



**For immediate release: Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2011**

## **HIGH STREETS FACE NEW CHALLENGE AS MORE MAJOR CHAINS CLOSE**

The news this weekend that Jane Norman is going into administration is the latest piece of bad news for Britain's high street. As well as Mothercare other chains including JJB Sports, Thorntons and Comet are also shutting some shops. With shoppers already turning their backs on town centres, these closures could be the final nail in the coffin for the high street.

- **Less than half of Brits are proud of their local town centre (49%)<sup>[1]</sup> and a quarter of people (25%) who used to be proud of their local town centre aren't any more<sup>[1]</sup>**
- **Two in ten shoppers (22%) have already turned their backs on their local High Street<sup>[2]</sup>**
- **Vacant shops are a turn-off – a quarter of people (25%) have shunned the high street because of the way the recession has led to a number of shops closing down<sup>[3]</sup>**
- **Brits blame high rents (66%), high rates (60%) and the fact that small businesses can't compete with the big retailers (64%)<sup>[4]</sup>**

**Ann Robinson, Director of Consumer Policy at [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com), says:** "Each shop that closes is another nail in the coffin for the High Street and as the recession rumbles on it's likely we'll see more retailers pay the ultimate price. Unfortunately our local high streets are caught in a vicious circle – boarded up vacant stores are a big turn off for shoppers, with many shunning the shabby and vacant high streets. But when consumers stop spending their money on the high street, the stores that are left suffer and are more likely to share the same fate.

"Britain's High Streets should be the lifeblood of the local community – instead they are dying on their feet. The good thing is that 97% of consumers care about their local town centre – they want to see it thrive and they would like to be able to spend their money there. Even small steps like a lick of fresh paint, cleaner pavements and more attractive shop fronts could help save our high streets, and prevent more stores from going under."

**For more information visit [www.uSwitch.com](http://www.uSwitch.com) or call 0800 093 06 07**

**-Ends-**

**For further information please contact:**

John Diviney, Lansons Communications on 0207 294 3696 or [johnd@lansons.com](mailto:johnd@lansons.com)

**Follow the uSwitch.com PR team on Twitter: [@uswitchPR](https://twitter.com/uswitchPR)**

**Notes to editors:**

Research was conducted by EasyInsites on behalf of uSwitch.com in May 2011 amongst 1,002 British adults. Results are weighted.

1. In response to: 'Are you proud of your local town centre?'
2. In response to: 'How often do you shop on your High Street?'
3. In response to: 'When you do not choose to shop on your local High Street, what are your reasons for not doing so?'
4. In response to: 'On many High Streets across the UK there are a lot of vacant stores. Please select what you believe are the main contributing factors to this problem'.

**About us:**

uSwitch.com is a free, impartial, online and telephone-based comparison and switching service, helping consumers compare prices on gas, electricity, water, heating cover, home telephone, broadband, digital television, mobile phones and personal finance products including mortgages, credit cards, current accounts and insurance. In 2010 uSwitch.com celebrated ten years of saving customers money.

uSwitch.com is the first comparison website to achieve the Plain English Campaign's Internet Crystal Mark, which is recognised as a standard that a website has clear language, is accessible and easy to use, and has been tested on a sample of its users.

uSwitch.com is dedicated to helping consumers save money whether they have internet access or not. It offers a dedicated call centre, manned by uSwitch customer service representatives, as well as a freepost 'Send us your bill' service, whereby customers can post their latest energy bills with their telephone number to FREEPOST USWITCH, to get a free call back from a dedicated customer services representative. The service is also available via fax, email and post. Consumers should fax 0203 214 8417, email [CustomerServices@uswitch.com](mailto:CustomerServices@uswitch.com) or write to Customer Services, uSwitch.com, Centro 3, 19 Mandela Street, London, NW1 0DU with their postcode and usage details.

uSwitch.com is owned by Forward Internet Group Limited, a privately funded collection of internet-based businesses focused on consumer engagement and innovation.