



## CABINET

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Romford Masterplan Formal Consultation
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Graham Williamson, Cabinet Member for Regeneration
<b>ELT Lead:</b>	Helen Oakerbee, Director of Planning and Public Protection
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<b>Policy context:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- National Planning Policy Framework 2023</li><li>- London Plan 2021</li><li>- Havering Local Plan 2016-2031</li></ul>
<b>Financial summary:</b>	The limited costs associated with this decision will be met within the existing Regeneration budget.
<b>Is this a Key Decision?</b>	Yes (c) Significant effect on two or more Wards
<b>When should this matter be reviewed?</b>	September 2027
<b>Reviewing OSC:</b>	Places overview and scrutiny

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

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well	x
Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy	x
Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council	x

**SUMMARY**

1. This report seeks approval to consult on the Draft Romford Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Consultation is proposed to start in late September and run for a minimum of 6 weeks, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. Cabinet is recommended to agree the publication of the Draft Romford Masterplan and associated documents as set out below for a minimum 6-week period of statutory public consultation under regulation 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, with an anticipated start date in late September 2024.
3. The following documents will be published:
  - Final Consultation Draft Romford Masterplan (Appendix 1)
  - Romford Masterplan Baseline Report (Appendix 2)
  - Romford Masterplan Baseline Report Appendix – Heritage Audit (Appendix 3)
  - Romford Masterplan Engagement Summary Report 2024 (Appendix 4)
  - Romford Masterplan Engagement Summary Report 2019 (Appendix 5)
  - Romford Masterplan Health Impact Assessment 2024 (Appendix 6)
  - Findings of No Significant Effect Report (Appendix 7)

**REPORT DETAIL**

**Background**

4. The Council has prepared a draft Romford Masterplan in conjunction with consultants Maccreeanor Lavington. The Masterplan has emerged over a number of years, with extensive early community engagement taking place in 2019. Further community engagement took place earlier this year in order to underpin and inform the preparation of a full draft Masterplan.
5. This report seeks Cabinet approval to publish the draft Masterplan for formal consultation with residents, stakeholders and statutory consultees.

6. Subject to consideration of the consultation representations and any subsequent amendments, the final Masterplan will then return to Cabinet for adoption and publication. The Masterplan will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document that supports the Council's adopted Local Plan 2016-2031.
7. The Havering Local Plan sets out detailed policy for Romford and commits to the delivery of a Supplementary Planning Document for the area, recognising the significant opportunities that Romford offers. The Masterplan develops and supplements the Havering Local Plan and sets out a framework to shape and guide development in Romford over the next 15-20 years.

### **Purpose of the Romford Masterplan**

8. Romford is the borough's primary centre and supports a vibrant mix of shopping, employment, leisure, night-time economy and housing, and is identified as a Metropolitan town centre in the London Plan. It is a key transport hub within the borough and benefits from improved accessibility since the Elizabeth Line opened.
9. The Masterplan will be instrumental in guiding Romford's ongoing evolution over the next 15-20 years. Its aim is to draw on Romford's unique character and to continue to evolve it into a place which respects and reveals its history whilst looking forward to deliver growth and opportunities that will benefit the entire community.
10. Romford offers exciting regeneration and development opportunities and is expected to accommodate significant levels of housing and economic growth in the coming years. It is identified as an Opportunity Area in the London Plan and a Strategic Development Area (SDA) in the Havering Local Plan. A Masterplan is needed to guide these opportunities in a way that respects Romford's qualities and history, strengthens pride in the town, and makes it a distinct and attractive place to live, work, and visit.
11. The Masterplan does not repeat policies in the Local Plan, and should be read in conjunction with it. As an SPD the Masterplan cannot introduce new planning policies but will shape and guide future development. The Masterplan will be a material consideration when determining planning applications. This means that in addition to satisfying the requirements of national, regional and Havering's local planning policies, development proposals will also need to demonstrate how the guidance in the SPD has been considered.

