

Table for None?

iP

The restaurant closure wave since 2021

Identifying the South East's Highest Risk Areas

Category: Opinion

August 2026



Regional and sector specialists



John Bell, Head of Commercial Agency

j.bell@glenny.co.uk
07766 225 489



Philip Colman, Divisional Director - Investment Agency

p.colman@glenny.co.uk
07768 070 249



Jim O'Connell, Divisional Partner - Essex

j.oconnell@glenny.co.uk
07768 070 248



Daniel Wink, Divisional Partner - Essex

d.wink@glenny.co.uk
07717 545 532



Ryan Anderson, Senior Associate - North East London & Herts

r.anderson@glenny.co.uk
07468 186 415

Author



Charlie Steadman, Senior Real Estate Analyst

c.steadman@glenny.co.uk
07918 250 021



Table for None?

The restaurant closure wave since 2021

Identifying the South East's Highest Risk Areas

Executive Summary

The UK restaurant sector has been through a volatile five years. National closure counts rose from around 1,300 restaurants in 2021 to over 4,000 in 2024, [1] though openings have kept pace almost exactly. 2024 alone saw both roughly 4,085 hospitality venues open and 4,078 close nationally, [1] pointing to a market defined by churn rather than straightforward decline. Operators that have reported a cause for closing have overwhelmingly pointed to cost pressure rather than demand (rent, business rates, labour and utilities). [3] [4] Looking at rental growth trends between 2021-2025 across 44 submarkets in North, East and South East London, Hertfordshire, Essex and Kent gives some insight into which regions are most likely to see continued growth and therefore sustained cost pressure in the years ahead. [7]

For the supply chain serving the on-trade, every closure is a lost account and every opening is a prospect. The central finding of this report is that rental growth functions as a leading indicator of closure and void risk. This has a direct bearing on distribution network planning, which accounts and postcodes carry elevated risk before that risk shows up as an empty unit.

Market Context: Cost Pressure, Not Falling Demand

Restaurant closures have risen since 2021 as the sector absorbed the end of pandemic support alongside rising energy and food costs. Food inflation reached 38.6% above November 2020 levels by 2024, [2] compounding pressure on already-thin margins.

By 2024 the picture had evolved into one of high churn rather than pure decline, where some 4,085 hospitality venues opened against 4,078 closures across the year, [1] equivalent to roughly 11 venues turning over every day. Food-led venues specifically fell by 0.7% year-on-year, while drinking-led venues grew by 0.5-1%, [1] suggesting the restaurant segment is the more exposed category.

Independent operators have borne a disproportionate share of this churn. More than 80% of UK restaurants remain independent businesses, yet their market share is shrinking, particularly on high streets and in prime retail locations that increasingly favour branded, chain-backed occupiers with stronger balance sheets and purchasing power. [3] However, even established chains have not been immune. 2024 saw high-profile UK closures including TGI Fridays (35 of 86 sites, following administration) and Papa Johns (43 sites). [4]

Crucially, when individual closures are examined, the businesses themselves consistently cite rent, business rates, labour costs and utilities as the deciding factor, rather than poor demand. [4] [5] This report treats that pattern as its starting point: if cost is the driver, suppliers to the restaurant sector must monitor rental growth data as an identifier for the locations under most pressure.

Table for None?

The restaurant closure wave since 2021

Identifying the South East's Highest Risk Areas

Methodology and the Business Rates Picture

The rental growth figures in this report are drawn from CoStar's submarket-level retail rent series, covering 44 districts across North, East and South East London, Hertfordshire, Essex and Kent from 2021 to 2025.^[7] This is a generic retail series rather than a restaurant-specific one, since CoStar does not isolate F&B rents from the wider retail series at submarket level. Generic retail rent growth is used here as an occupational cost proxy, since it reflects the same underlying market pressure landlords apply across a high street, including to F&B units.

