



## **CABINET**

**8 July 2015**

**Subject Heading:**

**Cabinet Member:**

**CMT Lead:**

**Report Author and contact details:**

**Policy context:**

**Financial summary:**

**Is this a Key Decision?**

**When should this matter be reviewed?**

**Reviewing OSC:**

### **APPROVAL OF THE ROMFORD DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK.**

**Cllr Osman Dervish** Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services and Community Safety

**Cllr Robert Benham** Cabinet Member for the Environment

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Havering Council Corporate Plan 2015-16: Using our influence by bringing more jobs, homes, schools and transport to Havering and influence the quality of private housing and the places where people live

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

London Plan Consolidated with Alterations since 2011 (2015)

Havering Local Development Framework (2008)

Romford Area Action Plan (2008)

This report concerns planning issues, and there are no specific, direct financial implications.

Yes

September 2017

Towns and Communities

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

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

**SUMMARY**

This report seeks approval for the Romford Development Framework to guide the future development of the town over the next 20 years. It will provide support to the Council to enable it to have more control over the quality of design and materials of the built form and clearly articulate its ambitions, preferences and improve engagement with prospective developers/landowners.

This Framework sets out an ambitious but realistic physical vision for the town and the mechanism by which it will be delivered. It proposes six strategic objectives which seek to ensure Romford capitalises on the town centre's significant potential for economic growth – with the aim of delivering thousands of high quality new homes and jobs, attracting more shoppers and leisure visitors, and capitalising on property demand and value growth driven by the arrival of Crossrail in 2018/19.

The development Framework takes a holistic view of the town centre and its key character areas, rather than solely concentrating on the individual development opportunities. Character areas have been developed and the Framework provides specific guidance and principles for each of these that seeks to control and influence new development in the individual areas. More detailed proposals for each of the character areas and key opportunity sites have been underpinned by urban design analysis, viability appraisal and analysis of development constraints, to ensure that any barriers to delivery can be overcome within the requisite timescales. This analysis has provided the basis for the development of a town centre wide Framework designed to strengthen Romford's identity, helping Romford over time, to become more legible, coherent and prosperous.

Proposed guidance on development densities provides opportunities for residential-led mixed use schemes providing high quality urban living for a new economically active community, whilst new social infrastructure brought forward in parallel with development will better serve the needs of existing residents in the town centre and beyond.

The Framework is broadly consistent with national and Mayoral planning policy and it will be taken forward as part of the evidence base of, and, subject to Member approval, incorporated, as appropriate, in the emerging new Havering Local Plan. It will not be subject to public consultation nor adopted as a formal statutory planning document but will be taken into account as a material planning consideration by development management planners in pre-application discussions and / or considering planning applications.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Cabinet:

- (1) Approve the Romford Development Framework (which is a background paper to this report) and agree that the Romford Development Framework should be a material planning consideration when considering development proposals.
- (2) Agree to work proactively with developers and key stakeholders to bring forward developments that meet the aspirations of the Framework and to take forward the actions proposed in the Framework.

## **REPORT DETAIL**

- 1.0 Background
- 1.1 In June 2014 the Council commissioned a multi-disciplinary team led by BBP (chartered surveyors), Tibbalds (design & planning) and Campbell Reith (engineering) to produce a draft development Framework for Romford. The purpose of this Framework is to help shape Romford's future development and growth and to support the town's development as a successful place to live, work and visit and where businesses will want to invest.
- 1.2 The Framework will form part of the evidence base for the new Havering Local Plan and includes recommendations which, subject to Member approval, may inform and support proposed future site allocations and policy in the Local Plan. The Framework needs to be consistent with the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and the Mayor's latest London Plan (2015) which both promotes the importance of a plan and a plan led approach to development. The Framework will also serve as a marketing tool for the town as well as a guide to developers.
- 1.3 It provides a strategic vision for the town centre, identifies character areas within it and makes recommendations on the form and scale of future development.
- 1.4 Key factors which have been taken into account in the production of the Framework include:

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- Maximising the opportunities of Crossrail, with an anticipated operational date of 2018 / 19.
- The latest London Plan (2015) supports increased residential densities which the Council will need to take account of in the Framework and the new Local Plan.
- Ensuring that Romford retailers are better positioned to respond to and thrive on the competition from Lakeside, Bluewater, and Stratford Westfield as well as the investment taking place in other town centres such as Chelmsford.
- Providing office stock which meets the changing needs of businesses.
- Strengthening Romford's leisure offer.
- The opportunity for the town centre to be the location for high quality new homes to help meet housing demand and need.

1.5 The Framework is intended to form part of the evidence base for the new Havering Local Plan, which once adopted will supersede the Local Development Framework (2008) including the Romford Area Action Plan. It therefore includes recommendations to inform and support future allocations and policy as that plan is prepared. The Local Development Framework (and the latest London Plan) will remain the primary planning policy context and until any policy recommendations are incorporated into the new Local Plan, the Framework would have the status of a material planning consideration. A material planning consideration is a matter that should be taken into account in deciding a planning application or on an appeal against a planning decision. These policy recommendations relate to land-uses, layout and density of building, design, appearance and materials and are outlined in the Framework document.

1.6 It takes a holistic view of the town centre and its key character areas, rather than solely concentrating on the individual development opportunities. Urban design analysis of the town centre as a whole has led to a clear definition of distinct areas or quadrants, each with their own characteristics and opportunities (see Section 4.0 of this report). This has provided the basis for a town centre wide Framework that will strengthen Romford and help it to become more legible, coherent and prosperous.

1.7 This town centre wide strategy has revealed key opportunity sites and guidelines for their redevelopment. These are set out including their massing, density, land use, guidelines and key development requirements. It is intended that this approach ensures that each site supports both the economic vitality and quality of the town centre as a whole as well as the individual character area where it is located. The draft Framework reflects the approach in the latest London Plan towards developments at higher densities. Members may wish to bear in mind that development proposals in Romford (and other town centres in Havering) with higher densities, and

which are also satisfactory in terms of other design requirements, may assist Havering in addressing its increased London Plan housing target figures whilst maintaining the more suburban parts of the borough at density levels which are more typical of earlier development. They may also assist in preventing the spread of development into the Havering Green Belt.

- 1.8 Development recommendations are underpinned by the urban design analysis, viability appraisals and analysis of development constraints, to ensure that as far as possible they are deliverable, and that delivery constraints are identified and understood.
- 1.9 The Framework has been developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members for the Environment, Regulatory Services and Community Safety and Housing, key landowners and developers and Council officers. Changes have been made to the initial recommendations as a result of this stakeholder engagement. A stakeholder event was held which included attendance from the above and local agents. Individual meetings have been held by the consultants with major landowners to test the proposals in the Framework. Public consultation on the Framework proposals that are taken forward within the Local Plan will take place as the Plan is consulted on.

## **2.0 Strategic Objectives and Town Centre Development Guidance**

- 2.1 A set of six strategic objectives have been developed to provide a clear vision for Romford.

The six objectives are:

- To strengthen Romford's role as a Metropolitan Centre by better serving the retail and leisure needs of local and neighbouring communities.
- To integrate an economically active sustainable community, delivering residential development alongside other uses and contributing significantly to the Borough's housing need.
- To remain an important employment centre, attracting inward investment and supporting businesses to grow or locate in the town.
- To build on the distinct character and fabric of the town centre bringing new vibrancy and activity to Romford's historic crossroads and market area whilst respecting and capitalising on its heritage.
- To portray a modern and vibrant aspirational identity for Romford's future whilst retaining its distinctiveness.
- To deliver a high quality well-connected public realm and improve access by public transport, walking and cycling.

