



**STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
AGENDA**

7.00 pm	Thursday 22 January 2026	Council Chamber, Town Hall, Main Road, Romford RM1 3BD
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Members 6 Quorum 3

COUNCILLORS:

**Conservative Group
(2)**

Ray Best
Timothy Ryan

**Havering Residents' Group
(3)**

Reg Whitney (Chairman)
Robby Misir (Vice-Chair)
John Crowder

**Labour Group
(1)**

Jane Keane

For information about the meeting please contact:

Taiwo Adeoye - 01708 433079
taiwo.adeoye@havering.gov.uk

Please would all Members and officers attending ensure they sit in their allocated seats as this will enable correct identification of participants on the meeting webcast.

Under the Committee Procedure Rules within the Council's Constitution the Chairman of the meeting may exercise the powers conferred upon the Mayor in relation to the conduct of full Council meetings. As such, should any member of the public interrupt proceedings, the Chairman will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Chairman will order their removal from the meeting room and may adjourn the meeting while this takes place.

Excessive noise and talking should also be kept to a minimum whilst the meeting is in progress in order that the scheduled business may proceed as planned.

Protocol for members of the public wishing to report on meetings of the London Borough of Havering

Members of the public are entitled to report on meetings of Council, Committees and Cabinet, except in circumstances where the public have been excluded as permitted by law.

Reporting means:-

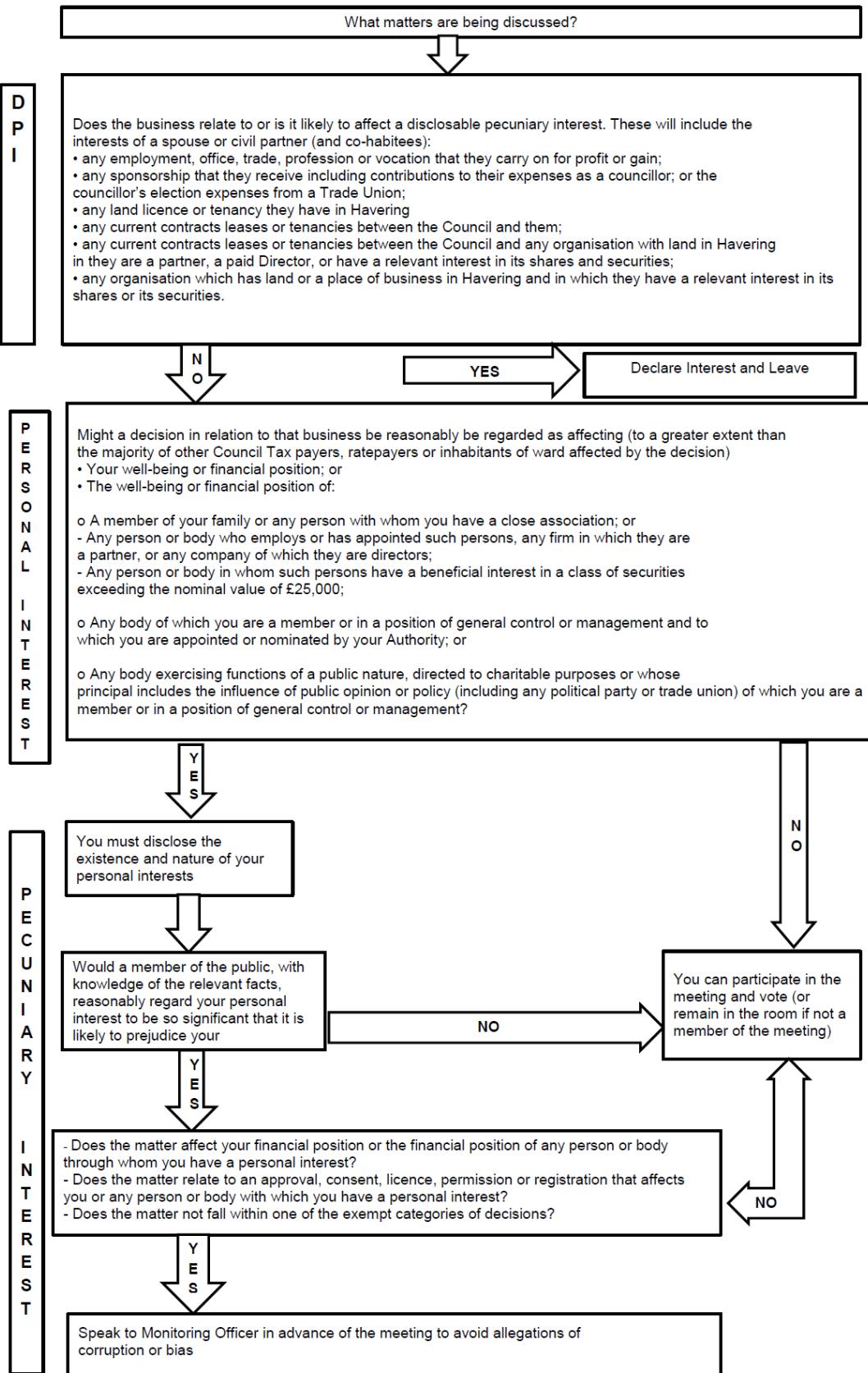
- filming, photographing or making an audio recording of the proceedings of the meeting;
- using any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later; or
- reporting or providing commentary on proceedings at a meeting, orally or in writing, so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later if the person is not present.

Anyone present at a meeting as it takes place is not permitted to carry out an oral commentary or report. This is to prevent the business of the meeting being disrupted.

Anyone attending a meeting is asked to advise Democratic Services staff on 01708 433076 that they wish to report on the meeting and how they wish to do so. This is to enable employees to guide anyone choosing to report on proceedings to an appropriate place from which to be able to report effectively.

Members of the public are asked to remain seated throughout the meeting as standing up and walking around could distract from the business in hand.

DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF



Principles of conduct in public office

In accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, when acting in the capacity of a Member, they are committed to behaving in a manner that is consistent with the following principles to achieve best value for the Borough's residents and to maintain public confidence in the Council.

SELFLESSNESS: Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

INTEGRITY: Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

OBJECTIVITY: In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

OPENNESS: Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

HONESTY: Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

LEADERSHIP: Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

AGENDA ITEMS

1 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman will make his announcements.

Applications for Decision

I would like to remind members of the public that Councillors have to make decisions on planning applications strictly in accordance with planning principles.

I would also like to remind members of the public that decisions may not always be popular, but they should respect the need for Councillors to take decisions that will stand up to external scrutiny or accountability.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

(if any) - receive.

3 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members are invited to disclose any interest in any of the items on the agenda at this point in the meeting.

Members may still disclose any interest in an item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.

4 MINUTES (Pages 7 - 14)

To approve as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 December 2025 and to authorise the Chair to sign them.

5 DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATIONS (Pages 15 - 16)

Report attached.

6 W0154.25 - FORMER HOMEBASE, DAVIDSON WAY, ROMFORD (Pages 17 - 26)

Report attached.

Strategic Planning Committee, 22 January 2026

7 **W0152.25 - CROWLANDS GOLF CENTRE, CROW LANE** (Pages 27 - 38)

Report attached.

8 **W0214.25 - FORMER DEBENHAMS, 56-72 MARKET PLACE, ROMFORD, RM1 3ER**
(Pages 39 - 50)

Report attached.

Zena Smith
Head of Committee and Election
Services

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 4

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Main Road, Romford RM1 3BD
11 December 2025 (7.00 - 9.00 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group Ray Best and Timothy Ryan

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

Labour Group +Matthew Stanton

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

5 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillor John Crowder and Councillor Jane Keane. +Councillor Matt Stanton substituted for Councillor Keane.

6 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no interest disclosure at the meeting.

7 MINUTES

Members agreed for the Chairman to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 13 November 2025 and 23 October 2025.

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

At the request of the Committee, the Developer Team presented in response to the concerns raised at an earlier developer presentation in respect of the following matters:

Transport and Movement

- Number of attendees and comparison with existing
- Times of day and days of the week
- Where do Mosque users live (confirm that this is a local facility)

- Confirm arrival/leaving patterns of movement and how these can be accommodated within the building / overall site / surrounding highway
- Existing pedestrian crossing / junction (South Street, Oldchurch Road and Thurloe Gardens) capacity / waiting times
- Drop off / pick up numbers and capacity of space in Oldchurch Rise car park
- Impact on ring road (potential for queuing vehicles)

Building Design

- Mosaic tiles (colour)
- Prominence of the Portico
- Scale of the Riverside entrance
- Parity of space for men/women

As set out in the Committee rules, the Developer Team was given 20 minutes to present the scheme.

The Developer Team provided an overview of the proposed mosque development at South Street, including findings from travel surveys and pedestrian modelling. It was noted that most worshippers currently use nearby car parks, with only 7% parking on-street (primarily Blue Badge holders). The new mosque will include eight on-site Blue Badge spaces and contribute towards a signalised pedestrian crossing on Old Church Road to improve safety. Pedestrian modelling indicated acceptable comfort levels during peak Friday prayers, and management plans will address visitor and vehicle movements.

It was stated that the proposal is supported by local and London Plan policies and offers strong public transport accessibility.

A Member of the Council Councillor David Taylor also addressed the Committee on the development presentation. Councillor David Taylor commended the design quality, sustainability, and extensive community engagement. He highlighted the building's architectural merit, its contribution to town centre regeneration, and excellent public transport links.

Members welcomed the detailed travel plan but raised concerns about pedestrian safety, drop-off arrangements, and managing large numbers during peak times. Questions were asked about parking provision compared to other mosques, including Cambridge, and whether traffic light-controlled crossings could be considered.

The Committee noted that there were unlikely to be significant developments requiring further scrutiny at this stage. However, it was acknowledged that the level of detailed information provided on pedestrian and vehicle movements was exceptional. Members expressed appreciation to the applicant for the effort made to demonstrate the potential impact on

the community, noting that the submission clearly reflected consideration for local needs.

One Member commented that given the proximity to residential properties, they were reassured by the information provided and confident that the proposal would not be detrimental to the surrounding area. The Member further stated that places of worship should be beautiful buildings, designed to convey reverence, and that the plans presented achieved this aim. The architectural designs were described as remarkable and unlike anything currently under consideration. While there had been some discussion regarding the heritage of the existing building, it was the opinion of the Committee that the proposed design would preserve and enhance the site, which was currently underutilized and in poor condition.

