



Planning & Development Ltd

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**STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF AN
APPLICATION FOR ALTERATIONS TO THE
SERVICE YARD AND ASSOCIATED WORKS
INCLUDING NEW BOUNDARY TREATMENT
BY JD WETHERSPOON PLC INCORPORATING
A DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

Back of Beyond Public House

108 Kings Road

Reading

RG1 3BY

Proposal: Application Statement, Back of Beyond Public House, Reading

Client: JD Wetherspoon PLC

Date: September 2019

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Statement is submitted in support of an application by JD Wetherspoon Plc for *'alterations to existing and new boundary treatment along Bembridge Place, to facilitate dual use of the service yard as a service yard/beer garden, and associated works'* at Back of Beyond Public House, 108 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3BY.
- 1.2 The Back of Beyond Public House has operated as a JD Wetherspoon pub since 1996 supporting the daytime and evening economy of Reading, creating local jobs and has operated in accordance with JD Wetherspoon's industry leading management guidelines in a way which respects its neighbours. The need for the works to the boundary arises from the desire of the operator to expand the external seating area to meet the needs of its customers by creating a dual purpose service area and beer garden.
- 1.3 Whilst the use of the outdoor space for this purpose does not need planning permission, the alteration to the boundary treatment to enclose the service yard/beer garden and reconfigure the fire escape doors does need planning permission, hence the submission of this application. The application also includes the extension of the existing pergola and insertion of a new door and window into the elevation overlooking the extended beer garden.
- 1.4 JD Wetherspoon Plc is a major town centre occupier and has circa 1,000 establishments and employs over 35,000 staff throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic and is an essential part of the local communities in which it is located. The backbone of JD Wetherspoon's successful growth has been the provision of high standards, attractive appearance, respect to heritage and conservation matters, range of services and an inviting atmosphere in all of its outlets since the very first JD Wetherspoon public house (pub) opened in 1979. Notably, the Company has more public houses in CAMRA'S Good Beer Guide than any other pub company.

- 1.5 A JD Wetherspoon public house provides a broad range of food and drink services throughout the whole day, including those provided by traditional licensed premises, cafes and restaurants. The Company's public houses have a high standard of interior and exterior design, extensive seating, state of art ventilation, CCTV provided both internally and externally, family areas and high levels of accessibility for the mobility impaired. This range of services, when combined with the style and mode of operation of JD Wetherspoon outlets, including all-day and weekend opening, results in substantial benefits for the community, attracting people throughout the day, enhancing the vitality and viability of shopping areas in which they may be located and creating linked trips with other retailers. As such, although not a retail use, JD Wetherspoon is a major contributor to enhancing the vitality and viability of a town centre area, which has been widely accepted and acknowledged by a significant number of Local Planning Authorities and Planning Inspectors.
- 1.6 As such, it is considered that the application proposal is of significant benefit further supporting the existing Wetherspoon Public House. For the above reasons and the reasons that will be set out within this Statement, it is considered that planning permission should be granted.
- 1.7 Accordingly, Section 2 of this Statement sets out the description of the site, whilst Section 3 reviews the planning history of the site. Section 4 sets out details of the JD Wetherspoon Freehouse, whilst Section 5 provides an overview of the proposal. Section 6 provides an overview of relevant planning policy and Section 7 sets out other relevant material considerations which weigh in favour of a grant of planning permission. Section 8 contains all relevant design and access information whilst relevant conclusions of the preceding sections are set out in Section 9.

SECTION 2: SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The Back of Beyond Public House is located at 108 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3BY and has been operated by JD Wetherspoon since 1996. The premises extend from Kings Road to the River Kennet with a beer garden and service area to the west of the building with direct access out on to Bembridge Place. Immediately to the east of the public house, on the corner of Kings Road and Bembridge Place, is another public house known as the Thirsty Bear (formerly known as Wynford Arms) with a first floor level beer garden.
- 2.2 Back of Beyond is located within Reading Central Core and is covered by the Reading Central Area Action Plan (January 2009) and also the Core Strategy (adopted January 2008, altered January 2015).
- 2.3 The public house comprises a traditional two storey building fronting on to Kings Road with a significant single storey modern addition extending from the rear of the original building to the site boundary on the River Kennet. To the east of the built form of the public house is an enclosed beer garden overlooking the River Kennet with an open service area between the rear of the adjacent public house and beer garden.

SECTION 3: PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 A review of the planning history for the site has been undertaken using the Public Access for Planning Application search facility on Reading Borough Council's website. The schedule below sets out the relevant planning history:

Application Ref	Description of Development	Decision	Date
92/0163	Change of use of retail unit to use as a laser quest game site	Refused	05/05/92
92/0520	Change of use to A3 (Food and Drink)	Permitted	24/09/92
96/0326	New window to Kennet/Avon Canal. New walls to form landscaped area. New wall to Bembridge Place. Erection of plant room	Permitted	01/11/96
96/0306	New window to Kennet/Avon Canal. New walls to form landscaped area. New wall to Bembridge Place. Erection of plant room	Permitted	01/11/96
96/0483	New fascia, hanging sign, amenity boards and menu choices	Permitted	01/11/96
96/0307	New fascia, hanging sign, amenity boards and menu choices	Permitted	01/11/96
01/0557	Freestanding retractable awning in dark blue canvas with 'JD Wetherspoon' logo, size of awning in open position 8,400 x 7,400mm.	Permitted	20/06/01
01/521	Freestanding retracting awning in dark blue canvas with 'JD Wetherspoon' logo, in yellow colour. Overall size 8,400 x 7,200mm. Location at rear of customer area	Permitted	20/06/01
07/417	Erection of glazing to existing timber frame and wall-mounted heaters to rear garden area	Permitted	16/08/07

Application Ref	Description of Development	Decision	Date
10/1702	Installation of 2 no. grand fixed 'Jumbrellas' to the existing garden	Permitted	01/09/10
14/1537	Extension of current beer garden into existing delivery area including repaving, erection of new and alterations to existing walls, timber pergola, fenestration, external lighting and associated works	Refused	30/06/15

3.2 It would appear that the premises changed from a retail unit to A3 (Food and Drink) in 1992. The planning history suggests that JD Wetherspoon's occupied the premises in 1996 (which is confirmed elsewhere in this report) when they submitted planning applications for various alterations to the premises which were approved and exist on site today. Subsequently, further applications were submitted to enable them to operate from the site and improve the premises in line with customer requirements.

3.3 In 2014 an application was submitted for the extension of current beer garden into the existing delivery area, including repaving, erection of new, and alterations to existing, walls, timber pergola, fenestration, external lighting and associated works (Ref: 14/1537). This application was refused on 30 June 2015 for one reason only as follows:

"The proposed loss of the pub's dedicated off-street service and delivery area would result in added competition for on-street parking/waiting space and obstruction/danger on the public highway and it is therefore unacceptable in terms of Policy DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters) of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework Sites and Detailed Policies Documents (2012))".

