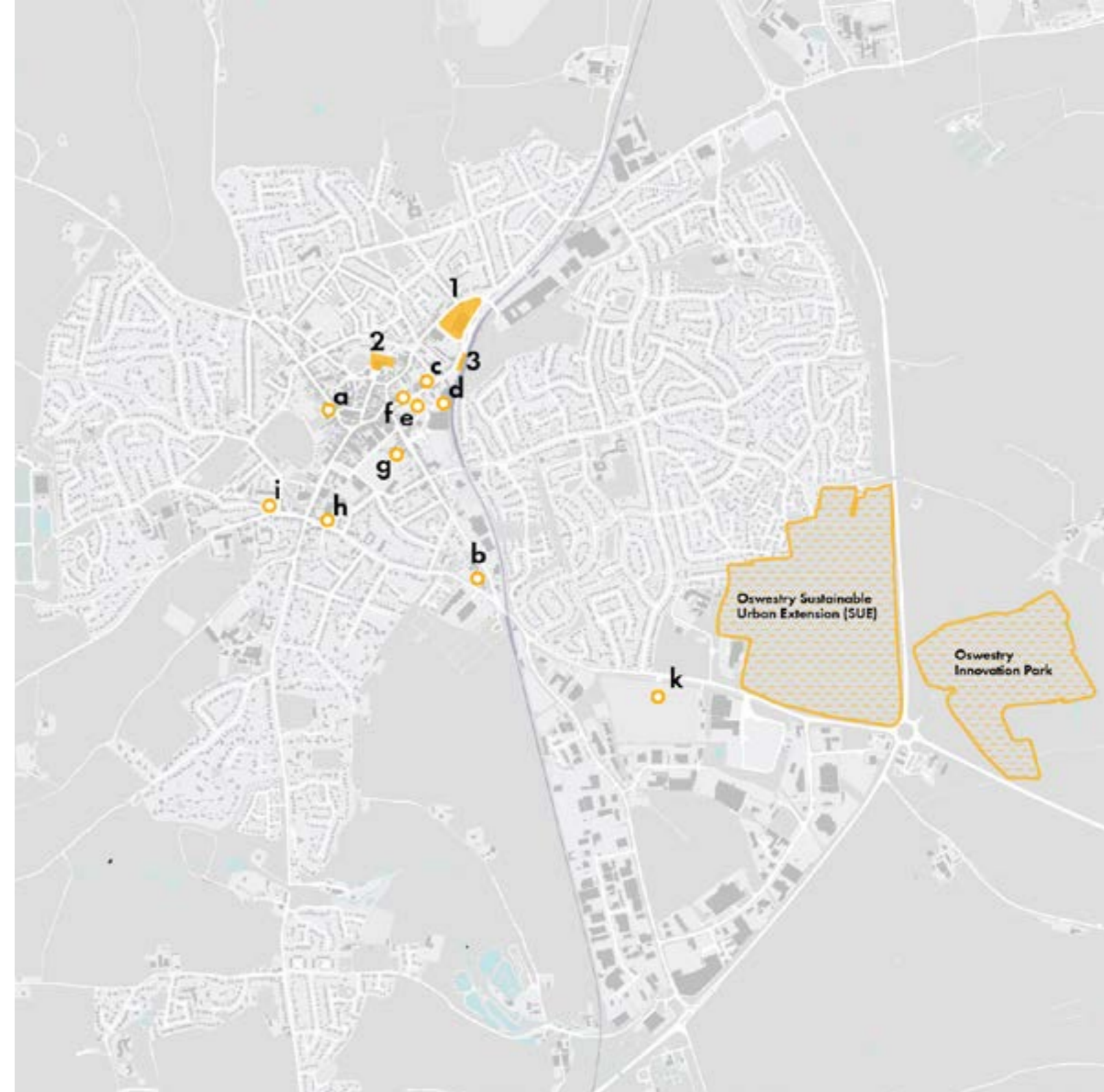


Figure 9 A map of big ideas for development and investment

Opportunities

1. Former Morrisons
2. Market Hall and backlands
3. Former Station building

Planned development

Minor sites

- a. Post Office, Willow Street
- b. Victoria Road
- c. K. C. Jones site
- d. Coney Green
- e. Iceland
- f. Qube
- g. English Walls (NE)
- h. Arthur's Vauxhall
- i. B. T. Exchange
- k. Former Livestock site

