



## CABINET

15 June 2016

Subject Heading:

Cabinet Member:

CMT Lead:

Report Author and contact details:

Policy context:

Financial summary:

Is this a Key Decision?

When should this matter be reviewed?

Reviewing OSC:

**Bridge Close, Romford**

**Councillor Osman Dervish** Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Community Safety,

**Councillor Damian White** Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing

**Steve Moore**

Interim Director of Neighbourhoods

Suzanne Lansley 432931  
[Suzanne.lansley@havering.gov.uk](mailto:Suzanne.lansley@havering.gov.uk)

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

London Plan Consolidated with Alterations since 2011 (2016)

Havering Local Development Framework (2008)

Romford Development Framework (2015)

Delivering the Council's vision for Bridge Close will act as a catalyst for investment and regeneration in Romford. This report calls for the comprehensive development of Bridge Close, approval to acquire sites by private treaty and where necessary, to consider and begin to undertake the necessary steps to acquire land by compulsory acquisition. There is an allocation of £8.9m non recoverable grant and £6.5m recoverable grant from the Greater London Authority (GLA) Housing Zone Programme to support the development of Bridge Close.

An exempt addendum accompanies this report which reviews the viability of proposals

**Yes**

September 2019

Towns and Communities

**The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives**

Havering will be clean and its environment will be cared for	[x]
People will be safe, in their homes and in the community	[x]
Residents will be proud to live in Havering	[x]

**SUMMARY**

**Summary**

This report seeks the Cabinet's approval that Bridge Close, including the houses fronting Waterloo and Oldchurch Roads, should be taken forward as a comprehensive development site.

Cabinet is asked to endorse a vision for Bridge Close to be a new residential neighbourhood which is a vibrant riverside quarter providing high quality place to live with well-designed buildings, environmental improvements to the River Rom, a new riverside walkway and includes public space.

Cabinet is being asked to endorse planning guidance for Bridge Close to support the comprehensive development of this site with a focus on new residential development, a new east-west route linking the site to the station, ecological improvements to the River Rom, and the re-provision of the Islamic Cultural Centre and either the provision on site or relocation off site of the ambulance centre. This guidance will form part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan.

This report seeks approval for the Council to enable the delivery of a scheme by firstly acquiring sites by private treaty then if necessary consider and begin to undertake the necessary steps to acquire land by compulsory acquisition.

Funding received by the Housing Zone will enable the Council to initiate the proposed actions detailed in this report. It is noted that the Council will require a development partner(s) to deliver a comprehensive scheme.

Working with development partner will reduce the amount of capital required from the Council in the short to longer term and allow the Council to utilise the skills, experience and resources of private sector partners and, ensure high quality design and the mix of tenures and social infrastructure.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Cabinet:

1. **Endorse** the vision (as set out in section 3) that Bridge Close should be a new residential led neighbourhood and endorses the proposals for comprehensive development of Bridge Close and the design principles for the site outlined in this report.
2. **Endorse** the planning guidance (as set out in section 4) as a material planning consideration and **notes** that this will form part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan.
3. **Agrees** to the Council entering into direct negotiations with land owners to purchase sites on Bridge Close by private treaty as the opportunities arise and note that an external chartered surveying firm will be appointed to professionally assist with negotiation, valuation and acquisition of the land interests.
4. **Delegate** to The Leader, Portfolio Holder for the Romford Housing Zone and the Head of Property oneSource, the authority to approve the terms of acquisition of sites by private treaty and any financial arrangements for relocation of current land owners or tenants.
5. **Delegate** authority to the Portfolio Holder for the Romford Housing Zone and Leader in conjunction with the Director of Legal and Governance oneSource and the Interim Director of Neighbourhoods to take any reasonable necessary steps to identify land which cannot be acquired by negotiation and appoint the relevant consultants in order to assess the need for the use of CPO. **Notes** that a report will be brought back to Cabinet when preparation of the order and heads of terms have been agreed with developer(s).
6. **Authorise** officers to negotiate suitable arrangements with appropriate developers including Mercury Land Holdings, who will be acting in a commercial capacity, to deliver the Council's vision and delegate approval of the terms of such arrangements to the Portfolio Holder for the Romford Housing Zone in consultation with the Director of Legal and Governance oneSource.

