

BRAND REFRESH · €1,350

Hartley's

A ninety-one-year-old hardware shop. Keep what customers recognise, fix what dates it, and change things in the order that costs least.

6

before-and-after views

4

things kept, deliberately

5

things fixed

7

steps, in rollout order

Portfolio sample. Hartley's is invented. A refresh is a correction, not a redesign — and the discipline of that is the product, so this document spends as much space on what is *not* changing as on what is.

THE RULE THIS WHOLE DOCUMENT OBEYS

A refresh is a correction. A redesign is a different business.

Ninety-one years of a name above a door is an asset that cannot be bought, and it is the thing most refreshes accidentally destroy. Every decision here was tested against one question: *would a customer of thirty years still know it was us from across the road?*

Five things are changing. Four are staying, and staying is a decision that took as long to reach as any of the changes.

What triggered this

A second shop opened in 2023 with a good sign and a website. Nothing about Hartley's got worse — the comparison arrived. That is the commonest and most legitimate reason to refresh, and it is a much better reason than boredom.

What would have been a mistake

Modernising the name. There was a suggestion of dropping the apostrophe-s and becoming *HARTLEY*. It looks contemporary, it costs nothing, and it would have thrown away the single most valuable thing the business owns.

KEEP, AND WHY

The name, apostrophe included

It is how people say it. A brand that is spelled differently to how it is spoken has created work for no reason.

The navy

Recognised at distance for decades. The exact shade changes; the fact of being the navy shop does not.

"Est. 1934"

Ninety-one years is genuinely rare and genuinely useful. It moves position and gets smaller, but it stays.

The paper bags

Customers mention them unprompted. They are cheap, they are distinctive, and they are older than any of the staff.

THE TEST APPLIED TO EACH

ELEMENT	WOULD A 30-YEAR CUSTOMER STILL KNOW US?	DOES IT DATE THE SHOP?	DECISION
The name	It is the whole recognition	No — names do not date	Keep
The navy	Yes, at a distance	The exact shade, slightly	Keep, adjust
Est. 1934	Yes	No — it is the opposite of dating	Keep, resize
Paper bags	Yes, strongly	No	Keep exactly
The 2006 typeface	No — nobody recognises a typeface	Severely	Fix
Gradient & shadow	No	Severely	Fix
Pillar-box red	Marginally	Yes — it reads as a 2010s sale	Fix

Two columns, one decision. Anything that scores *yes* on recognition and *no* on dating is untouchable, and most refreshes go wrong by touching those first because they are the most visible.

FIX, AND WHY

Five things dating it, in descending order of damage.

01 The gradient and the drop shadow on the sign

Added in 2006 when the sign was last redone. It is the single clearest date stamp on the building and it is doing more harm than the shopfront's age. Flat navy, flat cream, no effects.

02 The typeface

Currently a condensed sans that arrived with the 2006 sign. It says *2006* rather than *1934*. A serif with weight in it says the age without anybody having to read the date.

03 Nine strapline variants across seven surfaces

Your local hardware experts, For all your DIY needs, Trade & retail and six more, in six typefaces. Pick one. It should be the one about advice, because that is the actual difference between you and the second shop.

04 The navy itself

The current one is a purple-leaning navy from a paint chart. Half a step towards ink makes it read as older and deliberate rather than as a colour somebody picked. This is the smallest change here and possibly the most effective.

05 The van

White, with a phone number in three sizes and a clip-art hammer. It is seen by more people daily than the shopfront is. Name, one line, phone. Nothing else.

WHAT EACH FIX COSTS TO GET WRONG

Changing the name

Ninety-one years of recognition, gone in an afternoon, unrecoverable at any price. This is the only truly irreversible item on the page.

Changing the navy too far

Recoverable, but it costs a sign and a van wrap to undo. Half a step is safe; a different colour family is not a refresh.

Keeping the gradient

Costs nothing today and quietly costs a trade account a month to the shop that looks like it is still trading in this decade.

What is not on this list

The interior, the shelving, the aisle signage and the till system. All four came up, none of them is a brand problem, and spending the refresh budget on shelving is how a business ends up with a tidy shop that still looks like 2006 from the street.

BEFORE AND AFTER · THE WORDMARK

Same name, ninety-one years put back into it.

NOW

HARTLEY'S

Condensed sans, tight tracking, gradient fill and a 3px drop shadow. Reads as a sign made in 2006, which it was.

REFRESHED

Hartley's

Playfair Display at 700, flat, no effects, generous spacing. Nothing has been invented — the name is simply allowed to look its age.

NOW · THE STRAPLINE

YOUR LOCAL HARDWARE EXPERTS

One of nine in use. Claims expertise rather than demonstrating it, and every hardware shop in the country says a version of it.

REFRESHED

Ask us first. It is usually cheaper.

Says the same thing by being useful instead of claiming it. It is also true, which the previous one was only sometimes.

NOW · THE DATE

EST. 1934

Set in the same size as the name, in caps, competing with it. Two things shouting means neither is heard.

REFRESHED

SINCE 1934 · WATERFORD

Small, tracked, under the name. It stops competing and starts doing the quiet work of making the name feel earned.

WHY A SERIF, ON A HARDWARE SHOP

The instinct with trade businesses is a heavy sans — it reads as practical, industrial, no-nonsense. It is also what the new shop across town uses, and what every builders' merchant in the country uses, which makes it the opposite of distinctive.