### **Previous Community Engagement**

## **Cabinet, dd mmmm yyyy**

12. The Masterplan has been influenced by an extensive engagement process both for the initial development of the Masterplan in 2019 (see appendix 5) and for the Masterplan refresh in 2024 (see appendix 4). Throughout the development of the Masterplan, feedback from the engagement process has been incorporated to create and refine the vision, objectives strategies and site guidance.
13. In April and May 2024, the engagement included:
  - A digital launch and online survey on [www.yourromford.co.uk](http://www.yourromford.co.uk)
  - Five pop up engagement events in the town centre
  - Five workshops with children and young people
  - A stakeholder workshop
14. Overall, the sentiment about the Masterplan was positive, reflected in 73% of respondents either strongly or somewhat agreeing with the principles of the Masterplan. The ideas with the most public support were:
  - The Market place: focusing on the Market as a key transformation area for Romford
  - The River Rom: opening up the Rom and creating a high quality, exciting pieces of public realm
  - Public Realm: creating improved public realm so people want to dwell in the town centre
  - Behaviour: The above goals were identified in the context of addressing challenges with antisocial behaviour in the town centre.
15. Preparation of the Masterplan has also included engagement with a range of partners and stakeholders including landowners, developers and statutory consultees such as the Greater London Authority (GLA), Transport for London (TfL) and the Environment Agency.

## **Summary of Masterplan Content**

16. The Masterplan sets out a vision for Romford, supported by objectives, strategies and site guidance. The full Masterplan is out in Appendix 1. A summary of the vision, key spatial moves and key themes is set out below.

Vision for Romford:

*'Building on its unique character and history, Romford will be a mixed, vibrant and distinct regional town centre. It will consist of a refined retail offer complemented by a rejuvenated market with a focus on local goods and services, maintaining its role as a major leisure destination with an enlarged employment offer, an early evening food and beverage offer and new residential community supported by additional health and school facilities.'*

17. The Masterplan proposes a series of key spatial moves that establish the physical structure and interventions to achieve the long-term vision for Romford town centre:

- **Opening up the River Rom** - The River Rom will be deculverted and partially renaturalised through the town centre to create an ecological linear park.
- **Recharacterising the ring road** – creating an active travel corridor with at-grade crossings, planting and an urban boulevard character, better integrating the town centre with the surrounding neighbourhoods.
- **Celebrating Romford Market** - Reinforcing the importance of the market place as a key civic space by upgrading the public realm improving frontages and introducing spaces that can support a variety of events and gatherings.
- **Reinstating the historic urban grain** - Introducing new streets and spaces that reflect the finer historic urban grain of the town centre with smaller, more walkable blocks with varied and engaging building frontages.
- **Wider green links** - Introducing new green links that can act as walking and cycling corridors both through the town centre and connecting to wider key public green spaces and parks.
- **New and improved station entrances** - Creating a new station entrance that acts as a gateway to the town centre and improving the existing station entrance with public realm enhancements, seating and wayfinding.

18. The Vision is expanded through seven key themes and objectives to guide its delivery.

Key themes:

- **Space and landscape** - The Masterplan promotes a wide range of public spaces including high quality streets, pocket parks, squares and roof gardens. Blue and green networks through the town centre will be strengthened. The River Rom will be the centre piece of these networks as a new linear riverside park.
- **Movement and Connectivity** - The Masterplan improves access, connectivity and permeability across Romford. Public transport and active travel choices, such as walking and cycling, are promoted to encourage

healthy lifestyles and considered equitably with other modes of travel. Reconfigured streets and public realm will create a more attractive, safe and inclusive Romford.

- **Sustainability** - ensuring growth is built on a platform of sustainable infrastructure with environmental and wellbeing benefits. Environmental, social and economic sustainability is a golden thread that runs through the Masterplan.
- **Inclusivity, Health and Wellbeing** - all developments, public realm, transport and projects will have inclusive design at their heart. The Masterplan provides guidance to promote social cohesion and to create opportunities to diversify and to also improve health and wellbeing through better accessibility, infrastructure and resources.
- **Character and Townscape** - The Masterplan draws on the existing qualities and unique assets of Romford. The setting of Romford's historic places and buildings will be enhanced. New developments will contribute by positively supporting existing or evolving character areas through new and enhanced buildings, streets and spaces.
- **Uses and Mix** - The Masterplan promotes a diverse Romford that is active throughout all times of the day. In the central area smaller shops and a more varied food and drink offer will support the vibrancy of the centre and an enhanced early evening economy. Employment and business space will be enhanced. Key locations and public spaces will be anchored by cultural and leisure uses to drive footfall. New residential within the town centre will support existing and new businesses but will also require corresponding social infrastructure including schools, public spaces, health facilities and transport.
- **The Economy** - The Masterplan capitalises on Romford's unique position at the interface between Essex and London to promote Romford as a destination, to support existing businesses and attract new occupiers. The Masterplan seeks to broaden the early evening and night-time economies, revitalise Market Place and enhancing retail, business and residential offers. This diversification will create new jobs and support the vitality and long-term viability of Romford.

