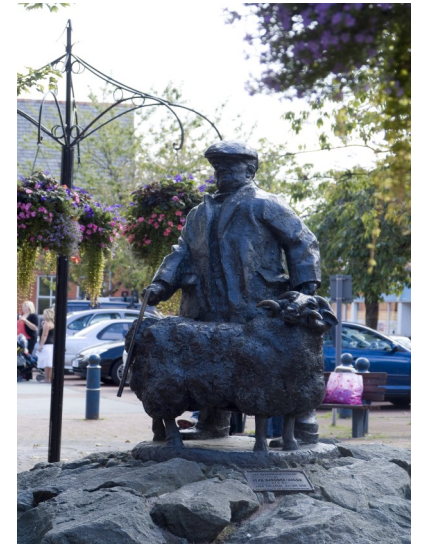


Oswestry: Town Centre Audit Analysis, 2023



Introduction

An audit of businesses operating in Oswestry's main shopping streets was undertaken in September 2023 as part of an on-going piece of research reviewing the vibrancy of Shropshire's main market towns and key settlements. Oswestry centre was first audited in August 2019 and again in September 2020, 2021 and 2022. The objective of these audits is to provide a snapshot of the vitality of the town by investigating:

- The range and diversity of the retail offer
- The number and types of non-retail businesses operating
- The number and location of vacant properties
- Distinctive characteristics within the town, for example a strong tourism offer or a high penetration of "low end" traders
- The amount, location and type of domestic residences in the centre of the town

The research also aims to monitor change over time. The functionality of the High Street has been changing for some time, and through 2020 and 2021 the coronavirus pandemic has posed additional challenges to High Street businesses. The 2020 audits for all towns took place in September, following the first national lockdown. Non-essential retail and hospitality businesses were able to trade at this time (albeit with strict social distancing measures in place). The 2021 audits also took place when High Street businesses were able to trade. By 2022 High Streets were trading normally with no Covid-19 restrictions, but the cost of living crisis was gathering pace. Inflation was elevated in 2023, which has also impacted people's spending power.

Key Findings

- 353 commercial units, occupying 56,000m² gross floor space
- Second largest centre in Shropshire behind Shrewsbury accommodating 13.7% of all Shropshire High Street traders
- Relatively high number of stores per head of population at a rate of 19 units per 1,000 population (13 on average for Shropshire)
- Average store size 159m² which is notably larger than the average across Shropshire (147m²) and third only behind Shrewsbury and Craven Arms
- 317 residential premises in the main shopping area, giving a ratio of 1.1:1 commercial versus residential properties
- Oswestry had an 15% business churn rate between the 2022 and 2023 audits, which is higher than the Shropshire average (12%)
- 12% of all commercial premises were vacant in 2023, just above the Shropshire average (11%)
- The number of vacancies rose by seven in 2023 to 43. This is 15 more unoccupied premises than in 2019
- The highest proportion of commercial units is attributable to comparison retail (24%), although this proportion is lower than in Shrewsbury, Ludlow, Bridgnorth and Whitchurch and has reduced over the last two years
- Retail services are also slightly over represented (21%)
- There are comparatively few businesses operating in convenience retail (7%), although these account for a larger share of gross floor space (12%)

Methodology Statement

Only the main retail centre of the town was surveyed, as shown on Map 4.

Both retail and non-retail businesses will be operating in other parts of the town. In Oswestry, the Business Improvement District Area covers a substantially larger area (see Map 3).

All commercial premises within the defined area were audited, and classified as:

- Comparison Retail—defined as stores selling non-food/drink/tobacco products
- Convenience Retail—defined as stores selling food/drink/tobacco products
- Retail Service— defined as stores selling a service rather than a product, such as hair dressers or travel agents
- Financial & Business Services — for example, banks, solicitors, accountants, estate agents
- Health - including dentists, health centres, GP practices, alternative therapies
- Restaurants & Takeaways—including cafés and tea rooms
- Tourism & Leisure—hotels and public houses/bars as well as visitor attractions and cultural assets
- Education & Community Facilities—including schools, colleges, libraries, community centres
- Other Non-Retail
- Vacant

Gross floor space was matched to each premise using OS Master Map. It should be noted, that where two outlets shared the same premise (as shown on Master Map) an assumption was made that both occupied the same amount of floor space. For multi-storey buildings occupied by multiple businesses, it is assumed that all floors have the same gross space. Unless it is clear that a single business occupies more than one floor of a building, it has been assumed that it occupies only one floor. This means that in some cases, gross floor space may be under-estimated as some traders use upper floors for storage. No estimate relating to net floor space has been made.

Businesses occupying above ground floor level premises have only been included in this audit if their presence is clear from street level (by door signs or external hoardings for example). It is likely, therefore, that some non-consumer businesses operating in the area may have been missed.

Premises are assumed to have changed hands if their name or function has changed since the 2022 audit. In some cases though, ownership may be unchanged but the business has been rebranded or renamed.

An estimate of the number of domestic residences in the main retail centre has been made using OS Address Base (complete version) using all residential classification codes.

Retail Centre Hierarchy

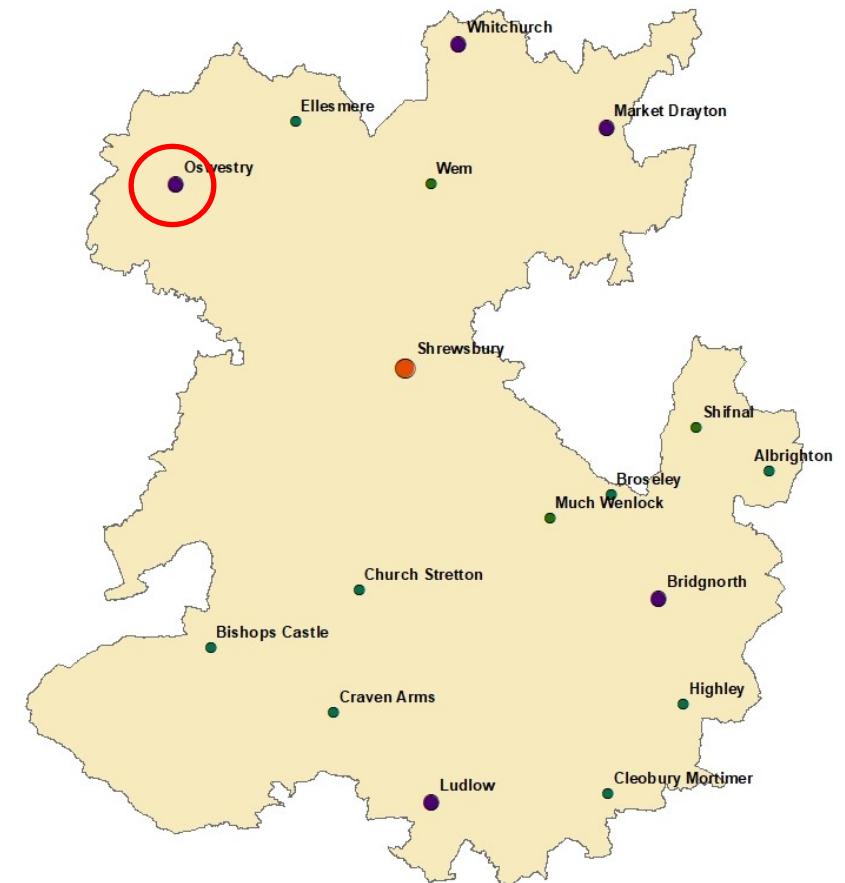
Town centres represent important employment, entertainment and shopping hubs for their local population and hinterland. They also represent an important component of the visitor economy.

However, not all centres have comparable functions. Larger centres tend to attract workers and shoppers from much further afield than smaller centres, and consequently offer a much greater volume and variety of retail trade and consumer and business services.

In order to benchmark Shropshire towns against each other in an appropriate manner, the following hierarchy has been adopted:

- Tier 1: Shrewsbury
- Tier 2: Bridgnorth
Ludlow
Oswestry
Market Drayton
Whitchurch
- Tier 3: Albrighton
Bishops Castle
Broseley
Church Stretton
Clebury Mortimer
Craven Arms
Ellesmere
Highley
Much Wenlock
Shifnal
Wem

Map 1: Shropshire's Main Retail Centres



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Oswestry is the second largest town in Shropshire, and also supports the second largest shopping centre, which caters not only for local residents, but for a hinterland which stretches into Wales.

About Oswestry

Oswestry is located in the north west of Shropshire close to the English-Welsh border. Today the town has a population of 17,568 and 7,961 households (2021 Census). The town's population has grown by 2.7% since 2011. It is the second largest town in the county behind Shrewsbury.

Oswestry is on the A5, which provides a direct southerly link to the main Shropshire market town of Shrewsbury (18 miles). Taking the A5 north provides a direct route to North Wales and the port of Holyhead (88 miles). The A483 provides access north to Wrexham (15 miles) and south to Welshpool (15 miles). The A495 heads east from the town to take in Whittington (3 miles), Ellesmere (9.5 miles) and Whitchurch (21.5 miles). The total population within a 10 mile radius is 92,700.

Oswestry is not on the mainline rail network. The closest railway station is at Gobowen, approximately three miles away.

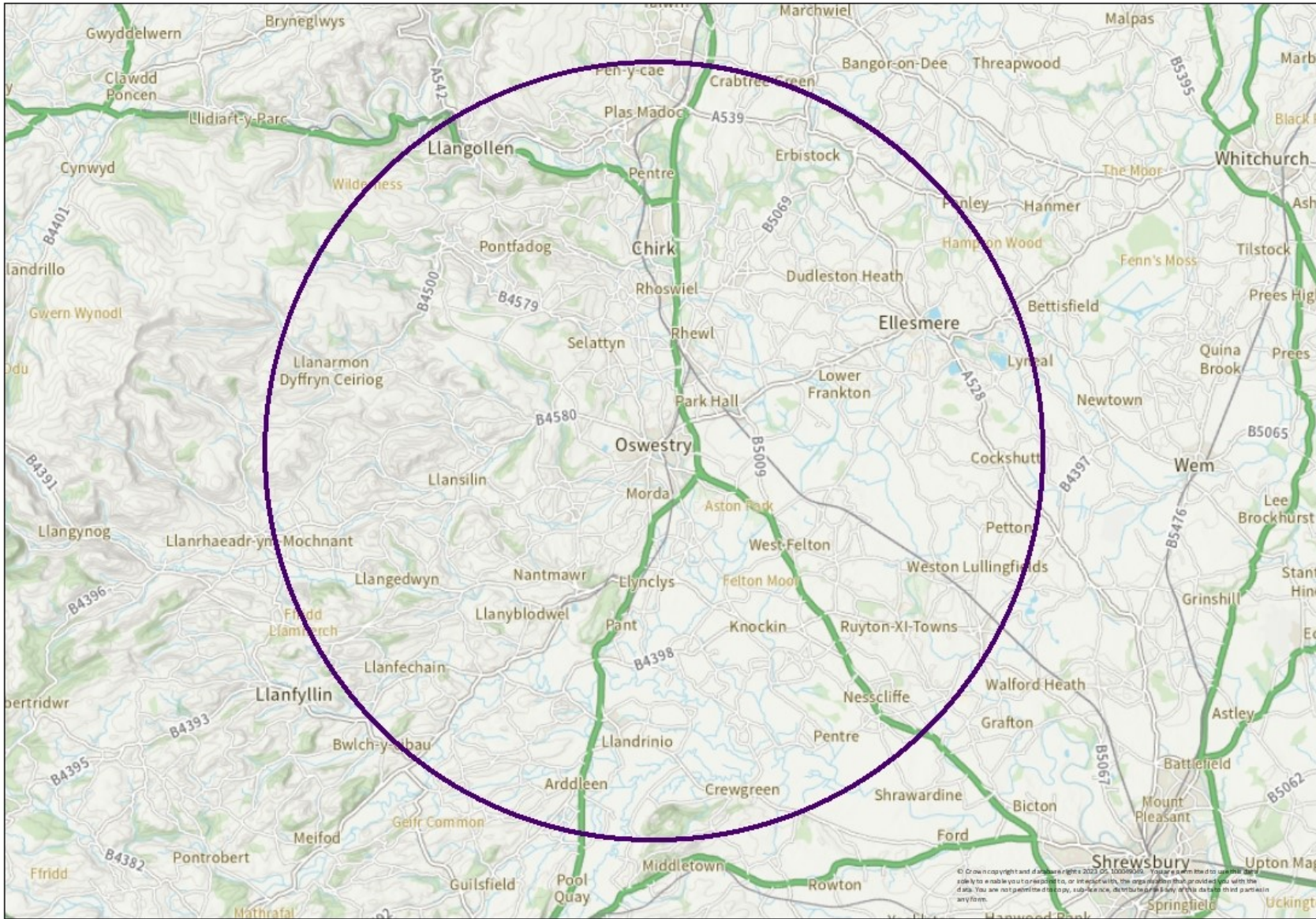
Oswestry is an important employment hub, second in size only to Shrewsbury. It provides approximately 7,000 jobs across the town council area (ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2022). Key sectors include:

