

# PLANNING REGENERATION + INFRASTRUCTURE

Delivering transformational, sustainable and viable  
developments, assets and places

# HOW PLANNING POLICY CHANGES AFFECT LOCAL HIGH STREET STRATEGIES

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# SCOPE OF PRESENTATION

- Background and town centre challenges
- Key policy changes
  - Use Class Changes – introduction of Class E
  - Permitted Development Rights and Article 4 Directions
  - High Street Auctions
  - Mayoral Development Corporations
  - High Street (Designation, Review and Improvement) Bill



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# A PERFECT STORM!



Interest rates @ 5.25%  
Inflation @ 3.4%



High Streets Vacancies @14%<sup>2</sup>



UK gross debt @£2.6bn<sup>1</sup>  
(101% of GDP)



Retail Park Vacancies @ 9%

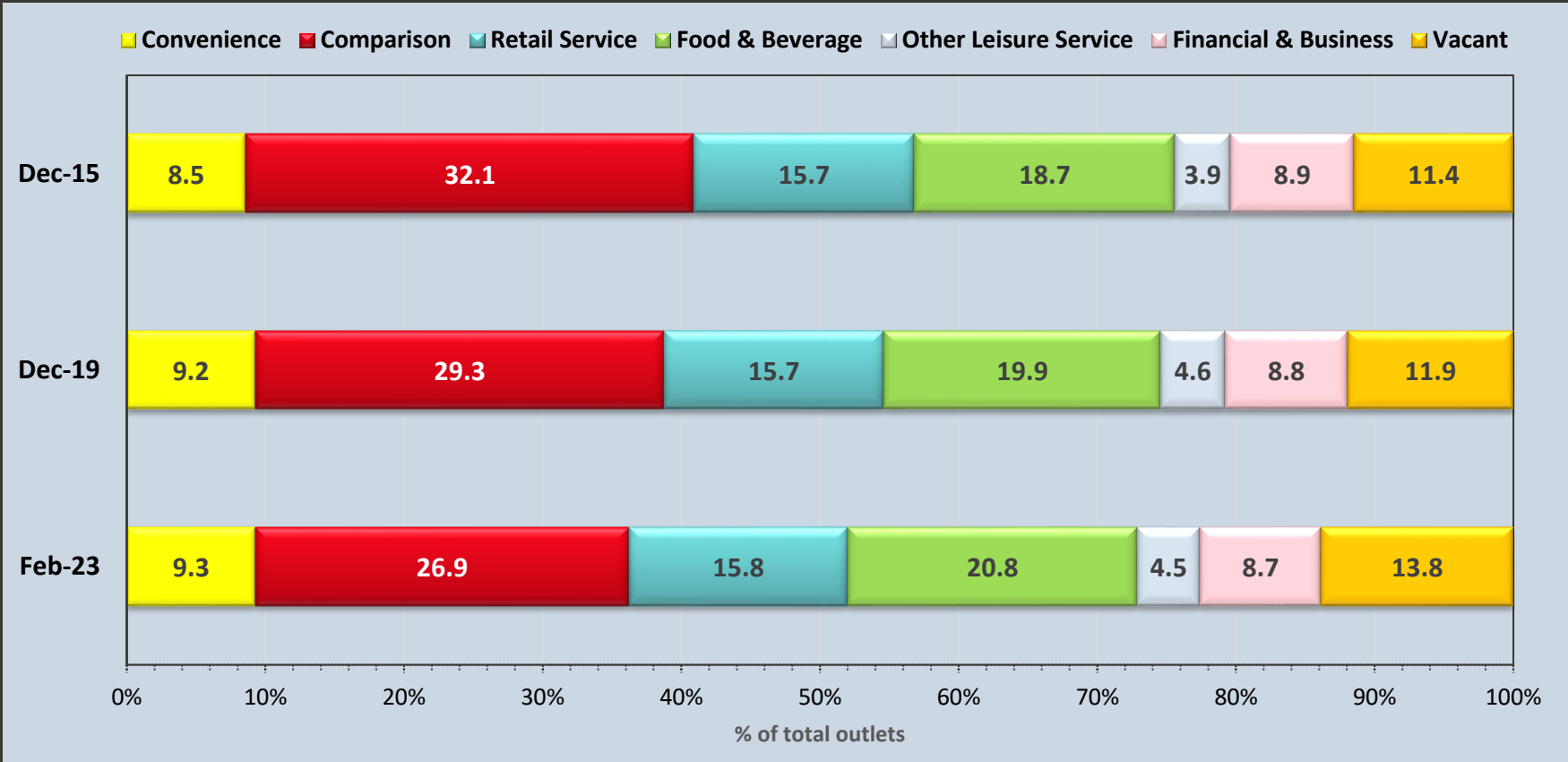


Online Sales @ 26%



Shopping Centre Vacancies @18%

# TOWN CENTRE COMPOSITION



- National and Local Government responding to problems
- Plan-led approach seen as key to success

**BUT**

- Central Government can introduce initiatives and policy changes that affect local governance and decisions, including:
  - Funding for town centre
  - Policy changes