1 Redevelop the former Morrisons site

The Former Morrisons site between Oswald Road and Beatrice Street is a perhaps the town's most significant opportunity for growth and to improve the arrival experience into town.



The size and location of the site means its redevelopment presents opportunities to improve many aspects of the town centre environment. These include economic improvements with new mixed use development contributing to the town's diversity and resilience; access and movement improvements given the opportunity to include the bus station site in redevelopment plans; and, environmental improvements given the opportunity to create a much higher quality gateway experience to the town when arriving from the north.

Primary opportunities from redevelopment of this site include:

- Opportunity for redevelopment of this key urban site immediately adjacent to Oswestry town centre, which could include new uses



Good practice precedent:
High quality new neighbourhood
Goldsmith Street, Norwich

including housing, leisure/culture, community and commercial uses as part of a comprehensive mixed use scheme.

- A range of housing types could be accommodated including a mix of higher density apartment types to family-orientated houses with private gardens.
- There is an opportunity to limit review parking provision given the site's proximity to the town centre and public transport.
- Opportunity to radically improve the northern approach to the town along Gobowen Road.
- New development should provide activity and enclosure along this key approach route - with doors and windows addressing the streets.
- Re provision of the poor quality bus station facilities could deliver town-wide benefits and improve public transport facilities for all town users.

Next steps to include an options appraisal study to review options for the short-term and long-term.

Strands of the vision it relates to:



2 Bailey Head indoor market hall

Oswestry is a proud market town. Market trading has taken place in the town since the reign of Henry II and in the Bailey Head area several hundred years. Maintaining a long term covered market offer for the town forms an important part of Oswestry's identity. The current market hall building dates from 1963 and is only used three days a week. Given its prominent location, there is an opportunity for the site to make a more significant contribution to the vitality of the town.



Any decisions would need to be made in conjunction with a wider review of the market offer and in consultation with market traders

Refurbishment and remodelling of the existing building may be a short to medium term option alongside a review of the market offer across the town. Other towns such as Southport and Altrincham have invested heavily in their historic market buildings to create new complementary attractions. A longer term option could be to promote this prominent site for redevelopment. This more ambitious approach would present scope for the relocation or re-provision of the indoor market.



Good practice precedent:
Southport indoor market refurbishment
(credit www.theguideliverpool.com)

The location and site would be suitable for additional community and cultural uses which would benefit the town centre. A public sector hub, hotel and/or new homes could support a viable scheme.

Opportunities for the redevelopment of the indoor market building at Bailey Head include:

- Any short or long term option for the site should secure the future of the indoor market in the town.
- A shorter term option would be the refurbishment of the facility to make it more outward looking and more inviting - perhaps in tandem with a shift in the nature of the offer.
- The site does however present a major long term mixed use development opportunity for the town centre.
- Opportunity to consider both on-site re-provision or relocation options for the indoor market.
- Future of the site might be considered alongside the future of the adjacent Guildhall.
- The site might present opportunities for a public sector hub facility which could be promoted in partnership with other public sector organisations in the town.
- Redevelopment would present opportunities to deliver improvements to the market square - potentially including reinstatement of the water pump feature (originally sunk in 1776 but removed in 1958).

Strands of the vision it relates to:



3 Refurbish the Railway Station building

Opportunity to renovate the Grade II listed building as flexible workspace/ small business space in the short term and to support a public transport hub at ground floor (toilets, café, etc.), while safeguarding use as an operational station in the long term.