- Retail (16.0% of jobs)
- Education (9.9% of jobs)
- Health (9.9% of jobs)
- Accommodation and Food Services (8.5% of jobs)
- Manufacturing (7.8% of jobs)

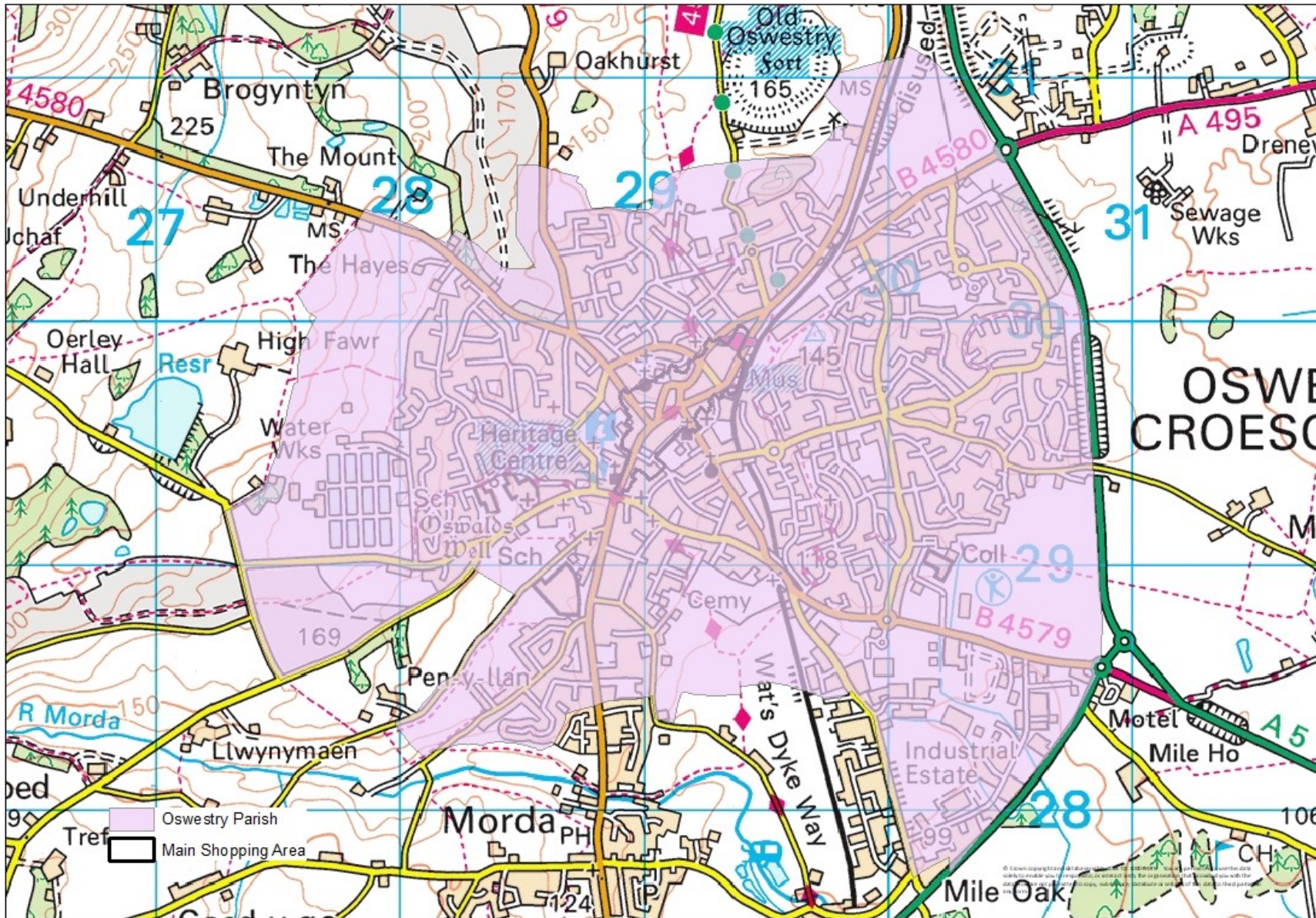
Overall, Oswestry town council area (depicted on Map 3) covers an area of 739 hectares. The main shopping area (depicted on Map 4) is much smaller than this, at around 14 hectares. This is nonetheless notably larger than the main shopping areas in Market Drayton or Whitchurch.

Today the town retains its vital function as a market and shopping centre serving North West Shropshire and Mid Wales. The town comprises predominantly independent retail, although the centre is large enough to have attracted a number of chains, particularly in the comparison retail and financial and business service sectors. The main indoor and outdoor markets take place on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The town is supported by the work of the Business Improvement District which is "a designated zone or area in which businesses benefit from a wide range of additional services over and above those funded through the standard commercial rates and council services".

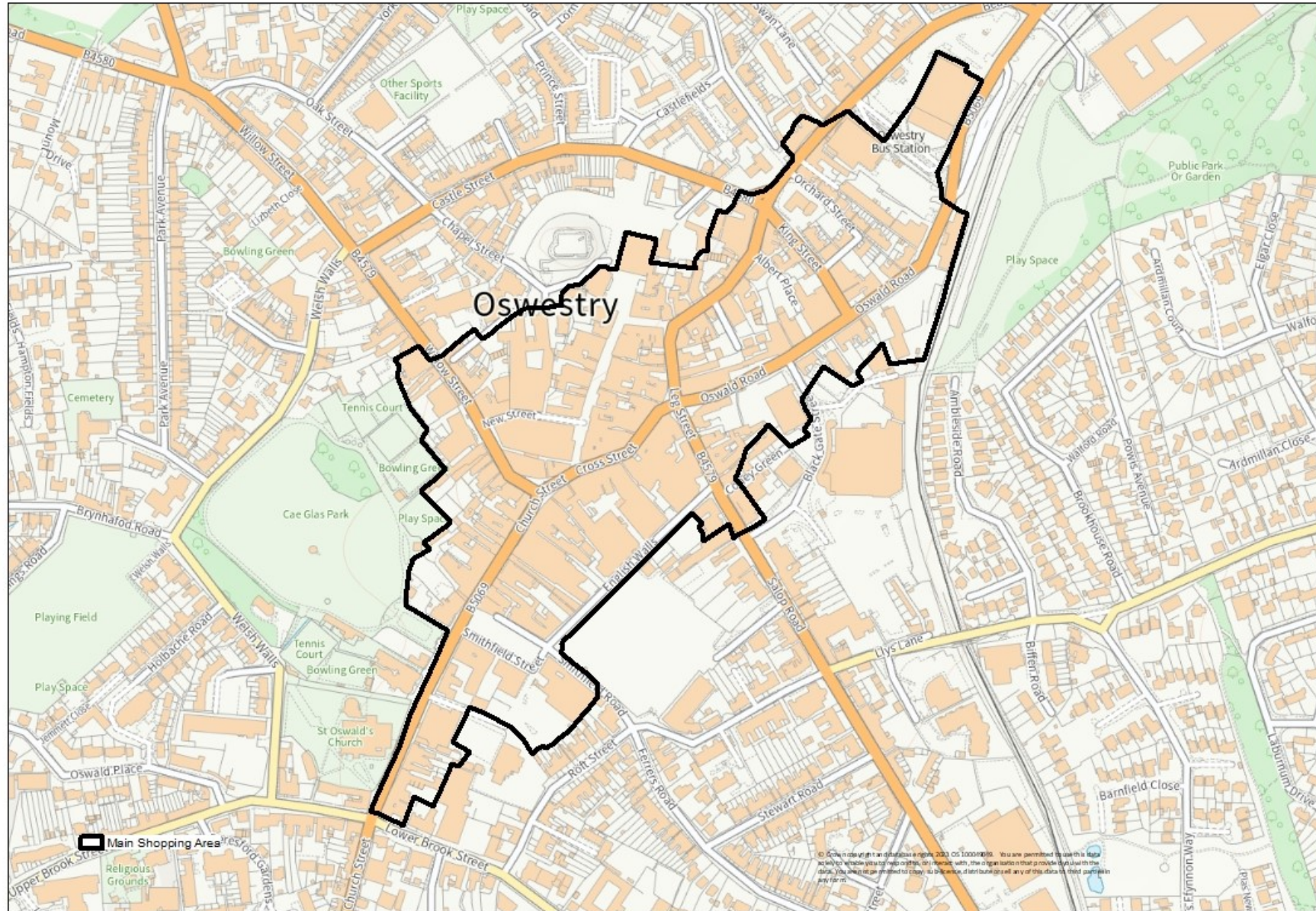
Map 2: Location of Oswestry showing 10 mile radius



Map 3: Oswestry Town Council Area



Map 4: Main Retail Shopping Area



Catchment and Footfall

The map on the following page shows the main catchment for Oswestry town centre. It covers the town itself and a substantial hinterland that stretches into Wales to the west and north, to Ellesmere and Whitchurch in an easterly direction and towards Shrewsbury to the south. Overall, the area includes 11 postcode districts.

The total population within the catchment is 216,614 people which is the third largest in Shropshire after Bridgnorth and Shrewsbury. The average catchment distance is relatively short at 8.65 miles.

The chart below shows the percentage of the catchment population visiting Oswestry at least once a month since April 2020. The conversion rate has ranged between 16.9% (August 2021) and 26.9% (December 2020).

