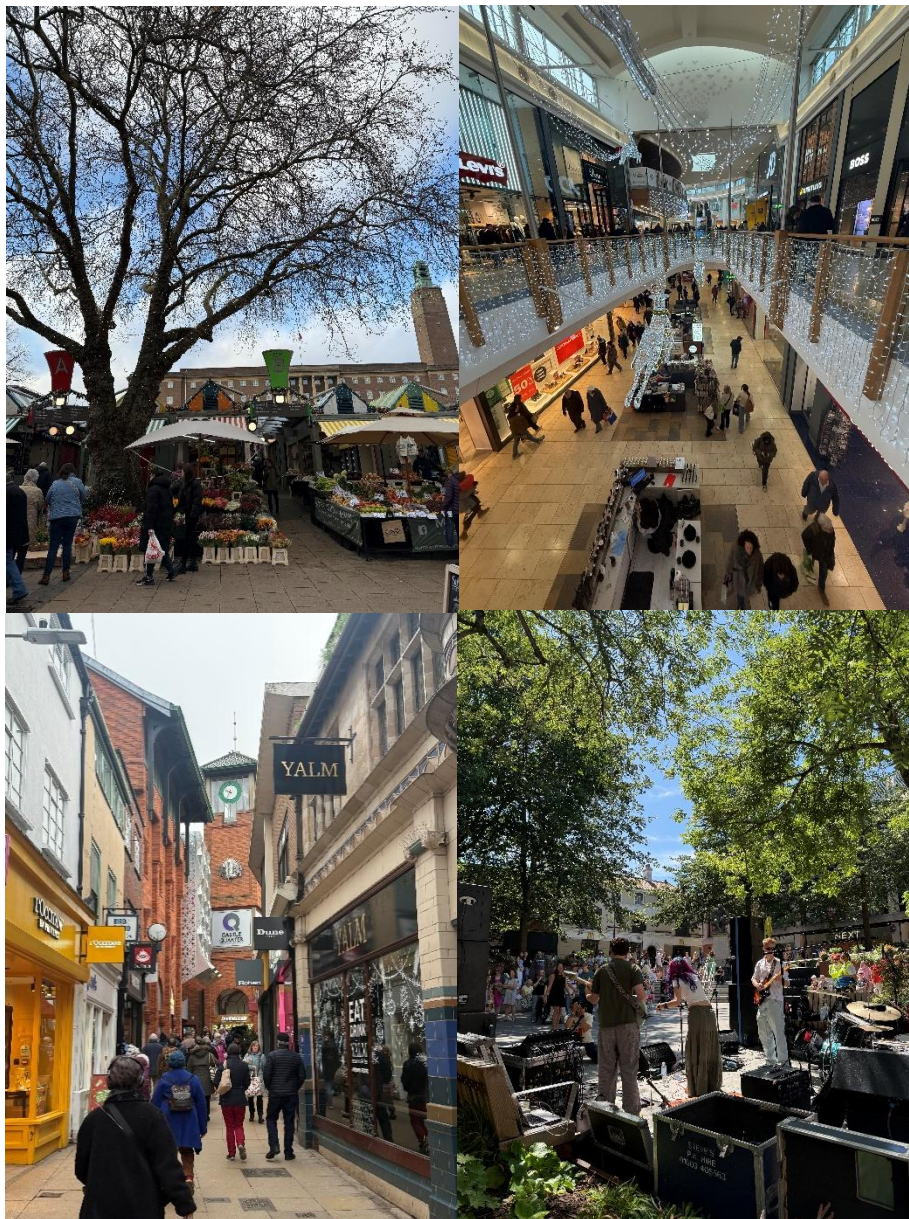


Norwich City Centre Shopping and Town Centre Floorspace Monitor & Local & District Centres Monitor



Survey at September/October 2025

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Introduction

1. Norwich city centre is a regional centre and serves much of Norfolk and north Suffolk. It accommodates the majority of jobs, key services and economic, leisure and cultural facilities. The centre has a wealth of heritage assets and an unrivalled historic and natural environment.
2. [‘Checking out: The varying performance of high streets across the country’](#) produced by Centre for cities and published in July 2025 highlights how Norwich’s lack of rivals means that its catchment stretches over a large area as shown in figure 1 below.

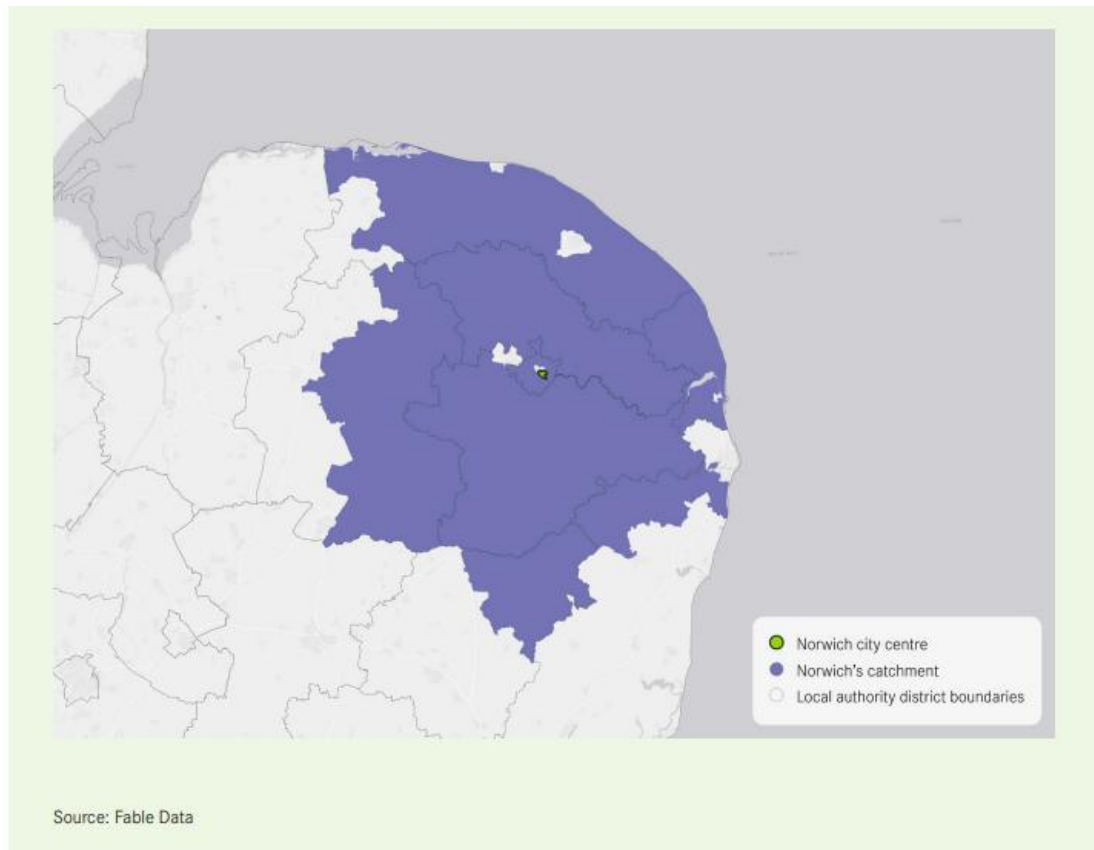


Figure 1: Norwich's catchment area - Replicated from 'Checking out: The varying performance of high streets across the country', Paul Swinney, Oscar Selb and Luka Kovacevic, Centre for cities, July 2025.

3. The Norwich City Centre Shopping and Town Centre Floorspace Monitor & Local and District Centres Monitor is the council's monitoring report advising of vacancy rates and changes of shop type across the city. Understanding how our high street changes over time allows the council to assess the performance of our planning policies and helps with their implementation.
4. The surveys for the city centre were carried out in September 2025 with the district and local centres being surveyed mainly in October 2025. This report provides an update from the last retail monitor which was produced in October 2024.
5. The [October 2024 monitor](#) reported that retail floorspace vacancy rates had reduced within the city centre since October 2023, although the total number of

vacant units increased between October 2023 and 2024. The primary retail area in particular performed very well, seeing a reduction in vacant floorspace and the number of vacant units. The secondary retail area experienced a significant fall in vacant available floorspace but a rise in all vacant floorspace and units. Vacancy rates increased within the Large District Centres and 'rest of the city centre' which indicated that the shopping areas on the city centre's periphery were performing slightly less well. Vacancy rates continued to increase within the district and local centres but remained significantly lower than the overall city centre rate.

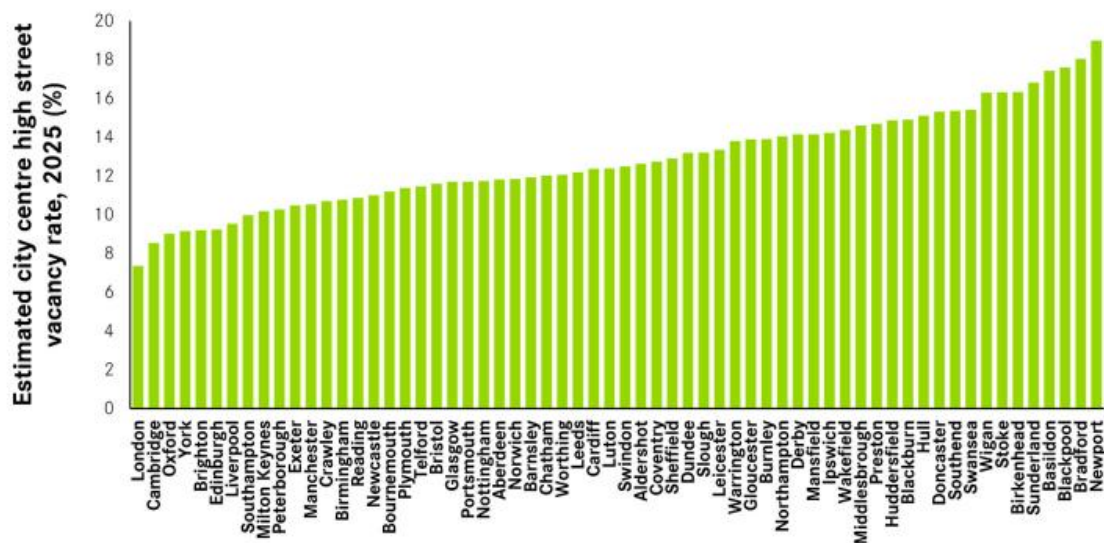
6. Nationally it was found that retailers were experiencing economic challenges brought about by the cost-of-living crisis and other economic and political factors, and as with many other towns and cities, Norwich unfortunately saw a number of closures as a result. In particular it appeared that some of the independent businesses were struggling more than the multiples. Notwithstanding this the 2024 monitor reported that Norwich continued to see investment and whilst some multiples and independents ceased trading, others opened over the monitoring period.
7. The past year has continued to see challenges in terms of the high interest rates, rising operational costs and higher costs of goods. This 2025 report looks at how Norwich's retail sector has coped with these economic pressures.

Policy Context

8. The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF 2024) promotes flexibility and diversification. It recognises the changing face of the high street and the need to take a different approach to retail planning policy in order to reinvigorate and adapt the offer focused in primary centres/core areas to successfully prepare for the future. This includes suitable provision of leisure uses and housing within town centres.
9. The Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) which was adopted in March 2024 also provides flexibility and recognises the trend for changing uses and functions in city centres. The aim of the plan is to ensure the centre provides an attractive location in which people can experience a complementary range of different uses which support the retail function as well as promoting diversification of services and facilities to ensure that vitality and vibrancy can be maintained throughout the day and evening.
10. The adopted Development Management Policies Local Plan (the DM plan) provides the detail to enable strategic policies to be implemented and to protect the vitality and viability of centres. The existing DM policies seek to retain a certain threshold of retail units within defined centres; however given changes to the Use Classes Order, General Permitted Development Order and the NPPF a more flexible approach is needed both when implementing the policies and during any future review. Nonetheless, it is still important to monitor our existing policies to provide evidence of the changes which have already, and will continue to, occur.

National picture

11. Previous monitors have set out the national vacancy rate which have been obtained from reports published by the Local Data Company. The Local Data Company is now part of Green Street Advisors and it does not appear that up-to-date data is available.
12. Centre for cities has produced an informative report entitled 'Checking out: The varying performance of high streets across the country' (July 2025). Whilst this report does not give a national average for vacancy rate it does include useful graphs which show how Norwich is performing against other UK towns and cities which are replicated within this section.



Source: Individual local authority business rates data; Centre for Cities calculations from Local Data Company data

Figure 2: Estimated city centre high street vacancy rates, 2025 - Replicated from 'Checking out: The varying performance of high streets across the country', Paul Swinney, Oscar Selb and Luka Kovacevic, Centre for cities, July 2025.

13. As shown in figure 2 Norwich sits within the left-hand side of the graph which shows that more than half of the cities surveyed have higher vacancy rates than Norwich. Whilst this provides a useful overview, the data is from business rates records and it has been noted within the Centre for cities report that not all data is collected consistently across authorities.
14. Furthermore, Centre for cities has also included a chart which ranks cities by population size and their catchment area. As can be seen in the chart (replicated in figure 3), whilst Norwich is ranked 35th in terms of its population, it is ranked 11th in terms of catchment size. The report acknowledged that the larger the catchment, the more potential customers there are to sell to and the less chance there is for spend to 'leak' out to other cities. The size of catchment is one of the key factors that influences performance.

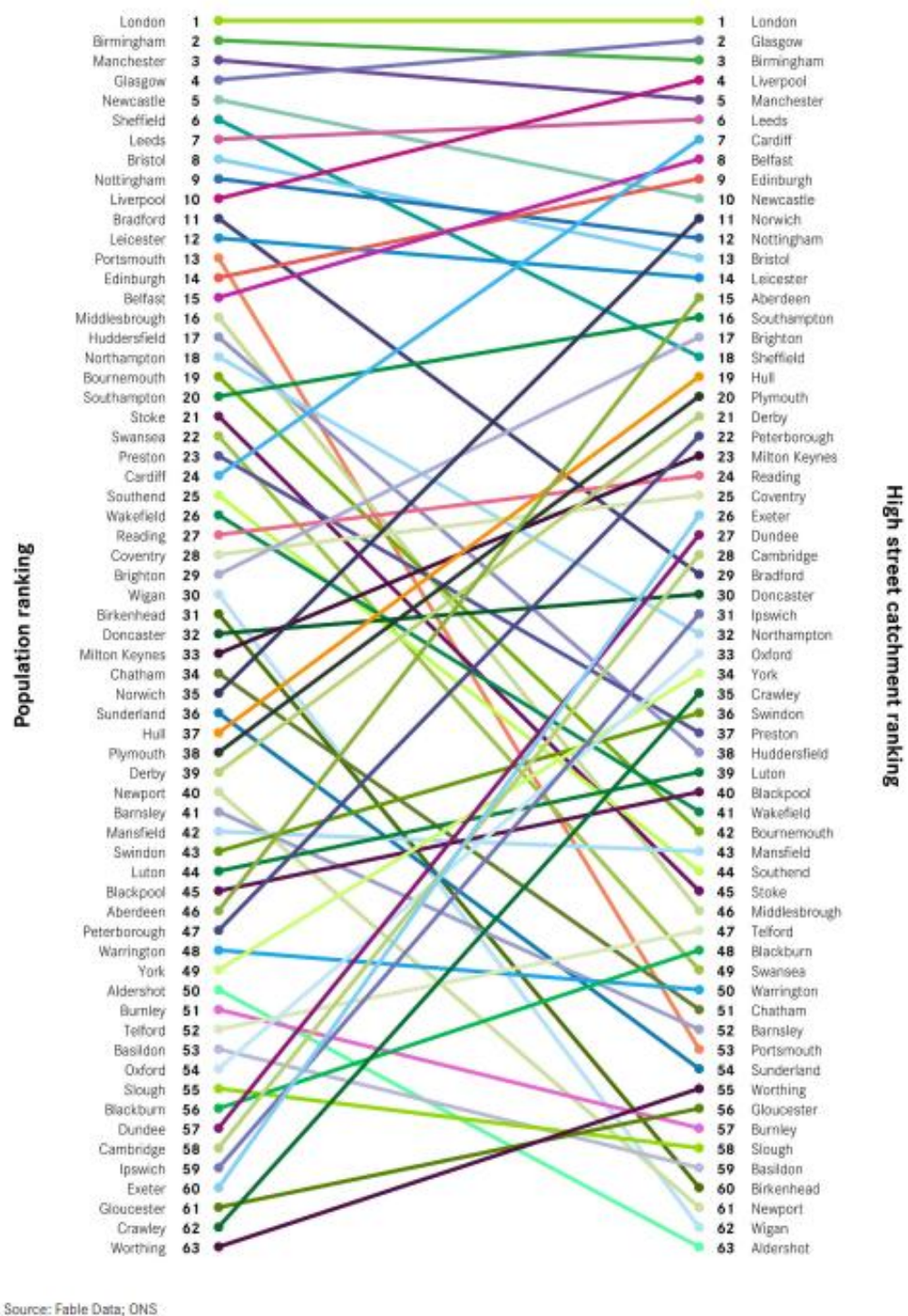


Figure 3: Ranking of cities by population size and catchment area - Replicated from 'Checking out: The varying performance of high streets across the country', Paul Swinney, Oscar Selb and Luka Kovacevic, Centre for cities, July 2025.