The Committee heard that the development would provide a landmark building and a much-needed community facility in a sustainable location. The site benefits from excellent public transport links, with a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) rating of 6a, close to the highest possible score. This was considered significant, as it indicated that the facility would be easily accessible without reliance on private vehicles. The surrounding area was noted to have lower housing density compared to the applicant's current location, which was seen as an improvement should relocation occur.

Members commended the applicant for extensive public consultation and pre-application engagement. The proposal was considered to align with relevant planning policies, including the Local Plan and the London Plan. Comments raised in earlier discussions regarding internal religious practices were noted as not being material planning considerations. The Committee was reminded that the planning system respects freedom of worship and decisions should remain focused on land use, transport, and design matters.

In conclusion, Members agreed that the scheme represented a well-designed, community-focused development appropriate for a major town centre. It was felt that the proposal respected heritage, improved the public realm, met local needs, and had been shaped through significant community engagement. The Committee was encouraged to recognise the substantial benefits the development would bring.

The following considerations were summarised as the points raised by the Committee at the meeting:

1. Several questions have been addressed, which was welcomed, but some remain outstanding.
2. Ongoing concern about pedestrian safety, particularly safe routes for crossing roads to and from the proposed site.
3. Clarification requested on whether the Cambridge Mosque has on-site parking and what its drop-off arrangements are.

4. Concern raised about drop-off activity near the proposed site and managing large numbers of attendees arriving and leaving at peak times.
5. Suggestion to consider a full traffic light-controlled crossing (similar to Waterloo Road) instead of a zebra crossing for improved safety.
6. Confirmation sought that the proposed crossing will be signalised and funded through a developer contribution.
7. Clarification that on-site parking will be reserved for Blue Badge holders (disabled users).

9 P1087.25 - PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW SEND SCHOOL, SPORTS GROUND, BALGORES LANE

The report before Members detailed an application that sought planning permission for the erection of a part single, part two storey building with a total floor area of 6339m² (GIA) to provide a new 38 classroom Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) school for both primary and secondary students with associated access and car parking, informal and formal play space, hard multipurpose games pitch (MUGA), hard and soft landscaping.

The school will have a capacity for 300 pupils aged 4-19 years (Key Stage 1 to 5), students with complex learning needs serving children from Havering's local community, and 218 members of staff would be employed on the site to support its operation.

The school would provide a special educational school for children with social, emotional, and mental health needs (SEMH) difficulties, Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and severe learning difficulties; it will help meet a pressing need for additional SEN school places in the Borough and will help ensure students are taught in specialist, purpose-built buildings specifically suited to their particular learning needs.

The proposed school building would be sited on an existing open green field. It would be a part single, part two storey building with a broadly U-footprint designed as a series of interconnected wings arranged logically to meet the needs of the different year groups. The layout groups Early Years, Primary, Secondary, and Post-16 pupils into distinct zones.

In accordance with the public speaking arrangements, the Committee was addressed by an objector with a response by the applicant's agent.

With its agreement, Councillor Keith Prince addressed the committee, expressing strong concerns about the lack of engagement with ward councillors and residents, stating that issues raised had been ignored and the process felt rushed. He highlighted residents' objections regarding the Council acting as applicant, planning authority and adjudicator, questioning fairness and transparency. Councillor Prince raised serious concerns about traffic safety, noting the potential risks posed by 250 daily vehicle

movements near local schools and commuter routes and argued that proposed traffic management measures were inadequate. He also stressed that the application still had seven outstanding conditions identified by the Mayor of London and would require GLA approval even if passed by the committee. Councillor Prince urged the Committee to defer the decision until these issues were resolved and further consultation undertaken, given significant changes since the original proposal.

With its agreement Councillor Taylor also addressed the Committee. He spoke, acknowledging the urgent need for a SEND school in Romford but raising concerns about the site's suitability. He questioned the adequacy of drop-off arrangements, bus capacity for pupils with mobility needs, and suggested TfL engagement to review transport provision and bus stop locations. Councillor Taylor also suggested pavement upgrades for safety and raised concerns about the proposed MUGA's community use outside school hours, urging consultation with residents to mitigate amenity impacts. In response, Officers confirmed that conditions and agreements would address lighting, community use and management plans and reiterated that the application would be subject to GLA and Secretary of State oversight.

Officers also clarified that safeguards were in place including referral to the Secretary of State and the Mayor of London ensuring the Council would not act as sole decision-maker.

Members discussed assumptions in the travel plan noting that the report on page 60 assumes an 85/15 split between minibus and car travel with no allowance for public transport use. A sensitivity test based on a 50/50 split was mentioned but not included in the report, prompting questions about its omission. Officers clarified that this will be addressed through a condition requiring submission and approval of a detailed travel plan, which will also be reviewed by TfL. Concerns were raised about the adequacy of parking provision, with only 29 spaces proposed for 218 staff, and whether assumptions about staff using public transport were realistic given early and late working hours. Officers explained that parking spaces were reduced following TfL's insistence on compliance with London Plan policies promoting sustainable travel, and that a parking management plan will be required.

The Committee discussed concerns regarding the lighting conditions associated with the proposed development. It was noted that the applicants would be required to submit further detailed information to ensure that lighting is properly managed and does not adversely affect neighbouring properties. Officers confirmed that such matters would be addressed through specific planning conditions, including those regulating external lighting schemes and floodlighting. These conditions, together with the required Community Use Agreement, would provide controls over how the sports facilities both the sports hall and the MUGA would operate.

Further clarification was provided regarding the management of the site. Members were advised that the facility would not be left unattended and that

on site supervision would form part of the operational arrangements. This was to ensure that the facility is used appropriately and that the surrounding area is protected, particularly given the proximity to a school. Reference was made to previous discussions with the applicant, during which the management approach was outlined, and it was confirmed that related travel arrangements and supervision expectations were incorporated into the submitted plans.

Members raised questions about the adequacy of parking provision noting that staff numbers were significantly higher than the number of proposed parking bays. Concerns were expressed about potential overspill parking in surrounding streets and the impact on local residents. Officers highlighted that parking provision had been a major point of negotiation, with Transport for London requiring a reduction in the number of spaces in line with London Plan policies promoting public transport. Much of the surrounding area is subject to parking restrictions, meaning staff would not be able to park in nearby streets. Officers reiterated that the scheme must comply with strategic transport policies, even if this resulted in limited on site parking.

It was further noted that the Greater London Authority had consistently taken the view that parking levels should be reduced, and officers advised that the scheme would not likely have progressed without the agreed reductions. Members discussed the practical implications for staff who might rely on private vehicles, but officers emphasised that travel planning and school management practices including incentives to use public transport would need to address such matters.

The Committee explored whether an additional planning condition should be imposed to ensure stronger management controls over the MUGA, specifically to minimise any potential amenity impacts on neighbouring occupiers. Officers advised that while existing conditions already covered lighting, noise and community use, it would nevertheless be permissible for Members to add a bespoke condition relating to the management of the MUGA if they considered it necessary.

Further reference was made to the Community Use Agreement, which would regulate public access to the sports facilities. Officers confirmed that the agreement submitted with the application was only a draft and would be fully finalised and discharged through the conditions process following approval. All such documents would be publicly accessible. The Committee expressed the view that a management plan going beyond the draft agreement might be desirable, and officers reiterated that a specific condition could be added should the committee wish to ensure a more detailed operational framework.

Additional comments were made regarding comparisons with other schools, noting that the proposed development would accommodate significantly more pupils and would generate greater traffic and safeguarding considerations.

Members stressed the importance of ensuring the safety of students, particularly during pick up and drop off periods. Officers explained that most pupils would travel by council provided buses or accessible transport, and that staggered arrival and departure times together with designated waiting arrangements for vehicles formed part of the submitted travel plan. These management measures would also be secured through planning conditions.

Following the debate, the Committee resolved to grant planning permission subject to the report conditions and additional condition discussed.

The vote for approval, was carried by 3 votes for, to 2 abstentions.

Chairman

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Agenda Item 5

Development Presentations

Introduction

1. This part of the agenda is for the committee to receive presentations on proposed developments, particularly when they are at the pre-application stage.
2. Although the reports are set out in order on the agenda, the Chair may reorder the agenda on the night. Therefore, if you wish to be present for a specific application, you need to be at the meeting from the beginning.
3. The following information and advice only applies to reports in this part of the agenda.

Advice to Members

4. These proposed developments are being reported to committee to enable Members of the committee to view them at an early stage and to comment upon them. They do not constitute applications for planning permission at this stage (unless otherwise stated in the individual report) and any comments made are provisional and subject to full consideration of any subsequent application and the comments received following consultation, publicity and notification.
5. Members of the committee will need to pay careful attention to the probity rules around predisposition, predetermination and bias (set out in the Council's Constitution). Failure to do so may mean that the Member will not be able to participate in the meeting when any subsequent application is considered.

Public speaking and running order

6. The Council's Constitution only provides for public speaking rights for those applications being reported to Committee in the "Applications for Decision" parts of the agenda. Therefore, reports on this part of the agenda do not attract public speaking rights, save for Ward Members.
7. The items on this part of the agenda will run as follows:
 - a. Officer introduction of the main issues
 - b. Developer presentation (20 minutes)
 - c. Ward Councillor speaking slot (5 minutes)
 - d. Committee questions
 - e. Officer roundup

Late information

8. Any relevant material received since the publication of this part of the agenda, concerning items on it, will be reported to the Committee in the Update Report.

Recommendation

9. The Committee is not required to make any decisions with respect to the reports on this part of the agenda. The reports are presented as background information.



Pre-Application Reference: W0154.25

Site: Former Homebase, Davidson Way, Romford

Ward: St Albans

Description: Demolition of the existing building, followed by a residential-led redevelopment of the site, with some ground floor commercial and community spaces, and the creation of a primary school.

Case Officer: Andrew Thornley

1. Site Description

1.1 The application site comprises a large brownfield site located just south of the Romford Ring Road (Oldchurch Road), east of Rom Valley Way, north of the Seedbed Centre site and west of the River Rom. Within the 1.9 hectare site is a large vacant retail store (formerly Homebase) with the remainder of the site laid to hardstanding, which used to function as Homebase's car park and external storage areas.

