



STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE AGENDA

7.00 pm

**Thursday
23 October 2025**

**Council Chamber,
Town Hall, Main Road,
Romford RM1 3BD**

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@onesource.co.uk**

**To register to speak at the meeting please call 01708 433100
before Tuesday, 21st October 2025**

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:-

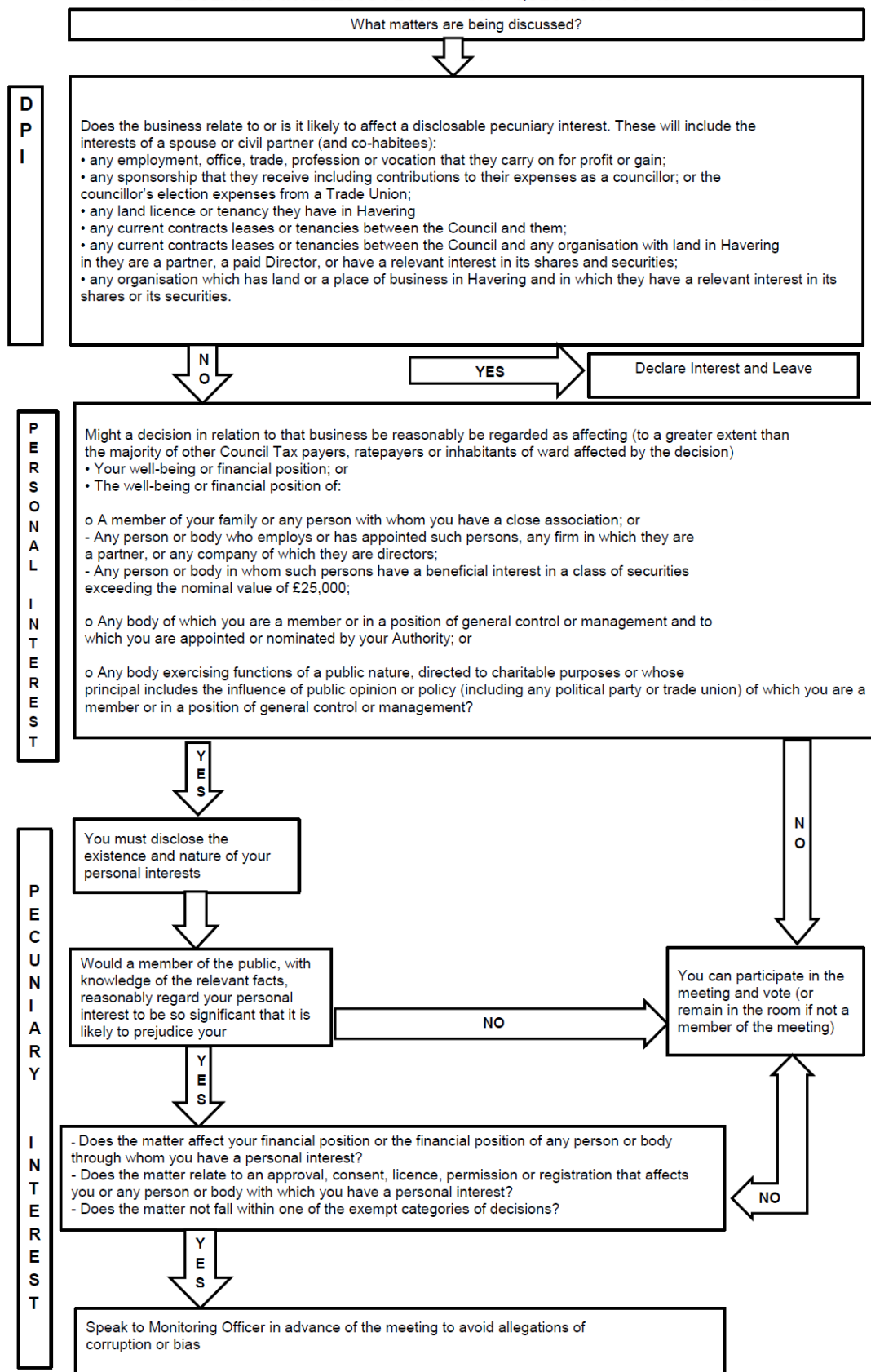
- filming, photographing or making an audio recording of the proceedings of the meeting;
- using any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later; or
- reporting or providing commentary on proceedings at a meeting, orally or in writing, 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 - 12)

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

5 DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATIONS (Pages 13 - 14)

6 W0210.24 - LIBERTY SHOPPING CENTRE, ROMFORD (Pages 15 - 32)

Report attached.

7 W0210.25 - YMCA THAMES GATEWAY, 29 RUSH GREEN ROAD, ROMFORD RM7 0PH (Pages 33 - 40)

Report attached

8 W0312.24 - FORMER ATIK NIGHT CLUB, 108 SOUTH STREET, ROMFORD (Pages 41 - 50)

Report attached

**Zena Smith
Head of Committee and Election
Services**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Main Road, Romford RM1 3BD
11 September 2025 (7.00 - 8.33 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group Ray Best and Timothy Ryan

Havering Residents' Group Reg Whitney (Chairman) John Crowder and Laurance Garrard (substituting for Robby Misir).

Labour Group Jane Keane

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

33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received Councillor Robby Misir, Councillor Laurance Garrard substituting.

34 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

35 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 August 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

36 W0154.25 - FORMER HOMEBASE, DAVIDSON WAY, ROMFORD (ST ALBANS)

The Committee received a presentation on the proposed demolition of an existing building followed by a residential-led development of the site, with some ground floor commercial and community spaces, and the creation of a primary school.

The site was on a long, low plateau with the main vehicular access being from Rom Valley Way. Developers planned to connect the site to the wider area using cycle routes etc. The site was close to other regeneration areas in Bridge Close and on the Seedbed Centre and Ice Rink sites. A new public

park would be incorporated as well as a primary school (on the border with the Seedbed Centre) and areas of small scale commercial use.

There would be a minimum number of car parking spaces onsite with a lot of pedestrianised areas within the development. There would also be new public access to the River Rom and safe, healthy green streets. Improvements to Rom Valley Way would include new street trees, cycling and pedestrian routes. Some 32 trees would be removed from the site initially. A diverse range of play areas would be incorporated for children of all age groups.

Developers felt that the planning benefits of the site included that this was a vacant brownfield site which would provide up to 600 new homes including affordable accommodation as well as a new primary school. Public engagement would commence on 23 September including a market stall giving information on 27 September.

A ward Councillor – Councillor Judith Holt also addressed the Committee.

Councillor Holt felt there had been too little notice given of the meeting and also of the provision of the slides used by the developers and thanked the Planning Officer for chasing this up. Councillor Holt was concerned at the impact of the development on local residents, particularly when taken in the context of neighbouring large developments. She questioned the impact on the local infrastructure such as Queen's Hospital and pointed out that the provision of the new school was ultimately a decision for the Department for Education.

The scheme would only provide affordable rather than social housing and Councillor Holt was also unconvinced about the lack of parking provision in the scheme. She was in favour of the park element of the proposals and the improvements to the River Rom.

The Committee then discussed the proposal. It was clarified that some parking bays would be provided for deliveries. The school site overlapped the Homebase and Seedbed Centre sites and, if the school was not ultimately built, the land could be transferred to the Council or retained by the developer. Barratt would make a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contribution if the school project was not brought forward.

It was accepted that the developers needed to assess the sewage capacity of the site in greater detail and this would be included in the Planning Application. The development plan for access to the River Rom would be submitted to the Environment Agency at the end of September. The central section of concrete wall by the river would be removed and developers were confident the scheme was deliverable. A Member asked for details of how the river would be protected from anti-social behaviour. Developers felt that the new scheme would lead to more people visiting the river area and a management company would also be on site.

Bulk storage would be available and it was clarified that there wouldn't be any shared ownership on the site. The overall height of the buildings would be similar to that of other planned developments nearby. It was clarified that the planned school would be in addition to that on the Bridge Close site. Engagement would be undertaken with Queen's Hospital about medical provision.

The road provision would allow a small number of vehicles to circulate around the site for collection, deliveries and fire access. Concern was expressed that the proposals did not take into account the high levels of car ownership in Havering but it was noted that this fell within the remit of the London Plan rather than the Committee.

Developers would check on any issues from survey work undertaken resulting from the site's previous use for landfill. This would include any build-up of methane etc. It was clarified that there would be five three-storey homes on the site but a Member felt that more provision should be made for elderly accommodation. Changes to the junction with Rom Valley Way would allow easier pedestrian access to the bus stops at Queen's Hospital. Subways under Waterloo Road could be removed or upgraded using CIL or section 106 monies.