3.4 Whilst the current application seeks to achieve effectively the same outcome as the previously refused application, it is the Applicant's intention to make the service area dual purpose, thereby ensuring that deliveries can occur in the mornings within the dedicated service yard, with this area becoming a beer garden in the afternoons/evenings when

required by customers. This is expanded upon more fully in the Proposals Section and in the supporting Delivery Management Plan prepared by DW Transportation.

SECTION 4: THE JD WETHERSPOON FREEHOUSE

- 4.1 In considering this application, it is relevant to understand the particular characteristics of a JD Wetherspoon Freehouse and the extremely high standards that the company operates to as one of the leading public house operators within the United Kingdom and a major landholder and operator of public houses in town centres throughout the country, often in locations where there are nearby residential properties. The Company is therefore extremely well-versed in managing its estate with respect to its neighbours. This is demonstrated in the successful way the Company has run Back of Beyond since its opening.
- 4.2 The JD Wetherspoon public house is a distinctive kind of public house, very different from the majority of public houses in this country. It recreates the congenial atmosphere of the traditional pub, combined with features found in modern cafes, restaurants and bars. This is achieved by a combination of high-quality design, well developed policies and procedures and good management.
- 4.3 The key factors that differentiate the JD Wetherspoon public house from other licensed premises are:
- i. The highest modern building and design standards through the provision of facilities such as ample seating and space for customers, easy access to bars, high-quality toilet provision, advanced ventilation systems. JD Wetherspoon aims to provide comfortable, efficient and ergonomic dining facilities and accessible customer areas suitable for all types of customer.
 - ii. JD Wetherspoon concentrates on the provision of cask conditioned beers - selling more than any other pub company. Throughout the year, the Company runs regional festivals showcasing the very best ales from local microbrewers as well as larger provincial brewers. The majority of its premises are accredited by Cask Marque for the quality of their ales. Real ale typically attracts a broader, often

older, cross-section of customers and studies over the years have indicated that public houses which do not target a predominantly young age group have better behaved customers.

- iii. The provision of good quality food at reasonable prices is core to its business. A full menu is available in its premises from opening until 23.00 hours. JD Wetherspoon always uses high quality ingredients and increasingly offers regional dishes and locally sourced products. The Company also takes great care to ensure that artificial ingredients are avoided wherever possible. For example, the company only uses organic milk, free range eggs, dolphin friendly tuna, cod from sustainable stocks and cooking oils without trans-fats.
- iv. JD Wetherspoon's award winning children's menu is available at all times children are permitted on the premises. A number of its children's meals use only organic ingredients. There are no preservatives, sugar, artificial colours or flavours in any of the meals in the children's menu. All children's meals come with a bag of fresh fruit as well as organic milk, orange juice or water as the drink options. The Company provides nutritional information about the meals offered on the children's menu to help parents make informed decisions about what their children are eating.
- v. The majority of the Company's public houses cater for customers who wish to partake in the breakfast offers. JD Wetherspoon pioneered the availability of breakfasts across its public houses and now sells more than 250,000 breakfasts per week. The breakfast menu is available every day until noon. In a similar vein, the Company now sells over 400,000 cups of Lavazza coffee every week and its coffee sales now approximately match those of Café Nero in volume and are about a quarter of Starbucks.
- vi. No playing of music or amplified sound of any kind is provided in a traditional JD Wetherspoon public house. The absence of music and entertainment, such as pool tables and juke boxes, is unique; it is the key to providing an atmosphere which is considered to have a beneficial effect on customers' behaviour, by attracting those mixed ages and of both sexes, from all sections of the local community, leading to

an improvement in standards of behaviour, both inside and outside its establishments.

- vii. JD Wetherspoon operates a dispersal and good neighbour policy designed to minimise the negative impact of their premises on their locality. The Company generally requests that a minimum of 30 minutes drinking-up time is incorporated in the premise's licence as an aid to the gradual dispersal of all customers from the premises at the end of the evening. A key element of encouraging customers who are leaving a JD Wetherspoon Public House to behave in a responsible fashion is ensuring that they are well-managed whilst on the premises. JD Wetherspoon accept its responsibilities cannot simply end at the front door and that, by contributing to better managed pubs at the end of the night the Company can help deliver safer town centres.
- viii. JD Wetherspoon has a high ratio of staff to customers to ensure that prompt service can be given to all customers during full opening hours and to ensure that the premises are kept clean and tidy at all times.
- ix. The Company sets very high standards when it opens a new Public House and these standards are maintained through constant supervision and monitoring using a system of mystery visits to the premises to assess 'Cleanliness, Quality, Service, Maintenance and Atmosphere' (CQSMA).
- x. The Company's employees are extensively trained on their legal obligations. There is a very strong culture of thorough induction training and on-going refresher training in the company. Training is provided for all employees regardless of their role, their age or their hours of work.
- xi. JD Wetherspoon applies high standards of management to ensure it meets its aims of providing excellent service to its customers and ensuring that its public houses are not only orderly, but successfully well run. JD Wetherspoon public houses each have an average of five managers and the majority of these hold personal licence qualifications.

- xii. The Company's approach to the sale of alcohol is to concentrate on the range and quality of the products on offer rather than to use price as an incentive. JD Wetherspoon continually reviews the pricing structure of its alcoholic and non-alcoholic products to ensure that it is encouraging sensible drinking at all times. The Company is recognised as being a Responsible Drinks Retailer and is a previous winner of the award of Responsible Drinks Retailer of the Year in the pub group category.

4.4 The Company is also a regular winner of 'Best Bar None' pub safety awards for providing a welcoming, safe and secure environment, whilst being commended for its approach to responsible drinking. JD Wetherspoon has also won numerous awards from the Wheelchair Users Group and the Disabled Access Award in respect of its access for all ethos. The Company's dedicated recycling centre recycles over 8m tonnes of waste each year, and has received national recognition and awards in each of the last four years.

4.5 The public houses have a high standard of interior and exterior design, extensive seating, state of art ventilation, CCTV provided both internally and externally as an active deterrent for anti-social behaviour, family areas and high levels of accessibility. JD Wetherspoon has consistently won awards for its fits outs, with numerous awards ranging from design to conservation. JD Wetherspoon goes to great lengths to research and retain information about the history of the building and its area, which they then display within the public house. JD Wetherspoon's ethos is to use local names for its public houses, derived from either the building's history or the surrounding area, and also where possible, source local materials to ensure sympathetic design and restoration. Further, JD Wetherspoon, as an employer, take great pride in their staff and has been listed, for a number of years, within Britain's Top 100 Employers.

