



Death of the British High Street

A decade ago, high streets were bustling with people, footfall was high and the retail sector was thriving. Just a few short years later and the opposite couldn't be more true. Data suggests that almost 50 shops a day are closing on high streets up and down the country across all sectors of the economy. And it's not just local boutiques but large-scale international companies too.

So why is this number climbing and what is the wider impact?

First and foremost, inflation. At the time of writing, the peak of CPI inflation of around 10% seems to be behind us but the figures still look dire with core inflation rising and the general cost of living getting harder and more expensive by the day. A combination of a post-pandemic world, soaring food bills and war on the European continent drove demand higher, made the shortage bigger and put further pressure on the delicate economic system. Increasing interest rates has made debt and borrowing money much more expensive and has left small retailers at the mercy of the global banking system. A further destructive UK business rates policy for high street renters also magnifies the situation.

It's becoming increasingly expensive for stores to keep the lights on due to increased energy costs, to pay their employees due to pressure to increase wages and to attract customers to their shops with more and more people working from home and avoiding high streets altogether. Historically, one of the main reasons people nipped into town was to visit their local bank branch. However, with branches closing left, right and centre due to technological advances improving online banking services, footfall decreases even further, leaving just a few lone workers roaming the streets of cities.

Compound this with the boom of online retailers and the benefits online shopping can bring and you're left with a dying high street. Online shopping has a seamless process. You can save your card details for easy checkout, you can price compare a

desired item in seconds and it can even be shipped to your doorstep within 24 hours. Who wouldn't want that kind of service?

Don't forget the background issue of the COVID pandemic, which forced thousands of retailers into liquidation. Shops just weren't ready to go 100% online and with a huge overnight increase in demand for shipping and logistics, it was simply too late for many to join the party.

It's sad to see some of the largest names in retail falling victim to this spiralling situation but there appears to be little we can do to turn back time and bring back those hustling and bustling city streets.