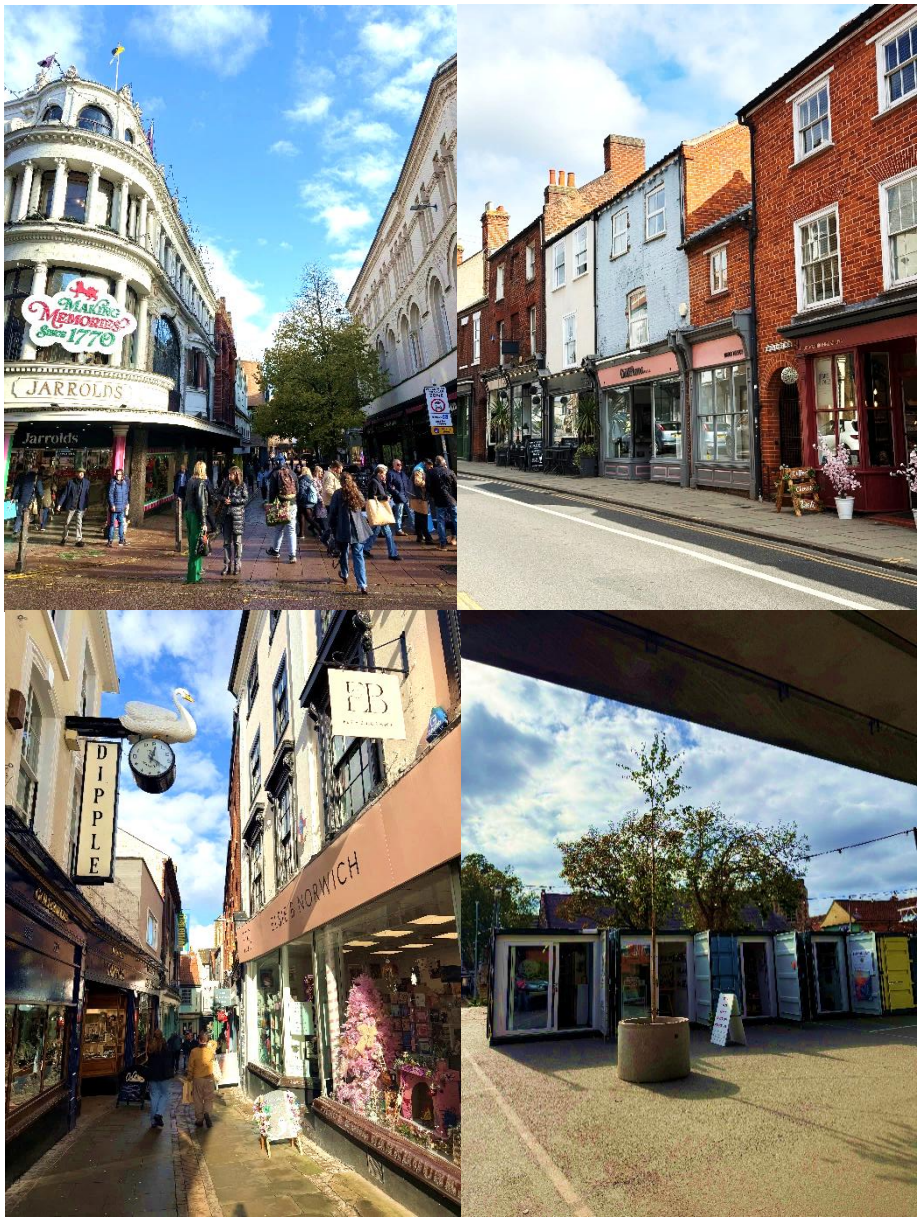
NORWICH
City Council

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



Survey at September/October 2026

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Executive summary

Over the past 12 months, retail vacancy rates have fallen within all areas of the city centre, for both floorspace and number of units. This is a really positive sign and demonstrates that Norwich has a robust and thriving city centre.

The removal of the (now-demolished) Anglia Square retail units from the monitoring results has significantly positively impacted upon vacancy figures for the Magdalen Street, St Augustine's Street & Anglia Square Large District Centre and the city centre as a whole. However, there are likely to be a number of other factors that have also helped contribute towards a fall in vacant units, which are explored within this report.

Work has recently commenced on a new Local Plan (Greater Norwich Local Plan 2045) and it is important that consideration is given to the future direction of our planning policies. The findings of this report can not only help in terms of the direction of our future planning policies but can also help inform current planning decisions relating to our town centre.

Introduction

1. Norwich city centre is a regional centre which contains most of the area's jobs, important services and key shopping, leisure, cultural and business facilities. The city centre has many historic buildings and a unique 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, explains how Norwich's established role as a regional centre gives it a broad catchment covering much of Norfolk and into north Suffolk, as shown in figure 1.

3. The Norwich City Centre Shopping and Town Centre Floorspace Monitor & Local and District Centres Monitor is the Council's monitoring report that tracks empty shops and changes in the types of businesses across the city. This information helps us understand how shopping areas are changing, assess how well planning policies are working, and guide future decisions.

4. The surveys for the city centre were carried out in September 2026 with the district and local centres being surveyed in October 2026. This report provides an update from the September/October 2025 monitor.

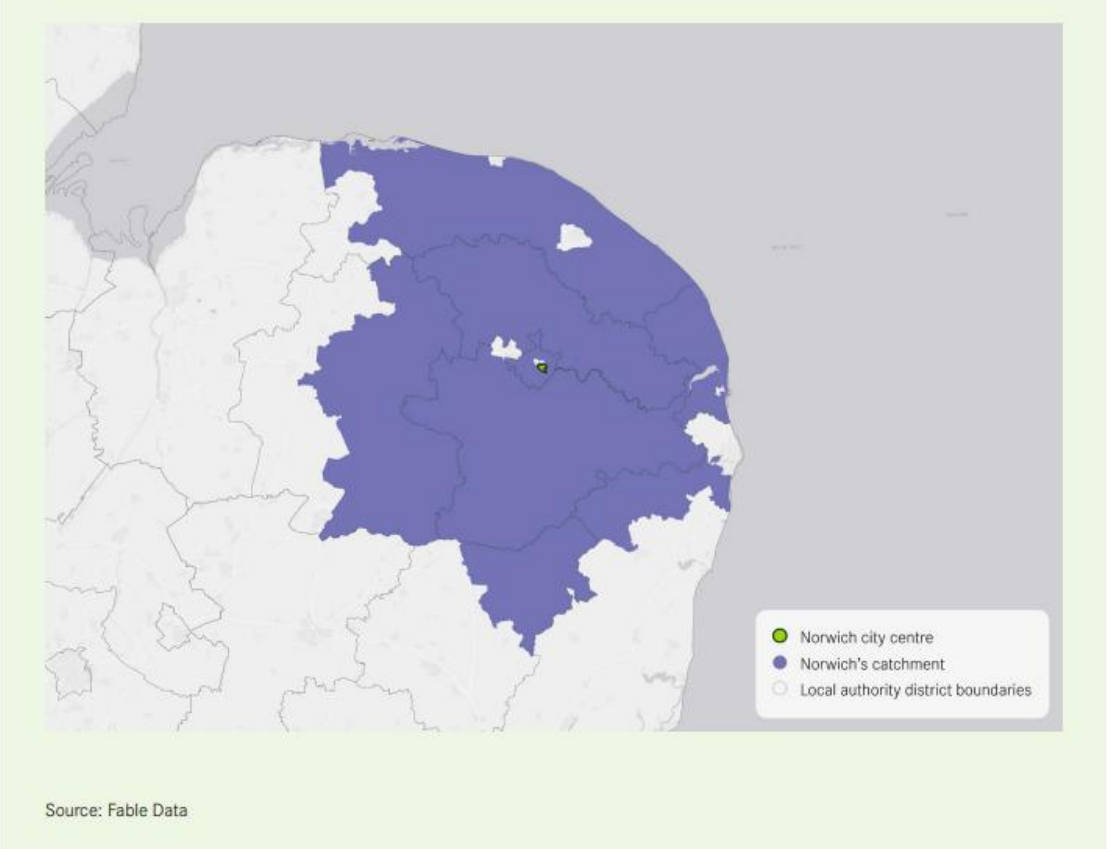


Figure 1: Norwich's catchment area - Replicated from 'Checking out: The varying performance of high streets across the country', Paul Swinney, Oscar Selb and Luka Kovacevic, Centre for cities, July 2025.

Policy Context

5. The National Planning Policy Framework 2026 (NPPF 2026), published in August 2026, replaces the December 2024 version. It separates policies for plan-making from those used in planning decisions. Chapter 8 (Ensuring the vitality of town centres) aims to promote the long-term vitality and viability of town centres by prioritising them as locations for main town centre uses and allowing them to adapt to changing community and business needs, in a way which reflects their locally distinctive roles and opportunities. The policies generally promote flexibility, diversification of uses, intensification and the provision of residential accommodation (provided this would not conflict with other policies in local plans).

6. The Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP), adopted in March 2024 also supports flexibility and recognises that city centres are changing. Its aim is to make the city centre an attractive place that offers a mix of shops, services, leisure and community facilities. This helps maintain a lively and vibrant city centre throughout the day and evening.

7. The Norwich Development Management Policies Local Plan (the DM plan) provides detailed policies to put these wider plans into practice and support the health of shopping centres. The DM policies seek to keep a minimum number of retail units in defined centres. However, changes to planning regulation and national policy mean a more flexible approach is now needed. Nonetheless, it

remains important to monitor these policies so the Council can understand the changes which have already, and will continue to, occur.

National picture

8. Up-to-date national vacancy figures are no longer widely available.

9. The Centre for Cities report included a chart which ranks cities by population size and their catchment area. Whilst Norwich was ranked 35th in terms of its population, it was 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.

10. Norwich has featured in the national press on a number of occasions. It was named as the best place to live in the annual *Sunday Times'* Best Places to Live guide in 2026. It was noted that Norwich is *'a creative, cosmopolitan city with a green conscience and a warm heart. It is a place of inspirational spires and cosy pub fires, where you can enjoy the best of both urban conveniences and rural living, eat like a king – and where homes are affordable.'*

11. In response to being awarded this title, Norwich's Business Improvement District ('the BID') commented as follows*: 'This is a fantastic accolade for the city and a strong opportunity to build on its positive national profile. By sharing and amplifying this news, businesses can help reinforce Norwich's reputation as a leading destination to live, work, and do business, further supporting efforts to attract investment, increase visitor footfall, and grow the local customer base.'*

12. Norwich's Lanes shopping area was also ranked in the American Express's Shop Small study as one of the country's most vibrant high streets.

Main Findings for Norwich

City Centre Overview

Headline figures	Vacant floorspace	Vacant available floorspace (excluding refurbs)	Vacant units	Retail floorspace change (since Sept 25)
City Centre (Retail only)	11.4%	10.4%	9.8%	3.1% decrease
Green = reduction in vacancy rates between Sept 2025 and Sept 2026. Red = increase in vacancy rates between Sept 2025 and Sept 2026				

13. Retail vacancy rates (former use class A1) are measured in three different ways:
    a. Retail vacancy rate as a proportion of retail floorspace.
    b. Retail vacancy rate as a proportion of retail floorspace, excluding space being built or refitted.
    c. Retail vacancy rate as a proportion of retail units.

14. Due to changes to the Use Classes Order in 2021, government policy and due to the adoption of the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) in March 2024, 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.

15. The vacant available retail *floorspace* in the city centre is 10.4% which is a decrease from September 2025's figure of 11.8% 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%.

16. City centre retail vacancy rates 'as a proportion of all retail floorspace' has also reduced from 16.3% in 2025 to 11.4% in 2026. The pre pandemic level was 10.0%.

17. The percentage of vacant *units* has reduced quite significantly over the past year from 15.2% in September 2025 to 9.8% in September 2026. This is the first time that vacancy rates for units has dropped below 10% since July 2008. Vacancy rates were very high in 2025 and some of this will have been as a result of units closing at Anglia Square to make way for redevelopment. These units have since been demolished so have been removed from the survey. This will partially have accounted for the significant fall in vacancy rates but there are other factors too that have contributed towards the improvement in vacancy rates with vacancy rates falling in all areas of the city centre. These factors are discussed within the report.

18. In terms of all town centre uses, vacant floorspace currently stands at 10.9% (down from 15.0% in 2025). Vacant units have also reduced from 15.1% in

September 2025 to 11.4% in September 2026. Compared to retail only this is 0.5% lower for floorspace but 1.6% higher 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 for floorspace but increase for units.

19. There has been a 13.1% decrease in retail floorspace since 2008. During the past monitoring period Norwich city centre lost 6,414 sqm of retail floorspace. The total number of retail units however increased from 906 in September 2025 to 928 in September 2026. 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. However this year the majority of the loss in floorspace is a result of vacant units at Anglia Square being removed from the survey. Many of the units at Anglia Square had quite large footprints. During the most recent monitoring period, a new box park opened at St Saviour's Yard. Whilst this increased the number of units (more units were provided at St Saviour's Yard than were lost at Anglia Square) the container units are only 15sqm or 30sqm so total floorspace has reduced significantly.

