

Planning Applications Committee



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

03 December 2025

Title	LOCAL LISTING REPORT - Royal Albion
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Burcu Can Cetin, Conservation Officer
Lead Councillor	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Ward	Battle Ward
Address	Royal Albion, 642 Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1EH
Recommendations	To agree that Royal Albion be added to the List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To report on a proposal to add Royal Albion to the List of Locally-Important Buildings and Structures. The report identifies the building as being of local historical and architectural importance and makes an assessment based on the Council's published Local List criteria for inclusion to the list.
- 1.2. In the last planning committee meeting in November 2025, the deferral was agreed to allow time for the Council to give an opportunity for the proprietor to make representations and the conservation officer to review and respond to the matters raised by the proprietor. This is the updated local listing report for Royal Albion, though the proprietor has not yet provided any comments.

2. Policy context

- 2.1. Reading Borough Council maintains a List of Locally-Important Buildings and Structures ('the Local List'). Its purpose is to recognise the buildings and structures which do not meet the criteria for national listing, but are nonetheless significant to the heritage of the local area. It was agreed by Planning Applications Committee on 2nd December 2020 that decisions on additions to the Local List should be made at PAC.
- 2.2. The criteria for considering additions to the Local List are set out in Appendix 2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019).

3. The proposal

- 3.1. A nomination was received on 08/06/2025 to add Royal Albion to the Local List. Consultations have been carried out in accordance with the agreed process, and this report sets out the recommended action.
- 3.2. The nominated asset is one of the few historic public houses dating back to the 1870s on Oxford Road. The existing building, which replaced 'the Thatched Tavern' and was named 'Royal Albion', has been in continuous use as a public house since its construction in circa 1875. Located on the north side of Oxford Road in Battle, the building features a two-storey, symmetrical façade with two dominant bay windows and

is constructed in Flemish bond under a hipped slate roof. It underwent historical alterations reflecting neo-Georgian influences of the Edwardian period.



Image of Royal Albion Public House

- 3.3. The nomination form received identifies the significance of the building as follows:
- 3.4. *"Principle for Selection for the Local List - (b) 1840 - 1913: any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are substantially complete and unaltered and of definite significance:*

The Royal Albion is a public house dating from c1875, replaced a former public house, parts of which may remain, on the same site. The original public house and possibly the new building for a short period of time, was known as the Thatched Tavern.

The Royal Albion Hotel is marked on the 1872-1877, published 1883 OS map, and was just outside the borough boundary at that time (see Appendix). This shows the original footprint and that it was without neighbours on either side.

The construction date can be established with some certainty because a spirit license for the Thatched House Tavern was approved in September 1874 on condition that the plans for a new public house as prepared by surveyor Mr Fulkes were carried out (Reading Observer 12 September 1874 p3). Brewer William Sims later that month requested tenders to take down part of the Thatched Tavern in Oxford Road and re-building (Reading Observer 26 September 1874 p2). If any earlier fabric remains e.g. the cellar in particular that could only be determined by a full inspection.

In 1901 minor alterations were approved to alter the position of the doorways and re-arrange the bars. These were allowed subject to conditions that the parlour was not used for drinking and the porch to the parlour not used for customer access and that drinking was not to take place outside. The plans were carried out with slight variations that year (Reading Publican's licensing register 1898-1928 RBO ref PS/R 14/6 folio 104).

in 1903 when the Licensed Premises Survey was carried out. The premises consisted of three bars, two smoke rooms and a bar parlour. It also had a club room and two rooms for travellers. It had no stable accommodation for horses but plans were being prepared for stabling and vehicle accommodation. There were three entrances from Oxford Road and one on each side of the pub accessed via a gateway. It was described as '...in good condition outside, clean and in good decorative repair inside. Frequented by artisans &c. Headquarters of Clubs, Friendly Societies &c'.

The two-storey, originally symmetrical building, with cellar is predominantly constructed of red brickwork in Flemish bond. There are stone quoins and between the ground and first floor, a string course on the façade. The centre where the main entrance is, is slightly recessed and a modern porch entrance has been added with a bar entrance to left and right within. There are two ground floor bay windows on each side of the main entrance and it is possible that these were added later (see above there were three entrances from Oxford Road in 1903). These are of brick construction and have been rendered and painted as has the rest of the ground floor façade making the brick bond difficult to identify. The three first floor windows are segmented with decorative frames and corbels supporting the lintel. Sash windows predominate but not all may be original.

The main roof is slate as are the roofs of the bay windows. The building has four chimneys which may have been replaced and a chimney on the eastern elevation was removed between 2016 and 2017 (Google Streetview).

A flat roofed modern single storey extension has been built to the western elevation now used for toilets. It has a bricked-up entranceway. There is a flat roofed single storey extension to the rear.

The front entrance is modern.

The public house is significant because of its age and consistent 150 year use as a public house and one of several along Oxford Road, its closest neighbour to the west being the Pond House at the junction with Grovelands Road.

