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The Public Plate

Scaling Public Restaurants



www.thepublicplate.com

Executive Summary

MISSION:

To build a high-volume, cost-efficient restaurant network that serves healthy meals at fast-food pricing, widening access to meals outside of the home.

VISION:

To create public dining halls in underused high-street buildings where eating well is affordable, and everyone feels they belong.

The Team

Led by Carly Trisk-Grove, a founder with 20 years' experience running high-volume, social-impact restaurants and strong networks across hospitality and food policy. Carly is assembling a senior team with expertise in operations and food systems; leaders who bring the commercial discipline, operational depth and mission alignment needed to scale public restaurants nationally.

Public Restaurants

Open-to-all, paid-for dining spaces that widen access to meals eaten out of the home, while helping to rebuild everyday social connection. They blend the efficiency of Wetherspoons, the simplicity of LEON, the warmth of Loungers and the canteen flow of IKEA, delivering high-volume, low-cost meals through central production while building belonging, improving public health and keeping value local through an equitable, mission-led franchise model.

The Public Plate

The Public Plate is a steward-owned franchise system with a three-layer financing model that enables national scale while keeping control mission-led and ensuring that value flows back to the people and places who create it.

Marketing

Public Restaurants require a blended go-to-market strategy that explains a new dining category, differentiates it from charitable models, highlights its familiar-yet-equitable offer, and builds demand through the shared value of affordable, welcoming, everyday eating.

The Financial Structure

Head Office provides the operational blueprint, central production capability and scalable support structure that grows only as the network grows; ensuring lean overheads, strong unit economics and consistent delivery across all Public Restaurants.

Financing & Returns

We are raising £1.2m in patient, purpose-aligned seed equity to build the system behind Public Restaurants. This seed round funds the high-risk build phase and delivering two sequenced pilots. A further raise will fund Head Office capacity for multi-site roll out, paired with a social impact fund providing patient debt to franchisees for capex.

Future Plans

A two-pilot programme with clear gateway criteria, performance metrics and feasibility checks allows The Public Plate to test, refine and de-risk the model before activating central production and moving into national rollout.

The Team



Carly Trisk-Grove | Founder and Purpose Lead

I spent 20 years founding and running three social-impact restaurants centred on affordability, access and sustainability. My first restaurant was a founder member of The Sustainable Restaurant Association and appeared in the Waitrose Good Food Guide for three consecutive years. I hold an MSc in Food Policy, and am a certified B Leader with B Lab UK.

Drawing from my extensive networks in food policy, hospitality and social impact, I will hold the vision through every decision, build the partnerships that make the model possible, drive commercial and civic relationships, and champion the health, economic and social value of Public Restaurants.

TBC | Fractional Chief Financial Officer

Providing financial stewardship across The Public Plate's multi-layered funding model, ensuring transparency, clarity and confidence for investors, franchisees and community stakeholders. Managing investor expectations through rigorous data, reporting and governance. Overseeing franchisee loan structures and repayment performance through the Social Impact Fund, ensuring capital is deployed fairly and sustainably. Safeguarding alignment between the three funding layers and ensuring they reinforce rather than compete with one another. Supporting long-term financial strategy so that commercial viability, social fairness and public purpose remain in balance as Public Restaurants scale.

TBC | Fractional Chief Operations Officer

Working alongside the founder to shape overall operational strategy, ensuring scalability, consistency and strong unit economics. Overseeing the development of the infrastructure, systems and production capacity that enable Public Restaurants to operate reliably, profitably and in alignment with mission and impact goals. Ensuring the franchise is governed according to stewardship commitments and that commercial decisions support public purpose and long-term resilience.

TBC | Operations Lead

Managing site openings end-to-end and leading quality assurance, compliance and service standards across the network. Overseeing on-the-ground performance management and providing direct support to franchisees. Ensuring operational consistency in every location and troubleshooting issues across sites to maintain smooth, reliable delivery of the Public Restaurants model.

TBC | Food-Systems Lead

Designing seasonal, rotating menus that minimise waste and align meals with what farms can genuinely supply. Overseeing centralised "meals-in-progress" production to ensure efficiency, quality and consistency as the network grows. Providing chef training, ensuring smooth delivery from central production to sites, and upholding high food standards across all Public Restaurants.