20. 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.

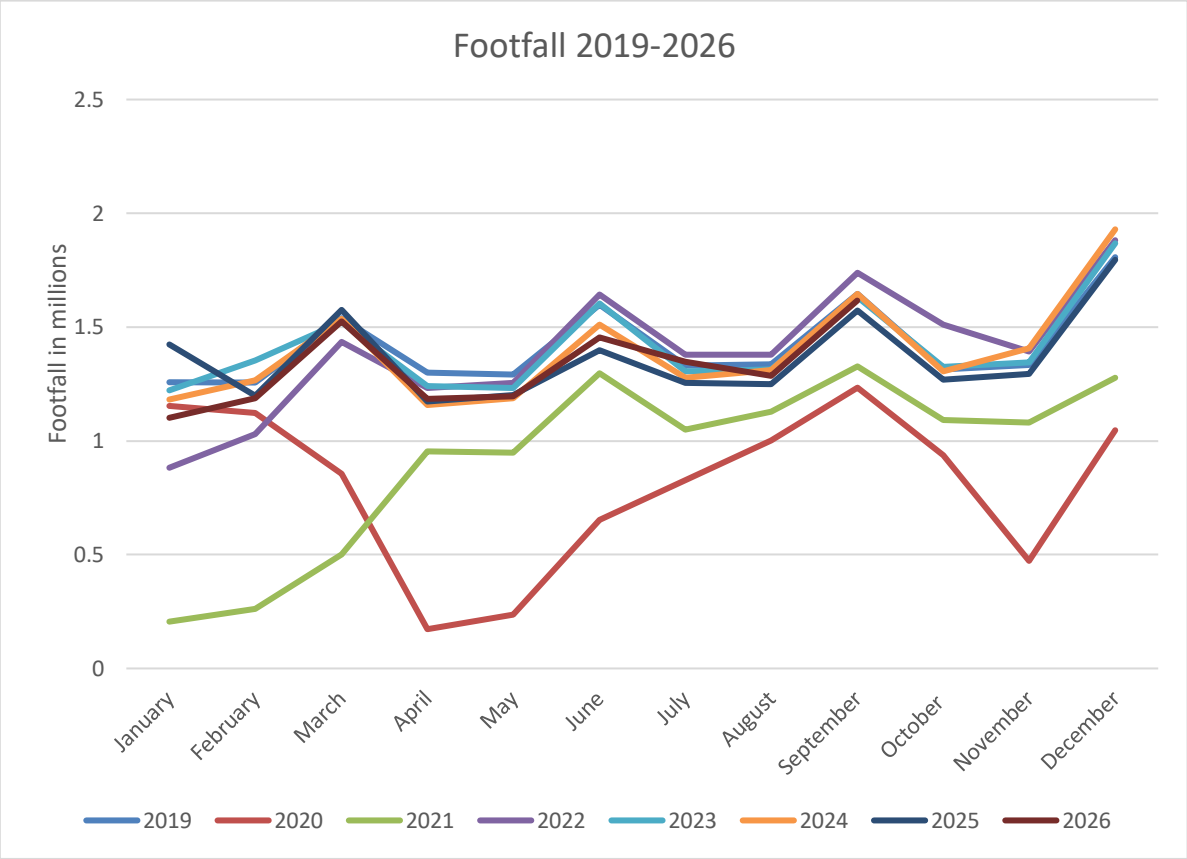
21. In terms of refurbishment, there has been a significant reduction in under construction/refurbishment floorspace since the last monitoring report. In September 2025 9,421 sqm of retail floorspace was recorded as being under construction/refurbishment. In September 2026 this had reduced to 1,912 sqm. This reduction is mainly as a result of floorspace at Anglia Square being removed from the monitor.

22. 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.

23. Since the September 2025 survey was carried out, some large national chains have been lost from the city centre. These have included Claires, River Island,

Select and Quiz. However there are a number of national chains that have recently opened in Norwich. This includes Swarovski, Leading Labels, Rivolo Lounge and MenKind and Lego is due to open a store in Chantry Place in late October 2026. This is a positive sign and suggests that Norwich is seen as a good place for investment.

24. Finally, footfall figures from the Norwich Business Improvement District (BID) are also useful intelligence. There have been fluctuations over the past few years; however as can be seen from the graph footfall has largely returned to pre-pandemic levels and it is really encouraging to see that people are continuing to shop and spend their leisure time in Norwich. By September 2026 the total number of visitors for the year to date was up 1.4% on the previous year.



Graph 1: Footfall in Norwich city centre 2019-2026

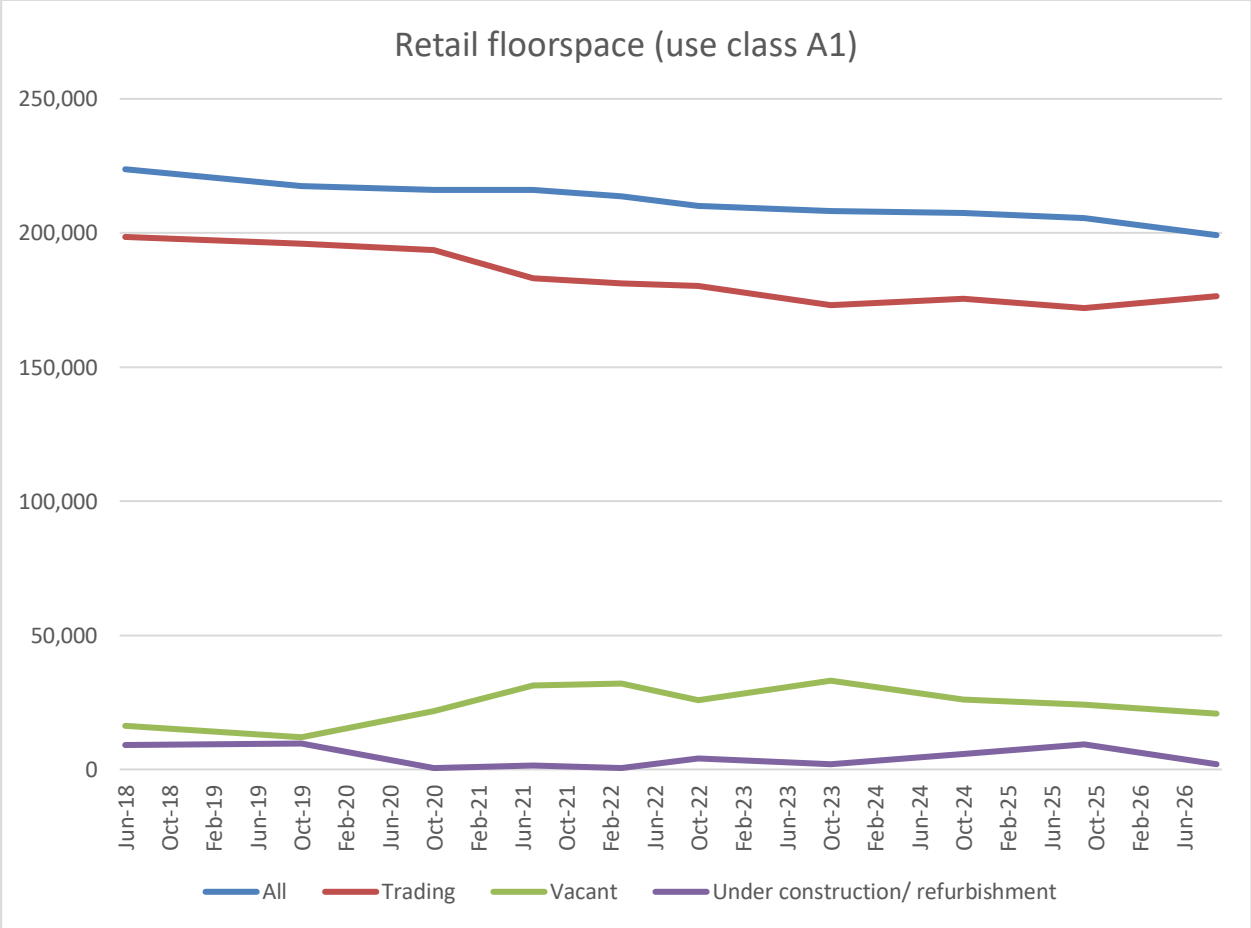
25. Table 1 (along with the accompanying graphs) provides city centre overview data on retail floorspace and units, enabling comparison over time back until the GNLP's base date of April 2018. Please note that all the graphs within this report that show retail floorspace, units and vacancy rates show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

26. 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
Sep 2026	**199,190**	**176,472**	**20,806**	**1,912**
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

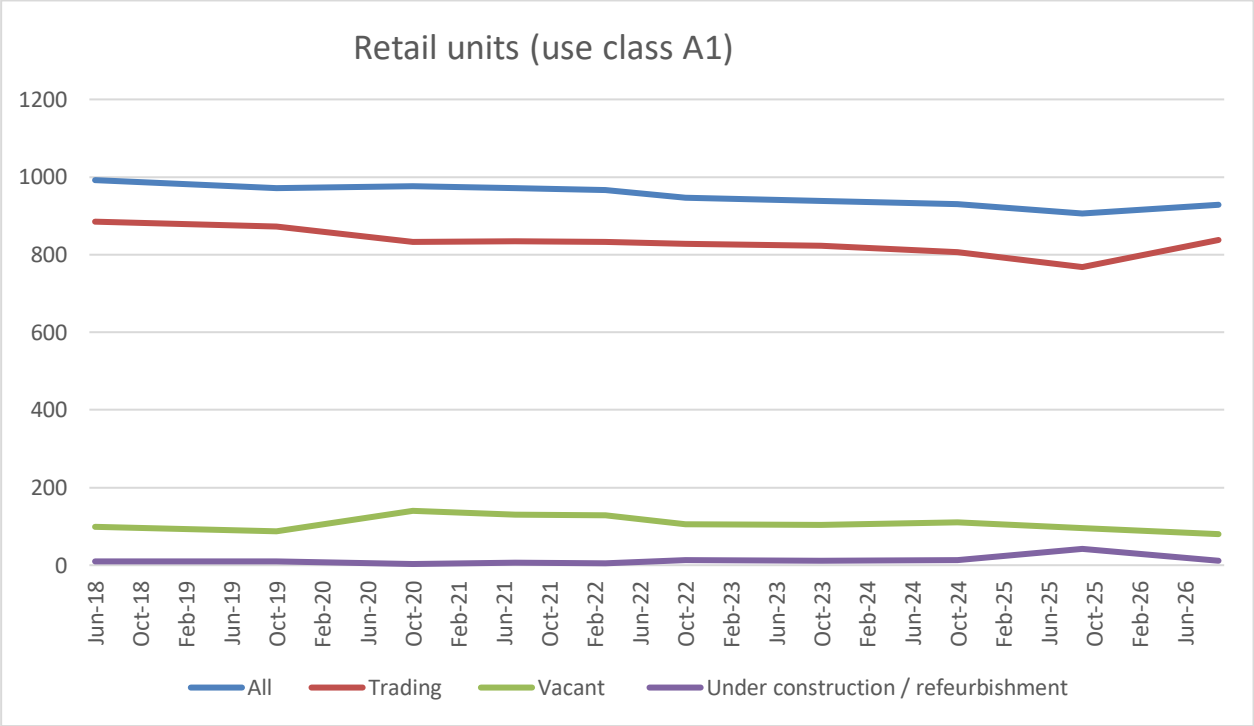


Overall retail floorspace change

Since Sept 2025	**Decreased by 6,414 sqm (3.1% decrease)**
Since July 2008	**Decreased by 29,930 sqm (13.1% decrease)**

Retail units (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2026	**928**	**837**	**80**	**11**
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 $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted $\frac{Vacant}{All}$	As a proportion of all retail units $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$
Sept 2026	**11.4%**	**10.4%**	**9.8%**
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%

