

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Main Road, Romford RM1 3BD
26 March 2026 (7.00 - 8.17 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Ray Best
Havering Residents' Group	Reg Whitney (Chairman), Bryan Vincent and John Crowder
Labour Group	Jane Keane

There were about 10 members of public present for parts of the meeting.

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

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillor Robby Misir and Councillor Tim Ryan. Councillor Misir was substituted by Councillor Bryan Vincent.

2 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no interest disclosed at the meeting.

3 MINUTES

The Committee agreed for the Chairman to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2026.

4 P0754.25 - ANGEL WAY MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK, ROMFORD

The Committee received a presentation on the proposal that sought permission for the complete demolition of the existing multi-storey car park commercial units and all structures and redevelopment of the site by the erection of two standalone residential buildings providing a combined total of 106 new homes, mixed-use scheme, alongside a Flexible Class E / F1

(commercial / community use) unit, with car parking, landscaping and related infrastructure including a new sub-station.

It was noted that the application had been called in by a Ward Member, Councillor Joshua Chapman joined the meeting virtually to speak. Councillor Chapman commented that the closed nature of the site is unsuitable for a town centre development, expressing concerns that it could lead to increased anti-social behaviour and reduced safety. He also suggested that the scheme should incorporate a well lit pedestrian route through the site to improve accessibility and security. Councillor Chapman urged the Committee to defer a decision on the application for the concerns to be addressed.

The Committee noted the addendum to the report in which officers provided detailed responses to the concerns raised by Councillor Chapman. Officers confirmed that from their perspective all issues identified had been fully captured and addressed.

With its agreement, a ward Member, Councillor David Taylor addressed the Committee. Councillor Taylor stated that just like Councillor Chapman they were representing the views of local residents and emphasised that the committee's role was to provide proper scrutiny and clear reasons for its decisions rather than simply to express personal preference. Councillor Taylor agreed with Councillor Chapman that the application should be deferred arguing that it was not ready for determination. It was highlighted that the officer report itself recommended that further work—particularly in relation to flooding—should be undertaken before any decision was made. Councillor Taylor expressed the view that the proposal was not in line with the Romford Master Plan, specifically regarding the de culverting and potential renaturalisation of the River Rom. They noted that Mercury Land Holdings had long been aware of this issue and had explored options, but while the applicant concluded that renaturalisation was not viable, the Environment Agency had indicated that more work was required. Councillor Taylor stressed that the Environment Agency had suggested the council pursue alternative solutions and carry out further flood risk mitigation work and therefore approval at this stage would prevent any future opportunity to renaturalise the river.

It was also suggested that the scheme did not deliver affordable housing despite being a council led development and argued that the viability review mechanism was only a deferred assessment with no guarantee of affordable homes. They stated that such assessment should take place before not after, planning permission was granted, noting that policy requires support for delivering the strategic target of 50% genuinely affordable homes. Councillor Taylor expressed concern that the view of the red brick façade of the Church currently framed by open sky would instead be dominated by a tall monolithic block behind it diminishing its prominence and harming the conservation area. There were also comments from the Romford Civic Society regarding the absence of long range visualisations suggesting design shortcomings.

Councillor Taylor expressed that the application was therefore premature. That the strong local opposition noting that 34 residents had written in and 32 had objected. In conclusion, Councillor Taylor stated that Romford needed new and affordable homes but that residents expected better designed development and therefore the Committee should either defer or refuse the application in its current form.

In response, Officers responded by acknowledging the desire for river renaturalisation, stating that they had pushed for this but the engineering challenges made it impossible without increasing flood risk elsewhere particularly to properties north of the site including those around Como Street and Linden Gardens. It was explained that while the Environment Agency encouraged exploration of options the modelling data reviewed by the Agency confirmed renaturalisation was not feasible without exacerbating flood risk. Regarding viability, officers reiterated that policy allows flexibility where schemes demonstrate genuine viability constraints. The proposal had been independently assessed by a third party consultant on behalf of the council who agreed that no surplus existed to deliver affordable housing. Officers noted the review mechanism had been secured to allow reassessment if the scheme did not start within two years or if financial performance improved during occupation.

During the discussion, Members of the Committee raised questions regarding the building height, noting that while the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) recommends four to six storeys, the application proposed eight. Officers explained that the SPD serves as guidance rather than a fixed rule and that surrounding developments of similar or greater height justified flexibility in this case.

Members queried the use of the proposed ground floor commercial unit and whether it could serve as a community space such as a café. Officers confirmed that the approved use class would allow either outcome. Questions were also raised about the possibility of a roof garden but officers advised that rooftop space was required for solar PV panels to meet the scheme's energy requirements. Concerns were expressed about the high number of cycle spaces with Members suggesting that space could be better used for community facilities; officers responded that London Plan standards mandated the amount of cycle parking especially for car free developments though four wheelchair accessible parking bays with EV charging were included.

Members further raised issues regarding the housing mix stating a preference for more three bed units to meet family needs. Concerns were also voiced regarding safety, lighting, waste management and the monolithic feel of the design, particularly given the height and massing around the Church and the desire to maintain key views from the conservation area. Members highlighted problems with waste and bulky waste storage in similar town centre schemes and sought clarity on how this development would manage such issues. Officers confirmed that waste

would be stored in the basement and collected mechanically, and advised that a planning condition could require further detail, including bulky waste arrangements. Members raised the issue of delivery access, the storage of mobility scooters and whether the cycle parking layout could be revisited to create more space. Officers explained that while cycle parking numbers must comply with policy the arrangement of parking could be reconsidered at the conditions stage.

Several Members expressed concern about the limited number of disabled parking spaces and the loss of existing surface level disabled parking from the current car park. The emerging design's impact on the surrounding area including feelings of enclosure, overshadowing, and implications for an ageing population were also discussed. Members cited non compliance with elements of both the Local Plan and the Romford Masterplan and expressed disappointment that no affordable housing would be delivered. Officers emphasised that the application must be considered on planning grounds as any other application would be and that independent viability assessments confirmed that affordable housing could not be supported. Officers reiterated that the recommendation was based on a careful balancing of the scheme's benefits and drawbacks.

Additional concerns discussed included parcel delivery arrangements, internal storage space, loading capacity for large household items and general practicalities of living in high rise units. Officers advised that a delivery and servicing plan would be secured by condition. Officers proposed amending Condition 12 to reference public safety explicitly in relation to lighting and confirmed that a flexible approach could be applied to the parking layout condition to allow optimisation at discharge stage. A Member expressed reservations noting they were not convinced that the scheme in its current form adequately addressed concerns relating to design, accessibility, waste management, views, community space, or long term sustainability.

Following the discussion, the Committee RESOLVED to GRANT Planning Permission subject to prior completion of a legal agreement pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), Section 16 of the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1974 and all other enabling powers to secure the following planning obligations and the conditions set out in the report.

The Committee voted 3 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention to approve the application.

Councillors Reg Whitney, Bryan Vincent and John Crowder voted in support of the proposal.

Councillor Jane Keane voted against the proposal while Councillor Ray Best abstained from the vote

Chairman