
The Former Royal Albion at 642 Oxford Road Reading RG30 1EH

Public House & Community Facility Needs Assessment

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1. Introduction

1.1. Context

- 1.1.1. Savills has been commissioned by M&M Property Investment (Reading) Ltd to undertake the following in relation to the change of use of the now closed The Royal Albion 642 Oxford Road.
- A Pub Facility Needs Assessment;
 - An Economic Benefits and Social Value Assessment.
- 1.1.2. The aim of the Pub Needs Assessment is to understand if the loss of the current vacant pub would result in a relative under provision of pubs in the local area. It is understood that the former pub ceased operating 8 March 2024 as it was not financially sustainable.
- 1.1.3. The Economic Benefits Assessments aim to quantify the true impact of the Proposed Change of use. This includes estimating the number and type of jobs generated if the change of use is granted, for local economy. In the Assessment, we estimate the value generated from employment, benefit for surrounding business, opportunities for meeting and social interaction. This represents the additional wider social, economic and environmental benefits that would be generated by the Proposed change of use.

1.2. The Proposal

- 1.2.1. The proposed use is commercial, with the ground floor functioning as E3(b) and the separate first floor to be E3(c)..

1.3. Report Structure

1.3.1. The report is structured as follows:

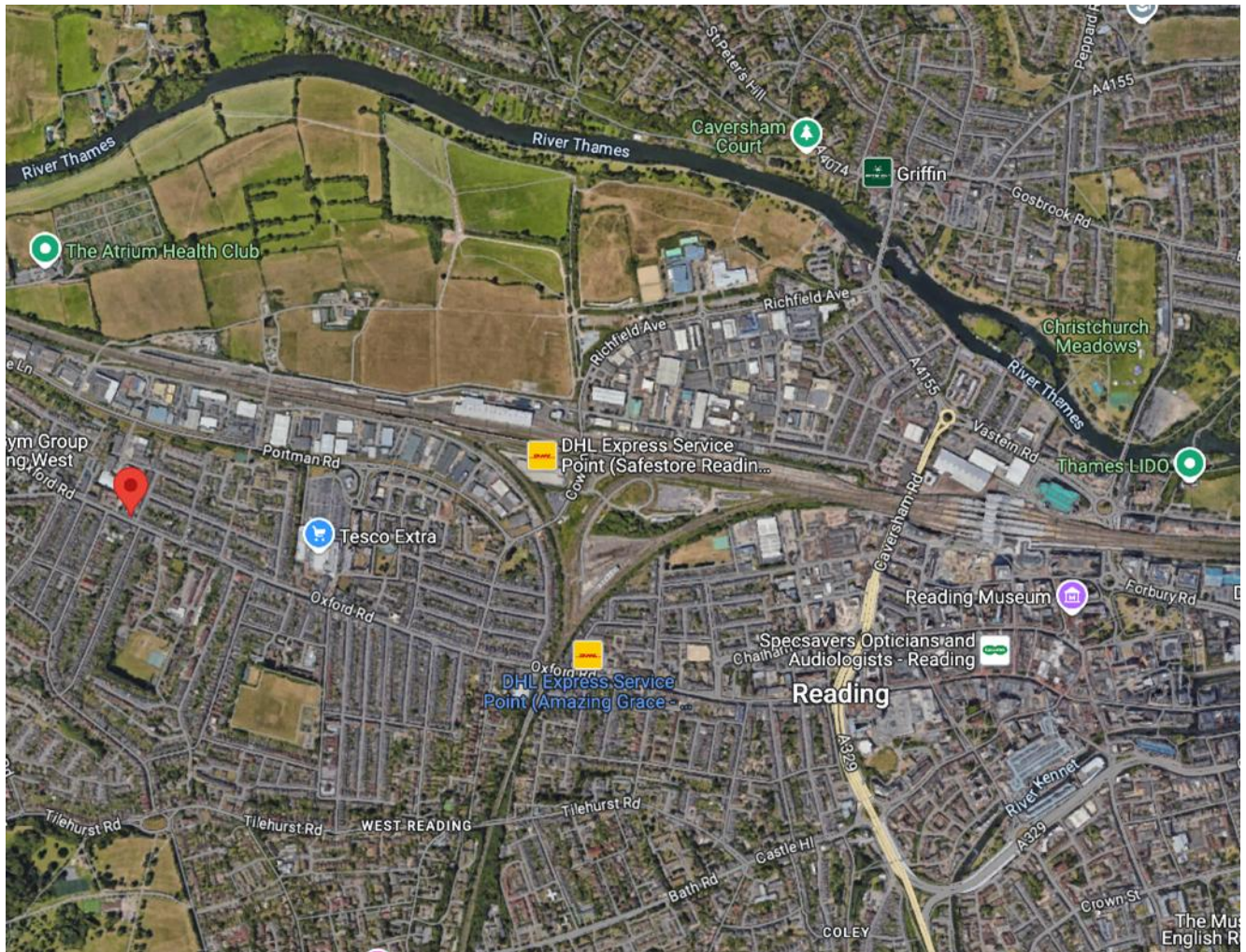
- Section 2 – Site Context
- Section 3 – Policy, Guidance and Approach
- Section 4 – Assessment Methodology
- Section 5 – Public House Needs Assessment
- Section 6 – Economic Benefits Assessment
- Section 7 – Conclusions

2. Site Context

2.1. The Site and Surroundings

- 2.1.1. The building is located approximately 1.3 miles from Reading Town Centre on the main A329, near to the junction of Alma Road.
- 2.1.2. 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.
- 2.1.3. The Subject Site currently contains the now closed former The Royal Albion. **Figure 2.1** below presents the location of the Subject Site.