Main Findings for Norwich

City Centre Overview

Headline figures	Vacant floorspace	Vacant available floorspace (excluding refurb)	Vacant units	Retail floorspace change (since Oct 24)
City Centre (Retail only)	16.3%	11.8%	15.2%	0.9% decrease
Green = reduction in vacancy rates between Oct 2024 and Sept 2025. Red = increase in vacancy rates between Oct 2024 and Sept 2025				

15. Retail vacancy rates (former use class A1) are measured in three different ways:

- Retail vacancy rate as a proportion of retail floorspace.
- Retail vacancy rate as a proportion of retail floorspace, excluding space being built or refitted.
- Retail vacancy rate as a proportion of retail units.

16. Due to changes to the Use Classes Order, government policy and due to the introduction of the GNLP, which identifies that there is a need for greater flexibility to allow our high streets to evolve to thrive, the report also now gives vacancy rates for all town centre uses. This is measured in two ways, vacancies as a proportion of all floorspace and vacancy rates as a proportion of all units.

17. The vacant available retail *floorspace* in the city centre is 11.8% which is a decrease from October 2024's figure of 12.6% and continues a downward trend with 15.9% of available retail floorspace being vacant in 2023. Today's vacancy rates are however still high compared to a pre pandemic figure of only 5.5%.

18. City centre retail vacancy rates 'as a proportion of all retail floorspace' has however increased from 15.4% in October 2024 to 16.3% in 2025. The pre pandemic level was 10.0%.

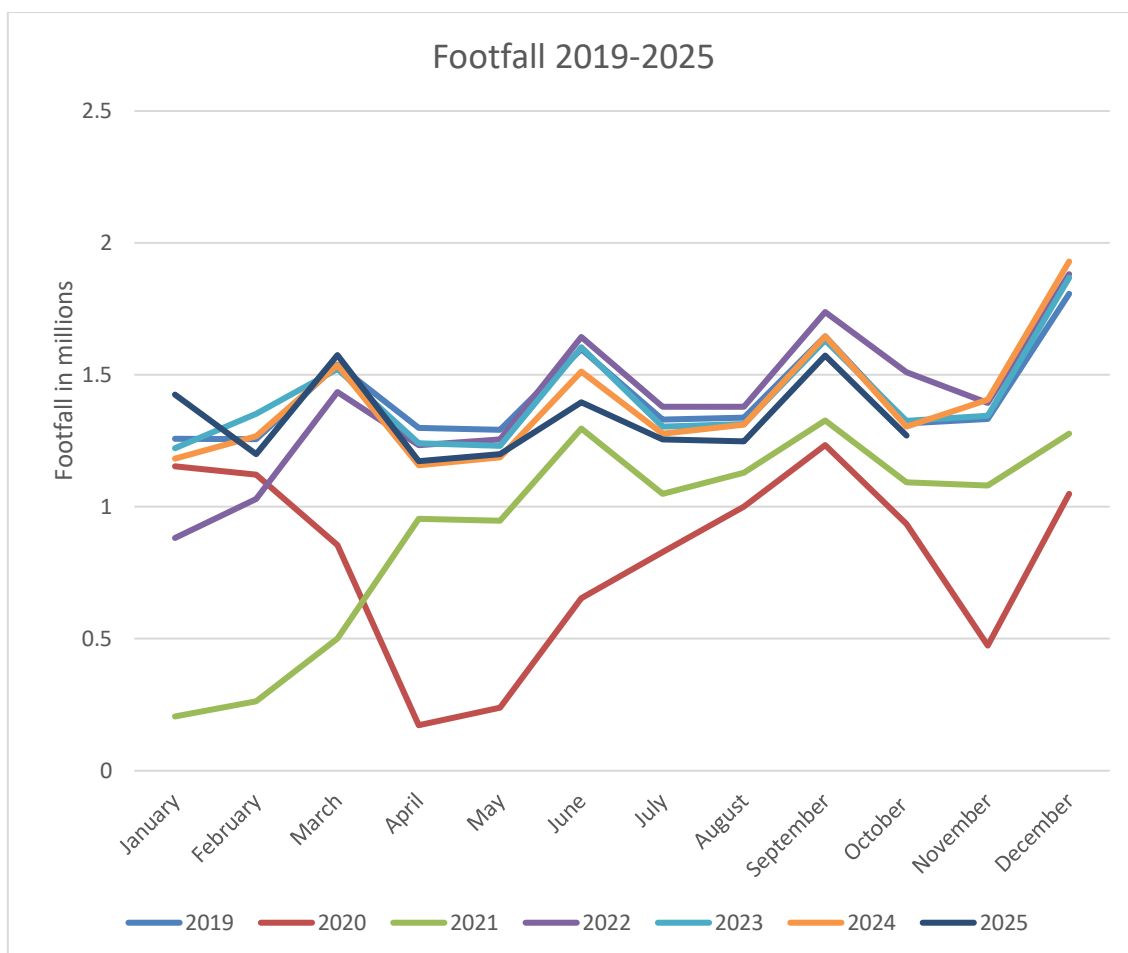
19. The percentage of vacant *units* has increased quite significantly over the past year from 13.3% in October 2024 to 15.2% in October 2025. Between October 2020 and October 2023 vacancy rates had continued to decrease year on year from a high of 14.7% to a low of 12.3% but they have now increased two years in a row although some of this will be as a result of units closing at Anglia Square to make way for redevelopment.

20. In terms of all town centre uses, vacant floorspace currently stands at 15.0% (up from 14.6% in 2024 but down from 17.0% in October 2023). Vacant units have increased from 14.0% in October 2024 to 15.1%. Compared to retail only this is 1.3% lower for floorspace and 0.1% lower for units. This suggests that by adding leisure uses (including cafes, restaurants, bars and takeaways) as well as financial, professional and other services vacancy rates decrease slightly.

21. There has been a 10.3% decrease in retail floorspace since 2008. During the past monitoring period Norwich city centre lost 1,805 sqm of retail floorspace. The total number of retail units also reduced from 930 in October 2024 to 906 in September 2025. Generally, over the past few years the loss of retail has

largely been due to changes of use to other town centre uses rather than to residential or due to demolition.

22. Whilst in the past a loss of retail has been of some concern, this very much supports the approach now promoted nationally and locally of repurposing and diversifying through increasing other uses such as the early evening economy, employment and cultural and visitor functions to enhance vitality and viability. It has been shown in the past that an appropriate diversity of other town centre uses such as restaurants, cafes and leisure uses can help support the economic vitality and health of the city centre and as we move forward, this is likely to become ever more important. This is reinforced by Centre for cities which sets out that, in general, stronger-performing city centre high streets have seen a greater shift in the share of their commercial space towards food and drink activities since 2010.
23. In terms of refurbishment, there has been a significant increase in under construction/refurbishment floorspace since the last monitoring report with 9,421 sqm being under construction/refurbishment. This is mainly as a result of works commencing to implement the planning consent for the redevelopment of Anglia Square. In October 2024 5,797 sqm of floorspace was under construction/refurbishment but the majority of this has now been completed with Home Bargains opening at the Cathedral retail park.
24. Recent years have seen an increased diversification of uses within the city centre with a particular increase in the number of cafes and restaurants, along with other 'service' type uses such as tattoo studios and beauty salons. Since 2018 there has also been a continued growth in leisure uses. Many of these leisure uses have been focused within the Castle Quarter but there have also been several hospitality and leisure uses opening in other parts of the city centre. It is likely that this trend will continue especially with planning policies being more flexible and with the changes to the Use Classes Order which make it much easier and quicker for landlords to offer their premises to a wider range of commercial businesses.
25. Since the October 2024 survey was carried out, some large national chains have been lost from the city centre. These have included Professional Music Technology, Farmfoods, Body Shop and Moda in Pelle. However there are a number of national chains that have recently opened in Norwich. This includes Charles Tyrwhitt, House of Cavani, Mowgli, Wingstop, Accessorize, Pro Cook, Toys R Us, Taco Bell and Homes Bargains. This is a positive sign and suggests that Norwich is seen as a good place for investment.
26. Finally, it is also important to look at the footfall figures from the Norwich Business Improvement District (BID). There have been fluctuations over the past few years; however as can be seen from the graph footfall has largely returned back to pre-pandemic levels and it is really encouraging to see that people are continuing to shop and spend their leisure time in Norwich. Footfall at the end of 2024 and the start of 2025 was higher than the same month in the previous year but it is noticeably lower from May 2025 onwards.



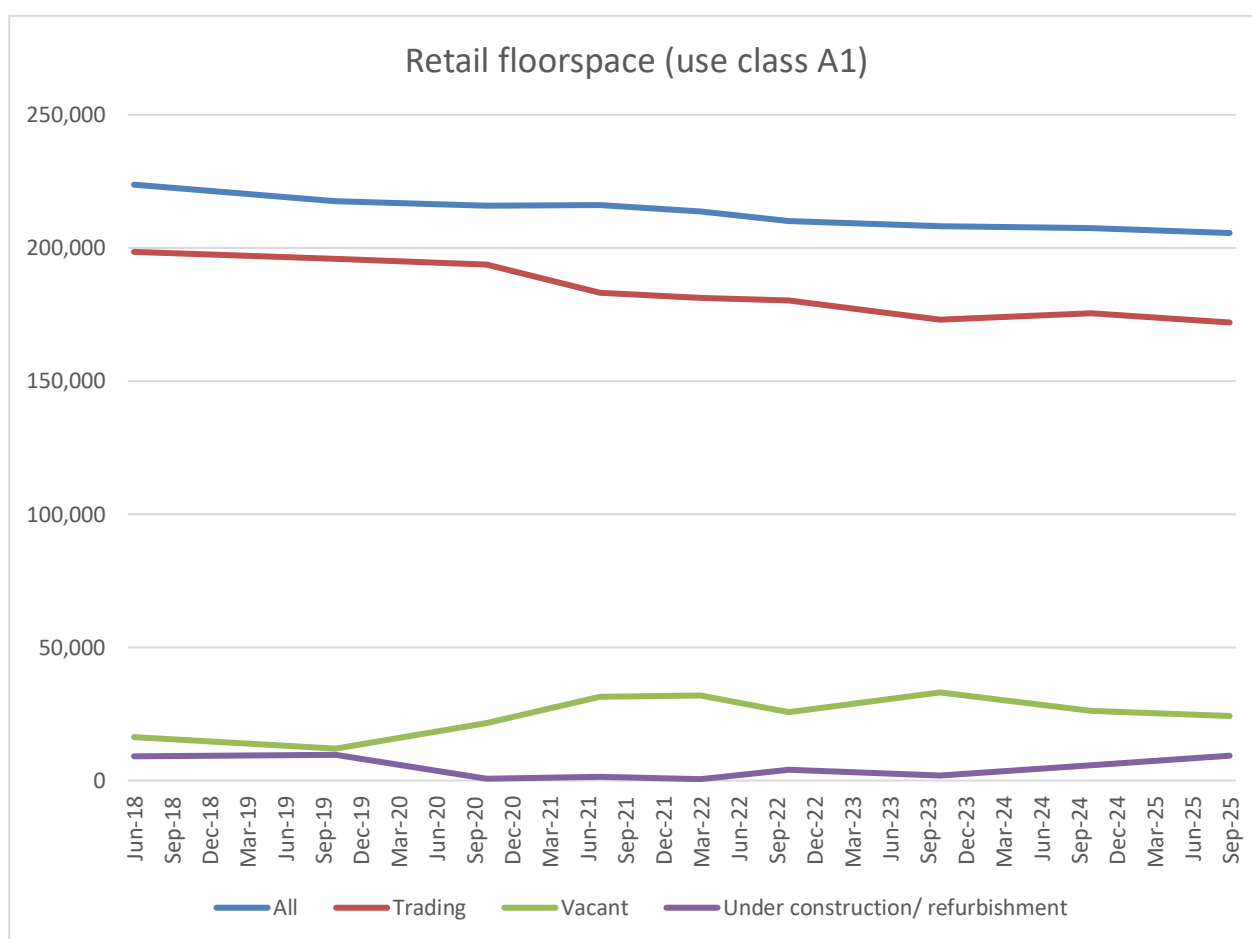
Graph 1: Footfall in Norwich city centre 2019-2025

27. Table 1 (along with the accompanying graphs) provides city centre overview data on retail floorspace and units, enabling comparison over time back until the GNLP's base date of April 2018. Please note that all the graphs within this report that show retail floorspace, units and vacancy rates show trends, and the dates shown within the graphs are not necessarily reflective of when the surveys were carried out.
28. Table 2 provides an overview of vacancy rates for all town centre uses and Table 3 compares this to retail uses only.