Chart 1: Catchment Conversion (%)

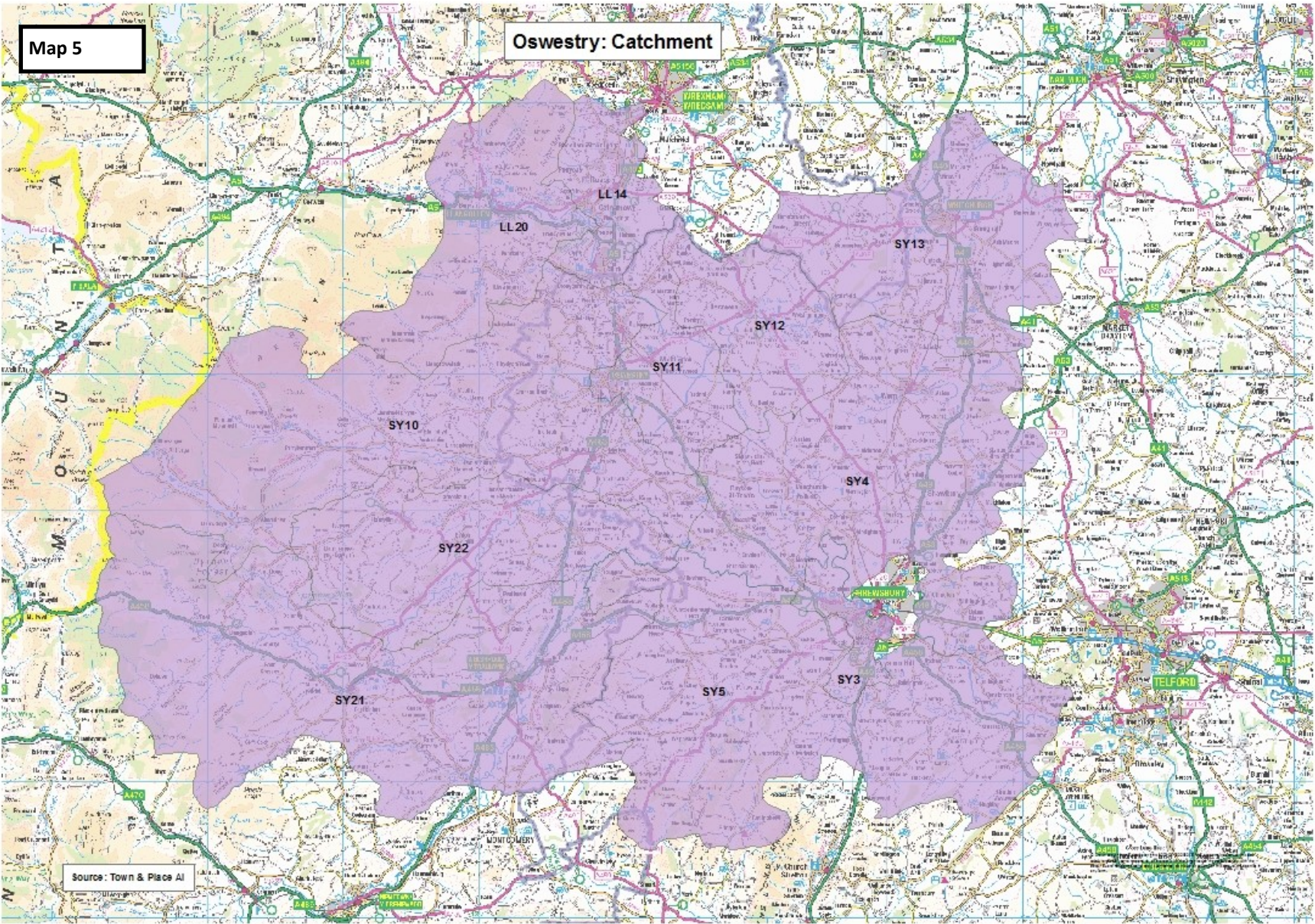


Source: Town & Place AI

Note: Catchment defined as any postcode district from which at least 3% of residents visited the town on at least one occasion during the preceding month. Hence, the precise catchment area and catchment population will change on a monthly basis.

Map 5

Oswestry: Catchment



Source: Town & Place AI

The map on the following page shows the percentage of each postcode that forms part of the Oswestry catchment area that visited the town centre at least once in February 2022.

The overall catchment conversion stood at 23.1% in February 2022. However, this ranges from more than 70% in SY10 and SY11 to 5% or less in SY5, SY13 and SY3. The town itself is in SY11.

Overall, 67% of visitors to Oswestry originated from the four postcode districts that make up the core catchment (SY10, SY11, SY22 and SY12). This proportion is relatively high. The remainder of the catchment accounts for 25% of visitors, with the remaining 8% representing visitors from further afield (classified as tourists). The proportion of visitors accounted for by tourists is relatively low.

Chart 2: Breakdown of Visitors to Oswestry, February 2022

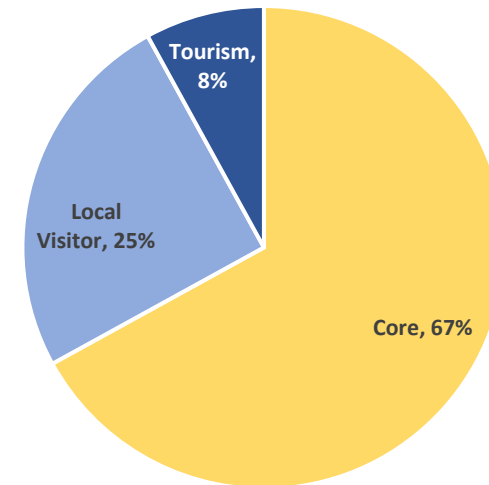
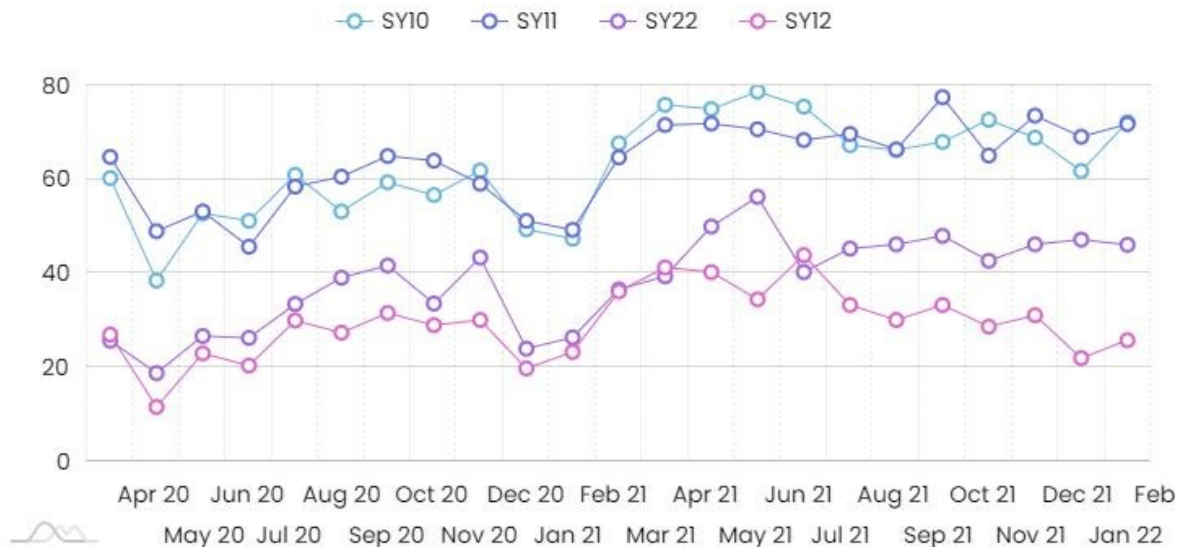


Chart 3: Trends in Oswestry Postcode Conversion

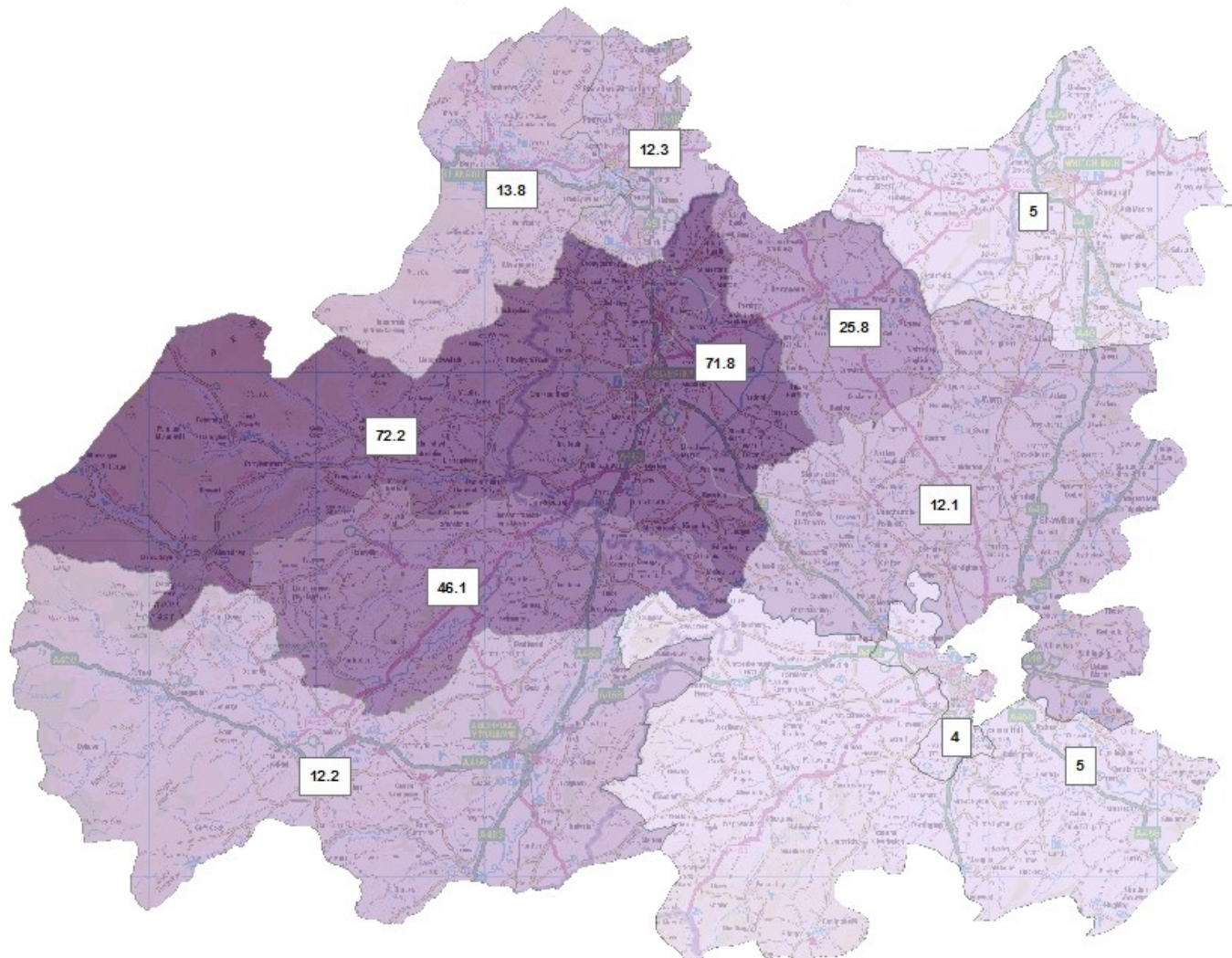
Postcode Conversion Trend (%)



The adjacent chart shows trends in postcode conversion for the Oswestry core catchment area. It shows that conversion from the core postcode districts SY10 and SY11 have been consistently higher than other postcode districts, and that conversion rates have been at a similar level for both postcode districts throughout the period. Although the town is in SY11, it is also the main shopping destination for residents of SY10.