1.2 The site is surrounded on nearly all sides by development parcels earmarked for predominantly residential developments, which either have extant planning permissions or are currently under assessment, and are likely to be brought forward in the short to medium term. These include the Seedbed Centre site to the south (Ref: P2072.22), the Bridge Close site to the north (Ref: P1765.23) and the Rom Valley Way site to the west (Ref: P0615.21). Collectively, these surrounding development sites will significantly change the character and appearance of this part of Romford through the introduction of large, high-density, predominantly flatted schemes, whereas the current character of these areas consists of low-level industrial, retail and other commercial uses housed within shed-style buildings.

2. Planning Policy Designations

2.1 The application site falls within Romford Strategic Development Area (RSDA), as described in Policy 1 of the Havering Local Plan, which sets out that the council will support the delivery of over 6000 new homes within the RSDA whilst focusing new commercial development within Romford Town Centre. New developments within the RSDA are further expected to improve public transport accessibility alongside enhanced public realm and walking routes to better improve connectivity for Havering's residents, whilst also improving access to social infrastructure including public open spaces, schools and community spaces where appropriate.

2.2 The site also falls within the Rom Valley area of the Romford Masterplan SPD, which sets out that this area of the wider Romford Masterplan should deliver a predominantly residential neighbourhood, supported by appropriate small-scale retail, community and leisure uses, taking advantage of the River Rom where possible. It is envisioned that the Rom Valley area provide a transition from the higher-density town centre developments to the more suburban residential areas of Rush Green, and on this basis it is expected that the scale and massing at the northern end of the site will be greatest, tapering down in height further south along Rom Valley Way.

2.3 The site has a Public Transport Accessibility level (PTAL) of 6a, measured on a scale of 0 to 6b where, 6b is the best, and therefore a score of 6a is reflective of excellent access to public transport. This PTAL is largely as a result of the many bus routes within the area but also because of access to Romford Train Station which is served by both National Rail and Elizabeth Line services, providing very convenient access westward into Central London and eastward towards Essex.

2.4 The vast majority of the site does not fall within a Flood Zone, however it should be noted that eastern edge of the site falls within Flood Zone 3 due to the presence of the River Rom which forms the eastern boundary of the site.

3. Proposal

3.1 The proposed development seeks the complete demolition of all buildings and structures on site followed by comprehensive redevelopment to provide 584 homes, approximately 200 sqm of commercial floorspace, a new public park, and space set aside for a new primary school (in tandem with the adjacent Seedbed Centre development).

3.2 This proposal was previously presented to this committee on the 11th September 2025, and during this intervening period, the proposal has been significantly revised, mainly as a result of the need to amend the layout to avoid affecting a large sewerage pipe which runs diagonally through the site. This pipe cannot be built over, and redirecting it would be prohibitively expensive and would severely impact the overall viability of the scheme, and therefore the layout has been amended to avoid it entirely.

3.3 These amendments, whilst necessary from a viability perspective, have nonetheless resulted in a number of positive amendments to the proposal, and as noted in the QRP comments below, the constraints imposed by the pipe's location lead to a revised scheme with enhanced public realm and a significantly larger public park, which runs linearly with the adjacent River Rom, whilst maintaining unit numbers at a relatively similar level.

3.4 The amended scheme comprises of two main courtyard blocks in the west of the site, near to Rom Valley Way, alongside two linear blocks positioned within the centre of the site, framing the proposed new public park. As with the previous version of the scheme, the approach to building heights has sought to increase height as you travel northwards on Rom Valley Way, with the tallest element located on the corner of the Roundabout, and dropping down in scale moving into the site. The current scheme still includes buildings of a significant height, with the tallest building proposed at 16-storeys (with an attached 10-storey wing), with a reduction in height moving southwards and eastwards into two 14-storey buildings (with attached 8 and 6 storey wings), a courtyard block ranging in height from 4 to 13 storeys, and a smaller linear block adjacent to the park and school proposed at 6 storeys.

3.5 The unit mix is set out as comprising 50% studio and 1-bedroom units, 40% 2-bedroom units and 10% 3-bedroom units, equating to approximately 292 x studio and 1-bedroom units, 234 x 2-bedroom units and 58 x 3-bedroom units respectively. The current affordable housing offer is 20% (by habitable room), with 60% of these to be provided as Social Rent and 40% provided as Discount Market Sale, and split evenly between the 2- and 3-bedroom units.

4. Quality Review Panel

4.1 The pre-application scheme was presented to Havering's Quality review Panel on the 1st July 2025 and again on the 2nd December 2025. The feedback from the most recent QRP, and the applicant team responses, are summarised in the table below:

QRP Comments	Applicant Team Response
Height and Massing	
The panel supports the proposed layout, height, massing and density which better define the routes and open spaces within the site.	No further changes required in layout, height, massing and density.
The relocation of the blocks to accommodate the existing sewer has resulted in a much-improved scheme with enhanced public realm, creating a destination which benefits the wider community.	Recognition of the impact of the sewer and positive design response acknowledged.
The reduction in the length of the façade and therefore accommodation overlooking Oldchurch Road is a great improvement.	Redesign of blocks C1/C2 into block C positively opens the frontage to Oldchurch Road
Public Realm and Landscape	
The inclusion of the indicative school layout has helped to define the school's relationship with the residential development and the public realm, particularly through the creation of the plaza.	Panel recognise the importance of defining a responsive school layout (to the constraints) to guide other proposed design principals.
The introduction of the park is a great benefit to the scheme for residents and the public.	Increased park space received positively.
Further consideration should be given to ground floor uses in Blocks A and B, to create a more active street frontage on Rom Valley Way. Additional views into the communal courtyards could help to relieve the building elevations along Rom Valley Way.	Triplex homes with front doors added to enliven the Rom Valley Way frontage.
Adding windows into cycle stores could help increase surveillance and activity at street level. The addition of a cycle maintenance hub along Rom Valley Way would be welcomed.	Continue to explore the design and connectivity at ground floor including a cycle hub.

Building entrances within the site should be better emphasised to improve wayfinding and give the buildings clearer individual identities and add moments of joy.	Continued detailed design development of entrances as a coherent and unified strategy.
The increased retention of existing trees is welcomed.	Noted.
Daylight penetration to Block B courtyard could be improved. The applicant is encouraged to investigate this further.	Limited design changes proposed but wider SE corner likely to enhance Daylight & Sunlight. Subject to ongoing technical assessment.
The inclusion of a gathering space in the park should be considered.	Captured in the developed Landscape design.
The duplex units work well, and the inclusion of individual front doors help to break up the scale of the buildings at the ground floor. There is the opportunity to introduce further duplex units and this would benefit the scheme	Positive design move to enhance the street.
Surface treatment of the entrance loop road should be considered to integrate this with the landscape and avoid a large area of tarmac. There could be a shared surface adjacent to Block C to create a better relationship with this block which is public on all sides.	More carefully landscaped, with softer surface materials and minimal hard surfacing.
Architectural and Internal Layout	
The eastern end of the ground floor of Block B3 could be more successfully reconfigured with an entrance directly from the street. The panel queries the success of the commercial unit in this location.	Reviewing this. Opportunity to introduce a community space here (less commercially sensitive) to maintain an active use in a more challenging location
Entrances within the site should be better emphasised to improve wayfinding and give the buildings individual identities.	Continued detailed design development of entrances as a coherent and unified strategy.

The panel generally likes the calm elevational treatment and absence of full height windows.	Noted.
However, further consideration should be given to the change of brick colour within blocks. A simpler approach, using one colour, could be more elegant and successful.	Brick palette being developed further.
The length of the access deck to Block B could be reduced by reconfiguring the end apartments.	Design development has reduced the amount of access deck.
Whilst the calm approach to the elevations is welcomed there is an opportunity for more moments of joy that celebrate entrances, key corners and moments within the scheme that would add a greater sense of richness and hierarchy.	Further design character work undertaken particularly on key public areas, where detail and texture will be most noticeable – for example commercial spaces and at residential entrances.
Open balconies above eight storeys should be reconsidered to ensure amenity will be useable. Inset balconies would be better used. The design of the balconies should also consider a degree of screening to maintain residents' privacy.	Where balconies are particularly exposed, these are inset. Consideration of balustrade design taken to alleviate mis-use and maintain quality.
The panel notes the length of internal corridors, particularly in Block A, and asks for natural light to be introduced to relieve this.	End windows at upper floors allows daylight into corridors. At lower floors, where corridors extend these have windows added to bring light in.
Access Servicing, Parking	
Vehicle and pedestrian routes and movement are now more legible and coherent.	Noted.
The access from Oldchurch Way works well, but the detailed design of the	We have reviewed the extent of hard surfacing and minimised.

road treatment and public realm will be important and should be further developed.	
Revised Greater London Authority cycle storage guidelines may reduce the amount of storage required. Any reduction may incorporate more active frontage.	Updated layouts show reduced cycle space. Allows cycles to be consolidated and active frontage enhanced.
The panel recommends the applicant contributes to creating links to the local cycle network at the roundabout. This would increase permeability through the site.	No comments.
Sustainability	
The panel congratulates the applicant on the commitment to achieving Passivhaus certification and would welcome more detail on how this will be achieved.	Noted.
The applicant should undertake a wind study to ensure the comfort of external spaces.	Ongoing to assess quality and comfort of external spaces.

5. Key Planning Considerations

- Principle of Development

5.1 The application site is considered suitable for comprehensive residential redevelopment in accordance with the principles set out in the Romford Masterplan SPD, recognising that the existing site, which is predominantly undeveloped hardstanding and a large shed-style outlet store, is underutilised and does not make efficient use of the edge-of-centre site.

5.2 Moreover, due to its specific location; surrounded on all sides by other development sites (the Seedbed Centre, the Bridge Close site and the Rom Valley Way site), it is considered an important parcel within the wider Rom Valley area of the Romford Masterplan SPD which would act to link together these four sites.

- Layout, Scale and Massing

5.3 The layout makes efficient use of the site, with a combination of courtyard and linear blocks of varying heights, whilst leaving space for the new school (to be delivered in tandem with the Seedbed Centre) and a new public park running parallel to the river. This allows for legible routes dissecting the site in a broad north/south and east/west pattern, although some concerns remain about the visible sightlines, particularly the north/south route, and whether this provides a clear and obvious route through the site connecting Rom Valley Way and Oldchurch Road.

