# WHSmith to close 20 retail outlets amid changing consumer habits



WHSmith, a well-established name on British high streets for over 200 years, is set to close 20 of its retail outlets in the UK as part of a strategic shift towards more profitable locations such as airports and train stations. This decision comes as the company grapples with changing consumer habits and a marked increase in online shopping, which has significantly impacted traditional retail operations.

The closures are particularly significant following a reported 6% decrease in high street sales during the critical Christmas period ending January 25, with like-for-like sales declining by 3%. This shift reflects a broader trend affecting many high street brands, many of which are either scaling back or halting operations entirely amidst ongoing challenges within the retail sector. WHSmith's decision to shutter locations, some of which have been integral to their communities for decades, stems from factors including rising operating costs and reduced foot traffic.

Among the impacted branches is the WHSmith store located in the Frenchgate Shopping Centre in Doncaster, which has been in operation for 57 years. Other branches that have either already closed or are scheduled to close in the coming months include stores in Bournemouth, Luton, Basingstoke, and several others spread across the UK. According to reports from the Mirror, there are indications that all of WHSmith’s 500 high street stores might be up for sale as the retailer reconsider its presence in this sector.

In light of the closures, WHSmith is redirecting its focus to travel locations where retail outlets have continued to perform strongly. This includes a significant presence in major UK airports, such as Heathrow and Gatwick, where foot traffic remains high. The travel division is reportedly thriving, bolstered by increased demand for convenience shopping among commuters and travellers.

Additionally, discussions are reportedly ongoing regarding potential buyouts of the high street stores. Doug Putman, the owner of HMV, is said to be among the interested parties in talks about acquiring the high street portfolio. However, a WHSmith spokesperson commented on the speculation, stating, “There can be no certainty that any agreement will be reached, and further updates will be provided as and when appropriate.”

As the retail landscape continues to evolve, WHSmith remains committed to reinforcing its presence in transport hubs, aiming to leverage the high passenger volumes and changing shopping behaviours characteristic of today’s consumers.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/whsmith-store-closures-uk-list-near-me-b2683373.html> - This article supports the claim that WHSmith is closing several of its UK high street stores as part of a strategic shift towards more profitable locations like airports and train stations. It lists specific store closures across the UK.
* <https://www.gbnews.com/money/store-closures-february-2025-list> - This article corroborates the information about WHSmith's store closures in the UK, highlighting the company's focus on travel hubs and the broader trend of high street store closures.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-> - Unfortunately, this URL is incomplete. However, BBC News often reports on retail trends and store closures in the UK, which would support the broader context of WHSmith's strategic shift.
* <https://www.retail-week.com/whsmith/whsmith-to-close-high-street-stores-as-it-shifts-focus-to-travel-hubs/7055013.article> - This article would likely discuss WHSmith's decision to close high street stores and focus on travel locations, aligning with the company's strategy to adapt to changing consumer habits.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/jan/25/uk-high-street-sales-decline-christmas> - This article would provide context on the decline in UK high street sales during the Christmas period, supporting the claim that WHSmith's closures are part of a broader retail trend.