

LUST FOR LIFESTYLE

Mixed-use, residential and lifestyle-orientated retail schemes are the thing of the future

Words by HYWEL ROBERTS

With changing consumer shopping habits and intense competition from online retail, it is little wonder that UK high streets are locked in

a bitter struggle for survival. However, rather than fading away, existing and new centres are fighting back with a comprehensive offer designed to appeal to the modern shopper. Combining retail with leisure and residential to offer a lifestyle experience is becoming more popular as a tool to combat the drain of spend to online. This means housing fashion stores in residential complexes that incorporate gyms, often independent cinemas and plenty of dining choices for shoppers.

Capital & Regional is one developer leading the way. As part of its "beyond retail" strategy, it announced an 86,000 sq ft extension to the 260,000 sq ft The Mall Walthamstow development in London, which will include 400 homes.

"All of our schemes are in the heart of the local community," says head of retail asset management Andrew Haughey. "There's connectivity with bus and rail stops. We have cinemas, restaurants and other leisure facilities, so it's everything people want really."

Grosvenor's London estate, incorporating the prestigious Motcomb Street, is one of London's premier retail locations. It is also in the heart of the city's desirable Mayfair and Belgravia districts.

"We've got about 450 units there that are roughly split into one-third residential, one-third retail and one-third office space," explains Grosvenor retail director Joanna Lea. "The advantages for the fashion retailers are obvious. With the offices and residential units, you have a catchment area of customers that goes beyond the usual travelling shoppers."

Paul Cook, managing director of property developer Dukelease, describes his role, and that of his company, as "an expert at putting retail and residential together".

He says he remembers the advent of online retail and people wondering whether it would lead to a "commodification of shopping". But, he adds, "What's happened is there has been a reaction against online that has caused a relational type of shopping. And it's brought in this lifestyle element."

Well heeled: Grosvenor's London estate (right) and Duke Street Emporium (below and below right)



Fashion retail needs to be part of an experience, and that's true more now than ever."

One store that benefits from a prime location is Mayfair's Duke Street Emporium. Jigsaw chief operating officer Richard Gilmore is responsible for the retail side of the store. He describes it as "an antidote to fast fashion".

"The definition of emporium is a place to meet and trade. And that's what it is: somewhere you can slow down, put a song on the juke box, but also pick up some high-end clothing. It's about looking at the experience of Oxford Street and saying 'there's another way to go about this'."

In November 2014 Duke Street Emporium gained an illustrious neighbour when Private White VC moved in next door. Andrew Allan, retail director of the menswear brand, says Mayfair is such an important location because "people come here looking for hidden gems".

"It's completely different to being at an airport or something like that," he continues. "People just come through for a stroll of the area. That way they're introduced to our brand and often follow it up online. So the residential area gives business beyond the obvious local clientele - it's international as well."

Offering a lifestyle proposition is not only for those seeking to attract wealthy jet-setters and Mayfair



residents. In August 2016 menswear brand Farah hosted an event in collaboration with music magazine *Clash* at its Covent Garden site. Mia Zackrisson, global head of marketing for Farah, says events such as this are important but only "if they're done right".

"The product still needs to be the focus," she adds. "We try to run events in the store at least every other month. There's a screening of a short film coming up. It's good to support creative people and get something back into the bargain."

Inner-city locations are the natural choice for integrated retail but more developers are now creating this out of town. They may not be as glamorous but can still be attractive. Shopping centre owner Intu recently announced that an "al fresco dining experience" will open at its Bromley complex.

"Today's shopping centre is a destination, used by customers to meet for a coffee, a lunch break, a convenience purchase or an evening out with friends and loved ones," says Intu asset management director Julian Wilkinson. So whether in or out of town, retail with a little extra on the side is here to stay.