Public Restaurants

Public Restaurants are large dining halls where the welcome is warm, portions generous, and menus balanced and climate-friendly, making eating out part of everyday life.

A Public Restaurant blends the best of what already works: the spacious, predictable walk-in ease of Wetherspoons; the balanced, minimal-choice menus of LEON; the neighbourhood warmth of the Lounges; and the canteen flow of IKEA Food.

Commercial viability comes from high footfall, low margins and low labour, supported by a focused menu and central production of 'meals-in-progress'; allowing Public Restaurants to operate at Wetherspoons style scale while staying affordable enough for regular use.

Social impact comes from a governance and finance model with equity built in: franchisees earn ownership through performance rather than wealth or networks, wealth stays local, and Public Restaurants scale as social infrastructure shaped by the communities they serve.

Public Restaurants **transform public health** by making everyday eating-out affordable and aligned with planetary diets, rebuilding social capital through real-world connection, and creating a consistent market for ecological growers; closing the loop between what's good for people and what's good for the planet.

A proven model:

The University of Reading offers a powerful proof point for the Public Plate model. Through its pre paid meal plan system, Reading delivers balanced meals for approximately £6 per plate when produced and purchased at scale.

Their approach shows that when demand is aggregated, menus are simplified and production is centralised, high-quality meals can be delivered at a price point far below typical out-of-home dining. This university exemplar demonstrates that affordability is not a theoretical aspiration; it is operationally achievable, commercially viable and already functioning effectively in the UK.



Consumer demand is shifting towards

- Consistency in food quality, transparency in pricing.
- Group-friendly dining that supports social connection.
- Simplified menus prioritising quality over volume.
- Value-driven offers such as loyalty schemes and subscription plans.

Public policy is shifting towards

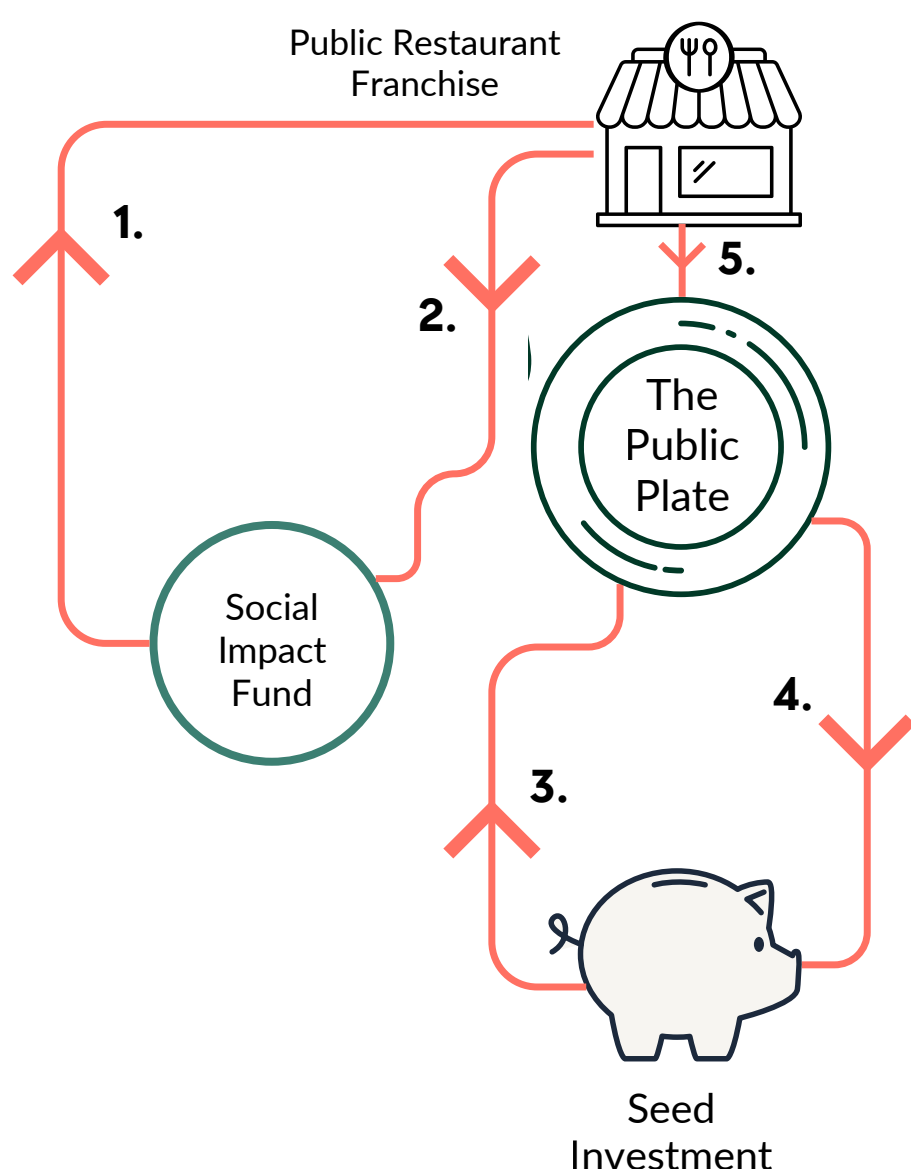
- Recognising the food system's role in keeping us within planetary limits
- Prioritising universal access to fresh fruit and vegetables as a public-health necessity
- Investing in social infrastructure, place-based regeneration and inclusive economic growth