2.2 In support of the strategic objectives, the Framework recommends that development proposals in Romford Town Centre should:

- Be of distinct character relating to Romford, of high quality design and construction, using long lasting materials.
- Create active and attractive frontages onto existing and proposed pedestrian routes and generally improve the pedestrian environment and accessibility of the town centre.
- Reduce the barrier effect of the ring-road, making the town centre more accessible for pedestrian and cyclists, provide attractive frontages and improve the image of Romford Town Centre when arriving by car or bus.
- Seek the introduction / densification of residential and employment uses on upper floors.
- Respect the Conservation Area and have regard to the historic fabric of Romford, strengthening Romford's character as a historic Market Town while introducing a more contemporary character around the Station Quarter.
- Support with appropriate uses the two key points of activity, the historic crossroads at the northern end of South Street and the area around Romford Station.
- Utilise opportunities to increase the number of people living in the town centre and provide them with appropriate levels of social and community facilities, including schools, nurseries, health care and GPs and community facilities.
- Provide appropriate levels of car parking in line with GLA standards, accepting car free living where appropriate, and consolidating town centre car parking and ensuring that commercial uses have access to appropriate levels of car parking to make them commercially viable.

### 2.3 Tall Buildings

2.3.1 The London Plan includes a specific policy dealing with the location and design of tall and large buildings (Policy 7.7). The policy says that 'tall and large buildings are those which are substantially taller than their surroundings, cause a significant change to the skyline or are larger than the threshold sizes set for the referral of planning applications to the Mayor.' The policy sets out the criteria that tall buildings should satisfy and its explanation (para. 7.26) emphasises that tall and large buildings should always be of 'the highest architectural quality' and 'should not have a negative impact on the amenity of surrounding uses'. The policy 'headline' says that tall and large buildings should be part of a plan-led approach to changing or developing an area by the identification of appropriate, sensitive and inappropriate locations. It says that tall and large buildings should not have an unacceptably harmful impact on their surroundings.

- 2.3.2 From a London Plan perspective, Romford Town Centre is, in principle, a suitable location for higher density dwellings. The Framework seeks to direct where those buildings would be and to limit potential heights to be appropriate for the town. The Framework provides overall height guidelines for each character area and where the scope for tall buildings is identified states that they should raise the bar in terms of quality of materials and architectural aesthetics emphasising the high aspirations of the town centre. They should provide a distinct focal point that helps people orient themselves and deliver strong public realm including in the spaces around them.
- 2.3.3. In line with the London Plan, which identifies that town centres which have good access to public transport may be appropriate for tall buildings, the Framework proposes to limit taller buildings to the southern part of town near the station where a cluster of buildings of varying heights is appropriate making the most of immediate public transport interchange and regeneration opportunities. Secondly to the Northern and Southern approaches to the town centre, where there is scope for tall buildings. In addition to being areas where tall buildings are already consented, permitting tall buildings in these areas will act as focal points reinforcing the North-South axis along South Street and thereby help direction finding and acting as a gateway to the town from these directions. The Framework seeks to take a pragmatic approach that provides support for tall buildings in limited locations. An approach that did not support tall buildings at all would not be in line with the London Plan.

### **3.0 Key Development Concepts**

- 3.1 Embrace Residential Living in the Town Centre
- 3.1.1 The Framework supports a significant increase in residential living in the town centre to provide high quality urban living for an economically active community. These new residents can provide key support for retail and service sectors and contribute towards a more secure economic future for an area by expanding the 'offer' of the town centre and extending the day and night time economy. New social infrastructure will better serve the needs of both new and existing residents in the town centre.
- 3.2 Strengthen Market Place
- 3.2.1 Market Place, one of Romford's greatest assets, could be rejuvenated by the delivery of a new public square providing a flexible civic space for cultural events and specialist markets, surrounded by a new cluster of cafes and restaurants leading to additional footfall and longer dwell times in the north of the town centre.
- 3.3 Strengthened and Diversified Retail and Leisure Offer
- 3.3.1 Support longer shop opening hours to encourage people to dwell longer in the town and a higher value evening economy in the Station Quarter,

Romford will begin to recapture greater retail and leisure expenditure from the local area and beyond.