Table 1: Norwich city centre – provision of A1 retail floorspace

Retail floorspace (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2025	205,604	172,003	24,179	9,421
October 2024	207,409	175,536	26,076	5,797
October 2023	208,146	173,069	33,086	1,991
October 2022	210,100	180,303	25,689	4,108
March 2022	213,701	181,137	32,050	514
July 2021	216,005	183,211	31,409	1,385
October 2020	215,949	193,658	21,686	605
October 2019	217,539	195,891	11,992	9,656
June 2018	223,770	198,519	16,265	8,986

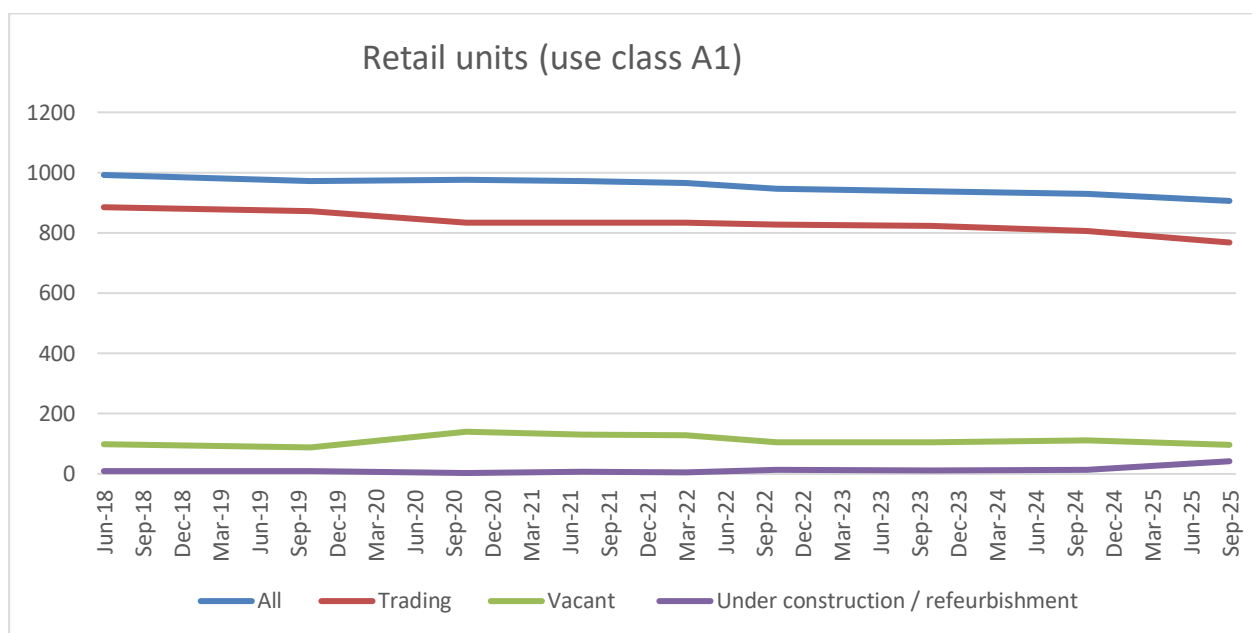


Overall retail floorspace change

Since October 2024	Decreased by 1,805 sqm (0.9% decrease)
Since July 2008	Decreased by 23,516 sqm (10.3% decrease)

Retail units (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2025	906	768	96	42
October 2024	930	806	111	13
October 2023	938	823	104	11
October 2022	947	828	106	13
March 2022	966	833	128	5
July 2021	971	834	130	7
October 2020	976	833	140	3
October 2019	971	873	88	10
June 2018	992	885	98	9



Retail vacancy rate (use class A1)

	As a proportion of all retail floorspace <i><u>Vacant+Refurbishment</u></i> <i>All</i>	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted <i><u>Vacant</u></i> <i>All</i>	As a proportion of all retail units <i><u>Vacant+Refurbishment</u></i> <i>All</i>
Sept 2025	16.3%	11.8%	15.2%
October 2024	15.4%	12.6%	13.3%
October 2023	16.9%	15.9%	12.3%
October 2022	14.2%	12.2%	12.6%
March 2022	15.2%	15.0%	13.8%
July 2021	15.2%	14.5%	14.1%
October 2020	10.3%	10.0%	14.7%
October 2019	10.0%	5.5%	10.1%
June 2018	11.3%	7.3%	10.8%

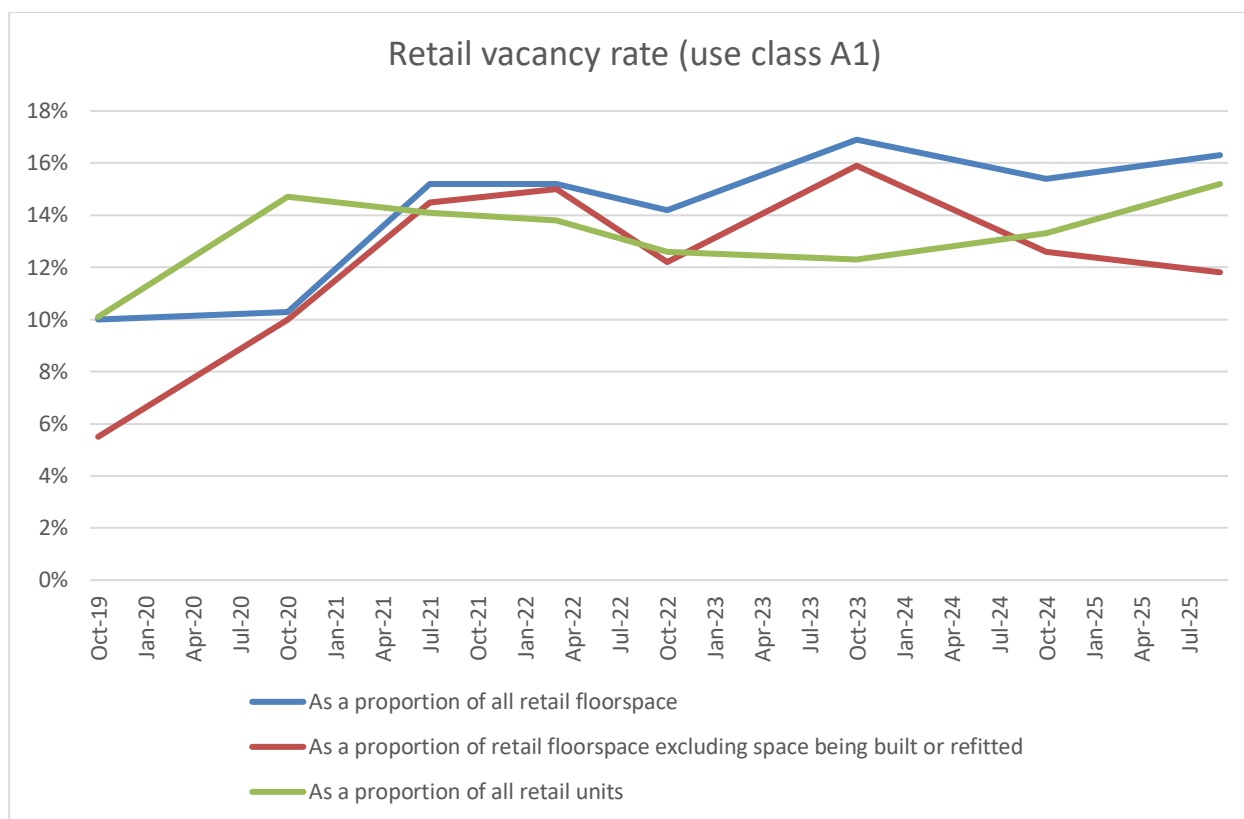


Table 2: Summary of all town centre uses vacancy rates

	As a proportion of all floorspace		As a proportion of all units	
	<u>Vacant+Refurbishment</u>		<u>Vacant+Refurbishment</u>	
	All		All	
	October 2024	Sept 2025	October 2024	Sept 2025
Norwich City Centre	14.6%	15.0%	14.0%	15.1%
Primary retail area	14.7%	14.4%	12.0%	12.6%
Secondary Retail area	23.1%	11.7%	13.8%	12.9%
Large District Centre	15.3%	30.0%	22.3%	33.7%
Rest of Centre	10.6%	8.8%	14.0%	12.8%

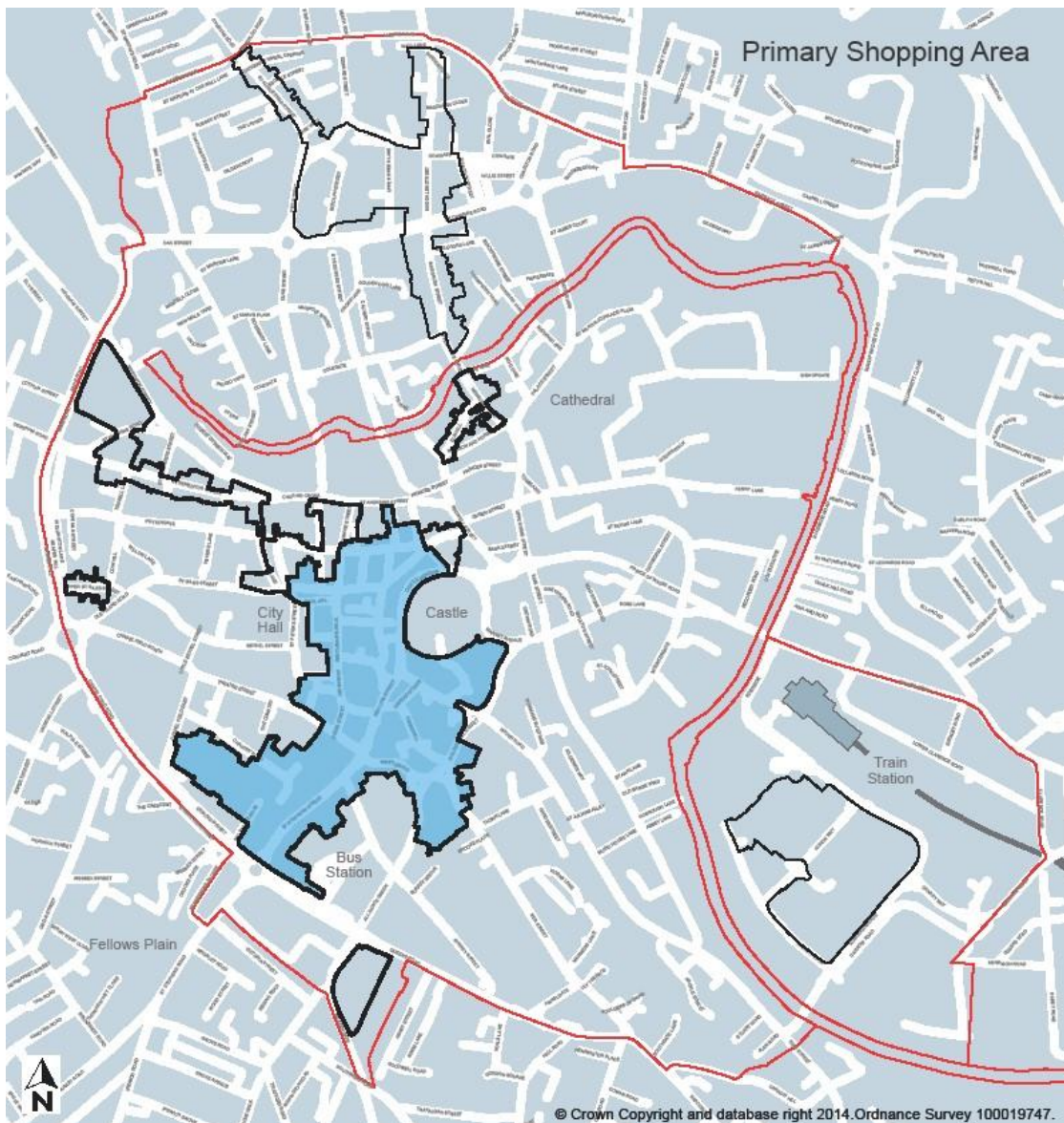
Table 3: Summary of retail only vacancy rates

	As a proportion of all retail floorspace		As a proportion of all retail units	
	<u>Vacant+Refurbishment</u>		<u>Vacant+Refurbishment</u>	
	All		All	
	October 2024	Sept 2025	October 2024	Sept 2025
Norwich City Centre	15.4%	16.3%	13.3%	15.2%
Primary retail area	14.3%	14.1%	9.9%	10.5%
Secondary Retail area	27.2%	9.2%	15.2%	13.5%
Large District Centre	13.9%	32.1%	21.3%	36.6%
Rest of Centre	15.2%	13.5%	16.1%	12.3%

The Primary Area: Retail Vacancy

Headline figures	Vacant floorspace	Vacant available floorspace (excluding refurb)	Vacant units	Retail floorspace change (since Oct 24)
Primary Retail Area (Retail only)	14.1%	13.4%	10.5%	0.7% decrease

29. The extent of the primary area, containing the shopping centres and main comparison goods stores, is shown below.



30. The vacant available *floorspace* rate in the primary retail area is currently 13.4% which is a 0.1% decrease on 2024 rates. In 2023 16.8% of vacant available floorspace was empty so this continued reduction in vacancy rates is a positive sign. Some large properties continue to remain vacant such as Debenhams

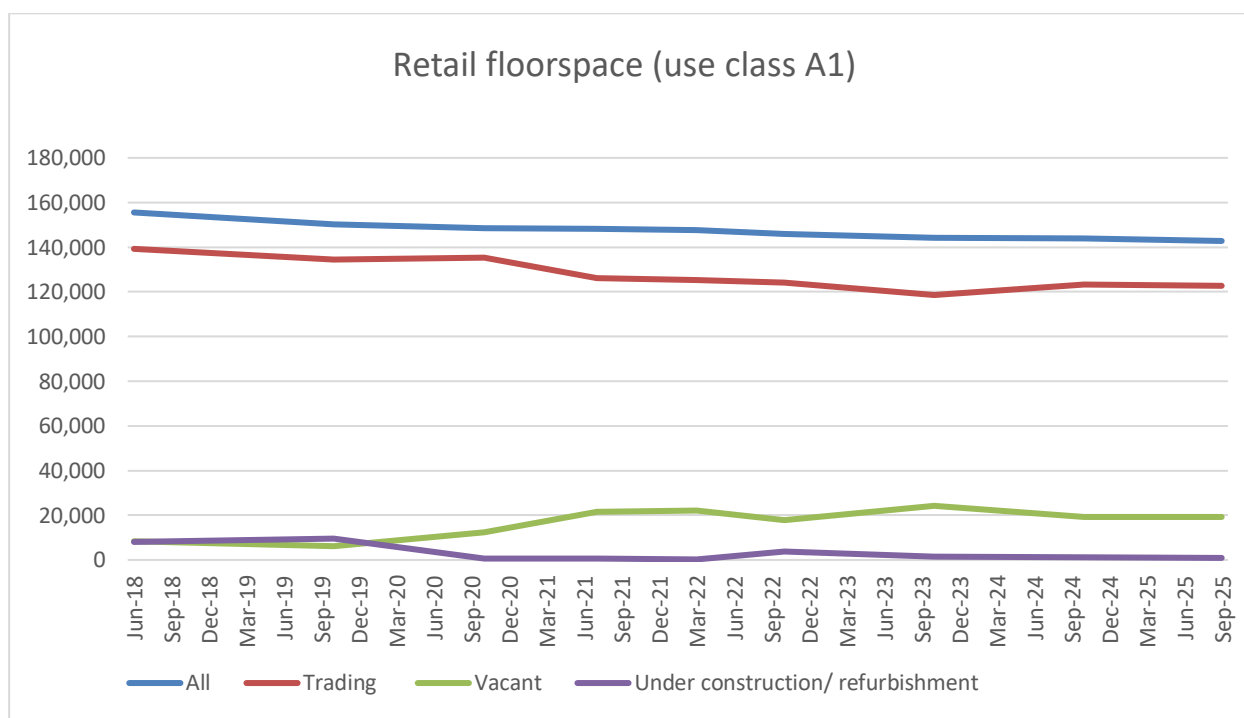
(8,360 sqm) and Wilko (5,600 sqm) which contributes significantly to floorspace vacancy rates. It should also be noted that vacant available floorspace is still significantly higher than before the pandemic when vacancy rates were at an extremely low rate of 4.1% in October 2019.

