

## APPENDIX 1: OUTLINE OF READING'S PROPOSED BID FOR CITY STATUS

### The City status bid competition

- A competition for City status, to which any UK local authority can bid, has been launched to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022
- The closing date for bids is 8 December 2021
- There are no specific selection criteria although the standard application form invites bids to address the following headings: 'Distinct identity'; 'Civic pride'; 'Cultural infrastructure interesting heritage, history and traditions'; 'Vibrant and welcoming community'; 'Record of innovation'; 'Sound governance and administration'; 'Associations with Royalty'; 'Other particularly distinctive features'
- The decision will be made by the Queen, on Ministerial advice.

### Reading's credentials for City status

Within the prescribed format and space constraints of the application form, Reading's bid for City status will highlight:

- **Reading's regional leadership role:** Reading is the County town of Royal Berkshire, one of a small number of counties without a City. Reading's economic significance to the county and beyond is well-established - the bid will demonstrate how Reading's success lifts the growth prospects of the wider region and indeed the UK. Institutions like the Royal Berkshire Hospital, the University of Reading and Reading Football Club are all based in Reading but serve a much larger geography and make a much wider contribution to the region beyond their immediate roles. The bid will articulate the contribution which these and other institutions based in Reading make to establish our leadership role in the Thames Valley and beyond.
- **Reading's rich history:** the application form requires a description of Reading's history and heritage which shape its identity. The bid will describe how Reading was established in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and how consecration of Reading Abbey in the 12<sup>th</sup> century saw the town become an internationally important destination for pilgrimage for 400 years until the dissolution. It will go on to describe how the industrial revolution heralded the development of the three industries - 'beer, biscuits and bulbs' - which put Reading on the world map, and how, after de-industrialisation, Reading re-invented itself once again as a hub of the modern knowledge economy.
- **Reading's future vision:** the bid will set out how we would use City status to help bring our future plans, in the form of our innovative *2050 Vision* for a smart, sustainable future, to fruition. The *2050 Vision* gives a blueprint to help Reading make the most of the opportunities which City status would present - for its own sake and the wider region. The bid will highlight that in 2020 the Financial Times FDI 'Tier 2 Cities of the Future' Awards placed Reading 13th globally - building confidence that we can deliver this vision.
- **Reading's Royal connections:** Reading's royal connections are a source of considerable pride: it is the last resting place of King Henry I, and the birthplace of a possible future Queen, Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge. For a time in the 13<sup>th</sup> century the entire kingdom was effectively ruled from Reading by 'the greatest knight', William Marshall, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Pembroke, who served as regent to the boy King Henry III from his home in Caversham. The bid will elaborate on these and other Royal connections which support Reading's bid for City status.

- **Reading's excellent physical and digital connectivity:** Reading enjoys unrivalled digital connections as a centre of the IT industry, as well as great physical connections, with the 2nd busiest railway interchange outside London, access to the rest of the world via Heathrow, and a highly successful municipal bus company which has bucked national trends in declining bus use. Cities are places of connection and the bid will highlight how these and other connections make Reading a strong candidate for City status. With the new Elizabeth Line opening in 2022 with Reading as the western terminus, our connections are set to become stronger still.
- **Reading's international outlook:** Reading boasts the oldest link between an English and a German city, dating to 1947, when Reading answered a call to help the hungry and homeless of Dusseldorf. Through its diverse communities, Reading has links with many parts of the world - we have the largest Barbadian community outside of Barbados, and were recently among the first Councils to offer to house Afghan refugees fleeing the humanitarian crisis. Reading is also a City of Sanctuary, committing us to be a place of safety offering sanctuary to those fleeing persecution. The bid will expand on this to demonstrate the vibrant, welcoming nature of the community in Reading.
- **Reading's diversity:** Reading is one of the most multi-cultural towns in the south east outside of London with 67 languages spoken and students from 150 nations attending our University. Reading has a proud record of good community relations, epitomised by the 'Reading Together' banner which arose spontaneously from the community in the aftermath of the 2020 pandemic and the fatal terror attack in Forbury Gardens. The bid will celebrate this diversity and showcase the contribution which Reading's diversity makes to its success as a place.
- **Reading's plans for 'levelling up':** a 2016 report on the UK's largest city economies suggested that Reading is the 3<sup>rd</sup> least equal city in the UK. In 2019, 5 Lower Super Output Areas in Reading were in the most deprived 10% nationally compared to 2 in 2015, suggesting that the gap may be widening. The bid will demonstrate how we would use City status to boost our plans for 'levelling up' and delivering inclusive growth at local level.
- **Reading's leadership on climate:** the world famous 'climate stripes' infographic, now being used around the world to highlight the reality of global warming, was created at the University of Reading, which has been rated 1st in the UK and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the world for climate science. The bid will set out how the University is at the forefront of Reading's reputation for innovation and efforts to accelerate progress towards net zero at home and abroad, and how it plays a key role in our local climate partnership alongside other public, private and voluntary sector partners.
- **Reading's cultural pedigree:** the bid will describe Reading's vibrant cultural scene, its high quality theatres, museums and arts venues and the fact that Reading is a prodigious exporter of cultural talent - from Jane Austen to Marianne Faithfull, Kenneth Branagh, Kate Winslet and Ricky Gervais. 'Banksy' recently adorned the side of one of our most famous landmarks - Reading Gaol, scene of Oscar Wilde's incarceration - with one of his artworks, a symbolic boost to our plans for culture-led recovery.
- **Reading's Festivals and events:** the world-renowned Reading Festival is the largest and best known of our festivals - but the bid will set out how this is just the tip of an iceberg of 'home grown' events celebrating the diversity of the borough and the issues we care about: Reading Pride, Reading Fringe, Reading Climate Festival and Reading Thames Festival to name a few.