



SEQUENTIAL ASSESSMENT

Proposed development of The Butler Pub and adjoining site, Reading, RG1 7DS



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Sequential Assessment Report has been prepared by Oxford Architects on behalf of our client in support of a full planning application for the proposed redevelopment of The Butler Pub and adjoining buildings located on the corner of Chatham Street and Eaton Place in the western Reading area. This proposed scheme will provide a hotel with 14 bedrooms and parking.

The main building, which is in good working order, is a Public House, however the connecting outbuildings are used for ancillary storage and/ or were previously tenanted to another business (Tyre Fitting Operation). These outbuildings are dilapidated and in need of refreshing.

The proposed development seeks listed building consent and planning permission for the conversion/ renovation of the existing outbuildings previously tenanted to a tyre fitting operation (B1c) and part of the existing pub (A4 use) to provide an ancillary 14 bedroom hotel with parking (C1 use) along with associated alterations to the public house. These associated alterations will result in no loss of bar space and will include the introduction of a new staircase providing access to the pub's new toilet facilities that will be relocated on the first floor of the main building; along with a new managers office on the same level. External alterations are also proposed on the elevation facing Eaton Place to improve the building frontage, streetscape and the public realm. The redevelopment of the existing building stock with a use class that is complimentary to the current Public House facility will enhance the visitor experience in Reading. Please refer to the Design and Access Statement for a detailed description of the proposed scheme. Please also refer to Appendix 1 for a location map indicating the proposed site and alternative sequential sites.

The purpose of this assessment is to provide justification for the proposal of regeneration of a dilapidated building to a boutique hotel, in order to assist the Local Planning Authority in the determination of the planning application. According to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirements, this document along with the sequential test discusses whether the proposal of the hotel is appropriate in the context of Reading Town Centre.

Please read in conjunction with the planning application forms and drawings.

2.0 THE EXISTING SITE AND PROPOSED SCHEME

2.1 The Existing Site

The site is at the corner of Chatham Street (A329) and Eaton Place, to the southwest of the Reading train station and to the West of the Reading Town Centre. As indicated in the map below, the site is located within the Reading Central Area but 59m from the Reading Town Centre Central Core boundary.

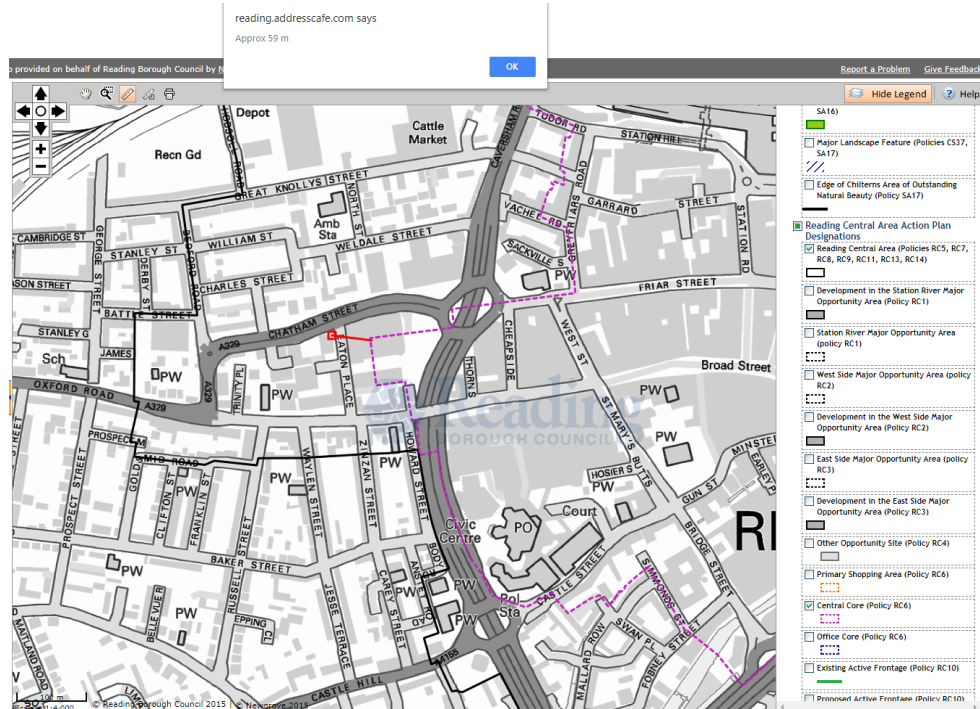


Fig 1: Map showing the Central area and the Central Core Area (courtesy of Reading Borough Council)

The site is located at the edge of a leisure and cultural area. The area to the north of the site, beyond the Chatham Road is a residential area. To the east of the site is a mixed use zone comprising carpark, restaurant, gym, laundry and offices as indicated in the image below.