Historic Interest:

(a) Historic Association (i) The building or structure has a well authenticated historical association with a notable person(s) or event:

For completeness and possible interest it should be noted that in the 1901 census Harry Barrett, professional exhibition cricketer was a visitor. The Royal Albion was only a short distance from the County Cricket Ground, now Kensington Park. Nothing else is known about Harry Barrett or whether he was attending the cricket ground.

(b) Social Importance: The building or structure has played an influential role in the development of an area or the life of one of Reading's communities:

As a public house the Royal Albion Hotel was an important centre for community life. There are also many references in the local press to its use for events and inquests as evidence for its wider social role.

The pub has been linked with some of Reading's important brewing names. In 1874 it was owned by William Sims. It was sold in 1882 together with the Lion Brewery on Castle Street and other licensed premises and brewery properties (Berkshire Chronicle 25 February 1882 p1) and was probably acquired by William James Justins Brinn of Castle Street who was owner by 1890 (Licensing Register 1887-1897 BRO ref PS/R 14/5). Fergusons were owners by 1899 (Reading Publican's licensing register 1898-1928 RBO ref PS/R 14/6 folio 104).

It was later acquired by Morlands of Abingdon, who took an interest in Fergusons in 1914 and full control in 1943. Just before closure, it was owned by Greene King of Bury St Edmunds.

The public house also provided accommodation. In the 1881 census 26 lodgers were living there. Most were labourers but there was also: a painter, two gardeners, a shepherd, a groom, a carpenter and a baker. There is no trace of this in the preceding, 1871 or following, 1891 census although the licensee at that time James W Gardner was described as a Hotel Proprietor. In 1903 it had two rooms to accommodate travellers which is not uncommon in larger public houses at that time.

Architectural Interest:

(c) Group Value (i) The buildings/structures form a group which as a whole has a unified architectural or historic value to the local area:

At the time of its construction the building was in a comparatively undeveloped area. When the original pub was advertised for sale in 1861, the Thatched House Tavern is described as an ornamental cottage formerly built as a lodge entrance to 'the property' (Berkshire Chronicle 3 August 1861 p1). It sold for £345 (Reading Mercury 17 August 1861 p5). This could have been part of the Grovelands Estate which was sold in the 1870s but Elm Lodge was also close by, as was Battle Farm and Battle House on the north and south sides of Oxford Road. The owner of the land (field 58 in the Tithe apportionment survey) could be established from the tithe records.

Development in the area after the Grovelands Estate was sold included the building of the barracks almost opposite in 1877. The change of name to 'Royal Albion' in the mid to late 1870s may be a link to that military use.

4. Consultations

- 4.1. The following were consulted on the proposed addition to the Local List:
- M AND M Property Investments (Reading) Ltd. (proprietor);
 - Battle ward councillors;
 - Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee;
 - Reading Civic Society; and
 - West Village Residents Association.
- 4.2. No response has been received from ward councillors.
- 4.3. The proprietor requested additional time for their comments.
- 4.4. No response has been received from the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee. They made the initial nomination.
- 4.5. No response has been received from the Reading Civic Society.
- 4.6. No response has been received from the West Village Residents Association.

5. Assessment

The proposal to add a building or structure to the Local List should be considered against the criteria in Appendix 2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019).

5.1. Exclusions

- 5.1.1. The Local Plan specifies that a building should not be considered for the Local List where it is already part of a conservation area, scheduled monument or subject to an Article 4 direction relating to historic or architectural interest. Royal Albion is not within

any of these existing designations and can therefore be considered against the other criteria.

5.2. General principles

- 5.2.1. Royal Albion dates from the 1870s and, therefore, needs to be considered against the following general principle:

b. 1840 - 1913: Any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are of clearly-defined significance in the local context and where elements that contribute to its/ their heritage significance remain substantially complete.

- 5.2.2 Royal Albion evolved to include historic and architectural elements from Victorian and Edwardian times, which are still legible on its front and side elevations. Despite some later modern alterations, Royal Albion has survived mostly complete externally.

5.3. Significance

- 5.3.1. To be added to the Local List, a building or structure must fulfil at least one of the defined significance criteria, which fall into two categories – historic interest and architectural interest. These are assessed below.

Historic Interest

a. Historical Association

i. The building or structure has a well authenticated historical association with a notable person(s) or event.

ii. The building or structure has a prolonged and direct association with figures or events of local interest.

- 5.3.2. On the nomination file, it is stated that there is a possible historic interest from the visitor, a professional cricket player, Harry Barrett, and there might have been some relationship with the County Cricket Club. From the newspaper archive, it is known that Royal Albion was a popular venue for various activities, from dinners to public meetings, reflecting its social value within a broader historical context. As such, it is considered that with limited information and evidence from the history of the public house, Royal Albion is not considered to fulfil this criterion.

b. Social Importance

The building or structure has played an influential role in the development of an area or the life of one of Reading's communities. Such buildings/structures may include places of worship, schools, community buildings, places of employment, public houses and memorials which formed a focal point or played a key social role.