Councillor Keane advised that she was a Board Member of Havering Museum and asked if an archaeological survey had been undertaken. This was the case and results would be shared in the planning application. Concerns over the height of the buildings was noted by developers and there would a disabled parking space provided at the new school.

An accompanied children only area of the park could be considered but developers felt that the park should be accessible for everyone. As required under the London Plan, a large number of cycle racks would be provided. Storage space for residents could be considered. Any impact of the air ambulance landing at Queen's Hospital would also be considered.

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

1. River Rom

These proposals were broadly welcomed but it was important to protect the river both during the construction phase and from anti-social behaviour once the scheme was completed.

2. Proposed New Park

Issues raised regarding the park's size, practicality, shading and who will use it.

3. Commercial Floor Space

Further details requested of how this will be used.

4. Parking Provision

While the position with the London Plan is noted, more parking should be provided for the commercial spaces. Details of how parking will be managed and the provision of disabled parking should also be provided.

5. New School

Clarity needed over whether this will be delivered.

6. Infrastructure

It was suggested that some of the commercial floor space could be used for health provision. There should also be better linkages to the hospital for pedestrians.

The capacity of the local bus network should be considered and a financial contribution sought for increasing this.

7. General Design Issues

The Committee is disappointed at the lack of family homes in the development and does not feel that a 16 storey block is contextually appropriate. There should also be some provision for senior living. The sewage capacity should be investigated and confirmed.

Bulk storage for residents should be provided and measures to achieve noise attenuation on the site should be included as part of the Planning Application. The flight path of the Air Ambulance should be fully investigated as should any issues with previous contamination of the land.

8. Archaeological Study

The outcome of the archaeological study should be provided to the Committee.

Members were informed that any further comments and questions be sent to planning officers within the next week.

Chairman

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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.

 Havering LONDON BOROUGH	Strategic Planning Committee – Developer Presentation 23 October 2025
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Pre-Application Reference:	W0210.24
Location:	LIBERTY SHOPPING CENTRE, ROMFORD
Ward:	ST EDWARDS
Description:	Residential-led, mixed use redevelopment of Liberty Shopping Centre.
Case Officer:	Andrew Thornley

Site Description

The Liberty Shopping Centre site comprises a large site (approximately 3.2 hectares) in Romford Town Centre, bounded by Mercury Gardens to the east and Western Road to the south. It is centrally positioned with excellent public transport accessibility (PTAL 6a), and provides for a range of town centre functions which maintains Romford as a Metropolitan Centre in the context of the London Plan. The existing site includes commercial (predominantly retail) buildings, multi-storey car parks, service yards, and fragmented rooftop parking and servicing areas. Buildings within the site have a varied appearance, with some making a positive contribution to the streetscene and character of the area (such as Lambourne House with unique detailing and modernist character), whilst other buildings have a neutral impact (such as Mercury house in the north-east of the site, which is being retained).

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 of the site the context is probably better described as mid-rise, with four, five and six storey buildings being the dominant scale,

and with Halyard Court directly south of Plot 1 topping out at nine storeys. To the east of the site, on Mercury Gardens, the scale is very mixed with generally low-rise buildings with large footprints (such as Mercury Shopping Centre and the former Wilko building) but also interspersed with tall buildings of 14 or 15 storeys such as Mercury House and the large residential development above and around Asda. As within the site, the quality of buildings in the surrounding context is also mixed, with the high street to the west providing a vibrant, active and busy town centre context whilst Mercury Gardens is very much car dominated and provides an unpleasant and unfriendly pedestrian streetscene experience.

Planning Policy Designations

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.

Plots 2 and 3, on Market Place, fall 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.

Proposal

The proposal seeks to demolish parts of the shopping centre alongside some of the surrounding buildings, followed by comprehensive redevelopment to provide a residential-led, mixed-use development including approximately 700 new homes. The scheme is coming forward seeking a full planning permission for Plot 1 only, with the remainder of the scheme secured as an outline consent, to be delivered in phases over several years.

Plot 1 has evolved significantly throughout the pre-app process, and in direct response to QRP comments, the scale and massing has changed from three point blocks ranging in height from 16-20 storeys, to a single, taller, 25 storey building located centrally within the plot, flanked by two 10-11 storey wings.

A new area of public realm would be created by removing the roof over the southern and south-western parts of the shopping centre, with ground floor commercial/retail uses facing onto these areas, to retain the character and appearance of a town centre. A larger unit is proposed for the corner facing Western Road, which has been earmarked for a flagship store.

Plots 2 and 3 face toward the Market Place, at the northern end of the site. These plots are proposed to come forward with lower rise (5-6 storeys) fronting onto Market Place,

and taller buildings behind, between 10-14 storeys. The applicant is liaising with the owner of the former Debenhams store to coordinate a way to bring forward these land parcels together in a holistic manner, and it is envisioned that there would be a stepping up in scale from west to east of the taller elements positioned away from Market Place. Ground floor uses within Plots 2 and 3 would be focused on creating a food and beverage area, especially facing Swan Walk, which could contribute to the evening and night-time economy, supporting the more retail focus of the shopping centre as daytime uses.

At this stage, the applicant plans on incorporating Mercury House into their proposal, to be renovated and converted from an office into residential use as part of the wider scheme. This is subject to the applicants acquiring Mercury House, which is currently owned by the council.

As part of the pre-application process, the rooftop of the redundant car park above the shopping centre has been altered from a green/biodiverse roof into 'Makers Place'. It is envisioned that this area would be used to support creative and start-up companies operating in the borough, and provide a level of vibrancy to an otherwise empty space, supporting the wider town centre functions.

Quality Review Panel

The pre-application scheme was presented to Havering's Quality review Panel first on the 01/04/25, and again on the 05/08/25, and the feedback received from the most recent QRP is summarised in the table below.

It should be noted that the scheme presented to members at this meeting is markedly different from the scheme presented to QRP on the 5th August, as the scheme has significantly evolved to directly respond to feedback from QRP, and the applicant team responses below reflect their position as of August 2025, so some comments may no longer be relevant.

QRP Comments	Applicant Team Response
Strategic Approach	
The proposal should look beyond the site's red line boundary, to ensure that the maximum long-term benefits will be provided for Romford town centre. A clear vision for the future character of the town centre should be included in the design code, noting that the scheme's edges are all very different and each will require a specific response to drive lasting and positive improvement.	The applicant team are in agreement with panel members that looking beyond the red line is key in ensuring the vitality of the site + Romford, and are, for example, currently engaging with the Debenhams owner's team, and are in communication with Havering council on meeting with Maccreanor Lavington to discuss their vision for the Market Place, and how our scheme would tie together. There are also commercial discussions taking place around a potential civic centre. There are also discussions taking place with Havering Council around a new potential civic centre on the

	Marketplace frontage, to be delivered by HUB. In the QRP meeting the applicant team shared some initial extracts of the design code that spoke to 'edges' identified which were the Southern Gateway, Market Frontage and Eastern Fringe. We are of the same view that each area is very different and will need to establish its own language and principles. These identified 'edges' we intend to form overarching sections within the design code which will create a clear narrative to each distinct character areal.
A growth strategy should be developed with Havering Council outlining future improvements to the town centre. A series of diagrams should be provided to show how the town centre could change over time on the neighbouring sites, so that the Council and other public sector partners can then take forward more specific policies and interventions to amplify and add value to the investment in the Liberty Shopping Centre.	HUB & Redical are fully committed to supporting Havering Council with their ambitions as set out in the Romford masterplan SPD, and have been through extensive pre-app engagement with the council to ensure their proposals continue to align with the Council's overarching ambitions for the site. As mentioned in point #1, HUB are collaborating fully with a number of other key stakeholders who have land ownership directly adjacent to the Liberty Shopping Centre. As for a wider growth strategy, this would of course rely on land ownership out of HUB/Redical control, but HUB/Redical would be very happy to support Havering Council in the evolution of this.
For example, the ring road around the town centre is currently very busy, but the reliance on cars is likely to diminish in the future. This proposal provides an opportunity to include improvements to the road as part of the strategic vision.	The applicant team are supportive of principles identified in the SPD masterplan such as improved road crossings to enhance pedestrian movement. As part of the design code we are intending to speak to how the future development of plot 02 and Mercury House could look to incorporate appropriate road improvement works with agreement from council members. These works would fall outside of HUB/Redical

	control, but could be captured through S106 agreements that this development facilitates.
The panel is disappointed that the Liberty Shopping Centre multi-storey car park site has been removed from the red line boundary. Engagement should be undertaken with Havering Council and the owners of The Brewery car park, to establish if the two car parks could be consolidated, to enable the delivery of additional homes.	Retaining the current multi storey is fundamental to the viability of the shopping centre. Redical have daily analysis from the car park and it's never much more than 50% occupied. Moving the car park further from the centre would be detrimental to the shopping centre, as well as surrounding business who currently use this parking for their employees. Separately, Redical are exploring alternative uses for public amenity on the rooftop of the multi storey car park which is likely to come forward as a separate application. This is to be considered on balance with the proposed uplift and redevelopment of the Liberty site as a whole. As a result of this development though, the ancillary car parking in places e.g. phase 1 and 2 are indeed being consolidated on site to the current MSCP.
The vision for the Liberty Shopping Centre car park site should be included in the drawings, to give officers confidence that a cohesive development will be delivered in the eastern corner of the urban block.	In meeting 02, the applicant team presented a review of the adopted masterplan based on their knowledge of the existing site and the requirement for the core of the shopping centre, and its servicing, to remain as far as the hybrid application is concerned. This study showed how the MSCP may come forward in the long term. In future this site may come forward but for now it plays a very important role and most parking on site will be consolidated here through removal of other spaces. Redical are in the process of agreeing terms for a leisure use on the top floor (given it's rarely fully occupied) which contextually compliments the neighbouring Sapphire Ice + Leisure Centre. This rooftop proposal will be included within the illustrative masterplan.

