

Customers could lose out in merger between window blind companies

Hunter Douglas is a leading global supplier of blinds and other window coverings, which generated global sales of \$3.6 billion in 2018. It already owns established online and in-home UK providers of window coverings, Blinds2Go and Hillarys. 247 Home Furnishings (247) operates online and sells a range of window coverings, including curtains, shutters and blinds, across the UK.

Hunter Douglas originally obtained a minority interest in 247 in 2013, although this was not publicly disclosed at the time. It then went on to purchase 100% of the shareholding last year.

The CMA's in-depth investigation has concluded that the companies are close competitors in online sales of made to measure market blinds, with few effective alternative providers remaining after the merger. Most other specialist retailers are much smaller and less well-established than the merging businesses, and competition from large retailers of window coverings, like Next, Dunelm and John Lewis, is limited. The CMA therefore provisionally found that the merger will leave customers for online made-to-measure blinds with few alternative suppliers, likely leading to less choice, higher prices, and lower quality.

While Hunter Douglas already had a minority interest in 247 before the merger, the CMA has provisionally found that the purchase last year will bring the Blinds2Go and 247 brands under the same ownership and significantly reduce the incentive to operate as independent competitors.

Kirstin Baker, Inquiry Group Chair, said:

"The CMA is concerned that this merger will negatively affect customers in the UK looking to buy custom blinds online. We have provisionally found that Hunter Douglas' ownership of Blinds2Go combined with the full purchase of 247 would give it control of a very large share of the market for online made to measure blinds – this would be bad for consumers, reducing choice and quality, and increasing prices."

All interested parties now have until 29 July 2020 to submit views on possible remedies to address the CMA's concerns, which may include selling part or all of Hunter Douglas' interest in 247, and until 5 August 2020 to submit views on the CMA's provisional findings.

For more information, visit the [Hunter Douglas N.V. / 247 Home Furnishings Ltd merger inquiry](#) web page.

For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.