31. Primary Area retail vacancy rates 'as a proportion of all retail floorspace' have also decreased. The disparity between vacant and refurbishment is only 0.7% which would indicate that there is not a significant amount of development occurring in the primary retail area. The former Tesco unit on Guildhall Hill currently contributes most to the disparity.
32. The percentage of vacant retail *units* in the Primary Area has increased from 9.9% in 2024 to 10.5% in 2025 which would suggest that some additional smaller units within the primary retail area have become unoccupied during the monitoring period. However, back in July 2021 vacancy rates for units reached 15.2% so vacancy rates are still quite low compared to four years ago.
33. The overall amount of floorspace in A1 retail use within the primary area has decreased by just over 1,000 m² between 2024 and 2025, and the number of units has reduced by 17. This is largely as a result of units changing from A1 to other town centre uses and shows how the primary retail area is diversifying.
34. In particular Castle Quarter has become a leisure destination whilst retaining some retail. Currently 9.8% of retail floorspace is empty within Castle Quarter (although 14.5% of all town centre use floorspace is vacant). This higher percentage for all town centre uses is largely due to the job centre remaining vacant. Several smaller retail units are currently vacant as 12 out of 55 A1 shops are unoccupied (21.8%). When taking into account all town centre uses, there are 25 vacant units (26.6%). Longterm vacancies in Castle Quarter are still of concern but generally it is considered that the leisure uses that now occupy the Castle Quarter are preventing a number of particularly large retail units sitting empty and that although certain sectors are declining, they can be replaced with other successful town centre business uses which will ultimately increase footfall.
35. Chantry Place (formerly Chapelfield) on the whole remains well occupied and at the time of the survey only four retail units were vacant out of a total of 77 (5.2%). For all town centre uses 12 are vacant out of a total of 99 (12.1%). In terms of floorspace 0.6% of A1 floorspace is vacant (compared to 3.6% in 2024) and 3.8% of all town centre uses floorspace is unoccupied (compared to 7.2% in 2024). This is well below the average for the primary retail area and city centre and it should be noted that within Chantry Place when a shop closes it is often replaced very quickly with new tenants.
36. If all town centre uses are taken into account, the proportion of vacant floorspace (including refurbishments) is 14.4% (down from 14.7% in 2024) and compared to retail only of 14.1%. The percentage of vacant units is 15.1% (up from 12.0% in 2024) and compared to retail only of 10.5%.
37. Table 4 provides retail floorspace and unit data for the primary area.

Table 4: Primary shopping area

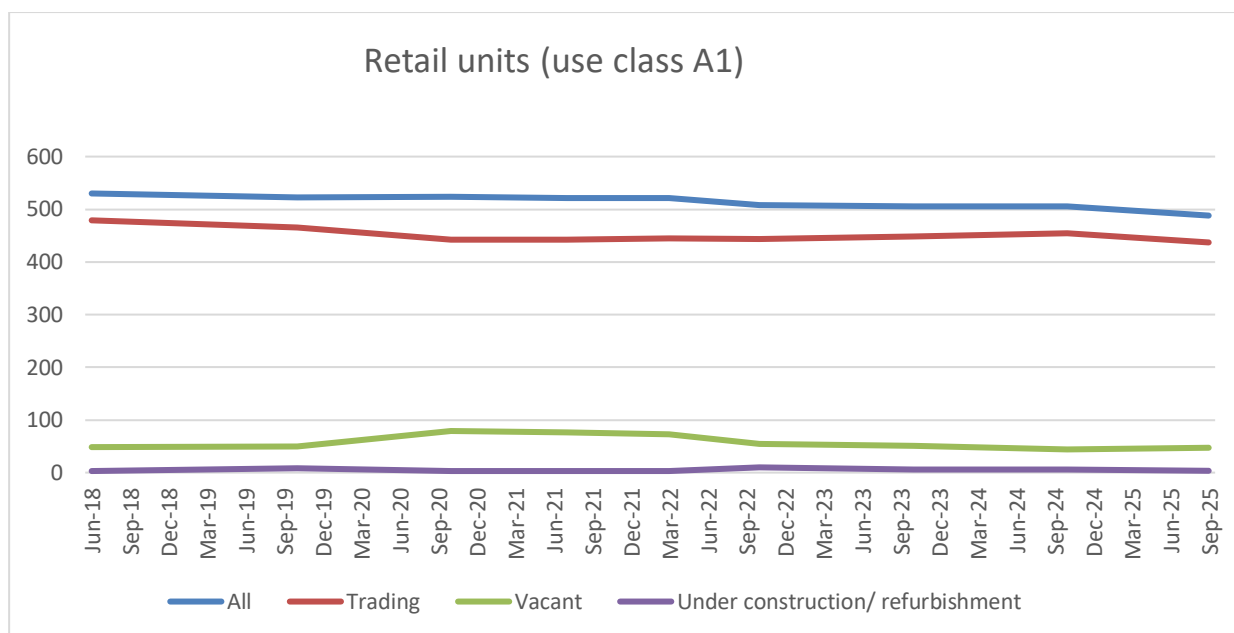
Retail floorspace (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2025	142,786	122,682	19,116	988
October 2024	143,851	123,220	19,359	1,272
October 2023	144,235	118,591	24,217	1,427
October 2022	145,862	124,146	17,838	3,878
March 2022	147,573	125,219	22,136	218
July 2021	148,263	126,098	21,564	601
October 2020	148,498	135,424	12,469	605
October 2019	150,094	134,405	6,148	9,541
June 2018	155,555	139,261	8,265	8,029



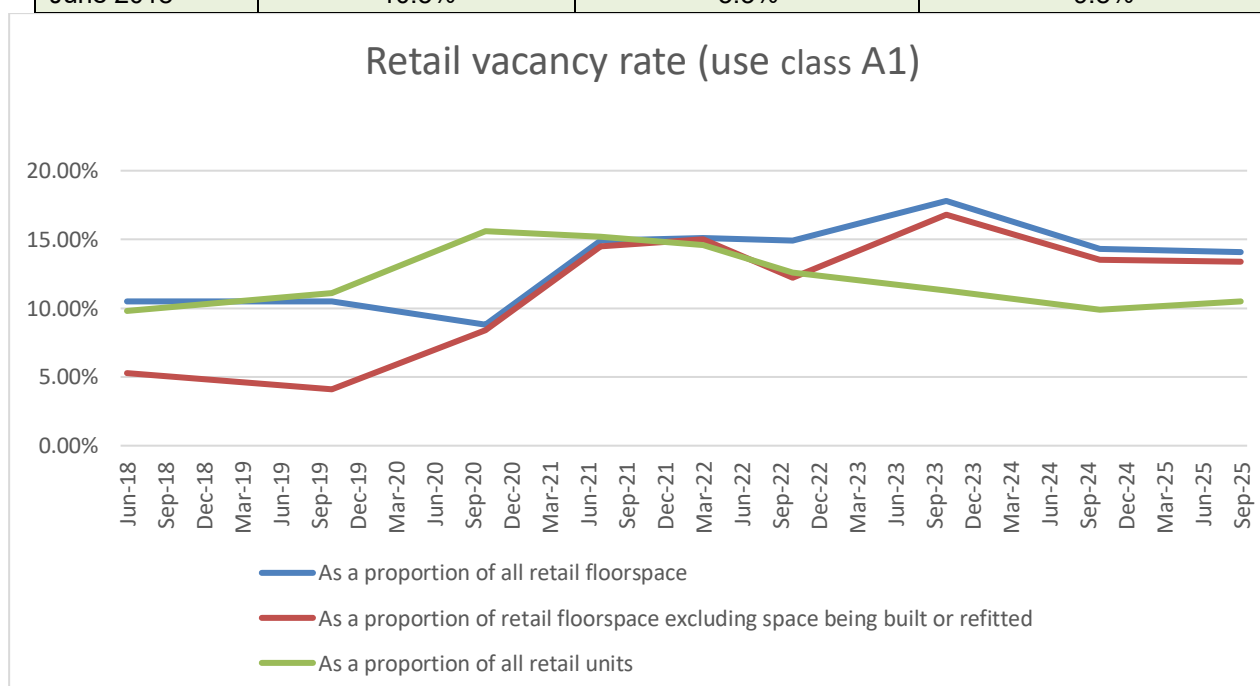
Retail units (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2025	488	437	47	4
October 2024	505	455	44	6
October 2023	505	448	51	6
October 2022	508	444	54	10
March 2022	521	445	73	3
July 2021	521	442	76	3
October 2020	524	442	79	3
October 2019	523	465	50	8
June 2018	530	479	48	3



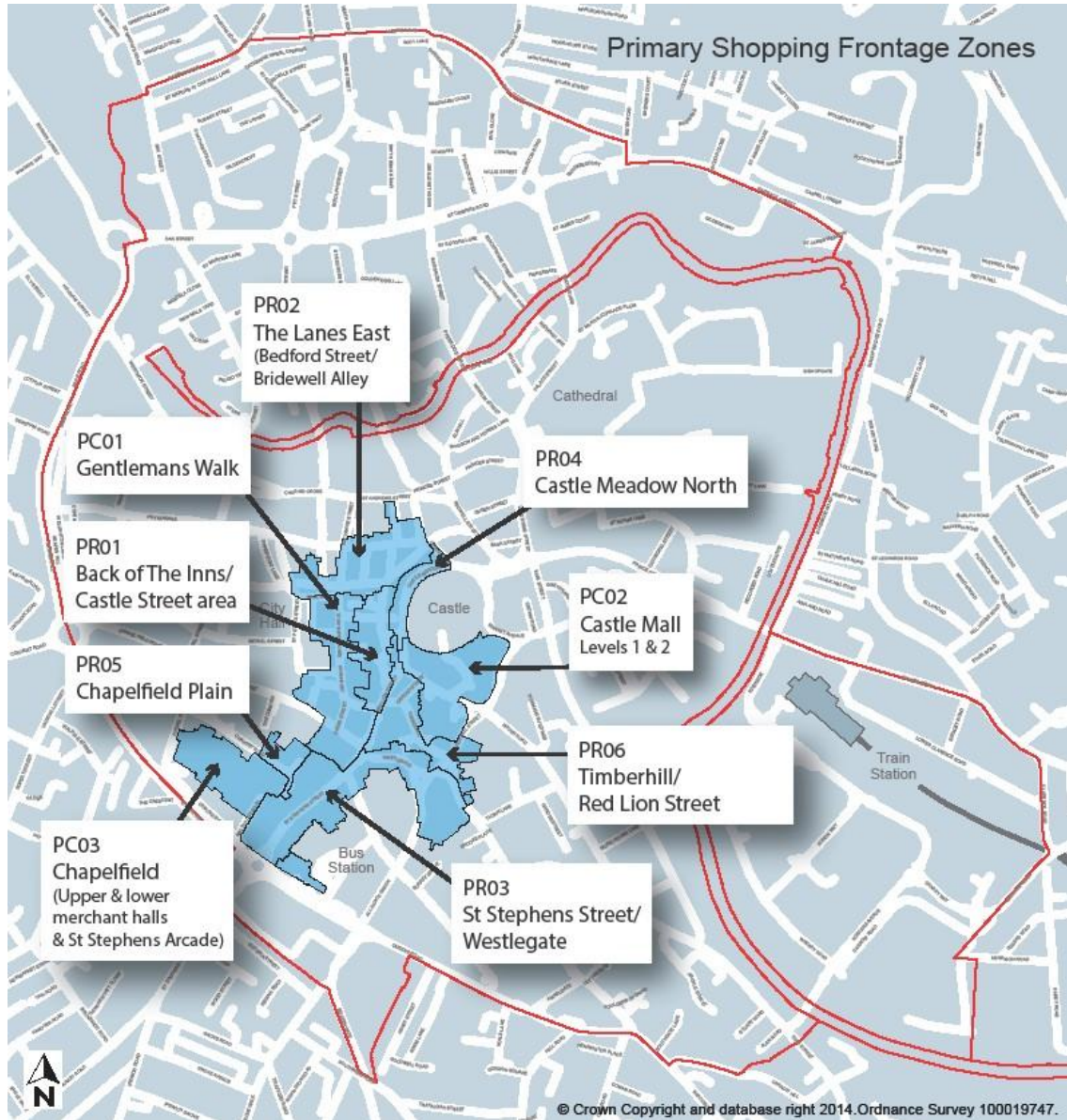
Retail vacancy rate (use class A1)

	As a proportion of all retail floorspace <i>$\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$</i>	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted <i>$\frac{Vacant}{All}$</i>	As a proportion of all retail units <i>$\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$</i>
Sept 2025	14.1%	13.4%	10.5%
October 2024	14.3%	13.5%	9.9%
October 2023	17.8%	16.8%	11.3%
October 2022	14.9%	12.2%	12.6%
March 2022	15.1%	15.0%	14.6%
July 2021	14.9%	14.5%	15.2%
October 2020	8.8%	8.4%	15.6%
October 2019	10.5%	4.1%	11.1%
June 2018	10.5%	5.3%	9.8%



The Primary Area: Retail Frontages

38. Policy DM20 divides the primary area into a number of smaller 'frontage zones' (as defined on the policies map and as identified in appendix 4 to the DM policies plan). The frontage zones are shown below.



39. The retail threshold applicable in each of these areas is set within the Main Town Centre Uses and Retail Frontages Supplementary Planning Document (December 2014).

40. Table 5 provides data on the percentage of retail uses in the primary area retail frontage zones. Since March 2022 the percentage of retail in Castle Quarter has been below the minimum threshold of 80% and since October 2023 the amount of retail in PR06 (Timberhill/Red Lion Street) has dropped below the minimum threshold of 60% set out in the SPD. All other frontages have remained relatively stable and policy compliant.

41. There have been changes to the percentage of retail frontage in all zones over the past year other than in PC03: Chantry Place where retail frontage remains very high at 96.9%. Details of the changes are set out below.
42. Within the following two frontage zones the retail frontage has increased:
- PC01 (Castle Quarter) increased from 66.9% to 69.8%.
 - PR01 (Back of the Inns/Castle Street) increased from 70.5% to 75.8%.
43. Within the following four frontage zones, retail frontage has reduced:
- PC01 (Gentleman's Walk/Haymarket/Brigg Street) reduced from 85.3% to 84.4%.
 - PR02: The Lanes east (Bedford Street/Bridewell Alley) reduced from 72.3% to 70.3%.
 - PR03: St Stephens Street/Westlegate reduced from 86.8% to 83.8%.
 - PR06 (Timberhill/Red Lion Street) reduced from 56.8% to 56.0%.
44. Overall, whilst in the past the city centre saw a gradual increase in the percentage of non-retail uses, during the past year there have been some increases in retail frontage and several of the retail frontages remain at relatively comfortable levels above their minimum thresholds. Notwithstanding this, the planning authority is now adopting a more flexible approach and the changes that have occurred nationally mean that some changes of use can take place without the need for planning permission, so it is inevitable that non-retail uses will increase within some frontage zones.

Table 5: Primary Area Retail Frontage Zones - Retail frontages in September 2025

Primary retail area core frontage zones

Frontage zone	Total frontage (m)	Total non-retail frontage Sept 2025	% A1 retail Sept 2025 (frontage)	% A1 retail October 2024 (frontage)	Minimum threshold (from 2014 SPD)
Primary retail area core frontage zones					
PC01: Gentleman's Walk/ Haymarket/Brigg Street	856.4	133.6	84.4%	85.3%	80%
PC02: Castle Mall (Levels 1 & 2)	898.1	271.5	69.8%	66.9%	80%
PC03: Chapelfield, upper & lower Merchants Hall and St Stephens Arcade	641.0	20.0	96.9%	96.9%	80%

Frontage zones in the rest of the primary retail area

Frontage zone	Total frontage (m)	Total non-retail frontage Sept 2025	% A1 retail Sept 2025 (frontage)	% A1 retail October 2024 (frontage)	Minimum threshold (from 2014 SPD)
Frontage zones in the rest of the primary retail area					
PR01: Back of the Inns/Castle Street area	660.5	159.7	75.8%	70.5%	65%
PR02: The Lanes east (Bedford Street/Bridewell Alley)	1116.3	331.2	70.3%	72.3%	70%
PR03: St Stephens Street/Westlegate	821.5	132.9	83.8%	86.8%	80%
PR04: Castle Meadow north		N/A ¹			
PR05: Chapelfield Plain		N/A ²			
PR06: Timberhill/Red Lion Street	434.2	191.1	56.0%	56.8%	60%

Key:

Green denotes no change or increase in A1 retail since 2024

Red denotes decrease in A1 retail since 2024.

