



RETAIL READY: SPACE GUIDE

In partnership with British Land, FSB and Curated Makers.

This guide provides a step-by-step summary of considerations when taking on retail space, drawing on the experience of Really Local Stores businesses, the British Land team and expert supply chain partners.

It includes a breakdown of stages, associated costs, logistics and more – to ensure that you and your product are retail ready.



1 CHOOSING SPACE

Who is your target audience and where are they? Different locations have different shoppers. Research different areas' demographics, footfall and existing offer and price points. Where does your product fit in the market?

What is your capacity and budget, and what would work best for your business? Do you want to showcase your product as part of an existing set-up, perhaps to test the market and offset some management responsibility with an experienced partner like [Curated Makers](#), or do you want the brand and management independence of your own space?

See this as a pilot to test whether this space is the right one for you and your product. Set out your barometers of success.



2 SECURING SPACE

You will need to enter into a lease or licence document with the landlord which sets out the terms of your occupation of the premises.

You should seek independent legal advice when entering into a lease or a licence as you are committing to legally binding terms. You can find a local solicitor via the Law Society website. Request an estimate.



Before signing any agreement, you should consider:

- The duration of the agreement and options to terminate the arrangement early. Unless you have a specific right to terminate, you are committing to the arrangement for the full duration.
- The level of rent and payment of service charge/building insurance, if the premises are part of a larger building or complex.
- Payment of utility costs would usually be your responsibility as the occupier. Stamp Duty Land Tax and business rates may also be payable to HMRC. These costs could be significant, but you may be entitled to relief. To find out more, look up business rates at www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates. You may need to pay for public liability, employer/employee liability and contents insurance.
- Responsibilities for maintenance and repair of the premises, e.g. roof maintenance, whether you can make any alterations to the premises or need additional permissions in relation to your shop fit or signage.
- The permitted use specified within the lease, as this determines what you can retail.

Before signing, it is your responsibility to **inspect the premises** to check it is suitable for your business operations, such as having appropriate electrical, plumbing, heating and internet connections and being in a good state of repair. Take photos for your records. It is likely you will need to hand back the unit in no-worse condition at the end of your agreement.

Depending on the duration of the agreement, the landlord may require you to contract out of certain provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. You should seek independent legal advice to understand the implications to your business.

3 PREPARING SPACE

FITOUT

Fitout costs vary hugely: a Really Local Store unit using upcycled materials costs £35-£45 per sq ft, while a standard commercial fitout from shell can be at least three times that.

Consider what standard of fitout you need to achieve for your brand and surroundings, alongside your furniture and display requirements.

There may also be landlord guidelines to follow.

BRANDING

Consider factors such as whether your brand works the same way in a physical space and on signage, and whether there are lit sign requirements or if vinyl will do. There may also be landlord guidelines to follow or permissions to achieve when changing external branding.

DISPLAY

Your display design should take into account the direction of footfall and where the till and display panels should be, along with accessibility requirements.



4 OPERATING SPACE

MARKETING

- You may decide that you need a digital presence; this could be a standalone social media account or could also include a website. Make sure that your physical space works alongside your online presence, and that the two link to and promote each other.
- Stationery and packaging – these require ongoing budget, dependent on what look and feel you want for your brand. Don't forget about operational basics to trade, such as till roll, bags and pens.
- Window displays can be a powerful pull; think about how they will entice customers in.

MAINTENANCE

- Check who is responsible for cleaning, tech installation and security and make sure you know what your needs are and that they're covered.
- You may have Health & Safety responsibilities, e.g. fire safety (fire panel servicing and testing), water testing, fixed wire testing, servicing, and testing of heating and cooling systems, as well as sprinkler testing.

STAFFING

- Factor in staff logistics such as what hours the space will need to be trading and staffed, what additional staff time will be needed to open/close and how you will cover absence, holidays and peak trade hours.
- Recruitment: check Right To Work documentation, ensure training, payroll and employee management systems are in place.
- What staff resources are needed or available, e.g. staff car parking, lockers and kitchen facilities?
- Consider customer service and whether a candidate is able to portray your brand message well.

5 NEXT STEPS

Should I stay, should I grow, or should I go?

Your options might include:

- Extend the lease, make enquiries as to whether that's possible or if a similar opportunity is available.
- Expand – is the business ready to grow?
- Bank the experience and move on to the next challenge.



To become retail ready, relationship building is critical to success. Work on connecting with the right people, building genuine relationships and staying on top of your communications. It is a major part of success when working with third parties.

I would recommend being true to yourself when negotiating and representing your brand, always keeping an open mind to opportunities and persevering when things don't always go the way you hoped.

If I can guarantee anything... it is that nothing ever goes quite to plan! I encourage you to remain positive, adaptable and take every experience as a learning opportunity. Enjoy the ride and remember that each opportunity and experience is a stepping stone to the next one!"

Megan Jones
Founder of [Curated Makers](#)

StudioAble

TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESS

[Studio Able](#) are an independent, collaborative design studio who work with British Land to support Really Local Stores businesses with their brand perception and physical appearance.

Here are their top three tips for retail ready success:

1. Invest in your brand

Brand is everything: your demeanour, customer service, expertise, signage and packaging. Ensure all of your touchpoints are perfect.

2. Trust your designer

Listen to the experts to ensure you have the best version of your product or business. Your vision might differ from what works best from a customer perspective.

3. Don't chase the money

Unless your product is specifically short term, remember that this is a long game; don't let a quick buck override decisions that secure the longer term sustainability of your business.



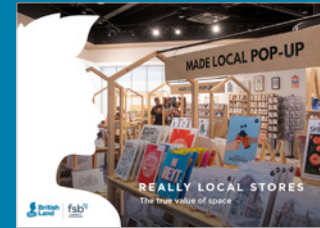
Curated Makers acts as a bridge between big and small businesses, celebrating and supporting local makers by transforming empty retail spaces into unmissable shopping experiences.



See more advice from Megan Jones at Curated Makers on how to enter retail as a maker or micro business [here](#).

FIND OUT MORE

Explore our 2025 report here:



REALLY LOCAL STORES

The true value of space

www.britishland.com/reallylocalstores

ABOUT US

British Land is a UK commercial property company focused on real estate sectors with the strongest operational fundamentals: London campuses, retail parks, and London urban logistics. Our purpose is to create and manage Places People Prefer – outstanding places that deliver positive outcomes for all our stakeholders on a long term, sustainable basis.

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) is the UK's leading membership organisation for small businesses and the self-employed. It is a cross-party non-profit body that supports millions of small business owners.