The Public Plate

The Public Plate is a steward-owned franchise system with a three-layer financing model that enables national scale while keeping control mission-led and ensuring that value flows back to the people and places who create it.

Operational Roles and Responsibilities

The Public Plate (Franchisor)	Public Restaurants (Franchisee)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runs the central kitchen and sourcing • Produces “meals-in-progress” (stock, sauce, prepped veg) • Designs menus and seasonal rotations • Manages producer and grower relationships • Handles logistics, procurement and supply-chain • Provides the brand, systems and training • Sets and upholds standards and consistency • Secures mission-aligned capital • Supports site openings and ongoing performance • Manages site leases and relationships with asset holders • Leads brand marketing and public awareness campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runs the dining hall day-to-day • Manages staff and customer experience • Delivers the menu and service model consistently • Operates a kitchen with minimal heavy prep, focusing instead on finishing fresh, daily-changing dishes • Drives local footfall and community engagement • Meets KPIs using the systems and tools provided • Accesses ongoing training, operational support and fair pathways into ownership



Fund flow

1. Restaurant franchisees receive loans for CapEx from the Social Impact fund.
2. And return interest through site profitability.
3. Seed investors fund The Public Plate infrastructure..
4. And receive returns via profit share.
5. Franchise pay a 9% fee for central support

Steward Ownership

And A Three-Tier Capital Model

Capital Layer

- 1. Seed Investors - Patient equity to build The Public Plate's core infrastructure and pilots:**
 - Fair economic returns when the system becomes profitable.
 - Investment Shares only; economic rights, no governance control.
 - Governance concerns escalated to the Guardian if mission drift is suspected.
 - Capital supports early high-risk build without compromising mission.
- 2. Social Impact Fund - Low-interest capped-return capex loans across franchisee portfolio**
 - Enables a fair pathway into ownership based on performance, not capital.
 - Participation rights through franchisee representation on Steward board.
- 3. Local Investment - Community shares**
 - Small-scale local investment, building early footfall through building a sense of ownership
 - Modest returns that sit beneath the Social Impact Fund loan.
 - Economic rights only.