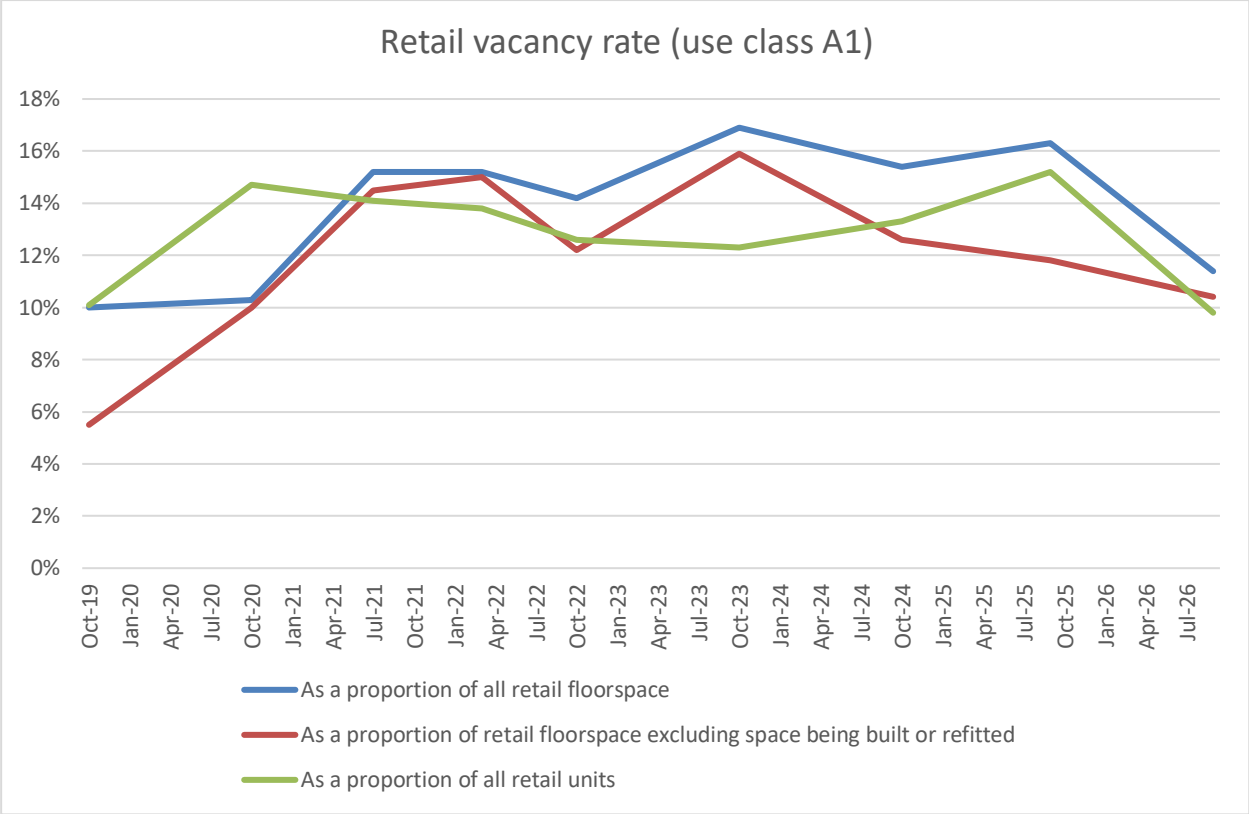


Table 2: Summary of all town centre uses vacancy rates

	As a proportion of all floorspace $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$		As a proportion of all units $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$	
	Sept 2025	**Sept 2026**	**Sept 2025**	**Sept 2026**
Norwich City Centre	15.0%	10.9%	15.1%	11.4%
Primary retail area	14.4%	13.8%	12.6%	11.4%
Secondary Retail area	11.7%	10.4%	12.9%	9.9%
Large District Centre	30.0%	8.3%	33.7%	11.7%
Rest of Centre	8.8%	5.1%	12.8%	12.1%

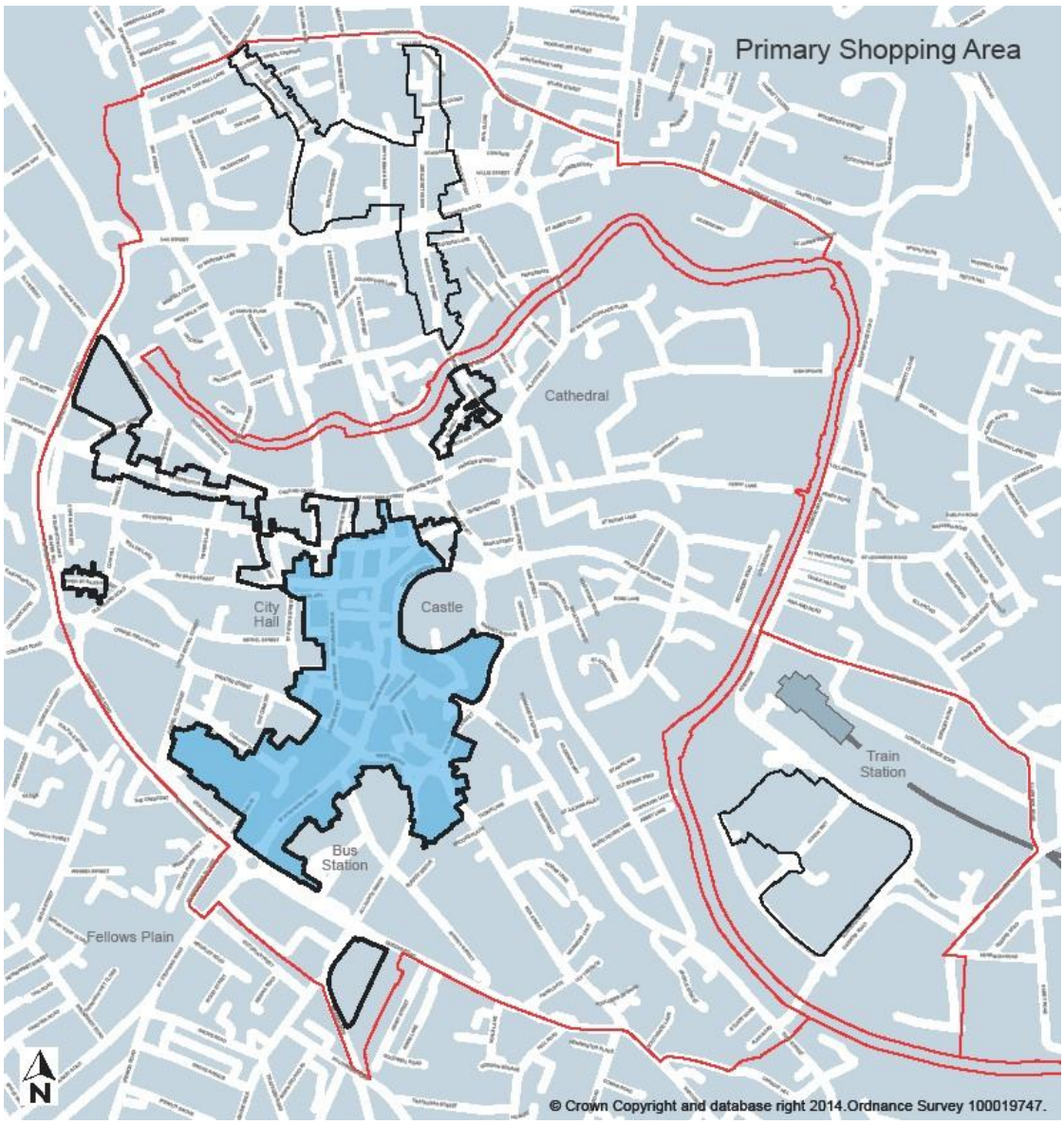
Table 3: Summary of retail only vacancy rates

	As a proportion of all retail floorspace $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$		As a proportion of all retail units $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$	
	Sept 2025	**Sept 2026**	**Sept 2025**	**Sept 2026**
Norwich City Centre	16.3%	11.4%	15.2%	9.8%
Primary retail area	14.1%	12.7%	10.5%	8.8%
Secondary Retail area	9.2%	8.6%	13.5%	9.5%
Large District Centre	32.1%	7.9%	36.6%	12.0%
Rest of Centre	13.5%	8.0%	12.3%	11.4%

The Primary Area: Retail Vacancy

Headline figures	Vacant floorspace	Vacant available floorspace (excluding refurbs)	Vacant units	Retail floorspace change (since Sept 2025)
Primary Retail Area (Retail only)	12.7%	11.7%	8.8%	0.02% increase

27. The extent of the primary retail area, containing the shopping centres and main comparison goods stores, is shown below. The NPPF sets out that the primary retail area is a defined area where retail development is concentrated.



28. The vacant available *floorspace* rate in the primary retail area is currently 11.7% which is a 1.7% decrease on 2025 rates and is the lowest since October 2020 when 8.4% of retail floorspace was vacant. In 2023 16.8% of vacant available

floorspace was empty so this continued reduction in vacancy rates is very much a positive sign. The vacant rate is still significantly higher than before the pandemic when vacancy rates were at an extremely low rate of 4.1% in October 2019. 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 but both of these sites are subject to development proposals which will hopefully come forward in the coming years. Some larger premises that have become occupied during the monitoring year include Home Values and Cash Convertors on St Stephens Street (1,015 sqm and 353 sqm respectively), 80's Casual Classics on Guildhall Hill (320 sqm) and Leading Labels in Castle Quarter (510 sqm).

29. Primary Area retail vacancy rates 'as a proportion of all retail floorspace' have also decreased. The disparity between vacant and refurbishment is only 1.0% 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, along with two units in Chapelfield which are to become a Lego shop, Samsung which is undergoing a refit and a vacant unit in Castle Quarter.

30. The percentage of vacant retail *units* in the Primary Area has decreased from 10.5% in 2025 to 8.8% in 2026 which would suggest that a number of units have been occupied by new tenants during the monitoring period. Vacancy rates for unit have fluctuated over the past couple of years and are now significantly lower than in October 2020 when 15.6% of units sat empty. Vacancy rates for units are now at their lowest since 2011.

31. The overall amount of floorspace in A1 retail use within the primary area has actually increased slightly during the monitoring period, increasing by 31m² between 2025 and 2026. The number of A1 units has stayed the same. The amount of retail has generally fallen year on year as the primary retail area has diversified and units have changed from A1 to other town centre uses so this is a slight anomaly.

32. In particular Castle Quarter has become a leisure destination whilst retaining some retail. Currently 7.5% of retail floorspace is empty within Castle Quarter (although 21.0% 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. Furthermore in the past 12 months a number of non retail units have closed including the entire food court, the NHS Wellbeing Hub and Vector Reality. Several smaller retail units are currently vacant as 11 out of 55 A1 shops are unoccupied (20.0%). When taking into account all town centre uses, a third of units are vacant (31 out of 93 units). 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.

33. Chantry Place (formerly Chapelfield) on the whole remains well occupied although this year vacancy rates have increased. At the time of the survey eight

retail units were vacant out of a total of 78 (10.3%). For all town centre uses 15 are vacant out of a total of 99 (15.2%). In terms of floorspace 4.2% of A1 floorspace is vacant (compared to 0.6% in 2025) and 6.8% of all town centre uses floorspace is unoccupied (compared to 3.8% in 2025). Whilst there has been an increase in vacancies this does include a number of units that are currently undergoing refurb and it should be noted that within Chantry Place when a shop closes it is often replaced very quickly with new tenants. During the past year Claires, River Island and Three closed down in Chantry Place but in the next few months Lego should open its doors and Samsung should reopen which shows that Norwich is seen as a good place to invest.

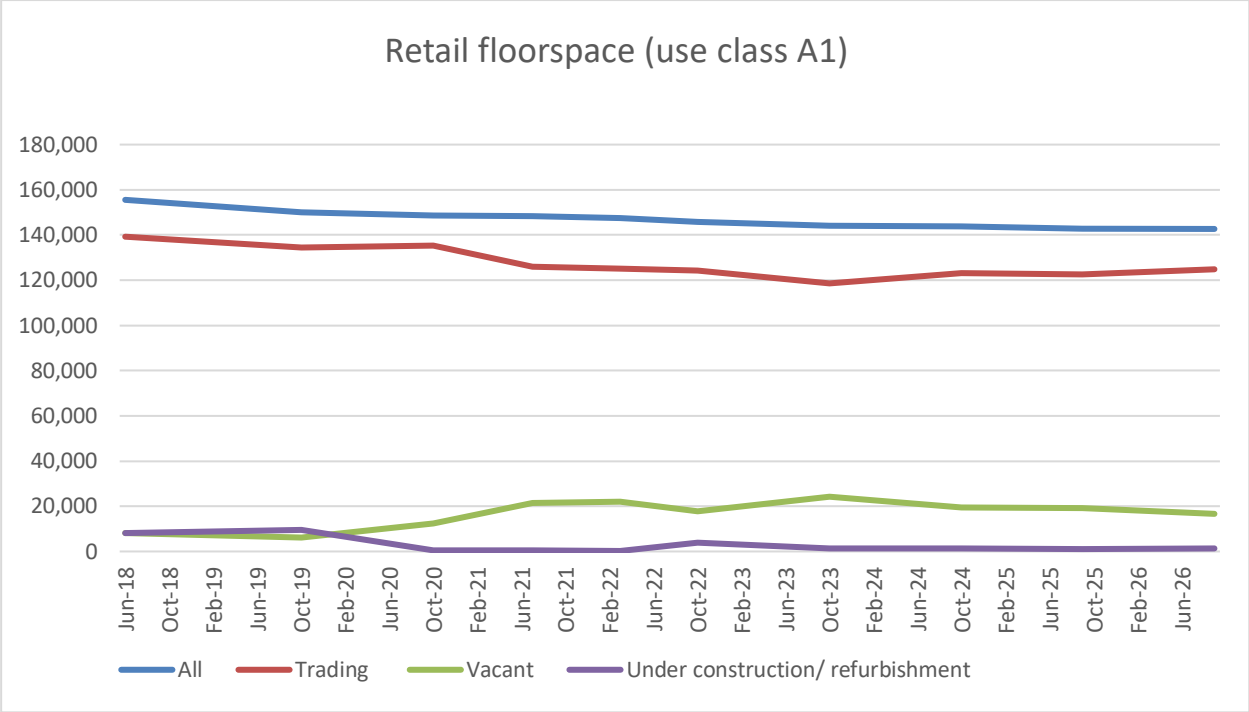
34. If all town centre uses are taken into account, the proportion of vacant floorspace (including refurbishments) is 13.8% (down from 14.4% in 2025) and compared to retail only of 12.7%. The percentage of vacant units is 11.4% (down from 12.6% in 2025) and compared to retail only of 8.8%.