Figure 5: Local Site Context

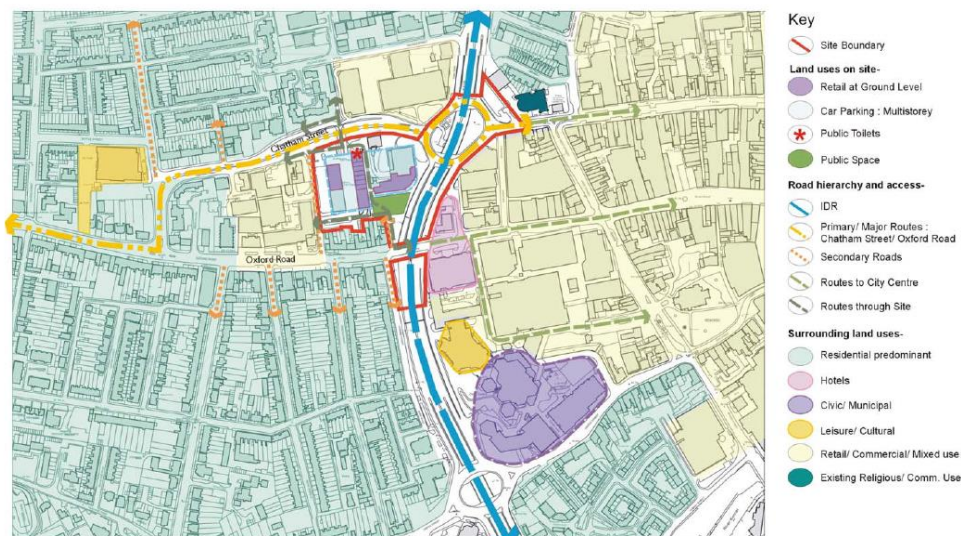


Fig 2: Map showing the Local Site Context – taken from 'Chatham St Regeneration Area' (courtesy of Reading Borough Council)

The site location is considered to be highly accessible and sustainable, because of its close proximity to the Reading Town Centre (9-minute walk), Reading train station (11-minute walk), and Reading West train station (10-minute walk). There are also 11 bus stops within the 10-minute walk distance radius from the site. The cycling routes coverage and pedestrian route around the site are also well-established. It is also a stone's throw away from Oxford Road and its amenities.

The Butler Pub, along with all its outbuildings and private external space, occupies a total site area of 888 m². The main site access is from Chatham Street (A329) which leads to the A33 running south to Basingstoke. The same junction is used to access the Q Park Chatham Street multi-storey car parking facility. The site also provide 14 car parking spaces along Eaton Road.

2.2 The Proposed scheme

The proposal is a conversion of the existing dilapidated outbuildings currently not used by the Pub into an ancillary 14-bedroom (12 single storey and 2 double storey) Boutique Hotel. In addition, part of the first floor of the main building is proposed to be develop internally, comprising an introduction of a new staircase providing access to the proposed relocated internal pub toilets located on the first floor of the main building; along with a new manager's office on the same level.

The scale of the development is as per the existing scenario with the only addition being the marginal proportional uplifting of some of the existing outbuilding roofs to a height lower than the roof height of the main building. Slate of a similar colour will be used on the uplifted roofs.

The proposed new external landscaping feature along the Chatham Road and Eaton Place – a series of planter box, will not only form a natural acoustic buffer zone, but also break up elevation facing the Eaton Place. The Courtyard, which is currently in poor condition, will be upgraded with new two sided external seating and trees. This will provide guests with a secluded external area to enjoy. A newly proposed bin store for both the pub and proposed hotel refuse is to be tucked away in a corner away from all principal walkways and entrances and close to the road on which the bin lorries arrive.