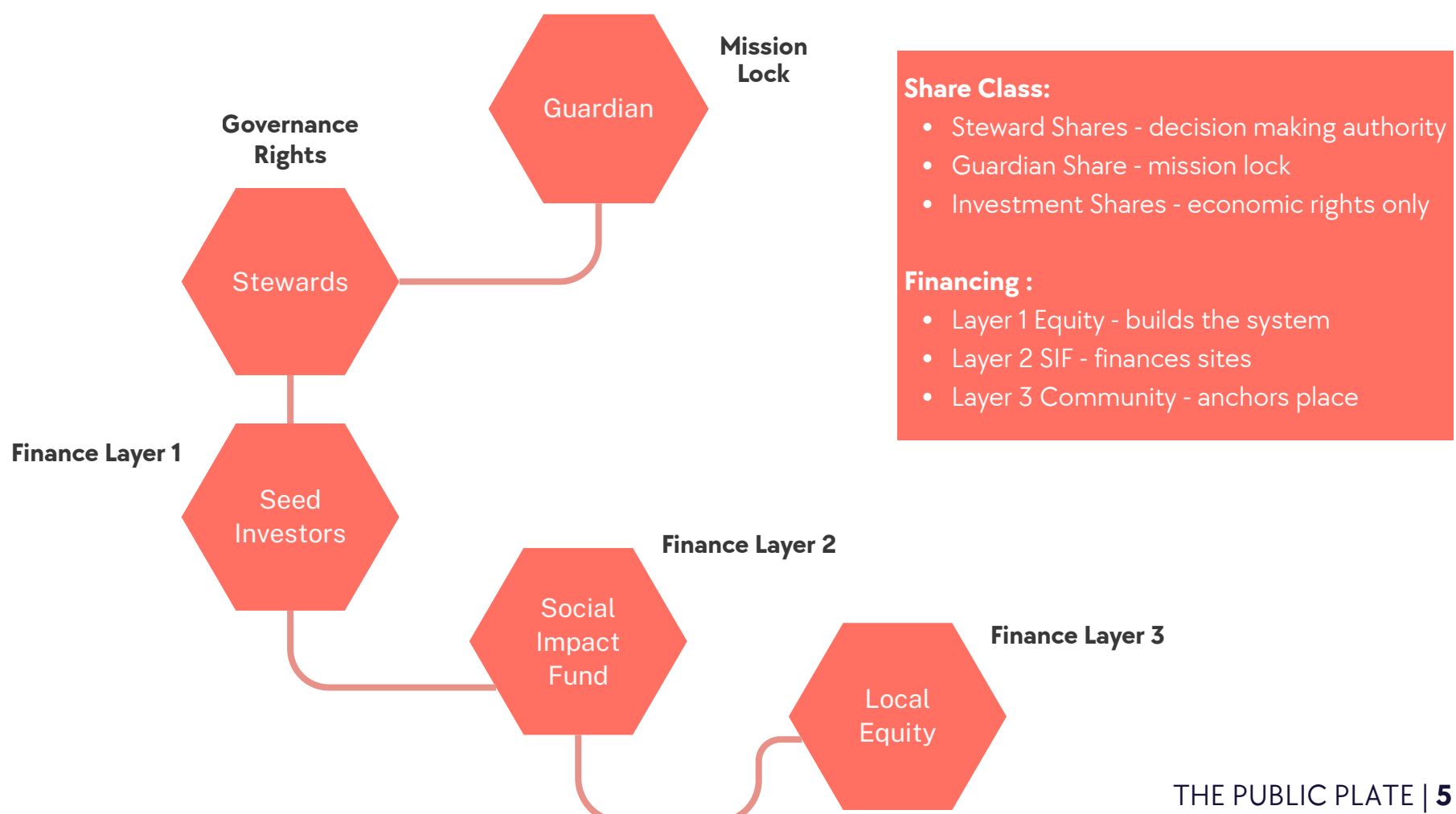
Governance Layer

Stewards - Decision-Making Authority

- Long-term governance, purpose protection, and commercial discipline.
- Steward Shares - majority voting power and responsibility for decision making with no extractive rights.
- Ensures mission alignment and prevents drift or external take-over.

Guardian - Mission Lock

- Independent oversight to protect purpose.
- A single veto over changes that threaten steward ownership.
- Guardian Shares; guarantees that capital can never override mission, and Public Restaurants remain public-purpose assets.



Designed For Scale

A Capital Structure Where Mission and Scale Reinforce Each Other

Our ownership and financing model is designed so that every actor contributes to, and benefits from, the system in a way that protects mission, widens access, and supports long-term resilience. To access the investment needed to build the organisation, The Public Plate will be incorporated as a company limited by shares, enabling compatibility with UK capital markets and EIS tax relief.