Map 6

Oswestry: Postcode Conversion
February 2022

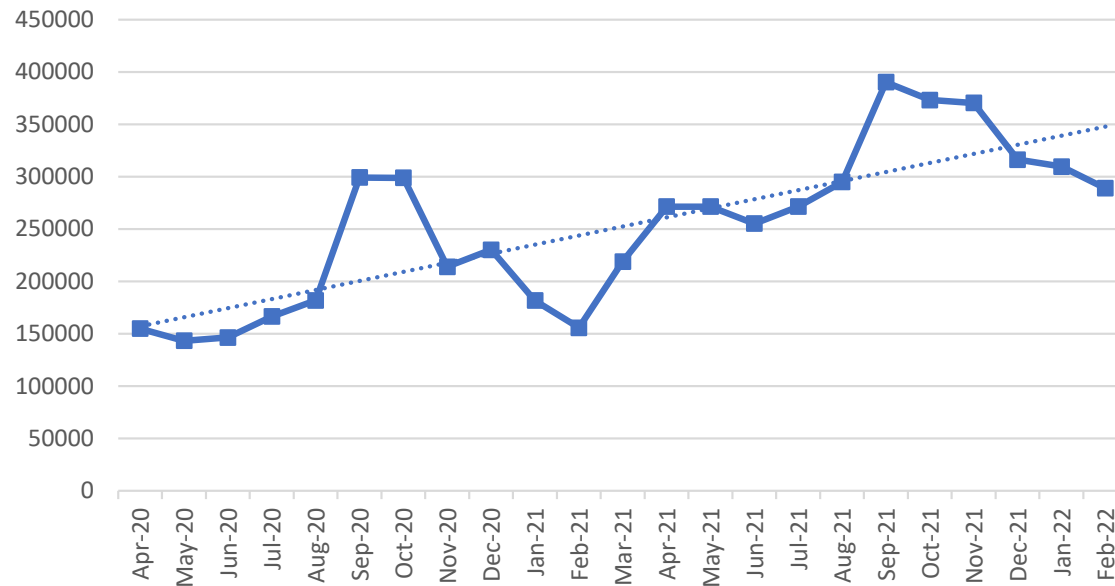


Source: Town & Place AI

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The following chart shows footfall in Oswestry town centre from April 2020 to February 2022. Not surprisingly, the overall trend is upward given that the start of the review period coincided with the first national lockdown arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. Overall footfall stood at 288,924 in February 2022, which represents an increase of 86% over the same month in 2021.

Chart 4: Trends in Footfall



Oswestry attracted 58,964 unique visitors in February 2022, each of whom visited an average of 4.9 times to generate footfall of just under 290,000. The average dwell time was 40 minutes. Both the average number of visits and the average dwell time are relatively high in Oswestry compared with other Shropshire towns.

Alternative Shopping Destinations

Although more than two-thirds of Oswestry residents (both SY10 and SY11) visited the town centre in February 2022, the town's population also utilises alternative shopping destinations further afield. The most frequently visited alternative destination is Shrewsbury, with 22.2% of SY10 residents and 20.3% of SY11 residents visiting at least once in the month. This compares with 16.5% of SY11 residents who visited Ellesmere (8.7% for SY10). The charts below show a steady increase in visits to Shrewsbury throughout 2021, although visits have tailed off somewhat at the start of 2022. Meanwhile, visits to Ellesmere have risen substantially since April 2021, especially for SY11 residents, for whom Ellesmere is more easily accessible.

Chart 5: Shrewsbury

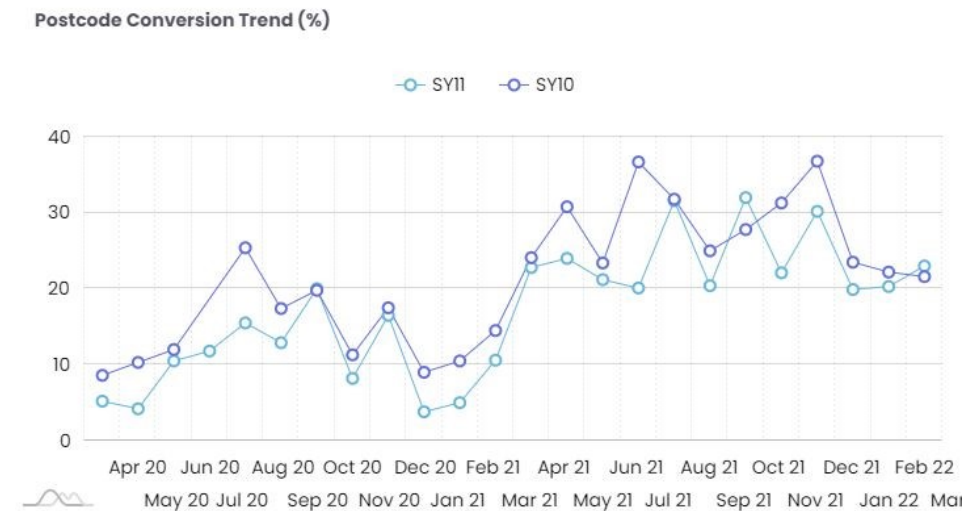
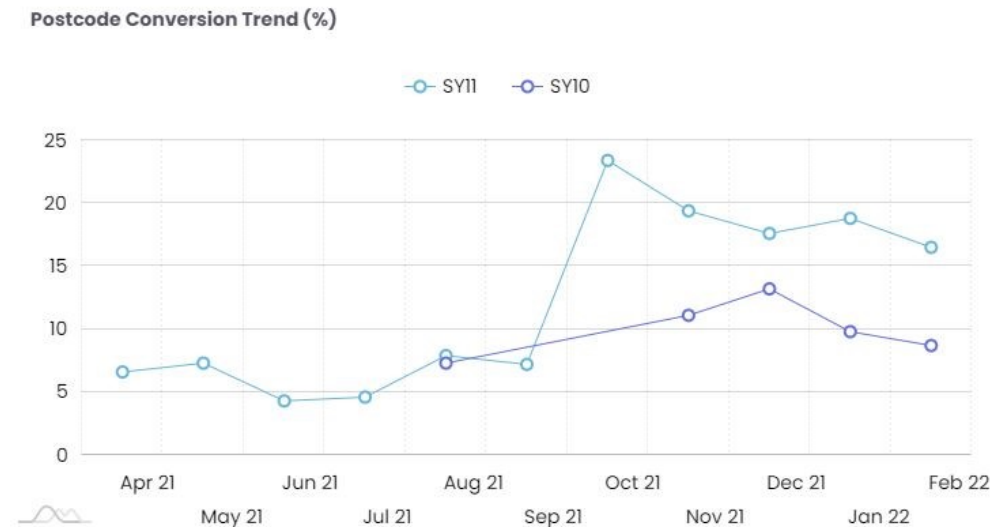


Chart 6: Ellesmere



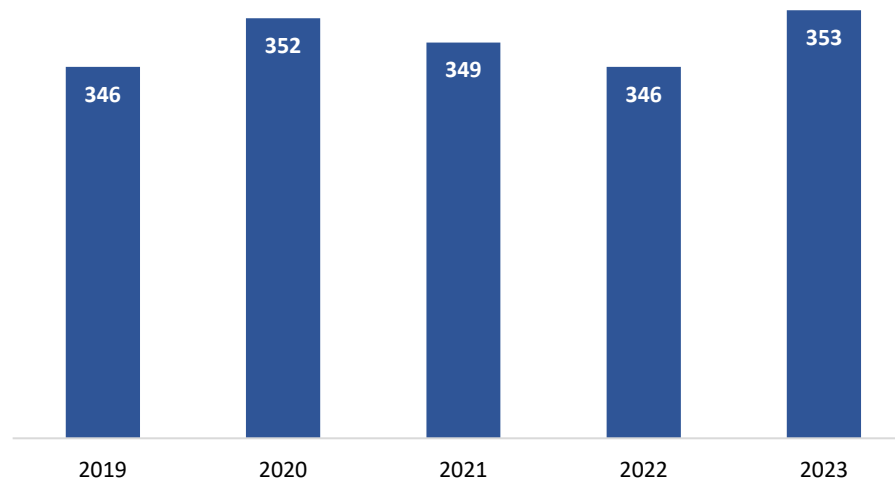
Oswestry residents also travel across the border to Wales on shopping excursions, meaning that a proportion of Oswestry retail expenditure is leaked out of Shropshire. 26.3% of SY11 residents visited Wrexham at least once in February 2022, as well as 11.1% of SY10 residents. Wrexham is located around 15 miles from Oswestry.

Key Audit Results

A total of 353 commercial premises are located within the Oswestry survey area. Oswestry town centre is the second largest in Shropshire behind Shrewsbury, and is notably larger than the other four tier 2 town centres. It has more than twice as many commercial operators than either Market Drayton or Whitchurch and around 50% more than either Ludlow or Bridgnorth. Total gross floor space within Oswestry is around 56,000m².

As shown on the adjacent chart, there has been some minor fluctuation in the number of identified commercial premises in Oswestry town centre since 2019. This may be due to operators which occupy non-ground floor premises being either more or less visible from street level when the audits were being undertaken and does not necessarily equate with a reduction or increase in commercial space. In 2023, two new outlets began operating in Herbie Roberts Way, a new unit was identified in Church Street and in addition, several larger units were split into smaller commercial spaces.

Chart 7: Number of Business Premises in Oswestry, 2019-2023



Note: Excludes permanent stall holders in Market Hall

Chart 8: Location of Business Premises in Oswestry, 2023

	% of Units	% of floor space
Bailey Head	2%	4%
Bailey Street	12%	12%
Beatrice Street	12%	7%
Church Street	18%	16%
Cross Street/The Cross	10%	13%
English Walls	6%	7%
Leg Street	11%	6%
Oswald Road	10%	14%
Willow Street	9%	8%
Other	10%	13%

The Oswestry businesses are primarily in Church Street (65 businesses), Bailey Head and Bailey Street (48 businesses), Beatrice Street (41 businesses), Leg Street (38 businesses), The Cross and Cross Street (34 businesses) and Oswald Road (35 businesses).

Gross floor space allocated to these businesses is almost 56,000m², split by street according to the adjacent table. The average store size is 159m² with units ranging in size from 10m² to over 2,000m². Compared with the other tier 2 retail centres in Shropshire, the average store size is large. Stores are notably smaller than average in Beatrice Street and Leg Street and are larger on Cross Street and Oswald Road.

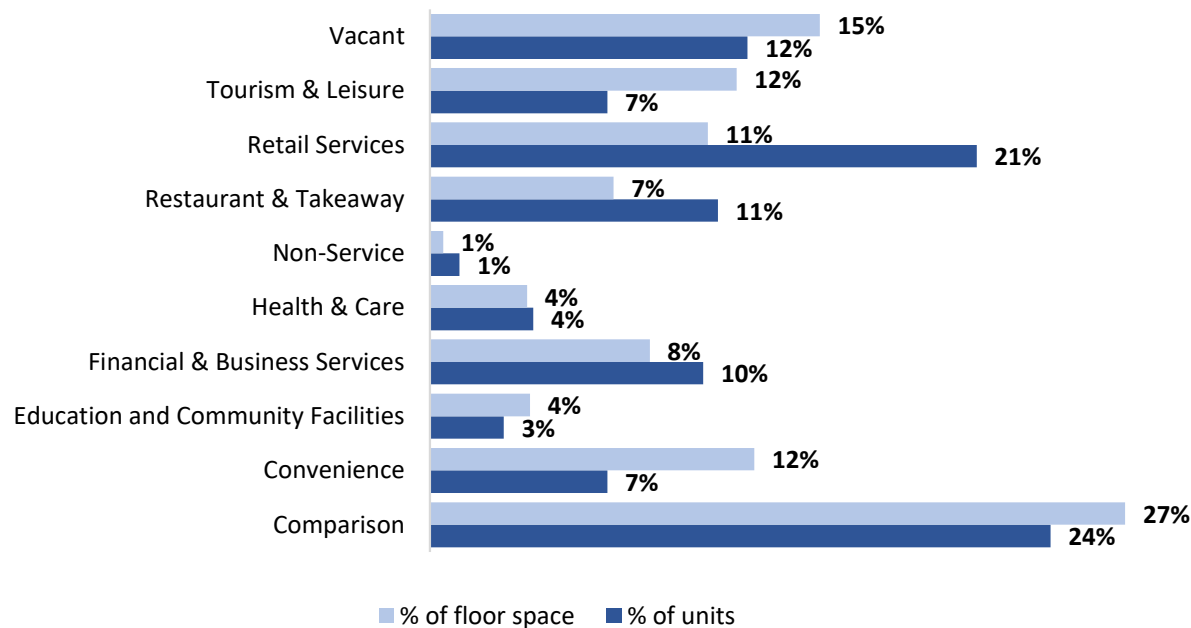
Business Classifications

The highest proportion of the town centre is allocated to comparison retail. There are 84 comparison retailers in the main shopping streets (excluding the market hall), which cover a combined gross floor space of almost 15,000m². This is the equivalent of 24% of units and 27% of space. The proportion of units attributable to comparison stores is low compared to the other comparable market towns in Shropshire (albeit higher than in Market Drayton). However, in terms of floor space, the share allocated to this category is high due to the presence of some very large outlets (including Boots, Home Bargains, B&M Bargains).