The station building is a major landmark building on the approach to the town from the north. This robust and flexible listed building presents opportunities for conversion and reuse. The building is already part occupied by Cambrian Heritage Railways who operate the adjacent Railway Museum.

Much of the rest of the building however remains empty and presents an opportunity to provide flexible co-working space. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in demand for small scale flexible and local office space as more people choose to work closer to home.

Redevelopment of the bus station as part of the redevelopment of the former Morrison site may require the re-provision of bus facilities. The

area outside the Railway Station building with its generous pavements provides an opportunity for a more convenient and better connected facility. This would once again anchor the station buildings role in the town as a transport hub.

Should the campaign to re-establish passenger services to Gobowen be successful, the basis of an integrated transport interchange at this gateway location will have already been formed.

Opportunities for the refurbishment of the Oswestry Railway Station building include:

- Sensitive refurbishment given the building's Grade II listed status.
- Suitable for conversion to flexible workspaces of a variety of sizes.
- Potential for ground floor cafe/restaurant use.
- Maintaining its relationship with the Cambrian Railway Trust would retain links with its past.



Precedent: Maldon Station, Essex, disused since 1953 is now refurbished as an office space.

Strands of the vision it relates to:



5 Bringing vacant properties back into use

Vacancy rates in the town centre is a concern for Oswestry as it is in many other town centres across the country. The HSHAZ initiative has already identified this issue as one requiring action and investment.



Bringing back into use vacant premises on upper floors of town centre (retail) property presents another complementary opportunity to bring investment and more vitality and diversity of uses into the town centre. One such project already underway is a co-working space which has been developed in the Memorial Hall.

Being proactive is important to bring these opportunities to fruition. Some success has already been secured through the work of the HSHAZ scheme to support repairs to historic shop frontages and to bring vacant or underused properties back into use.

Additional opportunities for investment could be sought and support for improvements could continue to be provided.



Cross Street, a focus for HSHAZ investment



Good practice precedent: Shopfront improvements Wheeler Gate, Nottingham and HAZ funded (image credit: Rayner Davies Architects)

Strands of the vision it relates to:



5 - IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Overseeing the Vision

The Future Oswestry Group is a partnership set up in 2019, made up of representatives from Shropshire Council, Oswestry Town Council and Oswestry Business Improvement District (BID).

Membership of the group includes:

- Two councillors representing Shropshire Council
- Two councillors representing Oswestry Town Council
- Two representatives of the Oswestry Business Improvement District (BID)

Support is provided by officers from Oswestry Town Council, the BID and Shropshire Council.

The Future Oswestry group has already helped support and develop the High Street Heritage Action Zone programme (HSHAZ), hosted workshops to refresh the vision for Oswestry as part of the master planning process, and supported work to help with social distancing measures in the town centre. The partners are co-ordinating resources and expertise to achieve the shared vision for the benefit of the town.

Two Community Representatives have been appointed to provide advice and support to the Future Oswestry partners to shape the

shared vision and help develop appropriate mechanisms for communicating with key stakeholders, established networks and the wider community.

Active engagement of wider stakeholders in the development of proposals and projects will be undertaken by the Future Oswestry partners, working with Community Representatives and established networks. This will be undertaken through a range of engagement methods, including face to face and online approaches. Opportunities to get involved will be actively promoted to ensure the Future Oswestry partners work collaboratively with stakeholders and the wider community on the preparation of the delivery plan and the development of proposals and projects.

Developing projects to deliver the vision

This vision provides the overview of regeneration ambitions. The next step is the preparation of a detailed delivery plan which will provide the framework for the development of key projects and enable long term co-ordination. Engagement with stakeholders and the wider community on the developing proposals will be undertaken, through the Future Oswestry group supported by the Community Representatives.

The type of project will inform the key asks

of partners and stakeholders, appropriate delivery model(s), and organisation lead. The nature and scale of projects identified will determine the need for detailed design, technical studies, and level of consultation with the community and with the relevant authorities as appropriate.