Planning, Statutory and Other Controls

Licensing Controls

- 4.6 In every case in which the company has obtained planning permission, the company must then obtain a premises licence before the provision of licensable activities would be permitted from any site. An application for a premises licence would be submitted to the licensing authority.
- 4.7 The Licensing Act 2003 requires applicants to satisfy the licensing authority, local residents and businesses ('interested parties') and the statutory authorities ('responsible authorities') how they are going to operate so as to promote the four licensing objectives; prevention of crime and disorder, prevention of public nuisance, public safety and protection of children from harm. If there are no relevant representations made to an application to vary a licence the licensing authority must grant the premises licence – no hearing is necessary. The grant of the licence will be subject to the mandatory conditions and any conditions offered by the applicant. If representations are received, then the licensing authority will hold a hearing to determine the application. They must make their decision based on what they feel is necessary to promote the licensing objectives. They can grant the licence in its entirety, subject to any conditions they consider necessary for the promotion of the licensing objectives. They could exclude some of the licensable activities or cut back the hours or limit the hours on certain days etc. They may reject the application entirely.
- 4.8 The new licensing regime also provides greater powers to the responsible authorities to ensure that premises are operated in accordance with the licensing objectives. The power to review a licence is the most important of those new powers. An application for review of the premises licence may be made at any time by a responsible authority or an interested party. The importance of the review is that the licensing authority has a variety of ways of dealing with the premises in order to promote the licensing objectives. They can:
- Remove the Designated Premises Supervisor
 - Modify conditions on the licence
 - Reduce operating hours
 - Exclude a licensable activity

- Suspend the licence
- Revoke the licence

4.9 Alternatively, they do not have to take any action and they may simply take the opportunity to give a very stringent warning to the premises holder or take no action at all.

Other Statutory Controls

4.10 Health and Safety is a key component to the business and there are absolute minimum standards the Company must ensure that it complies with, which are laid down in legislation, including Acts and Regulations.

4.11 There are various pieces of legislation which cover:

- Food safety
- Health and safety
- Fire safety
- Environment
- Trading Standards

4.12 Failure to comply with the minimum legal standards could result in legal action being taken against the Company, including the service of enforcement notices or in the worst cases being prosecuted. In some cases, it could result in a customer taking a civil case against the company for negligence, for example if they have been injured in an accident which occurred at one of the premises. Individual employees as well as the company may find themselves facing a criminal prosecution, which could result in a conviction, prison sentence or fine, if it is determined that they have not complied with the requirements of the legislation.

4.13 It is essential that Pub Managers and the management teams are familiar with the basic legal requirements of running a 'pub' business and the policies and procedures which the company have in place, such as the risk assessment manual, COSHH manual, health & safety manual and food safety manual. In respect of those matters, a degree of control of those matters relevant to planning is achieved by several other statutes:

- i. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the local authority has the power to deal with environmental and pollution matters. This includes such matters as noise and refuse. The environmental health department can serve a statutory notice for noise nuisance. The same requirements apply to smell, nuisances and emissions.
- ii. Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1994, environmental health officers have the right to inspect working environments at all reasonable times. Contraventions found are dealt with by 'improvement notices' which allow time for matters to be put right. JD Wetherspoon employs its own independent environmental health consultants; who carry out quarterly audits at all of the Company's drinking establishments in order to maintain high standards in this area.
- iii. All food businesses must comply with a variety of legislation which is enforced by environmental health departments which have powers to inspect premises at all reasonable times, without requiring prior notification.

Other Controls

- 4.14 In addition to these independent statutory controls, it is vital to JD Wetherspoon's continuing success to maintain a reputation for well-run and trouble-free establishments.

Standards Monitoring Visits ('CQSMA')

- 4.15 JD Wetherspoon sets very high standards when it opens a new Public House and these standards are maintained through constant supervision and monitoring using a system of mystery visits to the premises to assess 'Cleanliness, Quality, Service, Maintenance and Atmosphere' (CQSMA).
- 4.16 All operational head office employees and all senior head office employees are required to undertake between 15 and 60 'mystery visits' to JD Wetherspoon outlets every month. They are required to assess the premises in a number of areas varying from the cleanliness of the toilets to the friendliness of the staff. In addition, every single site is visited and assessed by an independent third-party company on at least two occasions every month.

- 4.17 Every establishment must receive at least five CQSMA visits each month but most will receive as many as 8-10 visits and every Public House receives a minimum of 60 CQSMA visits per annum to assess quality and standards. Any pub which is assessed as being below standard in any way is highlighted and revisited the following week. Monthly bonuses based on the CQSMA results are paid to all employees, including bar staff.
- 4.18 The CQSMA results assist in maintaining high standards but also allow public houses experiencing difficulties to be identified so that improvements can be made.
- 4.19 The CQSMA scheme is the cornerstone of the Company's business and employees at all levels are trained and incentivised to deliver the highest standards. Management staff earn around 40% of their total bonus through CQSMA and bar staff around two thirds.

Management Structure and Training

- 4.20 Each JD Wetherspoon has an average of five managers and the majority of these hold personal licence qualifications. There is always at least one manager (often more) on duty in every public house throughout trading hours and at peak times there will be a designated manager supervising the bar and '*walking the floor*'. Where a specific need is identified, the managers will undergo training through the Security Industry Association.
- 4.21 Public House Managers have the support of their Area Manager who in turn reports to a General Manager. The Operations Director maintains regular contact with management at all levels. This management structure ensures that if any employee has any questions or requires further support they can immediately ask for assistance from their management team. Area Managers look after an average of only 12 outlets each, which is a low number of '*pubs*' in comparison to regional managers in competitor '*pub*' companies.
- 4.22 It is widely recognised that the level and quality of staff training is a significant factor in controlling the behaviour of customers on licensed premises. There is a very strong culture of thorough induction training and on-going refresher training in the Company. Training is provided for all employees regardless of their role, their age or their hours of work.

- 4.23 The Company's training systems have been consistently praised by employees and by the industry. JD Wetherspoon has won many awards including the Supreme Training Award from the British Institute of Innkeeping which it has previously won for three years in a row.
- 4.24 Training of management personnel is conducted on a modular basis with continuing assessment throughout their employment period. Bar staff training is primarily carried out on-site by management personnel. JD Wetherspoon utilises an extensive network of area training co-ordinators to ensure that both management and staff training are carried out and are to the right standard. There is typically one co-ordinator for every 6-8 Public Houses.
- 4.25 An essential element in having a well-trained staff is the Company's ability to retain its employees. Turnover of 'Pub' Managers at JD Wetherspoon is around 12% which is less than half the industry average. Moreover, 75% of all management employees began with JD Wetherspoon as hourly paid employees and, typically, anyone appointed to run a JD Wetherspoon Public House for the first time is likely to have been employed by the Company for at least five years. JD Wetherspoon has been listed as Top Employer United Kingdom for 16 consecutive years.