35. Table 4 provides retail floorspace and unit data for the primary area.

Table 4: Primary shopping area

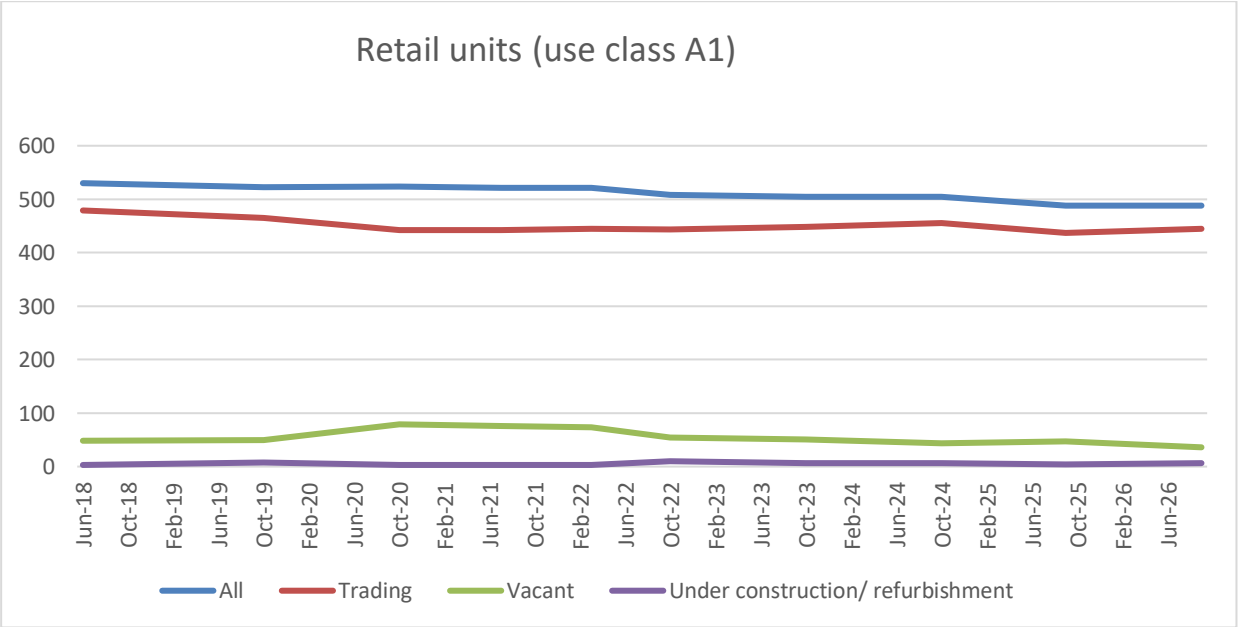
Retail floorspace (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2026	**142,817**	**124,731**	**16,670**	**1,416**
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



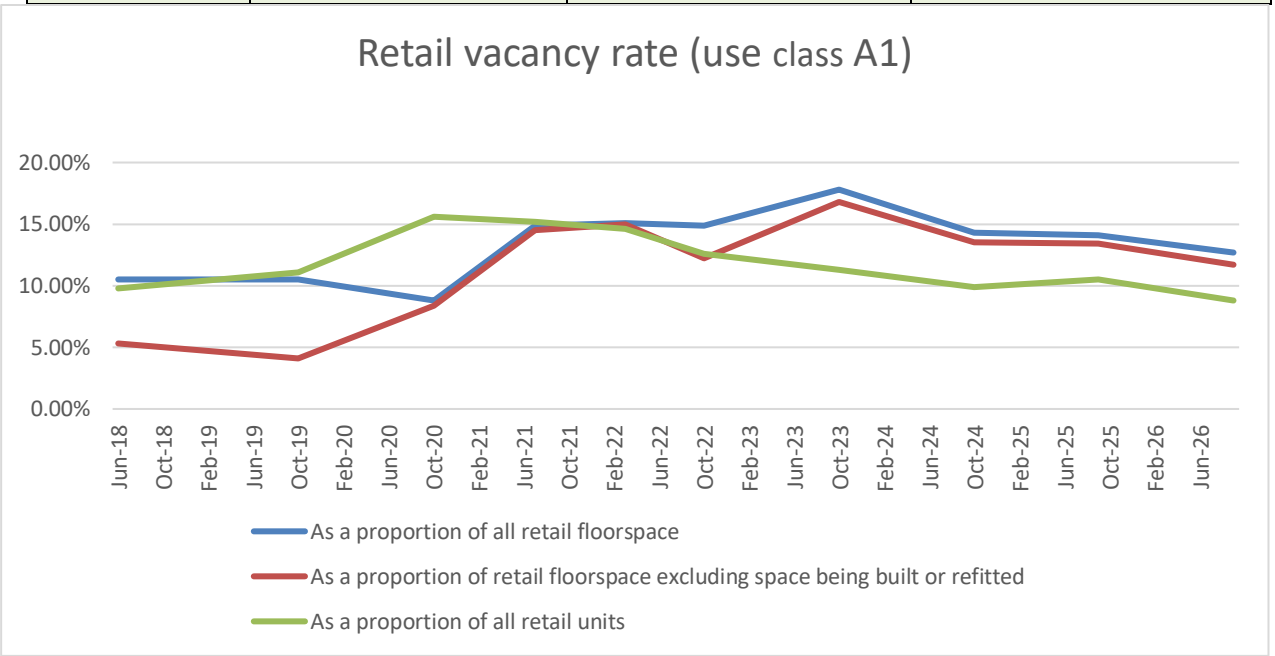
Retail units (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2026	**488**	**445**	**36**	**7**
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



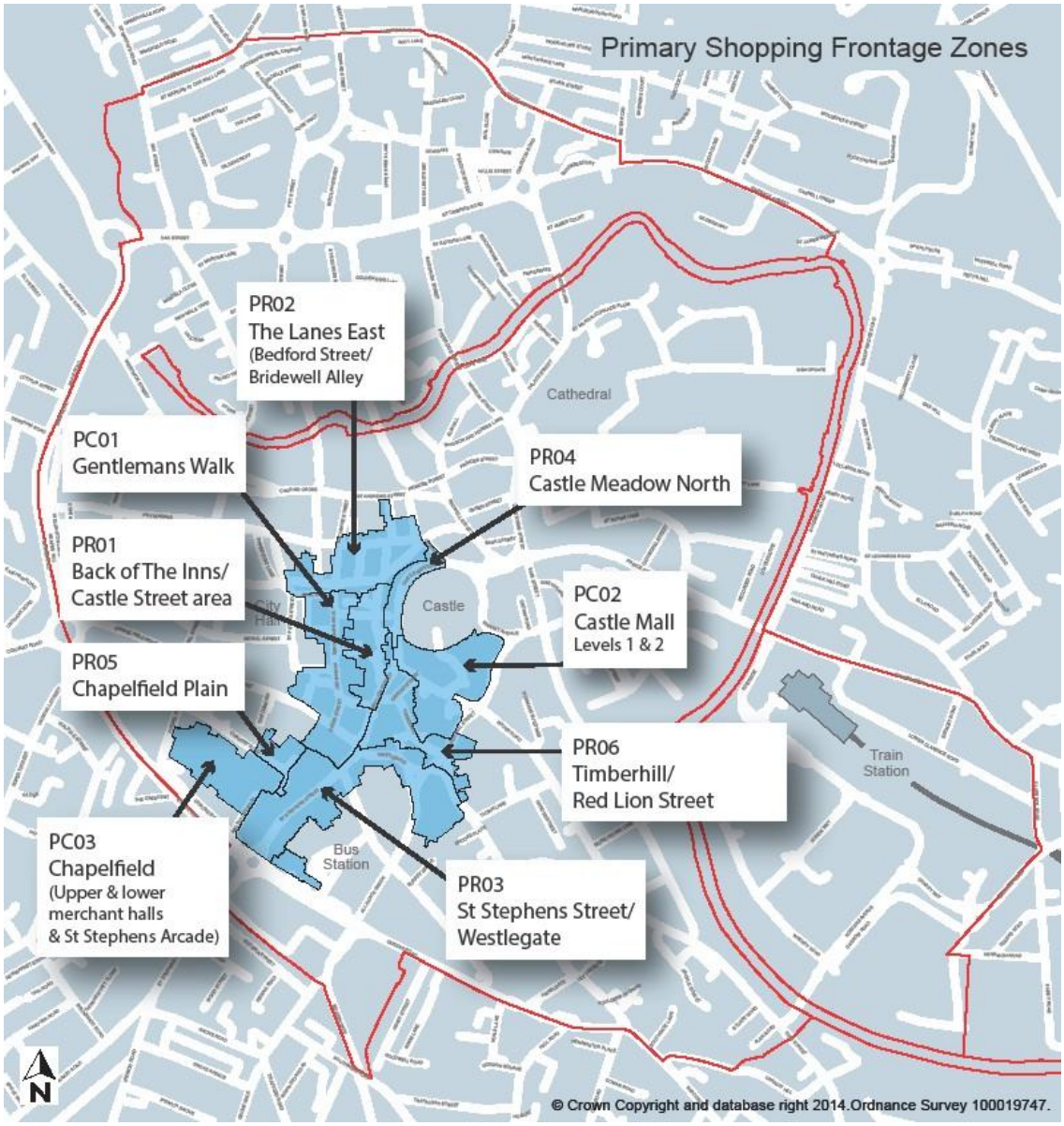
Retail vacancy rate (use class A1)

	As a proportion of all retail floorspace $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted $\frac{Vacant}{All}$	As a proportion of all retail units $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$
Sept 2026	**12.7%**	**11.7%**	**8.8%**
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

36. 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.



37. 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).

38. 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.

39. There have been changes to the percentage of retail frontage in three zones over the past year. There have been no changes in PC01 (Gentleman's Walk/Haymarket/Brigg Street), PC03: Chapelfield upper & lower Merchants Hall and St Stephens Arcade), PR02: The Lanes east (Bedford Street/Bridewell Alley) and PR03: St Stephens Street/Westlegate.

40. Within the following two frontage zones the retail frontage has increased:
    - PC01 (Castle Quarter) increased from 69.8% to 71.0%.
    - PR01 (Back of the Inns/Castle Street) increased from 75.8% to 77.6%.

41. Within the following frontage zone, retail frontage has reduced:
    - PR06 (Timberhill/Red Lion Street) reduced from 56.0% to 53.6%.