## **Site Guidance**

19. The Masterplan sets out specific site guidance for key areas that offer the most potential to deliver positive, transformational changes and are instrumental in the delivery of the overarching objectives and vision for Romford. Guidance is provided for the following areas:
  - Market Place
  - Civic Campus

**Cabinet, dd mmmm yyyy**

- Liberty
- Mercury
- Brewery
- St Edwards Way
- North Street
- Station Gateway
- Rom Valley
- Crow Lane

**Next Steps - Statutory Consultation**

20. Further to the extensive community engagement that has been already undertaken (refer to paragraphs 12-15) the following stage of consultation will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to review the Masterplan in full and provide consultation feedback.
21. Statutory consultation will be carried out in accordance with planning regulations and Havering's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The consultation will run for a minimum of 6 weeks (commencing in late September) and will include:
  - A dedicated Citizen Space page where documents can be viewed online and comments can be submitted (proposed consultation questions are set out in Appendix 8).
  - A hard copy of the Masterplan available to view at the Town Hall reception.
  - Email notifications to registered consultees and statutory consultees
  - Publicity on social media and in the 'Living in Havering' newsletter,
  - Statutory notice placed in the Romford Recorder.
  - Two in person drop in sessions at Romford Library for consultees to ask questions and seek clarification on any aspects of the Masterplan.
22. Subject to consideration of all consultation representations and any necessary amendments, the final Masterplan SPD would then be returned to Cabinet for adoption and publication.

**REASONS AND OPTIONS**

**Reasons for the decision:** Undertaking statutory consultation is the only option available to be able to progress the Romford Masterplan towards adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document.

**Other options considered:**

1. Do not consult. This option was rejected as it is a statutory requirement to consult on Supplementary Planning Documents under the Town and Country Planning (local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Adoption of the Masterplan as a supplementary planning document is dependent on progressing through the statutory consultation process.

2. Do not continue with the production of the Romford Masterplan. This option was rejected as there is significant development pressure within Romford and there is currently a lack of specific planning policy for Romford to be able to guide and influence future development.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

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

There are minimal costs associated with the publication of this Masterplan consultation, estimated at £600. This will be funded through the existing Regeneration (Capacity and Feasibility) budget.

The Masterplan itself sets out a set of principles for the vision for Romford, which will be used to inform future development, it does not commit any funding.

The vision will be achieved through a mix of private and public funding any council investment will be considered in future decision papers.

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

The preparation and adoption of Supplementary Planning Documents is governed by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) (“ the 2012 Regulations”).

Regulation 5 of the 2012 Regulations specifies what documents are local development documents. Regulation 6 defines a Local Plan as any document referred to in regulation 5(1)(a)(i),(ii) or (iv) or 5(2)(a) or (b). A SPD is a local development document that is not a Local Plan and is limited to including statements, as specified in Regulation 5(iii), that describe any environmental, social, design and economic objectives which are relevant to the attainment of the development and use of land specified in the Local Plan. SPDs do not form part of the development plan, they cannot introduce new planning policies into the development plan. Once adopted, the SPD will be a material consideration in decision making to which regard will have to be had when considering any planning application.



## **Cabinet, dd mmmm yyyy**

Part 5 of the 2012 Regulations sets out the procedure to be followed prior to the adoption of SPDs. The Council must prepare SPDs in accordance with its Statement of Community Involvement (section 19(3) PCPA 2004).

This decision seeks approval for commencement of consultation only. Further authority will be sought from Cabinet in event that the consultation is approved and we progress to adoption of the Masterplan as a Supplementary Planning Document.

Under regulation 5(6) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) a strategic environmental assessment is unlikely to be required where a supplementary planning document deals only with a small area at a local level unless it is considered that there are likely to be significant environmental effects.

Before deciding whether significant environment effects are likely, the local planning authority will need to take into account the criteria specified in schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and consult the consultation bodies.

The Council has consulted the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England who have all confirmed that they agree with the Council's view that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required for the Romford Masterplan SPD.

A Findings of No Significant Effect Report, containing a statement of reasons has been prepared and will be published alongside the Romford Masterplan (Refer to Appendix 7).

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

The consultation process will be managed internally by the Planning Service using existing staff resources. Therefore there are no HR implications or risks from this decision.

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

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

## **Cabinet, dd mmmm yyyy**

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

The Council seeks to ensure equality, inclusion, and dignity for all in all situations.

An EHIA (Equality and Health Impact Assessment) is usually carried out and on this occasion an EQIA (Equalities Impact Assessment) isn't required.