Being a Good Neighbour

- 4.26 JD Wetherspoon attaches the utmost importance to the careful investigation and prompt resolution of any complaint made in relation to the day-to-day running of any of its outlets. This includes the effect any public house may have on its surrounding area. Over a third of its premises have residents living above or adjacent to them with no history of complaint. JD Wetherspoon has always emphasised the importance of building close relationships with local residents. The Company's 'Pub' Managers are expected to resolve any complaints from local residents quickly and effectively. If they cannot be resolved on a premises level, they are referred to an Area or General Manager for resolution.
- 4.27 Public House Managers, Area Managers and General Managers convene regular meetings with residents whenever such meetings are requested by its neighbours. These meetings provide a forum for residents to raise any concerns they may have regarding its operations and provide the local management teams with an opportunity to learn how to become a better neighbour.

4.28 Overall JD Wetherspoon has had few complaints relative to the size of its estate and virtually all of these have been resolved satisfactorily through its complaint and investigation procedures. This is very much testament to the professional and well run nature of its establishments.

SECTION 5: THE PROPOSAL

- 5.1 As stated in the Introduction, the proposal is merely for the alterations to the existing boundary wall abutting Bembridge Place to facilitate the dual use of the existing service yard as a beer garden and service yard.
- 5.2 Whilst the application is broadly similar in nature to a previously refused application (see the Planning History section) for the *“extension of current beer garden into existing delivery area, including repaving, erection of new, and alterations to existing, walls, timber pergola, fenestration, external lighting and associated works”* (Ref: 14/1537) some of the content of this application did not require planning permission.
- 5.3 The ‘planning unit’ for the site comprises the existing building of the public house, beer garden and service area. Accordingly, any uses in this area for ancillary uses associated with the public house do not require planning permission. Therefore, the change of use of the service yard to a beer garden does not require planning permission as it is considered to be an ancillary use of the wider site. However, the Council’s concerns with regard to the loss of the pub’s dedicated off-street service and delivery area is noted and this proposal seeks to address this issue whilst also creating the additional seating area required by both the operator and customers using the site. This is to be achieved by the dual use of this area, whereby this space is used as a delivery bay during the hours of 07:00 to 12:00 and after this time becomes a beer garden for use of customers. With some changes to the boundary treatment and additional alterations to the internal configuration of this area, it is possible to ensure that this dual purpose use is achieved without any detrimental impact to highway safety. This can be achieved through the use of an appropriately worded condition and will be managed by JD Wetherspoon.
- 5.4 In support of the dual use of the site as a delivery and beer garden, a Delivery Service Management Plan prepared by DW Transportation has been submitted with this application which demonstrates how the dual use will be achieved and details the suggested condition.

- 5.5 The works that specifically require planning permission, as a result of this proposal, are the reconfiguration of the fire escape to the existing beer garden to facilitate outwardly opening doors which are deemed to be safer in the event of an emergency. Additionally, the proposal requires the creation of a new wall and gate to the existing service yard to provide security and safety for both deliveries and customers using it as a beer garden.
- 5.6 Additional works not requiring planning permission include the resurfacing of the service yard, the creation of a storage area within the service area/beer garden with the use of timber fencing to house various bins and kegs.
- 5.7 It is also proposed to remove one panel of the internal wall between the existing beer garden and service and to reduce the height of the wall either side of the new opening. This will enable the easy flow for customers between the existing and proposed beer garden and provide a visual link between the two areas. A new timber pergola to match that existing is proposed above the new door and window into the dual purpose service/beer garden to create a more attractive and welcoming environment for customers.
- 5.8 In order to ensure the dual use of the service yard/beer garden the following condition is suggested which will provide comfort to the Local Planning Authority that the operation of the public house will have no detrimental impact on the operation of the public house.

“The site area required for servicing, as shown on Drawing 01 : Swept Path Analysis Using Small Rigid Vehicle, shall be kept free of any obstruction and shall not be open to the general public during the period 07:00-12:00”.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

SECTION 6: PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 6.1 This section of the Appellant's statement sets out an overview of relevant national and local planning policies.

National Planning Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2018) (Amended February 2019)

- 6.2 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 24 July 2018 and updated in February 2019 and now constitutes guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications (paragraph 2).
- 6.3 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (paragraph 7).
- 6.4 Paragraph 8 confirms that there are three overarching objectives to sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. This includes:
- An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
 - A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural wellbeing;

- 6.5 Local Planning Authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible (paragraph 38).
- 6.6 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing (paragraph 47). Local Authorities may give weight to relevant policies and emerging plans according to the stage at which they are at and the extent of unresolved objections (paragraph 48).
- 6.7 Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and where there are opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future (paragraph 80).
- 6.8 Planning policies should set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and practically encourages sustainable economic growth having regard to local industrial strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration; set criteria to identify strategic sites for local inward investment to match the strategy and meet anticipated needs over the plan period; seek to address potential barriers to investment; and be flexible enough to accommodate the needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances (paragraph 81).

- 6.9 Local Authorities are required to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs and planning policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities which specifically identifies public houses. Furthermore the paragraph goes on to confirm that Local Authorities should ensure that established shops, facilities and services (which includes public houses) are able to develop and modernise and are retained for the benefit of the community (Paragraph 92).
- 6.10 Planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors (paragraph 82).
- 6.11 Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities taking a positive approach to their growth management and adaptation Paragraph 85).
- 6.12 The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities (paragraph 24). Planning policies and decisions should ensure that development functions well and adds to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive as a result of good architectural layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; are sympathetic to local character and history; establish or maintain a strong sense of place; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with high standard of amenity for future and existing users (paragraph 127).
- 6.13 Paragraph 182 of the NPPF confirms that planning policies and decisions should ensure that new development can be integrated effectively with existing businesses and community facilities (such as places of worship, public houses and sports clubs) and that existing businesses and facilities should not have unreasonable restrictions placed on them as a result of development permitted after they were established. Where the operation of an existing business or community facility could have a significant adverse effect on the development (including community use) in its vicinity, the Applicant or 'Agent of Change' should be required to provide suitable mitigation before the development has been completed.

Development Plan Policy

- 6.14 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that all applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan of relevance to the proposed development comprises the Core Strategy Adopted January 2008 (altered January 2015); the Reading Central Area Action Plan (Adopted January 2009); and Sites and Detailed Policies Adopted October 2012 (altered January 2015). The relevant policies from these documents are considered below.