**REPORT DETAIL**

**1.0 Background**

- 1.1 In December 2015 the GLA invited the Council to submit a proposal for Romford to be awarded Housing Zone status. In consultation with the Leader, a proposal was submitted and the former Mayor of London

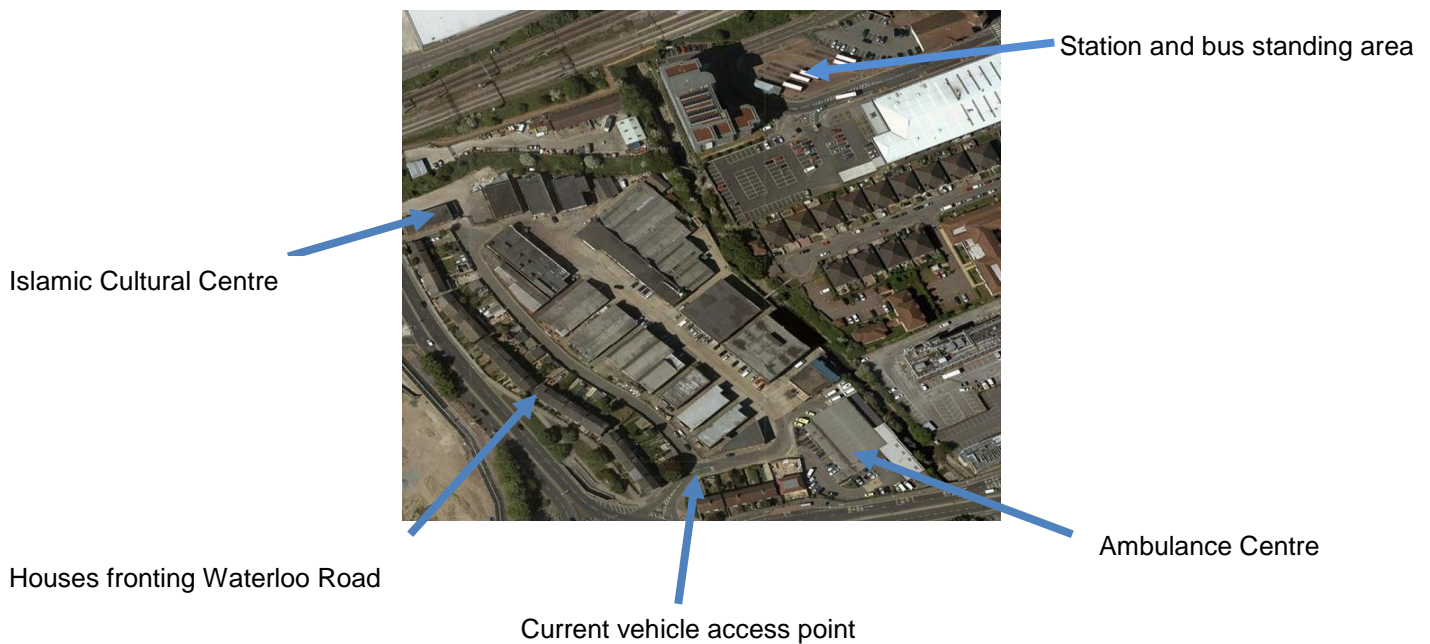
announced in March 2016 that this was one of 11 new Housing Zones, making Havering one of only 8 Boroughs to be awarded a second Housing Zone. HZ status and funding will enable the Council to unlock and accelerate the comprehensive delivery of housing development at Bridge Close.

