

# The Oracle, Reading

Transformational repurposing of The Oracle shopping centre in Reading town centre



## Client

Hammerson Plc

## LPA

Reading Borough Council

## Status

Ongoing

## Services

Planning, Heritage and Townscape, Strategic Communications, Sustainability, Economics, EIA

## Our role

- The Oracle shopping centre opened in 1999 and over the last 25 years has established itself as the primary shopping centre within Reading town centre. We have been working with Hammerson since 2021 responding to structural changes in the retail sector, which presented an opportunity to deliver transformational change to the centre as well as provide ongoing asset management advice.
- We submitted major planning applications for regeneration across two sites at the eastern end of the centre, to replace a vacant Debenhams department store and outdated Vue cinema, with tall buildings comprising residential uses, a replacement cinema and F&B buildings.
- We developed a considered planning strategy to consent mapping out local authority engagement, Design South East and community engagement. The importance of collaborative working is at the forefront of our involvement in this project.

## Results

- Secured series of minor consents for asset management initiatives in and around the shopping centre.
- Obtained planning permission to repurpose the former House of Fraser department store for a mix of retail and leisure uses, introducing new activity to the centre and create riverside activation.
- Working collaboratively with Reading Borough Council towards determination of the major applications, a resolution to grant was achieved in February 2026.
- Throughout the process, we have acted as a critical friend to the client and project team, ensuring an appreciation of the complexity of the site and developing solutions to work through the constraints to deliver transformational intervention in the heart of the town centre.