Core Strategy (2008)

- 6.15 On the Proposal Map associated with all of the Development Plan documents, the site falls within the Central Core (Policy RC86) within the Tall Buildings Cluster (Policy RC13) and adjoins Existing and Potential Green Links (Policy DM17) (the latter allocation relates to the canal and river and is not directly relevant to the proposal).
- 6.16 The Core Strategy sets out a number of environmental objectives to encourage living within environmental limits and ensuring a strong, healthy and just society. These include, inter alia:
- Create, enhance and maintain safer, cleaner and greener environments, which include diverse and distinctive places, spaces and buildings;
 - Create buildings and environments that work well, look well, wear well and are easy maintained;
 - Promote safer and stronger communities through measures to reduce crime and the fear of crime and enhance community cohesion;
 - Ensure accessible opportunities for all to engage in cultural, leisure and recreation activity, particularly open space and water space; and
 - Provide employment opportunities for all and support a successful balanced local economy that meets the needs of the area.

- 6.17 Policy CS7 (Design and the Public Realm) requires that all development must be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development will include:
- Layout, urban structure and urban grain;
 - Density and mix;
 - Scale, height and massing; and
 - Architectural detail and materials.
- 6.18 These criterion will be assessed to ensure that a development proposal makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives:
- Character – a place with its own identity and sense of place;
 - Community and enclosure;
 - Quality of public realm;
 - Ease of movement and permeability;
 - Legibility – clear and easy to understand;
 - Adaptability – capable of adaption over time; and
 - Diversity – meets a wide range of needs.
- 6.19 The policy continues by also saying that development proposals will be assessed to ensure that they respond positively to their local context and create room for local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm; creating safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; address the needs of all in society and accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces; and inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.
- 6.20 Policy CS26 (Network and Hierarchy of Centres) confirms Reading Centre as a Regional Centre. Policy CS27 (Maintaining the Retail Character of Centres) advises that a strong retail character will be maintained in the centres identified as being part of the network.

- 6.21 Policy CS32 relates to additional and existing community facilities which advise that proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable particularly where this will involve clear location of facilities on a single site. Community facilities should be located where there is a choice of means of travel, including walking and cycling and in existing centres where possible. Whilst a public house is not, strictly speaking, a community use, it provides an important purpose for the gathering of people in an appropriate environment.

Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009)

- 6.22 Policy RC7 (Leisure, Cultural and Tourism in the Centre) confirms that Reading Central Area will be the prime focus for major leisure, cultural and non-regionally significant tourist development. These uses should be concentrated within the Central Core as defined on the Proposals Map. The policy continues to advise that innovative solutions for leisure provision will be encouraged; particularly those that make best use of available (often limited) site area. The scale and design of the proposal must not have an adverse impact on the appearance and amenity of the surrounding development.
- 6.23 Policy RC8 relates to drinking establishments and advises that a range of complementary evening and night time uses, that appeal to all sections of Reading's society and contribute to the 18 hour welcome, will be provided. Such uses should not give rise to adverse impacts on the amenity of nearby residents and other town centre uses. Those uses that are likely to have an adverse impact on amenity or the character and/or function of the Central Area will not be permitted. The location of drinking establishments, including pubs, bars and nightclubs will be limited to Reading's Central Core.
- 6.24 As noted above, the site falls within the Tall Buildings Area with its associated policy, albeit the proposal does not relate to this matter.
- 6.25 Policy RC14 (Public Realm) advises that new development will need to make a positive contribution towards the quality of the public realm in the Central Area and sets out a number of criteria against which proposals will be assessed. With respect to the waterways it advises that design of development adjacent to a waterway will be required to enhance the appearance of the waterway and provide active elevations facing the waterways.

- 6.26 Policy SD1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) reflects guidance set out at national level.
- 6.27 Policy DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity) advises that development will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties, in terms of privacy and overlooking; access to light and sunlight; visual dominance and overbearing effects of development; noise and disturbance; artificial lighting; vibration; dust and fumes; smell or crime and safety.
- 6.28 Access, traffic and highway related matters are covered by Policy DM12 whereby consideration will need to be given to the effect of new proposals on safety, congestion and the environment. The policy sets out a number of criteria whereby development will only be permitted if:
- Access and works to the highway comply with the adopted standards of the Transport Authority;
 - The development would not have a material detrimental impact on the function of the transport network;
 - The proposal would not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and cyclists;
 - The proposal would not generate regular movement of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) on unsuitable roads or on roads without easy access to the classified highway network; and
 - For non-residential uses or new buildings on classified roads off-street servicing would be provided.

- 6.29 Policy DM15 relates to the protection of leisure facilities and public houses unless it can be demonstrated there is no need for the facility, the function of the facility can be adequately fulfilled by an existing facility, or the impact on amenity of residents of a retaining facility cannot be dealt with through other measures. This policy confirms the importance of public houses to the community.

Emerging Reading Local Plan 2036

- 6.30 Following the Public Examination, Modifications were subject to consultation between 12 June and 24 July 2019. The comments have been passed to the Inspector for consideration in her final report.
- 6.31 Upon the emerging Proposals Map the site falls within the Central Core and within the Tall Building Cluster.
- 6.32 Like the comparable adopted plan policy, emerging Policy LR6 relates to the protection of leisure facilities and public houses and advises that they will generally be retained unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there is no need for the facility; the function of the facility can adequately be fulfilled by existing facility; or there are amenity issues arising. Supporting text to this policy confirms that public houses and other leisure facilities form an important part of the community.
- 6.33 Earlier policies in the plan reflect the national guidance in relation to sustainable development and guidance in relation to design, broadly in the same format as the adopted policy is set out in Emerging Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm). Guidance in relation to amenity is set out in Policy CC8 in a similar format to that already adopted.
- 6.34 Access, traffic and highway related matters are set out within Policy TR3, which again broadly reflects that within adopted policy and requires that development will not have a material detrimental impact on the function of the transport network nor on the safety of users of the transport network including pedestrians and cyclists.

Summary

- 6.35 National Planning Guidance contains a requirement that Local Authorities plan positively for public houses and this is clearly reflected in adopted and emerging policy, which protects against the loss of such facilities within Reading Borough and the core of Reading Town Centre. Indeed, the provision of leisure is actively encouraged to make the best use of space, acknowledging that space is constrained within the urban area.
- 6.36 The adopted Local Plan contains a policy requiring development not to unduly impact on users of the transport network. This is also reflected in emerging policy. Overall, there is significant policy presumption supporting new public houses and leisure uses within the Core Centre of Reading Town Centre.

SECTION 7: PLANNING ISSUES

- 7.1 This Section of the Applicant's Statement sets out details of those material considerations which weigh in favour of a grant of Planning Permission.