- 1.2 Bridge Close had already been allocated as a key site for residential development in the Romford Area Action Plan 2008 which is part of Havering's Local Development Framework. The redevelopment of the site for residential use is also reflected in the recent Romford Development Framework (RDF), agreed by Cabinet in July 2015.
- 1.3 The RDF will form part of the evidence base for the new Havering Local Plan (which will incorporate Romford specific policies). Until the new plan is adopted the Local Development Framework (LDF) forms the primary policy basis for planning decisions and the framework will have the status of being a material planning consideration. Following the Local Plan a separate Site Specific Allocations Local Plan will be prepared which provides the opportunity to take forward and update the existing site allocation for Bridge Close currently contained within the Romford Area Action Plan.
- 1.4 The RDF states that Bridge Close could accommodate up to 840 residential units, 2700sqm of commercial space and 960sqm of open space, which could be developed on the site as part of a comprehensive development.
- 1.5 In order to facilitate the delivery of housing on Bridge Close the GLA, as part of the Romford HZ, have allocated funding to initiate acquisition of property, support business relocations, deliver an east-west link and support ecological improvements to the River Rom. This is broken down into £8.9m non recoverable grant (which includes £3m of grant towards the provision of 120 shared ownership units) and £6.5m recoverable grant.
- 1.6 The GLA expects the recoverable grant to be repaid over time through S106, contributions, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments, and sales receipts from onward land sales.

## **2.0 The Site**

- 2.1 Bridge Close is a 2.97 hectare site currently occupied by mixed industrial, warehouse and ancillary units in multiple ownerships, an ambulance station, Islamic Cultural Centre and a number of terraced properties to the front of the site.
- 2.2 Located to the south of the town centre the site is only 250 metres from the new Crossrail station but it currently takes 15 minutes to reach the station by foot as the site is bounded by the railway to the north, the River Rom to the east, and the Road Ring on the other two sides, creating an island effect.

Figure 1: Location plan of Bridge Close



2.3 The site is in multiple ownerships and one of the main landowners has been attempting, for a number of years without success, to bring forward a comprehensive redevelopment of the site. The current site is a mix of low value – low density housing, mixed industrial, warehouse and ancillary office units, which are somewhat dated and provide with low density employment uses, an Islamic Cultural Centre and an Ambulance Station.

### **3.0 Vision for the Site**

3.1 Building on the proposals set out in the Romford Development Framework Officers consider the comprehensive development of Bridge Close has the potential to create a place where people will wish to live comprising a new vibrant residential led waterfront quarter for Romford. It should provide high quality housing designed to reflect a modern and identity for Romford whilst retaining its distinctiveness. This will be created by establishing a palette of modern and more traditional materials to define different character within the site. This will create a step change in the quality of the new buildings and public open space in Romford, embracing urban design and higher densities where appropriate, particularly around the southern part of the site and towards the station Environmental improvements to the River Rom, a new riverside walkway and public space should provide an attractive focus to the development.

3.2 Housing on this site has the potential to deliver a new neighbourhood for a community who will be able to enjoy high quality residential living in the town centre and to support the economic growth of the town through promoting an economically active and sustainable community. The site will make a significant contribution to meeting the Borough's existing housing and

community needs, particularly through the provision of apartments to achieve appropriate densities and responding to market demand.

- 3.3 Development on the site will positively respond to the Ring Road, including opportunities for reducing its barrier effect and should create a new east-west link with a high quality well-connected public realm. This will improve access by public transport, walking and cycling from the west of Romford to the town centre and the station, thus integrating Bridge Close into the fabric of the town.
- 3.4 The comprehensive re-development of the site (including all the industrial units, Islamic Cultural Centre, ambulance centre and the houses fronting Waterloo and Oldchurch Roads) will deliver significant urban design benefits such as greater open space, a more positive southern gateway to the site, and revitalised frontage along Waterloo Road.

Figure 2- Image showing scope for a regenerated Bridge Close and River Rom



#### **4.0 Planning Guidance for the Bridge Close site**

- 4.1 Officers have considered how Bridge Close may be brought forward from an urban design perspective, and are asking Cabinet to endorse the following guidance as a material planning consideration. The guidance will be used to support the comprehensive redevelopment of Bridge Close, it will also form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan. The Council will also rely on National Planning Policy Framework, The London Plan, the LDF policies as well as the RDF to guide the development of Bridge Close until the new Local Plan is approved.
- 4.2 Design principles for Bridge Close
  - 4.2.1 The Council will require developments in Romford town centre to be of the highest architectural and urban design quality. Development and uses

must be appropriate for the site and will be expected to improve the function, appearance, and character of the town centre.

