



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

**Strategic Planning
Committee
21 July 2022**

Pre-Application Reference:	PE/00190/22
Location:	Seedbed Centre and Rom Valley Retail Park
Ward:	St Alban's
Description:	Redevelopment of the site to provide residential led mixed use development of up to 860 dwellings including: two form entry school, light industrial workspace and commercial floorspace (2,500-3000sqm) with associated local retail and leisure facilities, public realm, landscaping, parking and cycle routes improvements.
Case Officer:	Gemma Newall

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This proposed development is being presented to enable Members of the committee to view it before a planning application is submitted and to comment upon it. The development does not constitute an application for planning permission and any comments made upon it are provisional and subject to full consideration of any subsequent application and the comments received as a result of consultation, publicity and notification.
- 1.2 The proposed planning application has been the subject of 6 pre-application meetings with officers. There will have been two QRP meetings undertaken to date (QRP 2 held on the 19th July), a meeting with the Greater London Authority (GLA) took place on the 18th March 2022 and a meeting with Transport for London (TfL) took place on 12th May 2022. Informed by the feedback gained from these meetings and following discussions with officers, the scheme has gradually developed. Officers will briefly update Members at the meeting on the initial feedback from the second QRP panel meeting of 19th July.

- 1.3 The scheme is not finalised and it is anticipated that the proposals will further evolve over the coming months before submission. At this stage, Member feedback in regard to broad principles for the development will be useful.

2 PROPOSAL AND LOCATION DETAILS

2.1 Site and Surroundings

- The site is located opposite Queens Hospital and the former Ice Rink site. At the eastern and southern boundary of the site is the River Rom, whilst to the north is the Homebase site. The western boundary of the site adjoins the main route of Rom Valley Way (RVW).
- The site measures approx. 2.81 hectares.
- Vehicular access to the retail park is via Rom Valley Way, whilst the Seedbed Centre and Snow & Rock Store is accessed by Davidson Way.
- The site has very good access to public transport and other services, it is approximately 600 metre walk from Romford station. The PTAL of the site ranges from 6a to 4.
- Currently, there are 45 small industrial / commercial units, with an associated café and car parking. There are also five two-storey large retail units and a single-storey restaurant.

2.2 Proposal

- Complete redevelopment of site with demolition of all existing buildings.
- Residential development would be the predominant use of the site interspersed with green spaces / pocket parks and to the north, access to the River Rom.
- The quantum, layout and density of the development has not been fixed and is proposed to comprise up to 860homes, a two-form entry primary school, light industrial workspace and commercial floorspace (2,500-3,000sqm) with associated local retail and leisure facilities, public realm, landscaping, parking and cycle routes improvements.
- Vehicle access would be as existing, with the main access from Rom Valley Way, using the current access opposite Queen's Hospital, and from Davison Road.

Planning History

- 2.3 The site was developed in the late 1980's. There have been various planning applications in relation to the retail and employment uses including two applications for Certificate of Lawfulness to confirm the use of 8 units being light industrial and 18 units as offices.
- 2.4 A previous proposal (P1226.20) including 1072 homes, up to 7,804sqm employment space, and a medical centre was to be refused by the Council in April 2021 with the delegated report completed and the resolution to refuse submitted in May 2021 at the GLA Stage II referral at which point the application was withdrawn. A new design team has been brought on board since this time, with Fletcher Priest and Spacehub replacing Patel Taylor.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 At this stage, it is intended that the following will be consulted regarding any subsequent planning application:

- Mayor of London
- London Fire Brigade
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Thames Water
- Essex and Suffolk Water
- EDF Energy
- National Grid
- Transport for London
- NHS Trust
- Department for Education
- Historic England

- 3.2 The following consultees have commented as part of the pre-application process:

- Mayor of London – GLA meeting took place on 18th March 2022 and the pre-app report was received on the 25th and updated on the 28th April 2022. In brief, the pre-app report detailed that the scheme in general would be supported in line with Policies E7 (Industrial Intensification, Co-location and Substitution), H1 (Increasing Housing Supply) and S3 (Education and Childcare Facilities) and Objective GG2 (Making the Best Use of Land) of the London Plan but also detailed that a number of matters required further consideration including maximising the industrial floorspace on site, the school design, the suitability of the site for tall buildings and the proposal following the Viability Tested Route in terms of affordable housing provision.

- Transport for London – TfL meeting took place on 12th May 2022 and meeting notes were received on 13th June 2022. In brief, the notes received detailed that further updated transport surveys were required and further information on waste collections and safe cycle storage. Continued liaison with TfL is taking place in order to agree improvements to the junction and crossing points on the RVW.
- Environment Agency – discussions ongoing in relation to access and improvements to the River Rom.

4 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

4.1 In accordance with planning legislation, the developer has consulted the local community on these proposals as part of the pre-application process.