Retail service businesses are also very well represented in Oswestry, especially in unit terms, with 74 stores operating (excluding stalls in the market hall). This is over a fifth of the total. These units tend to be smaller than average, and hence account for just 11% of gross floor space.

Restaurants and takeaways account for 11% of units and 7% of floor space, while tourism & leisure accounts for 7% of units and 12% of floor space. 10% of units (and 8% of floor space) is attributable to financial institutions and business service providers.

Chart 9: Breakdown of Oswestry Commercial Premises by Classification, 2023



A small proportion of outlets in Oswestry are attributable to the convenience retail, education & community facilities and health.

12% of units across the town centre are vacant, which is the equivalent of 15% of gross commercial floor space.

Change since 2022

The main change in the commercial offer in Oswestry since 2021 has been an increase in the number of vacant units fuelled principally by a reduction in the numbers operating in tourism and leisure and in finance and business services.

There were four more retail services businesses operating in 2023 than there were in 2022, with two additional restaurants/takeaways and one extra health business.

Chart 11: Breakdown of Business Churn 2019-2023

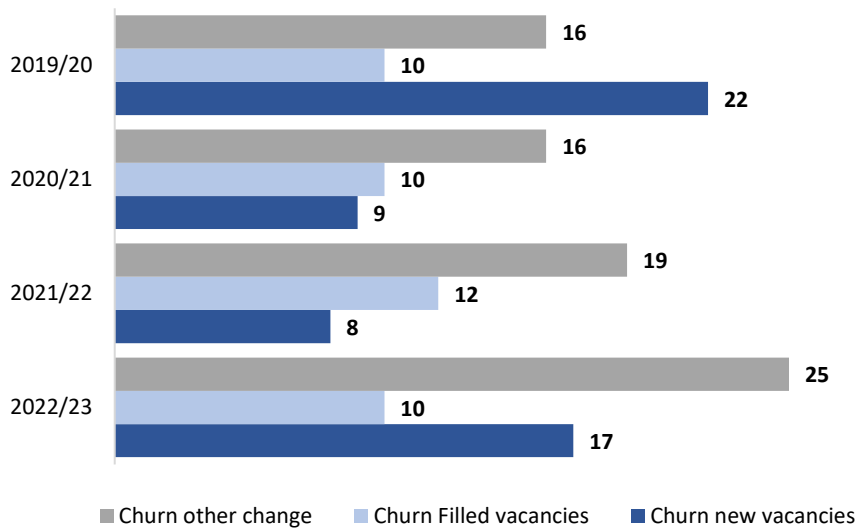
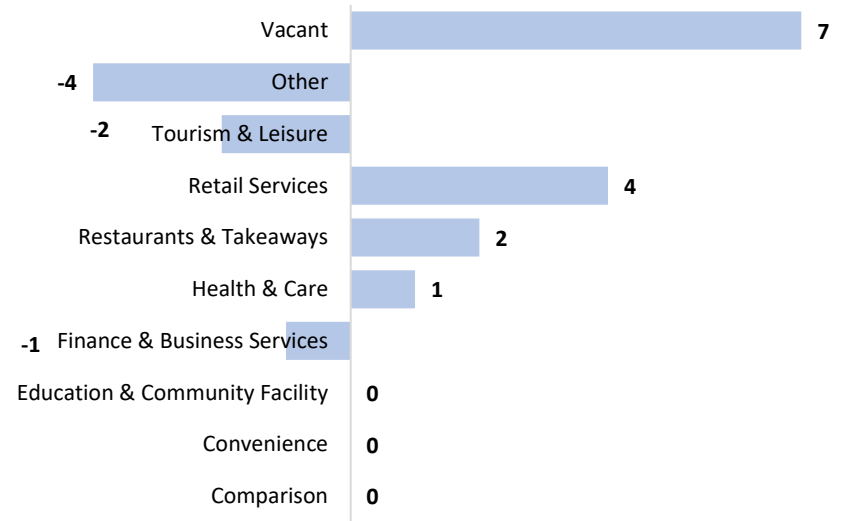


Chart 10: Change in Number of Units by Category, 2022/2023



Churn has been slightly lower than the Shropshire average across the last four years, but was elevated in 2023 at 15% (12% across Shropshire). This compares with 11% in 2022, 10% in 2021, and 13% in 2020 (13% for Shropshire in 2022 and 11% in 2021 and 15% in 2020).

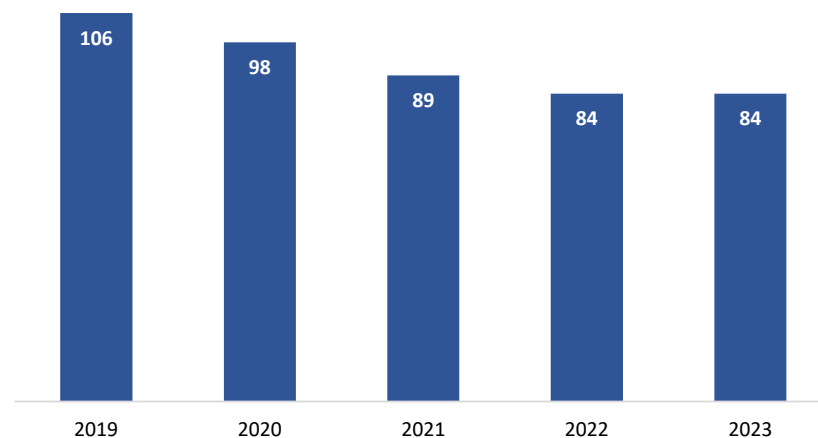
A third of churn in 2023 was new vacancies emerging. This represents a significant increase since 2022, when new vacancies represented 21% of all change. This means the number of new vacancies more than doubled from 8 to 17. Meanwhile, the number of previously vacant premises becoming filled fell from 12 (2022) to 10 (2023).

Almost half of all churn has been attributable to other change in each of the last three years. This includes businesses changing hands, rebranding, relocating or changing purpose.

Comparison Retail

The largest proportion of commercial units and space is dedicated to the comparison retail category, accounting for 24% of units and 27% of gross floor space. This is the equivalent of 84 stores accommodating gross floor space of almost 15,000m². There was no change in the number of comparison retailers in 2023, but overall the number of operators in this classification has fallen by 21% since 2019 (22 fewer outlets). Although the number of outlets held steady in 2023, over 1,000m² of floor space was lost (a decrease of 7%) due to the closure of some large stores including Wilko and M & Co. Despite this, the range of different comparison good stores is wide, and there is a balance between independents and national chains. There is also a significant comparison offer within the Market Hall, with 25 permanent stall holders offering some sort of comparison goods.

Chart 12: Number of Comparison Retailers 2019-2023



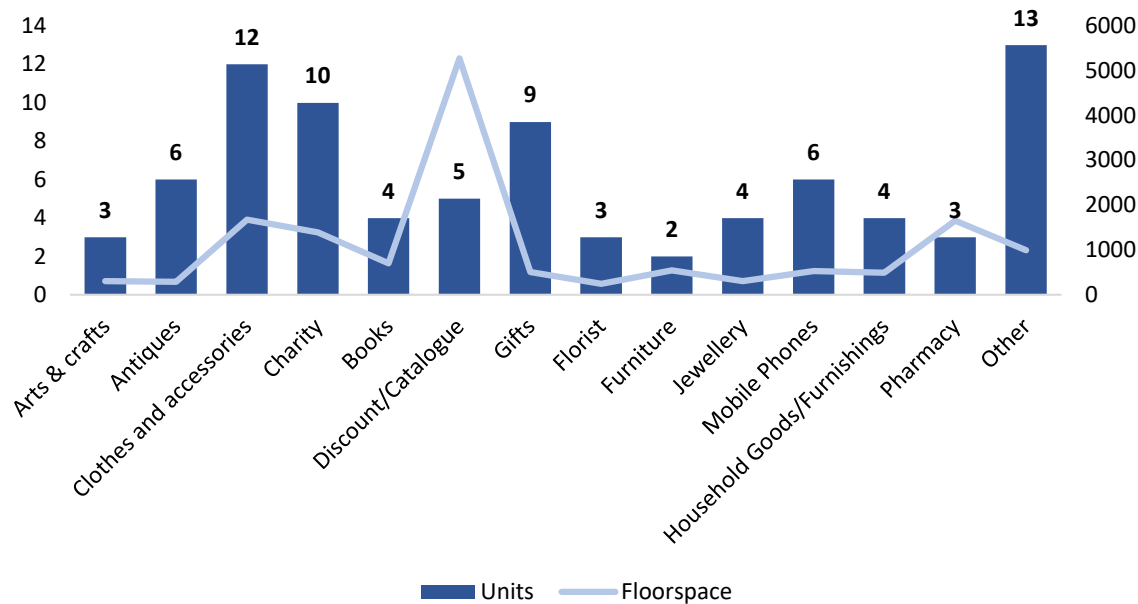
Within the town there are 12 stores offering clothing, shoes or accessories. The shops cater for men, women and children, and include small up-market boutiques as well as larger mass market outlets. Included are five clothing stores, four shoe shops, a hat and bag shop and a sportswear retailer. The town's branch of M & Co closed between 2022 and 2023. This follows the closure of other major chain stores in earlier years including Edinburgh Woollen Mill, Dorothy Perkins and New Look. The main chains still trading include Majors, Clarks and Sports Direct, and most operators are now independent. Other than the closure of M & Co there were no other changes in the high street clothing offer in Oswestry between the 2022 and 2023 audits. Despite being a larger shopping centre, there are fewer clothes shops in Oswestry than in either Ludlow or Bridgnorth. The offer is, however, augmented by three stalls on the market which sell clothing.

One in ten outlets is a charity store, with 10 units trading. Most of these are national charities (Barnados, British Heart Foundation, Salvation Army, Age UK, British Red Cross), but more local charities are also represented (Hope House, Nightingale House, Severn Hospice, the Rural Charity). One charity store closed between the 2020 and 2021 audits but there was no change in either 2022 or 2023.

There are five discount/catalogue stores in Oswestry, with these accounting for more than a third of comparison retail floor space against their 6% share of units. These are all chains. Three of the largest stores in the town (Home Bargains, Pound Land and B&M Bargains) operate in this sub-category. The average size of discount stores is much larger than the classification average (1,000m² compared with 177m²). The offer was reduced by one in 2023 with the closure of the town's branch of Wilko. This followed the closure of the town's stand-alone Argos store between the 2021 and 2022 audits.

Also very well represented in Oswestry are mobile phone stores, of which there are six (including EE, O² and the Carphone Warehouse). There are nine gift shops, which represents an decrease of one over the last year, also four jewellery stores, six antique shops and four book shops (one incorporating a café). There are also three florists, two furniture shops, three pharmacies, four household goods/furnishing stores and three arts and craft stores. One of the antique stores, mobile phone shops and book stores opened in 2023, the latter moving from it's previous location within the market.