4.2.2 In addition the following design principles should to be adopted within Bridge Close to create different character areas and developers and architects will be expected to be guided by these principles.

i) Ring Road Frontage-Waterloo Road and Oldchurch Road:

These properties should have predominantly brick frontages with ground floor entrances and personal defensible space which means that buildings will be set back from the pavement to provide some private amenity space. There will be landscaping to soften the effect of the Ring Road which would have the benefit of reducing the 'starkness' of the Ring Road – hence the term 'greening' of the Ring Road. We would not expect a continuous building frontage around the site, to ensure that views will allow permeability into the site and pedestrian access into the site from the Ring Road.

ii) River frontage

- Buildings should be arranged to prevent a 'wall' along the river and accommodate a range of building heights.
- There should be balconies and roof gardens overlooking the river. There should be sequences of spaces to provide both amenity space for residents and new public space for the town centre along the river and a defined pedestrian route.
- Environmental improvements to the River Rom will provide a focus for the development and seek to open up the River Rom to the South of the site.

iii) Internal Courtyards

- Flats in these blocks should offer the potential for roof gardens over parking areas and within blocks balconies and communal amenity spaces for residents.
- Some of the internal courtyards should have the potential to provide semi-private terraces for units located on that floor

4.3 Development proposals for Bridge Close should;

- Improve the ecological and environmental qualities of the River Rom and 'soften' and green the river edge. A riverside pedestrian walkway should be provided. Buildings should be set back by approximately 10m.
- Create a clearly defined east-west pedestrian/cycle route linking the Ring Road pedestrian crossing to a new River Rom crossing and to the rail station via Atlanta Boulevard linking growing residential areas to the west of the town through to a proposed southern entrance to Romford station.
- This pedestrian route should be well overlooked, safe and lined with active uses as far as possible.
- Provide public open space alongside the above pedestrian/cycle route.

- Develop the area predominately for residential uses of medium to high density with the opportunity for buildings of exceptional design quality in key landmark locations.
- Provide space for other land uses which could include the Islamic Cultural Centre, the relocated ambulance station (if no other location can be found) and some commercial use to help animate the ground floor alongside the pedestrian east- west link. Ensure that these uses are incorporated in ways that have a positive or neutral impact on the residential environment.
- Improve the edge to the Ring Road with high quality development that is set back behind a line of trees. There should be views into the site and not a wall of development along Waterloo Road.

4.4 There are also a number of key Urban Design Considerations;

- **Parking:** A mix of parking solutions should be explored such as underground, podium and on street parking. London Plan policies relating to parking standards will apply to this site but reduced parking provision may be proposed in a planning application due to the site location and if initiatives such as cycle parking and car club parking are incorporated into any proposals.
- **Scale and Massing:** The RDF suggests that this site should be between 5-8 storeys. There is the potential for some taller buildings up to 10-12 storeys particularly at key gateways and focussed towards the station area and along Oldchurch Road.
- **Landscaping and Open Space:** A high quality landscaping solution to the Ring Road should be designed and the use of roof gardens over parking and balconies should be explored.

**5. Rationale for intervention**

- 5.1 The site is in multiple ownerships however one landowner owns a number of units as well as the road and pumping station. They have tried to assemble this site for the past 15 years and it is unlikely without the Council's intervention and the HZ funding that a comprehensive scheme will be delivered.
- 5.2 It is necessary to facilitate change of land uses in the area in order to promote comprehensive high quality housing development on Bridge Close.
- 5.3 The area has been designated land for residential development in the Local Development Framework 2008.
- 5.4 The area represents one of the key, large scale strategic development opportunities in Romford. The Council's intervention aims to act as a kick start and encourage the market to bring forward comprehensive



development within the area in order to deliver the Council's vision for this site bring about the transformational change in this part of Romford.

5.5 The RDF identifies Bridge Close as a site with short term redevelopment potential which should be seen as a high priority for Council intervention.

5.6 Initial support for the Council's intervention on Bridge Close is set out in the RDF;

*"The Council may need to play a proactive role in land assembly if necessary using its CPO powers to support the delivery of a comprehensive redevelopment, particularly to deliver the east-west connection described above in the northern area of the site. The delivery of this link and associated public realm should come forward and be largely funded by adjacent development.*

*The Council may also have a longer term role enabling land assembly, allowing suitably configured phases to come forward across the rest of the site to avoid piecemeal development.*

*Any development needs to be comprehensive and applications will need to ensure that the proposal does not prejudice the implementation of the new pedestrian/ cycle route"*

(Romford Development Framework (2015) P84-85)

5.7 It likely that even if the site does come forward due to increased residential development values there will still be the issue of fragmented piece meal development with the danger of poor quality housing that will be detrimental to the future development of Romford.