5.4 In terms of massing, it is acknowledged that the proposal would introduce buildings of a significant scale onto the plot, with the height of the tallest building at 16-storeys, and prevailing heights of 12-14 storeys across the site. In this respect, the proposal no longer includes many mid-rise buildings, with the exception of Block D (six storeys), and the smaller wings of the main towers (6 to 10 storeys), which is somewhat expected noting that unit numbers are broadly similar to the previous iteration, whilst the buildable space has been reduced.

5.5 This would represent a significant change in scale compared to the existing plot, which is largely undeveloped, however would be broadly contextual with the surrounding sites, including Bridge Close (14 storeys), Rom Valley Way (12 storeys) and Seedbed Centre (12 storeys), and is indicative of the step-change in scale as set out in the Romford Masterplan SPD and the Romford Strategic Development Area.

- Access, Transport and Parking

5.6 The site has a PTAL of 6a, which is reflective of excellent access to public transport. This PTAL is largely down to the many bus routes within the area but also because of access to Romford Train Station which is served by both National Rail and Elizabeth Line services, providing very convenient access westward into Central London and eastward towards Essex.

5.7 The London Plan sets out that developments in areas of high PTALs should be car free, with a focus on sustainable and active modes of travel. The proposed development would be car-free, providing only wheelchair-accessible car parking on-site.

5.8 Cycle parking would be provided in accordance with the London Plan standards, and laid out in accordance with the London Cycling Design Standards. The layout would include dedicated cycle stores comprising a mix of cycle parking types at the ground floor level, with Sheffield stands provided at various locations within the public realm to provide space for visitors.

- Detailed Design

5.9 Whilst no specific details have been provided, it is anticipated that the proposal will come forward largely using brick as an external material, in keeping with the general vernacular of new developments coming forward in this part of Romford. The indicative CGIs show a pale or yellow brick across the façades.

- Unit Mix

5.10 The unit mix is set out as comprising 50% studio and 1-bedroom units, 40% 2-bedroom units and 10% 3-bedroom units, equating to approximately 292 x studio and 1-bedroom units, 234 x 2-bedroom units and 58 x 3-bedroom units respectively.

- Affordable Housing

5.11 As a major residential development, the policy target for on-site affordable housing is 50% (by habitable room), although a scheme which provides 35% on-site affordable can benefit from the 'fast-track' route set out in the Mayor's Affordable Housing SPG which means that the submission of a viability assessment would not be required.

5.12 The current affordable housing offer is 20% (by habitable room), with 60% of these to be provided as Social Rent and 40% provided as Discount Market Sale, and split evenly between the 2- and 3-bedroom units.

5.13 Given the scale of the proposed development, and as an important central parcel within the wider Rom Valley area of the Romford Masterplan SPD, the inclusion of affordable housing is critical to achieving mixed and balanced communities and the applicant will be encouraged to maximise the amount of on-site affordable housing throughout the remainder of the pre-app process and at application stage.

5.14 Having said that, due to a combination of external factors including high build costs, low land values (comparatively with other parts of London), and a somewhat weak economic climate, the delivery of 20% affordable housing on site would represent a fairly significant planning benefit of the scheme, despite being below the London Plan policy and Local Plan target.

- Provision of a School

5.15 The provision of a new primary school, to be delivered by the council or an education provider on land given in part by this site and in part by the adjacent Seedbed Centre site is a necessary and critical piece of social infrastructure, required to support the increase in population caused by this and the Seedbed developments. Nonetheless, whilst the creation of a new school

is considered necessary to support the scheme, it would be open and available to all children in a wider catchment area than just these two developments and therefore represents a significant planning benefit.

- Ecology, Biodiversity and Naturalisation of the River Rom

5.16 The proposal would be required to achieve an Urban Greening Factor (UGF) of 0.4 whilst also achieving a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) score of 10% (representing a 10% increase in biodiversity value when compared to the existing site). This should be easily achievable for this site, recognising that the existing site is characterised by a large extent of hardstanding and built form.

5.17 It should further be noted that the naturalisation of the River Rom as it runs through the borough is a strategic priority for the council, as set out in the Romford Masterplan SPD, and this proposal seeks to provide naturalisation as part of its overall landscaping strategy.

- Open Space and Play Provision

5.18 The proposal would deliver a new publicly accessible park as part of the development, to be provided in the south-east corner of the site, to sit alongside the new primary school.

5.19 The scheme would provide all of the required play space for 0-11 year olds and 12+ age ranges. This is very welcomed, noting that public play provision within the borough is often at or near capacity.

6. Conclusions

6.1 The proposed development is still at pre-application stage. The scheme will be further progressed through a design led approach. At this stage we would welcome Members thoughts and comments on the proposals to be incorporated in the scheme ahead of a submission later in the year.

 <p>Havering LONDON BOROUGH</p>	<p>Strategic Planning Committee Developer Presentation 22 January 2026</p>
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Pre-Application Reference: **W0152.25**

Location: **CROWLANDS GOLF CENTRE, CROW LANE**

Ward: **RUSH GREEN & CROWLANDS**

Description: **CONSTRUCTION OF UP TO 1,300 RESIDENTIAL LED DEVELOPMENT WITH SOME COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING, PARKING**

Case Officer: **Raphael Adenegan**

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This proposed development is being presented to enable Members of the committee to view it before a planning application is submitted and to comment upon it. The development does not constitute an application for planning permission and any comments made upon it are provisional and subject to full consideration of any subsequent application and the comments received because of consultation, publicity and notification.
- 1.2 The proposed planning application has been the subject of pre-application meetings with Officers and 1 GLA 'in principle' meeting held. There have been two joint (including B&D officers) pre-application meetings including two workshops with officers and the scheme has evolved over the months. The proposal was presented to the Council's Quality Review Panel on the 4th of December 2025. Pre-application discussions with the applicants have included the principle of the development proposed including quantum of development, massing, height layout, access and landscaping planning that have been undertaken by the applicants subject to a masterplan being developed for the site.

2 PROPOSAL AND LOCATION DETAILS

2.1 Proposal

Full planning application for mixed-use development of the site comprising:

- Full details for a total 1253 (100%) affordable homes,

- 720 sqm sports hall
- 450 sqm community centre / boat house
- 164 sqm neighbourhood retail
- Associated landscaping, parking spaces and cycle stores,
- Over 3.5ha of public open space and 1.5ha of children's play space
- New bus route linking Crow Lane and Wood Lane.

2.2 The proposed pre-application enquiry subject to review is detailed application. The information provided as part of this enquiry includes proposed quantum, layout and public opens space areas.

2.3 The key objective will be to create high quality buildings and places, which helps boost the supply of homes, which in this case are all affordable homes, within the London Borough of Havering and by extension the Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

Site and Surroundings

2.4 The site is the existing Crowlands Golf Centre, which comprises approximately 22.5hectares of land to the south of Crow Lane, and north of Wood Lane and Rush Green Road. It spans across two boroughs – Barking & Dagenham and Havering – with the majority within the London Borough of Havering. It is understood that the whole site is owned by the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham.

2.5 The site is within designated Metropolitan Green Belt in both Havering and Barking and Dagenham Local Plans. Part of the site is also a designated site of importance for nature conservation (SINC) of Borough Importance.

2.6 The land is currently in use as a golf centre, comprising a 9-hole golf course, driving range, lake and club house. The site is an L-shape, surrounding the West Ham training ground which occupies a large portion of land to the south and east. School playing fields and existing residential uses bound the site to the west, and a rugby club is located to the north-east.

2.7 The site currently records a public transport accessibility level (PTAL) of between 1a (very low accessibility) to the north of the site near Crow Lane, and 3 (moderate accessibility) to the south near Rush Green Road. No part of the site is within reasonable walking distance of a rail/tube station (Chadwell Heath and Romford stations are both more than 2km walking distance from the nearest part of the site), and only Rush Green Road is served by frequent bus routes. Crow Lane is served by the westbound 499 bus route only, which has low frequency and no bus stops.

2.8 There is currently no north-south vehicular access through the site, although there is a public right-of-way footpath from Crow Lane to Rush Green Road, leading across the golf course and to the side of West Ham training ground.

2.9 The site is within the Romford and Suburbs Strategic Area of the Havering Character Study and part of the Crow Lane Character Area in the Romford Masterplan SPD.

Planning History

2.10 None

5 MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 The main planning issues raised by the application that the Committee must consider are:

- Principle of development
- Density, scale and site layout
- Quality of Design/Living Conditions for Future Occupiers
- Parking/Traffic
- Housing mix/affordable housing
- Quality Review Panel (QRP) Comments
- Other issues

5.2 Principal of Development

- The site is currently a golf course and designated Green Belt in the adopted Local Plan. Whilst the developer argued that the site falls under the definition of Grey Belt in the NPPF, officers have advised that a Very Special Circumstances (VSC) approach is preferred in this case considering that the Green Belt review by the Council is still on-going. The proposal is for 100% affordable housing for social rent and key workers, and as such would likely meet the VSC test for development of this nature in this Green Belt site. However, the impact upon the openness of the site, implicitly intertwined with the visual impact of the proposals, is therefore a key consideration to determining the acceptability of the proposals in Green Belt terms.
- In addition, and as part of the proposal, there will be provision of an enhanced sport / recreational facility on the site to address the loss of the existing golf facility which officers consider also form part of the VSC.
- LBH supports the principle of residential led mixed use development on this site as it is providing additional homes in a well-established residential neighbourhood subject to all other material planning considerations.
- At all levels of planning policy there is strong encouragement to maximise the use of such sites when they become available. Bringing forward this type of site that could be delivered in the short and long term will support the Council in meeting its housing requirement.

5.3 Density, scale and site layout

- Infrastructure (below + above ground): A gas main and water pipe are running north-south to the west of the site and further water/electricity mains are running north-south to the east of the site, which are significant site constraints dictating the site layout strategy. The proposal seeks to retain a boating lake to the south and waterbody to the north-west.
- The site layout is organised around a green amenity parkland and primary road lined with apartment block typologies transitioning in dense 2-3 storey

terrace housing types to the east with primary and secondary streets. The retained lake to the south incorporates a boat house, with sports pitches and parks to the centre and the location of a sports building to the east adjacent to the rugby club.