Figure 2.1 Location Map of Subject Site



2.2. Site's Planning Context and History

2.2.1. Considering Policy RL6 (Securing Community Facilities), this document presents an initial evidence base to address the principle of land use, namely the loss of the former pub.

2.2.2. The Subject Site's planning history is summarized below.

Table 2.1 Subject Site's Planning Application History

Date	Description	Reference	Status/Decision
11 April 2006	Alterations and refurbishment of existing retail park	PL/06/1048	Application Approved
08 March 2007	Construction of new covered external dining/drinking area and new front	PL/07/0473	Application Approved

3. Policy and Guidance

3.1.1. This section reviews the key policies relating to the provision of pubs and community facilities at national policy level.

3.2. National Planning Policy

3.2.1. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) February 2019 states under Section 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities that:

"91. Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:

- a) promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;*
- b) are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do*

not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas; and

- c) enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.”*

“92. To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;*
- b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;*
- c) guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs;*
- d) ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernize, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and*
- e) ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.”*

- 3.2.2. In paragraph 92 the NPPF advocates for local authorities to plan positively for the provision of community facilities which it identifies as: *“local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses, places of worship and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.*

3.3. Local Policies

- 3.3.1. Reading Borough Local Plan was adopted in November 4 2019 This Local Plan outlines the planning policies for development in Reading until 2036 and is a key consideration in assessing planning applications. The plan addresses various aspects of development, including housing, employment, the environment, and heritage. .
- 3.3.2. Within the Reading Policies Plan, the provision of community facilities is considered

under Policy RL6. Individual pubs may be protected from changes of use under Policy RL6 based on evidence of need and demand for facilities and as such the following considerations should be taken into account:

3.3.3 Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public House: RL6: PROTECTION OF LEISURE FACILITIES AND PUBLIC HOUSES Existing leisure facilities or public houses will generally be retained, and there is a strong presumption in favor of retaining leisure facilities or public houses where they are the only facility of their type in a district, major local or local center. 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:

- a) *There is no need for this type of facility in this area; or*
- 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*
- c) *Unless the site is a sports or recreation facility, the impacts on amenity of residents or on crime and security of retaining the facility could not be dealt with through other measures, and would be so severe as to outweigh the benefits to the wider community of retaining the facility*

3.3.4. Policy paragraph 4.6.32 also relates to the loss of community facilities and states:

“Evidence to show that there is no need for the facility (a) will need to be based on clear, longterm issues and trends rather than short-term economic circumstances or lack of viability due to poor management. Retention of a facility where there is no need for it can result in long-term vacancy detracting from the centre’s vitality and viability or the quality of the local area. Any alternative facilities identified to comply with (b) must fulfil a similar role, have sufficient capacity to adequately serve the existing catchment, and must be at least as accessible by public transport, foot and cycle to the majority of the catchment as the facility to be lost.

The purpose of (c) is to ensure that facilities are not lost where there are alternative measures under powers such as licensing and environmental health that could resolve amenity issues whilst retaining the use, and that amenity impacts are intrinsic to the use rather than how the use has been managed – this is particularly relevant to public house

4. Assessment Methodology

4.1. Introduction

4.1.1. This section outlines the methodology adopted for the:

- Public House & Community Facility Needs Assessment;
- Economic Benefits Assessment;

4.2. Public House Assessment Methodology

4.2.1 To assess the local need for Public Houses this assessment outlines the general impacts and market trajectory of the pub sector, especially those public houses not located nearby to major economic and transport hubs similar to the Subject Site. The quality and characteristics of the former pub offering is compared with nearby pubs to help understand why it has closed and its prospects of reopening.

4.2.2. The results of the Public House assessment are details in **Section 5**

4.3. Economic Benefits Assessment of the Proposed Scheme - Methodology

4.3.1. The economic benefits of the Change of use are assessed by measuring the following receptors:

- Operational jobs (onsite & offsite);
- Enabling adaptive reuse based on demand
- Gross Value Added benefits;
- Increase foot fall benefiting the surrounding business; and
- Increased public sector revenues.

4.3.2. The results of the Economic Benefits assessment are details in **Section 6**

5. Public House Needs Assessment

5.1. Introduction

- 5.1.1. This section investigates the level and quality of local pub provision and compares this to the regional and national context. Market factors and consumer preferences impacting the pub sector are also discussed.

5.2. Growth of Private Renting, Over-Occupation, and Tenure Dynamics

- 5.2.1. Private Renting Growth
- 5.2.2. Reading has experienced a substantial increase in private rented sector households, with 37.4% of all households renting privately, well above the England average of approximately 20% (ONS, 2021).
- 5.2.3. Within the Oxford Road corridor, housing is characterized by:
 - High-density terraced housing
 - Significant Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)
 - Rapid turnover of residents due to affordability constraints and proximity to Reading town centre, the Royal Berkshire Hospital, and the University of Reading (Reading Borough Council, 2022).

5.3 Over-Occupation and Its Implications

- 5.3.1. Reading ranks within the top 10 local authorities in England for overcrowding in private rented housing (ONS, 2021, accessed 29 June 2025).
- 5.3.2. Overcrowding correlates with restricted leisure spending as income is prioritized for rent and basic utilities, limiting expenditure on non-essential social activities such as public house use (Scanlon et al., LSE, 2019).

