



# Asda's 2020 vision

Asda has revamped its Old Kent Road store with an eye on shoppers' needs now and in the future. John Ryan pays a visit



**T**here has been an Asda store along the road from London's Elephant & Castle since the early part of the last decade, but in late 2013 it got an eight-week makeover that put it in the vanguard of the grocer's latest thinking.

This is a 48,000 sq ft single-floor unit and according to store manager Diggi Saxena, "the rationale behind the makeover was to see what our Asda stores would look like in 2020".

And the moment shoppers enter the car park of this branch, just off the Old Kent Road, they will see that changes have been made. For those who really can't be bothered to go into the store there are three car wash-style bays, each with a button. Press the button and your click-and-collect shopping will be brought out to you – perfect for "the school run on the way home", as Saxena says.

But as is the case with many inner-London supermarkets, a lot of the business generated in this store comes from people who travel to it on foot or using public transport. This is borne out by the fact that this branch has an average of 40,000 customers visiting it every week, of whom 24,000 opt to self-scan their purchases when heading for the checkouts.

This suggests that more than 50% of people visiting this store have probably not arrived by car, as self-scan shopping tends to indicate the presence of local top-up shoppers and smaller basket sizes.

**ASDA, OLD KENT ROAD, LONDON**

**Size** 48,000 sq ft  
**Originally opened** 2004  
**Revamp** Late 2013  
**New features** Baby department, Subway, and halal meat concessions  
**Shopfitter** Uplands Retail, Bristol  
**Ambience** Cheap and cheerful



Yet click-and-collect is a major aspect of this store and points an important way forward for Asda.

Near the entrance of the store is a click-and-collect point consisting of a smooth, white standalone structure. It has a screen on which a code can be punched in, at which point pre-ordered shopping will be brought to the front of the shop.

Saxena says home delivery (picked in store) and click-and-collect account for sales of £60,000 a week here – which sounds relatively low in light of the store's 40,000 total weekly transactions – although he declines to reveal the turnover for the store as a whole.

**Relevant local offer**

For those who choose to shop, rather than collect, the makeover this Asda has received does set it apart from other branches. Walk into the shop proper and it is apparent that while this may be a fairly standard introduction to a supermarket, it is well executed.

**Asda's click-and-collect service is prominent, as well as the traditional in-store offer**





A 'Food to Go' section with the legend "chosen by you" area features sandwiches, fizzy drinks and snacks, and a mid-shop gondola displays local and national newspapers. The 'local' part of this is worth noting – while local newspapers may be stock-in-trade for large supermarkets everywhere, stringent efforts have been made across this store to ensure its offer is relevant to the local demographic.

Before encountering further evidence of this, however, the shopper will pass the takeaway counter, which sells food such as hot chicken and pizza.

This is followed by Haji Baba, a halal meat counter, which is a concession – although the casual shopper would be unaware of this as it has been styled to fit in with the other counters along the store's right-hand perimeter wall.

After this comes the fresh fruit and veg area. The price message, as would be expected in an Asda, is hammered home, but Saxena is quick to point





◀ out the lighting raft located above it, which lights the stock, rather than the shop.

It is black and studded with LED spotlights, adding a quasi-designer feel to the whole. Saxena says this is better for the produce because little heat is produced and energy is saved. It also brings the eye down to product level, helping to obviate the barn-like feeling that buildings of this kind can so easily generate.

Throughout the store there are free-standing fixtures and equipment heights have been lowered, generally improving visibility.

### Where the action is

In the middle of the shop, extending from one end to the other and cutting across all of the aisles of ambient food and homewares, is 'Action Alley'. This is a feature of every Asda store, but in the Old Kent Road branch it has been widened during the revamp. At 10ft across, instead of the previous 7ft, it is impossible to ignore, as are the many 'Rollback' deals along its length.

It is hard not to imagine that widening this thoroughfare by 3ft would impact on available selling space, something that is keenly monitored by every food retailer. Saxena says there was previously quite a lot of back-office space and an additional aisle has been added to the selling area from that, compensating for the aisle's enlargement.

Beyond the ambient food aisles are



The store includes the usual fresh food offer, alongside new sections such as babywear and a Subway (below)

**"THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE MAKEOVER WAS TO SEE WHAT OUR STORES WOULD LOOK LIKE IN 2020"**

Diggi Saxena, Asda

health and beauty, homewares and babywear. The latter is brand-new for this store and as well as incorporating clothing, it includes high chairs and other baby equipment. There is even a high-level suspended beacon overhead that shouts "nappies", giving a clue perhaps about the category's importance within this part of the store.

### Trend-aware

Saxena says there has been reorganising in this store, and the areas selling DVDs,

music and books have been cut back, "reflecting current trends", while computer peripherals, George Home and homewares have all been given additional space.

And so to George. Asda's private-label brand is the granddaddy of UK supermarket clothing offers, but the semi-enclosed faux-wood clad shop-in-shop with planked flooring that houses the offer looks fresh. It has been positioned next to the baby clothing area – a simple and logical layout – and the model followed can now be seen in a large number of Asda branches.

The final part of the journey around this store leads to a Subway. The fast food purveyor has set up a concession, the first in an Asda store. On the day of visiting, at lunchtime, it was busy.

There are 15 tills and four 'hybrid' tills that can function either as additional self-scanning points or, when busy, can become manned cash-taking checkouts.

Back outside the traffic heading south and east along the Old Kent Road continues to roar past. This is hardly a glamorous location, but Asda has succeeded in revamping this store in a manner that gives it appeal.

Asda is taking elements of what has been done on the Old Kent Road and replicating them in stores across its estate.

It may not be revolutionary, but it is an evolution designed to ensure shopper appeal.



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