Engagement with the Debenhams Store landowner and Havering Council is needed to coordinate plans for the development of the store site. Its location, fronting onto Market Place and otherwise surrounded by the proposal's red line boundary, will mean that any development on this site will have an impact on the proposal. The Debenhams Store site proposal should therefore be included in the application.	The applicant team advised the QRP panel in the meeting that engagement with the Debenhams store landowner was already underway and would be continued to ensure that plots 02 + 03 coordinate and synergise with the proposals for the Debenhams site, and likewise, what is proposed by the other party does not prejudice the applicant teams outline application. In the masterplan portion of the meeting the applicant team shared the illustrative masterplan which included the latest proposals for Debenhams obtained from their team. It remains our intention to include the proposal for the Debenhams store within the applicant team's illustrative masterplan to show how all market fronting plots would come together to form a cohesive vision for Market Place.
The panel supports the provision of a new, high-quality façade over the retention of the existing store façade, albeit acknowledging that this is outside the direct control of the applicant.	As noted, this is outside of the applicant team's control.
Alongside the vision for the masterplan, detail should be provided to show how the proposal will be stitched into the existing urban fabric. The detailed treatment of the different edge conditions, including the Liberty Shopping Centre, will need to be understood thoroughly to underpin a coherent and robust design code.	This will be provided within the design code.
A model should be provided to show how all the aspects of the masterplan will fit together and how the proposal interfaces with each boundary condition.	Appropriate material will be provided that speaks to the interfaces between new and existing as part of planning submission.
Social Infrastructure	
Details should be provided on the proposed relocation of the Community Health Centre, which is currently located in Lambourne House. The first floor of the block to the east of Liberty Square, overlooking Western Road, could be a suitable location. A street entrance and lift will need to be provided.	In future this site may come forward but for now it plays a very important role and most parking on site will be consolidated here through removal of other spaces. Redical are in the process of agreeing terms for a leisure use on the top floor (given it's rarely fully occupied) which contextually

	compliments the neighbouring Sapphire Ice + Leisure Centre. This rooftop proposal will be included within the illustrative masterplan.
Early engagement with the National Health Service is needed to ensure that any specific requirements are delivered.	As above. Redical will engage with the NHS to understand the specific requirements of the health centre to potentially be provided in Plots 02 and 03.
Additional social infrastructure, such as an optician, should also be provided to support the needs of the local community.	The applicant team intend to apply for a variety of Use Classes that could enable additional social infrastructure.
Character and Identity	
Analysis of the town centre, including how it functions and the demographic of visitors, should be undertaken with the aim of improving the experience of visitors and residents. The findings of these studies should inform the plan, layout and ground floor uses.	Redical are retail experts and anticipate crafting a tenant mix that responds to the needs of the local population and provide commercial spaces that remain viable in both the short and long term. The project team are also working with socio-economic experts Trium who have completed detailed demographic research and mapping of the area, supplemented with extensive local stakeholder engagement by HUB, to ensure all proposed ground floor uses of the scheme compliment the wider offering in Romford, and cater for the needs of both visitors, local people and new residents.
One singular approach to architecture and character does not work here, the design code should recognise that the different sides of the shopping centre will need very different architectural responses to enhance or transform the immediate context.	See QRP response item 1. Furthermore, the applicant team have undertaken a review of existing architecture and character which has been shared in strategic meetings with the council.
For example, groups of school children often congregate on Western Road after they disembark from buses at the end of their school day and when visiting the Sapphire Ice and Leisure Centre. This should inform the new character of Western Road, Liberty Square and the new entrance to the shopping centre.	The applicant team are conscious of the busy nature of Western Road and the proposals seek to create a new generous public realm that will create more space for children to spill out.
A survey of the bus activity on Western Road is needed. Engagement should be	A traffic survey has been undertaken at the Western Road/Chandlers Way

undertaken with Transport for London and Havering Council to determine how the pedestrian experience of Western Road and Liberty Square could be improved. Traffic calming measures could be considered to improve pedestrian safety, as well as reducing the number of buses and idling vehicles to improve air quality.	junction (to be submitted as part of the application) which captures the section of Western Road where the most buses 'pass' Phase 1, which is broadly opposite proposed Block A. In the worst-case hour, which was 11am 12pm on a Wednesday, there were 167 buses (east & westbound) included in a total of 177 vehicles using Western Road. This is less than three vehicles per minute, considered a relatively low total for a road of this type/use. Engagement has been undertaken with both Havering and TfL officers as part of the pre-application process. As per the response to feedback item no.15 above, the proposed civic square provides a significantly enhanced pedestrian space and environment. With reference to idling buses, the London Mayors website states: The current target date for a zero-emission bus fleet is 2034. With additional funding from the government this could be moved forward to 2030, as detailed in Transport for London's (TfL's) recent Business Plan." This will have a positive impact on air quality along Western Road given over 90% of vehicles using it are buses.
Rooftop amenity and play space	
A fresh approach is needed to reimagine how the rooftop space could provide high-quality amenity and play space alongside the service road.	During previous pre-application meetings (Landscape and Service Road Pre-app 19.6.2025) the applicant team have communicated the intention for the service road and roofscape. The retention of the service road is vital to the continuous operation of the shopping centre including how it currently functions. The transport consultant has undertaken surveys of how the road is currently used, which has identified an extensive use of this road in terms of vehicle trip numbers, which will increase significantly again when the scheme is delivered as the residential buildings also rely on this

	route for their servicing strategy. There are however areas for improvements to be made, and these have been identified and provided the design team with where there is scope to make changes, for example introduce landscaping, consolidated refuse management etc. The applicant team, and Redical the owner of the Liberty Shopping Centre have major concerns about introducing a public element to the rooftop, which has been voiced at multiple meetings. This highlights a major health and safety concern, as well as concerns around anti-social behaviour by introducing spaces without natural surveillance which has continually been raised as a fundamental concern by local people across all consultation events held by HUB to date. Instead, the applicant team have explored options for managed access to the rooftop, which would negate the concerns around security and safety from making the space publicly accessible with no management in place. The applicant team are proposing a creative hub on the central car park rooftop, featuring various 'makers spaces' that can be leased by creatives. This enables access on to the rooftop to be managed and limited only to those who have access to the makers yard. The makers yard is proposed to come forward as part of the outline application due to further work involved to do a structural survey of the car park and assessment of the impacts to viability of Plot 01. With regards to the service road, it is the view of the applicant team that the first floor should remain a functional servicing route, ensuring the continual viability of
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	the shopping centre throughout the construction period, with all feasible improvements made which don't involve introducing pedestrians to a heavily used vehicle route e.g. landscaping, ecology enhancements. The residential development's servicing strategy always requires retention of this route, the positive being this doesn't require servicing trips to be made at ground floor, maximising the area that can be given back to pedestrianised public realm. The entirety of the ground floor will be pedestrianised (one huge positive of the first-floor service road), creating safe, enhanced spaces for people of all ages to use.
A management strategy should be provided to ensure that pedestrians are prioritised over vehicles. For example, access to larger vehicles could be restricted at certain times of the day. Maximising greening across the whole of the rooftop will also help to make it feel like it belongs to the residents.	See QRP item 17.
Details should be provided on the provision of blue roofs and the strategy for grey water management. These would make a valuable contribution to irrigating the living roofs.	This will be included with supportive planning documents and we will provide a suds strategy as we develop the scheme design and receive topo / below ground services info. Wider greywater strategies will be developed by the project engineers and any potential for blue roofs will be fully implemented.
A variety of habitats, including water, should be provided to improve the ecological value of the roof space, improve residents' quality of life and provide a pleasant outlook for residents. Inspiration should be taken from relevant high-quality precedents, including the Beech Garden at The Barbican and the roof gardens at the University of Greenwich.	BD are in continued discussions with the project ecologists as to how we can best maximise biodiversity potential on rooftop green spaces. Provision of habitat features (bat boxes, bird bricks, habitat piles) actively encourage a range of wildlife For the public, there are significant benefits to having nearby green roofs which include, but are not limited to, a reduction in Urban Heat Island effect, improved stormwater runoff