Blue denotes frontage is within minimum A1 threshold.

Orange denotes minimum A1 frontage threshold has been breached.

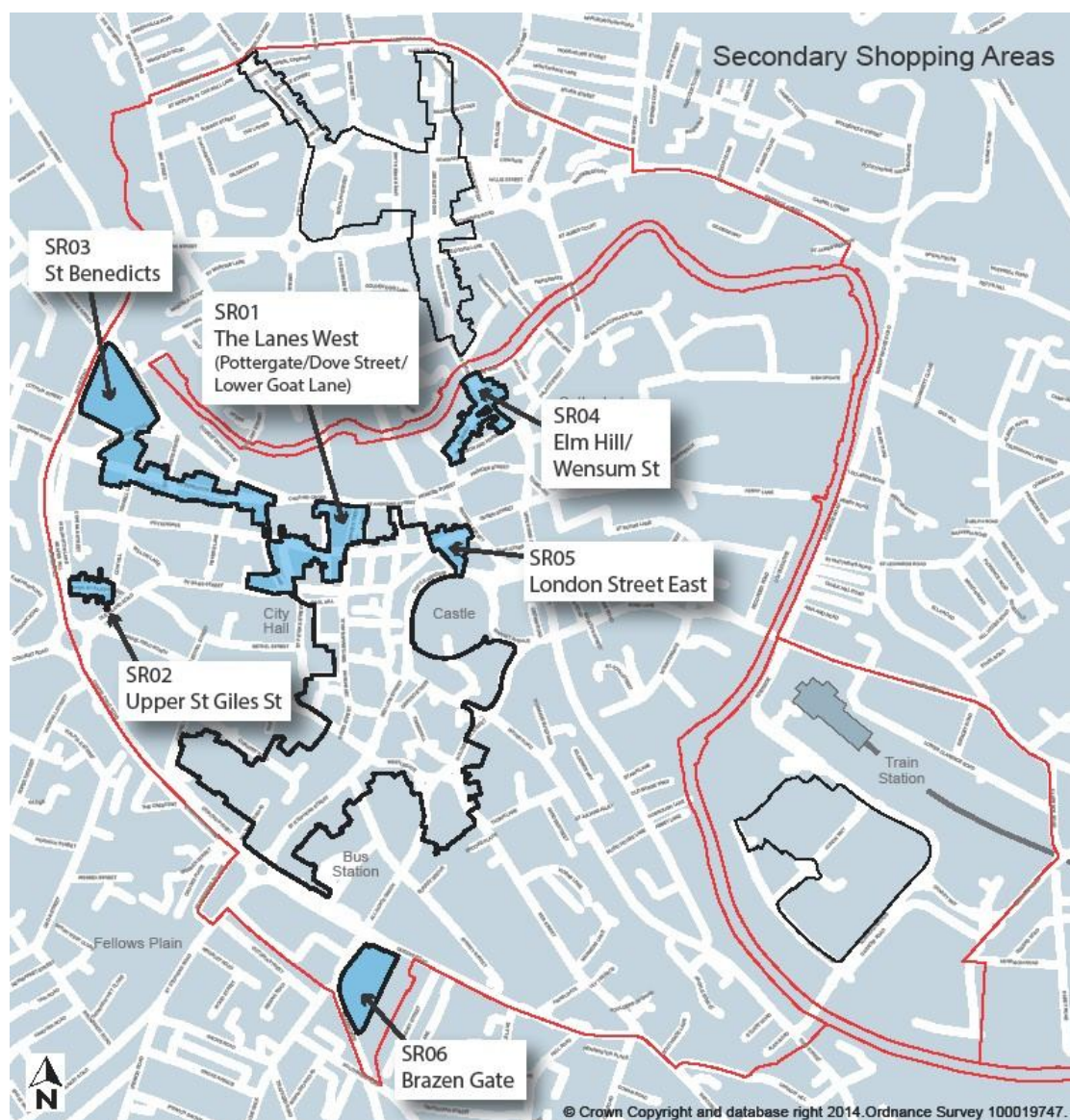
¹ There is no defined frontage in this zone

² There is no defined frontage in this zone

The Secondary Area: Retail Vacancy

Headline figures	Vacant floorspace	Vacant available floorspace (excluding refurb)	Vacant units	Retail floorspace change (since October 24)
Secondary area (Retail only)	9.2%	7.1%	13.5%	1.4% decrease

45. The secondary area and retail frontages are shown below.



46. Since 2018 the secondary retail area has experienced high floorspace vacancy rates due to the closure of Toys R Us in Cathedral Retail Park. In 2024 vacant floorspace rose to a high of 27.2% with an additional unit in the retail park closing. However the consolidation and refurbishment of these two units and the opening of Home Bargains in December 2024 has now dramatically reduced vacant floorspace to 9.2%. The retail park was only fully occupied for a matter of months, with Farmfoods closing in 2025. Notwithstanding this vacant

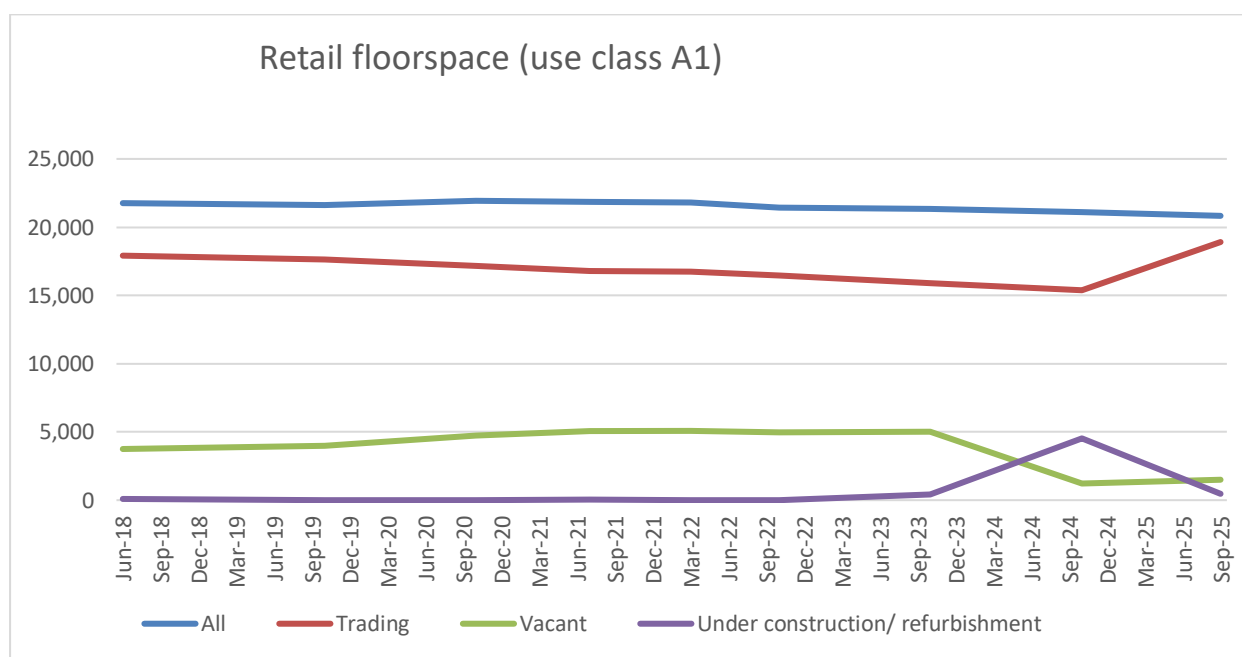
floorspace is at a very competitive level particularly for a secondary retail area.

47. The percentage of vacant retail *units* in the Secondary Area also decreased over the past 12 months reducing from 15.2% to 13.5%.
48. The overall amount of floorspace in A1 retail use continues to decrease but this has only fallen by 294m² and one unit since the 2024 report.
49. If all town centre uses are taken into account, the proportion of vacant floorspace (including refurbishments) is 11.7% (down from 23.1% in 2024 and compared to retail only of 9.2%) and the percentage of vacant units is 12.9% (down from 13.8% in 2024 and compared to retail only of 13.5%).
50. The secondary retail area includes some streets which provide a specialist mix of shops and is performing very well in providing independent retail diversity and by adapting rapidly it remained resilient during the pandemic and generally continues to perform well within the current economic climate.

Table 6: Secondary area

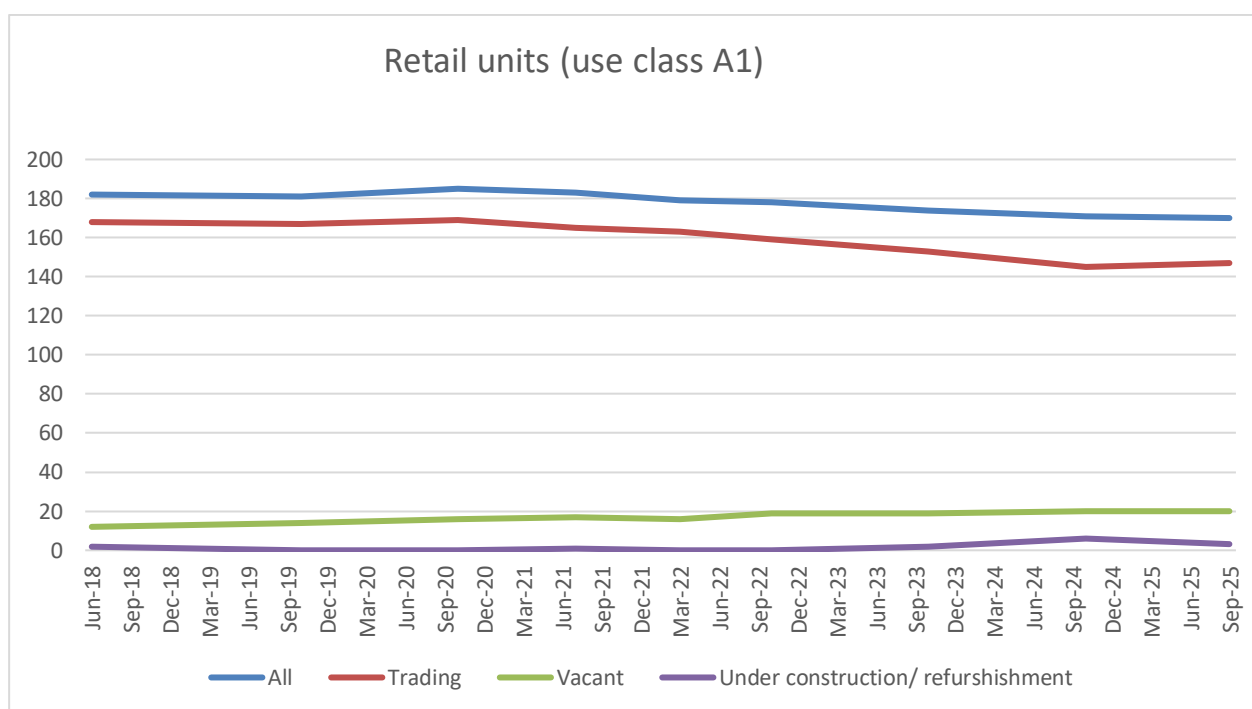
Retail floorspace (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2025	20,829	18,911	1,476	442
October 2024	21,123	15,379	1,219	4,525
October 2023	21,325	15,915	4,991	419
October 2022	21,443	16,454	4,989	0
March 2022	21,826	16,752	5,074	0
July 2021	21,859	16,775	5,060	24
October 2020	21,933	17,180	4,753	0
October 2019	21,611	17,651	3,960	0
June 2018	21,772	17,921	3,741	110



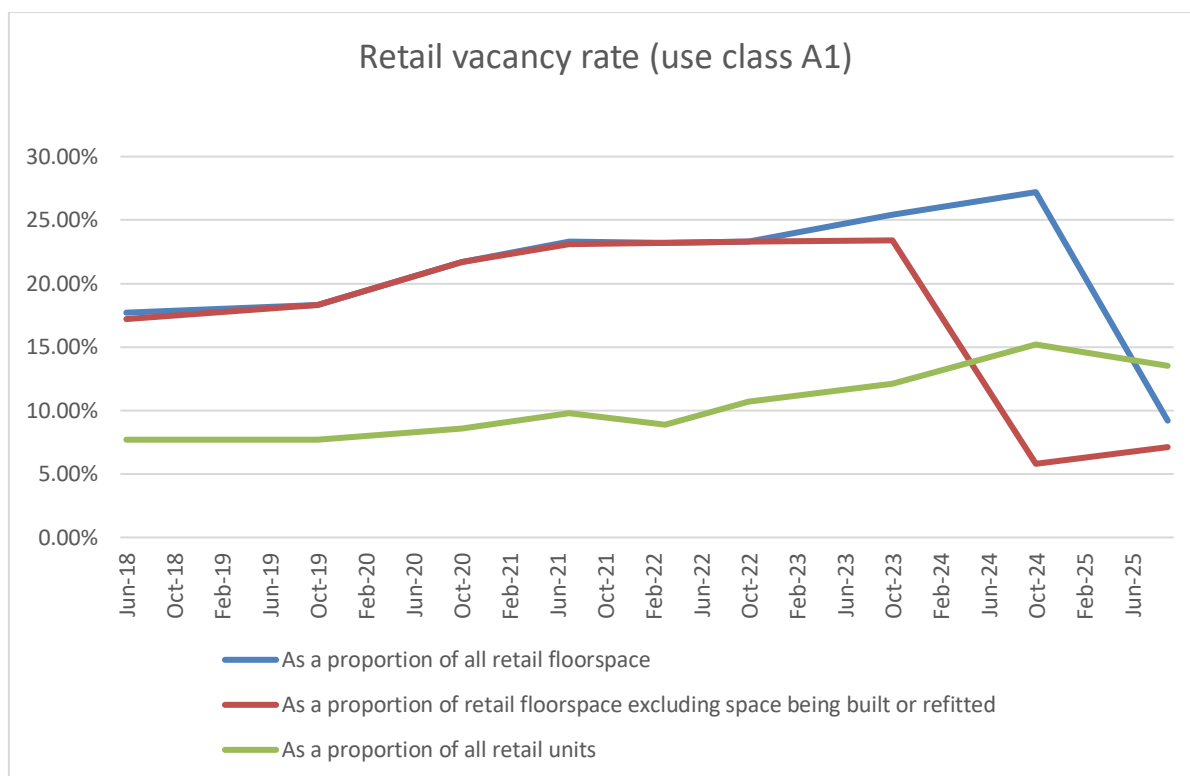
Retail units (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2025	170	147	20	3
October 2024	171	145	20	6
October 2023	174	153	19	2
October 2022	178	159	19	0
March 2022	179	163	16	0
July 2021	183	165	17	1
October 2020	185	169	16	0
October 2019	181	167	14	0
June 2018	182	168	12	2



Retail vacancy rate (use class A1)

	As a proportion of all retail floorspace <i>Vacant+Refurbishment</i> <i>All</i>	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted <i>Vacant</i> <i>All</i>	As a proportion of all retail units <i>Vacant+Refurbishment</i> <i>All</i>
Sept 2025	9.2%	7.1%	13.5%
October 2024	27.2%	5.8%	15.2%
October 2023	25.4%	23.4%	12.1%
October 2022	23.3%	23.3%	10.7%
March 2022	23.2%	23.2%	8.9%
July 2021	23.3%	23.1%	9.8%
October 2020	21.7%	21.7%	8.6%
October 2019	18.3%	18.3%	7.7%
June 2018	17.7%	17.2%	7.7%



The Secondary Area: Retail Frontages

51. Policy DM20 divides the secondary area into a number of smaller ‘frontage zones’ (as defined on the policies map and as identified in appendix 4 to the DM policies plan). The retail threshold applicable in each of these areas is set within the Main Town Centre Uses and Retail Frontages Supplementary Planning Document (December 2014).