5.4. Lack of Long-Term Resident Investment

- 5.4.1. Research shows that private renters demonstrate significantly lower levels of local amenity investment, community engagement, and loyalty to neighborhood businesses compared to homeowners (Scanlon et al., LSE, 2019).

- 5.4.2. The Oxford Road area has transient populations with limited disposable income stability, which negatively impacts businesses relying on regular repeat local patronage such as public houses.

5.5. Age Dynamics, Disposable Income, and Social Patterns

- 5.5.1. Under-25 Households in Private Renting
- 5.5.2. National data indicates 42% of private renters are under 35, with university towns like Reading showing an even higher proportion of under-25 renters (English Housing Survey, 2023).
- 5.5.3. In Reading, this age group is concentrated in:
- HMOs on Oxford Road and surrounding streets
 - Purpose-built studios where single occupancy is the norm.

5.6. Income Pressures

- 5.6.1. Under-25s have an average weekly disposable income of £277, compared to the national average of £351 (ONS Family Spending, 2024).
- 5.6.2. Rent in Reading consumes 40-50% of income for this demographic, leaving limited residual funds for discretionary social spending, particularly in traditional hospitality venues (English Housing Survey, 2023).

5.7. Changing Consumer Preferences

- 5.7.1. Over the past two decades, consumer preferences regarding where they buy their alcohol has shifted.
- Between 2001 and 2018, the average proportion of household expenditure spent on alcohol consumed outside of the home (such as in pubs) has decreased from 2.2% to 1.4%. In a typical UK household this equates to £244 less being spent on alcohol consumed outside of the home per year.
- 5.7.2. Since 2005/6, the proportion of household expenditure being spent on alcohol that is consumed at home (typically shop bought alcohol) has increased slightly. This demonstrates consumer's increased preference for consuming alcohol at home rather than in a pub or bar. UK households now also spend more of their total expenditure at

restaurants and cafes than they previously did. Effectively the proportion of household income being spend on alcoholic drinks away from the home (such as pubs) has been reducing in preference to drinking at home or visiting a restaurant or café to eat out rather than drink out.

(ONS, 2019. Family spending in the UK.)

5.8. Decrease in Alcohol Consumption Among Young Adults

5.8.1. National and Local Trends

5.8.2. 36% of 16–24-year-olds were teetotal in 2022, a significant rise from 24% in 2005 (ONS, 2023)

5.8.3 Average consumption among young drinkers has **halved since 2004**, with fewer high-intensity drinking sessions (Public Health England, 2023).

5.9. Changing Student and Young Adult Culture

5.9.1. At the University of Reading, Students' Union events have shifted towards alcohol-free options such as craft workshops, wellbeing classes, and café socials (RUSU Annual Report, 2024).

This reflects a broader generational shift away from traditional public house environments, with cafés and quick-service food outlets preferred for affordability and lifestyle compatibility

5.10. Increasing Running Costs of Public Houses

5.10.1. Rising Operational Costs and decreasing patronage

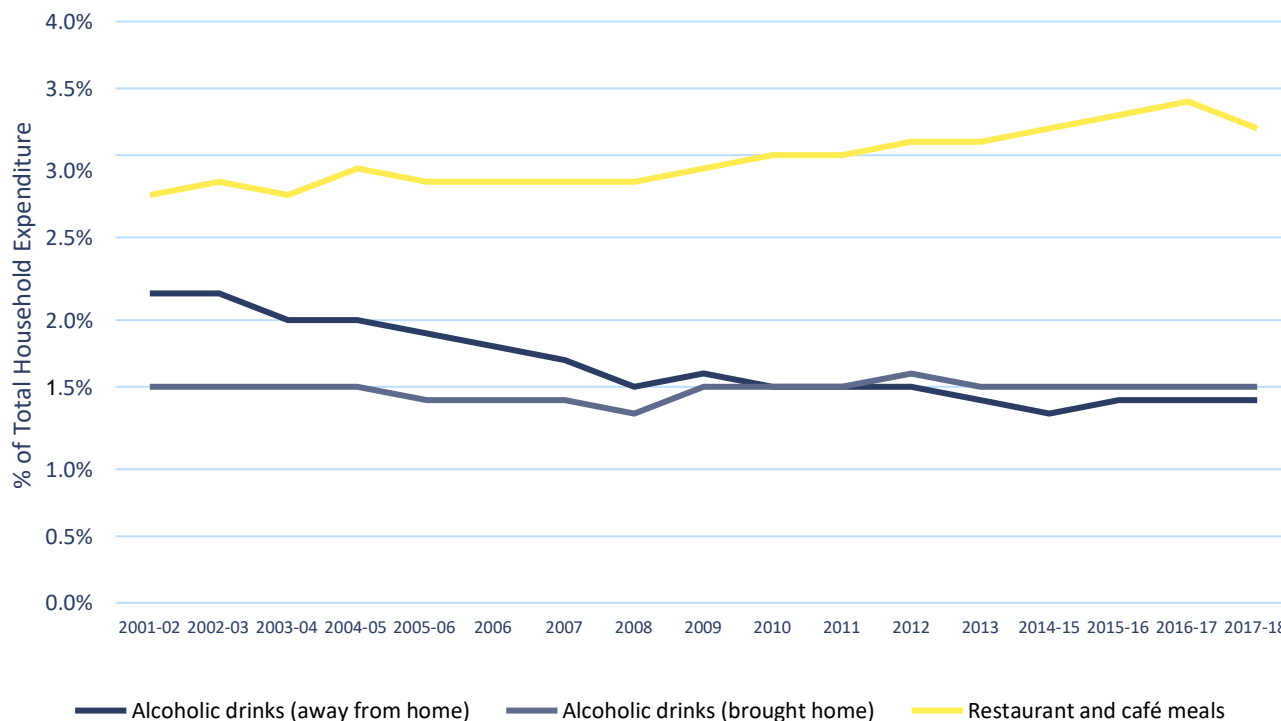
5.10.2. Energy Costs: Average pub energy bills have risen by 87% since 2021 (British Beer and Pub Association, 2024).