- 5.3.3. In addition to Royal Albion's being a tavern, inn, hotel and public house, and its connections with the local brewery as widely explained in the nomination file, it is noted that the building hosted annual concert and prize giving of West Reading Angling Club, annual dinner and meetings of Reading's Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, an address for the secretary of Reading YMCA Football Club, and many billiard plays, the last of which has been one of the main events held historically in Royal Albion to the present day. Therefore, Royal Albion has provided meaning(s) for communities derived from their collective experience, serving as a place of local identity, distinctiveness, social interaction, and coherence.

Please see Appendix 2 for related historic newspaper articles. There is also a social media account in which local people share their memories of Royal Albion.

c. Industrial Importance

The building or structure clearly relates to traditional or historic industrial processes or important businesses or the products of such industrial processes or businesses in the history of Reading or are intact industrial structures, for example bridges.

5.3.4. Royal Albion is not considered to fulfil this criterion.

Architectural Interest

a. Sense of place

i. The building or structure is representative of a style that is characteristic of Reading.

5.3.5. Royal Albion is not considered to fulfil this criterion.

b. Innovation and virtuosity

i. The building or structure has a noteworthy quality of workmanship and materials.

ii. The building or structure is the work of a notable local/national architect/engineer/builder.

iii. The building or structure shows innovation in materials, technique, architectural style or engineering.

5.3.6. Royal Albion is not considered to fulfil this criterion.

c. Group value

i. The buildings/structures form a group which as a whole has a unified architectural or historic value to the local area.

ii. The buildings/structures are an example of deliberate town planning from before 1947.

5.3.7. Royal Albion is a good example of the redevelopment of a traditional thatched inn to a Victorian public house in the 1870s and evolution into an Edwardian one at the beginning of the 20th century. As stated by the nomination file, it appears to be a type of suburban public house, formerly an inn, The Thatched Tavern or The Thatched House Tavern and renamed the Royal Albion between 1875 and 1877. Plans of the Victorian Pub were prepared by surveyor Mr Fulkes in 1874. It was possibly the Beer Act (1869) and the Aberdare Act (1872) that resulted in the remodelling of the previous 'Thatched Tavern' to become 'Royal Albion'.

5.3.8. It is evident from the OS Maps dating from the 1870s and 1910 that Royal Albion, with its location, scale, relatively large plot and distinctive architecture, has been recognisable among the surrounding modest-scale late Victorian terraces through the years. As the building appears not to belong to any known architect, it was probably reconstructed by a local builder before the terraces on Oxford Road, Alma Street, Beecham Road, and St George's Road, confirming its status as a traditional Victorian pub.

5.3.9. However, in line with the information from the nomination file, the public house had many internal and external alterations in the early 20th century. It is known that from the late 1890s, bars within pubs gradually became larger; in 1896, billiard saloons were introduced, and pubs were likely to be rebuilt to stand out from their neighbours, attract more customers, and increase trade, as is evident for Royal Albion.

5.3.10. It was the Edwardian and possibly inter-war period, when Royal Albion adopted a characteristic architectural style with a symmetrical design and neo-Georgian influence that it retains today. Constructed of red brick in Flemish bond under a slate roof, Royal Albion has three bays, two of which project on the first floor above the ground floor canted bay windows positioned on each side of the central entrance. The most imposing and arguably best-preserved feature is the geometric dominance of its proportions on

the façade. Tripartite first-floor sash windows with timber mullions and decorative carved brackets, raised string course, and quoins form its architectural quality and detailing. Compared with the front, the side elevations are plain, featuring 2x2 sashes of authentic design set in gauged brick lintels. Another notable characteristic is the building's five chimneys, which are pushed away from the front but consistently placed between openings on other elevations. Additionally, there are some surviving historic internal features such as the staircase, fireplaces, arched doorways, architraves, dado and picture rails.

- 5.3.11. The design of Royal Albion closely relates to the facing terrace of houses at Nos 623 to 649, known as Bishop's Villas, which dates from 1879 on the south side of Oxford Road. They share similar architectural detailing, including bay windows and brackets at the eaves. As such, Royal Albion forms a group with a clear visual and historic relationship with Bishop's Villas, contributing to the street scene and roofscape, and creating a distinctive local environment in this part of Oxford Road. In addition, due to its large townhouse appearance in harmony with the terrace and its striking aesthetic value, Royal Albion stands out positively as a landmark within the local scene (Appendix 2).
- 5.3.12. Although the nomination file mentions some possible connections with Brock Barracks, neither the historic evolution of Royal Albion and its immediate environment, nor the appearance and history of the barracks, refers to the other. It is considered that there is no evidence suggesting the opposite.
- 5.3.13. To conclude, Royal Albion, due to its age and continuous use for 150 years, holds social and communal value, local identity, distinctiveness, and, to some degree, aesthetic merits. It also possesses landmark qualities and group value, qualifying it as a non-designated heritage asset, a locally listed building.

5.4. Conclusion of assessment

5.4.1 Royal Albion qualifies for addition to the Local List because it:

- Is not within a conservation area, scheduled monument or area subject to an Article 4 direction relating to historic or architectural interest [amend if necessary if a building within a CA but not identified as of townscape merit, or a building covered by Article 4 is being considered];
- Dates from between 1840 - 1913: Any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are of clearly-defined significance in the local context and where elements that contribute to its/ their heritage significance remain substantially complete;
- Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its social importance;
- Contributes to the heritage of the Borough in terms of its group value.