	management, air quality improvements + a reduction in noise pollution.
The rooftop affords an opportunity to provide a creative access route and onsite play space for children aged 12 years and over. This would be preferable to children having to cross the busy ring road, accompanied by an adult, to access suitable play space.	We are currently providing 773 sqm of play to roof terraces which is an overprovision of 138 sqm. 95 sqm of play is required for the 12+ group therefore provision on plot 01 is achievable onsite without having to rely on the central roof, as suggested. It is also worth recognising that there is a shopping centre with targeted retail that is, and will continue to be a big draw for this age range, which is understood from the quantum of 12+'s that currently use the shopping centre, which was also highlighted by panel member.
Public realm and landscape design	
The proposal for a multifunctional landscape in Liberty Square is positive. However, the panel has concerns that the public realm will have to work very hard, given the heavy footfall expected. Wherever possible trees with adequate canopy height should be prioritised. Softer landscape should be specified in locations where it will be able to endure the wear and tear.	The public realm to the Liberty Square is generous and gives opportunities for multiple uses - shopping, relaxing and dwelling, outdoor dining and social seating. Planting beds are strategically placed to delineate spaces. We are working to design in wide, comfortable and legible routes through site, to ensure the public realm can accommodate the increased footfall. Tree planting within the public realm will have a min 3m clear stem to ensure clear sightlines.
The panel has concerns that the level change required for rain gardens to function effectively may conflict with play space safety requirements. Rain gardens should be specified only if they contribute to water management. Otherwise, an alternative type of green infrastructure should be provided.	The rain gardens form an important part of the surface water strategy picking up surface water run off from the newly created public realm so do form a valuable landscape feature. BD have worked on a number of award winning projects where incidental play combined with suds create resilient and biodiverse public realm. SuDs if designed correctly does not require irrigation. This is a hard-working space in central Romford so any planting will need management and maintenance - suds is no different and no more management than any other landscape planted area.

Careful thought should be given to the depth of soil needed on the rooftop, to avoid reliance on irrigation.	Each planting typology (tree planting, herbaceous, and extensive green roofs) will be provided with adequate and sufficient depth of planting medium. BD are working with the project engineers to locate heavier planting in appropriate locations on the roof terraces, so as to ensure no issues with loadings.
A detailed planting plan should be provided along with a tree and planting specification, including information on their long-term climate resilience. The parameter plans should be updated to accurately reflect the proposal.	Detailed planting plans would form part of the planning condition discharge level of information - within the planning soft landscape layouts plans outline schedules will form the submission including tree planting and soil depths. We are developing planting palettes for each specific microclimate across the site that will be included within the design + access statement, taking into consideration both current and future needs, future-proofing the proposal for a changing climate.
A maintenance plan should be provided, to ensure that the greenery will continue to thrive long-term.	A Landscape and Ecology Maintenance Plan would typically form part of the planning condition discharge level of information however we will include landscape management + maintenance information within the landscape chapter of the design + access statement.
An Urban Greening Factor score should be provided for both the masterplan and for Plot 1. Greening located inside the shopping centre should be excluded from the Urban Greening Factor score.	UGF has been calculated for Phase 1 at 0.23 and will continue to be calculated for the wider masterplan as proposals for the remaining plots are developed, and will not include any internal improvements. A target sitewide UGF score will be provided in the submitted planning documents. It should be noted that if the service road was excluded from the detailed application boundary, then a score of 0.3 would be achievable for Phase 01.
Environmental sustainability	
Microclimate and daylight/sunlight analysis should be provided, to demonstrate that the development will not have an adverse impact on the surrounding townscape and private amenity space.	Naturally this is being tested as part of the design process and findings will be shown as part of the planning submission.

A circular economy strategy should be developed, including information supporting the retention or demolition of buildings, and explaining how materials will be reused.	This will be provided as a supporting document to the planning application. HUB have also committed to providing the GLA and local authority a pre demolition audit and circular economy calculations ahead of formal planning submission.
While the panel does not feel that Mercury House warrants retention, details of the retrofit assessment should be provided to determine whether the former office block could be converted into high-quality residential accommodation.	HUB's ongoing commitment is to retain and re-purpose any buildings that are structurally viable. In addition, Mercury House grounds itself directly in Redical freehold ownership, so demolition is incredibly complex and would be disruptive to the day to day function of the shopping centre which is crucial. Final structural testing has just been completed, which will inform the decision making, however at this stage HUB remain committed to the retrofit of Mercury House to high quality residential accommodation, to compliment and stitch into the wider phase 2 area of the masterplan.
Market Place	
The six-storey massing proposed for the northwest edge of the site, fronting onto Market Place, sits comfortably with the surrounding context. However, further thought is needed to ensure the taller blocks to the rear have a positive relationship with the Liberty Shopping Centre.	The applicant team are continuously exploring and testing the parameters for plots 02 + 03 in addition to engaging with the Debenhams team. Any proposal that comes forward will have reviewed height and massing from streetscape and townscape context.
High-quality architecture should be referenced to inform the design. Further drawings should be provided to show how the references to verticality in the existing architecture are integrated into the Market Place façades.	The applicant team make reference the history of the market and high quality architecture as part of the evolving design to the market place. Further detail of facades and architectural quality will be provided within the Design Code and Design and Access Statements.
Plot 1	
A bolder ambition is needed for Plot 1. The dispiriting nature of Western Road provides an excellent opportunity to establish a new character for the street.	The team agree that plot 01 represents an exciting opportunity to establish a new character for the street, which is currently quite a hostile zone with ad hoc approaches to building design. The concept of linear blocks providing a strong frontage to Western Road, with any buildings of height pushed back

	towards the Liberty, is a key design principle which has been supported by council officers and local stakeholders from a very early stage. The building line itself is going to be pushed back considerably from its current positioning, sitting hard against the pavement edge, creating a street that can now be fully accessed by pedestrians at ground floor with a range of ground floor uses adding vibrancy to this space. The team fully believe in the approach being taken along Western Road, and continue to work in close collaboration with local stakeholders and council officers on the emerging architectural intent for the linear blocks in particular. HUB are fully committed to delivering a frontage along Western Road that local people are proud of, that ties into wider Romford.
The quantum of development proposed in three point blocks feels excessive and too dense for the site to comfortably accommodate. The panel encourages testing of fewer buildings, possibly even one elegant tower, as a marker for Romford town centre, which could work alongside two lower buildings. Inspiration should be taken from the references presented, including Karakusevic Carson Architect's Hoxton Press in Hackney and Howells' Octagon in Birmingham.	The applicant team have tested with council officers over the past 7 months a host of different design responses including the option suggested of a taller marker building, mansion blocks, taller western Road blocks, and varying height considerations have been continually tested throughout the process through townscape views, alongside reducing building footprints to create more elegant buildings. The applicant team has taken on board the feedback received from the QRP and Havering and presented further design options to Havering since the QRP. The scheme has evolved to slim down the building footprint of building A from square to rectangular, Building C has moved further away from the neighbouring MSCP creating a 9m offset, Building A + C have reduced in height moving away from point block expressions and Building B has increased in height to strengthen this building as a 'marker' and create clear hierarchy. This was a clear endorsement made by the QRP in terms of the height

	ambitions which should be sought for Block B.
There could be scope to increase the height of some of the massing fronting onto Western Road. The proposed five storey height is appropriate in the block at the South Street end of the road. However, the panel feels that there is potential for additional height to the east of Liberty Square. Given the deep plan of the block, a mansion block typology should be tested which may provide better high-quality residential density relative to the size of the site.	An increased height to the Western Road streetscape had been tested by the team and reviewed in terms of streetscape, micro-climate and daylight sunlight of amenity spaces. The massing height has increased on Western Road in response to the QRP feedback to create improved streetscape that ties into existing datums to the South.
The materiality and tone of the buildings should be simplified and elements of the architecture highlighted where necessary. This will help to create a coherent family of buildings, which sit comfortably together on Plot 1.	The design team agree with this comment and have already started to explore simplifying the expression of the buildings. The materiality and tone of the buildings will be continually explored as part of the design process to ensure that there is appropriate cohesion with the applicant team exploring a simplification of articulation and material palette as suggested by the panel.
Drawings should be provided to show the new character of the road, including views from Romford Station and from the corner of South Street.	These have been explored and shown in pre-application meetings and will be updated and provided within the Design and Access Statement.
Townscape views should be provided to show the proposal in context, including the emerging and future development in and around Romford town centre. This should include proposals for the Liberty Shopping Centre multi-storey car park site and the Debenhams Store site.	Cumulative wireframe townscape views of emerging approved developed will be provided. Outline details of any potential MSCP enhancements will be provided and the Debenhams' applicant teams proposals will be shown in any illustrative information submitted.