Since business rates are calculated based on a property's market rent (rateable value), they also add a compounding cost pressure alongside rental growth. The April 2026 business rates revaluation reassessed rateable values against April 2024 rental evidence. Nationally, the 'Other' sector (which includes the Assembly and Leisure sub-sector where restaurants and pubs sit) saw rateable values rise 28.1%, comfortably outpacing the 9.8% rise for Retail.^[8] From April 2026, a differentiated multiplier structure applies specifically to retail, hospitality and leisure (RHL) properties, offering a lower tax rate than non-RHL properties of equivalent size. This will be a partial offset, though not a reversal, of the sector's faster rateable value growth.^[8]

The Rental Growth Ranking, 2021–2025

Table 1 below ranks the 10 districts with the steepest cumulative rental growth over the past 5 years. The 5 with the least are listed underneath Table 1. Table 2 shows the average growth for each region (averaged across all their respective districts).

Table 1		
District	Region	5-Year Growth
Haringey	North London	26.20%
Lewisham	South East London	25.40%
Barking and Dagenham	East London	25.10%
Waltham Forest	East London	23.90%
Hackney	East London	23.30%
Brentwood	Essex	22.70%
Sevenoaks	Kent	22.70%
Islington	North London	22.40%
Redbridge	East London	21.70%
Bexley	South East London	20.80%

Lowest five districts: Stevenage (8.5%), Basildon (11.7%), Welwyn Hatfield (11.9%), Harlow (12.6%) and Chelmsford (13.4%). It's worth noting that these are all in Hertfordshire or Essex.

Table 2	
Region	Average 5-Year Growth
North London	21.50%
East London	21.10%
South East London	19.80%
Kent	18.50%
Essex	16.50%
Hertfordshire	15.80%

Table for None?

The restaurant closure wave since 2021

Identifying the South East's Highest Risk Areas

The Regional Picture - North London

District	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	5-Year Total
Camden	1.80%	4.90%	4.90%	4.20%	3.20%	19.00%
Barnet	2.10%	5.40%	5.30%	4.40%	3.40%	20.70%
Enfield	1.90%	5.10%	5.00%	4.10%	3.30%	19.40%
Haringey	3.80%	6.80%	6.20%	5.40%	4.00%	26.20%
Islington	2.10%	6.70%	5.60%	4.40%	3.60%	22.40%

North London has the highest average rental growth of the six regions in this report at 21.5%, led by Haringey at 26.2%, the single highest-growth district in the entire dataset. Across London, the casual dining segment most represented on these high streets saw outlet numbers decline by around 4% in 2024, while fast-casual and quick-service formats continued to expand. [6]

Haringey's rental growth lines up precisely with the evidence. Two long-running Crouch End restaurants, Banners and Lyon's, closed within the past year, both pointing to rising costs as key drivers. [5]

Of course rental growth alone doesn't tell the whole story, since many of the highest growth areas have sufficient demand and footfall to absorb that cost pressure. Even so, rental growth remains a useful indicator of where cost pressures are most prevalent.

Glenny insight: Some evidence of North London closures goes some way to confirm the link between extraordinary rental growth and venue closures. For wholesalers, it's worth noting the high rental growth in Haringey and Islington as high-risk accounts.



Rental growth heat map, Glenny region, 2021-2025

Table for None?

The restaurant closure wave since 2021

Identifying the South East's Highest Risk Areas

The Regional Picture - East London

District	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	5-Year Total
Tower Hamlets	0.9%	4.1%	4.2%	3.2%	2.9%	15.3%
Newham	1.7%	4.9%	4.9%	3.9%	3.1%	18.5%
Hackney	2.6%	6.1%	6.1%	4.7%	3.8%	23.3%
Waltham Forest	3.1%	6.3%	5.9%	4.9%	3.8%	23.9%
Redbridge	2.6%	5.8%	5.1%	4.7%	3.5%	21.7%
Barking and Dagenham	3.5%	6.5%	6.0%	5.2%	3.9%	25.1%
Havering	1.9%	5.2%	5.1%	4.2%	3.3%	19.8%