5.4.2 A description of the significance of the building for inclusion in the Local List is included in Appendix 3.

6. Contribution to strategic aims

6.1. The Council's Council Plan 2025-28 identifies five priorities as follows:

- Promote more equal communities in Reading
- Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
- Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future

6.2. Full details of the Council Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council's website](#).

- 6.3. Local listing of buildings and structures helps to achieve a sustainable and healthy environment, by helping to retain those buildings that contribute towards making Reading a more attractive place to live and connect Reading's residents to the town's past. They also make a strong contribution towards Reading's cultural success by highlighting buildings that have local historic or social importance.

7. Environmental and climate implications

- 7.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 7.2. Local listing of buildings and structures, where it leads to the retention of those buildings or structures, can help to address the climate emergency by negating the need for demolition and new development, which are processes that use significant amounts of energy and result in emissions. However, in the long-term, it can be more difficult to achieve high levels of energy performance in older buildings than in new builds. There are therefore potentially either positive or negative effects, and schemes will need to be assessed at the application stage in terms of their compliance with the Council's policies.

8. Community engagement

- 8.1. Details of the consultation carried out are set out in section 4 of this report. The scope of consultation to be carried out on proposals for addition to the Local List was part of the local listing process agreed by Planning Applications Committee on 2nd December 2020 (Minute 56 refers).

9. Equality impact assessment

- 9.1. It is not expected that there will be any significant adverse impacts on specific groups due to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or religious belief as a result of the recommendations of this report.

10. Other relevant considerations

- 10.1 None of this report.

11. Legal implications

- 11.1. Addition to the Local List is not a statutory process, and there are no legal implications of the recommendations of this report.

12. Financial implications

- 12.1. Consideration of this nomination and any resulting amendments to the Local List will be accommodated within existing budgets.

13. Timetable for implementation

- 13.1. Not applicable.