5.10.3. Wages: The National Living Wage increased to £11.44 per hour in April 2024, exacerbating staffing cost pressures (Gov.uk, 2024).

5.10.4. Ended of Business Rates Relief:

The 75% business rates discount for hospitality ended in April 2025, exposing public houses to full liabilities at a time of reduced revenues (HM Treasury, 2024).

Figure 5.1 Consumption of Alcohol as a Proportion of Household Expenditure.



Source: ONS, 2020.

2 ONS, 2019. Family spending in the UK. Website:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/expenditure/bulletins/familyspendingintheuk/april2018tomarch2019> Accessed: 19/11/

- 5.10.5. These changes in consumer preferences have applied increasing pressure on the UK's pubs and bars..
- 5.10.6. Competitive Alcohol Pricing:
Supermarkets undercut public house pricing by 50-70% per alcohol unit, leveraging scale economies (Alcohol Change UK, 2024).
- 5.10.7. Cost of Living Impact:
With food inflation peaking at 19.1% in 2023 (Bank of England, 2024), residents prioritize essential spending, further reducing pub patronage.

5.11. Demographic/Sociological Transition and Cultural Dynamics

5.11.1. BAME Community Growth in Reading

5.11.2. Reading is among the most diverse towns in the South East, with over 35% of residents identifying as BAME, nearly double the England average (ONS Census, 2021).

5.11.3. The largest groups include:

- South Asian (14%)
 - Black African/Caribbean (8%)
 - Mixed ethnic groups (6%)
- (ONS, 2021, *Ethnic group – Reading*, ONS,)

5.12. Cultural Norms and Public House Use

5.12.1 Cultural and religious norms within many BAME communities, particularly Muslim (12% of Reading's population), do not support alcohol consumption or public house attendance (ONS Religion by Ethnicity, 2021)

5.12.2. Instead, food-lead socialization in culturally appropriate cafés or quick-service outlets aligns with local needs

5.13. Covid 19 Impacts

5.13.1. As a result, Covid has further accelerated consumer trends that were occurring before the Covid 19 pandemic. For instance, Savills's Pub Market Update (May 2020) notes the sale of alcohol in supermarkets increased by 22% in March 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic in response to more alcohol being consumed at home.

5.13.2. Growth of Supermarkets and Alcohol Price Competition

5.13.3. Supermarket Proximity:

Within a 0.7-mile radius of the site there is a Tesco Superstore, Lidl, and several off-licenses (Google Maps, 2025).

5.14. Reading Public House Provision

5.14.1. The subject site has nine existing pubs in a 1.7 square km radius (not including the subject site). These include:

1) The Pond House on Oxford Road which offers bar, full food menu, outdoor seating, sports TV, family-friendly.

2) The White Eagle on Oxford Road which offers bar, beer garden, live music, Sports, pool, darts and karaoke, the present landlady had previously managed the subject site representing a familiar face to The Royal Albion patronage.

3) The wishing Well located on Oxford Road offering Traditional pub with food, drinks, and regular events.

4)The Spead Eagle Located Norfolk Road and Wantage Road offering bar, food and drink

5)The Butler located on Chatham Street offering bar food and music

6) The Tyler's Rest located Norcot Road Offering Bar Meals, drink sports hot food

7) Rose & Thistle located Argyle Road offering bar, food, drinks, sports outdoor space, pool, music

5.14.2. The Site is 1.3 mile away from Reading Town center of which you will find numerus pub and clubs within a very short distance demonstrated below in **Figure 5.4**. It is understood that all of these are operating as normal.