The Vision and preparation of the delivery plan will inform bids for funding and the prioritisation of projects to meet the aspirations of the Future Oswestry Plan.

There are a number of smaller scale projects that could be developed as early projects in the short term, to deliver improvements which have been identified as part of the engagement discussions. These projects ideas and ways to be involved in their development will be promoted through the Future Oswestry Group.



5.2 DELIVERY MODELS AND FUNDING OPTIONS

Introduction

The Future Oswestry Plan presents an ambitious programme which, if substantially implemented, will guide the development of this historic border market town. It concentrates on physical development activity as this is the role of this study and it will need to be coordinated with the changes to the highways network and future development proposals of land owners and developers to ensure that maximum benefit is leveraged.

Market Positioning

Oswestry today is an intriguing proposition in market terms. The area does offer significant opportunities for development with the greatest challenge being the identification of the most appropriate uses that would fully benefit the future of the town..

It is an established cultural and commercial location in north Shropshire, serving a cross-border catchment that extends into Wales. It is at the confluence of a number of roads. A thorough analysis would be required to identify the most appropriate uses for the development sites that have been created by the closure of the Morrisons store.

The Council has been developing this strategy to achieve long term sustainable

change and with a strong emphasis on quality and aligning new development to the needs of a target audience. It is important to emphasise that any buildings developed in this area must be of the highest quality given the important heritage and architecture of the town.

This vision is dependent on creating an environment of exemplar quality (green spaces and good design) with excellent connections including ICT, plus decent public transport and attractive walking and cycling routes through the area. It also needs to be perceived as a safe area and one where facilities (including community uses, leisure amenities and shops) are excellent.

Funding Sources and Delivery Mechanisms

In the current financial climate, there is scarcity of funds for site acquisition and capital enabling works. There are severe restrictions on local authority budgets, and this is likely to remain so for a considerable time to come.

The government has committed to 'Levelling Up' the country. Oswestry should be well placed to secure future intervention funding. The following potential sources of intervention funding are likely to present opportunities for the town (note that there are likely to be additional funding streams in due course):

- Levelling Up Fund
- High Street Heritage Action Zone
- Towns Fund
- Future High Streets Fund (or successor)
- Shared Prosperity Fund (in consultation).

In addition to these issues, there are major difficulties for private sector developers gaining access to development loan finance for schemes where there is a property market in transition. This is particularly true for speculative commercial development and this will need to be considered.

Public: Private Joint Ventures

One option for delivery of development sites is through a Joint Venture (JV), an entity formed between two or more parties which both contribute equity and then share in the revenues, expenses and control of the venture. JVs can be for one specific project or for a continuing business relationship. The phrase refers to the purpose of the entity rather than the type of entity, so a JV can be a corporation, a limited liability company, a partnership or another legal structure.

The public sector has extensive land holding in and around Oswestry and clearly has a very important role to play in the facilitation of the further exploration and investigation of opportunities identified. Where land assets are brought in a JV arrangement there will need to be discussions and agreements on

land values during relevant negotiations.

One method of delivery could see the public sector undertaking outstanding land assembly work and selling on to the private sector at market value, thereby realising 'best consideration' and fulfilling the obligations of section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Alternatively, the public sector could elect to put its land into any agreement at a discounted land value and accrue benefits over the medium term through increased values or overage agreements.

Next Steps

It is clear that partnership working will be critical to the success of the plan and with the council and public sector partners having several land holdings in the area, there are strong foundations on which to build links with the wider public and private sectors.