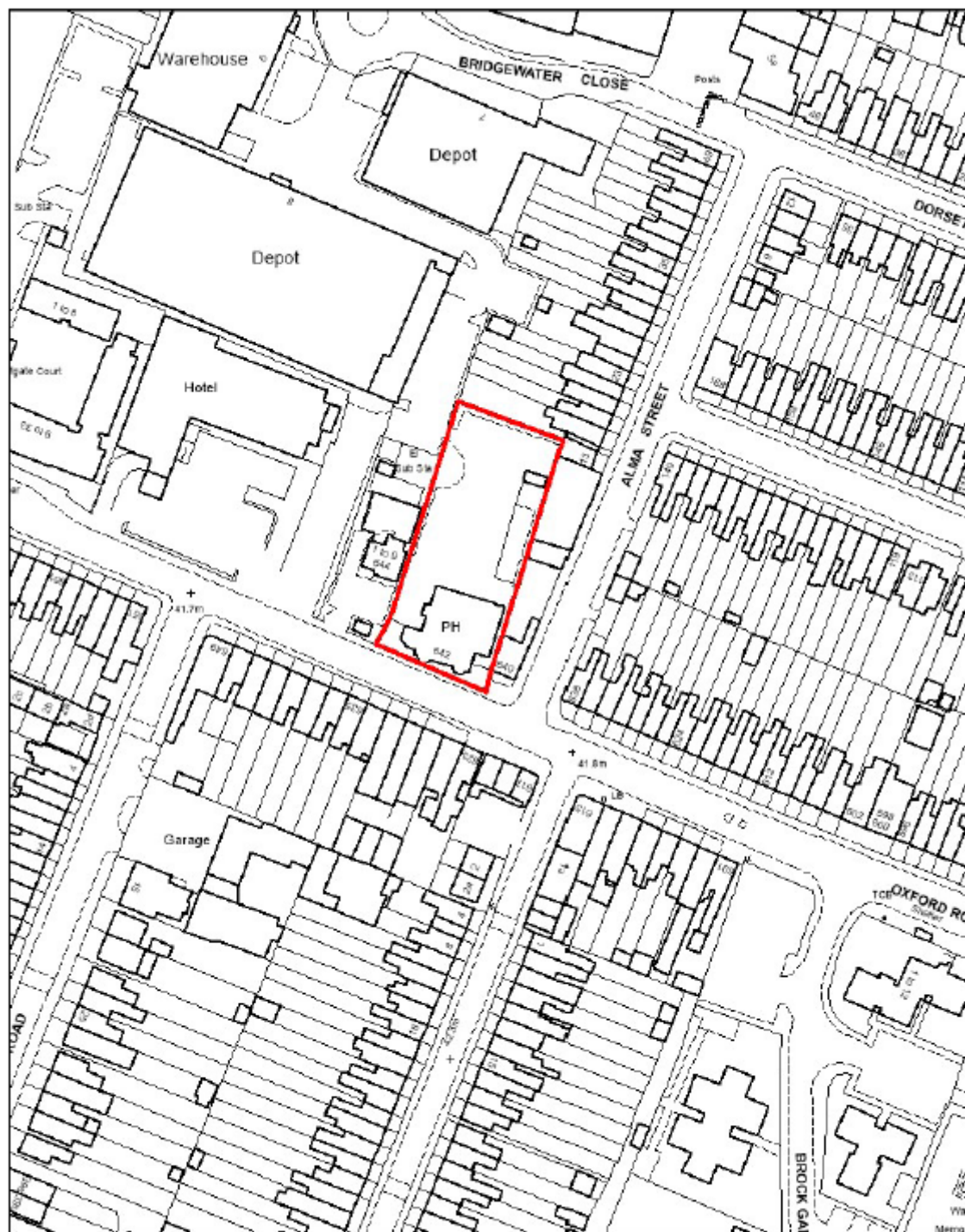
14. Background papers

- 14.1. There are none.

Appendices

1. **Location map**
2. **Relevant photos and illustrations**
3. **Proposed local list text**
4. **Original Nomination File**

Appendix 1: Location plan



Royal Albion, 642 Oxford Road

Nominated for inclusion on List

Appendix 2: Relevant photos and illustrations

READING MINOR LEAGUE

Y.M.C.A.'s OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

The outstanding performance of the week was that of Y.M.C.A., who scored 12 goals without reply from C.W.S. Preserves. R. Archer, their secretary, scored eight goals. Simonds reversed the result of last week by defeating Bradfield. Tilehurst were again defeated, this time by Twyford. The results of matches on Saturday were: Reading Y.M.C.A., 12; C.W.S. Preserves, 0. Simonds, 5; Bradfield, 3. Twyford, 3; Tilehurst, 2.

Change of secretary's address: Mr. J. J. Angus, Wilson Minors F.C., c/o Royal Albion Oxford Road, Reading

15th February, 1912.

BILLIARDS.

ROYAL ALBION HANDICAP.

SECOND ROUND DRAW

This handicap, which has produced some splendid play, and has attracted large attendances to the Royal Albion Hotel, Oxford Road, continues to make satisfactory progress. The following is the draw for the second round: Mr. Baldwin, jun., v. Mr. Willson; Mr. Adams v. Mr. Leake; Mr. Haddock v. Mr. Holt or Mr. Bennett; Mr. G. Powell v. Mr. Fawcett; Mr. Honey v. Mr. Attenbrow; Mr. Shorter v. Mr. J. Powell; Mr. Cowan v. Mr. Rushton; Mr. H. Luffman v. Mr. Bradley; "H." v. Mr. Absolom; Mr. Howse v. Mr. Blackwell; Mr. Webb v. Mr. Hendy; Sergeant Hatten v. Mr. Mitchell; Mr. Gladwell or Mr. Morris v. Mr. Wake; Mr. Solomons v. Mr. Hinton; Mr. Broom v. Mr. Baldwin, sen.; Mr. Sargent v. Mr. Hedington, sen. The class of play shown in this handicap, which was framed by Mr. Albert West, is distinctly good, and bears evidence to the improvement made since the Reading and District Billiard League took the game in hand.

Berkshire Chronicle - Saturday 19 June 1909

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Forks, "in all" rapery goods. ONE 288. D., ING.

St. John Ambulance Brigade, and afterwards was able to continue his journey home.

West Reading Angling Club

The annual smoking concert and distribution of prizes was held at the club house, the "Royal Albion Oxford Road, on Monday evening, when a most enjoyable evening was spent under the presidency of Mr. J. E. Eighteen, who also distributed the prizes. Some good specimens of fish were weighed in during the season, notably Mr. C. Gilmore's pike of 17lb. 3ozs. and Mr. H. Johnson's roach of 11lb. 13ozs. The following contributed to the harmony:—Messrs. Steve Port, J. Dell, John Williams, Jas. Williams, T. Christopher, P. Tompkins, Findlay, Cook and E. Fulbrook. Mr. F. Bacon ably presided at the piano.

Berkshire Chronicle - Saturday 13 December 1902

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Club Dinner.

The Reading United Wednesday evening at 7.30. Unfortunately from one side was a small one. The President of the Club (the Hon. E. Keyser, Messrs. Showronek (hon. sec.), W. Fisher, F. Fisher, O. Collier, G. Green, H. Barnett, E. Hoare, Mr and Mrs Edge, and Miss Hill. Apologies from the W. W. Ridley, W. rs.

Reading "Buffs" at Dinner.

Speech by Mr. Keyser.

The first annual dinner in connexion with the Royal Albion Lodge of the Buffaloes was held on Thursday evening at the Royal Albion Hotel, Oxford Road, Reading. In the absence of the Mayor (Bro. A. H. Bull), through illness, Bro. Councillor Hopkins Walters presided, and was ably supported by Bro. C. E. Keyser, Lamport Gilbert, Glazier, A. C. Ackerman, Kirkham, Tyer, Barnes, and Turner. Bro. A. Webb occupied the vice-chair, and amongst some four score present were: Sergt.-Major Turner, Col.-Sergt. Lawes, Staff-Sergt. Hall, Sergt. Lapworth, and Sergt. Bridges, Bros. and Messrs. Ensom, Allen Peirpoint, Turner, sen. and jun., Dowding, Neville, Burke (London), Williams, and Arnold. A bountiful repast was provided by Host Bro. Lewis.