5.8 Council intervention will encourage comprehensive residential development by organising the sites currently in multiple, complex ownership into a developable site.

5.9 The sites will be acquired through private treaty or, where necessary, the Council will consider and begin to undertake the necessary steps to acquire land by compulsory acquisition as discussed in the exempt part of this report.

5.10 With HZ funding the Council can start to acquire units by private treaty negotiating suitable arrangements to bring forward the site as a whole.

5.11 BBP, Glenny and Tibbalds were appointed to produce a viability report and massing study with the objective to provide commercial advice to the Council on a viable proposition to re-develop Bridge Close. Their joint report concludes that comprehensive development of the site is viable to include the entirety of Bridge Close. It further concluded that LBH will need to support site assembly which is likely to be required due to fragmented ownership and the need to relocate existing tenants.

5.12 This report seeks agreement to acquire land interests alongside seeking to acquire sites by private treaty and where necessary, the Council will

consider and begin to undertake the necessary steps to acquire land by compulsory acquisition

5.13 The benefits of early and direct acquisitions by negotiation and private treaty are:

- the Council will secure sites at current market value before the interest created by the Housing Zone and the planned investment in, the site and provision of infrastructure starts to push up values; and
- acquiring fewer sites through a CPO process will save time, cost, and resources; and
- early acquisitions will send a message to the market about the emerging commercial opportunity created by the Housing Zone and will make it easier for the Council, working with Mercury Land Holdings, (the Council wholly owned development company) to secure a developer partner.

5.14 It is important to demonstrate that the Council has used reasonable endeavours to acquire sites by private treaty initially as this will greatly improve the prospect of the Secretary of State confirming the CPO and will strengthen any necessary CPO case.

## **6.0 Development Partner**

6.1 The Council will need to seek a development partner(s) to ensure the deliverability of the site. Working with a development partner will reduce the amount of capital required from the Council in the short to longer term and allow the Council to utilise the skills, experience and resources of private sector partners and, ensure high quality design and the mix of tenures and social infrastructure. One of the partners could be Mercury Land Holdings, who acting in a commercial capacity could assist in funding and delivering development of the site in accordance with the Council's financial plans.

6.2 Any development partner(s) would be expected to;

- i) Agree to comprehensive development of the site in line with the Council's vision for the site.
- ii) Adhere to the vision and design principles (outlined in sections 3 and 4 of this report) and agree to undertake a formal design review process.
- iii) Work with the Council on the business relocation strategy.
- iv) Contribute to the acquisition costs of the site and CPO process (if required)

## **7.0 Business and residents relocation**

- 7.1 While the Council has no statutory obligation to relocate businesses, officers will work with businesses to provide advice and support as recommended by the DCLG guidance. As part of its commitment to support local enterprise the Economic Development team will assist businesses to seek suitable alternative accommodation, and where appropriate, will try to keep quality businesses within the borough.
- 7.2 Initial meetings have already been held with the Islamic Cultural Centre and the ambulance centre to understand their requirements either for re-provision on site or offsite, which is discussed in the exempt section of this report.
- 7.3 A business relocation action plan is being developed to programme the relocation of businesses. The action plan will involve the following:
- A) **Communication and Engagement.** Over many years private organisations have sought to promote the development of Bridge Close, so it is likely that businesses and freeholders will have expected that at some point Bridge Close will be redeveloped. Officers will have written an initial letter to business owners on the site about the regeneration plans for the area and will arrange follow up meetings by the time this report is made public.
  - B) **Business needs analysis.** Officers will arrange and undertake face to face meetings with businesses in order to understand the nature of the business and to record their aspirations and business needs based on location, space requirements, facilities and rent paid.
  - C) **Matching and relocation packages.** Officers will look for potentially suitable alternative premises for business in Havering and the neighbouring boroughs of Barking and Dagenham and Thurrock using existing business information databases and the extensive network of property agents within the region. Costs covering disturbance and relocation expenses are included in the land acquisitions budget (Property Cost Estimate).
  - D) **On-going engagement and support.** As part of the relocation action plan officers are seeking to provide advice and support for businesses.
- 7.4 Officers will have written to freeholders and leaseholder of the residential properties by the time this report is made public, who would be affected by the proposals and are preparing an action plan to support residents who need to find new homes.

