

 <b>Havering</b> LONDON BOROUGH	<b>Strategic Planning Committee</b>  <b>7 February 2019</b>
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<b>Pre-Application Reference:</b>	<b>PE/00414/2018</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>22 – 44 NORTH STREET, ROMFORD</b>
<b>Ward:</b>	<b>ROMFORD TOWN</b>
<b>Description:</b>	<b>DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS AND ERECTION OF 2-TIERED BUILDINGS TO PROVIDE 77 RESIDENTIAL AND 3 COMMERCIAL UNITS</b>
<b>Case Officer:</b>	<b>WILLIAM ALLWOOD</b>

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## **1 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 This proposed development is being presented to enable Members of the Strategic Committee to view it before a planning application is submitted and to comment upon it. The development does not constitute an application for planning permission and any comments made upon it are provisional and subject to full consideration of any subsequent application and the comments received as a result of consultation, publicity and notification.

- 1.2 The proposed detailed planning application has been the subject of meetings with Officers of Havering Borough Council as part of a Planning Performance Agreement; further meetings have also taken place with the Boroughs' Heritage Adviser and Heritage England. Members may recall discussing the scheme at the Strategic Planning Committee on the 07<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Finally, this pre-application scheme was presented to and discussed by the Borough Councils' Quality Review Panel on the 04<sup>th</sup> February 2019. Verbal up-dates will be provided.
- 1.3 The scheme has continued to be developed following feedback from the pre-application meetings.

## **2 PROPOSAL AND LOCATION DETAILS**

### **2.1 Initial Proposals**

- The initial proposed scheme ranged in height from 12 to 16 to 20 storeys, provided 169 residential units, and approximately 347 sq. m of commercial floor space
- The initial scheme proposed 114 private and 55 affordable residential units
- In response, Officers advised that the initial proposal was considered to be excessive in height and out of scale with neighbouring development; in addition, Officers advised that the proposed height and bulk of the initial scheme would significantly detract from the setting and views of the adjoining Church of St Edward the Confessor, a Grade II\* listed building, as well as having an overwhelming and negative impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

## Revised Proposals

- The revised scheme ranges in height from 6 to 12 storeys, provides 95 residential units, and approximately 373 sq. m of commercial floor space
- The revised scheme proposes 62 private and 33 affordable residential units
- The revised scheme will essentially be car-free, with provision of 10no. flexible use disabled spaces, which could also be utilised for a car club; vehicular access to the site is from The Mews to the east.
- Amenity space for the development will be created through the provision of a communal garden at level 5 of the lower building to the south, as well as private terraces and balconies.
- This is the scheme which was presented to Members on the 08<sup>th</sup> November 2018, where Members raised the following issues:
  - *Whether comparison to buildings nearby which are outside of the Conservation Area is disingenuous?*
  - *What the justification is for the proposed height, why so high?*
  - *Density of scheme. Why so high and dense?*
  - *Consultation with the Church. What consultation has been undertaken? This should include the Civic Society*
  - *The principle of the car club was welcomed*
  - *The developer was invited to engage in the Romford Masterplan process*

## **Latest Proposals**

- The latest revised scheme ranges in height from 6 to 9 storeys, providing 77 residential units, and approximately 382 sq. m of commercial floor space

## **2.2 Site and Surroundings**

- The proposed site is located on the north eastern side of North Street midway between the cross roads with the Market Place/High Street, and the roundabout on the ring road
- The current building comprises a two storey block of commercial units backing onto the Mews and the church yard to St Edward the Confessor's Church. On the opposite side of North Street is the 8-storey Rubicon Court mixed use block together with the unfinished frame of a redevelopment of 23 – 55 North Street.
- A night club is located at first floor level.
- To the north on the same side of North Street up to the roundabout is the podium development of North House, comprising a single storey plinth with a 12 storey office block.
- The site is located wholly within the Romford Conservation Area; St. Edward the Confessor Church - a Grade II\* listed building - is located to the south east of the site.
- The site is highly accessible to public transport and other services; it is 500 metres (12 minutes' walk) to the railway station and has a PTAL of 6a.