Although the pub itself is in fairly good condition the adjacent outbuildings are not, where the East Elevation is currently not an asset to the streetscape of Eaton Place. The existing façades will benefit from being cleaned up, stripped of paint where necessary and re-pointed to prevent future water ingress. The East Elevation will benefit from the introduction of new double glazed windows and doors, along with trees and planting which will work well with the ordered horizontal linear regularity of the streetscape along Eaton Place. This introduction of a secondary frontage (East Elevation) would improve visually the streetscape whilst also helping to make it feel safer at night when the adjacent offices are closed. The proposed development will not materially alter the appearance of the existing. The majority of the proposed work is of an internal nature.

In general, the proposed scheme will utilised the existing disparate outbuildings space to accommodate a hotel which would not only complement the existing pub context but also benefit from the pub's services and management. It will also improve the frontages and quality of the existing buildings, while maintain and enhance its original characteristic and appearance and respect the living conditions of neighbouring residents. The boutique hotel will facilitate an enhanced leisure facility in the central area in Reading to provide visitor a choice of a unique accommodation experience different from the large-scale franchised hotels. We believe that the proposed development will not only be beneficial to the local community but also enhance the visitors experience in Reading.

The proposed layouts are illustrated in the supporting drawings and are described in detail in the Design and Access Statement.

2.3 Need for the Development

This boutique hotel is supported by an adjoining existing public house. It facilitates 14 bedrooms, parking, free WiFi, private bathrooms and wheelchair accessible facilities. As the screenshot (taken from booking.com) below shown, there are only 8 comparable hotels which could provide similar facilities within the area of Reading. Moreover, the hotels marked on the map below are in a relatively large-scale franchised hotel, such as Holiday Inn, Ibis, Hilton, Mercure and Pentahotel etc. It is clear that the proposed boutique hotel is very different to the other hotels in Reading, in terms of size and type. Therefore, we believe that this small-scale local boutique hotel is unique in its entity.

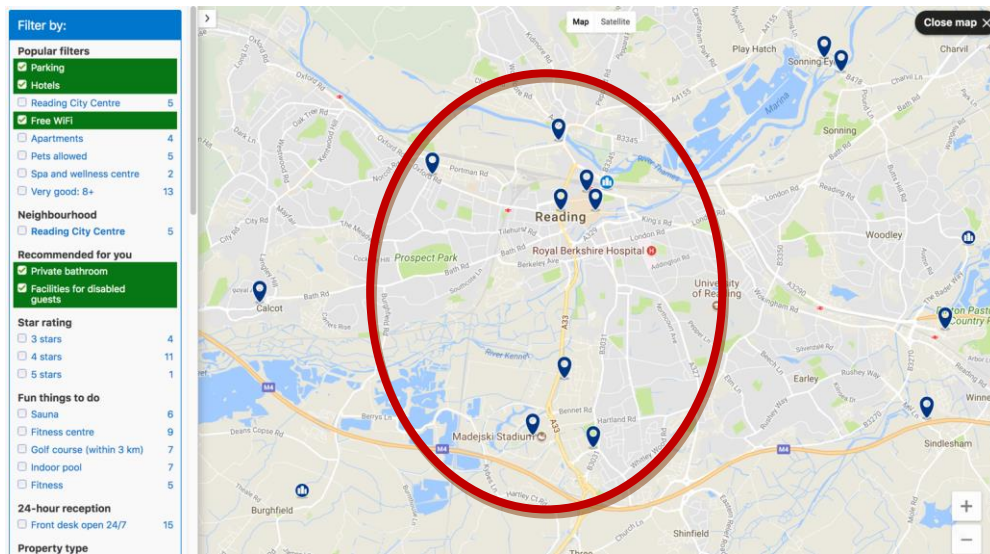


Fig 3: Map showing the comparable hotels in the Reading area (courtesy of Booking.com)

Reading is also evidently a tourist city for both inbound and international visitors. It has been ranked as one of the top 20 towns in the UK for both 'staying visits' by inbound visitors¹ and international visitors². Therefore, we believe that the demand for the proposed type of hotel in Reading is high.