East London's average rental growth of 21.1% is driven by Barking and Dagenham (25.1%), Waltham Forest (23.9%) and Hackney (23.3%) (three of the five highest-growth districts in the entire report).^[7]

Hackney's position also lines up directly with the evidence. Ombra and Morito were two long-established Hackney independents that closed in 2026, explicitly citing rising labour costs, utilities, rent and business rates.^[5]

Glenny insight: Barking and Dagenham, Waltham Forest and Hackney are the three East London accounts to watch most closely, since they are all in the top five areas for rental growth, with Hackney's risk already materialising in real closures.

Table for None?

The restaurant closure wave since 2021

Identifying the South East's Highest Risk Areas

The Regional Picture - South East London

District	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	5-Year Total
Bromley	1.6%	4.8%	4.8%	4.0%	3.2%	18.3%
Bexley	2.0%	5.4%	5.4%	4.5%	3.5%	20.8%
Lewisham	3.5%	6.6%	6.1%	5.2%	3.9%	25.4%
Greenwich	1.4%	4.5%	4.5%	3.7%	3.0%	17.0%
Croydon	1.8%	5.0%	4.9%	3.5%	3.2%	18.3%
Lambeth	1.8%	4.9%	4.6%	4.0%	3.8%	19.0%
Southwark	2.1%	5.2%	5.1%	4.1%	3.2%	19.7%

South East London's average rental growth sits at 19.8%, led by Lewisham at 25.4% (the second-highest of any district in the entire dataset) and Bexley at 20.8%.^[7] Southwark, home to Peckham's recent closures including Made of Dough and Cafe Britaly, sits at 19.7%, comfortably in the top half of the full ranking.^[5]

Glenny insight: Lewisham's rental growth rivals North London's highest-growth districts, making it the priority South East London account to monitor.

Table for None?

The restaurant closure wave since 2021

Identifying the South East's Highest Risk Areas

The Regional Picture - Hertfordshire

District	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	5-Year Total
East Herts	1.5%	4.7%	4.8%	3.9%	3.1%	18.0%
Broxbourne	1.1%	4.4%	4.5%	3.5%	3.4%	17.0%
St Albans	1.8%	4.9%	5.0%	4.0%	3.4%	19.1%
Watford	0.6%	3.8%	4.2%	3.2%	2.4%	14.2%
Hertsmere	1.7%	4.8%	4.9%	4.0%	3.2%	18.6%
Dacorum	1.9%	5.0%	5.0%	4.0%	3.1%	19.0%
Welwyn Hatfield	0.0%	3.2%	3.7%	2.6%	2.3%	11.9%
Stevenage	-0.9%	2.3%	3.1%	1.9%	2.0%	8.5%

Hertfordshire has the lowest average rental growth of the six regions at 15.8% and contains the single lowest-growth district in the entire dataset, Stevenage, at just 8.5%. Welwyn Hatfield (11.9%) is also among the five lowest-growth districts overall, whilst Watford (14.2%) and Hertsmere (18.6%) sit closer to the regional average.^[7]

Despite Hertfordshire's relatively steady rental growth, the county has still seen notable closures, including Thompson St Albans,^[9] a long-standing restaurant that closed in October 2025 after 12 years of trading. This suggests cost pressure is being felt even in lower-growth areas, which only underlines how thin F&B margins must be where rental growth is highest.

Glenny insight: Although reported closures indicate that all areas carry some risk, Hertfordshire's accounts carry the lowest rental-growth-driven risk of any region in this report, with Stevenage the most stable district identified anywhere in the dataset - a useful counterweight when prioritising route investment toward the higher-risk London boroughs identified above.

Table for None?