As more restaurants open and generate stable cashflow, and as franchisees repay their loans, the Social Impact Fund accumulates surplus capital. Over time, this creates a mechanism to amortise and gradually repay early seed investors without a sale or transfer of control. Instead of monetising the organisation, early investors are bought out through the shared prosperity created by the network they helped build.

As seed financing is repaid, a growing share of operating surpluses and recycled capital remains within the Impact Fund, expanding its ability to back new operators and support sites through difficult periods. This keeps growth equitable, resilient and aligned with place.

Together, steward ownership, EIS-eligible patient capital and a long-term impact fund create a financial architecture that supports scale without ever distorting purpose.

Marketing Plan

A blended strategy; part commercial, part public-value

Public Restaurants introduce a new category of dining to the UK and therefore require a blended go-to-market strategy: part commercial hospitality launch, part community-building and public-value storytelling. Early-stage marketing must both explain the concept and prove its everyday appeal.

A core priority is clearly differentiating Public Restaurants from community kitchens or charitable food provision. Unlike surplus-based, volunteer-supported models, Public Restaurants are commercial, affordable and designed for everyday social eating. This distinction - good food, low prices, no stigma - must be consistently and confidently communicated.

At the heart of the proposition are the elements customers will immediately recognise; a Public Restaurant blends the best of what already works:

- the spacious, predictable walk-in ease of Wetherspoons,
- the balanced, minimal-choice menus of LEON,
- the neighbourhood warmth of the Lounges, and
- the canteen flow of IKEA Food

But our real point of difference is what sits beneath it all: equity built into the design, governance, financing and ownership. Public Restaurants treat people as equal participants, not just customers, and that is what creates a sense of belonging. This foundation shapes the way we talk about value, experience and purpose.

Our goal is to shift a portion of takeaway and convenience-food spend into Public Restaurants by making the value proposition unambiguous: **better food, the price of a takeaway, no washing up, everyone welcome, and a place you actually want to be.**

To ensure this resonates, messaging must be tested with real people; focus groups and informal listening sessions will help identify what people genuinely care about.

Success also depends on building alliances: sector bodies, hospitality leaders, growers, place-based practitioners, policy makers and influential voices who can amplify the concept. It is vital that Public Restaurants are not perceived as a threat within the hospitality industry, but as a complementary model.

We will galvanise support by highlighting shared benefits; stronger high streets, better food options, fair work, social connection and healthier communities, and by fostering a sense of collective ownership in the Public Restaurant movement: spaces built for everyone, shaped by place, and designed for belonging.

Marketing Plan

The 4Ps of Marketing

Product	Price
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• fresh, balanced dishes with minimal choice and maximum transparency• a familiar, easy service flow• a neighbourhood feel that welcomes everyone• comfortable seats, communal and non-communal tables• plant-forward menu	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Predictable and simple pricing model; in line with fast-food pricing.• affordability improves with commitment through subscription and loyalty plans• access to people experiencing food insecurity (once Public Restaurants are established and cross-subsidisation aligned with outcomes based contracts enables subsidised access for low-income or socially isolated groups)
Promotion	Place
<p>National (Build the Category)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public campaigns to introduce the concept of Public Restaurants• Research-led storytelling that links food, health, belonging and high streets• Partnerships with sector bodies, universities and policy networks <p>Commercial (Build the Brand)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PR, digital and social content• Producer stories to reinforce values and transparency• Launch campaigns and membership/loyalty tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place-based channels (local authority comms, town centre partnerships, BIDs, libraries, leisure centres).• Community events, school networks, youth groups, resident associations• Collaboration with councils, BIDs, leisure centres and libraries• On-the-ground engagement to build trust, familiarity and regular use

Financial Plan

Unit Economics

Public Restaurants optimise for volume, consistency and sustainability rather than continuous service. Meals are delivered in defined two-hour windows, supported by a focused, plant-forward and climate-friendly menu that keeps costs predictable and operations efficient. Teams rotate fluidly across roles, aligning preparation and service to peak demand. By narrowing the operational task, sites achieve higher quality, better working conditions, and strong unit economics without sacrificing warmth or accessibility.