52. Table 7 provides data on the percentage of retail uses in the secondary area retail frontage zones. There are now two frontage zones below the minimum threshold set out within the SPD. Over the past monitoring period the retail frontage in SR01 (The Lanes West (Pottergate/Dove Street/Lower Goat Lane)) has reduced from 72.% to 68%. This now joins SR03: St Benedicts in being below the minimum threshold. During the monitoring period the proportion of retail has stayed the same within SR02: Upper St Giles.

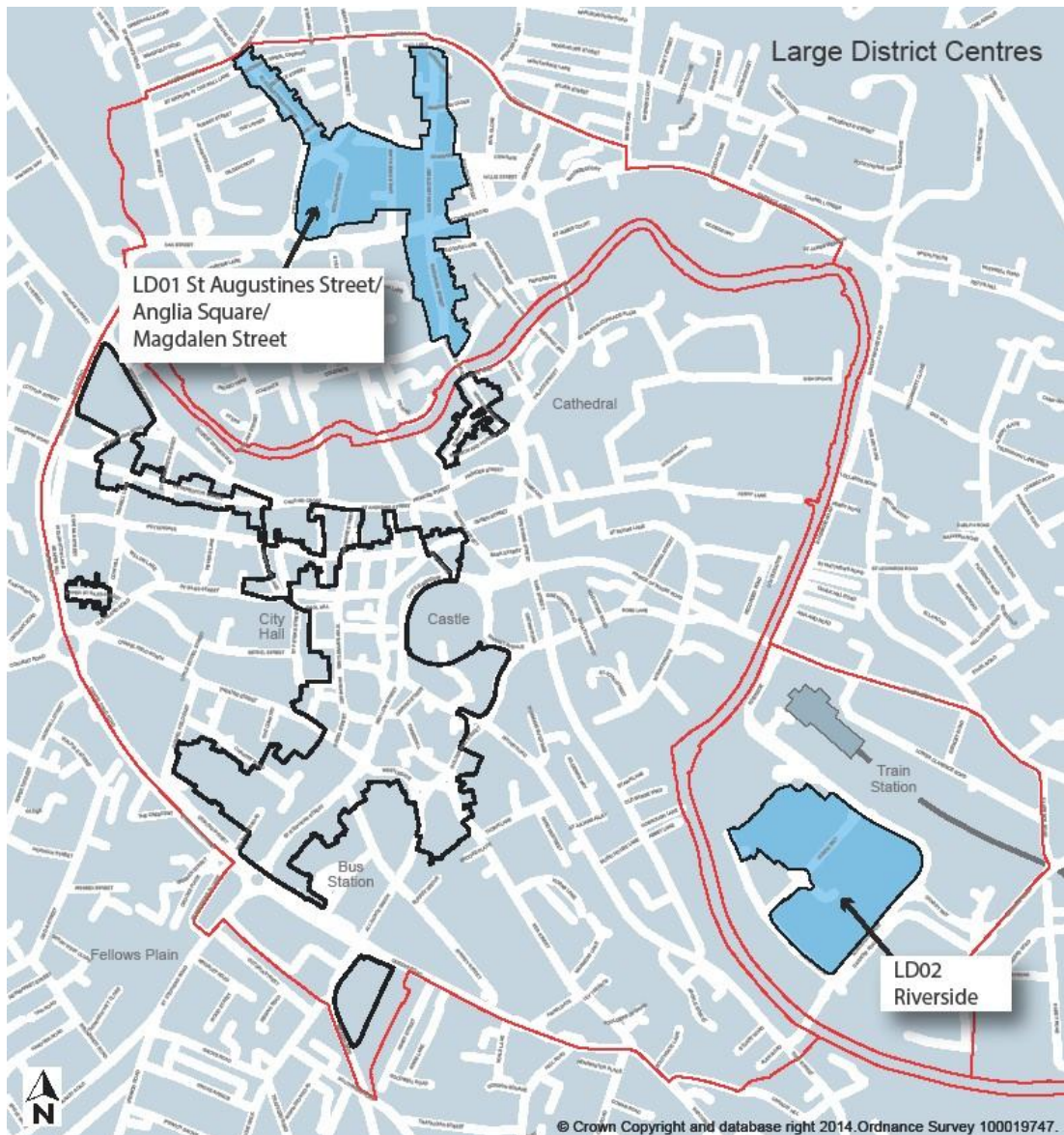
Table 7: Secondary area retail frontage zones

Frontage zone	Total frontage (m)	Total non-retail frontage 2025	% A1 retail frontage 2025	% A1 retail frontage 2024	Minimum threshold (from 2014 SPD)
Primary retail area core frontage zones					
SR01	391.3	125.4	68.0%	72.0%	70%
SR02	121.7	39.4	67.6%	67.6%	60%
SR03	638.0	274.8	56.9%	57.3%	60%
SR04	No defined frontage				
SR05	No defined frontage				
SR06	No defined frontage				

Large District Centres

Headline figures	Vacant floorspace	Vacant available floorspace (excluding refurb)	Vacant units	Retail floorspace change (since October 24)
Large District Centres (Retail only)	32.1%	7.9%	36.6%	1.6% decrease

53. The map below shows the extent of the Large District Centres.



54. The vacant available floorspace in the LDCs is currently 7.9% which is significantly lower than it was in October 2024 when vacant floorspace was 13.9%. All vacant retail floorspace has however increased from 13.9% to 32.1%. This was to be expected as all shops within the Anglia Square redevelopment area have been vacated to make way for demolition and the

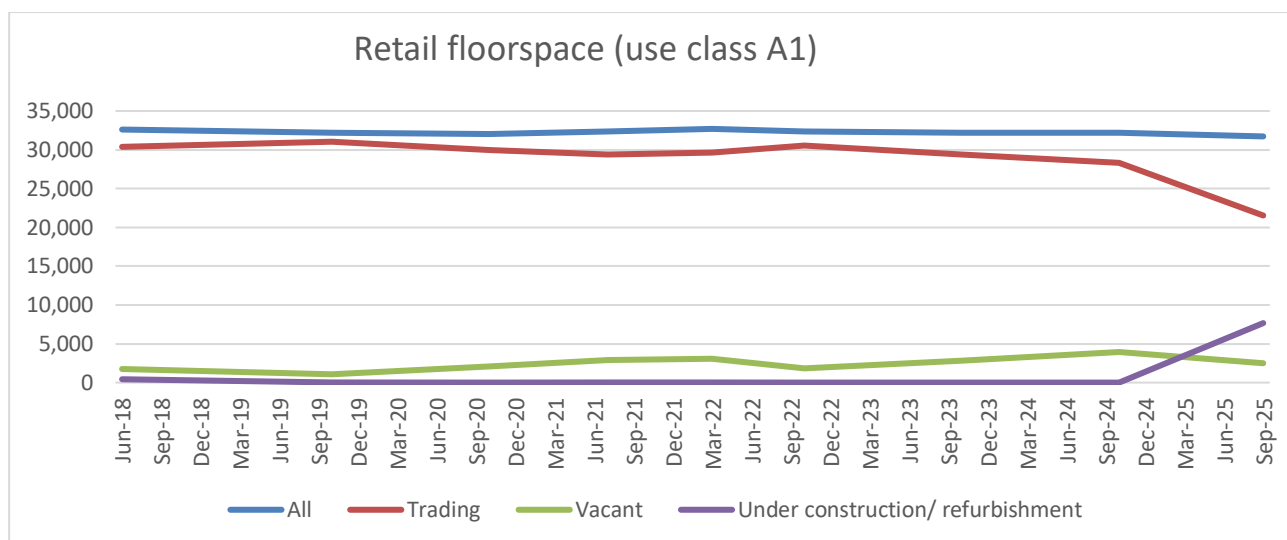
subsequent comprehensive redevelopment of this area. As shown in table 8 there is now 7,669 sqm of floorspace that is considered as 'under construction/refurbishment' as this has been vacated ready for demolition. This is therefore not considered as available floorspace as it is now within a hoarded off site. Planning permission was granted in July 2023 for up to 1,100 dwellings and up to 8,000 sqm (net internal area) of flexible retail, commercial and other non-residential floorspace including a community hub. Funded by Homes England, the Council has acquired the site and demolition has now commenced.

55. The percentage of vacant retail *units* in the LDCs now stands at 36.6% which is a total of 32 units. This has increased from 21.3% in 2024 and again is largely as a result of shops closing due to the Anglia Square redevelopment.
56. A new box park featuring more than 80 containers is due to open shortly to rehome Anglia Square traders. The food, retail and office centre will be made out of refitted shipping containers and will be built under the Magdalen Street flyover and will be known as St Saviour's Yard. There have been over 400 expressions of interest in the units with demand being greater than its Manchester equivalent. It is hoped that the box park will be fully occupied once it is open and the new floorspace will be reflected in the next retail monitor.
57. Riverside retail vacancy rates have reduced and vacant retail floorspace is at only 6.1%. The number of vacant units have reduced from two to one over the monitoring period with the opening of McDonalds. This remains a largely car-based destination, but routes established within the 'St Anne's Quarter' development have created a more attractive walking and cycling link between Riverside and the city centre.
58. If all town centre uses are taken into account, the proportion of vacant floorspace (including refurbishments) has increased from 15.3% in October 2024 to 30.0% in 2025 (and this compares to retail only of 32.1%) and the percentage of vacant units is 33.7% (up from 22.3% in October 2024) which compares to retail only of 36.6%.

Table 8: Large District Centres (Magdalen Street, St Augustine's Street, Anglia Square & Albion Way Riverside)

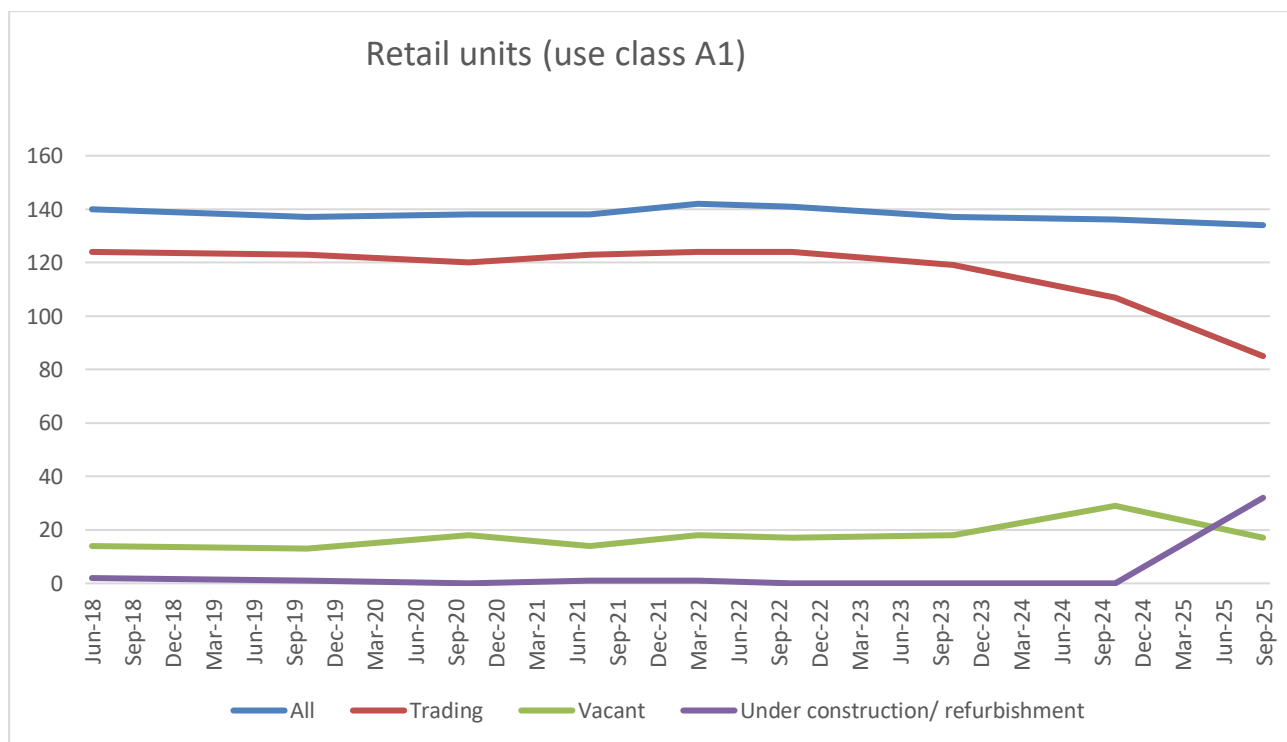
Retail floorspace (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2025	31,722	21,533	2,520	7,669
October 2024	32,227	28,285	3,942	0
October 2023	32,216	29,398	2,818	0
October 2022	32,385	30,561	1,824	0
March 2022	32,695	29,623	3,051	21
July 2021	32,379	29,426	2,932	21
October 2020	32,015	29,974	2,041	0
October 2019	32,164	31,043	1,071	50
June 2018	32,609	30,421	1,748	440



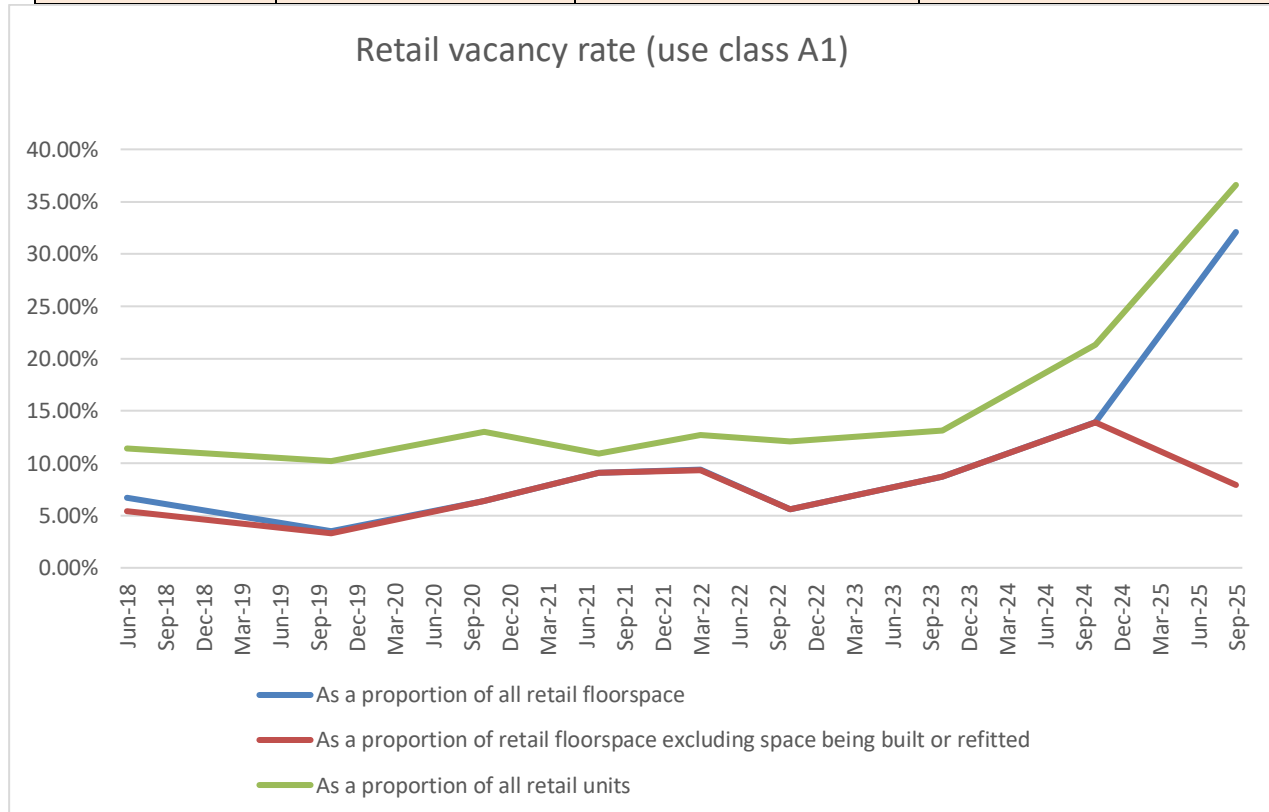
Retail units (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2025	134	85	17	32
October 2024	136	107	29	0
October 2023	137	119	18	0
October 2022	141	124	17	0
March 2022	142	124	18	1
July 2021	138	123	14	1
October 2020	138	120	18	0
October 2019	137	123	13	1
June 2018	140	124	14	2



