



Microsoft to launch first UK store on Oxford Circus

BY LUKE TUGBY

Microsoft will open its first UK store on Oxford Circus as it throws down the gauntlet to fierce rival Apple.

As exclusively revealed on Retail-Week.com, the technology giant has agreed a deal to move into 255-259 Regent Street, the prime unit currently occupied by United Colors of Benetton.

The Crown Estate, which co-owns the property, had previously explored options to redevelop the block, but has instead opted to re-let the unit.

Retail Week understands Microsoft has penned a 10-year lease on the 15,000 sq ft store, which is located near to rival Apple's Regent Street flagship.

Microsoft UK chief executive Cindy Rose said: "We couldn't be happier to be opening a flagship store in the heart of central London at Oxford Circus, where two of the world's most iconic shopping streets meet.

"We know our customers and fans, whether they are from London, the broader UK or just visiting, will love our bold plans for the space.

"This will be so much more than just a great place to experience all that is possible with Microsoft, but a real hub for the community where we'll be bringing to life our passion for helping people explore their creativity through an ambitious programme of workshops and training along with moments that work to unite the community."

The deal brings an end to Microsoft's lengthy search for a UK flagship. The business has been linked with a London store for a number of years following a string of successful openings in the US, including a flagship store on New York's Fifth Avenue. Commercial property agent CBRE acted for Microsoft on the deal.

Microsoft's entry to the UK is the latest example of a brand taking physical retail space on Oxford Street.

Dyson unveiled its first British store on Oxford Street in July last year and footwear brand New Balance threw open the doors of its London flagship last October as brands increasingly bid to sell direct to consumers.

Microsoft's stores offer free workshops and daily digital training programmes. The technology specialist regularly holds science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education programmes, including YouthSpark camps where shoppers can learn about computer science, take Minecraft coding classes, leverage LinkedIn for business, and participate in Xbox game design sessions.