Key Planning Considerations

- Principle of Development

There are four main elements to the Liberty Masterplan; Southern Gateway (Plot 1); Market Frontage (plots 2 and 3); Eastern Fringe (Plot 4) and the Shopping Centre. Some elements of the proposal align with the Romford Masterplan SPD, however some elements (i.e. comprehensive redevelopment of the shopping centre itself) have not been progressed because of the financial constraints associated with the shopping centre ceasing trading, a rationale that is accepted.

There is clear policy support within the London Plan, Havering Local Plan, and the Romford Masterplan SPD for redevelopment of the shopping centre, and it is

recognised that to make most efficient use of this well-connected brownfield site, a significant quantum of residential development is needed.

Rationalisation of the shopping centre is further considered to be broadly necessary to support the wider functions of the town centre, so that Romford (as a Metropolitan Centre within the London Plan) can continue to function at a high level, supporting a very wide catchment area.

- Layout, Scale and Massing

The proposal would introduce buildings of a significant scale and height across Plots 1, 2 and 3, notably a 25-storey building within the centre of Plot 1, which is designed to act as a landmark feature within the area. This design response has been put forward to directly respond to QRP comments in August, who raised significant concerns with the previous approach of three point blocks of 16-20 storeys in such close proximity to one another.

Within Plots 2 and 3, the general approach taken has been to avoid an overbearing impact on the Romford Conservation Area, centred on Market Place, whilst still optimising the site's potential for accommodating residential development. As such, both of these later phases propose smaller 5-6 storey blocks fronting directly onto the Market Place (with the top floor set back) to closely match the height of the existing Debenhams store, with the taller buildings positioned behind these, closer to the shopping centre. This approach seems sensible, and a views analysis has been undertaken to understand the impact of taller buildings on the nearby listed church, the Conservation Area and on wider views, to understand their relationship. The tops of these taller buildings would be visible from some views within Market Place, however this is unavoidable if the site's are to be optimised.

- Detailed Design

Only Plot 1 would come forward as a detailed application, the first phase of development. This plot would be largely finished in brick, with projecting balconies, however it is likely that the taller 25-storey building will be finished in an alternative material, to better provide a level of distinctiveness. Discussions are currently ongoing, with some discussions around an aluminium finish, however final materials are yet to be selected.

- Public Realm

The proposal seeks to create or enhance several areas of public realm, notably to the south of the Shopping Centre facing Western Road, to the west at Stewards Walk and to the north on Swan Walk, together with a managed semi-public space on the rooftop of the redundant car park (as Makers Place). The areas of public realm to the south and west would provide a predominantly retail focus, whilst the areas to the north around Market Place would look to create a new restaurant/dining focused area, to complement the existing town centre uses in Romford.

Any enhancements to public realm within Romford would be welcomed, recognising that the existing pedestrianised High Street provides a wide, open boulevard for

shoppers to roam freely, whereas the external areas around the shopping centre are relatively narrow and unappealing. The open character of the high street should be built upon to further promote Romford as a town centre destination for the wider area, and enhanced areas of public realm would support this aim.

- Transport, Parking and Servicing

Owing to the excellent PTAL of 6b, the proposal would come forward as car-free, with wheelchair accessible parking provided on the existing service road above the shopping centre.

This service road is adopted highway, and can therefore serve multiple functions in addition to continuing to serve the existing shops within the Liberty, and would provide the delivery and servicing areas for the future residents of Plot 1. Moreover, this area is proposed to become more pedestrian and cycle friendly, to better create a residential setting for any new homes, with the introduction of clearer demarcation lines and urban greening.

- Affordable Housing

Discussions around affordable housing provision are ongoing, however at this stage, the applicant's latest position is that the proposal is unviable and on a purely fiscal basis, no affordable housing can be provided. However, the applicant recognises that a scheme of this size and nature would be unacceptable without the provision of any affordable housing, and has therefore offered to provide in the later phases of the development 5% of Plot 2 and 10% of Plot 3 as Discount Market Rent (DMR) housing (approximately 5% of the overall scheme).

It should be noted that DMR is considered to be an intermediate tenure (i.e. equivalent to Shared Ownership or First Homes), rather than an affordable rent tenure, noting that the discount offered would not qualify under the affordable rented tenure. DMR is being proposed as the scheme would come forward under the 'Build to Rent' model, rather than market housing for sale. Build to Rent models have the potential for greater yields over time, but typically present themselves as receiving less return on investment in the short term.

Conclusions

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 prior to submission of a formal planning application.

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 Havering LONDON BOROUGH	Strategic Planning Committee – Developer Presentation 23 October 2025
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Pre-Application Reference: W0210.25

Location: YMCA THAMES GATEWAY, 29 RUSH
GREEN ROAD, ROMFORD RM7 0PH

Ward: RUSH GREEN & CROWLANDS AND HYLANDS &
HARROW LODGE

Description: Erection of a building to be used for
short-term supported accommodation.

Case Officer: Andrew Thornley

Case Officer: Andrew Thornley

Site Description

The application site comprises the northern car park of the existing YMCA building in Rush Green, and is comprised of hardstanding with a small section of amenity grassland in the north-east corner and a strip of grass adjacent to the River Rom.

The application site forms part of the wider YMCA site, which extends further south and west, and includes in its centre a large, long building of varying height (up to 11 storeys).

The surrounding area includes a mix of housing types and sizes, characterised predominantly by two-storey terraced houses, but with 9-10 storey blocks of flats to the north-east and a 3-4 storey (equivalent) self-storage unit to the east, beyond a single-storey community hall abutting the site. Grenfell Park lies to the south-east, beyond the River Rom, designated as Metropolitan Open Land.

It should be noted that the application site straddles the boundary between the London Borough of Havering and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

Planning Policy Designations

Parts of the site, adjacent to the river Rom and including the patch of grassland in the north-east corner, are designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (of Metropolitan Importance), and most of the site is covered by Flood Zones 2 and 3.

Proposal

The proposed development relates to the erection of a six-storey building, comprising 184 supported accommodation units. The proposed building would also include shared living, dining and kitchen areas, and an on-site laundry room, with the ground floor further including flexible space for both resident and public use.

The proposed building would form part of the wider YMCA campus in Rush Green, which currently provides 148 supported housing units and 61 'move-on' flats, alongside a gym, nursery and café. It is proposed that the existing building's residents will decant into the proposed development, and the tower will then be redeveloped/refurbished at a later date (subject to a future planning application).

Quality Review Panel

The pre-application scheme was presented to Havering's Quality review Panel on the 02/09/25, and the feedback received from QRP is summarised in the table below.

It should be noted that as the scheme evolves and responds to feedback, some of these QRP comments may no longer be applicable to the latest version of the scheme.

QRP Comments	Applicant Team Response
Principle of Development	
The Quality Review Panel strongly supports the delivery of new supported housing units, particularly as it will enable the wider YMCA site to be improved and redeveloped, with the important community use retained.	The support for the principle of development is noted.
Layout	
The panel supports the redevelopment of the site to provide housing for residents of the existing YMCA building.	The proposed building has been setback from Rush Green Road with a further setback on the western element of the proposed building. This ensures retention of the trees and provides a pleasant environment for pedestrians. Courtyards were considered by the design team however it is not feasible as the YMCA need to maximise space on the ground floor for the various uses including flexible spaces, offices, consultation rooms, chapel, a large entrance, and plant space for the units above.
The careful examination of similar types of accommodation to understand key issues and how they can be resolved is beneficial.	
While there are time and funding constraints, the panel feels that further work is needed to address concerns about the quality of the accommodation.	
The panel suggests moving the building back from Rush Green Road to better align with neighbouring properties.	
The panel has concerns that the building is too close to the existing trees	

and will cause damage. An arboricultural assessment is required to help determine the root protection zones and developable area.	
Demolishing the existing café would help free up the necessary space to move the proposed building back. However, a temporary strategy should be developed to ensure the café use can be retained during construction.	
Improvements to the pedestrian experience on Rush Green Road should be considered, with a more generous pavement. The design of the building should avoid being overbearing.	
The addition of planting along the northern edge will create a buffer between the building and the pavement, improving the experience for those using and living in the building.	
The impact of waste management and servicing should be tested.	
Wider Masterplan	
The panel recommends undertaking a quick vision or masterplanning exercise for the wider YMCA site in parallel to maximise the long-term investment in the site. This would also support a stronger rationale for the proposal, providing the councils with clarity and assurance on how the site might evolve.	The proposed vision for Phase 2 and the wider site is still being considered by the YMCA. As part of the planning application, it is proposed to prepare a high-level narrative to the wider Site and Phase 2. Notwithstanding, the existing community and sports facilities are an important part of the YMCA offer, and these will continue to be offered throughout. A direct connection to Grenfell Park from Rush Green is existing and located only 35m from the YMCA site.
Key spatial moves, the mix and relationship between different uses, wider long term opportunities such as the re-naturalisation of the river, and a direct connection from Rush Green Road to Grenfell Park, need to be considered.	
Phasing and temporary uses should be considered to ensure that the existing facility's functionality and community benefit are maintained during construction.	
Landscape and Ecology	
The panel welcomes the approach to maximising the landscape potential, particularly given the site constraints.	The support for the maximisation of the landscape is welcomed. The application is supported by a Daylight/Sunlight Assessment and an ecological assessment.
The creation of a series of 'stepping stones' as part of the wider green and blue infrastructure, the potential to create a series of different biomes.	

