

High Street Rental Auctions Bournemouth Town Centre Designated Area Consultation

Have your say

We are asking for comments on the proposed area to be designated for High Street Rental Auctions (HSRA) in Bournemouth Town Centre. HSRAs are a new power for local authorities to require landlords to let out persistently vacant properties to new tenants, such as local businesses or community groups.

HSRAs were introduced in December 2024 as part of [the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023](#) as a tool to see local authorities working proactively with landlords to encourage vibrant and successful high streets.

To be able to use HSRAs, we first must carry out community engagement on the area we want to focus on, asking for comments on the proposed area.

Please read this information document and use the online form to share any comments about the proposed area. Further information about the HSRA process is available in the Frequently Asked Questions at the end of this document.

The consultation is available online at haveyoursay.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/HSRA

Paper versions of this document will be available in the following libraries:

- Boscombe
- Bournemouth Town Centre
- Westbourne

If you have any questions, or require an alternative language or format, please email economicdevelopment@bcpcouncil.gov.uk giving your contact details.

The consultation will **close at 11.59pm on Tuesday 12 August 2025.**

What do High Street Rental Auctions do?

HSRAs have been designed to enable persistently vacant premises to be brought back into use, where all other attempts to let the premises have been exhausted.

HSRAs are a permissive power for councils to auction rental rights of commercial high street premises. When a building or shop has been empty continuously for 12 months, or for 365 days within a 24-month period, the council could work with the landlord to fill the space. If the premises remains vacant after these efforts, independent traders or local groups can then bid for a one to five year tenancy.

Why is BCP Council participating in this process?

We are one of the first councils to engage with the Government to be an early adopter of the High Street Rental Auction (HSRA) legislation.

Early adopters can act as champions to encourage greater take up of HSRAs by other local authorities. They can also perform an advisory role to help shape the guidance to improve the way in which the HSRAs can be delivered going forward. Part of our role in joining the HSRA Programme is to act in an advisory role as a critical friend where we will continue to support the government to refine the HSRA process.

What is the proposed HSRA Area?

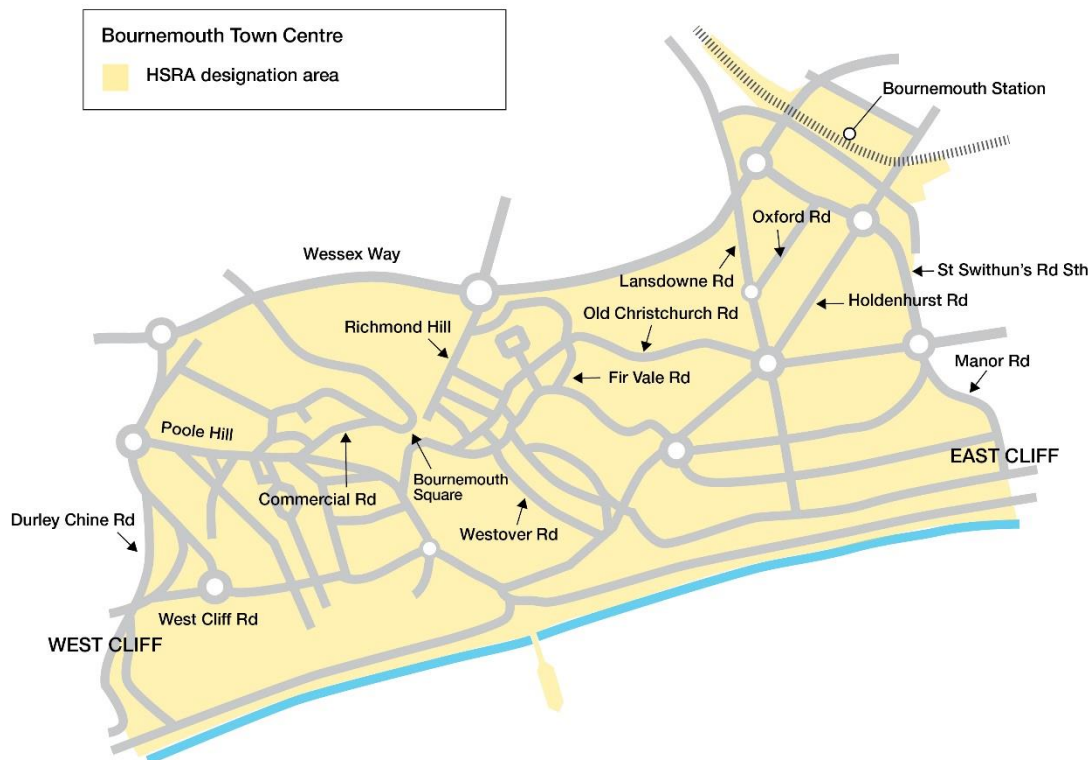
The Council is responsible for designating the streets or areas where a High Street Rental Auction could be used and must publish any proposed high street designation, or any variation of an existing high street designation.