- The proposed density, although could be said to be relatively high in the context of the site constraints and location, would be within the ranges identified in the current London Plan and the adopted Local Plan. What would be important in assessing such a proposal is whether it delivers sufficient quality of design and provides a high-quality living environment for future occupiers.
- At 2-6 storeys, the buildings will be taller than its direct neighbours but comparable to the wider context. Buildings of the height proposed, ranging from 2 to 6 (height above 2-storey mainly apartment blocks) storeys, could be considered appropriate in this context although there may be concerns over quality and liveability of accommodation, proximity of the buildings to the boundaries of adjacent sites in terms of amenity impact and/or prejudicing development of surrounding land. Any height and bulk should be justified through a thorough townscape and contextual approach including identifying important viewpoints, in accordance policies 7 and 10 of the Local Plan.

5.4 Quality of Design/Living Conditions for Future Occupiers

- There is merit in an approach as demonstrated which gives high priority to the quality of materials and which can demonstrate a coherent design led approach to the redevelopment of the site.
- It is important that any proposal provides high quality accommodation for future residents including provision of outdoor amenity space, avoiding single aspect dwellings and satisfactory outlook from habitable rooms and any potential overlooking of neighbouring residential properties.

5.5 Parking/Traffic

- It is not anticipated that the proposals will generate significant levels of traffic. There would be a requirement to provide disabled and service area parking, and given its location, there may be demand for residential parking spaces. However, the level of the overall parking provision is contingent on the demographic make-up of future occupiers (being 100% affordable housing) and the inclusion of a new bus route through the site.
- Given the quantum and the uses proposed and the nature of the site, providing the necessary parking and satisfactory servicing have to be balanced against relevant London and local plan policies.

5.6 Housing mix/affordable housing

- Redevelopment of the existing golf course use into a residential-led masterplan of circa 1,260 homes comprising of 100% affordable (60% social rent / 40% key worker housing).
- The site is located within the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and Havering, with majority of the site located within Havering (76.5%).

- Council policy states that all housing schemes should include a proportion of family-sized homes and reflect a recommended housing mix. The policy does allow for variations to the recommended mix, but states that these must be robustly justified, having regard to individual site circumstances including location, site constraints, viability and the achievement of mixed and balanced communities.
- The Borough's housing mix as set out in the Local Plan Policy 5 is applicable.

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+bed
Market Housing	5%	15%	64%	16%
Affordable Housing	10%	40%	40%	10%

- The scheme proposes 1253 new homes (959 (76.5%) in Havering and 294 (23.5%) in B&D) with the following mix:

	Social Rent	Key worker
1-bed	111	0
2-bed	284	388
3-bed	200	189
4-bed	64	17

8.85% 1 bedroom (111)

53.65% 2 bedroom (672)

31% 3 bedroom (389)

6.5% 4 bedroom (81)

OVERALL TENURE MIX

Flats				Houses			
1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	total	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	total
111	662	81	854	10	308	81	399
Social Housing							
Flats				Houses			
1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	total	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	total
61	378	40	479	0	150	64	214
Key Worker							
Flats				Houses			
1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	total	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	total
50	284	41	375	10	158	17	185

Housing Mix in Havering

Havering							
Flats				Houses			
1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	total	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	total
60	493	7	560	10	308	81	399
Havering Social Housing							
Flats				Houses			
1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	total	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	total
40	312	4	356	0	150	64	214
Havering Key Worker							
Flats				Houses			
1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	total	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	total
20	181	3	204	10	158	17	185

399 Houses (41.6%) and 560 flats (58.4%)

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+bed
Affordable Housing	(60 units) 6.25%	(503 units) 52.45%	(315) 32.85%	(81 units) 8.45%

- Current planning policy would require that a minimum of 35% affordable housing in all new developments (of which 70% should be social rented and 30% intermediate/shared ownership by habitable room, which is subject to tenure mix) is proposed or it should be comprehensively demonstrated that the maximum viable quantum is being provided. The proposal is for 100% affordable housing which is accorded significant weight in terms of VSC. Officers are satisfied with the mix between social housing and key worker housing

5.7 Quality Review Panel (QRP) Comments

- The proposal has been presented to the Havering Quality Review Panel once. Members should note that the proposal as presented to them may have changed to reflect the QRP. The applicant has provided the Table 1 below to demonstrate how the scheme has evolved in response to QRP comments. The following comments were made by the QRP:

Table 1

	Quality Review Panel Comment	Applicant Team Response
	1. Summary / principle of development Given the early stage, the Quality Review Panel was asked to focus on strategic design decisions including the site layout design, form, density, placemaking principles, access to open space and play space, healthy streets and residential quality.	
1.1.	<i>The panel supports the principle of development on this site and commends the brief to deliver affordable family homes for the borough.</i>	This is welcomed.

	Quality Review Panel Comment	Applicant Team Response
1.2.	<p><i>The panel acknowledges the potentially contentious nature of the allocation, given the need to demonstrate Grey Belt status. It will therefore be important to optimise and demonstrate social and environmental benefits to ensure the creation of a sustainable community.</i></p>	<p>The social and environmental benefits of the proposed development to create a sustainable community are significant. The benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% affordable homes, split between social rent and key worker. • Large proportion of family homes. • Publicly accessible open parkland. • New bus route connecting Crow Lane and Wood Lane. • New community meeting spaces. • New community leisure spaces.
1.3.	<p><i>The panel has some concerns related to viability and delivery given the current market. The design should acknowledge this uncertainty and look at how design quality can be locked in to withstand commercial pressure. Management costs should be considered, to ensure that the landscape and public realm can be maintained in perpetuity without significant impacts on service charges for residents.</i></p>	<p>Ensuring the delivery of this development is critically important to the Applicant as well. The viability of the proposal is a matter of constant review with the development's funders. The Applicant reassures Havering that the scheme is viable and will be delivered.</p>
	<p>2. Masterplan layout</p>	
2.1.	<p><i>More clarity is needed on the masterplan vision, to understand whether the site is characterised as two neighbourhoods on either side of the park, or as single place wrapped around it. The current layout feels as though it has been designed in plan, as it does not reflect the characterful topography and organic nature of the site. While the panel understands that surveys are ongoing, site levels are fundamental to the character of the site and should be used to drive the structure of the site, and arrangement of open spaces and homes. The panel recommends developing clear principles for fronts and backs which can be applied across the different character areas and typologies.</i></p>	<p>Considerable changes have been made to the masterplan layout. Courtyards have been removed in favour of streets, with car parking, and back-to-back gardens. These revised plot layouts are considered to respond more successfully to the site's topography. Layouts of the apartment blocks have also been updated to allow for a smaller point block approach; this has given us more flexibility to adapt to existing levels.</p>
2.2.	<p><i>The panel questions the extent of development within the parkland space. Densifying the eastern parcel could help to reduce the need for development in the parkland area, increasing the green space available. The park should be considered as a link between Hainault Forest and Central Park Dagenham. To increase densities, building heights within the centre of the masterplan could potentially be increased, as there are</i></p>	<p>Along with the amendments to the overall site masterplan, the amount of development within the parkland space has been reduced by concentrating buildings on the northern, eastern, and southern extent of the park. The access road to the western side of the park has been removed to give more space over to the park.</p>

Quality Review Panel Comment	Applicant Team Response
<p><i>fewer sensitive relationships with existing homes. The arrangement of the pavilion, courtyard and semi-courtyard blocks needs more thought to improve the relationship with the park, and address outlook and orientation.</i></p>	
<p>2.3. <i>Further exploration of the relationship with the surroundings is encouraged, to ensure it feels part of the wider area. Given the various edge conditions and levels, distinct strategies for each edge are needed to create opportunities for enhanced connectivity.</i></p>	<p>The site topography has been reviewed as part of the cut and fill exercise. The levels of the applicant site will be lowered where needed to connect to the wider area. For example, the street connection to Crow Lane will be lowered to ensure a smooth connection and enhanced connectivity.</p>
<p>2.4. <i>The southern edge condition feels currently undefined. It would be good to explore how welcoming this would feel for the public, with clear entrances and routes connecting to the lakeside walk. The boat house community centre could be a valuable offer for the local community, replacing the golf club house. The panel recommends reviewing the placement of this building to ensure it is legible, accessible and inclusive.</i></p>	<p>The community building boat house has been moved to the southern entrance on Wood Lane to create a more defined and welcoming entrance into the application site. Additional routes have also been developed towards the south of the site to create a clearer connection to Central Park Dagenham.</p>
<p>2.5. <i>Similarly, access to the parkland from the northern edge, particularly given the level change, and the relationship with wider connections, needs further thought. The panel would like to see how the relationship with the allotment and public right of way could be further enhanced.</i></p>	<p>As noted above, the site masterplan has been revised. This has had the effect of making the park to the north and west larger, enhancing sense of scale and connections. The buildings adjacent to the right of way have been adjusted in order to create a better relationship with the route.</p>
<p>3. Streets, access, and servicing</p>	
<p>3.1. <i>Further thought on the pedestrian and vehicular gateways to the site is needed, to develop a clear approach to thresholds and the arrival experience.</i></p>	<p>The community building boat house has been moved to the southern entrance on Wood Lane to create a more defined and welcoming entrance into the application site.</p> <p>The site topography has been reviewed as part of the cut and fill exercise. The levels of the applicant site will be lowered where needed to connect to the wider area. For example, the street connection to Crow Lane will be lowered to ensure a smooth connection and enhanced connectivity.</p>
<p>3.2. <i>Vistas and nodal points should be also considered further, so key routes are positively terminated with landmark buildings or open spaces. The panel recommends more thought on how people will move through the site. Kinetic views should be developed to address legibility and wayfinding.</i></p>	<p>The revised masterplan layout has allowed for more active views from both Wood Lane and Crow Lane. From Wood Lane, people will see the community boat house, homes, and the park in the distance. From Crow Lane, people will see into the heart of the residential homes, with green streets.</p>
<p>3.3. <i>The bus route feels overly prominent and overly scaled for the site. Layering of the street with segregated bike paths alongside the road could be reviewed.</i></p>	<p>The routing of the proposed bus route has changed, travelling more centrally through the site. As a result, the road connection that ran to the western and northern side of the park can be</p>