The Need to Plan Positively for Public Houses

- 7.2 There is a recognition within the NPPF about the important role public houses can play as community facilities. Paragraph 182 states that *"to deliver the social, recreational, cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:*
- *Plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments"* (our emphasis).
- 7.3 In addition, the paragraph also confirms that Local Authorities should ensure that established shops and facilities are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable and are retained for the benefit of the community.
- 7.4 There is, therefore, within national planning guidance a presumption in favour of proposals which support public houses. This is specifically referenced within the NPPF. This is an important material consideration which weighs heavily in favour of a grant of planning permission.

- 7.5 At a local level, Reading's adopted Development Plan and Emerging Plan both include policies which relate to drinking establishments and public houses whereby such facilities are supported and policy actively encourages their retention (adopted Plan Policy RC8 and Emerging Plan Policy LR6). Furthermore, Policy RC7 relating to leisure, cultural and tourism in the Centre confirms that leisure, cultural and non-regionally significant tourist development should be concentrated within the Central Core Area in which the application site falls. The policy acknowledges that innovative solutions to leisure provision will be encouraged, particularly those that make best use of available and often limited site area. The policy also acknowledges that the scale and design of the proposal must not have an adverse impact on the appearance and amenity of the surrounding development.
- 7.6 This application, which primarily relates to the installation of new boundary treatments to enable a dual use of the existing servicing area as a beer garden and service area is innovative and can be managed by a condition, as detailed above. Accordingly, the proposal is entirely in accordance with adopted and emerging policy.
- 7.7 The UK brewing industry is inherently good for UK plc. Beer is a British product and a major tax contributor. There are now over 1,400 breweries in the UK. Beer and pubs contribute £22 billion to UK GDP and generate £13 billion in tax revenue (The Beer Story Facts on Tap 2015). The production and sale of beer creates jobs in agricultural, brewing, pubs and the wider supply chain. In total the beer and pub sector supports almost 900,000 jobs. 46% of those employed in the pub sector are 16-24 year olds (The Beer Story, Facts on Tap 2015).
- 7.8 Pubs are vibrant small businesses and boast local economies by an average of £80,000 per year (The Beer Story Facts on Tap 2015).

- 7.9 The UK has lost 21,000 pubs since 1980. Half of these closures have taken place since 2006 (Closing Time Who's Killing the British Pub – Christopher Snowden December 2014). In 1969, there are approximately 75,000 public houses (Monopolies Commission, 1969:96). By 1980 this had fallen to 69,000 and numbers have gradually continued to fall, dropping to under 60,000 for the first time in 2003. In recent years, the trickle of pub closures has become a flood. The number of pubs plummeted from 58,200 in 2006 to 48,000 in 2013, a drop of 18% in just seven years (BBPA, 2014:68). Peak in pub closures came in 2009 with 52 pubs shutting down each week, but pubs were still closing at a rate of 31 a week in mid-2014, according to the Campaign for Real Ale.
- 7.10 The reasons for the decrease in public houses is varied; partly, it has been the increase in beer duty taxation and other economic factors, whilst growth in supermarket alcohol sales, cultural changes and changes in social habits (i.e. greater willingness to stay in on a Saturday night to watch the television) are all factors which have contributed to the loss of public houses.
- 7.11 As such, the proposals which enhance and support public houses should be supported as a matter of protocol by Local Planning Authorities.

Residential Amenity

- 7.12 As this application relates solely to the installation of new boundary treatments and not the use per se, residential amenity is of limited relevance. The use of the service yard for a dual purpose service yard/beer garden does not require planning permission as it is part of a wider planning use whereby these elements are ancillary and therefore do not require planning permission. However, the installation of the boundary gates do require permission due to their height but these have been sensitively design to respect the character of the site and wider area.

- 7.13 As described earlier in the Planning Statement, the application site currently comprises of a public house and extensive internal seating area as well as a beer garden abutting the River Kennet. The proposal seeks to enable the dual use of the existing service yard as a service yard to facilitate deliveries during a specified period and a beer garden outside of these hours for the benefit of customers. The use of the adjoining land is as a beer garden operating without any residential amenity issues arising. Therefore, the expansion of the beer garden into the service yard is unlikely to raise any amenity issues. Indeed, the proposal could be said to have positive benefits in that the proposal will create enclosure to the existing service yard, providing screening, and removing the potential for unauthorised parking and gathering of people and taking this area into the control of the public house.
- 7.14 The application plans show the existing and proposed arrangements and, as detailed in the Delivery Management Strategy, it is clearly shown how the site and its use will operate. This includes consideration to delivery vehicles and the collection of refuse from the adjoining public house. Enclosure of the service area/beer garden will have visual amenity benefits for the wider area and, therefore, it is not considered that there are any residential amenity issues arising from the proposal.

Management Approach

- 7.15 Notwithstanding the above comments JD Wetherspoon operates industry leading management practices in respect to its estate and the beer gardens that it manages. This experience which includes managing sites in close proximity to residential units ensures the company is well-versed in minimising issues and respecting its neighbours. It is clearly in the Company's best interest to work well with its neighbours in this regard.
- 7.16 JD Wetherspoon Plc attaches the utmost importance to the careful investigation and prompt resolution of any complaint made in relation to the day-to-day running of any of its establishments. This includes the affect any establishment may have on its surrounding area. Over a third of its premises have residents living above or adjacent to them with no history of complaint. JD Wetherspoon has always emphasised the importance of building close relationships with local residents. JD Wetherspoon Pub Managers are expected to resolve any complaints from local residents quickly and effectively. If they cannot be resolved on a premises level, they are referred to an Area or General Manager for resolution.

- 7.17 The compatibility of the proposed use with existing properties has been of paramount importance. The main area for consideration has been noise, specifically that arising from the patrons, particularly those seated in the proposed external area together with noise from servicing and deliveries and from plant and machinery.
- 7.18 Pub Managers, Area Managers and General Managers convene regular meetings with residents whenever such meetings are requested by our neighbours. These meetings provide a forum for residents to raise any concerns they may have regarding the Company's operations and provide the local management teams with an opportunity to learn how to become a better neighbour.
- 7.19 Overall JD Wetherspoon has had few complaints relative to the size of its estate and virtually all of these have been resolved satisfactorily through its complaint and investigation procedures. This is very much testament to the professional and well run nature of its establishments.
- 7.20 The application of the above measures has meant that formal authority complaints in respect of customer noise from the Company's outside areas are extremely infrequent. JD Wetherspoon Plc has not faced any formal enforcement action or premises licence reviews arising from noise issues from outside areas.
- 7.21 No playing of music or amplified sound of any kind is provided in a traditional JD Wetherspoon Public House. The absence of music and entertainment, such as pool tables and juke boxes, is unique; it is the key to providing an atmosphere which is considered to have a beneficial effect on customers' behaviour, by attracting those mixed ages and of both sexes, from all sections of the local community, leading to an improvement in standards of behaviour, both inside and outside its establishments.
- 7.22 JD Wetherspoon operates a dispersal and good neighbour policy designed to minimise the negative impact of its premises on their locality. The Company generally requests that a minimum of 30 minutes drinking-up time is incorporated in the premise's licence as an aid to the gradual dispersal of all customers in the premises at the end of the evening. A key element of encouraging customers who are leaving a JD Wetherspoon Public House to

behave in a responsible fashion is ensuring that they are well-managed whilst on the premises. JD Wetherspoon accept its responsibilities cannot simply end at the front door and that, by contributing to better managed establishment at the end of the night the company can help deliver safer town centres.