### 3.4 Revitalised Office Quarter

3.4.1 Romford's function as a focus for employment will be retained by the modernisation of its office space to cater for the changing needs of businesses.

3.4.2 It would be rebranded as the Station Quarter to emphasise links with transport (especially Cross Rail) and a more diverse range of uses including residential and leisure. This rebranded wider station quarter (incorporating current office locations round Eastern/western road), will have a focus on enhanced public transport.

### 3.5 Town Centre Linkages

3.5.1 Romford's excellent public transport links by bus and rail will be complemented by improving access to amenities for the new communities to the west of the ring road.

3.5.2 Strengthen the cycling and pedestrian linkages from Romford's hinterlands to the town centre.

## 4.0 Character Areas

4.1 Urban design analysis of the town centre as a whole has led to a clear definition of distinct character areas or quadrants, each with their own characteristics and opportunities. The distinct character of each area aims to create increase legibility and create a step change in the quality of new buildings and public open space and a palette of modern and more traditional materials to define different character areas. Over time these areas will be reinforced as the Framework provides specific policy and guidance to control and regulate new development in the areas. A map outlining the character areas is contained in the appendix to this report.

### 4.2 The Northern Approach

4.2.1 The Northern Approach is located around the main access routes from the north, including North Street, parts of St Edward's Way and North Street roundabout.

4.2.2 The function of this area is to provide a high quality approach to the town centre and a transition from suburban areas to the north. Future development proposals should:

- Improve the existing frontage with high quality buildings that incorporate commercial uses (appropriate for the town centre fringe) on the ground floor and residential above.



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- Improve the public realm and reduce the severance by the ring-road improving pedestrian and cycle access to the town centre.

### 4.3 North Riverside

4.3.1 The North Riverside area covers Como Street and Angel Way and provides the opportunity for significant residential growth with a good quality open space corridor round an opened up river Rom with pedestrian access, overlooked by high quality housing providing a new residential quarter round the former Decathlon site and Angel Way

4.3.2 Future development proposals should;

- Provide a new residential quarter round the former Decathlon site, and Angel Way
- Include new public spaces
- Provide an opportunity for the opening up of the River Rom to provide a high quality waterside environment.
- Ensure buildings are of the highest quality and distinct in character, by requiring proposals to go to design review and engaging in a constructive early pre-application process

### 4.4 Historic Core

4.4.1 The historic core incorporates the Conservation Area and the historic cross roads at Market Place. It is the area of Romford that is the most notable character area and retains a number of listed and locally listed buildings. This provides the opportunity to strengthen Romford's identity as an historic market town. The function of this area is to provide Romford Town centre with a high quality environment that acts as civic focal point for leisure and cultural activities.

4.4.2 The recommendations for this area include:

- Making the link between North Street and South Street stronger
- Maintaining the historic core
- Improving the quality of restaurant/night time offer in the Market Place
- Revised market layout with new public square
- Rationalisation of parking provision in the Market Place to support the traditional street market and shops in this area.

### 4.5 Civic Quarter

4.5.1 This area is predominately defined by the public uses that are located in this area. As a result of these this area is an important destination. The area straddles Main Road and the northern side of St Edwards Way. The

function of this area is to provide a pleasant environment for visitors and employees and create a positive approach into Romford Town Centre.

4.5.2 The recommendations for this area are as follows and future proposals should:

- Retain and improve the existing avenue planting along Main Road.
- Improve the pedestrian environment and accessibility of this area.
- Create high quality buildings alongside the ring road. These should be set back behind areas of open space and planting.