	Quality Review Panel Comment	Applicant Team Response
	<p><i>For instance, if cycle routes are relocated within the park, they would be more attractive to use and reduce road widths.</i></p> <p><i>Cycle routes across the site should generally be as direct as possible, as cyclists will want to travel the shortest distance.</i></p>	<p>removed. This also means that the cycle path that previously ran alongside the main bus route can be more organic and run through the park and along the residential streets which should make them attractive paths to use.</p>
3.4.	<p><i>The long rigid lengths of the primary route should also be reconsidered. The panel suggests a more fluid, informal arrangement to work with the existing topography. This could help make the route feel more subservient, creating a greater focus on the park.</i></p> <p><i>The relationship of the park and road also needs to be designed carefully to address safety and traffic speed from first principles, particularly for children.</i></p>	<p>As noted above, the site masterplan layout has been changed and large sections of road removed. This has had the effect of creating the more fluid and informal arrangement that works with the existing topography. Single direction traffic routes have been maximised in order to reduce the scale of the roads.</p>
3.5.	<p><i>More detailed strategies are needed for servicing, deliveries and refuse collection.</i></p>	<p>A delivery and servicing management plan will be submitted with the planning application.</p>
	<p>4. Car parking</p>	
4.1.	<p><i>There are concerns that the parking numbers proposed could be too low, given the anticipated demographic, including keyworkers and family homes.</i></p>	<p>The quantum of car parking has been increased. The overall quantum of car parking needs to be considered in the balance between providing access and maximising the use of public transport. Discussions are ongoing with TfL and the highways authority. It is considered that the proposed car parking quantum meets this balance.</p>
4.2.	<p><i>Enforcement of parking restriction will be critical to ensuring that people do not illegally park on verges and open spaces, which would impact the overall vision.</i></p>	<p>The Applicant agrees with this statement. A car parking and management plan will be submitted with the planning application.</p>
4.3.	<p><i>Alternative parking typologies should be explored, to minimise visual impact. It would be preferable for parking bays to be integrated on streets, as well as on plot. The current parking courts risk becoming poor quality backs with the potential for anti-social behaviour, crime, fly-tipping etc. Precedents of successful consolidated parking should also be looked at, including examples of car barns and parking courtyards.</i></p>	<p>The car parking courtyards have been removed in their entirety in favour of on-street car parking. This arrangement has improved better overlooking and this removes the potential for anti-social behaviour within what might have been less overlooked areas.</p>
	<p>5. Architectural character</p>	
5.1.	<p><i>The panel recommends developing a stronger identity, and variation between, the 'pavilion' blocks. The relationship between these blocks and the park lacks legibility. The buildings read more as urban blocks, rather than pavilions. Alternative precedents of good examples of buildings addressing and</i></p>	<p>The revised masterplan has allowed an improved stepping in height between homes and buildings, resulting in a stronger identity for the buildings. The orientation of the buildings has been adjusted so that they have a clearer connection to street and the park.</p>

	Quality Review Panel Comment	Applicant Team Response
	<p><i>sitting within a parkland setting such as Brent Cross Town, Lion Green Lane (by Mary Duggan Architects) and Bexleyheath should be explored and considered to assess the right response.</i></p> <p><i>The panel feels that the three-storey homes could have a more urban presence, designed as townhouses rather than two-storey houses with dormers.</i></p>	
5.2.	<p><i>The long terraces could work well, but it will be important to consider ways to create variation and deal with the changing topography along the length of each terrace.</i></p>	<p>There are multiple house design types that provide the variation sought by the panel. Considerable changes have been made to the masterplan layout. Courtyards have been removed in favour of streets, with car parking, and back-to-back gardens. These revised plot layouts are considered to respond more successfully to the site's topography.</p>
5.3.	<p><i>The panel recommends further review of the affordable house layouts. Features such as ensuite bathrooms and rooms sizes may need to be reviewed to address viability. The character studies and emerging architectural design are welcome.</i></p>	<p>The internal layouts of the homes have been designed in partnership with Havering's Housing Team. They have been designed specifically to meet the identified needs of those on Havering's housing waiting list.</p>
5.4.	<p><i>While the elevations of the houses are attractive, the panel cautions that the use of arches and stacked soldier courses could be expensive to deliver. Similarly, the brick balconies on the courtyard and pavilion blocks could prove costly.</i></p> <p><i>It is important to consider how to protect these high-quality features through the process, to retain the characterful appearance from value engineering, which would result in a lower quality, more generic design.</i></p>	<p>The Applicant welcomes the panel acknowledging the high-quality design proposed. Ensuring the delivery of this development is critically important to the Applicant as well. The viability of the proposal is a matter of constant review with the development's funders. The Applicant reassures Havering that the scheme is viable and will be delivered.</p>
	<h2>6. Landscaping design</h2>	
6.1.	<p><i>The existing golf course is characterised by the undulating landform, scrubland, dry ponds, and boundary trees. It is therefore disappointing that the current masterplan does not address or retain this character. Levelling the site will require significant civil engineering works and cut-and-fill. This will be costly and is likely to affect deliverability. A strategy that works more closely with the existing topography is strongly encouraged.</i></p>	<p>As noted above, considerable changes have been made to the masterplan layout. Courtyards have been removed in favour of streets, with car parking, and back-to-back gardens. These revised plot layouts are considered to respond more successfully to the site's topography.</p>
6.2.	<p><i>The panel recommends finding ways to retain the pockets of woodland and dry ponds, to protect the existing habitat and ecology on the site and retain the character of the site.</i></p>	<p>A series of ecological habitat surveys have taken place over the last ~7 months. These have identified areas of priority habitat, which includes a reed bed to the west of the site and the southern</p>

	Quality Review Panel Comment	Applicant Team Response
		strategy focus on these areas for retention and improvement.
6.3.	<p><i>Strategies for sustainable drainage, ecology and play should also be developed to inform the masterplan and to integrate with existing green and blue networks.</i></p>	A sustainable drainage strategy will be provided with the planning application.
6.4.	<p><i>The green corridors among the houses work well and create attractive places for people to dwell and socialise. It would be good to also consider movement desire lines, to make sure these are well-used.</i></p> <p><i>The inclusion of an orchard walk is positive, but the panel questions whether it is in the right location. Integrating this with existing trees and planting would embed it better into scheme.</i></p>	<p>The green corridors between houses have been maintained in the revised site masterplan. The Applicant welcomes the panel acknowledging this as a high-quality feature of the proposed development.</p> <p>The orchard walk has been located in proximity to existing retained trees and it is felt that this is well embedded into the proposed development.</p>
6.5.	<p><i>Improvements to the lake are welcome as they will enhance the leisure and community offer, as well as habitat and ecology. However, the current form of the lake restricts the connection to the south. As this feature is man-made, there could be scope to reconfigure the lake to improve connectivity and release developable land.</i></p>	The southern pond is a Thames Water asset and is a priority ecological habitat. As a result, the Applicant's focus has been on improving edge conditions to enhance its ecological benefits. The Applicant considers that the connections and buildings that are proposed around the southern lake are integral to the high-quality neighbourhood proposed.
6.6.	<p><i>A clear approach to boundary conditions should be developed, avoiding use of closeboard fencing in the courtyards.</i></p>	The courtyards have been removed.
	<h2>7. Sustainability</h2>	
7.1.	<p><i>The panel encourages an increased level of ambition, to exceed minimum policy requirements. As the scheme is fully affordable, it is important that operational energy and internal comfort are central to the design strategy, to reduce running costs and householder bills.</i></p>	The Applicant fully agrees that minimising running costs and householder bills is a key priority. The Applicant has considered this in their review of heating options.
7.2.	<p><i>The panel recommends reviewing the orientation of streets and homes, to find the optimum solution for daylight, overheating and energy. A sample assessment should be provided for each house type.</i></p> <p><i>Overheating should be addressed, with passive measures integrated for east-west orientated homes to avoid reliance on active cooling. Shading, deep reveals and glazing ratios should all be considered.</i></p>	This is noted and information will be provided with the forthcoming planning application. The layout of the housing has been reviewed and updated to increase the number of north-south oriented houses where possible.
7.3.	<p><i>Detailed analysis of form factor is also recommended for each typology.</i></p>	This will be noted for the forthcoming planning application.
7.4.	<p><i>While using a district heating network could be an appropriate strategy for the site, the panel notes that there can be</i></p>	The number of homes and variety in typology means that a number of different heating options can be used, adapted to best reflect the homes

Quality Review Panel Comment	Applicant Team Response
<p><i>losses associated with long service runs. Decentralised systems should also be considered, as these can reduce capital costs, as well as operational and embodied carbon.</i></p>	<p>they will serve. The Applicant will be connecting to the district heat network on Wood Lane/Becontree Leisure Centre to serve the flatted buildings on the western side of the Site. The homes on the eastern part of the site will be heated by heat pumps.</p>
<p>7.5. <i>To further reduce embodied carbon, timber framed construction should be considered for the houses and low-rise blocks.</i></p>	<p>The sustainability driven intention of this statement is noted; however, fire safety is a key priority for the applicant and timber framed construction is not being considered. Other sustainability measures will be pursued.</p>
<p>8. Next steps</p>	
<p>8.1. <i>The Quality Review Panel would welcome the opportunity to review the scheme again, if helpful to the applicant team and planning officers.</i></p>	<p>This is noted.</p>

5.10 Other Planning Issues:

- Archaeology
- Biodiversity
- Housing provision, including affordable housing
- Microclimate - Daylight/Sunlight
- Sustainable Design and Construction
- Impact on local Education provision
- Infrastructure and Utilities
- Healthcare
- Open Space and Recreation
- Flooding and Sustainable Drainage System
- Secured by Design Sustainable Design and Construction
- Secured by Design
- Servicing Management

Conclusion

5.11 The proposed development has been considered at two pre-application meetings and two design workshops with officers, and the scheme has been developed as a result. The proposed development is at pre-application stage. The scheme will be progressed through a design led approach. At this stage, Members' guidance will be most helpful to incorporate as the various elements are brought together.

 <p>Havering LONDON BOROUGH</p>	<p>Strategic Planning Committee Developer Presentation 22 January 2026</p>
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Pre-Application Reference: W0214.25

Application Reference: P1607.25

Site: Former Debenhams, 56-72 Market Place, Romford, RM1 3ER

Ward: St. Edwards

Description: Residential-led, mixed-use redevelopment of the site to provide a hotel (Class C1) with commercial space (Class E) at ground and upper floors fronting Market Place, alongside two residential buildings to the rear, connected by a communal amenity podium with commercial uses (Class E) at ground level, and a new public plaza with a freestanding commercial building (Class E), widening and landscaping works to Swan Walk.

