

Romford Town Centre  
History &  
Heritage Assessment



ROMFORD, MARKET PLACE, E.

Cover Image: *Looking past Laurie Hall to the market place and church spire c.1905*

This Heritage Statement has been prepared by heritage consultant Robert Bevan, director of Authentic Futures. Robert has qualifications in architecture, planning and urban design and has worked as a heritage specialist in government and in private practice.

© Authentic Futures, 2018

This report is for the sole use of the person/organisation from whom it was commissioned. It may not be used in whole or in part by anybody else without express consent. No liability for any loss or damage arising from any unauthorised use of this report is accepted.

Robert Bevan, Director

**AuthenticFutures**

[www.authenticfutures.com](http://www.authenticfutures.com)

+44 7963 319352

Ground Floor

72-74 Mare Street

London E8 4RT

## Romford Town Centre

### History & Heritage Assessment

#### Contents

1.0	Introduction	4
2.0	History and Morphological Evolution	6
3.0	Summary of Principal Morphological Changes	44
4.0	Town Centre Heritage Assets	46
5.0	Opportunities, Threats & Responses	83
6.0	Addressing Recent Change and Emerging Proposals	104



*Romford from above in 1920 with rear yards and green spaces still dominating the backlands behind the Market Place frontages.*

## 1.0 Introduction

This report by Authentic Futures is one of a suite of documents that has informed the emergence of a masterplan for Romford Town Centre, a project being led by architects Maccreeanor Lavington and a team of specialists. It informs the baseline assessment on heritage matters. The history of Romford is outlined, concentrating on its morphological evolution and physicality, then heritage assets are identified and some initial recommendations made in the light of heritage-related opportunities and threats.

Romford is identified as an Opportunity Area in the emerging London Plan and is at the centre of a Strategic Development Area identified in Havering's emerging Local Plan. Crossrail is also arriving in the town soon which will likely add to considerable housing pressures. At the same time, retail, which is the life-blood of central Romford today, is undergoing considerable flux. A masterplan is needed to guide 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. The masterplan focusses on a core area in and immediately around the town centre, with some strategies covering a wider area. This heritage report similar concentrates on the area within the existing ring road with some discussion of areas beyond it.

Romford has a long-standing identity crisis – is it part of London or a part of Essex? This is reflected in the physical environment of its town centre. Romford historically was a small market town and its market place a livestock market. Looking at archive photographs and sketches of its older buildings, and it is this rural, Essex aesthetic that is notable but one that has almost entirely vanished today beyond the form of Market Place itself and a clutch of key buildings.

Tasks for Romford include setting out an understanding of how its character emerged, what that character is today, and build upon it to reinforce local identity. This can be done by understanding the value of its heritage assets and their settings, identifying an underpinning narrative that is authentically Romford, then developing a strong development management framework that includes a design code and additional controls such as an expanded conservation area in order to deliver that narrative.

Even though much of Romford's historic built fabric has been lost, tracing its morphology, the persistence of its layout through the centuries, helps us identify its surviving but sometimes hidden history. What remains of historic environment gives us clues as to where to go next and how the add layers around existing

kernels of quality. This includes identifying the best of its inter-war heritage – a defining period of Romford's shopping story but one whose value has been much overlooked. This is not an argument for pastiche but for contemporary architecture that understands Romford's history and piece-by-piece creates a specific identity that resonates as Romford.

What follows focuses purposefully on the physical make-up of the town rather than a socio-economic history – although the pattern of town centre uses, of course, matter. It also uses the cardinal points to more easily identify the town's quarters while recognising this is a shorthand for what's on the ground.

## 2.0 History and Morphological Evolution

### 2.1 A Market Town Emerges

The Roman road towards Colchester left London at Old Ford through the great forest of eastern England and some ten miles later had to cross a ford in the River Rom – hence Romford. (The Roman settlement at Durolitum was once nearby).

The river was broader before it was controlled and water extracted – to the point that a (at least seasonal) lagoon may have existed in the vicinity of today's market place and the first pre-historic settlement is thought to have been at Marshalls, on higher ground behind today's library and town hall. The crossing of the river by road on a gravel terrace some 50ft above sea level persisted as Romford's basic form for centuries.

The first building mentioned is the chapel of St Andrew (1177 and abandoned before 1410) which once stood by the junction of Oldchurch Road and South Street so the nucleus of Romford or a separate settlement may once have been here. But it was the chapel of St Edward that came to dominate – originally some way north of today's market, a market sited on common ground beside the Great Essex Road and then straddling it and widening it out. The old chapel of St Andrew fell into ruin in the late 1300s and was replaced by a new church on the market that was completed in 1410. It was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and St Edward the Confessor. An orphanage at its western end became St Edward's School.