# USE CLASSES ORDER 2020

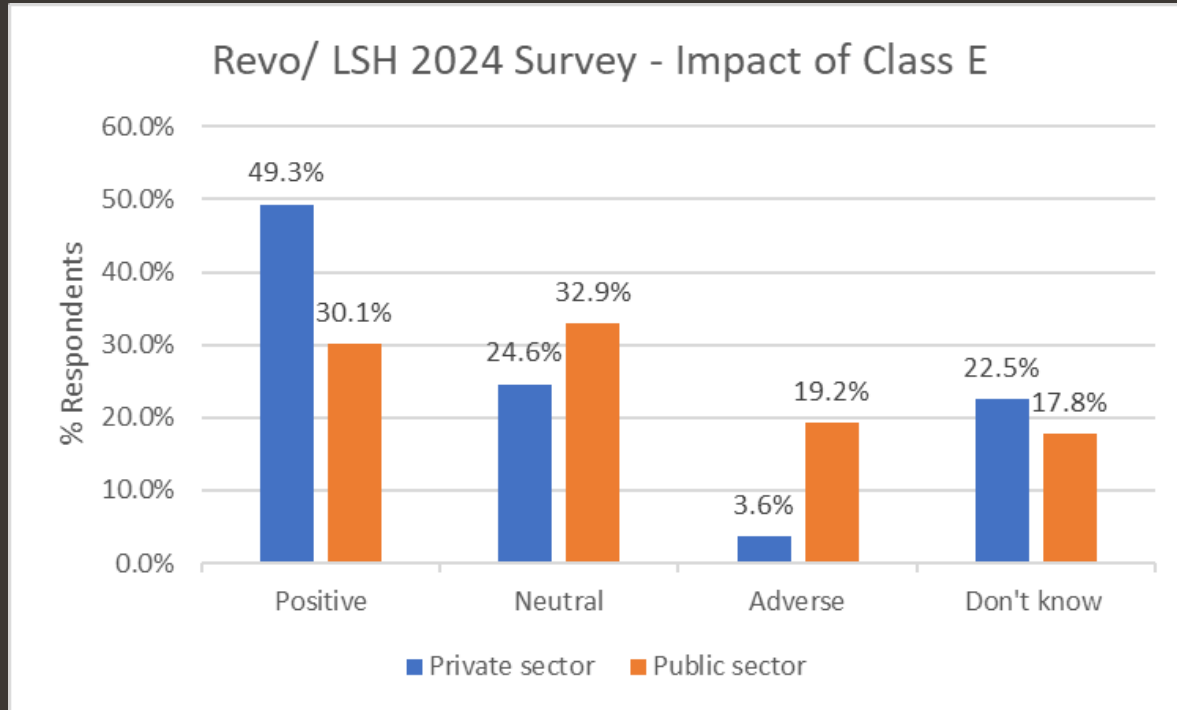
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Changes to Use Classes Order in 2020 introduced **Class E**, which includes retail but also wider range of uses:

- ✓ Restaurants & Cafés
- ✓ Financial & professional services
- ✓ Offices
- ✓ Indoor sport, recreation & fitness uses
- ✓ Medical & health services,
- ✓ Creche, day nursery or day centre

# UCO 2020 – IMPACT OF CLASS E

Removed ability of local authorities to prevent loss of retail units in town centres





# NHS COMMUNITY DIAGNOSTIC CENTRES

- **Eastgate Centre, Basildon** – healthcare facility opened in former Debenhams unit. There are longer term plans to incorporate step up/down care beds and optometry/ eyecare services.
- **The Glass Works, Barnsley** – part of wider town centre redevelopment. Services include ultrasound, X-ray, breast screening, phlebotomy and bone density scans. Open 7-days a week.
- **Dolphin Centre, Poole** – Dorset Health Village in the former Beales store. Brings together primary, community and secondary care as well as local health support teams.
- **St George's Shopping Centre, Gravesend** - NHS ultrasound clinic offer patients a seven-day service.