Case Officer: Andrew Thornley

1. Site Description

- 1.1 The application site comprises the former Debenhams Store in Romford, fronting Market Place and with Swan Walk to the west. The building is a 3-4 storeys tall (4-5 storey equivalent due to larger floor to ceiling heights internally), and occupies almost all of the plot, with its very large footprint.
- 1.2 The building has a fairly neutral appearance which does little to enhance the setting of Romford Conservation Area, appearing somewhat dated in terms of its overall design quality, although it is recognised that the building has some local significance as one of the largest department stores within Romford.
- 1.3 The surrounding context includes a mixture of commercial, residential, and leisure uses with varying building heights. To the north and west are generally lower rise buildings with ground floor commercial or retail uses and either office space or residential uses above, at one to three storeys in height, with the occasional four or five storey building visible on the northern side of Market Place, which is fairly typical of a traditional town centre. To the south is the Liberty Centre, a large, somewhat sprawling shopping centre of low to medium

scale, which is currently being assessed for comprehensive mixed-use re-development under application reference P1573.25.

1.4 Overall, the quality of buildings in the surrounding context is mixed, with the high street to the west providing a vibrant, active and busy town centre context with a clear priority for pedestrians, whilst Mercury Gardens is very much car dominated as a result of the Romford Ring Road.

2. Planning Policy Designations

2.1 The site falls within the Romford Strategic Development Area (SDA) as set out by Policy 1 of the Havering Local Plan, which generally encourages new residential, commercial and social infrastructure development, whilst being mindful of general townscape and heritage considerations, all whilst improving town centre connectivity. Moreover, the Romford Town Centre Masterplan (March 2025) seeks redevelopment proposals to focus on providing a commercial-focused area that provides active ground floor commercial, retail, and employment uses with residential accommodation on upper floors. Any development should be sensitive to and supportive of the special character and setting of the conservation area, positively engaging with a rejuvenated Market Place with listed buildings, breaking up the existing large scale blocks to deliver a finer urban grain.

2.2 The application site falls within the Market Place Conservation Area and within the setting of the St Edward the Confessor Church (a Grade II Listed Building of very high historical value) to the northwest of the site.

2.3 The building itself is further designated as an opportunity site within the context of the Romford Conservation Area, where any redevelopment proposals must enhance the experience of this part of the Conservation Area.

3. Proposal

3.1 The proposed development seeks permission for the complete demolition of the existing building within the site, followed by comprehensive redevelopment to provide a mixed-use, residential-led scheme, with a hotel block fronting Market Place, and ground floor commercial uses (Class E) across the site.

3.2 The proposal would provide 155 homes within two towers positioned at the southern end of the site, which would be connected by a podium at lower levels, whilst the hotel at the northern end of the site would have 118 rooms.

3.3 The two residential blocks at the southern end of the site are proposed at 12 and 14 storeys, with the taller of these two buildings in the south-east corner. The hotel block facing Market Place would be of a similar height to the existing Debenhams building, at 6 storeys (noting that the existing building has very high floor-to-ceiling heights and the revised scheme incorporates more floors within the same broad envelope through reduced floor-to-ceiling heights).

4. Quality Review Panel

4.1 This application was presented to the Quality Review Panel on the 4th November 2025, and below is a summary of the key points raised and the applicant's response:

QRP Comments	Applicant Response
Height and Massing	
The general concept of the massing distribution and stacking of building heights away from Market Place is appropriate.	The applicant team has carefully considered the panel's comments and has progressed the design to directly address these concerns through changes to the parapets and façade design of the higher residential blocks to the rear. The proposals have been amended and refined accordingly, with design changes embedded within the evolving scheme to ensure a high-quality, context-led response.
The height of the lower building facing onto Market Place is also supported. However, the height of the building to the rear of the site feels excessive and out of context.	The Project Team has worked closely with Liberty to deliver a height and scale that will work positively with the wider regeneration plans in the area.
Although the heights of all three blocks have been reduced since previous pre-application schemes, further townscape analysis would be welcomed. The intention should be to enhance the conservation area, not just reduce the harm to it.	Both parties have worked collaboratively to prepare an overall strategy for placement of height and mass which will better reveal the significant of surrounding heritage assets and truly enhance the visual amenity of the area.
Given the complexity of the site, the panel would welcome site sections to show the relationship between the existing and proposed buildings.	
A lower L-shaped block rather than two taller blocks separated by a courtyard could be a more successful solution to reinforce Market Place and Swan Walk.	
This solution could provide a private amenity space for the residential and hotel and remove the need for the first-floor podium.	
Architecture and Façades	
Retaining and redeveloping the Debenhams building or structural frame would be a more sustainable solution for the site. Further evidence is needed to support its demolition.	The applicant team has carefully considered the panel's comments and has progressed the design to directly address this point. In particular, the design of the replacement hotel fronting Market Place has changed from a more horizontal emphasis approach to a design that accentuates verticality and breaks the mass and width of the building up. This gives the new replacement building the proportions that
The Debenhams building is bulky and much wider than any other building on the Market Place. If it is to be demolished, it should not be replaced by a building of similar massing and scale. A more thorough understanding of the	

<p>conservation area should drive a more appropriate solution.</p>	<p>are more typical of the historic town centre, ei, terraces.</p>
<p>The hotel and commercial units should form part of a series of buildings, rather than a monolithic elevation. Reference to the historical context and fine grain of Romford High Street should be considered.</p>	<p>In addition, the left side (as viewed from the front) has had its shoulder / height reduced to respect the setting of the adjacent locally listed building. This amended design approach is much more sensitive in scale and proportion. It is also lower than existing debenhams store in relation to this neighbouring locally listed building and such better reveals its significance.</p>
<p>The current proposal of vertical bays does not help to reduce the scale of the building façade. The design team is encouraged to develop the composition in a more thoughtful way to break up its scale.</p>	<p>The proposals have been amended and refined accordingly, with design changes embedded within the evolving scheme to ensure a high-quality, context-led response. Further detail has now been provided with regards the façade treatment and more consideration given to the existing material palette of the location.</p>
<p>The methodology of 'analysing' and then replicating existing elevational propositions and arrangements is not convincing in the context of the conservation area.</p>	
<p>The proposed hotel entrance is too grand for this setting, and the portal is not in keeping with the context.</p>	
<p>The main frontages to the hotel and residential units are internalised and address the courtyard. This should be reconsidered to provide a more positive relationship with Market Square.</p>	
<p>The panel welcomes the number of dual aspect homes but is concerned that this has driven the form of the residential blocks rather than responding to the site. As the development will be visible from the conservation area, a more contextual approach is recommended.</p>	
<p>The dual aspect corner of the residential block on Swan Walk needs further consideration, to successfully address the passageway and the courtyard.</p>	
<p>Internal Layouts and Commercial Space</p>	
<p>The residential access routes through the buildings are convoluted with tight corridors and multiple blind corners. These need to be simplified and wheelchair access should also be considered.</p>	<p>The applicant team has carefully considered the panel's comments and changed the access routes to the cores in response.</p>
<p>Resolution of this will be essential to demonstrate that the site can accommodate a high number of good quality homes.</p>	<p>The corridors have been widened and overall quality of residential communal areas improved.</p>

<p>The route or arcade that runs through the commercial space from Market Place to the rear of the block seems unnecessary and should be reconsidered.</p>	<p>The applicant team have produced a commercial strategy that directly responds to the need of businesses and commercial reality of this location.</p>
<p>The size and layout of the commercial units should be considered further to ensure they meet local need.</p>	<p>A mid range hotel group has already been involved in shaping the design of the hotel element of the scheme and it is expected that this will come forward with them immediately should the application be approved.</p>
	<p>Along Market Place, modestly larger retail stores are proposed to provide meaningful retail offerings on this main historic square.</p>
	<p>Along Swan Walk, smaller units have been provided. It is envisaged that smaller units, in particular, would offer a range of opportunities for retail operators and for market operators to consider scaling up into a store.</p>
	<p>In addition to the above, a childcare nursery operator and gym group are also in dialogue with the Applicant about securing 2 of the larger ground floor units situated in less active areas of the development.</p>
	<p>The standalone commercial unit in the new public plaza is to be used for a community use and intended initially to be used as sales office for the development and potentially for wider regeneration development in the area.</p>

Public Realm and Amenity

<p>The panel applauds the design team's vision for the courtyard and the improved activation of Swan Walk. However, it finds the public realm lacking hierarchy and a clear sense of character.</p>	<p>The applicant team has carefully considered the panel's comments and has progressed the design to directly address these concerns. The amended proposals now has removed the previous colonnade which was a suggestion of the QRP. However, the width of Swan Walk has been maintained in order to ensure adequate access to Liberties. Reduce the impact in terms of scale, bulk and mass of the building on</p>
<p>Swan Walk should be secondary to Market Place. A narrower and more compressed space would create a better sense of place.</p>	
<p>Its current scale, in part driven by the requirements of the neighbouring Liberty</p>	

<p>proposal, is too wide and of a street rather than lane scale. LB Havering could helpfully direct the two developers to deliver a more appropriate lane width.</p>	<p>Market Place in comparison with the existing building which is situated within the conservation area. As such, ensuring that Swan Walk is widened serves to better reveal the significance of this heritage asset.</p>
<p>The panel recommends looking at precedents such as Lower Stable Street and Bagley Walk at Kings Cross, which work more successfully.</p>	<p>However, landscaping improvements for Swan Walk and the public realm areas have been thoroughly reviewed to improve its appearance and give it a more inviting sense of place.</p>
<p>Removing the planters should be considered to declutter the space, thereby allowing retail spill-out and improving visibility to the Liberty entrance.</p>	<p>The applicant team has carefully considered the panel's comments and has progressed the design to improve play provision.</p>
<p>Alternative opportunities for greening should be maximised across the site and building to meet Urban Greening Factor targets.</p>	<p>On site play space for children aged 0-11 will be provided in compliance with adopted policy.</p>
<p>The scale and usability of the courtyard between the blocks should be considered further.</p>	<p>The development also incorporates a public water play feature which enhance the public realm and provide play for the public.</p>
<p>This area could be more successful as a private courtyard, using the pavilion as a secure line. Opportunities for play and residential amenity should be considered.</p>	<p>Further detail and evidence will be provided at submission to demonstrate how the panel's feedback has informed the design development.</p>
<p>The colonnade feels unnecessary, creating a negative undercroft space. Providing clear demarcated thresholds at the front of the units onto Swan Walk could be more successful.</p>	<p>The applicant team did look at this, and the proposed development has been amended partially to address these comments which has increased private amenity space for the residential elements. However, for a number of reasons, the space between the new hotel building and residential led elements has been kept partially public/accessible/permeable.</p>
<p>Further detail on child yield should be provided, to ensure there is sufficient allowance for children's play space given the number of homes proposed. This will be essential to demonstrate that the site can accommodate a high number of good quality homes.</p>	<p>Key reasons include:</p> <p>Operation management and servicing of the site;</p> <p>Fire safety;</p>

