

# EXTENDING PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS ON THE HIGH STREET

*Posted on January 29, 2019*



The government's '[Planning Reform: Supporting the High Street and Increasing the Delivery of New Homes](#)' consultation report suggests plans that will introduce flexibility to react to local circumstances, by allowing employment space to be easily converted into residential buildings.

This consultation is stemmed from the government's commitment to simplifying and speeding up the planning system, in order to support the high street and make effective use of land and deliver more homes.

Since its initial release, key organisations in the industry have been submitting responses, with the majority expressing concerns. In this article, we analyse the industry responses to the issue of extending permitted development rights on the high street, as well as sharing our thoughts on the matter.

## Industry Insight

Whilst there is a common belief that there is a problem with the high street that needs to be addressed, withdrawing planning controls is not the answer. The Planning Officers Society (POS) declares that they are extremely concerned that the majority of PD residential conversions would result in poor quality dwellings in terms of size, quality and provision leading to the slums of the future and perhaps an area of rogue landlords attracted by a cheap residential conversion route.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) agree, and refer to the positive approach taken in the revised NPPF to 'ensure the viability of our town centres by taking a positive approach to their growth, management adaptation'. MHCLG believe that this positive approach is best delivered through the

formulation and delivery of locally-appropriate strategies, via the plan-led approach rather than nationally-determined and 'one size fits all' permitted development solutions.

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) agree that the planning system should be seen as the solution, rather than a barrier. RIBA call on the government to support local authorities in the form of advice on how to effectively engage property owners, as well as proper resourcing to ensure that have the capacity to take a proactive approach. Furthermore, RIBA also question that the use of office use B1 alone is the right approach to increase footfall and revitalise the high street. If the emphasis is on B1 Business instead, i.e. B1 (a), (b) and (c), covering offices, research and development of products and processes, and light industry appropriate in a residential area (such as maker spaces), the approach could be more effective in developing active frontage. RIBA also believe that B1 office space - if too much - can create a lot of dead frontage. If the Government were to consider widening the approach to include B1 Business, the RIBA could still only support a policy that requires proposals to receive proper scrutiny by the local authority through a full planning application.

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) also raise an important point, considering how the change would disadvantage disabled people in seeking work and going about everyday tasks. RTPI argue that if existing shop premises are converted to B1, they might not offer inclusive level access from the street, level access to the entered level of the building, and passenger lifts if the majority of the floor space converted to B1 would otherwise be out of reach.

## PI Opinion

"Local planning authorities try to protect high streets with restrictive policies. Meanwhile, they refuse applications for other non-traditional uses, which could have the potential to add vitality to high streets and employment opportunities in place of vacant units. Those that have flexibility will have more diverse and successful high streets, which is more favourable than PD changes." Peter Higginbottom, Director.