

# Request – 11197 -21 High Street, Sawston, Cambs CB22 3BG

I am trying to gather information on an empty property that sits in the middle of Sawston, High Street.

Until June 2014 it was leased by Barclays Bank who occupied it for many years. They were there when I moved in to the village in 1964.

In June 2014 the lease was taken over by Sainsbury's who intended to open a small supermarket, but that never happened. It has remained empty for EIGHT YEARS and is an absolute eyesore in what is otherwise an attractive village High Street. (see attached photos).

I have several questions relating to business rates and would like to establish under the Freedom of Information Act answers to the following:

1. Did Sainsbury's pay full business rates from June 2014 until they terminated the lease on 5th March 2022 or did they use one of a number of legal loopholes to avoid paying business rates while the property remained empty?
2. Who is now legally liable for paying the business rates on what appears to be an abandoned property?
3. Can you confirm that the last time business rates were assessed on CB22 3BG was in 2017 and the figure at the time was £28,750 and that a revaluation is due this month?
4. Even though Sainsbury's now claim (email to me last week) that they have no legal right or responsibility for the site can they be forced retrospectively to put it back to the condition it was in when they took it over?
5. Sawston Parish Council say that they will investigate serving a formal notice S215 requiring the owner/occupier to maintain the property in good condition. However, I believe that ownership lies with an investment company in the British Virgin Islands What powers do you have to go after that company or are they out of reach?

## Response

Thank you for your request for information above, which we have dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Access to information rights provided under both Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) and the Environmental Information Regulations (2004) – (EIR) provide for access to information that is already in existence, held by the organisation and able to be disclosed into the public domain.

This access does not provide for general enquiries, requests for opinions, reviews or any action that would result in creating new information that is not already in existence. We note that several of your queries raise these type of questions:

or did they use one of a number of legal loopholes to avoid paying business rates while the property remained empty?

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Sawston Parish Council say that they will investigate serving a formal notice S215 requiring the owner/occupier to maintain the property in good condition. However, I believe that ownership lies with an investment company in the British Virgin Islands What powers do you have to go after that company or are they out of reach?

We are unable to assist you with these queries, you may find contacting the planning enforcement department directly to see whether they can assist you, you can find their details here: [Planning control and enforcement - South Cambs District Council \(scambs.gov.uk\)](https://www.scambs.gov.uk/planning-control-and-enforcement)

We are able to assist you with the following:

1. Did Sainsbury's pay full business rates from June 2014 until they terminated the lease on 5th March 2022? Sainsbury's did receive Relief for such periods they met the relevant criteria, which reduced the charge
2. Who is now legally liable for paying the business rates on what appears to be an abandoned property? Steki investments ltd.
3. Can you confirm that the last time business rates were assessed on CB22 3BG was in 2017 and the figure at the time was £28,750? 28250 was the rateable value, which would need to be multiplied by the multiplier of the Standard Rate or Small Business Rate to get a full charge for the full year, then reliefs would be deducted from this amount.

The next national revaluation for National Non-Domestic Rates is due 01/04/2023

We aim to provide a quality service to you and hope that you are satisfied with this response, however if you have any questions, please contact us.