

Government to force landlords to rent vacant units after six months

By Laura McGuire | Wed 20 April 2022

Landlords will be forced to let out units that have been vacant for more than six months under new government plans to help the high street.

The new legislation will be introduced as part of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, which is set to be announced in the Queen's Speech next month, according to reports first published in the *Daily Mail*.

The regime will allow small communities and businesses to take over desolate retail units in a bid to revitalise the high street.

Under the new measures, local authorities could be able to “force landlords to rent out commercial property on high streets through a compulsory rental auction”.

According to the latest figures from the British Retail Consortium, the rate of store vacancies in the final quarter of 2021 stood at 14.4%, 0.1 percentage points below the Q3 level.

Dominic Curran, property policy advisor at the British Retail Consortium, told *Property Week*: “We welcome efforts to ensure that high streets and town centres are attractive places to visit.

“However, the underlying cause of empty shops is the business rates burden, which is now at an all-time high in England. Government must significantly reduce the rates burden on shops if they want sustainable and thriving high streets.”