4.2 A full public consultation has been undertaken. This has included consultation with residents, businesses, Council Members and a Member of Parliament (MP):

- Public consultation running from Friday 6th May 2022 to Thursday 26th May 2022, which allowed residents to provide feedback through a form available on the website, at two public exhibitions and via a paper copy on request via email or telephone.
- Newsletter sent to 4,046 residential properties and 226 businesses identifying the site and providing information about the proposed development. The newsletter contained details about the two public exhibitions and a link to the website.
- Establishment of a dedicated website for the development at romvalley.whatyouthink.co.uk, which allowed residents to view more information about the scheme and leave feedback through a feedback form.
- Two physical public exhibitions held at the Romford Seedbed Centre – residents and businesses alike were invited to speak with the development team and view boards with the proposals on 14th May 2022 from 10am to 2pm, and on the 16th May 2022 from 2pm to 8pm.
- Dedicated telephone line, email, and freepost address – these were clearly laid out at the exhibitions, on the newsletter and on the website. These allowed residents to get in touch independently.
- Survey of businesses that hold tenancy on the Seedbed Centre – this allowed the applicant to gain feedback from existing businesses and understand their requirements for the new ‘Makerspace’.

- Press activity – two articles featured in the Romford Recorder which updated residents on the proposals and contained important information about the development and where residents could leave comment.
- Engagement with local politicians – meetings have been offered to the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Ward Members. These meetings are ongoing, and feedback will be carefully considered before submission.
- Engagement with key other local stakeholders – there are currently ongoing meetings with a range of local stakeholders, including the local NHS Trust on the proposals. As these meetings are ongoing, any feedback will be carefully considered before submission.

4.3 The feedback from residents is currently under review and will form part of the Statement of Community Involvement submitted by the Applicant at submission. Currently, 1,133 residents have engaged in the process, and nearly a hundred people have attended the exhibitions.

5 QUALITY REVIEW PANEL

5.1 At an early stage in the development of proposals for the site, the developer sought feedback from the Havering Quality Review Panel (QRP) on 15th February 2022. At the time, the number of dwellings had not been set, but an indicative massing of blocks, access and open space. The indicative massing showed three blocks fronting RVW, all up to 12 storeys in height and three blocks alongside the River Rom, two up to 10 storeys in height and one up to 9 storeys in height.

5.2 The QRP report included the following headline conclusions:

- The fresh approach to the site is welcomed and much improved on the previous proposals.
- Stressed the importance of design code and parameter plans to ensure this becomes a good place to live and work.
- Clearer hierarchy of spaces and buildings is required to enable the site to accommodate the complexity of access and servicing for the diverse uses.
- There are some concerns over the proposed massing with the tall buildings requiring further justification. The scheme has an important role to play in managing the transition from town centre to the suburban hinterland. The massing could also benefit from being redistributed with height focussed on Rom Valley Way and a more relaxed relationship to the Rom.
- The impact of the massing on the quality of public realm also needs particular attention. The panel also questions the proposed typologies,

and notes that the prevalence of podium blocks suggests a more urban scheme than the site merits.

- 5.3 The design has evolved since QRP in February, with a further review scheduled for 19th July which officers will briefly update Members on verbally.

6 MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

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

- Principal of Development
- Quantum of development
- Design Quality and Scale
- Employment Re-provision of the Seedbed Centre
- Housing Mix and Affordable Housing Provision

6.2 Principal of Development

- The current proposed provision of 2500sqm min-3000sqm max industrial space is not policy compliant. In line with planning policy, the applicant is required to re-provide the total space of the Locally Significant Industrial Site (LSIS) (3,263sqm) in order to maintain the LSIS designation for continued industrial and employment use.
- The Local Plan designates the Seedbed Centre as a Locally Significant Industrial Site to protect the site for continued industrial and employment use (Policy 19). In order to comply with policy, there needs to be a re-provision of employment uses or improved provision as part of any redevelopment. Relocation for existing businesses also needs to be considered, the applicant has indicated that they intend to rehouse the existing industrial tenants in the development.
- There is no planning policy protection for out of town retail and as such there is no in principle objection to the loss of the existing retail units.
- Subject to the re-provision of suitable employment space, there is considered scope to provide residential development on the site as part of any residential led mixed use redevelopment. The applicant is required to provide supporting information / justification for this and this being an appropriate use being located adjacent to / above and within close proximity to industrial units.

6.3 Quantum of Development

- The site is located within the Romford Housing Zone and Strategic Development Area as identified within the spatial strategy for Havering over the 2016-2031 lifetime of the Plan. This means that development in

this area is considered to be sustainable in terms of being within close proximity to existing services and public transport. With this, there is an opportunity for the applicant to maximise the use of the site in terms of the quantum of units, taking account of the requirements regarding housing tenure and mix. It is considered appropriate for a design led approach to be followed to formulate a masterplan that informs the optimal level of development on the site.

- The ground floor units to Rom Valley will importantly provide an active frontage to the street, although the applicant will need to ensure no negative impacts occur to the wider area from units remaining untenanted for long periods of time.