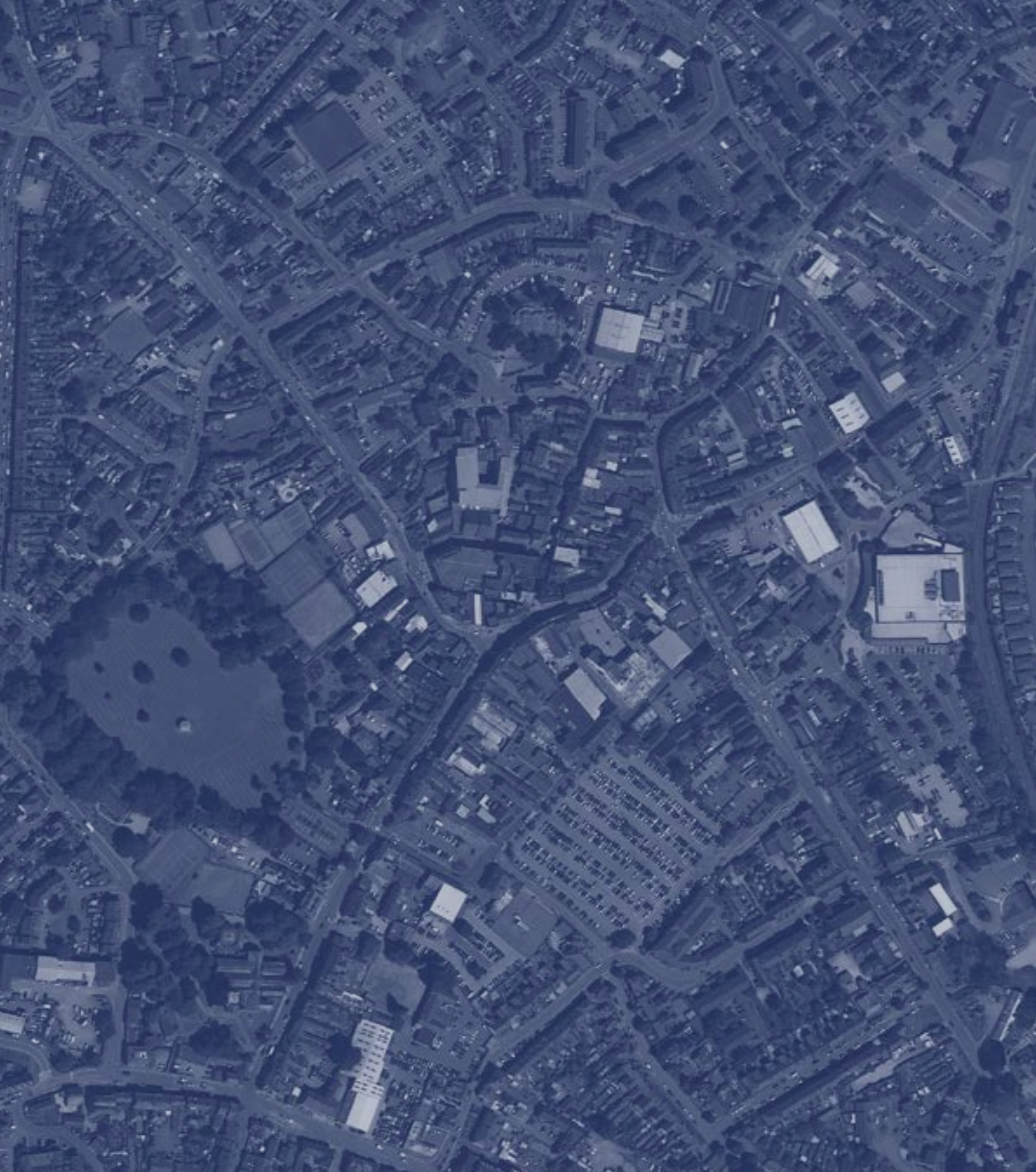
The opportunities identified in the Plan should form the basis of collaborative partnership working between FOG members. Most identified opportunities will require further engagement and consultation. That should lead to the agreement of an action plan identifying a series of quick wins and short-, medium- and long-term actions which the FOG and its partners can take the lead on. Progress on many of these actions will depend on working in partnership with other key stakeholders.



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