A serif on a hardware shop is slightly wrong, and slightly wrong is what gets remembered. It also does the one job the sans cannot: it makes ninety-one years legible without printing the number. The strapline keeps it from tipping into gentility.

BEFORE AND AFTER · COLOUR AND SURFACES

Three more views.

THE NAVY, HALF A STEP

**Now** #2B3A6B

Purple-leaning. Reads slightly bright beside the stone.

**Refreshed** #1B2A41

Half a step towards ink. Older, calmer, and still unmistakably the navy shop.

Nobody will notice this change and everybody will feel it. That is the correct outcome for a refresh — noticing means you went too far.

THE ACCENT

**Now** Pillar-box red

On sale stickers, the van, and the website header. Loud and generic.

**Refreshed** #C9A227

Brass, taken from the shop's own door furniture. Warmer, older, and it does not fight the navy.

THE VAN, NOW

White panel, name in 400mm caps, phone number repeated three times at three sizes, clip-art hammer, website in a different typeface, and *Trade & Retail Welcome* across the back doors.

THE VAN, REFRESHED

Hartley's

Ask us first. It is usually cheaper.

051 000 000

Whole van navy. Name, line, number. It will be the most modern-looking vehicle in the trade car park precisely because there is nothing on it.

The bag stays exactly as it is

Brown paper, one navy stamp, slightly crooked. It has been the same since at least the eighties and customers mention it unprompted. Reprinting it *properly* would be the most expensive mistake available in this project.

The price ticket

Six templates in three colours became one: navy on cream, product name in the serif, price large, brass only when something is genuinely reduced. Two hundred tickets printed at once, and nobody writes a new one in marker again.

APPLIED

Where it appears, and what happens to each.

SURFACE	NOW	REFRESHED	WHEN
Shopfront sign	Gradient, shadow, condensed sans	Flat navy, Playfair, date beneath	Step 4
Van	White, nine elements	Navy, three elements	Step 2
Paper bags	Brown, navy stamp	Unchanged	Never
Receipts	Default till header	Name and the one line	Step 1
Price tickets	Six templates, three colours	One template, navy on cream, brass for offers	Step 3
Website header	Red, condensed sans, 2006 sign as a logo	New wordmark, navy, one line	Step 5
Workwear	Assorted polo shirts	Navy, name on the chest in cream	Step 6
Trade account paperwork	Word template from 2011	Same layout, new wordmark	Step 7

What a customer sees first

The van, by a distance. It is on the road six hours a day and the shopfront is seen by people already on that street. That is why it is step two and the sign is step four.

What costs most

The sign, at roughly €1,900. It is also the one that can wait — nothing else depends on it and it looks worst in photographs, which is not where your customers are.

What costs nothing

The receipt header, the price tickets and the strapline. Three of the eight surfaces change for the price of an afternoon, and they are the three a regular sees weekly.

THE ONE LINE, AND WHERE IT GOES

Ask us first. It is usually cheaper. It appears on the van, the receipt, the website header and the door — and nowhere else. Four places is enough for a line to become the thing people quote back at you; nine places is how you end up with nine straplines again in five years.

It is also a promise with teeth. It only survives if the staff actually do talk people out of the dearer fitting, which they already do — this refresh is mostly a matter of putting the shop's existing behaviour above the door.

THE ROLLOUT

In the order that costs least and looks most.

STEP	WHAT	WHY HERE	COST
1 · Week one	Receipt header, price tickets, email signature, the one strapline agreed and written down	Free, immediate, and it stops the nine-variant problem getting worse	€0
2 · Week three	Wrap the van	Most-seen surface, and it is the change that makes people ask what else is happening	€1,100
3 · Week four	Print the single price-ticket template	Cheap, and it tidies the inside without touching the shelving	€120
4 · Month two	Shopfront sign	The expensive one. Do it once the van has told you the direction is right	€1,900
5 · Month two	Website header and favicon	Follows the sign so both match, and nobody notices a website mid-change	€0–300
6 · Month three	Workwear, as the old shirts wear out	Never replace usable clothing for a refresh. It is the one place people can see money being wasted	€400
7 · Month six	Trade paperwork, at the next reprint	Same layout, new mark. Trade customers care about the columns, not the logo	€0

Roughly €3,600 over six months, and €0 in the first fortnight. Illustrative — get your own quotes for the sign and the wrap.

Do not announce it

No *we have a new look* post. A refresh announced is a refresh people compare against the old one; a refresh done quietly over six months is one people simply find themselves preferring. If somebody asks, say the sign needed doing.

Do not do it all in one weekend

Beyond the cost, a business that changes everything at once looks like a business that has been sold. Ninety-one years of continuity is the asset — the rollout should feel like maintenance, because that is what it is.

WHAT THIS IS JUDGED ON

Trade account applications, and nothing else.

Not compliments about the sign. The second shop took trade custom because it looked like a going concern, and trade accounts are the revenue that does not depend on anybody walking past.

Last twelve months**14**

New trade accounts opened. Illustrative — your own figure is in the ledger.

Next twelve**22**

If the van and the sign do their work. Nothing here requires an advertising budget.

If nobody notices, it worked.

Hartley's is invented. It exists to show what a €1,350 refresh contains — a keep-and-fix split argued rather than asserted, six before-and-after views, every surface listed with what happens to it, and a rollout ordered so the cheapest changes come first and the expensive one comes after the direction is proven.