improvements to the SINC and the consideration of people and nature are all positive principles.	The proposed ecological and landscaping improvements to the Site adjacent to the River Rom result in indirect improvements to the River Rom and Grenfell Park. This includes removal of non-native species and the introduction of appropriate habitats and flood water retention. These are considered to be a substantial contribution to improvements to the River Rom. Additionally, as a charity, the YMCA are financially constrained, and any additional contributions would impact their operations.
However, the emerging landscape ideas should now be translated into more detailed proposals. These should be informed by robust assessments, including sunlight, ecology, and wind; an understanding of the user experience in each space; and clearer commitments.	
The combination of photovoltaics and green roof is supported. Rather than sedum, the panel encourages the team to develop a planting strategy that will offer greater ecological and biodiversity benefits.	
The panel has concerns related to the quality and viability of the interior courtyard areas. Although they will have some value, their usability and appeal will depend on a better understanding of the environmental conditions to understand what planting is feasible and how comfortable these spaces are.	
A clear and appropriate purpose should be developed, with opportunities to incorporate seasonality into the planting palette.	
It may be better to bring areas of the courtyards down to the ground floor level, to provide additional light and amenity space for the communal entrances and studio spaces. This would significantly improve the deep ground floor plan and sense of arrival, and physically and visually connect the atria with the entrance.	
The emerging ideas for the rear yard are positive, particularly the relationship to the river. Public routes from the public highway should be made clear and obvious.	
The panel suggests incorporating some form of shelter in the yard so that people can use the space when it is raining or windy.	
The emerging approach to sustainable urban drainage is promising. Opportunities to capture and reuse water on-site would be positive for landscape maintenance and/or food production.	

Further clarity is required regarding the proposed lighting strategy.	
The alternative option for parking, located away from the river corridor, is preferred as this helps reduce its dominance in the landscape.	
A sustainable landscape management and maintenance strategy is needed to provide confidence in the long-term quality of the proposals and their benefit.	
The SINC and River Rom should be considered beyond the application boundary to help create a holistic landscape proposal and improve the outlook for YMCA residents.	
Grenfell Park would benefit from biodiversity and ecological enhancement, and could be used to help mitigate flooding.	
As the proposals will involve construction on a SINC, a Section 106 contribution could be made towards the re-naturalisation of the river through the park.	
Architecture	
Supported housing can create quite repetitive and utilitarian elevations. Careful thought should be given to how this is designed, including opportunities for greater variety, depth and quality to the facades.	An overheating assessment, a noise assessment, and daylight/sunlight assessment will be submitted as part of the planning application. Initial results confirm that the living conditions of residents will be acceptable.
The character study is positive, but a more distinct and joyful language is required. Architectural detailing on streets such as Elm Park Road should be reviewed to help inform the design.	The building is setback from the street, with the ground floor layout revised to create a more active frontage with Rush Green Road including offices, the chapel, and a large entrance way. Flexible spaces are also provided to internal frontage to create an active frontage facing onto the communal landscaping.
While material choices are at an early stage, the panel supports the use of brick.	
The response to environmental conditions, including issues such as solar gain, overheating and road noise, could also inform the architectural language of the building. Deep recessed windows and solar shading are likely to be necessary on the Rush Green Road elevation and could contribute to the building's character.	
Entrances should be made more legible and celebratory, particularly on Rush	

Green Road. Internal spaces should be generous and welcoming.	
To help make the Rush Green Road frontage active and inviting, the communal and community uses should be made more open and visible.	
While having a strong base is positive, stepping back from the street to create more space between the pavement and building should be prioritised. Alternative approaches to defining and activating the ground floor should be considered.	
Signage and wayfinding should be an integrated part of the design.	
Sustainability	
A more specific and ambitious approach to sustainability is required, including robust commitments and evidence of how this has informed the design.	The YMCA have sought to maximise the developments approach to sustainability. An energy and sustainability strategy, a whole life carbon assessment, a circular economy statement, and an overheating assessment will all be submitted as part of the planning application.
The strategy should address how embodied carbon has informed material selection, the re-use of existing materials on site, operational performance, and the construction strategy.	
Greater assurance is required regarding how overheating has influenced the design, including material choices, elevation details, ventilation strategy and the building's management strategy.	
The proposed electrical systems, their application for the various uses in the building, and the feasibility of heat recovery systems, such as those for showers, should all be carefully considered as part of the energy strategy.	
The applicant should ensure that it can easily connect to an energy centre in the future, or as part of a larger masterplan or in the local area.	
The consideration of how the building could be re-purposed for alternative uses in the future is welcome. In addition to identifying alternative uses, the potential deconstruction of the building at the end of its life should be considered.	

Key Planning Considerations

- Principle of Development

The type of accommodation offered within this development is in very high demand, and would greatly assist the borough by providing short-term accommodation for homeless people, allowing the council to meet its statutory duty to provide shelter for homeless people within the borough. Policy H12 of the London Plan (Supported and specialised accommodation) sets out that applications which seek to deliver this type of accommodation should generally be supported.

- Layout, Scale and Massing

The proposed building would have a long, linear footprint, with its long edge facing towards Rush Green Road, and would be six storeys in height. The layout features a slight kink in the centre, to allow the western end of the block to be slightly set back from the road, to lessen impacts on the row of three street trees to the front of the site on Rush Green Road.

- Detailed Design

The proposed development would be finished in brick, using generally paler brick tones with some detailing around the windows. The ground floor would be of a greater floor-to-ceiling height, recognising that the ground floor would provide the majority of the communal facilities, alongside the flexible space and the entrance lobby, and this would be reflected in the external façade.

- Quality of Accommodation

The proposed units would be approximately 13 sqm in size, with ensembles, and a slightly larger allowance for the accessible rooms, which would be equivalent to a hostel or small hotel room. Each room would be for single-occupancy use only.

Owing to the proposed layout, which is largely a response to other site constraints, nearly every unit would be single-aspect, although there is an opportunity for the corner units on each floor to be provided with a secondary window. As such, there are some concerns with the quantum of single-aspect north-facing units, which would have relatively poor access to daylight and virtually no access to direct sunlight, and conversely, the potential for overheating in the single-aspect south-facing units which make up the other half of the proposed units. This will have to be carefully considered by the design team and the local planning authority to ensure that the quality of accommodation provided is of an acceptable standard.

- Transport, Parking and Servicing

The application site is located on the car parking area to the front of the main YMCA building, and as a result of the development, all 59 of these spaces would be lost, with the scheme including the re-provision of 10 wheelchair-accessible parking spaces.

The site has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 3-4, indicative of relatively good access to public transport, primarily in the form of buses. For this type of accommodation, there are no set parking standards, and parking provision should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. It is understood that the vast majority of people living on-site do not have access to a car, and that the car parking areas serve the general public when using the on-site facilities (e.g. gym, café, nursery), and it is important to ensure that sufficient parking spaces remain to continue to serve these needs.

- Landscaping and Ecology

The proposed landscaping areas will need to be multi-functional, in that it will need to provide external amenity space, surface water management and habitat creation, all within a fairly limited space. Part of the site is designated as a SINC, although its actual ecological value is unlikely to be high noting that the site is dominated by hardstanding and amenity grassland, and efforts to enhance the SINC's ecological value through the creation of a riparian buffer zone are currently being explored.

- River Rom and Flood Risk

The River Rom runs in a broad north-south direction along the eastern boundary of the site, and as a result, much of the site is in Flood Zones 2 and 3, meaning it is highly susceptible to flooding. This has heavily influenced the proposed layout and design of the proposal, such that no parts of the building falls within Flood Zone 3b (functional flood plain).

