

PLANNING STATEMENT for Proposed Change of Use

At 642 Oxford Road,
Reading, RG30 1EH

V3: 3rd December 2024



Fig 1: Aerial view of site

INTRODUCTION

1. This statement is written to support our planning application for the following proposed development:

Change of use from public house (sui generis) to commercial (E3) at ground floor and residential (C3) at first floor with associated alterations.

2. The building is located approximately 1.3 miles from Reading Town Centre on the main A329, near to the junction of Alma Road.
3. There are commercial uses in the buildings to the east, a block of flats to the west and a hotel beyond this. To the north there are houses and a 'Core Employment Zone' to the north west.

USE

1. The existing premises comprises a public house at ground floor with associated residential / ancillary accommodation above.
2. The proposed use is commercial (E3) at ground floor and self-contained residential above, with its own access formed.



Fig 2: Relationship to the centre of Reading

AMOUNT OF DEVELOPMENT

- 1. Breakdown of areas:
 - 1.1. The total site area = 1504 sq.m
 - 1.2. Gross internal area of the proposed commercial space at ground floor = 219sq.m
 - 1.3. Gross internal area of first floor residential = 133sq.m

POLICY

- 1. The Local Plan Map (Fig.3) shows the site to be adjacent to a Core Employment Area and fronting a ‘Classified Highway Network’ so Policy TR3 will apply.
- 2. The existing use as a public house is protected by Policy RL6. Refer to the Policy notes below:



Fig 3: Extract from Local Plan Map

Policy	Notes
RL6: PROTECTION OF LEISURE FACILITIES AND PUBLIC HOUSES <i>Existing leisure facilities or public houses will generally be retained, and there is a strong presumption in favour of retaining leisure facilities or public houses where they are the only facility of their type in a district, major local or local centre. Developments that would result in the loss of a leisure facility or a public house will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that:</i> <i>a. There is no need for this type of facility in this area; or</i> <i>b. The function of the facility can be adequately fulfilled by an existing facility, or a facility proposed as part of the development, where that facility would be at least as accessible to the same catchment; or</i>	It is considered that the pub ‘facility’ is not required due to the remaining two pubs within 1km of the site (see figure 4) which adequately serve the area.

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

In determining proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network, improvement works to the transport network, the creation of new transport infrastructure or the generation of additional trips on the transport network, consideration will be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment.

Development will only be permitted where:-

- i) Accesses and works to the highway comply with the adopted standards of the Transport Authority;*
- ii) The development would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network;*
- iii) The proposals would not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and cyclists;*
- iv) 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*
- v) For non-residential uses, or new dwellings on classified roads, off-street servicing would be provided.*

Proposals involving either the construction of a new site access, or a material increase in the use of an existing site access, directly onto the Classified Highway Network will not be acceptable if they would be likely to result in the encouragement of the use of the network for short local trips or compromise the safe movement and free flow of traffic on the network or the safe use of the road.

No access works proposed

It is not considered that the change of use will impact the functioning of the transport network. The existing car park remains with the same capacity which would be the limiting factor for vehicles able to use the site.

The use is anticipated to be 'retail' or 'cafe' so there would not be heavy goods vehicles, only occasional servicing which can be done 'off-street' as with the existing pub use.

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3. Policy H1 identifies the need for housing and Policy H2 sets out the density / mix. Given the size of the first floor it creates a generous 4 bed family sized apartment.
4. Policy H5 sets out standards for new dwellings. In this case (given the arrangement in relation to the existing building) it is not possible for the apartment to fully meet part M4(2). It will meet NDSS standards as set out in Figure 4.7.
5. Policy H8 sets out the standards for residential conversions and it is considered that the proposal meets the applicable points.
6. Policy H10 calls for communal outdoor space for flats to be provided and it is proposed

JUSTIFICATION FOR LOSS OF PUBLIC HOUSE

7. The existing pub was not commercially viable and had been through a number of changes of management before the owners (Green King) decided it was not possible to turn it around and put the premises up for sale. The applicant has provided the following reasons for closure to support this application:



Fig 4: Existing public houses in relation to the site

8. **Over-saturation of Pubs in the Area:** The local area already has a number of pubs, including establishments located a short distance from the property in question. These pubs serve the local community's demand for such venues, and as a result, the necessity for an additional pub has greatly diminished. With several options available to local patrons, including The Pond House located 170 meters away, The white Eagle located 800 meters away, Double Barrelled Brewery located 800 meters away, The Spread Eagle located 900meters away, The Wishing Well located 900 meters away., the continued operation of this establishment as a public house no longer contributes significantly to the area's need.
9. **Diminishing Viability as a Pub:** Operating this premises as a pub has become financially unsustainable. A combination of declining foot traffic and increasing operational costs has led to a situation where it is not feasible to maintain the business. The economic viability of continuing to run this establishment as a pub is, therefore, questionable, especially given the nearby competition. Furthermore, the recent decline in pub patronage across many areas in the UK, accelerated by changing social habits and economic factors, reinforces the idea that maintaining this site as a pub is no longer practical.

10. **Negative Press and Community Impact:** Recent incidents, such as those reported in the media, have cast a negative light on the operation of The Royal Albion, it was subject to a police raid following concerns about drug-related activities within the premises ([source: Reading Chronicle](#)). This type of criminal activity not only tarnishes the reputation of The Royal Albion but also impacts the community's sense of safety and wellbeing. Transitioning the property to an alternative use would help to positively influence the area and avoid any potential contribution to these issues.

11. **Potential for Community Benefit through Alternative Use:** Enabling a class E usage could bring the opportunity such as companies like Greggs / Starbucks, who have demonstrated an interest in taking the property on as a lease, this would not only mitigate the potential risks associated with maintaining the premises as a pub could result in benefiting the local community and business in general.
12. **Conclusion:** In summary, the request for a change of use from a pub to an alternative purpose is justified by the over-saturation of similar establishments in the area, the decreasing viability of the property as a pub, the potential risks of continuing operation in light of recent local criminal

activity, and the opportunity to provide a new function that better serves the community. I respectfully request that the application for change of use be considered favourably in light of these factors.

ACCESS & SERVICING

13. The vehicular access to the site is via the existing crossover from Oxford Road to the south. The existing car park to the north is retained with no changes proposed.
14. The ground floor unit can be accessed from the existing front doors opening onto Oxford Road. Servicing is from the car park at the rear as per the existing public house. Requirements would be confirmed by individual occupiers but there is sufficient space for commercial bins to be accommodated.
15. The first floor accommodation can be accessed from the existing side door where a new corridor is proposed to link to the existing staircase. There is space for bins and bikes adjacent to this entrance.
16. Policy TR5 gives general requirements for car, cycle parking and electric car charging. This refers to the parking SPD which shows this site to be in

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Zone 3. This guidance sets a 'maximum' parking standard of 2 spaces for a 3+ bed flat plus 1 visitor space. These have been shown as designated on the attached plan and also include a charging point. The ground floor Class E use would have the remainder of the spaces.