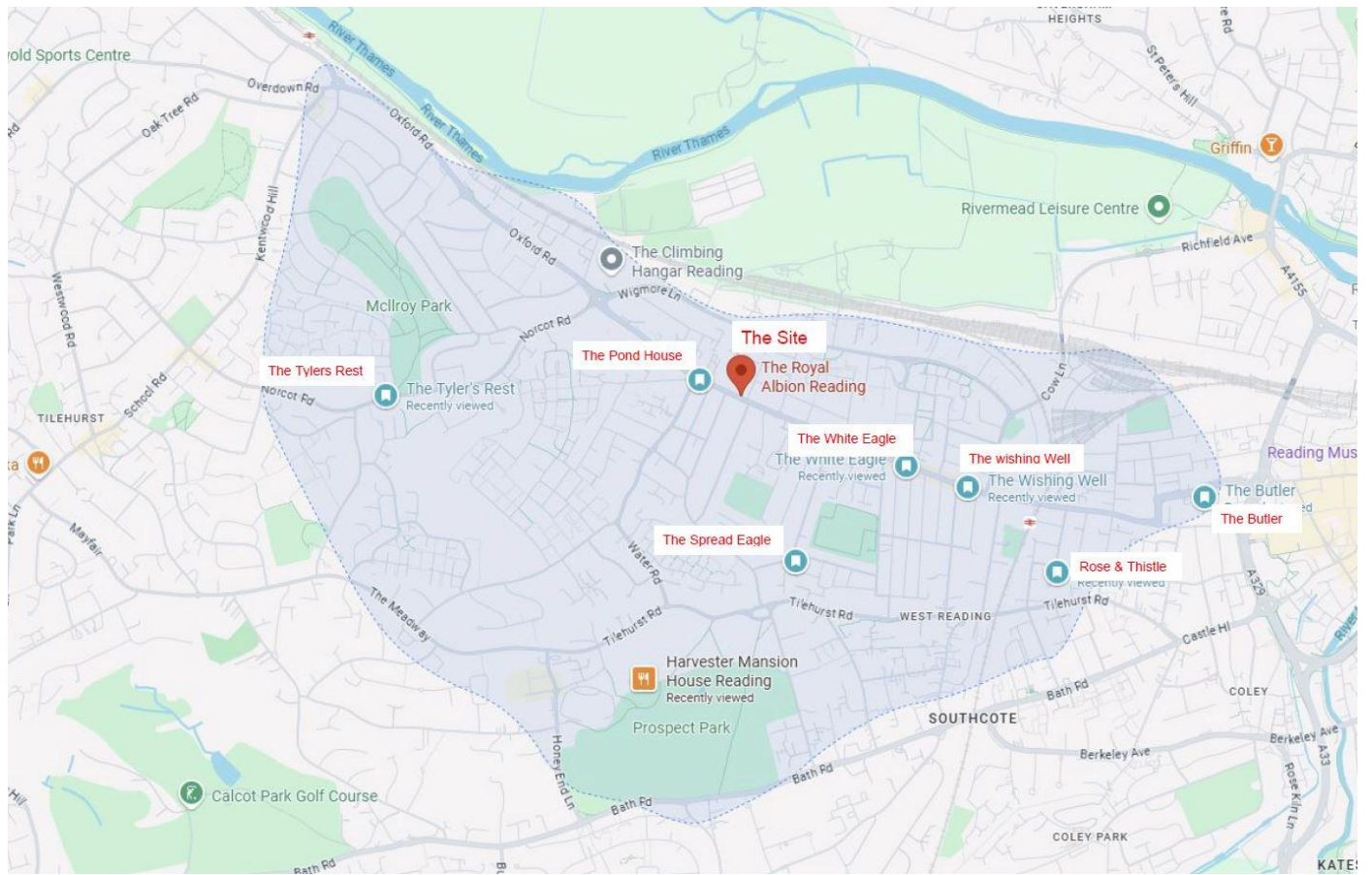


Figure 5.4 Pubs Nearby to the Subject Site

5.14.3 The approximate walking distances from the Subject Site to each of the local pubs identified above are listed below in **Table 5.2**. This analysis shows there are a number of pubs in the local area available to serve the residential population.

Table 5.2 Reading Pubs – Walking Distance from Subject Site

Pub Name	Walking Distance from Subject Site
Pubs within 2km walking catchment	
The Pond House	160m
The White Eagle	670m
The Wishing Well	920m
The Spread Eagle	800m
Rose & Thistle	1600m
The Tylers Rest	1600m
The Butler	1800m
Town Centre	2 km from town center of which there is numerous of pubs and clubs

5.15. Decline in Viability

5.15.1. Over the last decade, The Royal Albion has faced significant challenges including:

- Negative local reputation, deterring a wide customer demographic and creating an unwelcoming perception among families, professionals, and older residents.
- Changing social habits, with declining pub attendance as more people choose alternative social venues or home-based entertainment.
- Strong competition from nearby pubs and restaurants, many with superior reputations, modern environments, and established food offerings.

5.16. Crime and Anti-social Behavior

- 5.16.1. The subject site The Royal Albion had an unwelcome and stubborn association with anti-social behavior and crime. A likely reason as to why The Royal Albion lost out in the battle for dwindling customers is, that it had suffered from negative press, giving it a bad reputation. Two examples of this are:
- 5.16.2. drugs raid in May 2022 where a quantity of drugs (believed to be Class A) and a number of weapons were seized. <https://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/19969941.royal-albion-reading-police-storm-pub-drugs-raid/>
- 5.16.3. The subject site making the BBC new reporting on a patron being involve in a road traffic incident involving knocking down pedestrians. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-berkshire-68798798>
- 5.16.4. As the Subject Site is no longer occupied and has been closed for 16 months and has already have several incidence involving anti-social behavior with one requiring us to report it to the police.

6. Economic Benefits

6.1. Introduction and methodology

- 6.1.1 This section details the economic benefits associated with the change of use in opening a Retail shop in the local community'

6.2. Retail Shop for Local Community

- 6.2.1. Provides direct employment (full-time and part-time jobs) for local residents.
- 6.2.2. Stimulates local businesses such as maintenance, cleaning, delivery services, and local product suppliers.
- 6.2.3. Encourages residents to spend money in their own community, keeping economic activity local.
- 6.2.4. Offers entry-level roles that can develop into long-term careers, often with on-the-job training.
- 6.2.5. Business rates and employee taxes support public services and infrastructure investment in the area.
- 6.2.6. Helps reduce local unemployment rates, particularly for youth and less-skilled workers.
- 6.2.7. Reuses vacant buildings or plots, improving the appearance and vibrancy of the community.
- 6.2.8. Attracts customers to the area who may also shop at other nearby businesses, boosting the whole local economy.
- 6.2.9. Many retailers support community initiatives, charities, schools, and local events.
- 6.2.10. Gives residents better access to affordable food, clothes, or essentials without needing to travel far.
- 6.2.11. A successful retail outlet can attract more businesses to the area, leading to a clustering effect and broader economic development.
- 6.2.12. Some retailers employ disadvantaged groups (e.g., people with disabilities, ex-offenders), enhancing inclusivity and social mobility.
- 6.2.13. Essential retail outlets often remain open during tough times (e.g., recessions), offering economic stability and continuity.