The applicant has engaged with the Environment Agency in separate pre-application discussions, who are generally satisfied that the proposal can be accommodated without increasing flood risk elsewhere, provided sufficient mitigation is put in place and secured as part of the development, to include flood resilience measures.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) would be used for this scheme to manage surface water, whilst the building would be raised 300 mm above the maximum-modelled flood depth for a 1 in 100 year flooding event.

In addition, the council and the applicant are currently exploring how best to naturalise this part of the River Rom, which is currently culverted with a sheer concrete wall, as part of the council's wider efforts to naturalise the river along its length within the borough.

Conclusions

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 prior to submission of a formal planning application.

 Havering LONDON BOROUGH	Strategic Planning Committee – Developer Presentation 23 October 2025
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Pre-Application Reference: W0312.24

Location: FORMER ATIK NIGHT CLUB, 108 SOUTH STREET, ROMFORD

Ward: ST EDWARDS

Description: Demolition of the existing building, followed by the erection of a co-living development.

Case Officer: Andrew Thornley

Site Description

The application site comprises an irregularly-shaped plot situated on the corner of South Street and Havana Close, which wraps around the Hilton Romford (a hotel), which faces onto South Street. The site lies within Romford Town Centre (a Metropolitan Centre within the London Plan), immediately adjacent to Romford Train Station, which is served by the Elizabeth Line, the Liberty Line (London Overground) and Greater Anglia Services (National Rail).

The existing building on site has two main parts; a lower rise part one, part four storey (equivalent) section on the corner of South Street and Havana Close; and a taller six storey section to the west, positioned away from the high street, which is understood to have historically been used as a coal store and gas holder. The building's overall appearance is of a fairly neutral character with a lack of a coherent frontage and somewhat oppressive façades, with clear signs of deterioration visible from the outside such as smashed and boarded up windows, and overgrown weeds.

With the exception of the adjacent Hilton Hotel (nine storeys), the host building is of a similar scale to the surrounding buildings, such as the Brewery Shopping Centre multi-storey car park and the Vue Cinema, with a slight stepping down in scale northwards on South Street to predominantly three and four-storey buildings, although it should be noted that immediately to the west of the application site is a large plot occupied

by a small single-storey substation located centrally within its plot, which is largely devoid of built form.

Planning Policy Designations

The site falls within the 'Brewery' area of the Romford Masterplan SPD, which seeks the delivery of a predominantly commercial area, comprised of retail, leisure, culture and business uses that maintains the area's role as a primary destination in Romford. There is also the potential for housing both at ground floor and upper levels, and this approach is consistent with London Plan and Havering Local Plan policies in relation to Metropolitan Centres.

The application site is not specifically discussed within the Masterplan SPD, however the SPD broadly encourages cultural and leisure uses along the eastern side of the 'Brewery' area (between the River Rom and South Street), north of the application site, with social and community uses to the west, but obviously with a predominantly retail focus across the wider area.

There is no specific demand identified for co-living schemes within the Havering Local Plan, however the London Plan sets out that this use provides a form of housing which, provided it meets the criteria set out in Policy H16 (Large-scale purpose-built shared living), is encouraged to broaden the type of housing offered to Londoners.

The site has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 6b (the best) and is within Flood Zone 2, because of an underground brook (Black's Brook) which runs beneath the site (east/west).

Proposal

The proposed development seeks the complete demolition of all buildings and structures on site followed by comprehensive redevelopment to provide a single building ranging in height from six storeys (on the corner of South Street and Havana Close) to nine storeys (in the north-west corner of the site, facing towards the Brewery), with two intermediary eight storey elements.

The scheme would comprise of 294 co-living units (sometimes referred to as shared-living), which is a form of housing designed specifically for single person households who cannot, or choose not, to live in self-contained homes or HMOs. This type of accommodation is seen as providing an alternative to traditional flat shares and includes additional on-site services and facilities, such as room cleaning, working spaces, an on-site gym and a concierge service.

The ground floor comprises most of the shared living facilities, alongside a cycle store, bin store, and mechanical plant, with the main entrance located on the southern side of the building, facing a proposed area of new public realm on the Battis. The residential accommodation is located on the first to eighth floors, with shared external amenity areas provided at roof level on the first, sixth, and eighth floors.

Each unit would be provided with its own kitchenette and bathroom facilities, to provide an element of independence for future occupiers, whilst still relying on the shared facilities for social interaction and engagement, which is in line with London Plan policies on this type of accommodation.

Owing to the excellent PTAL of 6b (the best), the site is proposed as car free, with one wheelchair accessible space provided on-site, accessed from Havana Close.

Quality Review Panel

The pre-application scheme was presented to Havering's Quality review Panel on the 14/08/25, and the feedback received from QRP is summarised in the table below.

It should be noted that as the scheme evolves and responds to feedback, some of these QRP comments may no longer be applicable to the latest version of the scheme.

QRP Comments	Applicant Team Response
Strategic Approach	
The panel supports the proposal for a shared living scheme on this well-connected town centre site, next to Romford Station.	This feedback is welcomed, the Applicants vision is to provide an exemplar shared living development that realises the full potential of this disused site, especially given the highly sustainable location.
A high-quality development should be delivered, that meets the high standard of the reference presented: Folk's Sunday Mills in Earlsfield.	The project brief is to provide high quality shared living accommodation and to bring forward a well-designed sustainable scheme with public realm that contributes positively to the local area.
In-depth research should be undertaken, to determine how the accommodation proposed meets the needs of the local demographic in the borough, particularly young people.	The Applicants have undertaken in-depth research into demand and need for this type of accommodation in the borough. A Co-Living needs assessment will be provided as part of the planning submission.
The panel suggests integrating some longer-term rental alongside the shared living accommodation.	The proposed scheme will not have restrictions on the maximum length of stay and through well thought out management and community building events the aim of the development will be to retain its renters for the longer term. Shared living can provide longer-term rented accommodation, as there is no upper limit to how long individuals can stay in co-living accommodation. Typically, residents would stay between three months to three years, akin to traditional rented accommodation.

The proposed height works well in the surrounding townscape.	This feedback is welcomed. A Townscape Assessment will be provided within the planning submission that reinforces the massing assumptions.
Ground floor layout, activation and uses	
The panel supports the aspiration to provide open views through the ground floor of the building, between The Battis and Havana Close/Exchange Street. This would contribute positively to the street scene.	This is welcomed, since the QRP, the team have worked to ensure there is a clear sight line through the building.
The cellular layout of amenity spaces should be reconsidered. Some of the residential amenity should be moved to the first floor, to create more space and allow open vistas through the building.	CAL have taken on board the QRPs comments and created a clear sight line through the building from The Battis to Havana Close. Some of the residential amenity has now been located on the first floor opening up on the roof terrace. We now have amenity on Ground, 1st, 7th & 8th floors.
A larger space is needed for the public use on the corner of South Street and Havana Close, to ensure that it will be fully functional and successful.	The team see this as an urban coffee shop at the corner along with the co-working on Havana Close which will be opened up to local residents thereby creating a larger space for public use.
Analysis of the residents' arrival experience should be undertaken. Given the distance to the second lift core from the reception area, it may be necessary to provide higher capacity lifts in the first core, to ensure that residents do not have excessive wait times for the lift.	CAL see the main core as the core by the front entry lobby off the Battis, the secondary core is more to do with fire requirements for the building, none the less analysis of the vertical transportation design has been undertaken by the team to ensure that there are no extended waiting times especially at peak times.
The ground floor of the building should make a greater contribution to Romford town centre. A complementary, or alternative, use to the proposed café should be considered. Uses that remain open into the evening should be provided to contribute to Romford's night-time economy. For example, a bar, event space, or an after-school use.	As noted in the previous comments the corner will be an urban coffee shop along with a complementary co-working space that will be opened up to local residents.
The opportunity to provide outdoor seating for any food and beverage use should be explored.	We have reviewed this option and the location on a busy corner where servicing vehicles are likely to turn into Havana Close was not seen as a safe space for outdoor seating. Therefore, we felt that it is not feasible or practical to achieve on South Street.