Top towns for 'staying visits' by inbound visitors

2016			2015		2014	
	Town/city	Visits (000s)	Town/city	Visits (000s)	Town/city	Visits (000s)
1	London	19,060	London	18,851	London	17,404
2	Edinburgh	1,689	Edinburgh	1,543	Edinburgh	1,585
3	Manchester	1,191	Manchester	1,152	Manchester	994
4	Birmingham	1,115	Birmingham	1,107	Birmingham	944
5	Liverpool	671	Glasgow	662	Glasgow	624
6	Glasgow	659	Liverpool	601	Liverpool	605
7	Oxford	586	Oxford	535	Oxford	489
8	Bristol	570	Bristol	526	Bristol	446
9	Cambridge	498	Brighton/Hove	457	Brighton/Hove	423
10	Brighton/Hove	465	Cambridge	430	Cambridge	418
11	Cardiff	357	Cardiff	358	Leeds	370
12	Inverness	340	Bath	323	York	311
13	Leeds	331	Inverness	316	Cardiff	300
14	Bath	331	Leeds	300	Inverness	261
15	Nottingham	304	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	263	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	243
16	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	296	Southampton	257	Aberdeen	241
17	York	265	York	240	Bath	236
18	Reading	245	Reading	236	Nottingham	218
19	Aberdeen	237	Aberdeen	217	Reading	189
20	Leicester	229	Nottingham	204	Windsor	187

Source: International Passenger Survey, Office for National Statistics. Please note that figures are based on small sample sizes for all cities with the exception of London and should therefore be treated with caution.

Fig 4: Table showing the top towns for 'staying visits' by inbound visitors (courtesy of Visit Britain)

Moreover, the location of the proposed site is 10-minute walk from the Reading town centre, Reading or Reading West Train stations (as shown in the map below). Hence, we believe that our proposed location is ideal for hotel use, visitors would be able to get easier access to the local amenities, landmarks and public transport.

¹ 'Top towns for 'staying visits' by inbound visitors' (2017) <<https://www.visitbritain.org/town-data>> [accessed 27 06.2018]

² ARFIN, FERNE 'Top 20 Most Popular UK Cities for International Visitors' (24.01.2018) <<https://www.tripsavvy.com/popular-uk-cities-for-international-visitors-1661845>> [accessed 27 06.2018]

3.0 SEQUENTIAL ASSESSMENT

3.1 General Considerations

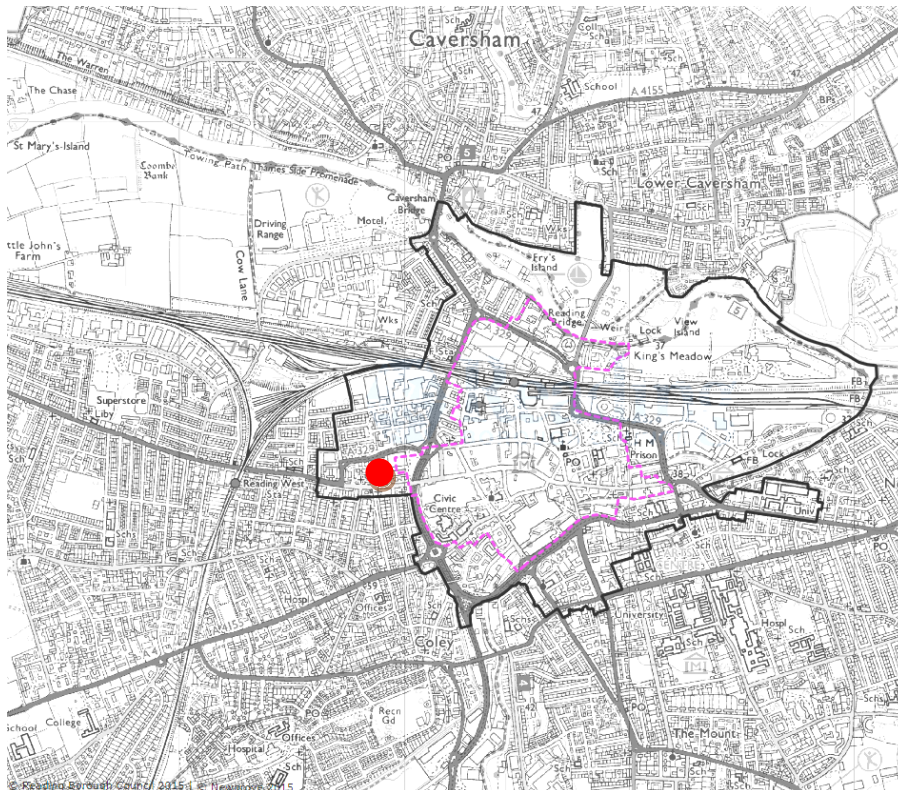
According to the NPPF, the sequential test is required to demonstrate that there are no sequentially preferable alternative sites available within, or adjacent to, existing centres that could accommodate the proposed development. However, although flexibility should be demonstrated, according to the NPPG checklist, there is no requirement to consider whether the proposal should be altered to for an alternative site. It is unrealistic to consider that the applicant should alter their requirement to fit a different site. However, we shall reflect what benefit a more central located site could bring to accommodate the proposed development.

