

Waitrose to open 100 new stores in 'biggest period of expansion'

Waitrose, the premium grocer, has announced plans to increase its store portfolio by approximately a third over the next three years. This move is part of one of its "biggest periods of expansion", with a particular focus on 'Little Waitrose' convenience shops.

[The company](#), headquartered in Berkshire, will invest more than £1bn in a project that includes opening 100 new stores and refurbishing an additional 150. At present, Waitrose operates just over 350 stores across the UK.

The new stores, marking Waitrose's first in six years, will emphasise the "areas which differentiate the grocer". These include service counters, wine selection, and collaborations with third-party eateries.

Nish Kankiwala, CEO of [the John Lewis Partnership](#) which has owned Waitrose since 1937 stated that investment in the Waitrose store portfolio has "already yielded strong results", with customers "responding positively."

"As our retail driven plan continues to gain traction, our growing number of shoppers and increasing customer satisfaction scores are clear indicators of its success," Kankiwala said.

"This is a result of our unrelenting focus on improving the customer experience of our retail businesses, taking the love that exists for both brands and making sure customers are rewarded with better shops, the highest quality products, and the best service," he added.

Recently, Waitrose has been competing with Marks and Spencer to attract middle-class shoppers. Earlier this year, it reduced prices for the fifth time in twelve months, as reported by [City AM](#).

The company's market share has seen a modest rise of 0.1 per cent, reaching 4.5 per cent year on year in the last quarter, with sales surging to just over £5bn, up significantly from £1.44bn in 2023, as per data from Kantar.

Marks and Spencer trail slightly behind with a market share of just under four per cent as of April 2024.

Finchley Road store to be used as a tester

The retailer detailed its pilot scheme at the Finchley Road, London, branch, intended to “trial new services, product offerings and concept upgrades” within the coming year, leading up to a comprehensive reveal of a new Waitrose shop design in 2025.

After a six-week closure for refurbishments, the store will now feature fresh concepts such as a Parmesan counter and a chilled wine section.

Commenting on the strategy, James Bailey, executive director for Waitrose, remarked, “Waitrose will always offer fantastic food, but the groundwork we have undertaken behind the scenes in recent years means we can now focus on growth through new shops and ensuring our existing ones are providing great shopping experiences that match the quality of our products.”

“The transformation of our Finchley Road store marks the next evolution of our journey to create a great shopping experience for our customers, underpinned by a high-quality product offering tailored to the local area, and the quality service we are synonymous with.”

“In the design process of the [Finchley] store, we’ve taken into account our customers’ shopping preferences and used this insight to introduce new concepts. These will be trialled and implemented nationwide as we strive towards shaping the future of Waitrose.”

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