The town grew around the market and not the royal retreat of Havering Palace that may have had Saxon origins and stood in the nearby village of Havering-atte-Bower and was in occasional use by royalty until Cromwell's Commonwealth (it declined and was demolished in the decades following). The area had an unusual governance status being the Liberty of Havering-atte-Bower as well as a royal manor consisting of Havering, Hornchurch and Romford and in possession of the crown from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the late 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The whole was also the Parish of Hornchurch.

Romford as a manor (called Mawneys) is first recorded in 1299 but it already had a weekly general market on Wednesdays in 1247 serving as an animal and produce market for its agricultural hinterland with later a Monday market for calves (until 1816) and a Tuesday market for hogs (from at least 1633). There was an annual fair by 1250. The Saturday market was a more recent development, beginning some time before 1907.

For much of its existence Romford was, essentially, a substantial village of houses and inns around the market, the High Street and the eastern end of London Road, but already in the 1600s it was being described as a 'great market town for corn and cattle'. In 1670 it has been estimated that there were 323 houses in Romford (184 centrally) and this had grown to some 522 houses and a population over 3,000 by 1801.

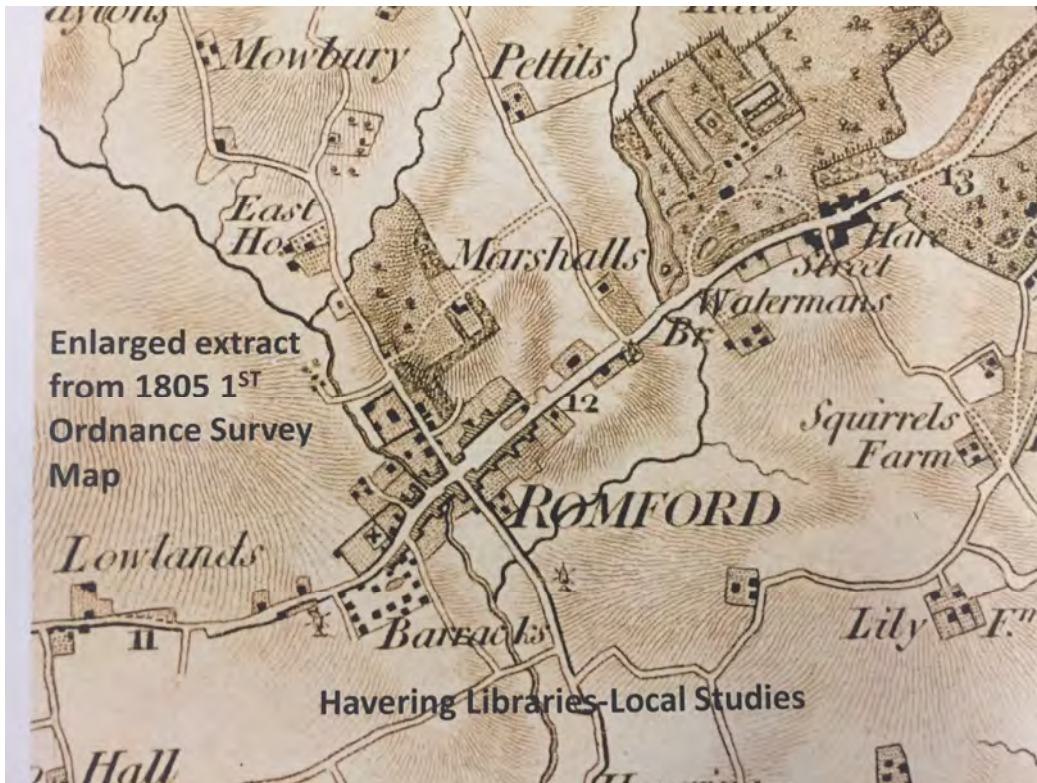


*Liberty of Havering with Romford at centre c. 1610*

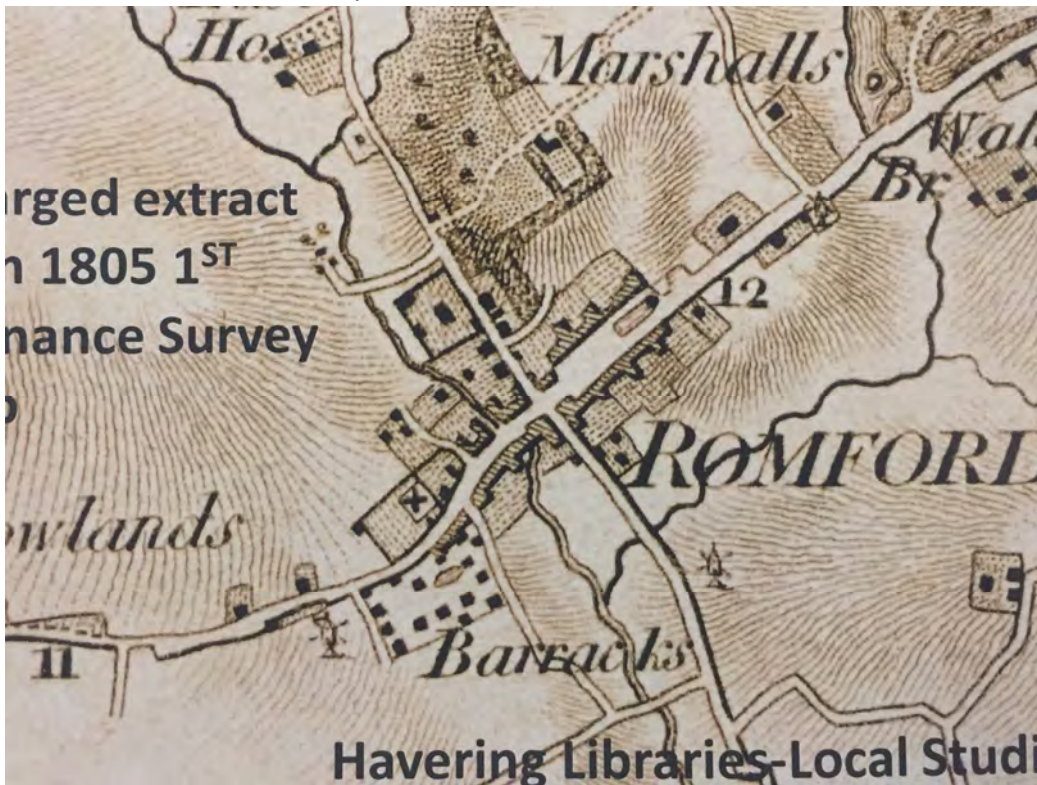


*Chapman and Andre 1777 map: Romford's early linearity is beginning to expand into a settlement of four quarters around a crossroads although the expansion is chiefly along the north arm as well as east-west. Market Place is the dominant space but in this depiction at least, the High Street is also broad.*





Above 1805 Ordnance Survey



1805 detail: At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the pattern of settlement remains much as it had some two decades earlier but the barracks located

*where the London Road met today's Waterloo Road is in place and there is more development in the north west corner (ie west of today's North Street).*