Site Dynamics

Each site is operated by a franchisee (earning £35k) who takes on a franchise loan of up to £300k to cover CapEx and site refurbishment. Loans are repaid over ten years at a 7% interest rate. A 9% franchise fee covers central services; HR, bookkeeping, IT and operational support, allowing franchisees to focus entirely on the day-to-day restaurant, their team and the customer experience; the job any great host is built to do.

A minimum of 4,000 sq ft with capacity for 180 diners, operating a daily lunch and dinner service. Utilisation assumed to vary by season and day of the week, remaining within a 60%–140% capacity range, where 140% reflects more than one sitting per table during peak periods.

Lunch trade is forecast to operate at c.60% volume of dinner trade. Service follows a streamlined canteen model. Customers order and collect their food and drinks at the bar; pub meets canteen. The idea is to minimise the number of servers and create an environment that feels participatory.

Average Sales

Weekday, Winter: 60 lunch covers and 99 dinner covers

Weekend, Summer: 150 lunch covers and 252 dinner covers

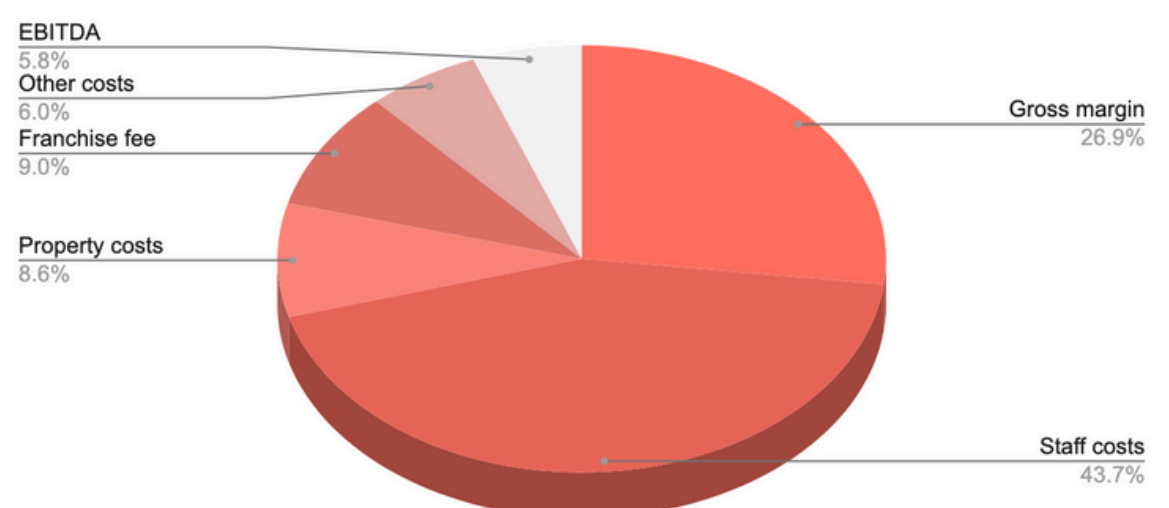
A realistic but confident ramp profile, reflecting both seasonal uplift and the capacity for high-volume turnover at maturity. Site sales have a growth profile of; building up to 65% Year one, 85% year two and 100% (i.e. full forecast maturity) at year three. Sales projections do not include revenue from any drinks/cakes sold in between meals, although staffing for this period is accounted for.

Logistics

- Efficient layout based on canteen principles
- Lunch: 12–2pm, Dinner: 6–8pm
- Bar/Coffee open between services
- Food and drink ordered at the bar or on app and delivered to the tables.

Staffing

- Franchisee, Supervisor + 2 Chef + 3 FOH (rising to 5 at peak)
- Cross-trained staff: prep, bar, servery, kitchen porter
- 4-day week aspiration with no zero-hour contracts
- Minimum Income of £30,500, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.



Financial Plan

Our assumptions are grounded in lived operational data, drawn from the restaurant we built and ran between 2005–2019, which we grew to £1m turnover and sold for £0.9m.