The Chairman said he regretted that through the illness of the Mayor he occupied that position; owing to the same cause he had to apologise for the non-attendance of Messrs. Morland, Skerby, Ferguson, and Huggins. The Chairman gave the loyal toasts, which were heartily received and Primo. H. B. Kirkham gave the "Imperial Forces" in a capital speech. Bro. Sergt. Lapworth, in responding, said he re-

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14TH, 1909, EEDING.

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5/-
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W. Turner, Ben Shirley, Golding, G. Pounds, and others. Mr. H. W. Davis was an able accompanist. Mr. J. E. Wise presented prizes won in annual and specimen competitions.

Buffaloes' Meeting Night.

R.A.O.B. Grand Surrey Banner (Mother Lodge of the World), the "Royal Albion" Lodge, which is held at the "Royal Albion" Hotel, Oxford Road, Reading, has changed its meeting night to Mondays at 8 o'clock. Brothers of all sections are cordially invited to attend.

Figures 1 to 5. Historic newspaper articles



Figures 6 and 7. Royal Albion on the OS Map of 1872 to 1877 (published in 1883) (Left) and Royal Albion PH and Victorian terraces on the OS Map of 1910 (published in 1911) (Right)



Figure 8. Bishop's Villas facing Royal Albion

Appendix 3: Proposed local list text

Royal Albion is a well-preserved example of a suburban Victorian public house that evolved architecturally through the Edwardian and interwar periods, retaining key features emblematic of these eras. Constructed circa 1875 in red brick laid in Flemish bond under a hipped slate roof, the building presents a symmetrical two-storey façade distinguished by two projecting bay windows flanking a central entrance. Its design incorporates neo-Georgian influences evident in the tripartite sash windows with timber mullions, decorative carved brackets, raised string course, and quoins that articulate the front elevation. The side elevations are more modest, with authentic 2x2 sash windows set beneath gauged brick lintels. Its five chimneys are noteworthy, positioned with careful regularity. Internally, historic features such as staircases, fireplaces, arched doorways, architraves, dado rails, and picture rails survive, contributing to the building's architectural interest and integrity.

Royal Albion holds considerable social and communal significance, having functioned continuously as a public house for approximately 150 years and serving as a venue for local clubs, societies, and community gatherings. It forms an architecturally and historically coherent group with the adjacent Bishop's Villas terrace (c.1879), sharing similar design motifs including bay windows and eaves brackets, thereby contributing positively to the character and appearance of this section of Oxford Road. Its prominent scale, distinctive architectural detailing, and long-standing communal role establish Royal Albion as a local landmark and a focal point within the streetscape. These attributes collectively justify its recognition as a non-designated heritage asset of local importance.

Appendix 4 : Original Nomination File

Assessment form for locally listing buildings in Reading Borough November 2012

CRITERIA AND CONSIDERATION FOR LOCALLY LISTING BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES IN READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

Background and explanation: Heritage assets cannot be replaced once lost. They include both nationally and locally listed buildings. Harm to an asset's significance can cause a loss of value to society and a loss of public benefit.

The criteria for assessment of locally listing buildings/ structures are set out below and are taken from the adopted Sites and Detailed Policies Document. These criteria and the accompanying explanation of how a particular building or structure meets these criteria will be used to assess whether that building or structure merits designation as a locally listed heritage asset.

The assessment will be based purely on the evidence provided with this form (unless the authority has access to further evidence).

Identification of buildings or structures for local listing: Buildings or structures worthy of being locally listed will mainly be identified through the process of considering and determining planning proposals and applications.¹

Exclusions

Buildings and structures will not be considered for the Local List when they are already part of a Conservation Area², Scheduled Monument, or subject to an article 4 direction relating to historical or architectural interest.

Address of building/ structure: Royal Albion, 642 Oxford Road
Reading

Postcode: RG30 1EH

¹ Buildings or structures identified outside the application process will be considered as resources become available.

² Buildings that warrant local designation in a conservation area are awarded a 'Buildings of Townscape Merit' designation. For the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012), Buildings of Townscape Merit will be considered to warrant conservation and where appropriate enhancement in accordance with the NPPF.

Selection for the Local List

For any building, structure or group of buildings to be included in the Local List it **must** clearly meet the relevant age and integrity criteria:

	Please tick relevant box ³
(a) pre-1840: Any building, structure or group of buildings where its/ their style, form and construction are easily identifiable.	
(b) 1840 - 1913: Any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are substantially complete and unaltered and of definite significance.	✓
(c) 1914 - 1939: Any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are substantially complete and unaltered and of a high level of significance.	
(d) post 1939: Any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are of exceptional significance and wholly complete and unaffected by inappropriate changes.	

Please provide comments/ further explanation of above:

The Royal Albion is a public house dating from c1875, replaced a former public house, parts of which may remain, on the same site. The original public house and possibly the new building for a short period of time, was known as the Thatched Tavern.