42. 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 2026

Primary retail area core frontage zones

Frontage zone	Total frontage (m)	Total non-retail frontage Sept 2026	% A1 retail Sept 2026 (frontage)	% A1 retail Sept 2025 (frontage)	Minimum threshold (from 2014 SPD)
Primary retail area core frontage zones					
PC01: Gentleman's Walk/ Haymarket/Brigg Street	856.1	133.6	**84.4%**	84.4%	80%
PC02: Castle Mall (Levels 1 & 2)	898.1	260.5	**71.0%**	69.8%	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 zones in the rest of the primary retail area					
PR01: Back of the Inns/Castle Street area	660.5	148.2	**77.6%**	75.8%	65%
PR02: The Lanes east (Bedford Street/Bridewell Alley)	1116.3	331.2	**70.3%**	70.3%	70%
PR03: St Stephens Street/Westlegate	821.5	132.9	**83.8%**	83.8%	80%
PR04: Castle Meadow north		N/A[1]			
PR05: Chapelfield Plain		N/A[2]			
PR06: Timberhill/Red Lion Street	434.2	201.5	**53.6%**	56.0%	60%

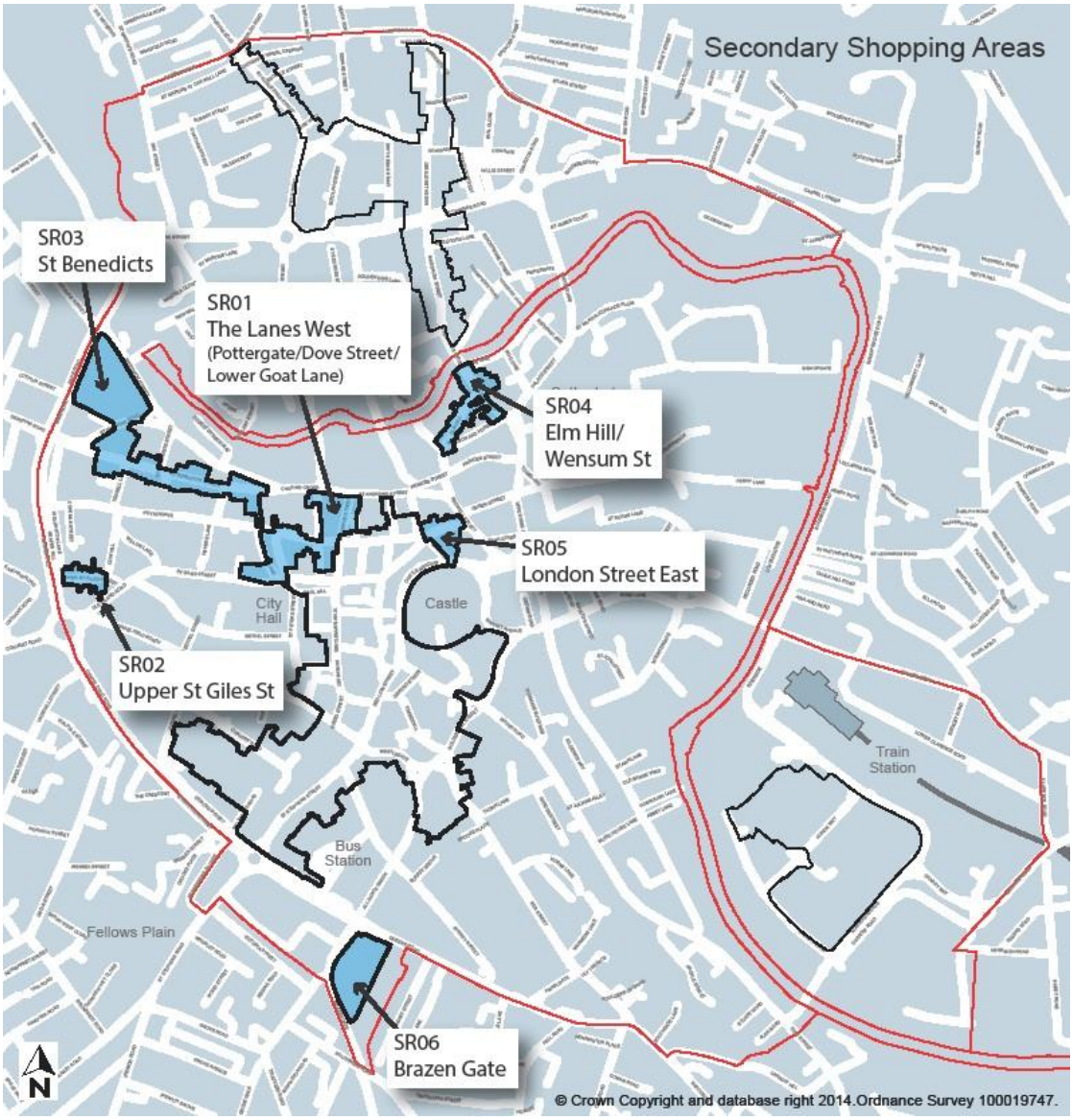
Key:
Green denotes no change or increase in A1 retail since 2024
Red denotes decrease in A1 retail since 2024.
Blue denotes frontage is within minimum A1 threshold.
Orange denotes minimum A1 frontage threshold has been breached.

[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 refurbs)	Vacant units	Retail floorspace change (since October 25)
Secondary area (Retail only)	8.6%	6.6%	9.5%	1.0% increase

43. The secondary area and retail frontages are shown below. These are generally more specialist shopping areas with local independent retailers and services.



44. Vacancy rates within the secondary retail area are currently at a very competitive level. As a proportion of all retail floorspace vacancy rates are currently at 8.6% (down from 9.2%) and excluding refurbishment floorspace vacancy is currently only 6.6% (down from 7.1%).

45. The percentage of vacant retail *units* in the Secondary Area also decreased over the past 12 months reducing from 13.5% to 9.5%.

46. The overall amount of floorspace in A1 retail use has increased over the past year by 204m² although the number of retail units has fallen by two since the 2025 report.

47. If all town centre uses are taken into account, the proportion of vacant floorspace (including refurbishments) is 10.4% (down from 11.7% in 2025 and compared to retail only of 8.6%) and the percentage of vacant units is 9.9% (down from 12.9% in 2025 and compared to retail only of 9.5%).

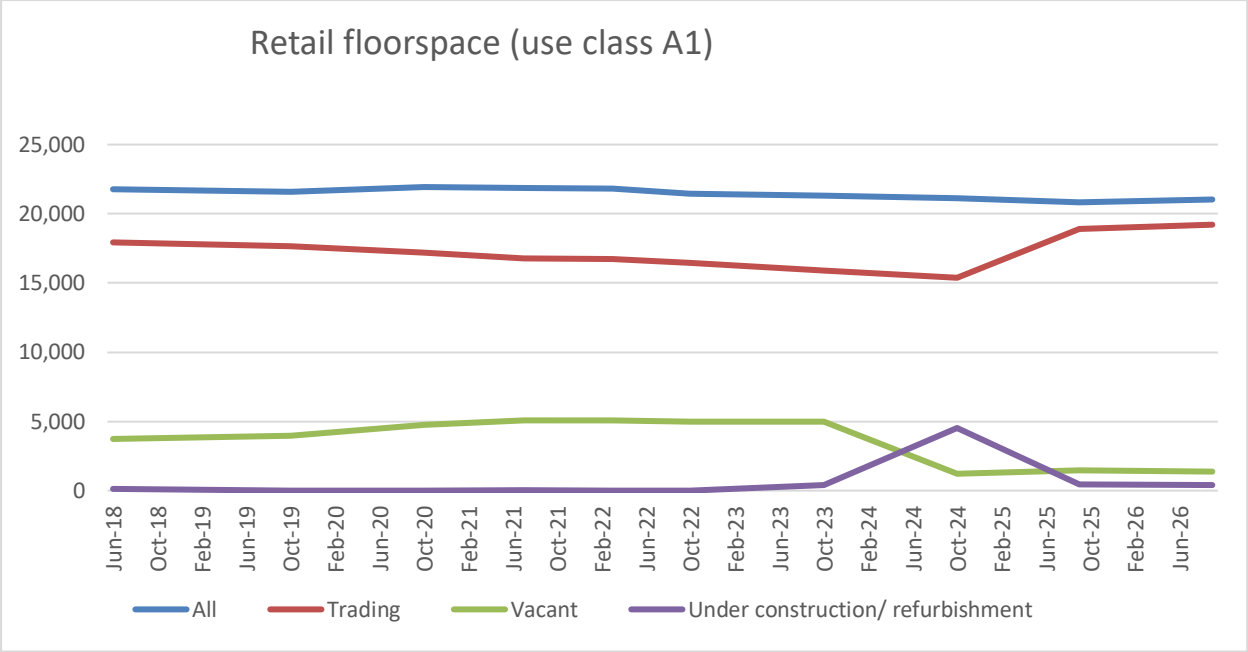
48. The secondary retail area includes some streets which provide a specialist mix of shops and is performing very well in providing independent retail diversity and by adapting rapidly it remained resilient during the pandemic and generally continues to perform well within the current economic climate.

49. Norwich Lanes were ranked in the American Express's Shop Small study as one of the Country's most vibrant high streets. A senior manager at American Express said, *"Small businesses play a crucial role in supporting local economies up and down the country and it's pleasing to now see their impact beyond the high street."* The research director at GlobalData also commented *"Independent shops bring something different to high streets, offering uniqueness and propositions that are finely tuned to the needs of their local communities."*

Table 6: Secondary area

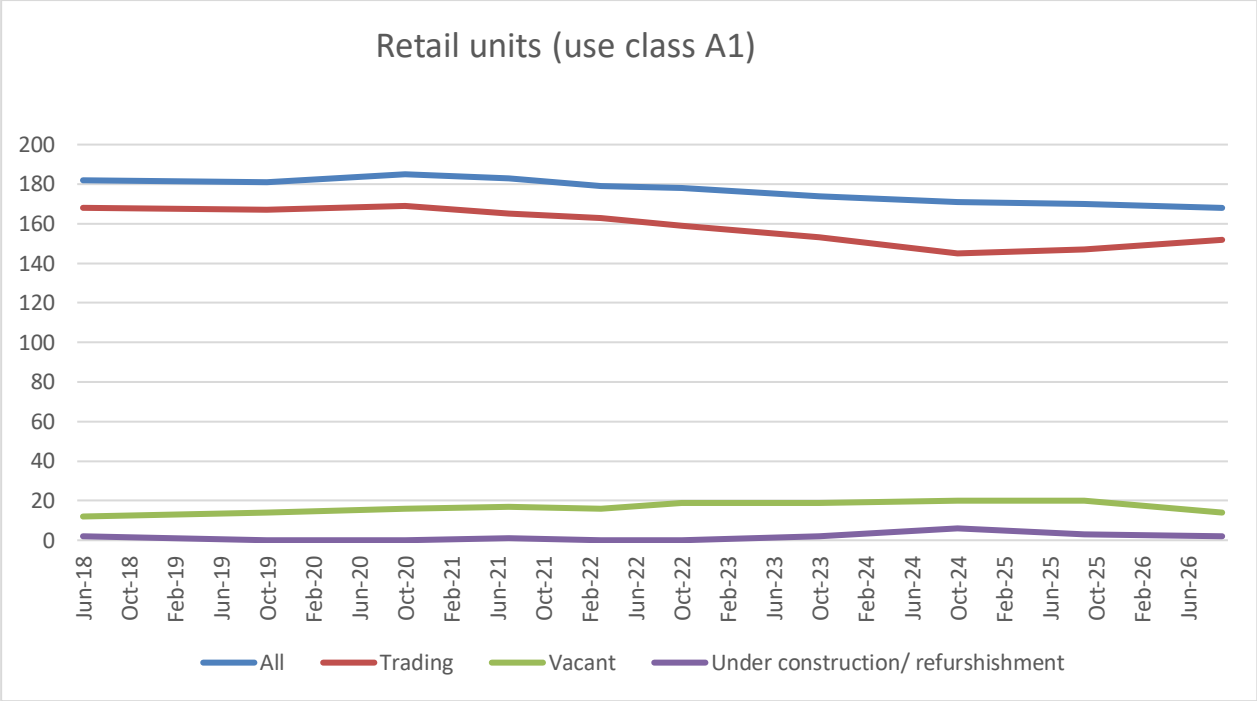
Retail floorspace (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2026	**21,033**	**19,214**	**1,395**	**424**
Sept 2005	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



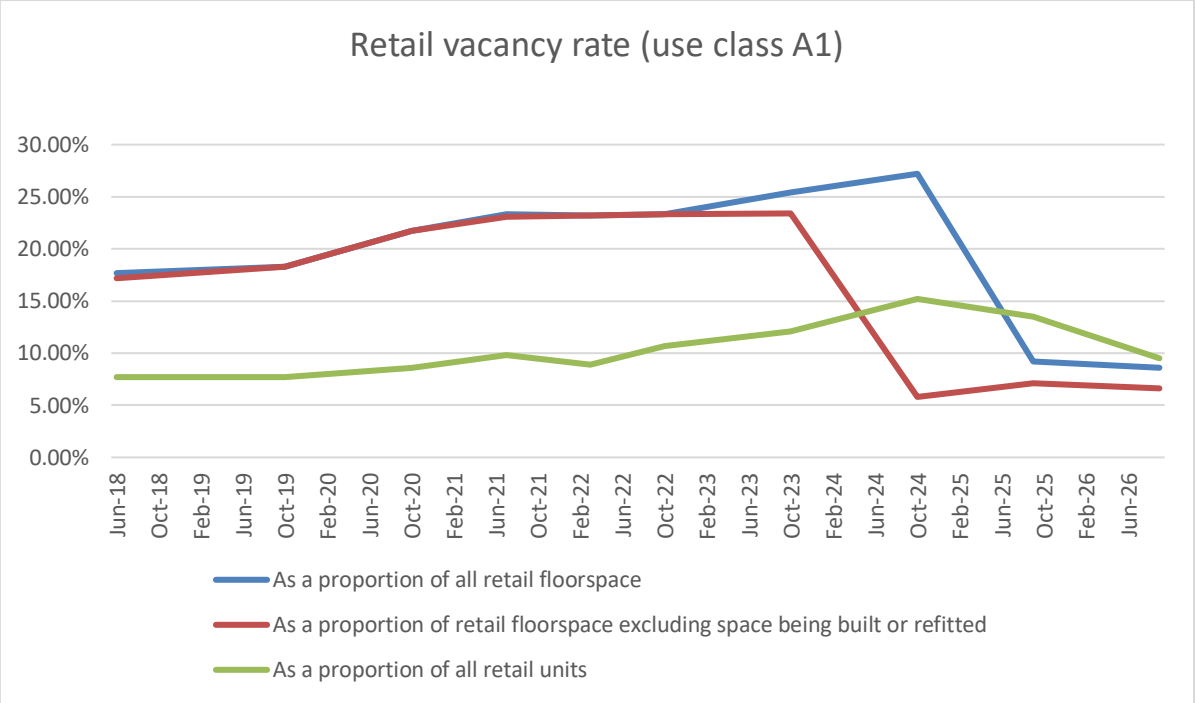
Retail units (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2026	**168**	**152**	**14**	**2**
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 $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted $\frac{Vacant}{All}$	As a proportion of all retail units $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$
Sept 2026	**8.6%**	**6.6%**	**9.5%**
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

50. 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).