The restaurant closure wave since 2021

Identifying the South East's Highest Risk Areas

The Regional Picture - Essex

District	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	5-Year Total
Epping Forest	1.7%	4.8%	4.8%	3.8%	3.1%	18.2%
Harlow	0.2%	3.4%	3.8%	2.7%	2.4%	12.6%
Uttlesford	0.9%	4.1%	4.3%	3.4%	2.8%	15.5%
Brentwood	2.7%	5.9%	5.6%	4.7%	3.8%	22.7%
Thurrock	1.2%	4.4%	4.7%	3.8%	3.1%	17.2%
Chelmsford	0.5%	3.7%	3.8%	2.9%	2.6%	13.4%
Braintree	1.3%	4.5%	4.5%	3.5%	2.9%	16.7%
Basildon	-0.1%	3.1%	3.6%	2.7%	2.4%	11.7%
Southend-on-Sea	2.3%	5.4%	5.3%	4.2%	3.5%	20.8%

Essex's average rental growth of 16.5% masks a wide internal range, whilst Brentwood has seen the sixth highest growth in the entire region (22.7%), Basildon (11.7%), Harlow (12.6%) and Chelmsford (13.4%) sit among the five most stable districts in the whole report. This disparity illustrates the need to treat rental growth risk at district level rather than as a single county-wide risk figure.

Whitbread, which owns Premier Inn, announced in April 2026 that it will shut all its separately branded dining venues. The motivation was to cut 3,800 jobs across the UK and Ireland and focus on the company's hotel brands. The move will close ten restaurants across Essex, including Table Table, Cookhouse + Pub, Brewers Fayre and multiple Beefeater locations.^[10]

Glenny insight: Essex is not a uniform market. Brentwood carries genuine cost-pressure risk on par with the highest-growth London boroughs, while Basildon, Harlow and Chelmsford are among the most stable districts in this entire report. Route and account planning across Essex should differentiate sharply by district rather than applying a single county-level risk assumption.

Table for None?

The restaurant closure wave since 2021

Identifying the South East's Highest Risk Areas

The Regional Picture - Kent

District	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	5-Year Total
Canterbury	0.7%	3.9%	4.1%	3.2%	2.7%	14.6%
Maidstone	1.7%	4.9%	5.0%	4.0%	3.2%	18.9%
Swale	2.0%	5.1%	5.1%	4.0%	3.0%	19.3%
Sevenoaks	2.8%	6.0%	5.7%	4.7%	3.6%	22.7%
Royal Tunbridge Wells	1.6%	4.9%	5.0%	4.2%	3.2%	18.8%
Tonbridge and Malling	1.5%	4.6%	4.7%	3.8%	3.0%	17.6%
Dartford	1.3%	4.4%	4.5%	3.5%	3.0%	16.7%
Medway	1.8%	5.0%	5.1%	4.1%	3.2%	19.1%

Kent's average rental growth of 18.5% is led by Sevenoaks at 22.7%, tied with Brentwood as the highest-growth district outside London. Canterbury (14.6%) is Kent's most stable district. Medway and Tonbridge and Malling sit at 19.1% and 17.6% respectively, both close to the regional average.^[7]

Citing rising costs as the motivation, Prezzo announced the closure of 46 restaurants in 2023, 4 of which were in Kent.^[11] In line with the Hertfordshire analysis, this again demonstrates that restaurants are feeling cost pressures everywhere, so those areas with extraordinary rental growth carry even higher risk. Whilst not captured in annual rental growth figures, Kent's structural seasonality risk is also worth noting. Coastal towns like Margate, Whitstable and Folkestone are exposed to seasonal footfall swings that a straight rent trend does not show.

Glenny insight: Sevenoaks stands out as Kent's highest-risk district on rental growth alone, comparable to the top London boroughs, while Canterbury is comparatively stable. Coastal accounts need separate seasonal route and volume planning regardless of where they sit on the rental growth ranking, since seasonality is a distinct risk this dataset does not capture.

Table for None?