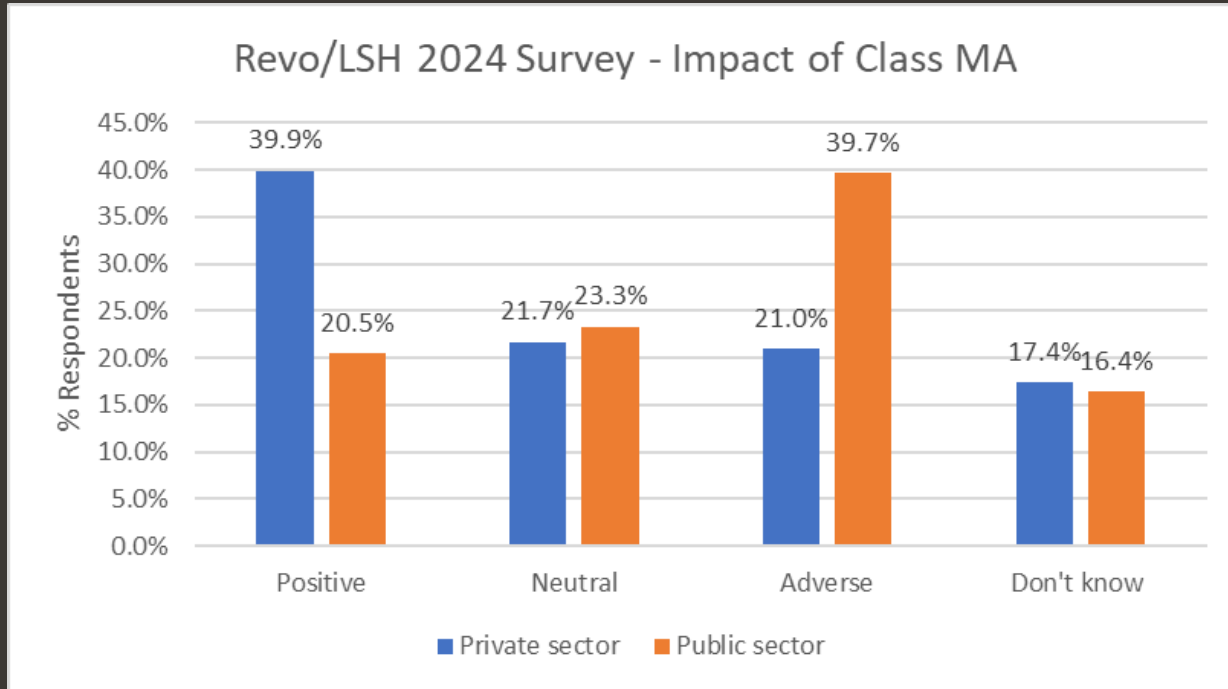
# PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

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- **PDR apply in many parts of planning but those that affect town centre uses include:**
  - Offices to residential conversion (introduced 2013)
  - Conversion of shops and certain other uses to residential (introduced 2013)
  - 2020 Use Class changes introduced Class MA PDR rights for Class E to residential use
  - Upward extensions on existing homes, blocks of flats and buildings in mixed or commercial use (introduced 2020)
  - Demolition of commercial buildings

# PDR – CONVERSION TO RESIDENTIAL

Prior approval still required but matters for consideration now relate more to residential amenity than retail area



# PDR – ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS

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- **A Council can remove PDR rights using Article 4 Directive**
- **However, the NPPF (paragraph 53) indicates this should only be done:**
  - ✓ Where it is necessary to avoid wholly unacceptable adverse impacts
  - ✓ There is robust evidence it is required
  - ✓ It applies to the smallest possible geographic area
- **If the SoS does not consider that these criteria have been met, he/she can amend the Direction**