6.4 Design Quality and Scale

- The buildings currently on site are of limited quality and there is a high amount of hard standing for parking spaces - although their impact is reduced due to their limited height and position set back from the dual carriageway. A high quality design is expected deriving from a masterplan and agreed design code, which will inform the scale of any buildings and their relationship to surroundings and the resulting character formed by the new development.
- The relationship to the River Rom, a provision of a two form entry school, the incorporation of public open spaces with increased landscaping and the potential for improvements of key routes to and from the site are important considerations for this scheme.
- The proposed taller blocks (10-12 storey in height) have potential to overshadow public open spaces, the school and the locally listed two storey buildings on South Street. The overall impact on townscape views is of utmost importance as this will change significantly.
- Taller blocks next to low blocks means that flank walls could be exposed, particularly from Rom Valley Way views. The Design Code and illustrative proposals should set out how this will be resolved positively through design solutions providing visual interest.
- The relatively high density of the proposals leads to a few buildings of 10 and 12 storeys within the development. The development is seeking to provide a transition from the potentially taller development on the Homebase site to the north, to the south and the river rom to the east which are predominantly 2-3 storey neighbouring buildings. In addition, need to address constrained courtyards and public spaces resulting in daylight/sunlight and overlooking issues. Daylight/sunlight studies for the proposed blocks are required to be reviewed at Pre-App to better inform discussions on height and massing.

6.5 Housing Mix and Affordable Housing Provision

- Planning policy 5 (Housing Mix) seeks to provide a range of housing sizes in new development and it would be expected that a reasonable proportion of larger size dwellings be provided in any redevelopment, subject to providing suitable amenity space. Policy 5 seeks that 80 % of the units are 2 or 3 bed units subject to site constraints and viability in order to achieve a mixed and balanced community.
- Havering Local Plan Policy 4 (affordable housing) seeks at least 35% provision of affordable housing with a tenure split of 70:30 in favour of social rent / intermediate housing. Policy H6 of the London plan details at least 30% low cost rent (social rent or affordable rent), at least 30% intermediate (London Living Rent or shared ownership) and the remaining 40% to be as determined by the LPA.
- The main affordable housing need of the Council is for 2 bed 4 person and 3 bed 6 person units of social rented housing. Provision of 35% affordable housing would mean no viability testing of the proposals would be required. The proportion and tenure of affordable housing has not been confirmed, but the applicant has previously indicated that 20-30% affordable housing would be achievable, although the tenure split is not clear; as such, it would follow the 'Viability Tested Route' under the London Plan and therefore will be supported by a Financial Viability Assessment (FVA) to determine the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing that the scheme can deliver. The Council would have the FVA submitted to support the application independently assessed to ensure we are securing the maximum benefit for the Council.

6.6 Access and Servicing

- Further information on traffic levels is required to assess whether there are any likely impacts on existing junctions.
- Part of the masterplanning process should ensure that all areas of the development can be adequately serviced including allowing flexibility in the type of employment uses that can be accommodated.

6.7 Parking

- Given the proximity of the site to Romford town centre and related services, the level of parking is proposed to be limited for both the residential and employment components of the proposal, although it should be demonstrated that the proposal would not result in any overspill parking in streets surrounding the development.

6.8 Impact on Infrastructure Provision and Mitigation

- At this early stage of the scheme development, options for any on-site infrastructure requirements arising from the development should be considered.

6.9 Financial and Other Mitigation

- The proposed development is within LB Havering where it will be subject to the Mayoral MCIL2 charge is £25 per square metre Gross Internal Area (GIA) for eligible development. The Council's proposed CIL charges are currently under examination and may be in place by the time an application is submitted.
- Subject to the above, and any on site provision, contributions may be sought for the following:
 - School places
 - Pedestrian/cycle improvements
 - Public transport contribution
 - River Rom improvements
 - Open space/sports facilities provision/improvement
 - Health facilities
- As well as the above, the proposal may attract the following section 106 obligations to mitigate the impact of the development:
 - Apprenticeship scheme for construction jobs
 - Job brokerage for new jobs created
 - Affordable and/or Start-up business space provided
 - Restriction on parking permits
 - Car club provision
 - Affordable housing

6.10 Other Planning Issues

- Ecological Impact and Mitigation
- River Rom improvements
- RVW improvements tying into RVW masterplan
- Sustainable design and construction measures
- Secured by Design
- Agreement of Design Code

7 CONCLUSIONS

The proposed development remains in the pre-application stage and additional work remains to be carried out. The scheme will be progressed through a design led masterplan approach over the coming months.

At this early stage, Members' guidance will be most helpful to be incorporated into the scheme as the various elements are brought together, particularly in relation to the following points:

- Re-provision of the Seedbed employment space
- Scale and massing

- Affordable Housing Provision
- Provision of Family housing (2 bed 4 person and 3 bed 6 person units)
- Setting of the River Rom
- Transport – sustainable access to the site and RVW improvements