The restaurant closure wave since 2021

Identifying the South East's Highest Risk Areas

What this means for your distribution network

Rising costs are consistently cited as the reason behind restaurants closures. Rent is one of the largest of those costs, which makes its growth rate a useful starting point for identifying and tracking high-risk areas. Business rates liability compounds this further, since rateable values are themselves tied to market rent, meaning the districts seeing the steepest rental growth are typically facing rising pressure on two cost lines at once.

However, rental growth alone doesn't tell the whole story. Areas with the highest growth are often also the areas with the highest demand and footfall, which means they can absorb a meaningful share of the added cost pressure. The hospitality and foodservice supply chain should weight rental growth heavily in account risk assessment but not treat it as the only variable.

Risk also varies sharply within regions, not just between them. Essex's Brentwood (22.7% growth) and Basildon (11.7%) both sit in Essex, but at opposite ends of the entire 44-district ranking. Route and account planning should be built at district level using the data in this report, not applied uniformly across a whole county or London sub-region.

Taken together, this analysis gives distributors a genuinely forward-looking tool. North and East London's highest-growth districts (Haringey, Islington, Barking and Dagenham, Waltham Forest and Hackney) warrant close account monitoring, while Hertfordshire's low-growth districts represent the most stable ground for existing route relationships. Essex and Kent sit between these two extremes and both require district-by-district judgement rather than a single regional assumption.

Sources and References

1. Restroworks. Restaurant Failure Rate Statistics UK – Closure Rates & Industry Challenges. January 2026. Available at: restroworks.com.
2. Level 2 Food Hygiene. UK Restaurant Industry Statistics: 2026 Facts, Data & Key Insights. April 2026. Available at: level2foodhygiene.org.uk.
3. Food Council UK. UK Restaurants Insight Report 2025–2027: Independent vs Chain Dining Trends. Available at: foodcouncil.uk.
4. Restaurant Management. The UK Restaurant Industry in 2024: Challenges, Trends, and Opportunities. Available at: restaurantmanagement.co.uk.
5. London The Inside. 'These London Restaurants Have All Closed.' Available at: londontheinside.com.
6. Restroworks. London Restaurant Industry Statistics 2025 – Market Data & Dining Trends. February 2026. Available at: restroworks.com.
7. CoStar Group. Retail Rent Growth by Submarket — North, East and South East London, Hertfordshire, Essex and Kent, 2021–2025. Client data export, July 2026.
8. Valuation Office Agency. Non-Domestic Rating: Change in Rateable Value of Rating Lists, England and Wales — 2026 Revaluation (Compiled List). 1 April 2026. Available at: gov.uk.
9. The Caterer. 'Thompson St Albans to close after 12 years of trading.' 13 October 2025. Available at: thecaterer.com
10. Essex County News. 'Essex Table Table, Beefeater and Brewers Fayre to close.' July 2026. Available at: essexcountynews.co.uk.
11. KentOnline. 'Prezzo to close four Kent restaurants.' 24 April 2023. Available at: kentonline.co.uk.

About us

Glenny LLP is the only full-service property consultancy and chartered surveying practice specialising in the East London & Essex, North London & Herts and South East London & Kent commercial property markets

We deliver services regionally, and nationally, across all phases of the property lifecycle including:

- Commercial Agency
- Development Agency
- Investment Agency
- Research and feasibility
- Asset & Property Management
- Cost Consultancy & Project Management
- Building Surveying
- Architecture
- Residential Development Agency
- Valuation
- Lease Advisory

For more information call us on 020 3141 3500 or visit our website at www.glenny.co.uk

The content of this document is for reference purposes only and does not constitute advice or guidance.
Copyright Glenny LLP August 2026



Intellectual Property is published for the benefit of our clients and selected contacts, with restricted distribution and access.

Providing deeper insight into our detailed market intelligence, Glenny iP presents our research findings, and opinion pieces on related topics.

We are always happy to discuss our findings, and your requirements, in more detail so please contact us to arrange a call or meeting.