51. Table 7 provides data on the percentage of retail uses in the secondary area retail frontage zones. There are two frontage zones below the minimum threshold set out within the SPD (SR01 (The Lanes West (Pottergate/Dove Street/Lower Goat Lane) and SR03: St Benedicts). The proportion of retail has dropped within SR02: Upper St Giles; however it remains above the 60% threshold set out within the SPD.

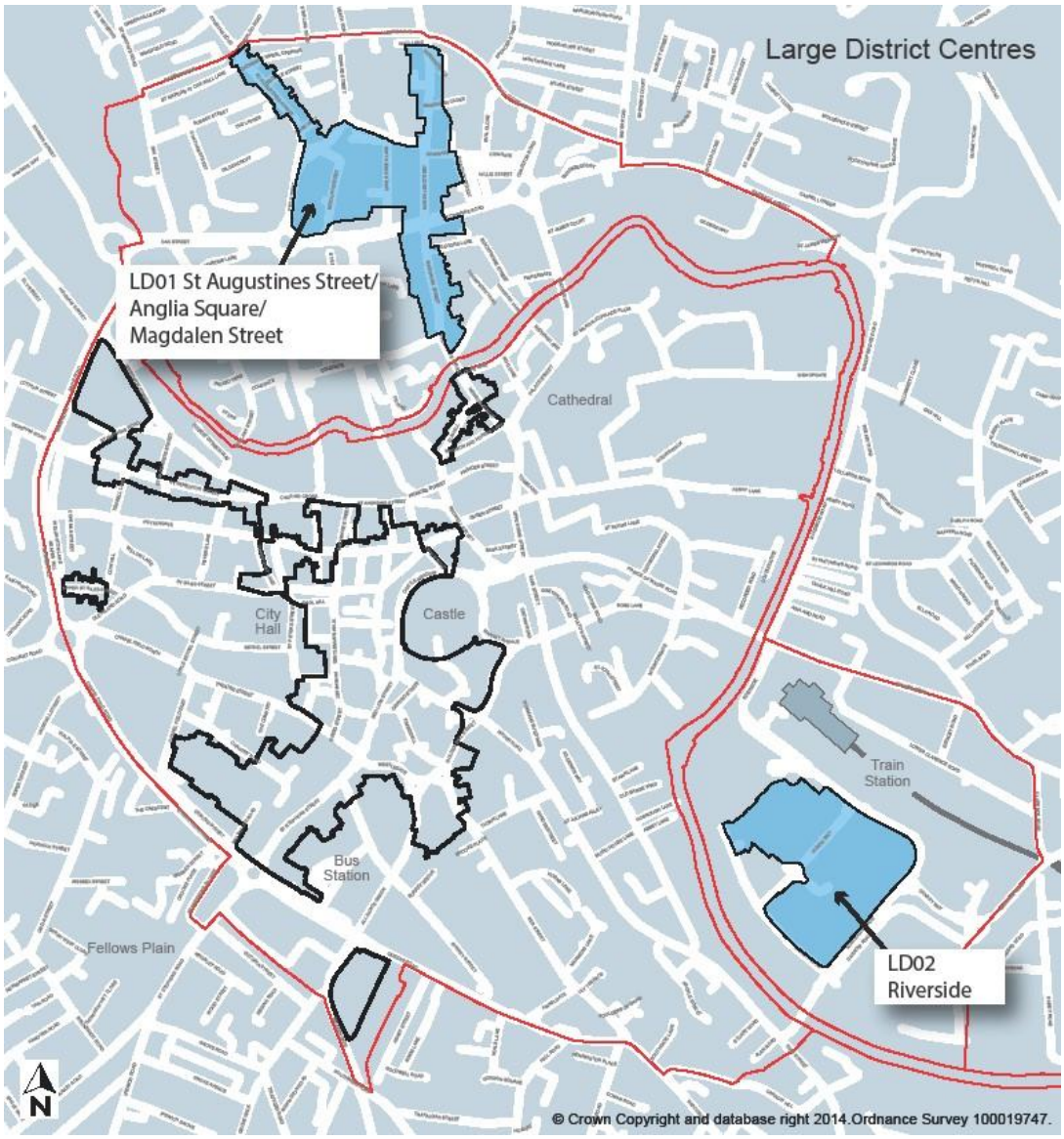
Table 7: Secondary area retail frontage zones

Frontage zone	Total frontage (m)	Total non-retail frontage 2026	% A1 retail frontage 2026	% A1 retail frontage 2025	Minimum threshold (from 2014 SPD)
Primary retail area core frontage zones					
SR01	391.3	135.3	**65.4%**	68.0%	70%
SR02	121.7	44.2	**63.7%**	67.6%	60%
SR03	638.0	275.3	**56.8%**	56.9%	60%
SR04	No defined frontage				
SR05	No defined frontage				
SR06	No defined frontage				

Large District Centres

Headline figures	Vacant floorspace	Vacant available floorspace (excluding refurbs)	Vacant units	Retail floorspace change (since October 24)
Large District Centres (Retail only)	7.9%	7.6%	12.0%	21.7% decrease

52. The map below shows the extent of the Large District Centres. LD01 is focused around Anglia Square, Magdalen Street and St Augustines Street with LD02 focusing on Riverside. Large District Centres provide a complementary role to primary and secondary retail areas and meet more day-to-day needs.



53. The Magdalen Street, St Augustine's Street, Anglia Square Large District Centre has experienced significant change during the past monitoring period which has dramatically affected the vacancy figures for the Large District Centres and will also have affected vacancy rates across the city centre as a

whole.

54. In September 2025, 32.1% of all retail floorspace and 36.6% of all retail units across both Large District Centres were vacant. At the point in time that the September 2025 monitor was carried out, all shops within the Anglia Square redevelopment area had been vacated and boarded up to make way for demolition and the subsequent comprehensive redevelopment of this area. Therefore the units were recorded as being vacant but were not recorded as being available. This resulted in a large discrepancy between the vacancy rate which included all retail floorspace and the vacancy rate which excluded space which was being refurbished.

55. Over the past monitoring period, all units within the Anglia Square development area have now been demolished to make way for the new proposals. Within the Large District Centre 40 units and 9,508sqm of floorspace (all town centre uses and not just retail floorspace) has been removed from the monitor. The removal of the retail units has resulted in vacancy rates for all retail floorspace reducing from 32.1% to 7.9%, with vacancy rates for units falling from 36.6% to 12.0%.

56. St Saviour's Yard which is a new box park featuring more than 80 containers has opened during the monitoring period. The aim of this box park was to rehome Anglia Square traders. The food, retail and office centre is made out of refitted shipping containers and is situated under the Magdalen Street flyover. There were over 400 expressions of interest in the units with demand being greater than its Manchester equivalent. A tenant list was obtained from the site manager in August 2026 and at this point in time all but one unit within the box park were occupied. The combined new floorspace of all 83 units is 1,425sqm and this has been reflected in the September 2026 monitor. Please note that this figure relates to all town centre units rather than retail only.

57. In terms of the long-term future for this Large District Centre, 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 acquired the site and demolition is well underway. Once construction has commenced and new town centre units are getting out of the ground these will then be added into the monitor.

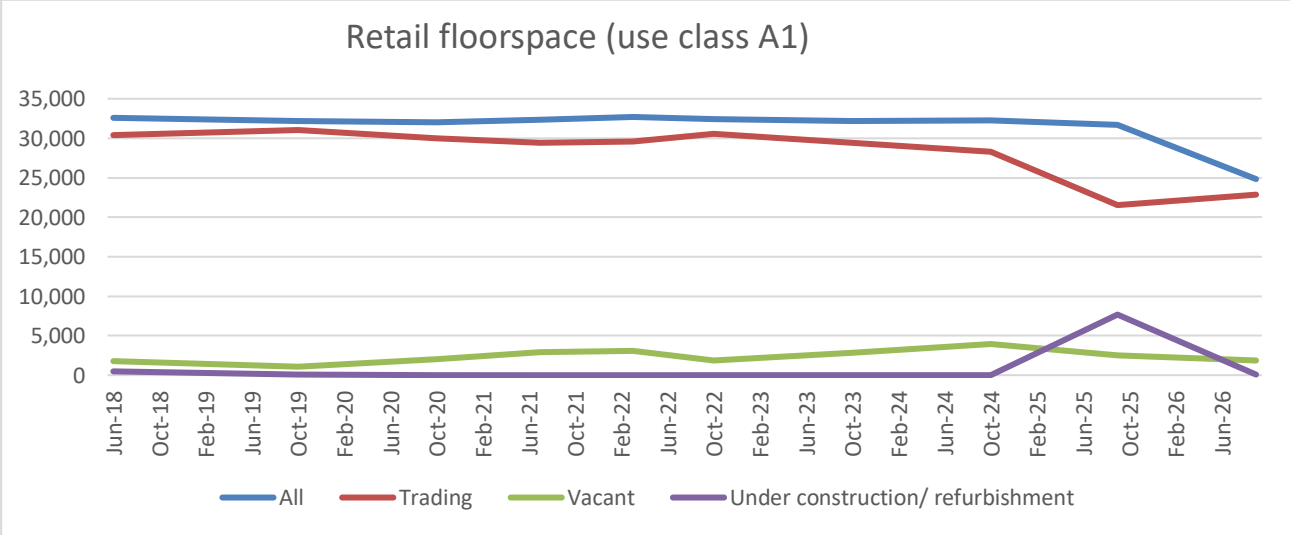
58. In terms of Riverside there have been no changes during the monitoring period. Vacancy rates remain low with only one unit being vacant (6.3%). This remains a largely car-based destination, but routes established within the 'St Anne's Quarter' development have created a more attractive walking and cycling link between Riverside and the city centre.

59. If all town centre uses are taken into account, the proportion of vacant floorspace (including refurbishments) has reduced from 30.0% in September 2025 to 8.3% in 2026 (and this compares to retail only of 7.9%) and the percentage of vacant units is 11.7% (down from 33.7% in September 2025) which compares to retail only of 12.0%. Again, these significant drops in vacancy rates are due to vacant floorspace at Anglia Square being removed and newly occupied floorspace at St Saviour's Yard being added.