The Role of Head Office

Head Office (HO) exists to make the franchise model commercially strong, operationally consistent and cost-efficient. Its structure is designed to scale in line with the network. The core team for the pilot phase establishes the operational blueprint and ensures that pilots run with the rigour required for replication at scale.

- Founder (£50K FT) – Purpose, partnerships, strategy, governance
- COO (£80K 0.05 FTE) – Operational strategy, systems, commercial discipline
- CFO (£80K 0.05 FTE) – Financial oversight, multi-layer capital management
- Food Systems Lead (£50K 0.5 FTE) – Menus, direct sourcing, central production
- Operations Lead (£50K FT) – Site openings, QA, compliance, performance

Scaling Head Office

The model is intentionally designed so that HO grows only as the network grows, ensuring lean overheads and strong unit economics. Growth is funded through:

- 25% of franchise fee is allocated to build centralised staffing and support.
- This enables the hiring of one additional FTE support role for every two sites that reach sales maturity (c. £1m turnover).
- Ensures the central team expands in line with operational need and revenue; never ahead of it.

Back-Office & Organisational Overheads:

- Fixed base of £15k per year covering insurance, regulatory, admin and essential operational support.
- Additional 5% of franchise fees allocated to back-office scalability as the network expands.

Marketing

Marketing is designed to build a national category while supporting local traction.

- 20% of franchise fee directed to brand, PR, digital and operator-facing marketing support.
- £3k per month in Year One for brand establishment, awareness and category education.
- As each site matures, £30k per site per year is allocated to localised and national marketing to drive sustained footfall.

Central Food Production

A single central kitchen underpins economies of scale. To be established post the second pilot.

- £78k per year allocated for rental of one central kitchen in the first phase.
- Staffing for CPU is fully absorbed within the 24% food margin used across site modelling.
- As the network grows, CPU efficiencies improve margins, consistency, labour efficiency and supply-chain stability.

Scaling Restaurants

Scaling is possible because the model separates high-volume production from daily service. The central production unit (CPU) handles the labour-intensive prep, allowing restaurant teams to focus on service and final cooking, lowering labour demands while ensuring consistency and quality across all sites. One CPU is expected to support up to ten Public Restaurants, creating strong economies of scale as the network grows.

Financial Plan

Capital Requirements

Seed capital investment of £1.3m enables a structured two-year pilot programme designed to validate the model at speed while rigorously managing risk. The pilots are an intentional, time-bound investment: a controlled environment to test, learn, refine, and position the organisation for successful national rollout.