## **Planning History**

2.3 The following planning decisions are relevant to the application:

- Various applications relating to the night club use

- In 2015, planning permission was refused on the southern part of the site at 22 – 28 North Street The demolition of 4 shops and offices over and the erection of an 8 storey mixed development with 4 No ground floor shops (A1 and A3), 28 flats above (24 No 2 Bed and 4 no 1 bed) together with private balconies and terraces, communal storage, roof mounted photo-voltaic cells, bulkhead lighting to adjacent pavements, associated pavement improvements and improvements to the rear facade of 30-44 North Street (reference P1528.13)
- That application was refused for the following reasons:
  - Given the piecemeal nature of the development, and the loss of existing buildings which positively contribute to the conservation area, the setting of Grade II\* listed church and wider street scene, the replacement scheme by way of its significant height, bulk, and massing would result in significant harm to heritage assets and incongruous to the established character locally
  - The proposed residential access was considered substandard being located in a back-street location, lacking legibility to pedestrians, would contribute to an unacceptable standard of residential accommodation
  - The proposed development failed to delivered appropriate planning obligations

### **3 MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

3.1 The main planning issues raised by the application that the committee must consider are:

- Principle of development
- Density and Site Layout
- Heritage considerations
- Design
- Housing provision
- Regeneration

#### **3.2 Principal of Development**

- This is a brownfield site close to Romford Town Centre that is no longer required for its existing use. At all levels of planning policy, including the emerging Local Plan there is strong encouragement to maximise the use of such sites when they become available. Bringing forward this type of site that could be delivered in the short term will support the Council in meeting its housing requirement and identifying a 5-year supply of housing land.
- The site is located in Romford town centre, and is designated as “retail core” in the Romford Area Action Plan DPD. Policy ROM10 of the DPD states that planning permission will be granted for A1 uses at ground floor level, with planning permission potentially being given for A2-A5 uses under given circumstances.
- The existing buildings are of varied architectural interest and the parade is identified in the Romford Conservation Area Character Appraisal as having a part positive and part neutral impact on the visual character of the Conservation Area.

- Demolition and redevelopment is capable of being considered as acceptable in principle subject to any redevelopment being demonstrated to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

### **3.3 Density and Site Layout**

- The proposed density would exceed the ranges identified in the current London Plan and the adopted Local Development Framework. The emerging London Plan suggests moving away from the density matrix approach however, and in any case, density is only one indication of the appropriateness of proposed development. What would be important in assessing such a high density proposal is whether it delivers sufficient quality of design and provides a high quality living environment for future occupiers.
- The existing Rubicon Court (8 storeys) opposite, and to some extent North House (12 storeys), has established the principle of taller buildings locally. Buildings of the height proposed, ranging from 6 to 12 storeys or possibly taller, could be considered appropriate in this context although there may be concerns over proximity of the buildings to the boundaries of adjacent sites in terms of amenity impact and/or prejudicing development of surrounding land, in accordance with Policy DC61 of the LDF and policies 7 and 10 of the submitted Local Plan.

### **3.4 Heritage Considerations**

- Given the proximity of the site to listed buildings, particularly the Grade II\* church and the fact that the entire site is located within the Romford Conservation Area, heritage matters are a key consideration for any redevelopment proposal. This is reinforced by the fact that Historic England considers Romford Conservation Area to be at threat with the potential of losing Conservation Area status or a significant change to its

boundaries should its character be adversely affected by inappropriate redevelopment or change.

- Any redevelopment of the site needs to demonstrate the positive or neutral impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area and setting of the Grade II\* listed church which any redevelopment needs to achieve.

### **3.5 Design and Appearance**

- There is merit in an approach as demonstrated which gives high priority to the quality of materials and which can demonstrate a coherent design led approach to the redevelopment of the site.
- The initial pre-application scheme included pre-cast artificial stone or concrete cladding to lower and upper floors to differentiate them from the middle of the building and make them more special. In the revised scheme, these areas would be clad in high quality red brick, while the middle of the building would use London stock brick blend.

### **3.6 Housing Provision**

- Policy DC6 of the LDF states that the Council will aim to achieve 50% affordable housing provision as part of new major housing development in the Borough and the need to maximise affordable housing provision is reiterated within the draft Local Plan. The Mayor of London's adopted SPG on Affordable Housing and Viability specifies that where 35% or more affordable housing, measured in habitable rooms, is to be provided without public subsidy then viability appraisal would not be necessary.

### **3.7 Regeneration and Romford Town Centre**

- Romford and the town centre are key areas for new growth, intensification and regeneration. The scope for this site in isolation, which is wholly within the Conservation Area, to contribute to these wider aspirations is important



and officers are looking to ensure that the proposals are considered in the context of the forthcoming work on the Masterplan for Romford Town Centre.

### **3.8 Other Planning Issues**

- Archaeology
- Consideration of microclimate
- Servicing Management Plan
- Sustainable design and construction measures
- Secured by Design

### **Conclusions**

- 3.9 The proposed development has been considered at various pre-application meetings, including the earlier presentation to Strategic Planning Committee on the 08<sup>th</sup> November 2018, and the scheme has been developed as a result. There are some aspects that require further work as identified in this report and Members' guidance will be most helpful to incorporate as the various elements are brought together.