6.3. Further Benefits of Potential Interested Party (Greggs)

- 6.3.1. A detail report is attached in Appendix A which explains in detail the economic benefits Greggs contribute to its local community including the following points:
- 6.3.2. The new change of use would create 10 full-time equivalent jobs, including 5 full-time and 10 part-time positions. Jobs will be recruited locally, supporting the Reading area's employment market.
- 6.3.3. Actively employs individuals with Down's Syndrome and ex-offenders, helping underrepresented groups gain paid work.
- 6.3.4. Opening hours of 05:00–23:00 allow adaptability to meet local customer demand, potentially increasing footfall and economic activity.
- 6.3.5. Greggs donates 1% of its pre-tax profits, or around £3 million annually, to community organizations across the UK.
- 6.3.6. In 2023, over 1,000 tonnes of food were donated via 956 local charities—supporting local communities while reducing waste.
- 6.3.7. 35 outlet shops sell day-old food at reduced prices in socially deprived areas, helping people access affordable food and funding local community projects.
- 6.3.8. Over 1.3 million Surprise Bags sold through the Too Good To Go app at deep discounts (~£2.59 for £8 worth of food), increasing consumer value while reducing food waste.
- 6.3.9. Supports over 890 schools and 62,000 children daily through the Breakfast Club Programme, improving children's nutrition, attendance, and concentration.
- 6.3.10. The Hardship Fund provides grants up to £180 for essentials like appliances, with over £1.4 million distributed in 2023.
- 6.3.11. The North East Core Fund awards up to £45,000 to charitable groups, injecting approximately £600,000/year into community services.
- 6.3.12. 32% reduction in food waste at manufacturing sites since 2018. 42% of unsold food was saved in 2023, reducing costs and environmental impact.
- 6.3.13. Eco-shops cut energy use by 20%, lowering operational costs. 21% of all Greggs shops now use resource-saving technologies.
- 6.3.14. 97.1% of Greggs' electricity is from renewable sources; the goal is 100% by 2025. Solar panels and electric vehicles further lower long-term energy costs.
- 6.3.15. Target to reduce packaging weight by 25% by 2025, saving material costs and enhancing recyclability.
- 6.3.16. Commitment to responsible sourcing, reducing risks of reputational or legal issues. Supports fair trade,

animal welfare, and local suppliers.

6.3.17. Commitment to securing and maintaining Tier 1 BBFAW Animal Welfare Standard by 2025.



Greggs Roadside Unit
The Royal Albion Pub
Oxford Road, Reading
March 2025

The Occupier

With over 2,000 shops, nine centres of excellence and some 20,000 employees who serve millions of customers each week, Greggs is the UK's leading bakery food-on-the-go retailer. The company started over 80 years ago when a John Gregg started out with the goal to deliver, by bicycle, fresh eggs and yeast to families in Newcastle. 10 years later he opened Greggs of Gosforth on Gosforth High Street, which remains a Greggs to this day.

The proposed Greggs bakery will offer the following baked and convenience goods including:-

- Bread;
- Savoury pastries;
- Cakes;
- Sandwiches;
- Soups;
- Salads;
- Pasta;
- Snacks;
- Hot wraps;
- Confectionery;
- Hot and cold drinks; and
- Other ancillary items.

These items will be sold for consumption on or off the premises. The new store will comprise a back of house area and a customer area to include an indoor seating area allowing customers to 'eat in' plus other associated works including bin storage. Deliveries are usually undertaken by a 18t rigid axle lorry on a daily basis, but timing varies site to site depending on the delivery route and schedule.

It is envisaged that a Greggs of this size will generate ten full-time equivalent jobs, with five full-time positions and 10 part-time opportunities. These jobs will be recruited locally. Accordingly, whilst it is considered that this proposal will meet an identified need in the wider area, the proposal will also contribute to the provision of jobs within local area.



Greggs not only employ people but provide opportunities to those that find entering the world of work difficult. Greggs has an agreement with the Downs Syndrome Association to employ people with Downs Syndrome within stores, who might otherwise find it difficult to find meaningful paid employment. Equally, Greggs actively seek to employ those who have previously been in prison who deserve a fresh start but may find it difficult to find new employment opportunities given their history.

Planning permission is sought for the unit to operate 05:00 – 23:00 Monday to Sunday to ensure the needs are met. Depending local requirements and demand, the opening hours will be within this timeframe but the above allows flexibility.

The Greggs Pledge

As confirmed by the Chief Executive 'it is a duty as a modern business to stand for more than just profit' and in April of this year published 'The Greggs Pledge'.

Greggs has a proud reputation of giving back and since John Gregg founded the business in 1939, Greggs have always tried to do the right thing by their people, suppliers and communities. 'The Greggs Pledge' was first launched in 2021 and has been updated annually since, setting out their sustainability targets and progress, and includes ten things they are doing to make the world a better place by 2025 and beyond.

The Breakfast Club Programme

'The Greggs Pledge' commits to supporting 1,000 schools' Breakfast Clubs by 2025 providing some 70,000 meals each school day. Greggs started the Breakfast Club programme in 1999 because it knew there were children over the country attending school every day without having eaten breakfast. As at April 2024 there are over 890 Breakfast Clubs operating across the UK every day. Each school day, these school clubs serve a nutritious breakfast, free of charge, to over 62,000 primary school children making sure they have the energy to concentrate and learn.