Retail vacancy rate (use class A1)

	As a proportion of all retail floorspace <i>$\frac{\text{Vacant} + \text{Refurbishment}}{\text{All}}$</i>	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted <i>$\frac{\text{Vacant}}{\text{All}}$</i>	As a proportion of all retail units <i>$\frac{\text{Vacant} + \text{Refurbishment}}{\text{All}}$</i>
Sept 2025	32.1%	7.9%	36.6%
October 2024	13.9%	13.9%	21.3%
October 2023	8.7%	8.7%	13.1%
October 2022	5.6%	5.6%	12.1%
March 2022	9.4%	9.3%	12.7%
July 2021	9.1%	9.1%	10.9%
October 2020	6.4%	6.4%	13.0%
October 2019	3.5%	3.3%	10.2%
June 2018	6.7%	5.4%	11.4%



Rest of the City Centre

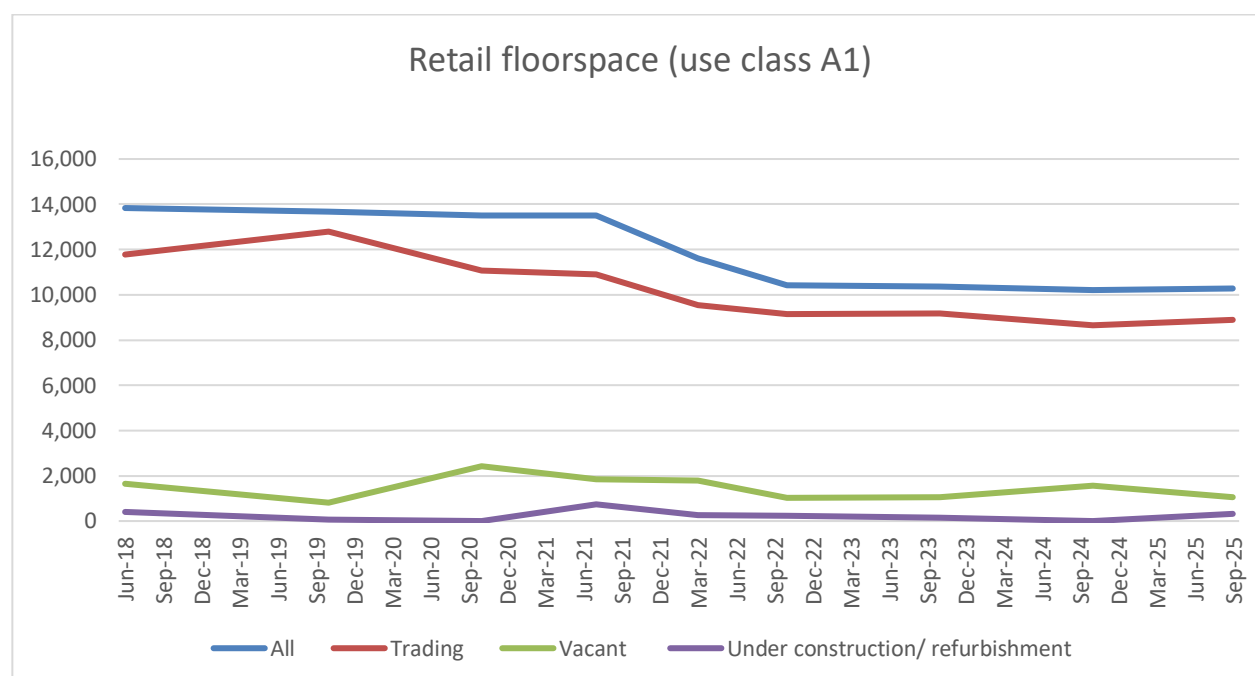
Headline figures	Vacant floorspace	Vacant available floorspace (excluding refurbishments)	Vacant units	Retail floorspace change (since October 24)
Rest of City Centre (Retail only)	13.5%	10.4%	12.3%	0.6% increase

59. This area covers all shops within the city centre which are not included in the defined areas.
60. Vacant floorspace within the 'rest of the city centre' currently stands at 12.3%. This is a significant decrease from October 2024 when 15.2% of available floorspace was vacant. Vacancy rates within the 'rest of the city centre' do fluctuate quite significantly and have historically been fairly high. In October 2019 (pre pandemic) only 5.9% of available floor space was vacant which is a bit of an anomaly; however, in October 2020 17.9% of available floorspace was vacant.
61. The number of vacant retail *units* in the 'rest of the city centre' has also reduced from 16.1% in October 2024 to 12.3% in October 2025. This would suggest that a number of smaller units have been occupied over the monitoring period.
62. The overall amount of floorspace in A1 retail increased slightly between October 2024 and October 2025 (by 60 sqm) although the number of retail units reduced by four.
63. The statistics from the past few years suggest that there has been a lot of change and turnover in the 'rest of the city centre' area which is expected within the more peripheral city centre shopping streets. Although a number of businesses closed over the pandemic, the 'rest of the city centre' has bounced back in a similar way to some of the more central shopping areas. There has been a lot of diversification in the past with a number of retail units changing to other town centre uses but over the past monitoring period the amount of total retail floorspace has remained relatively stable.
64. If all town centre uses are taken into account the proportion of vacant floorspace (including refurbishments) is only 8.8% (down from 20.0% in 2024) which compares to retail only of 13.5% and the percentage of vacant units is 12.8% (down from 15.7% in 2024) which compares to retail only of 12.3%. This highlights how successful some of Norwich's more peripheral shopping streets are and how well the 'rest of the city centre' has performed this monitoring year.

Table 9: Rest of city centre

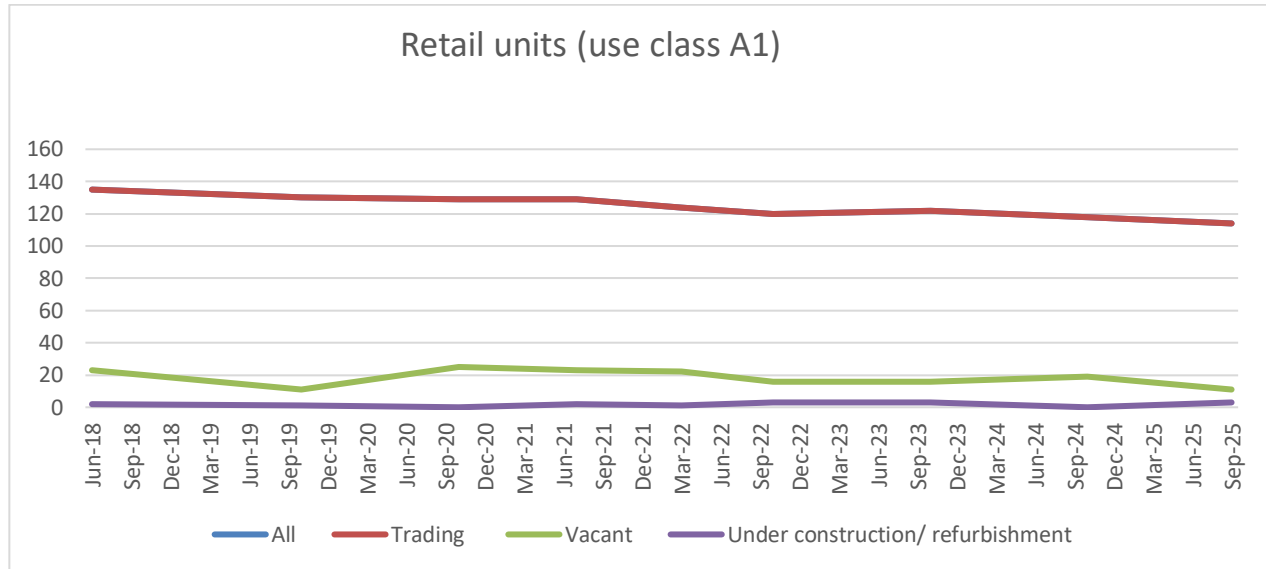
Retail floorspace (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2025	10,268	8,878	1,068	322
October 2024	10,208	8,652	1,556	0
October 2023	10,371	9,165	1,061	145
October 2022	10,410	9,142	1,038	230
March 2022	11,607	9,544	1,788	275
July 2021	13,503	10,912	1,852	739
October 2020	13,503	11,080	2,423	0
October 2019	13,670	12,792	813	65
June 2018	13,834	11,769	1,658	407



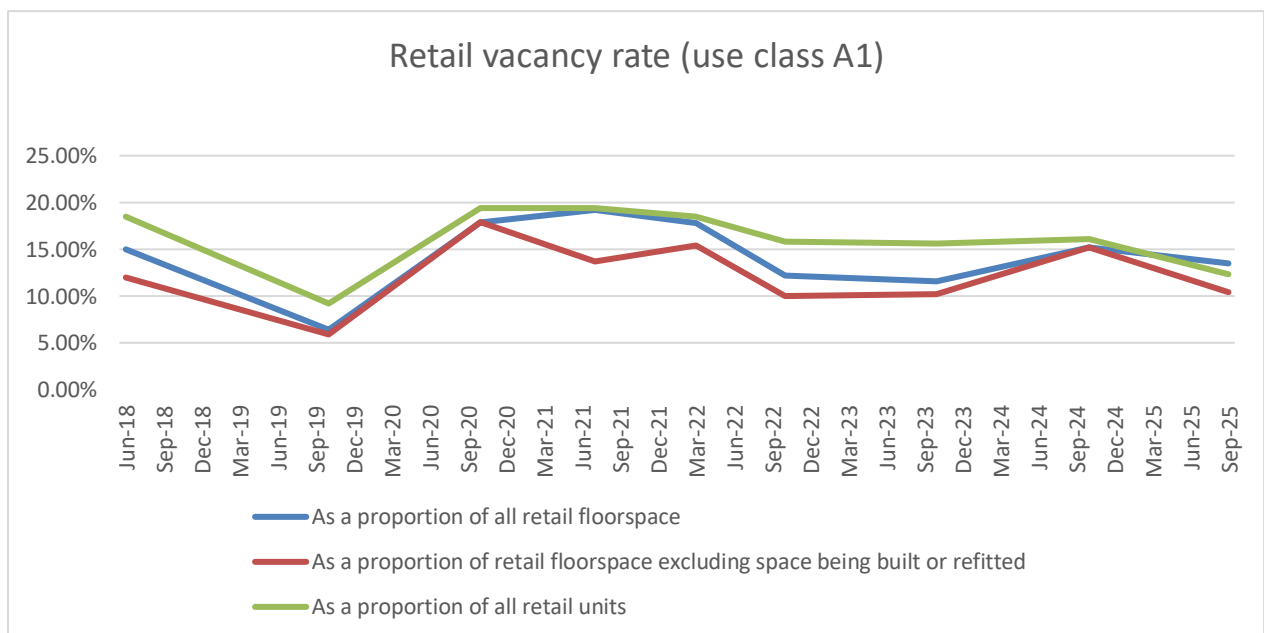
Retail units (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2025	114	99	11	3
October 2024	118	99	19	0
October 2023	122	103	16	3
October 2022	120	101	16	3
March 2022	124	101	22	1
July 2021	129	104	23	2
October 2020	129	104	25	0
October 2019	130	118	11	1
June 2018	135	110	23	2



Retail vacancy rate (use class A1)

	As a proportion of all retail floorspace <i><u>Vacant+Refurbishment</u></i> <i>All</i>	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted <i><u>Vacant</u></i> <i>All</i>	As a proportion of all retail units <i><u>Vacant+Refurbishment</u></i> <i>All</i>
Sept 2025	13.5%	10.4%	12.3%
October 2024	15.2%	15.2%	16.1%
October 2023	11.6%	10.2%	15.6%
October 2022	12.2%	10.0%	15.8%
March 2022	17.8%	15.4%	18.5%
July 2021	19.2%	13.7%	19.4%
October 2020	17.9%	17.9%	19.4%
October 2019	6.4%	5.9%	9.2%
June 2018	15%	12%	18.5%



District and Local Centres

65. Policy DM21 of the Development management policies plan establishes A1 retail use thresholds of 60% for District Centres and 50% for Local Centres.
66. Vacancy rates in District and Local Centres focus on units only. Between 2021 and 2022 there was a significant reduction in vacancy rates and overall vacancies reduced from 11.6% in 2021 to 6.5% in 2022. Over the past 36 months there has been a very slight increase in vacancies with 6.9% of units sitting empty in 2023, 7.8% of units being vacant in 2024 and 8.6% being vacant in 2025. However, this is still significantly lower than the 15.2% shop vacancy rate in the city centre which would indicate that despite the challenging circumstances Local and District Centres are faring extremely well. During the pandemic more people started to shop locally and this seems to be continuing.
67. Overall, these figures would suggest that District and Local Centres are continuing to perform their function and to offer an appropriate range of local services and facilities and over the past few years Norwich's District and Local Centres have continued to grow in strength and importance.