Chart 13: Breakdown of Comparison Retail by Type, 2023



Convenience Retail

There are 24 convenience stores within the main shopping area of Oswestry. This is one more than in 2021 but represents no change since 2022. They account for 12% of floor space against a share of just 7% of units, meaning that the average size of units in this classification is almost twice the size of the overall average for businesses within Oswestry town centre. The reason for this is the presence of some large supermarkets within the principal shopping area.

As well as the town centre stores, there are four permanent stall holders offering convenience produce in the Market Hall. While these are not included within the figures, the market itself is included as a convenience operator.

Map 7: Location of Oswestry's Main Convenience Stores

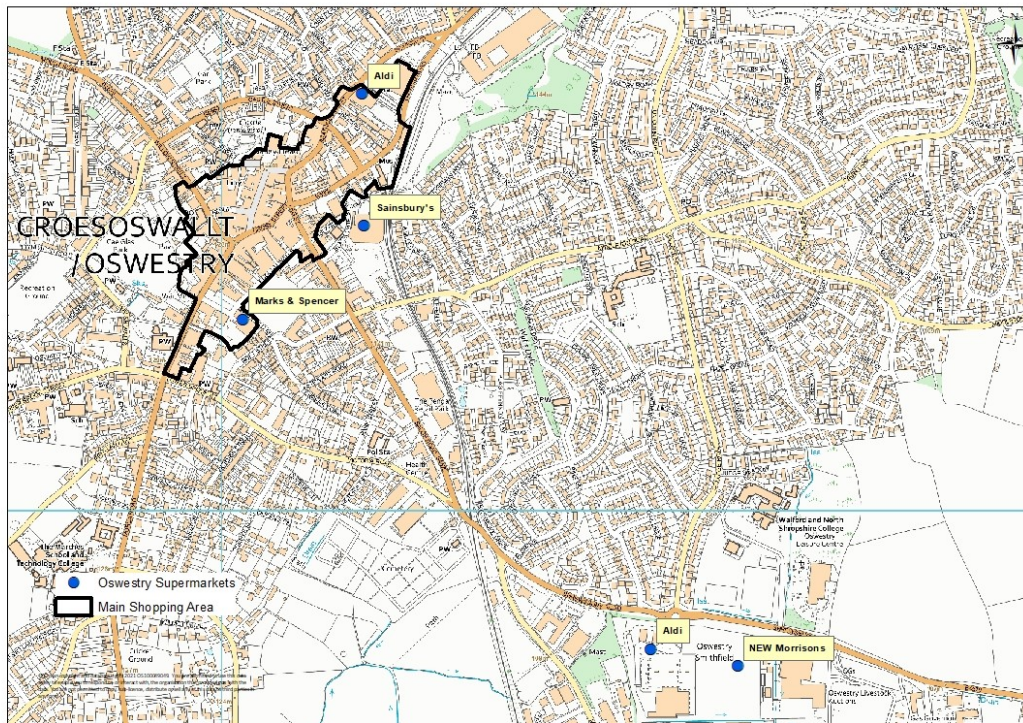
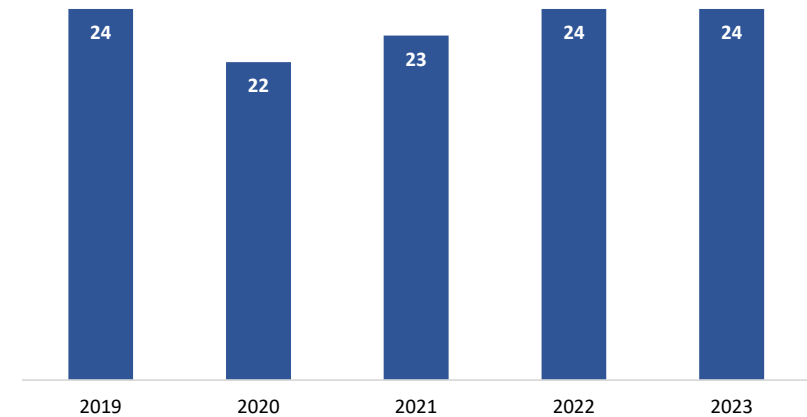


Chart 14: Number of Convenience Retailers 2019-2023

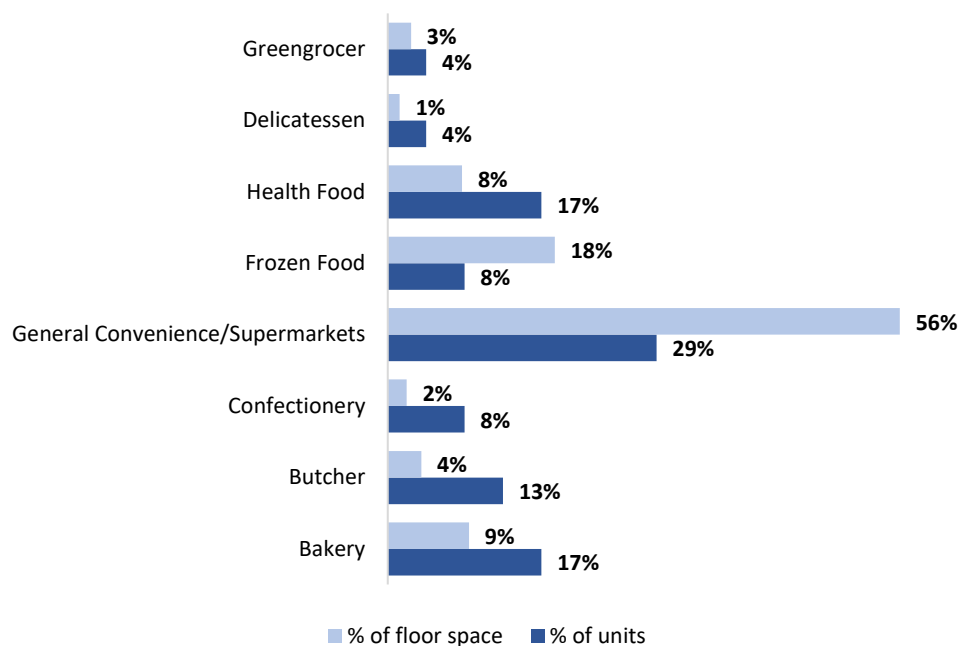


Between the 2019 and 2020 audits, the town centre Morrisons closed, with a new store opening outside the main retail centre. The former site is still vacant. This leaves Aldi and Marks and Spencer Food with a presence in the centre. Like the other two tier 2 Shropshire towns in the north of the county (Market Drayton and Whitchurch) the main supermarkets serving the town are now located outside the main shopping area. As shown in the adjacent map, Aldi and Sainsbury's as well as Morrisons operate a store outside the centre.

As well as the main supermarkets, there are also five other general convenience stores in the centre of Oswestry. These stores account for 29% of the convenience offer in unit terms and for 56% of floor space. The town centre is also home to three butchers, two confectioners, four health food stores, four bakeries and two frozen food outlets. There was minimal change in the classification between the 2022 and 2023 audits, with one butcher closing and a bakery opening.

There is also a delicatessen and a greengrocer. The indoor market hall has an additional butcher, two deli counters, and a confectioner (not included in the chart below).

Chart 15: Breakdown of Convenience Stores by Type, 2023



With the exception of the supermarkets, most operators in the convenience retail category are independent, although the chains Greggs, Heron Food, Grape Tree and Iceland are all present.

Restaurants & Takeaways

11% of units in Oswestry are attributable to restaurants and takeaways, with this category accounting for a lower proportion of gross floor space (7%).

The number of operators in this sector has fluctuated slightly since 2019, falling slightly post-pandemic, but recovering with the opening of two new outlets in 2023. The number of units allocated to restaurants and takeaways remains typical for a town the size of Oswestry.

The 39 units are split between cafés (36%), restaurants (26%) and takeaways (38%). Takeaways account for a lower share of floor space (26%) while restaurants have a disproportionately high share of floor space (41%).

There is also a comparison store (book shop) which incorporate a café. The café that was incorporated within a florist in 2022 is now a stand-alone café.

Chart 16: Number of Restaurant/Takeaway Units, 2019-2023

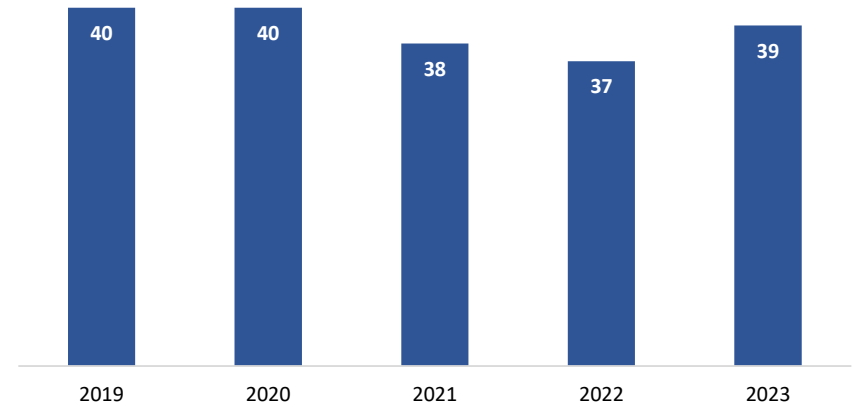
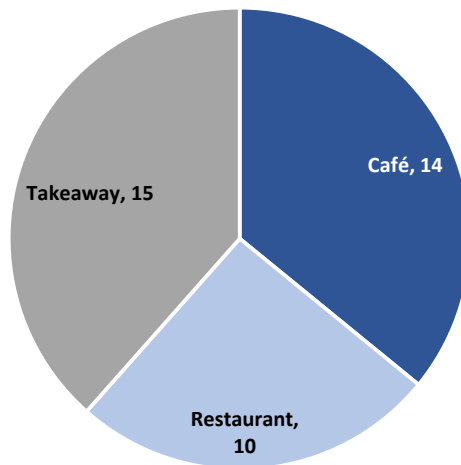


Chart 17: Breakdown of Restaurant/Takeaway Units by Type, 2023



The range of cuisines on offer at the Oswestry restaurants includes Thai, Chinese, Indian, Italian and modern British. In terms of takeaways, there is a range of Indian, Chinese, pizza, kebab and fish and chip outlets. Although most outlets in this category in Oswestry are independent, there is a Costa Coffee shop, a branch of Subway and a Prezzo Italian restaurant.

There are also two cafes operating stalls within the Market Hall. These are not included within the figures opposite.

Tourism & Leisure

Also within the hospitality sector, there are 16 public houses and bars. These take up almost 3,000m² gross floor space, the equivalent of over 5% of all floor space in the town. One of the town's bars closed between the 2022 and 2023 audits. There is also a cocktail bar in the market hall (not included in the table below). Oswestry's status as the largest of the tier 2 retail centres in Shropshire is evidenced by other tourism and leisure facilities that the town has to offer. Although there is only one hotel (the Wynnstay, which has 31 bedrooms and has four stars), there are three museums (the Oswestry Town Museum, Qube Museum and Art Gallery and the Cambrian Railway Museum). There are also other leisure facilities that are absent from the smaller towns in the same hierarchy, including a gym, a night club and an amusement arcade. An additional amusement arcade closed in 2023.

Outside the town centre, Oswestry has both a Premier Inn and a Travelodge.

Other than the closure of a bar and an amusement arcade, the only other changes in the tourism and leisure classification in 2023 was the rebranding of one of the public houses and a change in either name or ownership of the night club.

