

How are the UK Core Cities responding to retail-related challenges in city centres?

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Abstract

The growth of online shopping, which has been further accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, has reduced the need for shoppers to visit physical retail centres. This has led to high retail vacancy rates, particularly in city centres that have struggled in recent years to attract sufficient visitors to remain economically viable. Many cities in the UK have prepared post-pandemic recovery plans to respond to the major changes caused by the pandemic. This paper aims to explore how the UK Core Cities have dealt with the recent challenges of retail spaces of city centres at a strategic level. Through analysing their recovery plans, this paper investigates whether they have acknowledged the major challenges in the retail sector, whilst classifying the strategies that they have adopted to deal with these challenges. The results show that the studied cities have acknowledged the major changes to the retail sector and have adopted various strategies to address retail-related challenges. These strategies can be classified into three categories of temporary interventions, economic and financial interventions, and planning and design interventions. While there are considerable similarities among the adopted strategies, some cities have developed more comprehensive and innovative strategies, particularly in relation to planning and design interventions.

Keywords: Retail, City Centre, Planning Interventions, Online Shopping, UK Core Cities.

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