- 7.23 JD Wetherspoon has a high ratio of staff to customers to ensure that prompt service can be given to all customers during full opening hours and to ensure that the premises are kept clean and tidy at all times.
- 7.24 The Company sets very high standards when it opens a new public house and these standards are maintained through constant supervision and monitoring using a system of mystery visits to the premises to assess '*Cleanliness, Quality, Service, Maintenance and Atmosphere*' (CQSMA).
- 7.25 The Company's employees are extensively trained on their legal obligations. There is a very strong culture of thorough induction training and on-going refresher training in the company. Training is provided for all employees regardless of their role, their age or their hours of work.
- 7.26 JD Wetherspoon applies high standards of management to ensure it meets its aims of providing excellent service to its customers and ensuring that its public houses are not only orderly, but successfully well run. JD Wetherspoon Public Houses each have an average of five managers and the majority of these hold personal licence qualifications.
- 7.27 The Company's approach to the sale of alcohol is to concentrate on the range and quality of the products on offer rather than to use price as an incentive. JD Wetherspoon continually reviews the pricing structure of its alcoholic and non-alcoholic products to ensure that it is encouraging sensible drinking at all times. The Company is recognised as being a Responsible Drinks Retailer and is a previous winner of the award of Responsible Drinks Retailer of the Year in the pub group category.
- 7.28 The Company is also a regular winner of 'Best Bar None' pub safety awards for providing a welcoming, safe and secure environment, whilst being commended for its approach to responsible drinking. JD Wetherspoon has also won numerous awards from the Wheelchair

Users Group and the Disabled Access Award in respect of its access for all ethos. The Company's dedicated recycling centre recycles over 8m tonnes of waste each year, and has received national recognition and awards in each of the last four years.

Location with Reading Town Centre

- 7.29 It should also be recognised that the application site is located within Reading Town Centre and Central Core as defined within the adopted plan's Proposals Map. This is an appropriate location for a public house and beer garden. Indeed, the proposal just seeks to extend the existing beer garden into the service yard when the service yard is not in use. The only element of this proposal which requires planning permission is the alterations to the boundary treatment to create a safe and secure service and beer garden which will have dual usage. The management of this area is set out in the Delivery Service Management Plan document and the proposal will have amenity benefits as detailed elsewhere.
- 7.30 For those living in proximity to the site the principle that residents living within a town centre environment should expect a noisier background environment is well-established and the presence of the beer garden is already in existence upon the site. As such, in this respect it should be accepted by such occupiers that their living conditions will be noisier in such a location than in a solely residential area elsewhere. This is simply '*part and parcel*' of living in a town centre location and it is unlikely to be changed by the expansion of the beer garden as this is an existing use on part of the site presently.

Impact on the Vitality and Viability of Reading Town Centre

- 7.31 The contribution JD Wetherspoon public houses make to enhancing the vitality and viability of town centres has been widely acknowledged by many Local Planning Authorities and Planning Inspector's.
- 7.32 Any enhancement to the vitality and viability of Reading Town Centre thus accords with National Planning Guidance which seeks to direct town centre uses to town centre locations and seeks to enhance the vitality and viability of town centres. In addition, the proposal accords with relevant Town Centre Policies of the adopted Development Plan including Policy RC7 (Leisure, Culture and Tourism in the Centres), RC8 (Drinking Establishments) and emerging policy DM15 (Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses). There is therefore

a policy presumption within both National Planning Guidance and the adopted Development Plan which supports the enhancement of an existing public houses within Reading Town Centre. Overall, therefore, it is considered that the proposal will result in a number of significant beneficial impacts to Reading Town Centre. This is a significant material consideration in support of the proposal.

Highway Safety

- 7.33 As noted in the Planning History Section an application for a similar proposal was refused on the grounds that the loss of the dedicated off-street service and delivery area would result in added competition for on-street parking/waiting space and obstruction/danger on the public highway and was therefore considered unacceptable in terms of Policy DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters) of the adopted plan.
- 7.34 This proposal has been amended since the previous similar application on the site so as to create a dual purpose service and beer garden ensuring that deliveries occur in the mornings when customers have no requirement for the beer garden and with the area converting to a beer garden, with the installation of collapsible or movable chairs and tables, when customers are most likely to want to use this area, ie in the afternoons and evenings.
- 7.35 The Delivery Service Management Plan prepared by DW Transportation, submitted with this application, confirms the arrangements for deliveries and that this level of organisation/management is entirely acceptable in highway safety terms. As required by the Highway Authority, off-street servicing will continue to occur and therefore the proposal is considered to accord entirely with Policy DM12 as the proposal will have no impact on highway safety or result in additional vehicles on to the public highway or on-street servicing.
- 7.36 The dual use of this area and the creation of a new boundary wall will ensure that the service area is managed appropriately and is also screened from the public highway in an appropriate manner whilst also meeting the customers' needs. Therefore, best use is made of an existing under-utilised area in a pragmatic and easily manageable way.
- 7.37 The operation of this area can be managed by conditions, as set out elsewhere in the report. Based on the previous application, which was similar in principle, the only reason for refusal

stated has now been addressed meaning the proposal should be acceptable in planning policy terms (and there are no other relevant material considerations).

Flooding

- 7.38** The site is located within Flood Zone 1 (based on the Environment Agency's flood maps for planning) but the adjoining River Kennet is in Flood Zone 3. Given the proposal makes no changes to the extent or principle of the surfacing material, the proposal will have no impact on the drainage of the site or wider area. Accordingly, no drainage or flooding issues are raised by the proposal.

SECTION 8: DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

- 8.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by the Applicant, JD Wetherspoon plc, to support the full planning application for the installation of new boundary treatments to facilitate the dual use of the service yard as a service yard/beer garden at Back of Beyond Public House, 108 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3BY.
- 8.2 The design and access requirements of the site have evolved from an appraisal of the site's context, against the background of its location and proximity to the highway network and developed nature of the site.
- 8.3 In accordance with the requirements to formerly state how design and access issues have been considered (under Section 61 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2014) this document addresses the design principles and concepts that have been applied to development in relation to location, use, layout, scale, appearance and landscaping in relation to the site's context.
- 8.4 The Design and Access Statement should be read in context with the planning application's supporting reports and drawings.