	Future connectivity potential with Liberty and adjacent public house rear yard / potential beer garden; Construction sequencing and delivery.
Access and Servicing	
Gating the service access route to the rear of site would reduce the security risk in this area.	The applicant team has reviewed the proposals and ensured that all residential entrances are secure and feel safe.
The panel is not convinced that the proposed uses in this location would resolve overlooking, as gyms do not tend to have an active street frontage and a nursery would likely require some outside play space.	There are no issues of overlooking as compliant distances are provided between all proposed blocks and any prospective developments on adjacent land. The Project Team have been working with Liberties to ensure that neither development is prejudiced and that both are complementary to each other.
The panel also notes that the Bull Tavern adjacent to the site has a lively yard space that will potentially be overlooked by future residents. The LB Havering should ensure that environmental health factors do not curtail the activities of this important part of Romford's evening economy on Market Place.	<p>Servicing has been particularly carefully considered and an operational management plan has been prepared that demonstrates that the development can function without any concerns. All elements of the development will be serviced from the rear with a central external communal lift that allows for private management for each respective element to move waste to the first floor level storage area and await collection from the rear.</p> <p>Further detail and evidence will be provided at submission to demonstrate how the panel's feedback has informed the design development.</p>
Sustainability	
The sustainability statement is aspirational rather than evidential. Further proof of how sustainability targets will be achieved and how they have been used to inform the design would be welcomed.	The applicant team has carefully considered the panel's comments . Since this time, a comprehensive Energy Strategy, supported by an ENE04 Passive Design Statement and an ENE04 Low and Zero Carbon Feasibility Study, has been prepared in accordance with GLA Energy Planning Guidance, the London Plan and Part L 2021. The strategy follows the London Plan energy hierarchy, prioritising demand reduction,
A circular economy statement and pre-demolition audit should be provided to support the demolition of the existing building.	

	<p>efficient energy supply and on-site renewable energy generation.</p> <p>At the demand reduction stage, the scheme incorporates a high-performance building fabric, enhanced airtightness, efficient glazing and thermal detailing, alongside energy-efficient services including LED lighting and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery. These measures deliver carbon reductions of approximately 12% for residential uses and 15% for non-residential uses beyond Part L 2021 requirements, meeting the London Plan 'Be Lean' targets.</p> <p>The site is not located within an area of decentralised energy potential and there are no existing or planned district heat networks nearby. As a result, the scheme adopts all-electric, low-carbon heating solutions, avoiding on-site combustion and delivering zero on-site NOx emissions, in line with the Future Homes Standard and air quality objectives.</p> <p>At the renewable energy stage, the development incorporates air source heat pumps and a 68 kWp roof-mounted photovoltaic array, maximising available roof space and delivering further significant carbon savings. Other technologies were assessed and robustly discounted as unviable due to site constraints, limited carbon benefit or air quality considerations.</p> <p>Overall, the Energy Strategy demonstrates a site-wide regulated carbon reduction of approximately 40% beyond Part L 2021, exceeding the London Plan target of 35%. Residential uses achieve reductions of around 60%, with non-residential uses achieving approximately 35%. Any remaining shortfall will be addressed through a carbon offset contribution in accordance with London Borough of Havering policy.</p>
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	<p>In parallel, a Pre-Demolition Audit has been prepared in line with the BRE Code of Practice, London Plan Policy SI 7 and the Mayor of London's Circular Economy Guidance. The audit identifies extensive opportunities for reuse and high-value recycling, with approximately 120 tonnes of materials suitable for reuse, avoiding an estimated 195 tonnes of embodied carbon. A landfill diversion rate of at least 99% by weight is proposed, exceeding policy requirements.</p> <p>Together, the energy and circular economy assessments confirm that the scheme delivers a robust, future-proofed and environmentally responsible redevelopment, significantly reducing both operational and embodied carbon, minimising waste and environmental impact, and fully aligning with local and strategic sustainability policy objectives.</p>
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5. Key Planning Considerations

- Principle of Development

5.1 At present, the site is considered to represent an underutilised brownfield plot within a busy town centre, with an overprovision of commercial floorspace above ground floor level. As such, whilst it is important to maintain a healthy provision of commercial floorspace at ground floor level, to activate Market Place and Swan Walk, it is generally accepted that commercial floorspace at first floor levels and above are surplus to requirements in most modern town centre settings. In this respect, the proposal seeks to maintain a similar quantum of Class E floorspace at ground floor level to the existing building, albeit through the creation of multiple smaller units, but it should be recognised that the proposal would result in an overall reduction in Class E floorspace.

5.2 There is general support for the creation of new residential units within the scheme, taking advantage of Romford's excellent access to public transport and doorstep amenities.

5.3 The proposal also includes a proposed 118-bedroom hotel, positioned facing Market Place, and this is considered to be an acceptable town centre land use.

- Heritage Assets

5.4 The Romford Conservation Area extends along Market Place and down South Street towards the station, including the buildings on either sides of these

routes. Modern redevelopment from the mid-20th century onward has eroded the special historic character of the area to a degree, however, its special interest as a historic commercial centre of high local importance remains clearly legible. Ongoing development pressures mean that further development within and around the Conservation Area is very likely, and any new development will need to complement the positive features of the surrounding area to avoid any further harm to heritage assets.

5.5 The proposal is also in relatively close proximity to the Grade II* listed St Edward the Confessor Church, the Grade II listed Golden Lion Public House, and the Grade II listed Lamb Public House, all located on the north side of Market Place.

- Layout, Scale and Massing

5.6 In planning policy terms, there is scope for some taller buildings to be introduced in this location, to allow any redevelopment to properly optimise this town centre, brownfield site, however it is important that taller elements respond appropriately to the historically lower rise context of Romford Town Centre, whilst also being cognisant of the emerging proposals within the adjacent Liberty Centre.

5.7 The proposal would introduce a fairly substantial change in both the massing and the quantum of development across this part of Romford, with the introduction of a 12 and 14 storey building at the southern end of the plot. Whilst significantly taller than most of the existing buildings in the area, there are some examples of taller buildings nearby (e.g. Mercury House), with various other consented schemes within the wider town centre of a similar scale and height.

5.8 Improvements to Swan Walk are proposed, in tandem with the adjacent application for the Liberty Site, and there is a general intention to make this route wider and improve its overall appearance. It is considered that Swan Walk could provide a key route through the town centre if activated well with supporting high-street commercial frontages along its length.

- Detailed Design

5.9 The proposed development would largely be finished in red brick, utilising a mix of tones to articulate the various sections of the buildings, with paler tones proposed for the tallest proposed building, in the south-east corner. The ground floor is designed to provide a solid base to the buildings, utilising different materials and design techniques to the upper floors, to emphasise the different land uses within the scheme (commercial uses at ground floor level with residential and hotel uses above).

5.10 The proposed fenestration gives the buildings a clear vertical emphasis, and the proposed buildings have a well defined base and middle, with some articulation and differentiation of the tallest elements through the use of vertical

soldier courses and decorative motifs, although these elements are somewhat modest in the context of tall buildings.

- **Transport, Parking and Servicing**

5.11 The application site has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 6a, on a score from 0 (worst) to 6b (best), indicative of excellent access to public transport. As such, the proposal is proposed to be car-free, in line with London Plan policies for well-connected areas.

5.12 The proposal includes five disabled parking bays, which would be accessed via the existing servicing access road to the east of the site which connects with Mercury Gardens.

5.13 Servicing would also take place from Mercury Gardens, utilising the previous servicing area positioned on the access road which sweeps round the Liberty Centre at roof level, however the Transport Assessment further notes that there is also the potential to provide a small level of servicing from Market Place (outside of Market days and within current timing restrictions).

- **Landscaping and Ecology**

5.14 The proposed scheme would have an Urban Greening Factor (UGF) of 0.4, which is the target for residential-led developments, and is set out as being exempt from the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements as less than 25 sqm of habitat currently exists on-site.

- **Unit Mix**

5.15 The residential component of the proposal would comprise of 155 units within Blocks 2 and 3, in the south of the site, with 62 units within Block 2 and 93 within Block 3. Of these 155 units, 59 would be 1-bedroom units (38%), 50 would be 2-bedroom units (32%), and 46 would be three-bedroom units (30%), representing a fairly even split of unit sizes.

5.16 All of the new dwellings would have private external amenity space in excess of the London Plan standards. There will also be shared podium external amenity space that would provide outdoor play for toddlers and young children, although not all play space demands can be met on site (for ages 12+).

- **Affordable Housing**

5.17 Whilst a Financial Viability Assessment has not been submitted with the application, the Planning Statement sets out that the scheme will not meet the policy target of 35% of affordable housing (by habitable room). However, the Planning Statement further explains that the proposal would seek to provide affordable housing provision equal to 20%, equivalent to 91 habitable rooms, and the applicant has suggested these could be provided as 17 x 3-bedroom

units, 7 x 2-bedroom units, and 1 x 1-bedroom unit, which is significantly weighted in favour of family-sized accommodation.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The proposal to redevelop the former Debenhams building within Romford as a residential-led scheme, with ground floor commercial uses and a hotel block facing towards Market Place, is considered to be broadly acceptable in principle, making effective use of a brownfield site in a very accessible location, with doorstep amenities available for future occupiers. However, any redevelopment proposal needs to be conscious of the site's historic setting, and the balancing of these two material considerations will be key to the assessment of this application's overall acceptability.
- 6.2 Please note that this application has been submitted and is currently under assessment by the local planning authority. Members comments and considerations on the current proposals would be welcomed in order to inform further negotiations on the scheme.