4.6 Retail Quarter

4.6.1 The retail quarter consists of three sub areas, East (Liberties and Mercury Mall), West (The Brewery) and South Street. The function of this area as the main retail area for Havering must be retained and nurtured to ensure that Romford Town Centre continues to attract people and stay commercially competitive.

4.6.2 The recommendations for this area include;

- Consolidated retail heart
- Improve existing pedestrian links with active frontages and proactively encourage a pedestrian flow through the town centre as a whole.
- Improving the quality of restaurant/night time offer in the town;
- Introduce local, independent and niche shops, cafes and restaurants with sitting out areas in the public realm;
- Improve the look and maintenance of service courts and reduce their negative impact onto the town centre environment
- Improving the public realm, de-cluttering South Street and restricting advertising boards, improving the maintenance and introducing high quality materials and street furniture.

4.7 Station Quarter

4.7.1 This area is focused around Romford station and incorporates what was formerly known as the Office Quarter. It is split into three sub-areas. The function of this area is to act as a gateway to Romford and focal area for a vibrant mix of commercial and residential uses. It will utilise the opportunities presented by Crossrail and create a vibrant and attractive arrival point for the town centre. This area will be a key destination with a high number of people passing on a day to day basis. Therefore, the public realm and building quality will need to be exceptional within this area creating a distinct identity and external image.

4.7.2 Recommendations for this area include;

- Create a high quality arrival point for Romford Town Centre and improve the legibility and way finding around the station.

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- A new bus link through the area – instead of Chandlers Way-connecting Western Road and Eastern Road, providing an attractive approach into Romford town centre and the station.
- Provide a new public open space and avenue that acts as focal point for the area and gives it identify and character.

### 4.9 Southern Approach

4.9.1 This area is formed around the southern extend of South Street and its junction with the ring road. There is an opportunity to make better use of land and replace existing development with medium density development. The function of this area is to create a high quality approach to the town centre and station.

4.9.2 The recommendations for this area are as follows and future proposals should:

- Improve the street, its environment and frontages by high quality development and public realm improvements, incorporating cluster of street trees where possible.
- Improve the existing frontage lined by high quality buildings that incorporate commercial uses (appropriate for the town centre fringe) on the ground floor and residential above.
- Improve the public realm and reduce the severance by the ring-road improving pedestrian and cycle access to the town centre.

### 4.10 South Riverside

4.10.1 This area is focused around the River Rom and includes Bridge Close. It incorporates the south western section of the ring-road providing the opportunity to reduce the barrier effect. The function of this area is to provide good quality town centre housing.

4.10.2 The recommendations for this area include;

- Comprehensive residential development with some commercial units and would support the Council having a proactive role in land assembly.
- Create an east-west pedestrian/cycle route linking the ring road pedestrian crossing, to the River Rom and to the station. Proposals will have to demonstrate how this link will meet proposals/opportunities in the Station Quarter to ensure that proposed routes link up. This pedestrian route should be well overlooked, safe and lined with active uses as much as possible.
- Improve the ecological and environmental qualities of the River Rom and provide a high quality open space that provides a focal point for the area.

## **5.0 Delivering the framework recommendations**

5.1 The Framework offers a number of recommendations to the Council which the Cabinet is being asked to endorse, which will give confidence to developers that the Council would work positively with developers and owners to bring forward sites providing the developers meet the high standards set out in the Framework.

5.2 Specifically the Council will;

- Work proactively with developers to review their proposals, to ensure developments meet the guidelines set out in The Framework;
- Invest (when funding is available including from partners such as TfL) in a planned programme of improvements to the public realm in Romford in line with recommendations in the Framework;
- Having established a Housing Company, the Company will invest on its own or with partners to bring forward high quality developments in the town;
- Where appropriate the Council will use its land assembly powers to bring forward sites that support the growth and vibrancy of the town and meet the site specific guideline detailed in the Framework. This would be subject to detailed consultation with Members and further approval via the appropriate reporting procedures;
- Support the outcome of the review of the market and the redesign of the market place; and
- Seek to establish a wider town centre partnership to promote and support the economic vibrancy of the town.