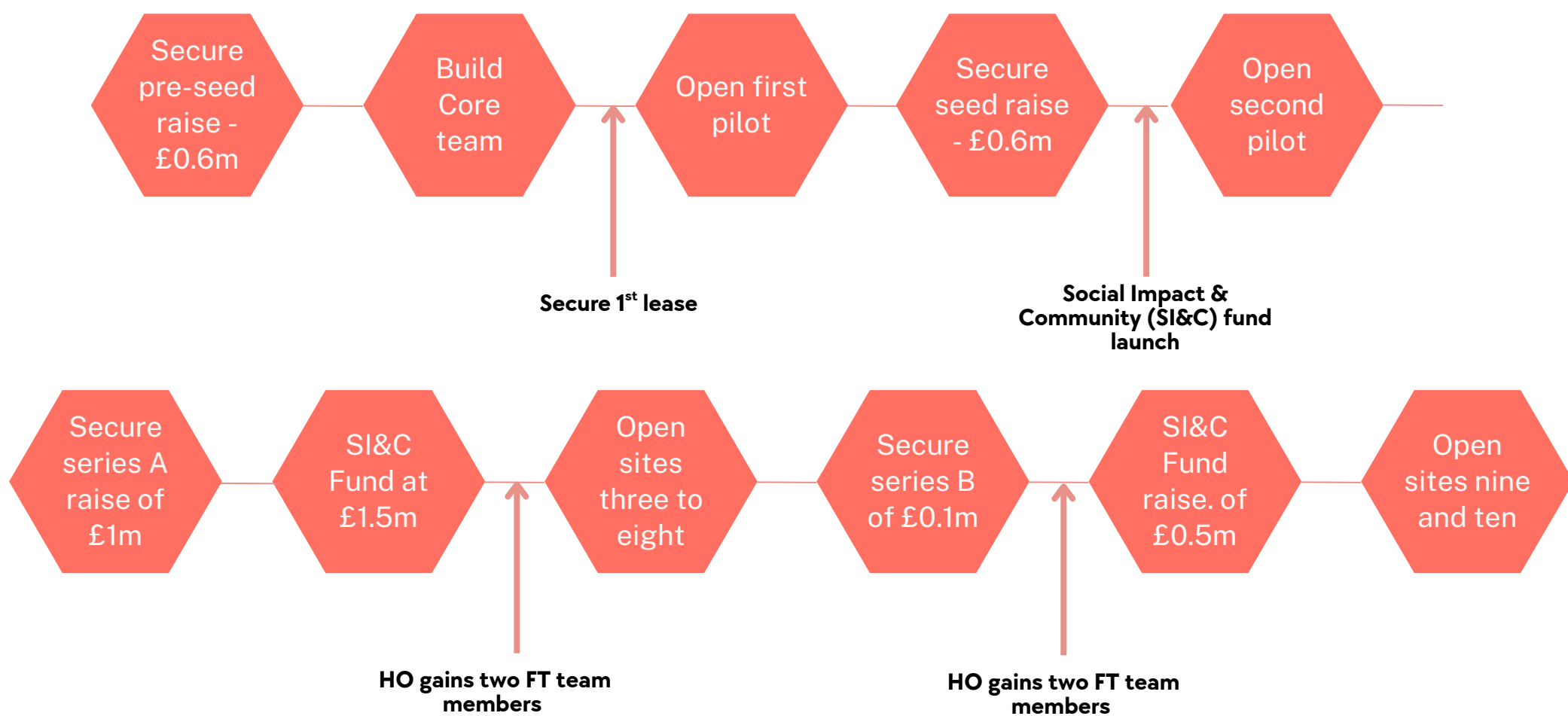
	Value	Percentage
Pilot site capex (two sites)	£600,000	47%
Site operations & working capital	£204,089	16%
Marketing & brand	£74,009	6%
Head office staffing & overheads	£393,394	31%
TOTAL	£1,271,491	

Financial Outlook

After the first two years establishing the pilot sites, expansion continues at a steady pace with two additional sites added each year. Although the capital for these openings is provided through the Social Impact Fund, each new site will still require support for working capital and for head-office functions that are not yet fully covered by franchise fees at low site numbers. By the time the network reaches ten sites in Year Seven, the organisation is expected to move into overall profitability.

Year Number of Sites	Year 1 (1)	Year 2 (2)	Year 5 (8)	Year 7 (10)	Year 10 (10)
Revenue	£0.49m	£1.51m	£7.15m	£11.08m	£11.73m
EBITDA	£(0.33m)	£(0.3m)	£(0.1m)	£0.53m	£0.88m
Risk Capital (cumulative)	£0.6m	£1.2m	£2.2m	£2.3m	£2.3m
Social Investment Fund (cumulative)	-	-	£1.5m	£1.9m	£1.9m
Risk Capital ROI	-	-	-	8.6%	9.1%

Phases & Evaluation



Derisking Investment

- Both pilots are sequenced tightly, ensuring momentum and early proof points.
- Each phase has gateway criteria, allowing course-correction before scale.
- Operational data, customer behaviour, financial performance, and social-impact metrics will guide model refinement.
- Central processing and the impact-fund model are only activated once feasibility is demonstrated.

Gateway Criteria

- Pilot one opens once the following are in place: core operational team, standard operating procedures and menu architecture,
- Pilot two launches once Pilot one has met certain metrics, to include: minimum average occupancy of >55%, demonstrated growth in covers, food and labour cost within target range.
- Preparation for scale happens once both pilots are meeting or outperforming expected cost ratios and cover assumptions.
- Roll-out requires central production and core team capability to manage multiple sites and engagement from LAs and asset holders to secure affordable sites and make national scale viable.

Get in touch

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