3.2 Assessment Parameters

Having considering the above, it is measured to be suitable to consider alternative opportunity sites that could accommodate the proposed boutique hotel with parking, a bar and dining space as an entity, rather than just the proposed hotel bedrooms as the well-established existing Public House is proposed to service, manage, support and facilitate the proposed hotel. Therefore, the two cannot be separated.

Within 1 km radius of the site is the Reading Town Centre. The proposed scheme shares the facility of an existing Public House which serves mainly the Reading Town Centre and also the immediate neighbouring residents. We believe it is appropriate and essential to consider alternative sites that are located in the Reading Central Core Area and area near its perimeter only. Therefore, sites in other defined centre or out of town locations will not be considered. The need of a boutique hotel should also be considered for alternative sites.

In addition, Policy RC6 and RC7 of the Reading Town Centre Area Action Plan confirms that future leisure, cultural and tourism development should be concentrated within the Reading Centre Core.



Therefore, this sequential test will review possible alternative sites within Reading Central Core Area and the area in close proximity to its perimeter (within and near the pink outline shown in the image below) only and consider their feasibility, suitability and vacancy, for the purpose of finding out whether the proposal pass the test.

Fig 5: Map showing the Reading core centre area and Reading central area (courtesy of Reading Borough Council)

The site-specific parameters for this proposal are as follows:

- A site area of approximately 0.1 - 0.07 ha
- The site is vacant
- Sufficient parking space (7 no. min)
- Suitable access for servicing
- A noticeable location in Reading central area.
- Have the ability to deliver a commercially sustainable hotel facility for 14 beds with car parking
- At an accessible location with good transport links including – train, bus, car, cycling and walking.