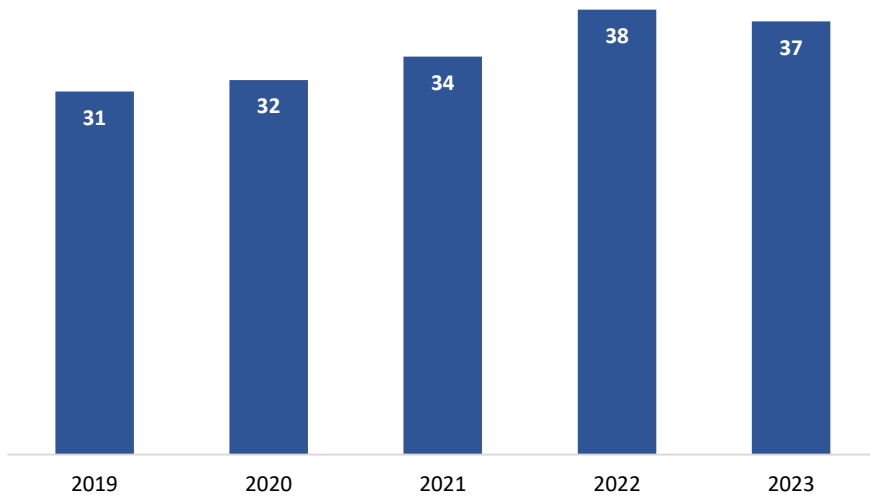
Chart 18: Oswestry Town Centre Tourism & Leisure Offer, 2023

	Units	Floor Space (m ²)	Average Size (m ²)
Public House/Bar	16	2,951	184
Hotel	1	137	137
Museum	3	1574	525
Visitor Attraction	1	564	564
Amusement Arcade	2	389	195
Night Club	1	198	198
Gym	1	100	100
Total	24	6,583	274

Finance & Business Services

There are 37 commercial operators in the finance and business services arena in Oswestry town centre, accounting for around 4,700m² of gross floor space. This represents a decline of one since 2022, but a rise of six compared with 2019.

Chart 19: Number of Financial/Business Service Providers, 2019-2023

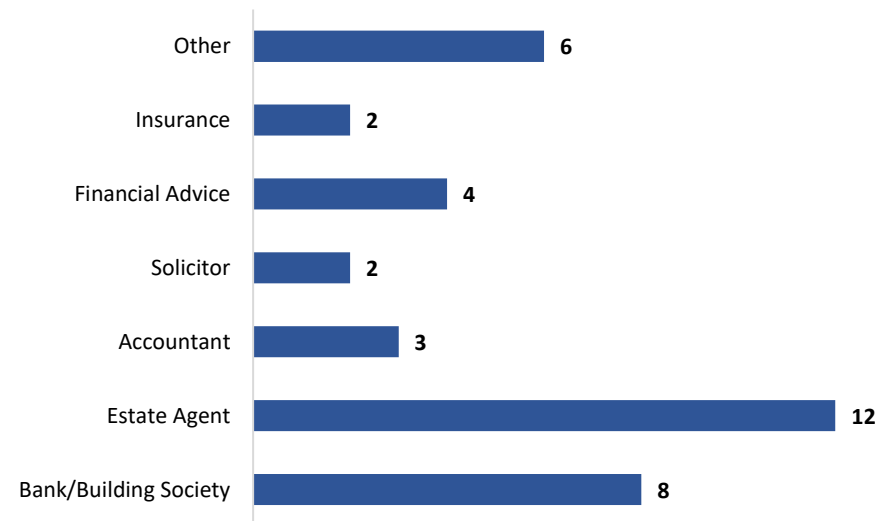


Included within this classification are five banks (Nat West, Halifax, HSBC, Santander and Lloyds TSB) plus three building societies (West Brom, Nationwide and Principality). The town's branch of Barclay's closed between the 2022 and 2023 audits.

There are three accountants and 12 estate agents as well as four financial advisers, two insurance brokers and two solicitors.

Also included within this classification are a mortgage broker, an employment agency and a job centre.

Chart 20: Number of Finance & Business Service Providers by Type, 2023



Retail Services

In 2023, there were 74 retail services businesses in Oswestry, which represents a fifth of all commercial operators in the town. This is the equivalent of almost 6,000m² of floor space, which is 11% of the town's total commercial space. The number of units in this classification has risen from 65 in 2019 and from 70 in 2022. There are also five retail services providers in the Market Hall; these are not included in the chart opposite.

Chart 21: Number of Retail Service Businesses, 2019-2023

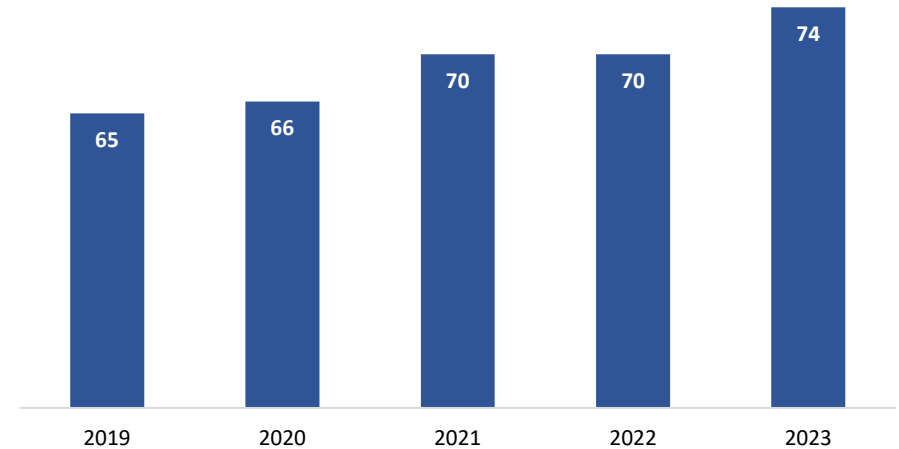
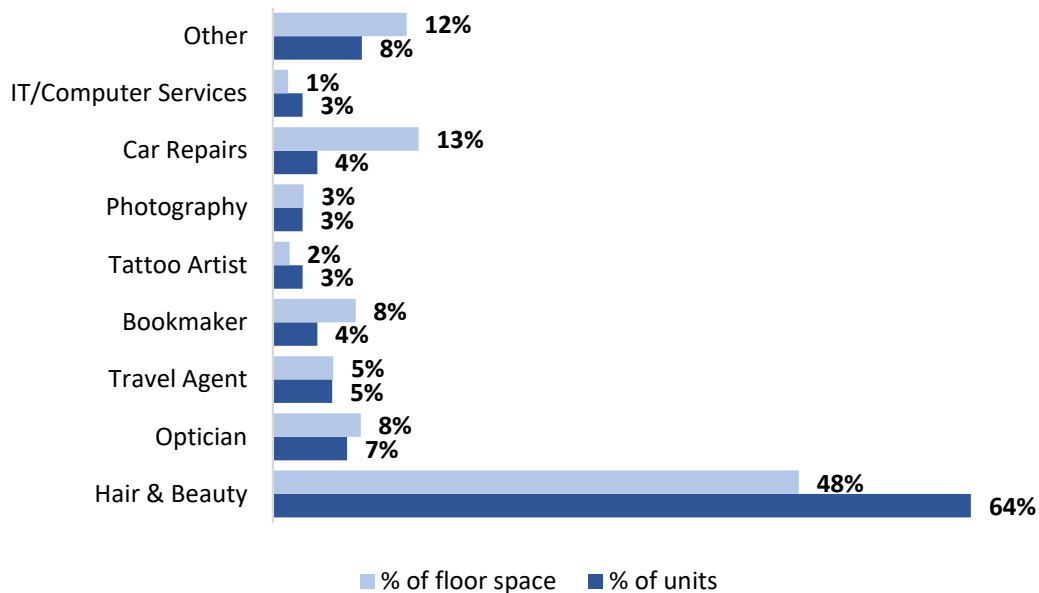


Chart 22: Breakdown of Retail Services by Type, 2023



Although the range of services provided is wide, a very high number of operators are in the barber and hair/beauty salon classification, with these together representing 64% of units and 48% of floor space. There is a range of barber shops, unisex hair salons, nail bars and beauty parlours. The town's branch of Toni and Guy has closed since the 2022 audit. There are also two hair dressers in the Market Hall.

In addition, there are five opticians (including the chains Vision Express and Specsavers), four travel agents (including a branch of Hays), three bookmakers (Coral, Bet Fred and Corbett), two tattoo artists, two photographers and three car repair outlets.

Other operators include a funeral director, a post office and a taxi rank.

Health

There are 14 operators in the health sector in Oswestry town centre, with a combined floor space allocation of over 2,000m². There are two counselling/mental health service providers, two massage parlours (one Chinese), two dentists, a GP practice, a pain clinic, a chiropodist, an osteopath and an alternative therapy provider.

Vacant Units

12% of Oswestry town centre outlets are vacant (15% of gross floor space). This is higher than in Ludlow, Bridgnorth or Whitchurch but lower than Market Drayton. It is also slightly higher than the Shropshire average (11%) but compares favourably with the vacancy rate nationally which stood at 13.9% in the second quarter of 2023 according to BRC (data relating to high streets only). The size of vacant units ranges from 20m² to over 2,000m².

The number of vacant units rose significantly in 2020 from 28 to 40. In 2021, there was one fewer vacancy than there had been in 2020 and the number reduced by a further three in 2022. However, there was an uptick in vacant premises in 2023.

