

Concession retail plan for Grimsby's former House of Fraser derailed

Plans for Grimsby's former House of Fraser to become the venue for an emerging retail concept have been dashed.

15:17 Ltd, the operator behind a concession-led model it had [previewed in the town](#) before the pandemic hit – having launched in Scotland and Wales – is in the process of being wound up.

It had taken leases on large former department store properties with the plan to manage the space, sub-letting areas from cabinets to large-scale units depending on retailers' needs. But the Covid lockdowns hitting a start-up with no trading history, appear to have derailed it, against a backdrop of continued high street decline and a turbulent economy.

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A winding up order was filed in February, while in Grimsby the 64,000 sq ft site – where it aimed to create a “community within a community,” appears to be back in the private landlord's hands.

Leisure, retail, events and provision for other services had been eyed, after House of Fraser's rent-free stay of execution came to a close in late 2019, having seen a brief U-turn on earlier closure plans.



15:17 Ltd opened a first venture in a former BHS in Ayr, Scotland, in August 2019, main and bottom right. Top right, Grimsby's House of Fraser, was to be the first English format. Members of the 15:17 team, now moved on, launched the proposal in the town in January 2020 – as the world woke up to what Covid could be – and while backed by considerable national high street experience in Julia Reynolds and Mercier Mainwaring – there were reports of unpaid bills at the first Scottish venture.

Ms Reynolds, as chair, had previously held chief executive roles with Antler, Blacks Leisure and Figleaves.com. She was director of buying and merchandising at Tesco, where she launched the Florence and Fred clothing brand, having been a senior buyer with Arcadia.

Mr Mainwaring, managing director until he stepped down in November last year, had a 45-year retail CV that included Etam, Debenhams, M&Co and MK One. He had stepped down in November last year.

Now it looks like the prominent building will be back on the market comes as North East Lincolnshire Council has taken ownership of Freshney Place, which enveloped the premises, with the consultation open on the cinema and leisure plan for the neighbouring western end. It will see the former BHS unit transformed into a new market hall to make way for Parkway's screens and seats.

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