3.3 Opportunity Sites within Reading Central Area Action Plan

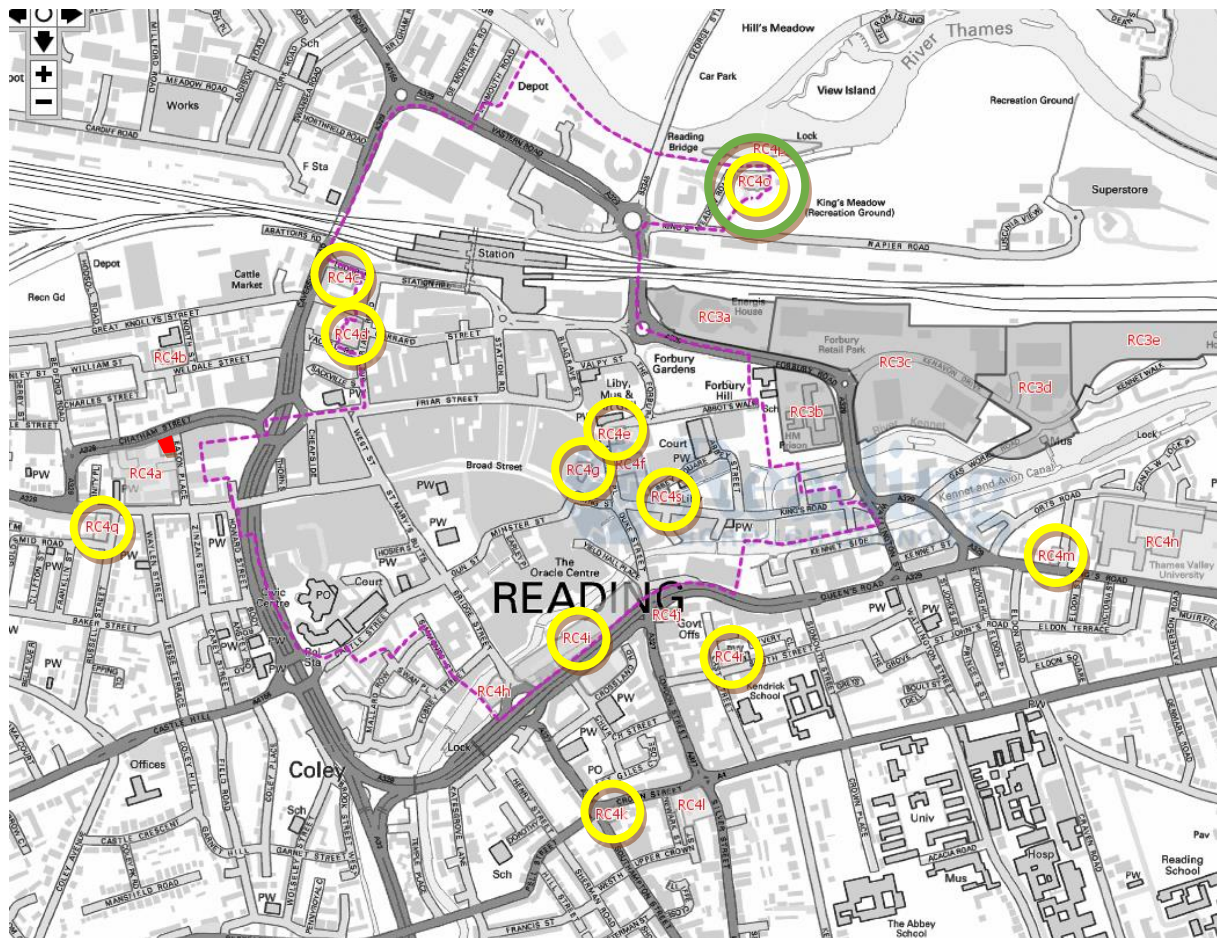


Fig 6: Map showing the Reading core centre area and the nearby Sites (courtesy of Reading Borough Council)

- Size of site that are approximately suitable
- Sites that are suitable for hotel use

An 'elimination exercise' has been done to all potential 'Opportunity Sites' (within Reading Central Area Action Plan) within and near the perimeter of the Central Core Area as shown on the map above. Sites in yellow circles (Opportunity Sites RC4c, RC4d, RC4e, RC4g, RC4i, RC4k, RC4m, RC4o, RC4q, RC4r and RC4s mentioned on the Reading Central Area Action Plan) have similar site area to the proposed site area. However, only RC4o - Kings Meadow Pool, Kings Meadow Road is suitable for tourism uses, and therefore suitable for hotel use. All other site are dismissed, because they are allocated to other uses such as residential, retail, office, commercial and etc.

Further research has been done on the site RC4o - Kings Meadow Pool, Kings Meadow Road, it is considered as not suitable for the proposed boutique hotel, and the reasons are as follows:

- The site is currently not available or active on the market
- It is currently occupied by the Thames Lido

3.4 Other Town Centre Sites

We have taken a desktop search for available commercial properties / sites via online website such as Estates Gazette property link, Rightmove and Zoopla. These websites allow a detailed search within the defined 'area of search'.