District Centres

Headline figures	Vacant units	Number of units change
District Centres	6.8%	1.5% increase

68. Whilst vacancy rates have increased from 6.4% to 6.8% between October 2024 and October 2025, vacancy rates are still significantly lower than pre pandemic times where 11.6% of units within District Centre stood vacant in 2018. The total number of vacant units in the 10 District Centres is currently only 14 which compares to 23 in 2018.
69. In term of total number of units, there has been an increase of three units. Two of these units are within the Earlham House District Centre (DC06) and one within the Eaton Centre (DC03). There has not been a reduction in units in any of the District centres.
70. The percentage of non-retail units currently stands at 45.9% which is 0.4% higher than in 2024 which follows the general trend experienced since 2019. In terms of units, the total number of non-retail units is 94 out of 205. There has been an increase in non-retail in DC01 Bowthorpe , DC03 Eaton Centre, DC05 Aylsham Road/Mile Cross and DC08 Dereham Road/Distillery Square. The percentage of non-retail actually decreased in two District Centres which are DC04 Plumstead Road and DC09 Hall Road where it reduced from 51.5% to 48.5% and 55.5% to 44.4% respectively.
71. There have been no changes since 2024 in the District Centres which exceed the 40% non-retail threshold set out in Development management policy DM21. The following District Centres exceed the 40% non-retail threshold.
- DC01: Bowthorpe

- DC03: Eaton Centre
- DC04: Plumstead Road
- DC05: Aylsham Road/Mile Cross
- DC07: The Larkman
- DC08: Dereham Road/Distillery Square
- DC09: Hall Road

72. A few of these centres have non-retail percentages not too much above 40% and as shown in previous monitoring years it only takes one or two units changing to retail to satisfy the policy ambition. However, patterns both nationally and locally over recent years have shown that things are generally moving in the opposite direction with an increase in non-retail uses and this is very much encouraged by government changes to the use class order and permitted development rights which were introduced a few years ago. Whilst it is recognised that some non-retail units such as restaurants and cafes, along with community, service and leisure uses can add to the vitality and viability of a retail centre, there is concern that the change of use to residential would have a significantly detrimental impact upon District Centres and their ability to meet local need. So far, the impacts as a result of the changes to the Use Classes Order and Permitted Development Order have actually been quite minimal but this will need continual monitoring. Furthermore, during the pandemic Norwich's District Centres seemed to thrive with more people shopping locally. The past monitoring period has continued to show the strength of the District Centre, but it will be interesting to see whether other economic factors such as the cost of living crisis impact upon the centres in the coming months and years.

73. In terms of the individual District Centres the following is of note:

74. The vacancy rate within Bowthorpe district centre DC01 has reduced during the monitoring period from three units (17.6%) to one unit (5.9%). This has gone from being the District Centre with the highest vacancy rate to having below average vacancy rates. The percentage of non-retail units has increased by one.

75. Lidl within the Drayton Road District Centre (DC02) closed during the 2022-23 monitoring period and during this monitoring year has opened as a funeral directors. Vacancy rates have reduced from two units to one unit. The non-retail percentage rate has remained at 33.3% which sits below the 40% recommended maximum guideline.

76. One additional unit has opened within DC03: Eaton Centre which is a property management business within a new largely residential development opposite Waitrose. With 61.1% of units being non-retail this is the highest of all District Centres.

77. The number of vacant units within DC04: Plumstead Road has increased from three to four which gives a vacancy rate of 12.1% which is the second highest. The percentage of non retail has however reduced from 51.5% to 48.5%.

78. DC05: Aylsham Road/Mile Cross has gone from having one of the lowest vacancy rates in 2024 (4.2%) to having the highest in 2025 (12.5%). The number of non retail units has increased by one.

79. Earlham House district centre DC06 was previously recognised as one of the poorest performing district centres in terms of vacancy rates in 2016. However, since that time the centre has benefitted from some refurbishment. The number of units has increase by one, it still only has one vacancy and it also has the highest proportion of retail units of all District centres.
80. There are two district centres which have all of their units occupied for the second year in a row which are The Larkman (DC07) and Hall Road (DC09) centres. Both of these fully occupied District Centres have over 40% non-retail but within Hall Road the number of non retail units has decreased from five to four in during the monitoring period.
81. Dereham Road/Distillery Square (DC08) has two vacant units but both are undergoing refurbishment. Over the past monitoring period one retail unit has change to non-retail.
82. There has been no change in vacancy rates or the percentage of non-retail within Sprowston Road/Shipfield (DC10). This centre only has one vacant unit and 36.8% non-retail.

Table 10: District Centres defined in the adopted Norwich Local Plan 2014

Ref No	Centre name	Total units	Vacant units	% vacant/ annual change		Non retail units	% non-retail	
DC01	Bowthorpe	17	1	5.9%		8	47.1%	
DC02	Drayton Road	15	1	6.7%		5	33.3%	
DC03	Eaton Centre	18	1	5.6%		11	61.1%	
DC04	Plumstead Road	33	4	12.1%		16	48.5%	
DC05	Aylsham Road/ Mile Cross	24	3	12.5%		12	50.0%	
DC06	Earlham House	19	1	5.3%		5	26.3%	
DC07	The Larkman	14	0	0.0%		6	42.9%	
DC08	Dereham Road/ Distillery Square	37	2	5.4%		20	54.1%	
DC09	Hall Road	9	0	0.0%		4	44.4%	
DC10	Sprowston Road/ Shipfield	19	1	5.3%		7	36.8%	
TOTAL		205	14	6.8%		94	45.9%	

Key

Vacancy rate is **unchanged** since last survey

Vacancy rate is **up** since last survey

Vacancy rate is **down** since last survey

Proportion of A1 retail units is **ABOVE** 60% policy

Proportion of A1 retail units is **BELOW** 60% policy



Local centres

Headline figures	Vacant units	No of units change
Local Centres	9.8%	0.3% increase

83. Table 11 below shows vacancy rates and percentage of non-retail units for the 28 local centres.
84. Of the 327 units, the number of vacant units is 32. This is an increase of four vacant units from October 2024 which has increased the percentage from 8.6% to 9.8%. This is still significantly lower than the city centre vacancy rate. Just under half of all local centres (13 out of 28) are fully occupied which is less than in 2024 where 15 were fully occupied. There has been an increase of one unit over the past monitoring period.
85. Improvements in vacancies since 2024 have taken place in 7 local centres which are LC01 Hall Road/Trafalgar Street, LC06 Unthank Road, LC10 Aylsham Road/Glenmore Gardens, LC14 Magdalen Road, LC19 Colman Road, LC24 Witard Road and LC26 UEA. The local centres which have had increased vacancies during the monitoring period are LC02 Hall Road/Queens Road, LC07 St Augustine's Gate, LC11 Aylsham Road/Boundary Road, LC13 Catton Grove, LC18 Earlham West Centre, LC20 Colman Road/The Parade, LC22 St John's Close/Hall Road, LC25 Clancy Road, Heartsease and LC30 St Stephens Road.
86. There is less of a disparity in vacancy rates than in 2021. Back in 2021 LC01 (Hall Road/Trafalgar Street) for example had a vacancy rate of 42.9% whilst other Local Centres were fully occupied. Now the worst performing local centres are LC07 (St Augustine's Gate), LC13 (Catton Grove Road/Ring Road) and LC28 (Magdalen Road/Clarke Road) which all have a quarter of units empty.
87. The percentage of non-retail units across all of the centres is 51.4% down from 51.8% in 2024. The percentage of non-retail still exceeds the 50% threshold but is the first time in several years since the proportion of retail units has actually increased. There are 13 local centres that are not policy compliant, two centres which sits at the recommended 50% threshold and 13 which have more than 50% of units as retail. There has been no change to this since 2024.
88. Over the monitoring period however there has been three centres where the proportion of non-retail has reduced but two centres where the proportion of non-retail has increased.
89. The thirteen local centres that have exceeded the DM21 policy threshold and have greater than 50% non-retail uses are listed below. LC03 (Hall Road/Southwell Road) and LC30 St Stephens Road have been added to this list and LC10 (Aylsham Road/Glenmore Gardens) has been removed.
- LC02: Hall Road/Queens Road
 - LC03: Hall Road/Southwell Road
 - LC06: Unthank Road;
 - LC07: St Augustine's Gate;

- LC11: Aylsham Road/Boundary Road
- LC14: Magdalen Road
- LC15: Sprowston Road/Silver Road
- LC17: Bishop Bridge Road
- LC20: Colman Road, The Parade
- LC26: UEA; and
- LC28: Magdalen Road/Clarke Road
- LC29: Aylsham Road/Copenhagen Way.
- LC30: St Stephens Road

90.LC18: Earlham West Centre and LC13: Catton Grove Road/Ring Road have exactly 50% non- retail. Any changes of use of existing A1 units to non-retail uses will cause the DM21 policy threshold to be exceeded.

Table 11: Local Centres¹⁶ defined in the adopted Norwich Local Plan 2014

Ref No	Centre name	Total units	Vacant units	% vacant/ annual change		Non retail units	% non-retail	
LC01	Hall Road/ Trafalgar St	8	1	12.5%		2	25.0%	
LC02	Hall Road/ Queens Road	30	7	23.3%		18	60.0%	
LC03	Hall Road/ Southwell Road	7	0	0.0%		4	57.1%	
LC04	Grove Road	14	0	0.0%		5	35.7%	
LC05	Suffolk Square	9	0	0.0%		3	33.3%	
LC06	Unthank Road	43	2	4.7%		25	58.1%	
LC07	St Augustine's Gate	8	2	25.0%		7	87.5%	
LC08	See footnote ³							
LC09	Aylsham Road/ Junction Road	8	1	12.5%		3	37.5%	
LC10	Aylsham Road/ Glenmore Gardens	13	0	0.0%		6	46.2%	
LC11	Aylsham Road/ Boundary Road	14	2	14.3%		8	57.1%	
LC12	Woodcock Road	7	0	0.0%		2	28.6%	
LC13	Catton Grove Road/Ring Road	12	3	25.0%		6	50.0%	
LC14	Magdalen Road	14	1	7.1%		8	57.1%	
LC15	Sprowston Road/ Silver Road	8	0	0.0%		6	75.0%	

³ Local centres at **Dereham Road/Distillery Square** (previously LC08) and **Sprowston Road/Shipfield** (previously LC16) were redesignated as district centres following the development of new anchor foodstores and renumbered as DC08 and DC10 respectively in the 2014 local plan. They are listed in table 10 above. The local centre at **St Stephens Road** newly designated in that plan (LC30) falls partly within and partly outside the city centre.

Ref No	Centre name	Total units	Vacant units	% vacant/ annual change		Non retail units	% non-retail	
LC16	See footnote							
LC17	Bishop Bridge Road	8	0	0.0%		6	75.0%	
LC18	Earlham West Centre	22	5	22.7%		11	50.0%	
LC19	Colman Road/ The Avenues	16	2	12.5%		5	31.3%	
LC20	Colman Road, The Parade	10	1	10.0%		7	70.0%	
LC21	Woodgrove Parade	9	0	0.0%		2	22.2%	
LC22	St John's Close/ Hall Road	10	1	10.0%		4	40.0%	
LC23	Tuckswood centre	5	0	0.0%		1	20.0%	
LC24	Witard Road, Heartsease	9	0	0.0%		2	22.2%	
LC25	Clancy Road, Heartsease	5	1	20.0%		2	40.0%	
LC26	UEA	9	0	0.0%		8	88.9%	
LC27	Long John Hill	5	0	0.0%		2	40.0%	
LC28	Magdalen Road/ Clarke Road	8	2	25.0%		5	62.5%	
LC29	Aylsham Road/ Copenhagen Way	5	0	0.0%		4	80%	
LC30	St Stephens Road	11	1	9.1%		6	54.5%	
TOTAL		327	32	9.8%		168	51.4%	

Key

Vacancy rate is **unchanged** since last survey

Vacancy rate is **up** since last survey

Vacancy rate is **down** since last survey



Proportion of A1 retail units is **ABOVE** 50% policy target

Proportion of A1 retail units is **BELOW** 50% policy target

Proportion of A1 retail units is **AT** 50% policy target



Conclusions

91. Over the past 12 months the vacant available retail floorspace has reduced within the city centre, although the total number of vacant units and city centre retail vacancy rates as a proportion of all retail floorspace has increased between October 2024 and 2025. The primary retail area continues to perform well seeing a reduction in vacant floorspace but a slight increase in vacant units. The secondary retail area has experienced a significant fall in all vacant retail floor space (due to the opening of Homes Bargains at the Cathedral retail park) and in units. Furthermore, as shown in table 12 vacancy rates have reduced for both floorspace and units within the rest of the city centre. In terms of the Large District Centre, Riverside continues to perform well; however inevitably all vacant floorspace and vacant units have increased significantly within the Magdalen Street, Anglia Square & St Augustine's LDC as retailers were required to vacate to enable the demolition and subsequent comprehensive redevelopment of Anglia Square. Vacancy rates have continued to increase within the District and Local Centres but remain significantly lower than the overall city centre rate.

Table 12: 'At a Glance' The direction of travel of vacancy rates and retail floorspace in Norwich since October 2024

Area	Available vacant floor space	All vacant floor space including refurbishment	Number of vacant Units	Overall Floor Area	Overall units
City Centre	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Primary Area	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓
Secondary Area	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓
LDC	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓
Rest of city centre	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓
District Centres	N/A	N/A	↑	N/A	↑
Local Centres	N/A	N/A	↑	N/A	↑

Key

↑ = increase ↓ = decrease

Red = Moving in a negative direction

Green = Moving in a positive direction

Grey = No change

92. It has been a slightly mixed picture for Norwich but compared to other cities nationally Norwich is still performing well which is helped by having such a large catchment area. Over the past year some multiples have ceased trading, however others have opened which shows that Norwich is seen as a good place to invest. Norwich's independent retailers have historically been very resilient and continue to perform well.

93. The total amount of retail floorspace within the city centre is continuing to

decrease, however generally it is not being lost to residential or being demolished. Instead, the city is experiencing diversification and the floorspace is changing to other town centre uses which is very much the approach that is supported by national government as well as the policy direction that is set out in the GNLP.

94. In July 2025 Centre for cities published a report entitled [Checking out: The varying performance of high streets across the country](#). Key messages to take away from the report and consider further are summarised as follows:

- a) One of the most fundamental issues is that of income. Much high street policy in the past has focused on the high street itself. But this has misinterpreted the cause of its struggles. In most struggling places people have got too little money to spend to sustain a thriving high street. Any policy interventions to save the high street shouldn't start with the high street itself, but the wider economy, and where it locates in a city. A struggling high street is the outcome of a struggling economy, not the other way round. Therefore high street specific interventions must be carried out alongside broader economic interventions in the city centre.
- b) National and local policy should gear itself towards making city centres better places to do business and it is also important to have a city centre strategy in place. Norwich is shortly due to commission work on a City Centre Investment Prospectus. This will enable the council to focus on the delivery of a range of incremental and phased actions that will support a sustainable city centre with more jobs and businesses, better transport options and with a range of living opportunities to attract investment and help to future-proof the local economy. It will identify the priorities for public sector interventions that will best lever private sector investment with a focus on economic and physical regeneration
- c) The ability to change the size of the catchment is limited. However, it is possible to increase the density of housing close to the centre. In Norwich there is a need to consider how we can make better use of vacant and underused space at upper floor level within retail areas or brownfield sites outside the retail areas. There is also a need to consider how we can increase the number of people that work within the city centre.
- d) Visitor spend can boost the high street. Norwich benefits from a historic centre and a clear visitor offer. These need strengthening and consideration should be given to how the city can increase visitor numbers through the provision of accommodation, facilities, attractions and infrastructure.
- e) There is the need to continue to help the high street adapt to being less retail focussed, as in general stronger-performing city centre high streets have seen a greater shift in the share of their commercial space towards food and drink activities since 2010. In Norwich consideration should be given to how the evening and weekend economy can be further enhanced.
- f) It is important to continue to work with the BID and other stakeholders.
- g) The public realm needs to continue to be improved.

95. Overall, given the circumstances Norwich has demonstrated that it remains relatively robust and is a thriving regional retail centre. Whilst the number of

vacant retail units has increased slightly over the past 12 months, available vacant retail floorspace has decreased and footfall levels are still good. To maintain a thriving city centre, the council must identify ways to adapt and to attract investment given the potential challenges faced ahead.

Contact Information

Further information can be obtained using the following contact details.

Planning Services
Norwich City Council
City Hall
St Peter's Street
Norwich
NR2 1NH

0344 980 3333

The contact officer for this report is:

Joy Brown

01603 989245

joybrown@norwich.gov.uk