

High Streets get welcome boost

In a recent press release issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, new legal changes to empower councils to auction off leases for long-term empty lots was released. Here's what the changes will provide:

High streets are set to be revitalised as the government hands councils new powers to tackle the scourge of empty shops. Local authorities will be able to auction off leases for commercial properties that have been empty for long periods, helping bring business back to the high street and drive growth across the country.

High Street Rental Auctions will create a 'right to rent' for businesses and community groups, giving them access to city, town and village centre sites. The changes will stop landlords sitting on empty lots for more than 365 days in a 24-month period, before councils can auction a one-to-five year lease.

With growth a key mission for the government, it is committing over £1m in funding to support the auction process, which will create jobs for local people and boost trade by bringing local businesses back to the heart of our communities.

Local Growth Minister Alex Norris said:

“High streets lie at the heart of communities the length and breadth of this country. But in many areas, they are not what they used to be.

“Small businesses need our support and that's why we are creating a 'right to rent' so that high street lots that have been left empty for far too long can be brought back to life. We want shops and shoppers back on the high street – and that's what these changes will help to bring.”



Originally introduced by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, the High Street Rental Auctions powers came into force after legislation was laid in November. Before putting a property to a rental auction, a local authority must first seek to resolve the vacancy by engaging with the landlord.

High Street Rental Auctions form part of the government's wider commitment to support high streets and small businesses, as part of work to drive economic growth in all parts of the country, break down barriers to opportunity, and fix the foundations of the economy.

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