## **6.0 Next steps**

6.1 If the Development Framework is approved by members it is planned that the Framework will be launched later in the year at a special event for developers, investors, agents, Great London Authority, Transport for London and other strategic partners. A Prospectus version of the Framework document will be produced to highlight the key recommendations and proposals and be used as a marketing tool to encourage high quality developers to invest in Romford. The Framework will also be renamed to reflect the fact that it covers not just physical development proposals but encompasses the public realm, community and social infrastructure and to improve the marketing impact of the document.

6.2 The event will showcase Romford to the development market and open dialogues with developers to try to ensure that high quality designed proposals are put forward for key sites. We intend to prepare a more visual master plan for the Western quarter of Romford.

- 6.3 Building on the work already undertaken as part of The Framework (but incorporating additional sites) a visual master plan will be prepared for the Western part of the town centre. As part of this process there will be active consultation with local residents and key stakeholders to develop the vision for this area of Romford.
- 6.4 The proposals and recommendations outlined in the framework will be taken forward as appropriate in the Havering Local Plan to inform and support future site allocations and policies.

## **REASONS AND OPTIONS**

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

It is recommended that Members approve the Development Framework. The Framework is intended to form part of the evidence base for the new Havering Local Plan, superseding the Havering Local Development Framework and the Romford Area Action Plan (2008) and, to that end, it includes recommendations to inform and support proposed future site allocations and policy subject to Member approval. The Framework is consistent with the national and Mayoral planning policy which promotes the importance of a plan led approach to development. It will also serve as a marketing tool for the town as well as a guide to developers.

As a non-statutory document that is not formal planning policy it will give the Council a tool to use when discussing applications with developers and it will have the status of a material planning consideration. Applications can be discussed on a site by site basis within the guidelines for the character area and with a key focus on the quality of design and the appropriateness of material choices.

### **Other options considered:**

Not to publish the Romford Development Framework. This option was considered and rejected as there is a need to have a clear and comprehensive set of principles that can be discussed with developers. The current Romford Action Plan does provide policy guidance and the Framework builds on current policy but with an increased emphasis on high quality design.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

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

The recommended Framework would be taken into account as a material planning consideration by development management planners in pre-application discussions and/or considering planning applications.

There are no specific financial implications to report. Increased economic activity will improve the level of business rates coming to the Council. Increased housing provision (which in any event Havering needs to provide to meet GLA targets) will mean increased income and expenditure to the Council, but this is complex and uncertain to model.

Any specific actions or projects undertaken by the Council within the Framework would be subject to individual evaluation and approval process.

### **Legal implications and risks:**

There are no legal implications and risks from this document as it provides overall strategic guidance rather than outlining individual project delivery. Should the Council decide to participate in taking forward the development opportunities outlined in the document then these would be subject to a separate reporting and approval process.

The legal weight afforded to the Framework in determining planning applications is limited to it being a material planning consideration as it is not part of the formal Havering Local Development Framework.

Only adopted Development Plan Documents which fall within Regulation 5(1)(a)(iv) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 can be used as 'development management and site allocations policies, which are intended to guide the determination of applications for planning permission.'

The Framework cannot lawfully set out the Council's policies relating to the development and use of land unless formally adopted as a Development Plan Document in compliance with Section 17 (3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

### **Human Resources implications and risks:**

There are no human resource implications.

### **Equalities implications and risks:**

The Framework is intended to form part of the evidence base for the new Havering Local Plan, which will be subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). An EIA is therefore not required for the Romford Development Framework at this time. However if the Council takes forward (either in partnership or on its own) any of the

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development proposals outlined in the document then an EIA will be required for each individual project.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Draft Romford Development Framework