

DANIEL KAWCZYNSKI MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

31 May 2023

Dear Constituent

CAMRA Campaign

Thank you for contacting me about the CAMRA campaign on high street rental auctions.

I recognise how valuable our pubs are to the many people who enjoy them. Not only are they important parts of local economies, but they also bring people together and are the very lifeblood of our communities.

It is always disheartening to see a pub forced to close its doors permanently. I completely understand that closures can be hard for owners and communities. I also recognise the very real wider persistent issue of vacant high street units which the proposed new high street rental auction process is aiming to address. Shops and buildings being left vacant for prolonged periods of times is a blight to our high streets, has a direct and negative impact on footfall and risks businesses shutting down.

The Government is consulting on the design of high street rental auctions, including a new permitted development right to allow buildings which do not fall under the Commercial, Business and Service Use Class (such as pubs) to change use as part of the new high street rental auctions process. I would encourage you to share your views. You can do this by searching: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/high-street-rental-auctions>

I want to assure you that the Government has been clear that the permitted development right, if introduced, would not allow for physical works to be carried out to the premises that amount to development. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has said that: "Where such building works are necessary, a planning application or listed building consent would be required. The premises will revert to its former use at the end of the period of the lease, unless otherwise agreed and planning permission obtained...".

It will be for individual local authorities – who know their area best – to use their discretion when it comes to using the new powers for high street rental auctions. I want to be clear that the intention of these new auctions is not to interfere with properties whose landlords are actively seeking to fill their premises, but rather to provide a tool to local authorities where vacancy rates are a significant issue and landlord cooperation is low.

There are existing mechanisms to support community groups to step in where pubs are at risk of being lost without intervention. Listing a pub as an Asset of Community Value allows communities to have up to six months to bid to buy it if it has been put for sale. In addition, the Government's the £150 million Community Ownership Fund is helping community groups buy assets such as pubs so that they can continue to serve their local area.

I do hope that this response has provided you with some assurance. Please be assured that I will be carefully scrutinising the outcome of the Government's consultation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kaw', followed by a horizontal line.

Daniel Kawczynski MP
Member of Parliament for Shrewsbury & Atcham