Site Evaluation

- 8.5 There are a number of key issues which have informed the design solution for the site's development. Effectively it balances the site's opportunities and constraints arising from the assessment of the site to deliver the Company's aspirations for an extended beer garden whilst retaining an off-road service area. The proposal has consideration to high quality design, sustainability, economic viability and aspirations to enhance the locality.
- 8.6 The principle constraints can be identified as:
- The need to utilise the existing access from Bembridge Place into the service yard; and
 - The need to retain off-road servicing whilst also meeting the Company and customers' aspirations for an enhanced beer garden.

8.7 There are a number of opportunities afforded by the potential development of the site that are relevant material considerations in the evaluation of the proposal. In summary these are:

- The opportunity provides an enhanced beer garden within the Central Area of Reading Town Centre;
- The opportunity to screen the service yard from the highway; and
- The opportunity to create a dual purpose area maximising the use of the site within a very central location.

Planning Policy

8.8 A detailed evaluation of the planning policies relevant to this planning application is provided within Section 6 of this Statement. However, in summary the following policies are of particular relevance to the Design and Access Statement and inform this report.

- Paragraphs 7, 8, 38, 48, 80, 81, 92, 124 and 127 of National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019);
- Core Strategy (2008) Policy CS7;
- Reading Central Area Action Plan (January 2009) Policies RC7, RC8 and RC14; and
- Sites and Detailed Policies (adopted 2012) (altered 2015) Policies SD1, DM4 and DM12.

Design Considerations

Use

8.9 The application does not relate to the use per se but the proposed boundary treatments, which will enable the dual use of the existing service yard as a service yard/beer garden which is ancillary to the main use of the site as a public house. Accordingly, the use of the site does not need specific planning permission as it is covered by the existing permission on the site. In any event the proposed uses are considered to be entirely appropriate on the

site given that the extension of the beer garden into the service yard is merely an extension of an existing facility, making the best use of land, in a town centre location.

Layout

- 8.10 Given the above comments the layout of the dual use service yard/beer garden does not require planning permission, albeit the submitted plans show the dual use of the area including indicative positions of the tables and chairs etc and the operation of the area as a delivery area.
- 8.11 The plans show adequate provision of storage for the Back of Beyond Public as well as space for delivery vehicles, confirming that the service area will continue to operate as existing.

Scale

- 8.12 The proposal is entirely compatible with the use of the site and therefore the scale is appropriate.

Appearance

- 8.13 The proposal requires the addition of a boundary treatment along the existing service area on to Bembridge Road. This boundary treatment will match the existing boundary further to the south adjacent to the River. Also proposed as part of this application is the reconfiguration of the existing fire exit on to Bembridge Road to enable the doors to open outwards rather than inwards which offers safety benefits over the existing situation.
- 8.14 In terms of appearance of the proposal the boundary will match the existing boundary treatments and therefore is entirely compatible with the site and wider area.

Materials

- 8.15 As detailed above, the materials of the proposed new boundary treatment will match the existing with the cantilever gate to be clad in vertical timber. This is entirely appropriate for

the location within this area of Reading which is mixed in character and is not within a conservation area or adjacent to listed buildings.

Community Safety

- 8.16 Consideration has been given to create an attractive safe environment through the development of a high quality public realm on Bembridge Road and also creating a secure area for customers within the public house, whilst also removing a visible storage area through screening. This will create a safer and more attractive environment for the benefit of users of the site and the wider community.

Landscaping

- 8.17 Landscaping is not directly relevant to the proposal as the service area/beer garden will be an enclosed space, albeit appropriate hard surfaces are proposed to ensure that the site is attractive and accessible for all.

Refuse Management

- 8.18 As shown on the proposed layout drawings, adequate storage is provided for refuse and kegs. These will be stored within screened areas and collected by private contractors.

Accessibility

- 8.19 The Applicant is committed to a policy of equality, inclusion and accessibility for those who visit the site as it strives to exceed all required standards and achieve a development which promotes inclusion and accessibility.
- 8.20 The provision of an accessible and inclusive environment has been an integral theme throughout the design process, from its initial conception to its current form. The concept of inclusive design seeks to remove barriers which create undue effort, separation or special treatment which enables everyone to participate equally, regardless of gender, disability or age.

- 8.21 The use of the site as a public house is well-established by the planning history of the site and the current facilities upon it. Access within the building and to the beer garden broadly remain as existing and meets all accessibility requirements.

Inclusive Access

- 8.22 In respect to inclusive access, all of the major public house operators agree that it is not merely physical barriers that can cause difficulties for customers. Employees of JD Wetherspoon receive disability awareness sessions as part of their basic training to understand the challenges customers with disabilities may face and to ensure that their needs are met.

- 8.23 Level access is provided throughout the public house and this will be extended to the beer garden areas. Therefore, easy access is available throughout the premises.

Conclusion

- 8.24 The proposal responds positively to the site's opportunities and constraints, and consideration has been given to layout, scale, appearance and landscaping. Access to and within the site has been carefully reviewed. It is considered that based upon the above an appropriate, site sensitive design solution has been found

SECTION 9: CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 JD Wetherspoon Plc seeks planning permission for alterations and additions to the rear boundary wall adjacent to Bembridge Place, to facilitate dual usage of the existing service yard as a service yard/beer garden at the Back of Beyond Public House, 108 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3BY.
- 9.2 JD Wetherspoon plc opened the Back of Beyond Public House in 1996 and since this time the site has operated highly successfully supporting the daytime and evening economy of Reading, providing local jobs and has operated in accordance with JD Wetherspoon's industry leading management guidelines in a way which respects its neighbours.
- 9.3 The application site is located with Reading Town Centre and, as such, is located in an appropriate location for this use. Simply, this application seeks to make boundary treatment changes to effectively enable the existing service yard to operate as a dual purpose area – delivery area in the morning and beer garden in the afternoon/evening to meet the needs of the operator and customers.
- 9.4 The Applicant is a leading provider of public houses within the United Kingdom. The Company has unrivalled expertise in managing its estate and beer gardens, the vast majority of which are located in proximity to existing residential properties. The enclosure of the service area and extension of the beer garden area will have no detrimental impact on either highway safety or residential amenity.
- 9.5 The supporting Delivery Service Management Plan prepared by DW Transportation confirms details of the operation of the premises and how the business will operate ensuring existing off-road deliveries continue. Accordingly, the proposal accords with adopted highway policy ensuring the safe operation of the highway whilst also meeting the operational needs.
- 9.6 For the above reasons it is respectfully requested that the application be granted.