The Romford Masterplan is a Supplementary Planning Document that provides guidance and advice on the policies in the Havering Local Plan (2016-2031). Supplementary Planning Documents do not form part of the Development Plan and therefore cannot introduce new policies. A full Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken of the Local Plan and is available on the Council's website [here](#). As the Masterplan cannot set new policy a full EQIA has not been carried out. However, the Masterplan will play an important role in ensuring that future development in Romford contributes positively to ensuring equality and improving the quality of life of all residents including those with protected characteristics.

In particular the Masterplan supports:

- The delivery of a range of high quality, mixed tenure dwellings
- Improved accessibility in and around Romford and active travel options
- The delivery of social infrastructure including education, healthcare and community facilities.
- Improved public realm and physical environment and designing out crime.
- A mix of uses and vibrant town centre, improving safety and security
- Enhanced employment opportunities for all

In conclusion there are no equalities and social inclusion implications and risks associated with this decision.

### **Health and Wellbeing implications and Risks**

The built environment (including homes, green spaces, transport, places of education and places of work and leisure) is a fundamental determinant of the health and wellbeing of local populations. Embedding health and wellbeing considerations into planning design and policy provides a vital opportunity to maximise positive health and wellbeing benefits arising from new developments or regeneration and mitigate against any potential negative impacts.

The Masterplan recognises the importance of wider health determinants, as evidenced in one of the seven strategic objectives under section 5.5. Inclusivity,

## Cabinet, dd mmmm yyyy

Health and Wellbeing. Commitment to promote and factor health and wellbeing into the RMP are also covered under the following sections:

### 4.4.3: Active travel via healthy streets approach

- 5.7.2. 5: Green strategy - establishing a network of primary, secondary and tertiary green corridors and spaces, new street tree planting and necklace of green space connecting cotton spark with lodge farm park.
- 5.2.2.2: Blue Strategy of re-establishing the River Rom, maximise the experience and ecological potential of existing waterways through naturalisation, de-culverting, landscaping, and Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) feature.
- 5.2.2.3 Public Realm strategy-ensuring all new major development bring significant public space encouraging cultural events and community activity
- 5.5.2.2 Commitment to schools' provision, social amenities to improve air quality including through changes to Ring Road and improved bus service connections.

The Romford Masterplan is accompanied by a Health Impact Assessment (Appendix 6). The Masterplan was assessed as largely having a positive impact on health.

The HIA is an iterative, dynamic process and a number of recommendations were made to ensure that the Masterplan fully addresses any health and wellbeing implications, while also identifying opportunities to further enhance positive impacts:

- Assess demand for healthcare services and set out how healthcare infrastructure will be provisioned including the ambulance station location in the proposed Bridge Close Development working in partnership with NHS
- Identify location for a secondary school and ensure educational needs of children within the area are met.
- Enhance open space and access to ensure safety and accessibility for all including women and the disabled
- Ensure the maintenance and management responsibilities of new open space is clarified and factored into development applications to retain the benefits
- Enhanced accessibility to buildings and places through the reprovision of public toilets, changing places and provision of cycle parking for accessible cycles
- Identify childcare facilities to further maximise positive impacts of access to work
- Enhance the positive impact of social cohesion through provision for voluntary and community sectors and additional space for civic functions
- Consider the provision of community gardens and food growing space to enhance access to healthy food

These recommendations have been taken on board and reflected in the final consultation draft Masterplan with the detail recorded in the Health Impact

Assessment, Appendix 5: Romford Masterplan Actions in Response to the July 2024 HIA Recommendations. The HIA will be reviewed in light of these responses and feedback from the public consultation.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

The Romford Masterplan is a Supplementary Planning Document which builds upon and provides more detailed advice and guidance on policies in the adopted Havering Local Plan 2016-2031. As SPDs do not form part of the Development Plan, they cannot introduce new planning policies. The Masterplan does however provide the opportunity to guide development in Romford to have a positive impact on climate change, carbon emissions and biodiversity.

The Masterplan seeks to ensure that the redevelopment of Romford captures the opportunity to transform the town centre into a sustainable and resilient place through four strategies:

- **Environment resilience** - Creating a town centre that is resilient to changes in climate
- **Biodiversity Net gain and urban greening factor** - Showcasing Romford as a forward thinking town centre that champions biodiversity and urban greening
- **Energy and Carbon** - Setting a pathway to zero carbon through the design of buildings and infrastructure
- **Circular economy and materials** - Maintain materials at their highest values through construction and operation, by reuse and repurposing, and avoiding waste.

The draft Masterplan has been reviewed by the Council's planning sustainability panel as well as the Quality Review Panel, which has helped embed climate change guidance within the Masterplan.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None