

THE WAREHOUSE OF THE FUTURE

IMHXTM **2025**
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Sustainable Building Design

Warehouses of the future will be designed for longevity, emphasising modular construction, sustainable materials and energy-efficient designs.

The adoption of **CLT** and **glu-lam timber** will become widespread. With the UK target of 70GW of solar capacity by 2030, warehouse rooftops will become a key asset, incorporating solar panels, skylights and drone docking stations.

Underground storage will also be more widely utilised, to aid in minimising environmental impact and noise pollution. Integrated **green landscaping** will ensure that warehouses contribute positively to both ecosystems and communities. High-bay **robotic pallet shuttle** systems will cut energy use by 70% compared to conventional cranes.



Advanced Automation

AI, robotics and automation will continue to revolutionise warehouse operations. Currently, only 10-15% of global warehouses

use robots, but this number is set to rise significantly.

Automated guided vehicles (AGVs) and robotic picking systems will refine inventory handling, autonomously adapting techniques to minimise errors.

By 2025, automation adoption will surge, driven by rising labour costs and declining automation expenses.

The '**Robots as a Service**' (RaaS) model will enable businesses to experiment with automation with minimal financial risk. Warehouses will feature higher eaves, smoother mezzanine floors, and increased electrical infrastructure to accommodate robotics.

AI will further support real-time monitoring, predictive maintenance, and supply chain forecasting, enhancing warehouse efficiency and worker safety.



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Smart Energy Management

Innovations in smart energy management

are reshaping warehousing, significantly reducing energy consumption through automation and renewable energy integration.

The widespread adoption of

electric vehicles (EVs) has driven demand for EV charging stations, benefitting both employees and freight transport while cutting carbon emissions.

Energy storage technologies are advancing, allowing warehouses to store excess solar energy for future use, ensuring continuity and efficiency. High-bay robotic storage systems will also contribute to energy savings by using significantly less power than conventional **automated storage and retrieval systems**. As the industry shifts towards a decentralised, digital and eco-friendly model, energy-efficient warehouses will be critical in minimising environmental impact, optimising operations and driving sustainability.



Data Driven Solutions

Warehouses will transform into data-

driven environments, utilising **AI and IoT** for real-time decision-making and predictive analytics. AI will optimise supply chains, workforce management and energy efficiency, while cybersecurity remains a growing priority.

The increasing volume of data tracking each item's journey through the supply chain will introduce new challenges in data security and integrity.

Blockchain will enhance product authentication in secondary markets, ensuring transparency. AI-powered system integration will eliminate the need for expensive IT upgrades, creating seamless interoperability between platforms.

AI will also enhance inventory accuracy, demand forecasting and security, making warehouse operations more efficient and resilient. **Cloud-based solutions** will improve collaboration and supply chain visibility, enhancing responsiveness and agility.



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Space Optimisation

Warehouses will maximise vertical and underground storage by implementing multi-level racking, mezzanines and automated systems to improve space utilisation while facilities will expand in both height and footprint.

Underground ASRS systems will help mitigate noise pollution while reducing environmental impact. Rooftops will be optimised for solar, natural lighting and **drone logistics**.

Smart zoning strategies will enhance workflow efficiency, ensuring the smooth movement of goods and better space utilisation.

With rising land costs, planning policies will promote higher-density warehousing and mixed-use developments, enabling warehouses to coexist with residential and commercial properties. **AI-driven inventory management** will help prevent excessive stockpiling, ensuring leaner, more adaptable operations.



Digital Integration

The traditional belief that 'people buy from people' is becoming outdated.

In today's digital economy, commoditised transactions are

streamlined, choices are clearer and automated procurement is widely accepted.

Inspired by platforms like **Airbnb** and **Uber**, digital systems will dynamically match warehouse space with real-time demand, allowing businesses to lease storage flexibly without long-term commitments. Efficiency tracking and performance analytics will increase transparency.

IoT, blockchain and cloud computing will accelerate digital transformation, ensuring real-time tracking, security and efficiency. Connected devices will enhance supply chain visibility, reducing delays and human errors. AI-powered software will integrate with inventory management systems, automating decision-making and boosting operational networks.



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Environmental Integration

In the 1990s, renewable energy accounted for just 2% of the UK's electricity generation; today, it makes up around 40% and continues to grow. Future warehouses will focus on **sustainability, energy efficiency and carbon footprint reduction**. The demand for low-emission

transport and green infrastructure will reshape logistics.

By 2050, sustainability efforts will better balance the three key aspects of packaging: using

recycled materials, reducing weight to lower transport emissions and **minimising waste** from product damage.

In 2022, domestic freight reached 216 billion tonne-kilometres, with over 80% transported by road. This will shift towards low-carbon alternatives, requiring warehouses to serve as EV charging hubs for fleets. **Battery-electric forklifts** will replace diesel models, cutting costs and emissions.

Sustainable initiatives like rainwater harvesting and carbon offsetting will support greener supply chains.

Future warehouses will also implement strategies such as **enhanced traffic control**, eco-friendly landscaping and biodiversity projects, including rewilding and beekeeping. Labour shortages will drive improved working conditions, with features like **on-site childcare**, training centres and better transport links.



Community Connection

Warehouses will become more integrated with their surrounding communities,

investing in **public infrastructure**, shared spaces and employee wellbeing.

Over a decade ago, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills predicted that "the UK workforce in 2030 will be multi-generational, older, more international and more female.

Technology will be ubiquitous, job roles will become more fluid and global labour competition will increase. Warehouses will embrace diversity, with more women, older employees and neurodiverse individuals entering the workforce. AI-driven labour allocation and flexible shifts will allow workers to select shifts based on demand and pay rates.



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