Evaluations of Breakfast Club schemes have uncovered the following key benefits:

- Children have improved health and nutrition;
- Children have improved attendance and punctuality;
- Children are able to socialise and make friends;
- Children have better relationships with school staff;
- Parents are less wary of schools and are more likely to attend parents' evenings; and
- Children are able to concentrate better, and results are improved.

The Breakfast Club model, which delivers flexibility to meet the needs of the children, has been highly successful with many schools working with the Foundation for in excess of 20 years.



Putting an End to Food Waste

Greggs are obsessed with freshness and that is key to the business model, but it is a challenge too, making sure there is enough for everyone but avoiding waste at the end of the day. Greggs have focussed on reducing waste in production and in the shops and also putting waste to good use.

In Greggs' manufacturing sites, food waste has been reduced by 32% since 2018, exceeding the set target of a 25% reduction. During 2023, Greggs' stores managed to save nearly 42% of unsold food from going to waste — an increase of 4% on 2022.

Greggs aim to donate as much unsold food to charity as possible, including soup kitchens, food banks and shelters for the homeless and the vulnerable. The amount of unsold food the company has donated to good courses has increased ten-fold over the last five years and the company has ambitious plans to grow this more in the years ahead.

In 2023, Greggs maintained a network of 956 local charities which pass surplus food on to people in need. Greggs gave away over 1,000 tonnes of food this way in 2023.

Furthermore, over 1,000 shops now feature on the 'Too Good To Go' app which gives Greggs another channel to redistribute unsold food. Through the app, Greggs sell 'Surprise Bags' worth around £8 for just £2.59. During 2023, Greggs sold 1.3 million discounted Surprise Bags to customers, an increase of almost 20% compared with 2022.

Supporting our Communities

Greggs now have 35 'Outlet shops' around the UK where day old food products are sold at a reduction helping people to spend less on food. These are located in areas where social deprivation is high. As part of plans for 2024, Greggs intend to trial the addition of a dedicated and responsive delivery service. This will involve vans travelling around a local area and ensuring that shops' surplus food is delivered to a nearby Outlet shop.

The outlet shops were originally introduced to help avoid sending edible food to land fill. We now see that these shops can do even more; we donate a share of all our profits from these shops to the Greggs' Foundation which passes it on to local community groups that are working to address food poverty and associated problems.

Helping our Customers to make Healthier Choices

In 2023, Greggs far exceeded their target for 30% of the items on their shelves to be healthier choices. In fact, 40% of the range was a healthier option. Greggs define a



‘healthier option’ as one that contains fewer than 400 calories and with no red traffic lights, based on the UK Government’s voluntary nutrition labelling scheme.

Net Zero Carbon

Greggs are committed that by 2025 they will be well on their way to achieving carbon neutrality by using 100% renewable energy across all of their operations. Today 97.1% of the electricity Greggs use is from renewable sources and therefore carbon neutral. The goal is simple; Greggs want that to be 100% by 2025.

Greggs started this journey by putting photovoltaic solar panels on the roof of nine of their manufacturing sites which have the capacity to generate 2,111 kW every day which is the equivalent to the amount of energy used in 235 typical UK households. Whilst they do not have sufficient roof space to generate enough renewable energy to meet all of their energy needs Greggs have chosen to purchase Green Electricity from the grid which has had the result of reducing the carbon intensity of the business by over two thirds.

The majority of Greggs’ direct emissions come from three sources: diesel and petrol for their vehicles, gas for cooking and heating water, and refrigerant gas. They are taking steps to reduce the carbon impact of all three

Greggs continue to migrate their company car fleet to electric or hybrid vehicles and are building a charging network into our manufacturing and logistics sites, as well as at Greggs House. By 2035, Greggs want to have a net-zero fleet.

Greggs no longer install gas boilers when they open a new shop or refit an existing one, with the intention of going entirely electric over time. In the meantime, they have increased the amount of renewable gas they purchase by 30% and are on track to get to 100% by 2025.

Greggs also have a number of other carbon reduction projects which include energy saving technologies, helping customers to eat less meat, reduce packaging, sustainable forest management and decreasing the use of palm oil and soya.

Building the Shops of the Future

In 2022, Greggs opened their first Eco-Shop in Northampton, testing 20 different green initiatives which, between them, cut energy use by a fifth compared with a standard shop. Greggs are committed that by 2025 25% of their shops will feature elements from their eco shop ‘store of the future’ design.

In 2023, Greggs set themselves the target to introduce ideas from their Eco-Shop into over 500 shops. They achieved it, meaning that 21% of their estate now features some form of resource saving technology. Greggs will meet their 2025 target of 25% at least a year ahead of schedule.



Using Less Packaging

By 2025 Greggs will use 25% less packaging, by weight, than in 2019 and the only remaining packaging will be made from material that is widely recyclable.

Greggs have tackled single-use plastics, eradicated unnecessary packaging, and reduced their use of things like stretch-wrap film and plastic trays. Optimising the amount of packaging used is complex — using too much is a waste of resources, but remove too much and the product is more likely to get damaged and wasted; but Greggs are always looking for that perfect balance. In 2023, they saved 14 tonnes of cardboard by reducing the weight of the lids on our two-pack sweet treats and Belgian Bun box.

In 2021 Greggs joined the “On Pack Recycling Label” (OPRL) scheme to make recycling communications for customers easier to understand. Now, 100% of Greggs branded printed packaging now carries a simple, recognisable recycling icon, helping our customers to get our packaging into the correct bins.