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

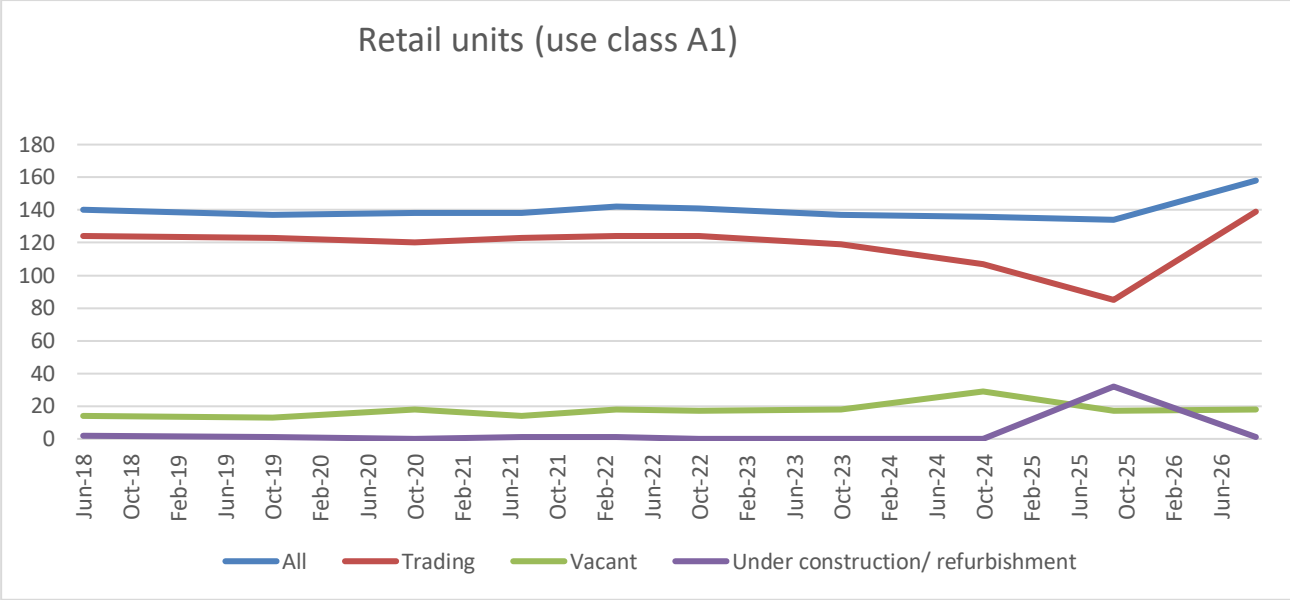
Retail floorspace (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2026	**24,830**	**22,862**	**1,896**	**72**
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



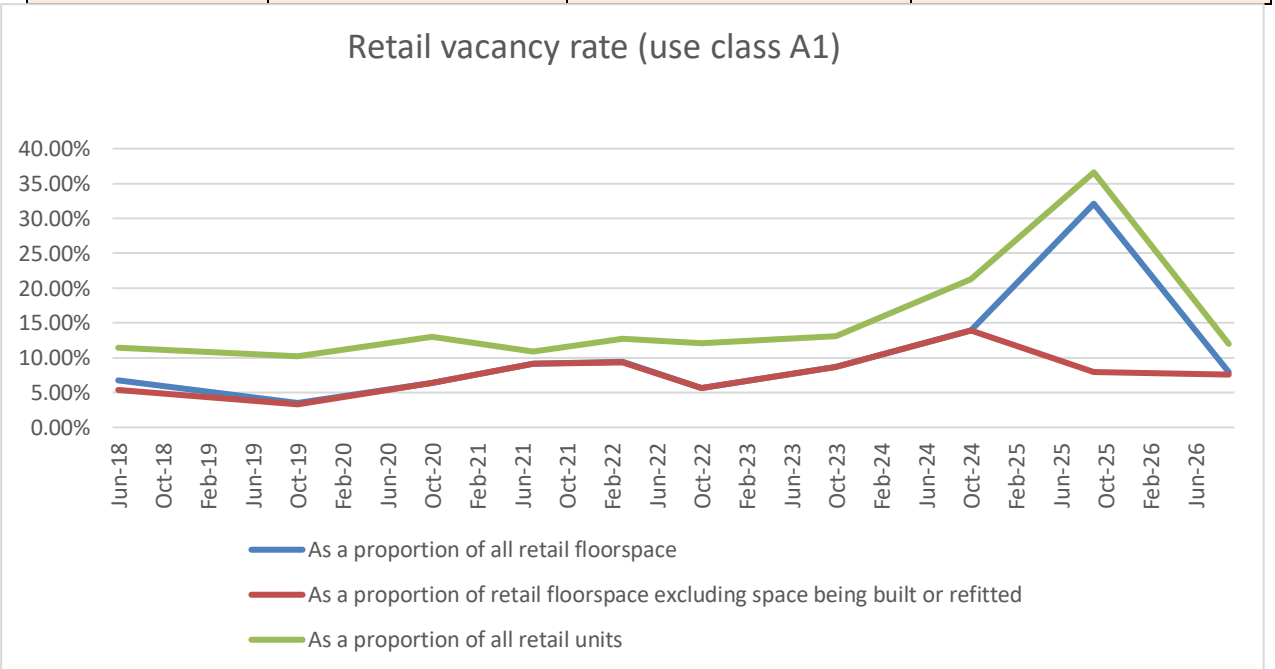
Retail units (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2026	**158**	**139**	**18**	**1**
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 $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted $\frac{Vacant}{All}$	As a proportion of all retail units $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$
Sept 2026	**7.9%**	**7.6%**	**12.0%**
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 refurbs)	Vacant units	Retail floorspace change (since October 25)
Rest of City Centre (Retail only)	8.0%	8.0%	11.4%	2.4% increase

60. This area covers all shops within the city centre which are not included in the defined areas.

61. Vacant floorspace within the 'rest of the city centre' currently stands at 8.0%. This is a significant decrease from October 2024 when 15.2% of available floorspace was vacant and September 2025 when 10.4% was vacant. Vacancy rates within the 'rest of the city centre' do fluctuate quite significant 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.

62. The number of vacant retail *units* in the 'rest of the city centre' has also reduced from 16.1% in October 2024 and 12.3% in September 2025 to 11.4% in September 2026. This would suggest that a number of smaller units have been occupied over the monitoring period.

63. The overall amount of floorspace in A1 retail increased between September 2026 and September 2026 (by 243 sqm) although the number of retail units stayed the same.

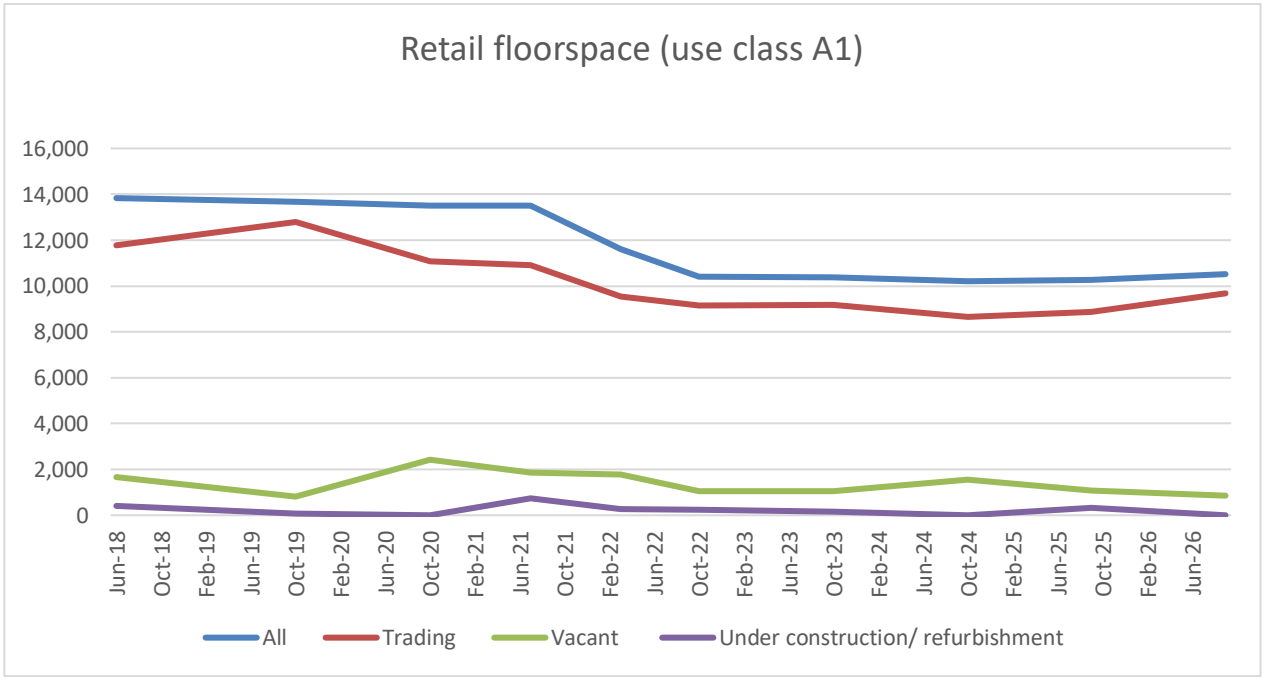
64. The statistics from the past few years suggest that there has been a lot of change and turnover in the 'rest of the city centre' area which is expected within the more peripheral city centre shopping streets. Although a number of businesses closed over the pandemic, the 'rest of the city centre' 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 and has actually increased.

65. If all town centre uses are taken into account the proportion of vacant floorspace (including refurbishments) is only 5.1% (down from 8.8% in 2025) which compares to retail only of 8.0% and the percentage of vacant units is 12.1% (down from 12.8% in 2025) which compares to retail only of 11.4%. 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

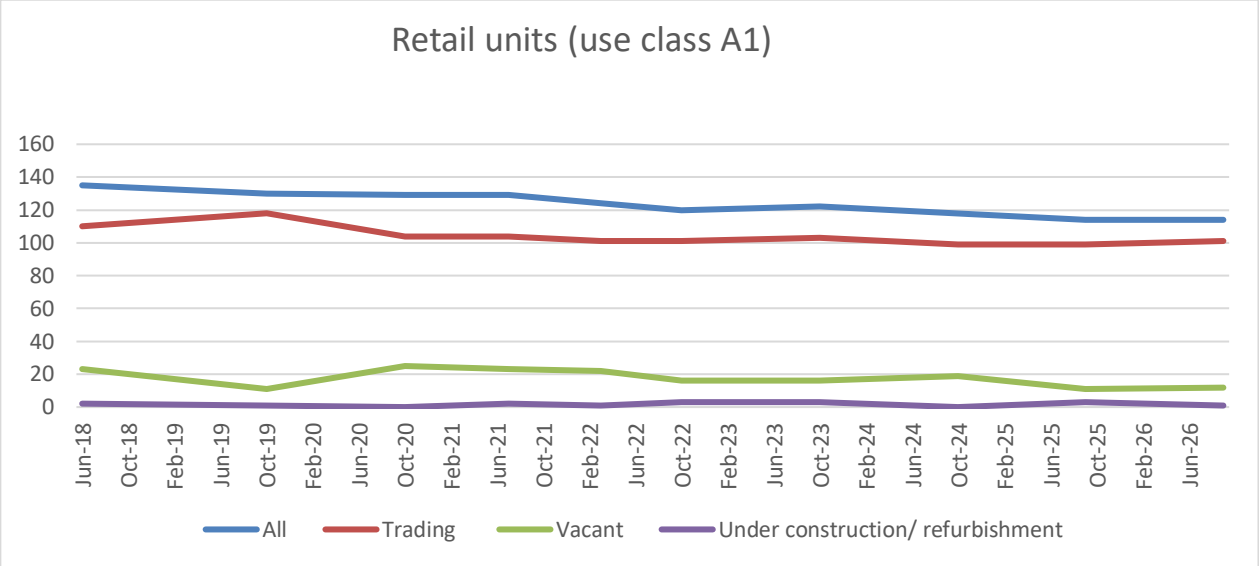
Retail floorspace (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2026	**10,511**	**9,666**	**845**	**0**
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



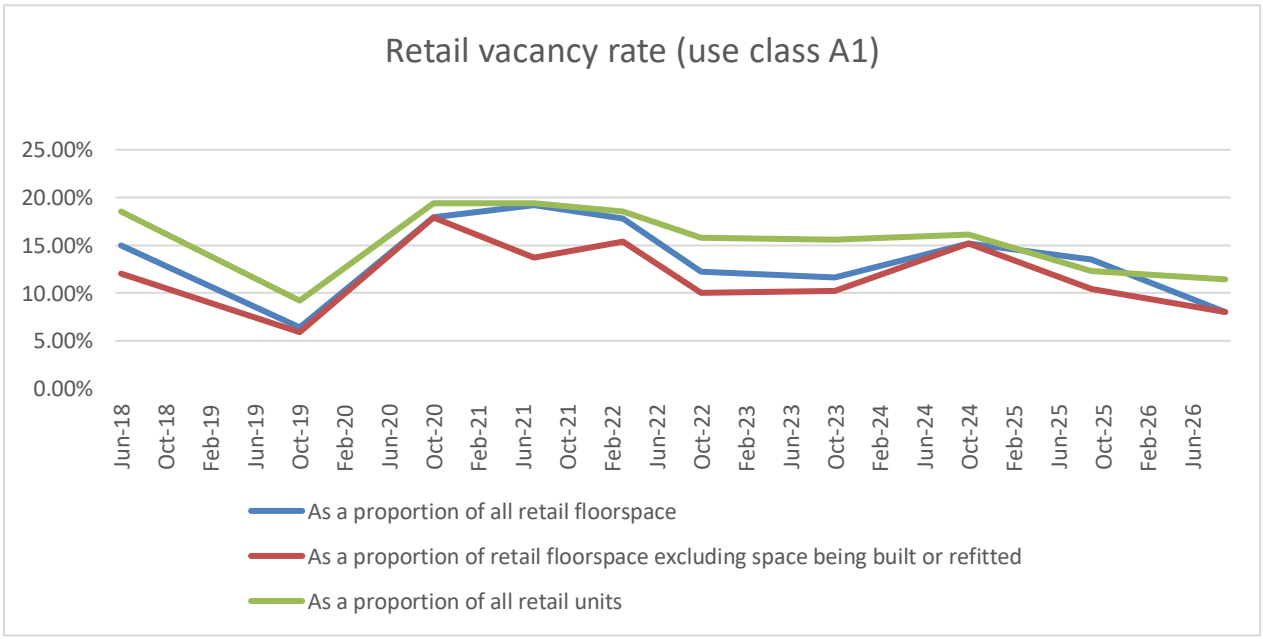
Retail units (use class A1)

	All	Trading	Vacant	Under construction/ refurbishment
Sept 2026	**114**	**101**	**12**	**1**
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 $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$	As a proportion of retail floorspace excluding space being built or refitted $\frac{Vacant}{All}$	As a proportion of all retail units $\frac{Vacant+Refurbishment}{All}$
Sept 2026	**8.0%**	**8.0%**	**11.4%**
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

66. Policy DM21 of the Development management policies plan establishes A1 retail use thresholds of 60% for District Centres and 50% for Local Centres.