Flexible soft start uses could be beneficial, with smaller spaces provided initially that can expand to the scale typically found in the high street. This would also help to ensure a large enough space for a viable night-time use.	The team are working with local charities and youth group to try and facilitate the usage of some of the amenity spaces. We hope that this will help embed the proposed scheme within the town centre and provide varied activation through the day.
Opportunities should be explored to provide greater activation of the long elevation on Havana Close and Exchange Street, given that pedestrians will use this street to access to the future Brewery Quarter development.	CAL have rearranged the Havana Close / Exchange St frontages moving the main refuse store to the West side of the building. The new layouts have a much greater active frontage along the street.
The cycle storage could be relocated to help activate the frontage and/or the bin store layout changed to reduce the area of blank façade.	CAL have also relocated the cycle store again to the central West of the building bring the more amenity scape fronting on to The Battis.
Quality of accommodation	
Any improvements that can be made to bring natural light into the long east west corridor, on the upper levels of the building, would be welcomed.	We reviewed this with the wider team and for fire safety concerns the eastern end of the corridor can not be opened.
The provision of a range of different size accommodation, including larger units, should be tested.	We have a range of unit sizes from 18 sqm, 21m sqm and 28 sqm.
The provision of external green amenity spaces on various levels is positive. Architectural expression	This feedback is welcomed; it is the Applicants intention to provide a high quality amenity spaces for residents and increase the Site's urban greening & BNG.
Architectural expression	
The architectural expression of the café should make a greater contribution to the Romford town centre. Its location, on the corner of South Street and Havana Place, provides an excellent opportunity to deliver a delightful piece of architecture that belongs to the local community.	The team see this an urban coffee shop and in and out space. The façade above the coffee shop will be designed as an ode to the strong presence of artwork and graffiti on this corner of the site. The team will design this feature wall to have artwork in engagement with the local community which we think will help root the building in Romford.
The muscular architecture of the north and west elevations responds well to the complexity of the surrounding context. However, these large repetitive elevations would benefit from further refinement, to add more delight to the scheme. Inspiration should be taken from the reference presented: Bell Philips Architects' Southwark Housing.	CAL have been working on the refinement of the elevations breaking down into three zones around the building.
Designing elevations in response to their solar orientation will provide a further	CAL have been developing the elevations in keeping with their

opportunity to incorporate more delight into the architecture. Increasing the depth of window reveals will improve solar shading, as well as adding visual interest through the play of light and shadow.	orientation and exploring ideas for passive solar shading.
The reference to the language of the adjacent railway arches should be celebrated more.	CAL note that the celebration of the arches on The Battis is still very much the architectural way forward.
Further work is needed to give architectural weight and distinction to the top of the building.	CAL note that detailed façade panel zones will be included in the DAS which will demonstrate our approach to creating a distinctive top to the building.
Collaboration with Nathan Bowen or a local artist is encouraged, to include street art on the façade, given that the existing artwork will be lost. This will help to ground the new building in Romford.	The team really appreciated the suggestion and have taken the comment on board. The wall facing South St is now being designed as an art wall.
The specification of high-quality materials and careful detailing will be essential to the success of the development. The panel supports the use of planning conditions to ensure that the quality shown in the drawings is delivered.	The scheme intends to use high-quality construction materials & finishes.
Public realm and landscape design	
The panel welcomes the provision of a new public square adjoining The Battis.	This is welcomed, the intention of the scheme is to use the amenity spaces to activate this new square and the Battis as much as possible.
While it supports the residents' entrance being located off the square, it is essential that a generous space is provided that is welcoming and accessible to all.	Since the QRP, the team have worked with LBH to ensure the residents entrance is safe, welcoming and accessible to all.
Additional trees and greenery should be provided. More detail is needed to demonstrate that a robust and high-quality design will be delivered and thrive long-term in an area of high footfall. Softer landscape should be specified in locations where it will be able to endure the wear and tear.	A landscaping strategy will be provided within the planning submission; this will include the Site's Urban Greening Factor Score and the BNG.
Thought should be given to how Lime bikes discarded in the public realm will be managed.	Lime, or other shared public hire bikes, do not currently operate in the borough. However, the public realm includes a marked area public shared hire bikes to encourage them to be parked in an appropriate location, should they operate in the borough and local area in future.

Servicing	
A strategy is needed for the management of deliveries, particularly take-away food deliveries and residents moving into and out of their accommodation.	Servicing and deliveries, with the exception of waste collection, will be undertaken from the existing loading bay on South Street, a short distance east of the main entrance to the building. Deliveries will be carried/trolleyed along the Battis from the loading bay to the main entrance and a concierge reception is provided to assist with the arrival of goods, along with a dedicated post and parcel room. An analysis of the expected servicing and delivery trips to the proposed development has been undertaken, including assessment of vehicle types and arrival times. This has been presented to LBH during pre-app discussions and will be included within the Transport Assessment supporting the planning application. A survey has been undertaken of existing servicing activity in the South Street loading bay and this demonstrates that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the expected servicing demand associated with the proposed development. A Delivery and Servicing Management Plan is being prepared to support the planning application.
Refuse storage should be provided for the café/corner unit.	A separate commercial bin store is provided and is shown on the ground floor layout plans.
Environmental sustainability	
The design of each elevation should be orientation-specific, to help address overheating.	The design will meet the requirements of Part O Overheating of building regulations. The strategy will ensure the design can meet requirements by natural ventilation means first and foremost, but also that thermal comfort can be achieved indoors with the windows partially or fully closed, should the occupants so choose, for any facades where the noise assessment may show a risk of noise ingress (in line with the Part O methodology).

External shading should be used to reduce solar gain, particularly on the west and south elevations.	Passive means of solar shading will be incorporated to avoid solar gains.
A noise impact assessment is needed, to mitigate any adverse impact of the air source heat pumps on the residents' and neighbouring hotel guests' quality of life.	A noise impact assessment has been undertaken, and this will be submitted in support of the planning application.
Assessment of the noise impact from neighbouring sites, including the substation, the railway line, the Brewery car park building and hotel plant is also needed.	A noise impact assessment has been undertaken, and this will be submitted in support of the planning application.
A ventilation strategy should be provided.	The proposed ventilation strategy comprises: - MVHR in dwellings. - Natural vent to plant room with external walls. - Mechanical extract to internal plant rooms - MVHR or NVHRs to amenity spaces Relevant information relating to the ventilation strategy will be provided in the Energy Strategy report as part of the planning submission.

Key Planning Considerations

- Principle of Development

The site falls within the 'Brewery' area of the Romford Masterplan SPD, and is an underutilised brownfield site in a very sustainable town centre location, and is therefore considered suitable for redevelopment.

There are no known co-living schemes currently operating within the borough of Havering, and this form of accommodation is considered to broaden the type of housing offered for residents, providing an alternative to renting alone in a one-bedroom flat, or in a shared flat or house (HMO). There is therefore general support for this type of accommodation, subject to further evidence being provided to demonstrate that there is an unmet need within the borough.

In this respect, it is recognised that this type of development can provide a meaningful positive contribution to the borough's supply of new homes by reducing pressure on the private rented market housing sector and the need for existing homes to be converted into HMOs (noting that conversion into HMOs can reduce the availability of family-sized houses being used for their original purpose).

- Layout, Scale and Massing

The overall scale and massing of the scheme would be of a similar height (nine storeys) to the Hilton Hotel, to the south, stepping down in scale to six-storeys facing South Street. The massing illustrations appear slightly bulky, however, high-quality detailed design of the facades would be needed to break up the perception of massing, especially given the fairly restricted plot size.

- Detailed Design

The proposal would be finished in predominantly red brick, with lighter brickwork used to highlight vertical elements, with soldier courses further expressing storey heights. At ground level, arched openings are proposed, to complement the railway arches opposite, alongside extensive glass façades facing towards Havana Close and South Street.

- Quality of Accommodation

The internal space standards for residential developments set out in the nationally described space standards and the London Plan do not apply to this form of accommodation. Instead, the quality of accommodation is assessed on a case-by-case basis, using a qualitative assessment to determine whether each unit is provided with adequate functional living space and has a sensible layout, whilst sufficient communal facilities are provided. Each unit would be provided with its own kitchenette and bathroom facilities, to provide an element of independence for future occupiers, however the proposal also includes a communal kitchen, communal space and dining areas.

- Affordable Housing

In accordance with Policy H16 of the London Plan (Large-scale purpose-built shared living), on-site affordable housing is not sought, and instead developments are expected to provide a contribution that is equivalent to 35% of the units, and will be subject to the Viability Tested Route for assessing affordable housing.

- Public Realm

The inclusion of a new small public square facing towards the station is a very welcome addition, and is a clear betterment compared to existing conditions, which would make the pedestrian route to the side of the railway arches much more welcoming. The Masterplan SPD seeks to improve the pedestrian environment along these routes as important link routes between South Street and the Brewery shopping areas.

- Transport, Parking and Servicing

The proposal would be car-free, which is supported for this town centre setting in very close proximity to Romford Train Station, with excellent access to public transport. Moreover, the provision of on-site parking would severely restrict the optimisation of the site due to its fairly limited size, and basement parking is not possible due to the presence of an underground culverted river (Black's Brook). It is further recognised that the type of accommodation offered (for single-occupancy shared living) is unlikely to attract people who would rely on a car for their day-to-day lives.

Servicing arrangements will need to be carefully managed in this part of the town centre, which is relatively busy with the frequent movement of buses and other vehicles. It is proposed that the existing loading bay on South Street is utilised for delivery vehicles, whilst refuse collection would take place once a week from Exchange Street.

Conclusions

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 prior to submission of a formal planning application.