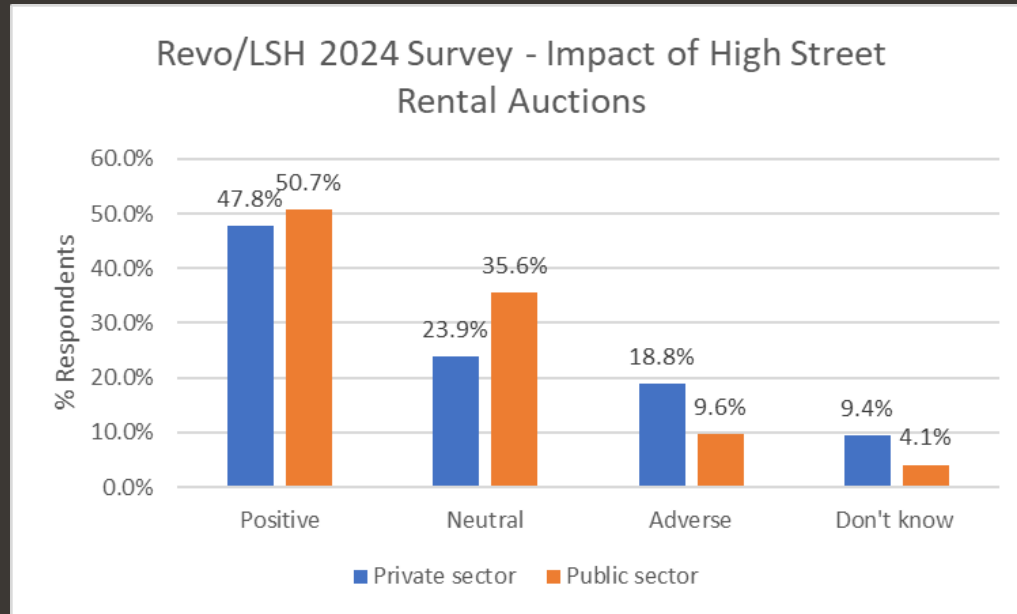
# PDR – DEMOLITION OF COMMERCIAL SPACE

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- **Currently PDR rights allow demolition of some commercial buildings and construction of residential in their place**
  - ✓ Limited to certain previous uses (office, R&D or light industrial)
  - ✓ Buildings built before 1990
  - ✓ Vacant for at least 6 months
  - ✓ Footprint under 1,000 sqm and rebuild to same footprint
- **Government consultation to possibly extend these PDRs ended in April 2024**

# LUPRA: HIGH STREET RENTAL AUCTIONS

- Part 10 gives local authorities a mechanism to revitalise high streets by auctioning off leases of vacant premises
- Limited application in practice .... but seen more as a positive “tool” in the LSH/Revo survey



# MAYORAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS

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- Expansion of established programme for regeneration involving central government-led public-private partnerships
- Extended powers to London mayor in 2011 and since 2017 applies to other mayors - now totalling 13
- Areas can include town centres and being applied as follows:
  - ✓ **Greater Manchester** – Stockport town centre
  - ✓ **Tees Valley** – 2 DC established including Middlesbrough town centre and Middleton Grange Shopping Centre, Hartlepool

# HIGH STREET (DESIGNATION, REVIEW & IMPROVEMENT PLAN) BILL

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## *A Bill to require local authorities to:*

- *designate high streets in their area;*
  - *undertake and publish periodic reviews of the condition of those high streets;*
  - *develop action plans for the improvement of the condition of those high streets and for connected purposes.*
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- ✓ Private Members Bill introduced in 2024 with Government support
  - ✓ Completed readings in House of Commons and for debate in the Lords on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2024
  - ✓ Shows on-going recognition of importance of High Streets



# WHAT HAVE WE **LEARNT?**

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- Every town centres and high street is unique – no “one-size-fits-all” approach
- Places cannot stand still.
- Diversity & flexibility are key.
- Need strong leadership & governance.
- Collaboration and (balanced) partnership-working
- Tap into the passion & energy of communities & key stakeholders
- Informed by robust policy framework, deliverable visions & regeneration strategies

**“Government measures have the power to influence high street strategies, but the important thing is to have a robust vision and strategy in place”**

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