67. 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. Between 2022 and 2025 vacancy rates have gradually crept up with 8.6% of units being vacant in October 2025. Vacancy rates have however fallen over the past 12 months and now stand at 7.0% which is lower than the 9.8% shop vacancy rate in the city centre. This 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.

68. 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	5.4%	No change

69. Vacancy rates for all District Centres have reduced from 6.8% in October 2025 to 5.4% in October 2026. The total number of vacant units in the 10 District Centres is currently only 11 which compares to 14 in 2025 and 23 in 2018. The total number of units has remained the same over the past 12 months.

70. The percentage of non-retail units currently stands at 45.4% which is 0.5% lower than in 2025. In terms of units, the total number of non-retail units is 93 out of 205. The percentage of non-retail decreased by one unit in DC08 Dereham Road/ Distillery Square. Since 2019 the general trend has been an increase in non-retail units across all District Centres, so this is a slight anomaly.

71. There have been no changes since 2025 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 Classes 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.

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

74. The Eaton Centre (DC03) now has no vacant units; however, with 61.1% of units being non-retail, this is the highest of all District Centres.

75. The number of vacant units within DC04: Plumstead Road has reduced from four to two which gives a vacancy rate of 6.0%. In 2025 the district centre had the second highest vacancy rates.

76. DC05: Aylsham Road/Mile Cross now has the highest vacancy rate for all District Centres. In 2024 only 4.2% of units were vacant. This increased to 12.5% in 2025 and now stands at 16.7%.

77. Within the Earlham House district centre (DC06), vacancy rates are now 10.5% which is the second highest of all District Centres. It does however have the highest proportion of retail units of all District centres.

78. Dereham Road/Distillery Square (DC08) now has no vacant units. In 2025 two units were undergoing refurbishment. Over the past monitoring period one non-retail unit has change to a retail unit.

79. In 2025 two district centres had all of their units occupied (The Larkman (DC07) and Hall Road (DC09) centres). For the third year in a row these both still have no vacancies. Two further District Centres now have no vacant units – DC03 Eaton Centre and DC08 Dereham Road/Distillery Square. All of these fully occupied District Centres have over 40% non-retail.

80. There have been no changes in vacancy rates or the percentage of non-retail within Bowthorpe (DC01), Drayton Road (DC02), The Larkman (DC07), Hall Road (DC09) and Sprowston Road/Shipfield (DC10).

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	0	0.0%	11	61.1%
DC04	Plumstead Road	33	2	6.0%	16	48.5%
DC05	Aylsham Road/ Mile Cross	24	4	16.7%	12	50.0%
DC06	Earlham House	19	2	10.5%	5	26.3%
DC07	The Larkman	14	0	0.0%	6	42.9%
DC08	Dereham Road/ Distillery Square	37	0	0.0%	19	51.4%
DC09	Hall Road	9	0	0.0%	4	44.4%
DC10	Sprowston Road/ Shipfield	19	1	5.3%	7	36.8%
TOTAL		**205**	**11**	**5.4%**	**93**	**45.4%**

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

Local centres

Headline figures	Vacant units	No of units change
Local Centres	8.0%	No change

81. Table 11 shows vacancy rates and percentage of non-retail units for the 28 local centres.

82. Of the 327 units, the number of vacant units is 26. This is a decrease of six units from October 2025 and has reduced the percentage from 9.8% to 8.0%. This remains lower than the city centre vacancy rate. Twelve out of 28 local centres are fully occupied, which is less than in 2025, when 13 were fully occupied and in 2024, when 15 were fully occupied. The total number of units has not changed during the past monitoring period.

83. Improvements in vacancies since 2024 have taken place in eight local centres which are LC01 Hall Road/Trafalgar Street, LC02 Hall Road/Queens Road, LC06 Unthank Road, LC07 St Augustine's Gate, LC11 Aylsham Road/ Boundary Road, LC13 Catton Grove Road/ Ring Road, LC28 Magdalen Road/ Clarke Road and LC30 St Stephens Road. The local centres which have had increased vacancies during the monitoring period are LC05 Suffolk Square, LC10 Aylsham Road/ Glenmore Gardens and LC18 Earlham West Centre.

84. The worst performing local centre is LC18 Earlham West Centre where 31.8% of units are empty, followed by LC25 Clancy Road, Heartsease where 20% of units are empty.

85. The percentage of non-retail units across all of the centres is now 49.8%, down from 51.4% in 2025 and 51.8% in 2024. The percentage of non-retail now no longer exceeds the 50% threshold and it is the second year that the proportion of retail units has actually increased. Previous to this the proportion of non-retail was on the increase for several years in a row. There are 12 local centres that are not policy compliant, three centres which sit at the recommended 50% threshold and 13 which have more than 50% of units as retail.

86. Over the monitoring period there has been seven centres where the proportion of non-retail has reduced but two centres where the proportion of non-retail has increased.

87. The 12 local centres that have exceeded the DM21 policy threshold and have greater than 50% non-retail uses are listed below. LC28 (Magdalen Road/Clarke Road) has been removed from this list during the past monitoring period due to it no longer being above 50%.

    - 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
- LC29: Aylsham Road/Copenhagen Way.
- LC30: St Stephens Road

88. LC18: Earlham West Centre, LC13: Catton Grove Road/Ring Road and LC28: Magdalen Road/Clarke 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 Centres[3] defined in the adopted Norwich Local Plan 2014

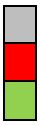
Ref No	Centre name	Total units	Vacant units	% vacant/ annual change	Non retail units	% non-retail
LC01	Hall Road/ Trafalgar St	9	1	11.1%	2	22.2%
LC02	Hall Road/ Queens Road	29	4	13.8%	17	58.6%
LC03	Hall Road/ Southwell Road	7	0	0.0%	4	57.1%
LC04	Grove Road	14	0	0.0%	5	35.7%
LC05	Suffolk Square	9	1	11.1%	3	33.3%
LC06	Unthank Road	42	1	2.4%	24	57.1%
LC07	St Augustine's Gate	7	1	14.3%	5	71.4%
LC08	See footnote					
LC09	Aylsham Road/ Junction Road	8	1	12.5%	3	37.5%
LC10	Aylsham Road/ Glenmore Gardens	13	1	7.7%	6	46.2%
LC11	Aylsham Road/ Boundary Road	14	1	7.1%	8	57.1%
LC12	Woodcock Road	7	0	0.0%	2	28.6%
LC13	Catton Grove Road/Ring Road	12	1	8.3%	6	50.0%
LC14	Magdalen Road	14	1	7.1%	8	57.1%
LC15	Sprowston Road/ Silver	8	0	0.0%	5	62.5%

[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
	Road					
LC16	See footnote					
LC17	Bishop Bridge Road	8	0	0.0%	6	75.0%
LC18	Earlham West Centre	22	7	31.8%	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%	3	30.0%
LC23	Tuckswood centre	5	0	0.0%	1	20.0%
LC24	Witard Road, Heartsease	10	0	0.0%	3	30.0%
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	0	0.0%	4	50.0%
LC29	Aylsham Road/ Copenhagen Way	5	0	0.0%	4	80%
LC30	St Stephens Road	12	1	8.3%	7	58.3%
TOTAL		**327**	**26**	**8.0%**	**163**	**49.8%**

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

89. Over the past 12 months the vacant available retail floorspace has reduced within the city centre, as has the total number of vacant units and city centre retail vacancy rates as a proportion of all retail floorspace. The Primary Retail Area continues to perform well seeing a reduction in vacant floorspace and vacant units. It has also experienced an increase in retail floorspace. The Secondary retail area has also experienced a fall in vacancies and an increase in floorspace whilst the number of retail units has also fallen slightly. Furthermore, as shown in Table 12, vacancy rates have reduced for both floorspace and units within the rest of the city centre.

90. In terms of the Large District Centre, Riverside continues to perform well and has seen no change within the monitoring period. However, the part of the city that has experience most change during the monitoring period is Magdalen Street, Anglia Square & St Augustine's LDC. During the 2024-25 monitoring period vacancies increased significantly as retailers were required to vacate to enable the demolition and subsequent comprehensive redevelopment of Anglia Square. These units have now been demolished so have been removed from the retail monitor. St Saviour's Yard box park has also opened during the past monitoring period which has replaced some of the floorspace (but by no means all) but has increase the total number of units within the Large District Centre.

91. Vacancy rates have also reduced within the District and Local Centres. They remain 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 September 2025 (Sept/Oct 2026 results)

Area	Available vacant floorspace	All vacant floorspace including refurbishment	Number of vacant units	Overall floor area	Overall units
City Centre	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑
Primary Area	↓	↓	↓	↑	
Secondary Area	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓
Large District Centres	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑
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. The past 12 months have been very positive with retail vacancy rates falling in all parts of the city centre for both floorspace and units. Norwich is performing well, which is likely to be 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 have continued to perform well over the past year.

93. The total amount of retail floorspace within the city centre is continuing to decrease. This year much of this has been lost due to the demolition of Anglia Square; however, some has been replaced through the provision of St Saviour's Yard box park. With the exception of Anglia Square, on the whole, floorspace is not being lost to residential or demolished but 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. Whilst the removal of Anglia Square from the monitor has significantly positively impacted the vacancy figures for the Large District Centre and the city centre as a whole, there are likely to be a number of other factors that have also helped contribute towards a fall in vacant units. These may include the following:

- Over the past few years Norwich has benefited from an improved city centre attractiveness and visitor experience. The Norwich Castle: Royal Palace Reborn project, Hay Hill public realm works, and refurbishment of The Halls have all improved the quality of the city centre environment. Individually, each may have a modest effect, but collectively they reinforce Norwich's appeal as a place to visit, shop and spend time. Retail increasingly depends on the broader visitor offer. The growth of food, drink, culture, heritage and events can support retail occupancy by increasing dwell time and footfall. The improvements to cultural venues and public spaces may therefore have indirect retail benefits.

- Being named the *Sunday Times* best place to live in the UK in 2026 generated a lot of national publicity and has boosted investor, occupier and consumer confidence. Retailers often make location decisions partly on perceptions of a place's future prospects, not just current trading conditions.

- Post-pandemic market adjustment may finally be working through. Many centres experienced years of structural change, with weak operators exiting and rents adjusting downward. Norwich may now be benefiting from a more sustainable level of rents and occupancy that is attractive to independent businesses and growing chains. Retailers may be responding to Norwich's relative resilience. National retailers are becoming more selective about locations. Centres that continue to attract footfall can benefit disproportionately as occupiers consolidate into stronger locations. Norwich may be capturing some of this effect.

- Strength of the wider Norwich economy – the city continues to benefit from

a large student population, strong public sector employment, a substantial professional services base and a significant catchment area. These provide a relatively stable customer base compared with some competing centres.

- Vacancy reduction can become self-reinforcing; as units are occupied, empty frontages diminish, confidence improves, pedestrian flows increase and neighbouring units become easier to let.

95. Finally the September 2025 retail monitor mentioned a Centre for Cities report that was published in July 2025 entitled Checking out: The varying performance of high streets across the country'. The conclusions of Norwich's city centre monitoring report set out the key messages to take away from the Centre for cities report. As work progresses on the new Greater Norwich Local Plan 2045, it is ever more important to consider the following as we plan for the future of our high streets.

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 has recently commissioned 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 obviously 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 further 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 Norwich BID and other stakeholders.

g) The public realm needs to continue to be improved.

96. Overall, over the past year, Norwich has demonstrated that it is a robust and thriving regional retail centre. The number of vacant units and the quantity of vacant retail floorspace has decreased over the past 12 months and footfall is up on last year. After a very successful year, it is important to continue to maintain a thriving city centre. The Council must identify ways to continue to adapt and to attract investment, particularly 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