

66 Westgate Street - Hedley's

66 Westgate Street is a timber framed building on the north side of Westgate Street close to the Cathedral. It stands just inside the west gate to the city on one of the principal thoroughfares into the centre of medieval Gloucester. Occupation of such an important site would indicate that its



builder had considerable means and the quality of its construction is indeed proof that this was a building of high status.

Dendrochronological dating of the timber frame has established its construction around 1460. Originally, it was constructed as two separate dwellings and shops.

The Victorian ground floor windows are an early example of large plate-glass made possible by the technology gained in building the Crystal Palace, London for the Great Exhibition in 1851.

The windows on the first floor were inserted in the eighteenth century.

A thorough restoration of the building was completed in 2009 and the decorated gable storey now resembles its original medieval appearance.

Construction of 66 Westgate Street

It is built on a tapering site, slightly angled to the street frontage, suggesting that the plot boundaries were already established by the time this building was constructed. It is three stories in height, jettied on both the first and attic floors, and is two bays wide by two bays deep, with gable ends to the front and rear elevations. There are cellars beneath each of the two front bays.

The framing pattern is particularly noteworthy for the huge sections and lengths of oak used in its construction. It consists of four immense posts each nearly 8 metres long by 300mm square, which rise through the entire height of the building on the outer of the wall frames. These posts are connected at the first and second floors by the intermediate floor beams and girding beams, and at the wall plate by toe beams. The longitudinal wall bracing is provided by wide relatively straight braces which descend from the uppermost point of the rear wall down through each floor to ground level in Bay 1. The internal bracing is provided by means of knee braces rising up from the outer posts to the cross beams. There are additional braces on the south wall which descend down from the posts to the cross beams, probably to provide additional bracing on the south wall which was not propped by any adjoining structure. (It is difficult to see how it would have been possible to construct a frame of this enormity had it been constrained by buildings on both sides)

The front wall frame was an easier piece of construction since it can be built up in stages off each jettied floor. At ground level, there is evidence of two entrances from the street, one per bay.