The Royal Albion Hotel is marked on the 1872-1877, published 1883 OS map, and was just outside the borough boundary at that time (see Appendix). This shows the original footprint and that it was without neighbours on either side.

The construction date can be established with some certainty because a spirit license for the Thatched House Tavern was approved in September 1874 on condition that the plans for a new public house as prepared by surveyor Mr Fulkes were carried out (Reading Observer 12 September 1874 p3). Brewer William Sims later that month requested tenders to take down part of the Thatched Tavern in Oxford Road and re-building (Reading Observer 26 September 1874 p2). If any earlier fabric remains e.g. the cellar in particular that could only be determined by a full inspection.

In 1901 minor alterations were approved to alter the position of the doorways and re-arrange the bars. These were allowed subject to conditions that the parlour was not used for drinking and the porch to the parlour not used for customer access and that drinking was not to take place outside. The plans were carried out with slight variations that year (Reading Publican's licensing register 1898-1928 RBO ref PS/R 14/6 folio 104).

³ Note - if none of the above boxes are ticked, the building/ structure will not qualify for consideration as a locally listed building.

in 1903 when the Licensed Premises Survey was carried out. The premises consisted of three bars, two smoke rooms and a bar parlour. It also had a club room and two rooms for travellers. It had no stable accommodation for horses but plans were being prepared for stabling and vehicle accommodation. There were three entrances from Oxford Road and one on each side of the pub accessed via a gateway. It was described as '...in good condition outside, clean and in good decorative repair inside. Frequented by artizans &c. Headquarters of Clubs, Friendly Societies &c'.

The two-storey, originally symmetrical building, with cellar is predominantly constructed of red brickwork in Flemish bond. There are stone quoins and between the ground and first floor, a string course on the façade. The centre where the main entrance is, is slightly recessed and a modern porch entrance has been added with a bar entrance to left and right within. There are two ground floor bay windows on each side of the main entrance and it is possible that these were added later (see above there were three entrances from Oxford Road in 1903). These are of brick construction and have been rendered and painted as has the rest of the ground floor façade making the brick bond difficult to identify. The three first floor windows are segmented with decorative frames and corbels supporting the lintel. Sash windows predominate but not all may be original.

The main roof is slate as are the roofs of the bay windows. The building has four chimneys which may have been replaced and a chimney on the eastern elevation was removed between 2016 and 2017 (Google Streetview).

A flat roofed modern single storey extension has been built to the western elevation now used for toilets. It has a bricked-up entranceway. There is a flat roofed single storey extension to the rear.

The front entrance is modern.

The public house is significant because of its age and consistent 150 year use as a public house and one of several along Oxford Road, its closest neighbour to the west being the Pond House at the junction with Grovelands Road.

In addition it must also be shown that it contributes to the character of an area and is valued by local people in accordance with at least one of the criteria detailed below under the headings of historic interest, architectural interest and townscape value.

Historic interest

Please tick the relevant box/es

(a) Historical Association i. The building or structure has a well authenticated historical association with a notable person(s) or event.	✓
ii. The building or structure has a prolonged and direct association with figures or events of local interest.	
(b) Social Importance The building or structure has played an influential role in the development of an area or the life of one of Reading's communities. Such buildings/structures may include places of worship, schools, community buildings, places of employment, public houses and memorials which formed a focal point or played a key social role.	✓

(c) Industrial Importance The building or structure clearly relates to traditional or historic industrial processes or important businesses or the products of such industrial processes or businesses in the history of Reading or are intact industrial structures, for example bridges	
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Comments/ further explanation of this should be provided in the box at the end of this section.

Architectural interest

(a) Sense of place i. The building or structure is representative of a style that is characteristic of Reading.	
(b) Innovation and Virtuosity i. The building or structure has a noteworthy quality of workmanship and materials.	
ii. The building or structure is the work of a notable local/national architect/engineer/builder.	
iii. The building or structure shows innovation in materials, technique, architectural style or engineering	
(c) Group Value i. The buildings/structures form a group which as a whole has a unified architectural or historic value to the local area.	√
ii. The buildings/structures are an example of deliberate town planning from before 1947	

Comments/ further explanation of this should be provided in the box at the end of this section.

Townscape Value

The buildings/structures have prominence and a landmark quality that is fundamental to the sense of place of a particular locality.	√
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Please provide comments/ further explanation of above

Historical Association (i) For completeness and possible interest it should be noted that in the 1901 census Harry Barrett, professional exhibition cricketer was a visitor. The Royal Albion was only a short distance from the County Cricket Ground, now Kensington Park. Nothing else is known about Harry Barrett or whether he was attending the cricket ground.

Historic Interest (b) Social Importance As a public house the Royal Albion Hotel was an important centre for community life. There are also many references in the local press to its use for events and inquests as evidence for its wider social role.