We were offered the opportunity to be part of the early adopter programme, using HSRAs as a tool to help with collective efforts to improve Bournemouth Town Centre.

Bournemouth is being prioritised on the basis that it has consistently has a higher number of vacant units compared to the other town centres of Poole and Christchurch. Public perception and resident feedback has been focused on Bournemouth being the main area of concern for tackling high street vacancies. This includes feedback from the Bournemouth Town Centre - share your ideas consultation.

Whilst Bournemouth Town Centre is the area we are focusing on in the first instance, there is the possibility to designate other town centres or high streets in the future, although nothing is planned at this stage.

The proposed area for the HSRA is shown in the map below (and can be seen as an interactive map at haveyoursay.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/HSRA).



The proposed Bournemouth Town Centre area mirrors the existing town centre boundary, as defined in the adopted Local Plan and the Bournemouth Town Centre Area Action Plan, and therefore has historic and legislative recognition. It reflects the area most significant to, and at the heart of, Bournemouth Town Centre's economy. In using this as the designated area, it fulfils the requirements of the HSRA guidance as being important to the local economy due to the local benefit from a concentration of premises undertaking high street uses.

What are the next steps?

The consultation runs until Tuesday 12 August 2025. The findings will be presented to the Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations for a decision to be made. The results will be published at haveyoursay.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/HSRA.

This engagement is part of a pre-auction process that the local authority must undertake if it wants to commence an HSRA in the future.

A high street designation does not mean that an HSRA will be started on a building/premises within that area. The intention is to use the powers only as a tool if cooperation to find an alternative solution with the landlord fails.

Once vacant premises have been identified, the council would seek to work with agents and landlords to bring those premises back into use before pursuing any action using HSRA powers.

How to have your say

The first stage is to engage residents, businesses and other stakeholders on the proposed area for the HSRA.

We would like to hear any comments on the proposed area before it is designated.

You can have your say by completing our online form on the following website haveyoursay.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/HSRA

Alternatively, you can view a copy of this document at the following libraries:

- Boscombe
- Bournemouth Town Centre
- Westbourne

If you have any questions or require a large print copy of this information or alternative language or format, please email economicdevelopment@bcpcouncil.gov.uk giving your name, address, and telephone number.

The consultation will **close at 11.59pm on Tuesday 12 August 2025.**

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a High Street Rental Auction (HSRA)?

High Street Rental Auctions (HSRA) are a new power for local authorities to require landlords to rent out persistently vacant commercial properties to new tenants such as local businesses or community groups.

They were introduced in December 2024 as part of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 to see local authorities working proactively with landlords to encourage vibrant and successful high streets.

What is a permissive power

HSRA powers are permissive in nature because they allow, but do not force, the local authority to do something.

What do High Street Rental Auctions do?

HSRAs have been designed to enable persistently vacant premises to be brought back into use, where all other attempts to let the premises have been exhausted.

HSRAs are a permissive power for local authorities to auction rental rights of commercial high street premises. When a building or shop has been empty for 365 days within a 24-month period, the local authority will work with the landlord to fill the space. If they don't come to an agreement, independent traders or local groups can then bid for a one to five year tenancy.

Why was Bournemouth Town Centre selected?

BCP Council was offered the opportunity to be part of the early adopter programme, using HSRAs as a tool to help with collective efforts to improve Bournemouth Town Centre.

Bournemouth is being prioritised on the basis that it has consistently has a higher number of vacant units compared to the other town centres of Poole and Christchurch. Public perception and resident feedback has been focused on Bournemouth being the main area of concern for tackling high street vacancies. This includes feedback from the Bournemouth Town Centre - share your ideas consultation.

Whilst Bournemouth Town Centre is the area we are focusing on in the first instance, there is the possibility to designate other town centres or high streets in the future, although nothing is planned at this stage.

Which premises could be eligible for HSRA?