Embracing Diversity

Greggs are committed to ensuring that by 2025 the workforce will represent the communities which they serve.

Greggs want everyone to feel welcome and their employees to be able to be themselves at work, whatever their background, preferences or views. They also want to make sure there are no barriers that might stop anyone from growing a successful career with them. Greggs accept that being a diverse business is critical to their future growth.

Sourcing Sustainably

By 2025 Greggs will have a robust and responsible sourcing strategy in place and will report annually on the progress towards their targets. Six key principles in meeting this commitment include ‘we treat our suppliers with respect; we care about how animals are treated; we respect human rights; we support fair trade; we support local businesses and we respect the environment’.

Greggs have clear environmental and social standards and requirements that their suppliers must meet if they want to do business with them. Examples include the Modern Slavery Policy which ensures that sound social and ethical practices are upheld, the Greggs Farm Animal Welfare Strategy which sets out how they expect animals in their supply chain to be treated, and ingredient-specific standards for commodities such as soy, palm oil, beef, and cocoa contained within their Responsible Sourcing — Deforestation Policy.



Protecting Animal Welfare

Greggs are committed to securing and maintaining Tier 1 in the BBFAW Animal Welfare Standard by 2025.

Animal welfare is a priority for Greggs and they want to do the right thing by ethically sourcing which is consistent with their values and nothing less than you would expect from them. Greggs' Farm Animal Welfare Standards, set clear rules that were developed with consideration to the Farm Animal Welfare Committees five freedoms and over the last five years this has been implemented by Greggs with their suppliers.

Greggs' Foundation

Greggs donates one percent of its pre-tax profits to the Greggs Foundation and distributes around £3.0 million to community and charity organisations throughout England, Scotland and Wales. A significant proportion of the Greggs Foundations' impact is also achieved with the generosity of Greggs' employees and customers. The Foundation brings together all of Greggs charitable groups which has a long and rich history. It is managed by an executive team of currently nine members of staff and overseen by a Board of Trustees, with the charitable mission of 'making a difference to people in need in the heart of Greggs' local communities'.

The Foundation prioritises organisations that support voluntary careers, people with disabilities, homeless people and older people. The Foundation aims to make a difference through the following programmes; North East Core Fund, Local Communities Urban Rivers Regeneration Fund, Hardship Fund, Breakfast Clubs Programme, Community Holiday Club Programme and Health Programme Grant which share the common goal of improving the quality of life of people in local communities.

The Community Urban Rivers Regeneration Fund provides funds to river trusts to run educational and community based environmental projects based on urban rivers.

The Tackling Health Programme is an interactive project for children which takes a holistic approach to teach children about their own health and well-being and about leading a healthy lifestyle.

The North East Core Fund makes grants to charitable organisations based on the North East of England, who make a difference to people in need. Grants can be up to £45,000 and aims to increase the capacity of organisations to provide quality services. Around £600,000 per year is donated through this programme.

The Hardship Fund provides grants to people in extreme financial need in the North East of England via recognised social organisations such as charities registered with



the Charity Commission, housing associations and social services acting on behalf of a family or individuals in need. Grants are made for up to £180 to families and individuals and can be used towards household equipment such as cookers, fridges and washing machines that can make a significant difference to peoples' lives.

In 2023, the Foundation provided more than £1.4m in small grants to individuals and families in financial crisis. These grants were specifically for essentials such as household appliances, beds and bedding, clothing, food, or utility vouchers. Almost half of the grants were for families in the Foundation's school network.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1.1. This report has assessed the local provision of public houses and their current and potential future role in the surrounding Oxford Road community.
- 7.1.2. The loss of the now-vacant pub would not result in an under-provision of public houses in the area. A strong number of existing venues within walking distance of the site including The Pond House, The White Eagle which presently is operated by the ex-landlady of the subject public house, The Wishing Well, and others provide sufficient access for local residents.
- 7.1.3. The Royal Albion faced long-standing viability issues before closure, including reduced patronage, operational challenges, a negative reputation linked to anti-social behavior, and broader demographic shifts. These are not short-term issues, but part of longer-term structural changes in demand for pub facilities in this location.
- 7.1.4. Furthermore, consumer behavior particularly among younger residents has shifted toward alcohol-free social settings, quick-service dining, and at-home consumption. With this trend well-documented, reopening the site as a pub would not meet local needs or preferences.
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- 7.1.5. We believe the proposal clearly satisfies all three criteria of Reading Borough Local Plan Policy RL6: (a) There is no demonstrable ongoing need for this type of facility in this location; (b) The function of the facility is fulfilled by nearby alternatives that are accessible, established, and preferred; (c) Retention of the facility presents ongoing risks to safety and amenity which cannot be mitigated through licensing or enforcement, especially considering its criminal history and decline into vacancy.
- 7.1.6. The proposed change of use will introduce measurable benefits to the local economy, including job creation, enhanced services, social value, and the reduction of vacancy-related decline.
- 7.1.7. Additionally, the Change of use would generate significant economic benefits and social value for the local area, especially considering the existing pub building is vacant with little prospect of being reactivated given the challenging economic conditions for pub

sector, especially so many pub in local proximately. As previously stated, the area is sufficiently served by pubs, and the change of use would offer a greater diversity of services and be more economically beneficial for the area.

- 7.1.8. Therefore, with robust evidence provided throughout this assessment, compliance with Policy RL6 has been clearly demonstrated. The proposed change of use is fully justified and should be supported.