

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Main Road, Romford RM1 3BD
13 November 2025 (7.00 - 9.30 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group Ray Best and Timothy Ryan

Havering Residents' Group Reg Whitney (Chairman), Robby Misir (Vice-Chair) and John Crowder

Labour Group Jane Keane

Also present for part of the meeting was Councillor Judith Holt.

There were about 25 members of the public present for the meeting.

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

All Members of the committee were present.

2 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interests.

3 W0225.22 - 222/226 SOUTH STREET, ROMFORD, RM1 2AD

The Committee received a presentation on the partial demolition of existing building(s) and redevelopment of the site to erect a new Havering Islamic Community Centre.

The proposal has been the subject of 4 pre-application meetings with officers. The scheme was presented to Havering's QRP meeting in September. Informed by the feedback gained from the meetings and the Quality Review Panel (QRP), the scheme has gradually evolved.

The Committee noted that the scheme is not finalised and it is anticipated that the proposals will further evolve before submission of a planning application.

With its agreement, a ward Councillor Judith Holt addressed the Committee and raised concerns and also sought clarifications on the proposal. Councillor Holt stated that the current site does not provide a distinctive or welcoming entry experience. Concerns were raised about the condition of the River Rom, which is not clean and has graffiti present, requiring attention. Councillor Holt requested further clarification on the proposed plans for improvements, as previous discussions were not fully clear.

Questions were raised regarding the location of the ladies' entrance. At present, it is positioned at the rear of the building, which makes it less visible and potentially unsafe due to people loitering in the area. It was suggested that the entrance be relocated to the side of the building to improve visibility while maintaining separation from the men's entrance.

Further concerns were expressed about the internal washing facilities. Currently, there are three main washing areas for men but only one a smaller area for women. Councillor Holt sought the reasoning behind this arrangement and suggested considering an additional washing area for women.

Additional questions included the height of the proposed minaret and whether the call to prayer would be broadcast audibly. On the consultation process, Councillor Holt asked specifically who had been involved in developing the plans—whether it was solely mosque representatives or included wider community input.

Councillor Holt agreed that the Havering Islamic Cultural Centre requires a new home. It was emphasized that the chosen location and design must meet all requirements and ensure collaboration with the local community so that the Centre achieves a suitable and welcoming environment.

The following points were agreed as a summary of the Committee's views on the Development.

1. Attendance and Capacity

- Members queried the projected attendance figures and requested comparison data with similar facilities.
- Clarification sought on peak attendance times, days of the week, and how arrivals/departures will be managed to avoid congestion.

2. Traffic and Transport

- Concerns raised about site location and its impact on nearby roads, pedestrian safety, and junction management.
- Requests for:
 - o Detailed drop-off management plan, including marshals.
 - o Evidence that vehicles stopping for pick-up will not cause hazards.
 - o Parking capacity assessment at Church Rise.
 - o Full traffic management scheme prior to planning submission.

- Members emphasized the need for a detailed Travel Plan to encourage public transport use and avoid car dependency.
- Assessment of bus service capacity and opportunities for improvement requested.

3. Design and Heritage

- Positive comments on retaining the building and incorporating heritage features, such as the coloured mosaic.
- Suggestions for artistic or visually pleasing security measures instead of standard fencing.
- Landscaping proposals should include:
 - o Replacement of lost trees with robust alternatives.
 - o Consideration of green roofs or living walls.
- Concerns about rear elevation appearance and overall visual impact.

4. Noise and Environmental Considerations

- Clarification requested on whether the minaret will include loudspeakers.
- Noise attenuation measures must ensure no disturbance to nearby residential properties.
- Design to include extraction systems for cooking fumes from the outset.
- Waste storage and collection arrangements to be addressed.

5. Internal Layout and Accessibility

- Queries on adequacy of space for women and provision for disabled users.
- Comment on parity of facilities and accommodation sizes.