A premises is eligible for a High Street Rental Auction where it has been unoccupied continuously for 12 months, or for at least 366 days (non-continuously) within a 24-month period.

To qualify for a High Street Rental Auction, premises need to be situated on a designated high street or in a designated town centre and the local authority needs to consider them to be suitable for a high-street use, which includes:

- shops or offices
- restaurants, bars, public houses, cafés
- public entertainment or recreation
- a communal hall or meeting-place
- services such as financial, property, beauty services

The premises to be auctioned can include:

- the whole of a building that is designed or adapted to be used as a whole; or
- any part of a building that is designed or adapted to be used separately from the other parts, or could be used with reasonable adaptation.

This means that premises on different floors of a building could be auctioned if they are designed or adapted to be used separately.

HSRAs will not be applicable for all buildings. For example, premises which are affected by significant issues, such as dangerous structures, contain combustible cladding, or have serious condensation or damp issues are unlikely to be considered given the likely significance of repair costs payable by the landlord. In addition, buildings such as large ex-department stores (or other sites where subdivision or other complex changes may be necessary) may be subject to long-term, complex redevelopment plans which may be negatively impacted by being included.

A HSRA will also not be appropriate if there is not likely to be a sufficient demand for the premises, should it be available at the Minimum Standard and at a fair market rent.

How many vacant premises are there?

To determine whether premises are vacant for the purpose of a HSRA, we are required to carry out due diligence into the length and nature of any occupation of the premises over the last 2 years.

We will be commissioning a consultant to identify the vacant premises that meet the criteria for HSRA in the proposed area. We have received funding from the Government to do this work and it will be completed by early summer 2025.

Does this mean that HSRAs will commence?

A high street designation does not mean that we will start an HSRA on a premises within that area. It is part of the process that we must undertake if we want to commence a HSRA in the future.

We know that many landlords are proactive and want to fill their shops and we would always work with them in the first instance and have been doing so. Where this is not working, HSRAs provide a tool to address persistently vacant premises to improve the local high street economy.

How would a rental auction work?

Conditions to satisfy to use a High Street Rental Auction

The local authority must be satisfied that the premises meet the vacancy condition and the local benefit condition before issuing an initial notice.

The vacancy condition states that premises are eligible for a High Street Rental Auction where it has been unoccupied continuously for 12 months, or for at least 366 days (non-continuously) within a 24-month period.

The local benefit condition states that the local authority must be satisfied that the occupation of the premises for a suitable high-street use would be beneficial to the local economy, society, or environment.

The High Street Rental Auction Process begins with a 10 to 12 week Notice Period and then a 12 week Auction Period.

Notice Period

The Notice Period begins with a local authority serving an initial notice on the landlord of premises they have identified as eligible for a High Street Rental Auction.

The landlord will then have the chance to make their own arrangements to enter into a tenancy, if this tenancy begins within 8 weeks of the serving of the initial notice and provided they meet certain conditions. If the landlord fails to enter into such a tenancy, the local authority may serve a final notice informing the landlord of the local authority's intention to run a High Street Rental Auction in relation to the premises. The landlord has the chance to serve a counter-notice, objecting to the final notice, and appeal. Assuming the final notice is not withdrawn by the local authority following counter-notice, or successfully appealed, the process will then move to the Auction Period.

Auction Period

The local authority then has 12 weeks to (1) auction the premises and (2) complete the tenancy contract.

During weeks 1 to 4 of the Auction Period the local authority and landlord should engage with each other, with the landlord being required to provide information about the premises and being afforded the opportunity to make representations on the proposed terms of the tenancy contract and tenancy, so that the auction pack can be created. The tenancy contract and tenancy, along with several other documents, will make up the auction pack. A marketing period (operating during weeks 5 to 9 at a minimum) follows where interested parties can register their bid with the local authority. In weeks 10 to 11 of the Auction Period the local authority must serve the bids on the landlord before a successful bidder is chosen. The auction process concludes when a tenancy contract is exchanged between the successful bidder and the landlord.

After the auction

The successful bidder at auction will enter into two legal agreements with the landlord. The first is the tenancy contract, which governs the landlord's required works prior to the tenancy commencing, and the second is the tenancy itself, which will set out the specific obligations on the tenant and landlord during the term of the tenancy.

Following completion of the landlord's works the tenancy is granted.

The High Street Rental Auction process is expected to take 22 to 24 weeks from initiation to completion.