

Retail parks



Terrorism threat to retail parks

- There is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors in the UK could have the intent to conduct attacks against retail parks in the UK due to their easily accessible nature and the regular gathering of large crowds within and in proximity to their sites.
- It is highly likely that any terrorist attack conducted against a retail park in the UK would be conducted by an individual or small cell using a low sophistication methodology. E.g., Bladed or Blunt Force Weapons, Vehicle as a Weapon, or Fire as a Weapon.
- There is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors in the UK could have the capability to conduct a high-sophistication attack at a retail park. E.g., Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), Person Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (PBIED) or a marauding attack with Firearms. The complicated nature of plotting a high-sophistication terrorist attack makes it highly likely that there will be greater opportunity for UK police and security services to disrupt potential attacks.
- The assessments in this report were made using the PHIA Probability Yardstick, for further information please see the Assessment Methodology [section below](#).

Location based threats to retail parks in the UK

- There is a realistic possibility that terrorist actors in the UK could seek to conduct an attack against retail parks that are located in proximity to smaller towns in the UK due to the lack of other suitable targets in the nearby area compared to more urban environments.

Previous terrorist incidents related to retail parks in the UK and overseas

- Terrorist actors have previously demonstrated the intent and capability to conduct terrorism-related activity at retail parks in the UK, including:
 - **2025 Manchester;** On 25 January 2025, an individual conducted a Vehicle as a Weapon attack against a police officer. The officer was responding to reports of suspicious behaviour at a retail park before the vehicle was driven towards her at speed. The motivation for the attack remains unclear and investigation remains ongoing. The incident has not been deemed an act of terrorism.¹
 - **2015 Oxford;** In November 2015, Gavin Rae, 36, was arrested for attempting to buy pistols and machine guns from an undercover officer. Prior to his arrest, Rae met an undercover officer at Bicester Village to set up a meeting to purchase the weapons. Rae had reportedly previously attempted to travel to Syria to join Islamic State.²
 - **2006 Belfast;** On 01 November 2006, Dissident Republican terrorists reportedly conducted a Fire as a Weapon attack on a retail park in Belfast. Several stores were significantly damaged. While a number of staff were reportedly in the Homebase store when the device exploded, there were no injuries reported.³

Other potential threats to retail parks in the UK

- It is almost certain that any terrorist actor with the intent to conduct an attack against a retail park would have open access to the site and the capability to conduct uninterrupted hostile reconnaissance due to the relaxed security posture and publicly accessible nature of retail parks in the UK.
- There is a realistic possibility that there could be a heightened threat to retail parks at peak times. E.g., Retail parks would likely have a higher footfall around Christmas or during major sales events such as Black Friday. It is almost certain that large crowds that gather for major sales events would be an attractive target for terrorist actors in the UK.
- There is a realistic possibility that the threat posed to retail parks could be dynamic and dependent on the nature of the tenants within each retail park.
 - E.g. Terrorist actors in the UK could have the intent to purchase or steal goods required to facilitate an attack from certain tenants within retail parks in the UK.
 - E.g., There could be a heightened threat to tenants within a retail park with a particular association to a contentious issue and/or industry. For example, animal rights activists could have the intent to target stores with links to the fur and/or hunting industry.
- There is a realistic possibility that staff employed at retail parks could pose an insider threat to retail parks in the UK, including:
 - Staff could enable terrorist actors in the UK to access a site within a retail park with malicious items by allowing such individuals to bypass any security mitigations in place at that site.
 - Staff could exploit vehicular access routes to the site available to suppliers to facilitate the use and/or placement of high-sophistication attack capabilities.
 - Staff could grant terrorist actors access to monitored and/or restricted substances and items in particular shops, bypassing restrictions on the purchase of certain materials.

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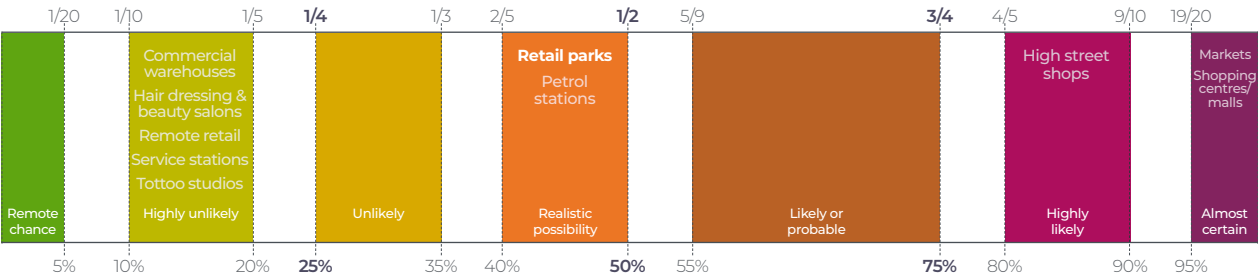
Threat visualisation

The diagram below outlines the intent of terrorist actors in the UK to conduct attacks against retail parks within the retail & wholesale sector.

Terrorist intent can be defined as the desire and/or determination of an individual to conduct an attack against any given site.

The intent of terrorist actors to conduct an attack against the retail & wholesale sector in the UK is subject to change based on the assessments outlined in this report.

Note: The terrorism threat to any given site is not based solely on intent, but also the capability of terrorist actors in the UK as outlined in this report. Terrorism threat is also mitigated by the UK’s countrywide terrorism risk mitigation infrastructure including both public and private security and safety capabilities.



Assessment Methodology

The assessments made in this report have been made using the Professional Head of Intelligence’s “Probability Yardstick” (above). The Probability Yardstick is a standardised instrument used to provide a professional standard for intelligence assessment.

- **Almost certain:** An event has a greater than 90% chance of occurring.
- **Highly likely:** An event has a 76% to 90% chance of occurring.
- **Likely:** An event has a 55% to 75% chance of occurring.
- **Realistic possibility:** An event has a 40% to 54% chance of occurring.
- **Unlikely:** An event has a 25% to 39% chance of occurring.
- **Highly unlikely:** An event has an 10% to 24% chance of occurring.
- **Remote chance:** An event has a less than 10% chance of occurring.

Time spans

- **Short Term:** 0–6 Months.
- **In the next 12 months.**
- **Medium Term:** 12 months–5 Years.
- **Long Term:** 5+ Years.

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Bibliography

1. Man, 19, arrested on suspicion of attempted murder after female police officer hit by car, UK News - Sky News
2. "Would-be ISIS soldier" jailed after police sting operation at Bicester Village - Oxford Mail
3. Dissidents 'behind bomb attacks', Northern Ireland - BBC News

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