The pub has been linked with some of Reading's important brewing names. In 1874 it was owned by William Sims. It was sold in 1882 together with the Lion Brewery on Castle Street and other licensed premises and brewery properties (Berkshire Chronicle 25 February 1882 p1) and was probably acquired by William James Justins Brinn of Castle Street who was owner by 1890 (Licensing Register 1887-1897 BRO ref PS/R 14/5). Fergusons were owners by 1899 (Reading Publican's licensing register 1898-1928 RBO ref PS/R 14/6 folio 104).

It was later acquired by ~~Morlands~~ of Abingdon, who took an interest in Fergusons in 1914 and full control in 1943. Just before closure it was owned by Greene King of Bury St Edmunds.

The public house also provided accommodation. In the 1881 census 26 lodgers were living there. Most were labourers but there was also: a painter, two gardeners, a shepherd, a groom, a carpenter and a baker. There is no trace of this in the preceding, 1871 or following, 1891 census although the licensee at that time James W Gardner was described as a Hotel Proprietor. In 1903 it had two rooms to accommodate travellers which is not uncommon in larger public houses at that time.

Architectural Interest (c) Group Value

At the time of its construction the building was in a comparatively undeveloped area. When the original pub was advertised for sale in 1861, the Thatched House Tavern is described as an ornamental cottage formerly built as a lodge entrance to 'the property' (Berkshire Chronicle 3 August 1861 p1). It sold for £345 (Reading Mercury 17 August 1861 p5). This could have been part of the ~~Grovelands~~ Estate which was sold in the 1870s but Elm Lodge was also close by, as was Battle Farm and Battle House on the north and south sides of Oxford Road. The owner of the land (field 58 in the Tithe apportionment survey) could be established from the tithe records.

Development in the area after the ~~Grovelands~~ Estate was sold included the building of the barracks almost opposite in 1877. The change of name to 'Royal Albion' in the mid to late 1870s may be a link to that military use.

Townscape Value

The public house is a substantial, detached property on a large plot on the north side of Oxford Road.

Recommendation made by (name of Proposer) : Evelyn Williams for Reading CAAC
Date : 8 June 2025

General notes and any other relevant information on the building/ structure by Proposer ⁴ making recommendation for local listing including reasons for recommendation ⁵

Source of all information and details of any supporting document used to support the recommendation to locally list the building or structure ⁶ .	
Detail of evidence/ document (including photographs)	Source/ reference of information

Continue on separate sheet if necessary

⁴ The 'Proposer' is anticipated to normally be the Planning Case Officer given that the identification of most buildings or structures will currently be identified through the process of determining planning applications, however, the 'Proposer' could also be a member of the public or another organisation' group.

⁵ Failure to meet the requirements for a building or structure to be locally listed at a particular point in time does not rule out future re-consideration of that building or structure if significant new evidence is produced.

⁶ Any supporting documentation provided cannot be returned and will be kept on file as part of the supporting documentation should the building be locally listed. Please only send photocopies (subject to relevant copyright) should you wish to keep a copy of any documentation.

For official use only.

Recommendation confirmed/rejected by Conservation Officer:

Date:

Conservation Officer signature confirming recommendation:

Position:

Print name:

Reasons that the recommendation for locally listing the building/ structure have been confirmed/ rejected

Any additional comments regarding the building/ structure

The rural location of the predecessor public house is summed up in a notice in the Reading Mercury in 1845 (Reading Mercury 21 June 1845 p3). *'A maying will take place at the Thatched House Tavern, Oxford Road, Tilehurst, on Monday and Tuesday, the 23rd and 24th June 1845. A bower will be erected in a Meadow near the house, which considering the beauty of the situation cannot fail to prove most attractive and agreeable. An effective band has been engaged for the dance, and arrangements made for other rural amusements'*.

Building/ structure identification:

Grid reference:




UPRN:

Signature of Manager accepting recommendation:

Date: _____

Position: _____

Print name: _____

<p>Image/Map/ Reference</p> 	<p>Source/Comment</p> <p>Extract from OS map 1872-1877 pub 1883. Royal Albion, previously the Thatched Tavern circled. The borough boundary is marked by the dashed line to the west and north of Elm Lodge. Courtesy of National Library of Scotland</p>
	<p>Extract from OS map 1910 published 1911. Royal Albion circled. Courtesy of National Library of Scotland</p>
	<p>Extract from OS map 1938 published c1944. Royal Albion circled. Courtesy of National Library of Scotland.</p>
<p>Tithe map St Mary's Reading parish</p>	<p>Online map at http://www2.berkshirenclosure.org.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=DD1%2f98%2f1</p>
<p>Census Records</p>	<p>Online via findmypast</p>
<p>British Newspaper Archive</p>	<p>Online via findmypast</p>

1903 Licensing Survey	<p>County Borough <u>Of</u> Reading. Licensed Houses,; REPORTS of the committee of borough justices appointed to visit Licensed houses to obtain Statistical Information, and of the Clerk to the Justices, and Statistical Information obtained. Author Borough of Reading, printed by The John Read Printing Works 1903</p> <p>Reading Central Library https://reading.spydus.co.uk/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/ENQ/WPAC/BIBENQ?SETLVL=&BRN=1143655</p>
Licensing Records for Tilehurst and Reading	Royal Berkshire Archives
Google Streetview	Google maps