There were no identified sites in the Reading Central Core area that satisfy the following parameters:

- Opportunity Land
- Property for licensed and leisure
- Site size under 1 Ha

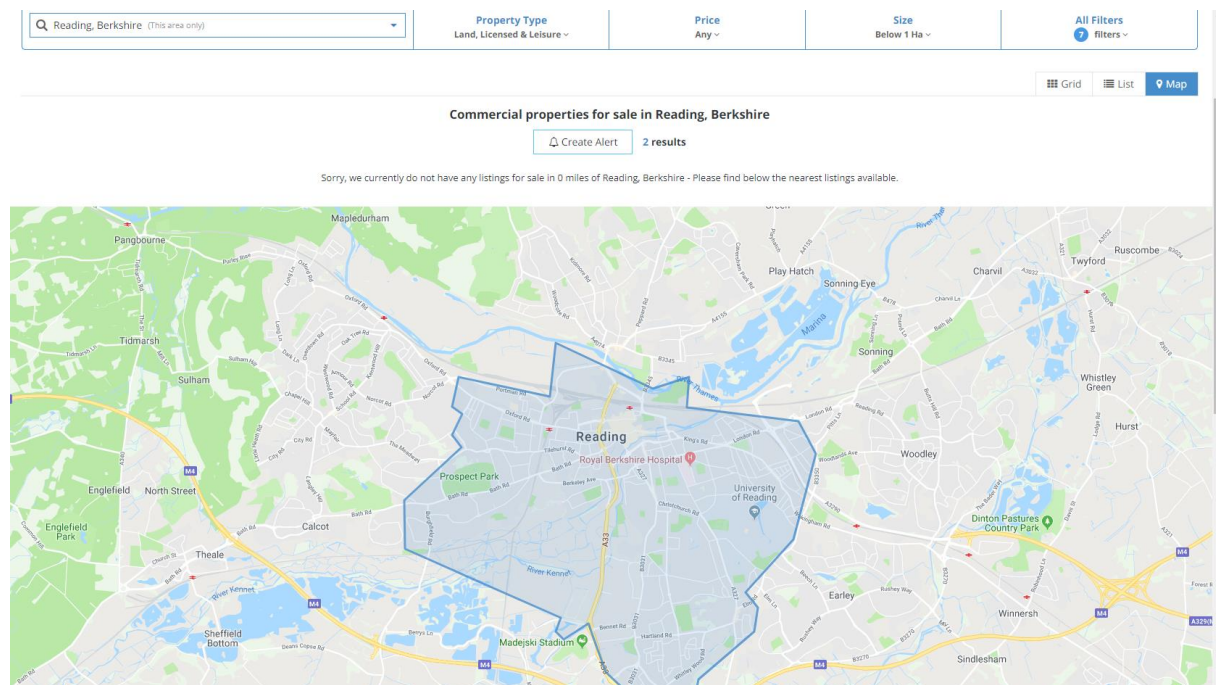


Fig 7: Search Map (courtesy of EG Property link)

3.5 Conclusion

The sequential test has considered every potentially available sites in Reading Central Core and the nearby area. The result of this assessment is that there are no suitable or available sites within the Reading Central Core Area to accommodate the proposed boutique hotel. Therefore we believe that the sequential test is passed.

4.0 SUMMARY

With the consideration of the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework, the National Planning Practice Guidance, Local Development Framework, Core Strategy and the Reading Central Area Action Plan, Oxford Architects has carried out a sequential assessment in regard to the proposed boutique hotel which has considered all potential premises and opportunity sites within and near Reading Central Core Area.

The proposed development for the boutique hotel makes use and good of an existing vacant and dilapidated building. The proposed hotel is the most ideal use for this particular site as the site would not only complement the existing pub context but also benefit from the pub's services and management. As the Butler Pub is already a well-established leisure facility, we believe that it will benefit and guide the boutique hotel to its success.

The location of the proposed site is sustainable, as it is walking distance to the reading town centre, train stations and bus stops. The easy accessibility of the site could assist the travelling for visitors to get access to different facility, services and landmarks that Reading has to offer. This is in line with Policy CS4.

We believe that the proposed scheme will support the local tourism of the Reading Town Centre in line with Policy RC7.

The sequential test carried out in regard to the proposals proves that there are no suitable and available sequentially preferable sites within Reading Central Core Area that they could facilitate the proposed development. Therefore, it is evident that the site at the Butler Pub and the adjoining building is the most sequentially preferable location for the proposed boutique hotel. This is in line with Policy CS25.

Considering the above, the sequential assessment has proven that the proposal is fully comply with the NPPF, NPPG and LDF provisions. We believe that planning permission shall be granted for the proposed development scheme.

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28.06.18