Chart 23: Number of Vacant Premises, 2019-2023

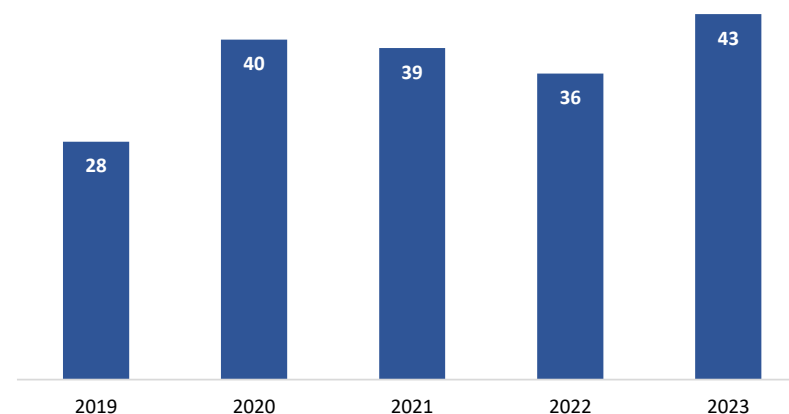


Chart 24: Vacancy Rates by Street, 2023

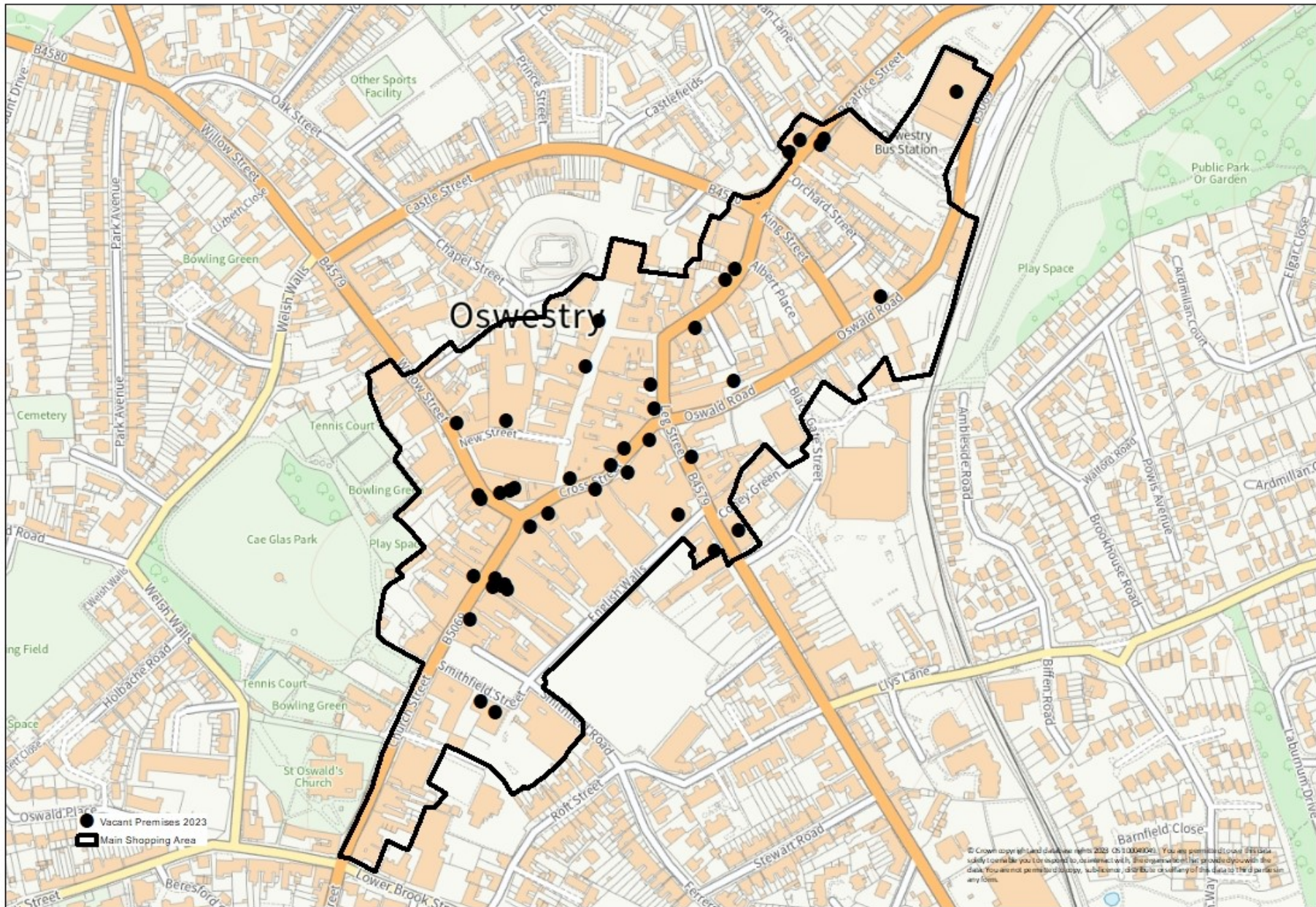
Street	Vacancy Rate	% of all Oswestry Vacancies
Bailey Head/Street	4%	5%
Beatrice Street	17%	16%
Church Street	12%	19%
Cross Street/The Cross	32%	26%
Leg Street	8%	7%
Oswald Road	6%	5%
Salop Road	29%	5%
Smithfield Road	25%	5%
Willow Street	9%	7%
Other	7%	7%

The table opposite shows the location of Oswestry vacant premises by street. The highest proportion of vacant commercial premises in Oswestry are located in Cross Street/The Cross, at over a quarter. Beatrice Street and Church Street also account for more than a tenth of vacant premises each.

In terms of vacancy rates, the rate is highest in Cross Street/The Cross, and also exceeds the town's average in Beatrice Street, Salop Road and Smithfield Road.

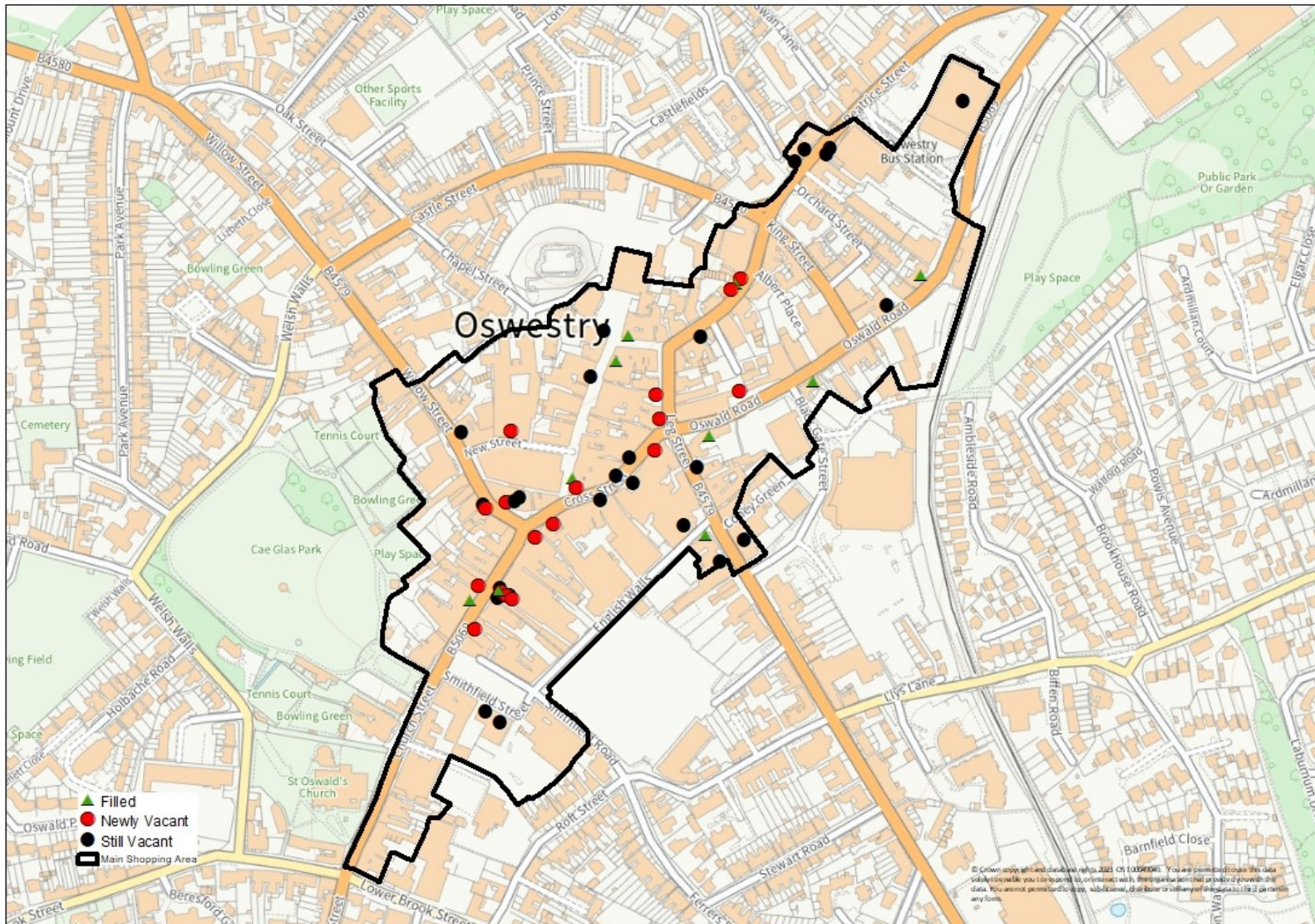
In 2023, 40% of all unoccupied premises had become vacant between the 2022 and 2023 audits. 30% of units have been vacant since 2020, while five units (12% of 2023 vacancies) have been empty since at least 2019.

Map 8: Location of Vacant Commercial Premises, 2023



The number of vacant units in Oswestry rose by seven in 2023 in relation to 2022. Of these, 17 had become vacant since 2022, while 26 had already been vacant for at least a year at the time of the 2023 audit. 10 units that were vacant in 2022 had been filled by 2023.

Map 9: Change in Location of Vacant Commercial Premises, 2022-2023



Residential Premises

Although the town centre contains concentrations of commercial enterprises, there is also a significant amount of residential property within the main shopping centre. In total, 317 residential premises are located in the audit area, of which the majority are flats (245 or 77%) which are largely located above retail or other commercial outlets. There are 61 terraced houses in the area, which is the equivalent of a fifth of all housing stock in the town centre. There is a cluster of terraced housing towards the north end of Beatrice Street and along Orchard Street and Albert Place. At the other end of the town centre, there are also some terraced properties at the southern end of Church Street. There are 10 semi-detached homes in the town centre, again mainly on Beatrice Street. There is just one detached premise in the area. There are five more residential flats in the town than there were in 2019.

Map 10: Location of Residential Premises in Oswestry Town Centre

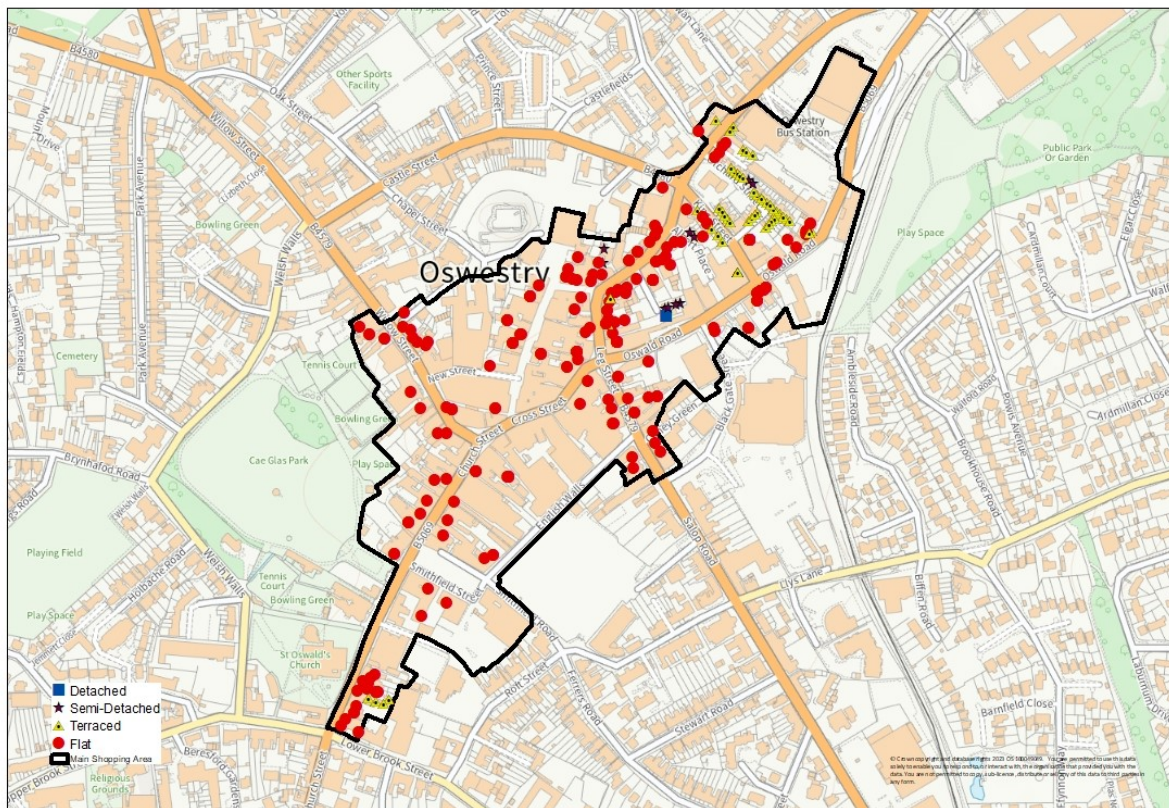


Chart 23: Breakdown of Residential Properties by Type