## **REASONS AND OPTIONS**

### **Reasons for the decision:**

By supporting the vision for the comprehensive development of Bridge Close and agreeing to the acquisition of sites through private treaty and thereafter, where necessary, considering and beginning to undertake the necessary steps to acquire land by compulsory acquisition will ensure that the Council's vision for the site is adhered to. This will prevent ad-hoc development delivering poor quality housing development that does not support the economic development of the town. Further, ad-hoc development will not facilitate the development of key linkages across the site, which will be necessary for further western Romford estates to link into the town. Housing Zone funding provides the opportunity for the Council to support the comprehensive development of Bridge Close and ensure that the vision and design principles are embedded in any development.

### **Other options considered:**

Not implementing the comprehensive development of Bridge Close—**REJECTED**. Without the Council's intervention there would be fragmented development and the site could come forward in a piecemeal fashion. Piecemeal development would fail to deliver the required mix, tenures or typology necessary to meet the objectives of the Council's vision for the site and ensure the delivery of the important east-west link. Only a comprehensive development can provide high quality residential living in the town centre to support the economic growth of the town and promote an economically active and sustainable community

## **IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

### **Financial implications and risks:**

Financial matters are dealt with in the exempt part of this report.

### **Legal implications and risk**

The legal justification for this approach is linked to the CPO statutory framework.

The Council will seek to acquire land primarily by negotiation, however it is noted that it has powers under section 226 of the Town and Planning Act 1990 to make a CPO for any land within the borough in the terms set out in para 5.2 above. The DCLG Guidance 'Compulsory Purchase Process' and how the Council's case fits in

with the statutory powers will be further developed before a CPO is progressed and made and is considered in the body of the report.

Section 13 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 enables the Council to acquire any new rights over land which is required to facilitate the development proposed in the outline planning application.

**Human Resources implications and risks:**

The Economic Development Service will be required to dedicate resources to the programme management and delivery of the land assembly and compulsory purchase work stream. GLA funding allows for additional time limited support to be brought in as required to deliver the land assembly, CPO and business relocation strategy work streams.

Delivering the development of Bridge Close will at times require the input and resources of a number of Council services particularly, Housing, Planning, Highways, Legal and Property Services.

**Equalities implications and risks**

Officers are in the process of undertaking the Equalities Impact Assessment for Bridge Close and officers are taking actions that one would expect to mitigate any negative equalities impact though developing an action plan to support business and residents who might be affected by the proposals.

If negotiation of the acquisition of land by private treaty fails the Council will have to consider the use of compulsory acquisition powers. If they are necessary, the Council should be satisfied that there is a compelling case in the public interest and that there is sufficient justification for interfering with human rights of those with an interest in the land affected. In this respect the Human Rights Act 1998 incorporates certain provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, namely:

- (a) Article 1 – the right of everyone to peaceful enjoyment of possessions. No one can be deprived of possessions except in the public interest and subject to the relevant national and international laws.
- (b) Article 8 – private and family life, home and correspondence. No public authority can interfere with these rights except if it is in accordance with the law and is necessary in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of a country.
- (c) Article 14 – the right to enjoy rights and freedoms in the Convention free from discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, or national or social origin.

In the case of each of these articles, the Council should be conscious of the need to strike a balance between the rights of the individual and the interests of the public. The Council may decide that, in the light of the significant public benefit which would arise from the proposed development, the use of compulsory purchase powers is necessary and proportionate taking into account the availability

**Cabinet 15 June 2016**

of compensation. In particular, the Council may consider that the CPO would not constitute any unlawful interference with individual property rights. The CPO process provides the opportunity for representations to be made and the holding of a public inquiry in the case of objections by affected parties.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None