6. Wider Public Realm

- Suggestions to improve public realm beyond site boundaries, including wayfinding and signage.

7. Community Impact

- Question raised on whether the facility is primarily for the local community or a wider catchment area.

8. Next Steps

- Members agreed that traffic and pedestrian safety require further discussion before planning submission.
- Recommendation for an additional pre-application meeting focused on transport and access issues.

Members were reminded to email any further comments or considerations to the Head of Strategic Planning within a week of the meeting.

4 P0421.25 - FARNHAM AND HILLDENE ESTATE, ROMFORD

The Committee considered a planning application for the comprehensive redevelopment of the Harold Hill District Centre and demolition of existing buildings and structures. The application forms part of the Havering's '12 Estates' regeneration strategy. The application follows the recent approvals for the Family Welcome Centre on the northern side of Hilldene Avenue and

the affordable led residential scheme on the southern side of Chippenham Road.

The scheme proposes the demolition of the existing centre where the Harold Hill Library will be retained and for the redevelopment to deliver up to 481 homes, between 6,204 sqm and 6,504 sqm maximum (GEA) of flexible commercial and community floorspace, public and private open space, highways improvements, landscaping and other benefits.

Members reviewed the detailed graphics presented and expressed concern about the potential loss of valuable spaces within the scheme. It was noted that the development is heavily residential with limited commercial provision, raising questions about the viability of a mixed-use centre. Concerns were also raised regarding the lack of supporting infrastructure, particularly the absence of secondary school provision, which represents a missed opportunity to address local needs.

Further comments highlighted the need for larger family homes, as the current proposal includes a significant number of smaller units, which may create long-term challenges for future generations. Members also noted the prevalence of single-aspect dwellings, which could lead to poor ventilation and limited natural light, impacting the quality of living conditions. While some dual-aspect units were acknowledged, concerns remained about the overall design quality.

Questions were raised about the compatibility of proposed uses, such as pubs, within a predominantly residential development. Members stressed that such uses would require careful management, particularly given trends toward extended opening hours and live entertainment. Additional concerns were expressed about the nature of retail provision, which currently includes bars, takeaways, and betting shops, in an area of significant deprivation.

Members queried whether the scheme offers sufficient quality and diversity, noting the absence of financial services such as banks or post offices. It was requested that discussions be held with relevant institutions to explore these opportunities.

Further clarification was sought on internal layouts, including whether floor spaces meet recommended standards and whether all areas are genuinely usable. Members also requested details on servicing arrangements for commercial units.

Members raised two major concerns regarding the proposed scheme. The first related to the bulk and height of the blocks along Farnham Avenue, which were considered too high and potentially causing overshadowing. It was suggested that further work may be needed to reduce building heights and address overshadowing impacts within the outline design. The second concern focused on parking provision. Members questioned whether the proposed number of spaces would be sufficient given the anticipated increase in residential units and the existing high demand in the area. It was

noted that the current proposal includes 61 residential spaces, with retail parking provision ranging between 137 and 150 spaces, based on survey data showing peak demand at approximately 128 spaces. Officers clarified that the application is hybrid in nature with detailed parking numbers to be confirmed at a later stage, and that residential parking would be provided at a minimum ratio of 0.35 spaces per unit. Members stressed the need to ensure adequate parking capacity to avoid future issues, particularly given the loss of existing housing and the likelihood of increased car use for shopping and local trips.

Members welcomed the relocation of the public house within the scheme, noting its importance as a community hub. However, they reiterated the need for careful consideration of parking impacts and requested that these concerns be addressed in future design stages.

Following the debate, the Committee resolved to grant planning permission subject to completion of a legal agreement or unilateral undertaking whichever is the appropriate legal mechanism pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and all other enabling powers to secure the planning obligations detailed in the report. And one additional condition on noise and ventilation.

The vote for approval, was carried by 5 votes in favour to 1 abstention. Councillor Ray Best abstained from the vote.

Chairman