The Market Place developed to about 400 by 50 metres with, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, still large areas devoted to cattle – one of the largest near London. By the 1870s, the eastern end was used for pigs and cattle and the western reaches for farm tools, clothing and produce. The cattle market remained significant until shortly after the Second World War and it finally closed in 1958, with the market remaining for household items, clothes and food. From at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century until 1933, the Market House stood at the western end by the crossroads. It held a courtroom, gaol and the official measures for weighing goods. It was a two-storey classical building with an arcaded ground floor and crowned by a small cupola.



*Romford has lost almost its entire collection of Georgian buildings including many frontages on the north side of Market Place. The shambles was on the north side outside the church.*



*Romford Market House, c.1800. (Havering Libraries Local Studies and Family History Centre)*

The Market Place remained the through route for Romford until 1970. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century it had become a toll road used by coaches and wagons with the nearest tollgate further south down the High Street. Romford Bridge carried the road over the High Street in the vicinity of today's surviving brewery buildings and was rebuilt a number of times – the last in 1921.

## 2.2 Victorian and Edwardian Romford

The still linear town's first notable expansion was the Napoleonic War-era barrack ground off London Road that covered 12 acres towards the later line of the railway and which was subsequently developed as New Romford, some 200 cottages with two or more factories. The site today is the estate off Waterloo Road.

The early arrival of the Eastern Counties railway in 1839 was the tipping point for rapid change with Romford's population jumping from 5,317 to almost 14,000 in 1901 then to more than 40,000 in the inter-war period. The station's location on South Street stimulated further growth along that arm of Romford's central crossroads. Development also spread up Collier Row Lane (later North Street) from an earlier hamlet of artisan's cottages. The first station was joined by a second opposite that later linked the LMS line to the GER/LNER before the stations were amalgamated in 1934 and one entrance closed and converted into shops.



*Gotto map of 1848: Romford is still a small country town and building along South Street is still very limited despite the arrival of the railway embankment. There is a gas works located by the station in the vicinity of today's Art Deco former cinema building. Western Road is in place on the Stewards Estate. The long-standing windmill south of the line is shown and there is development on the site of the former barracks to the south west of the centre.*

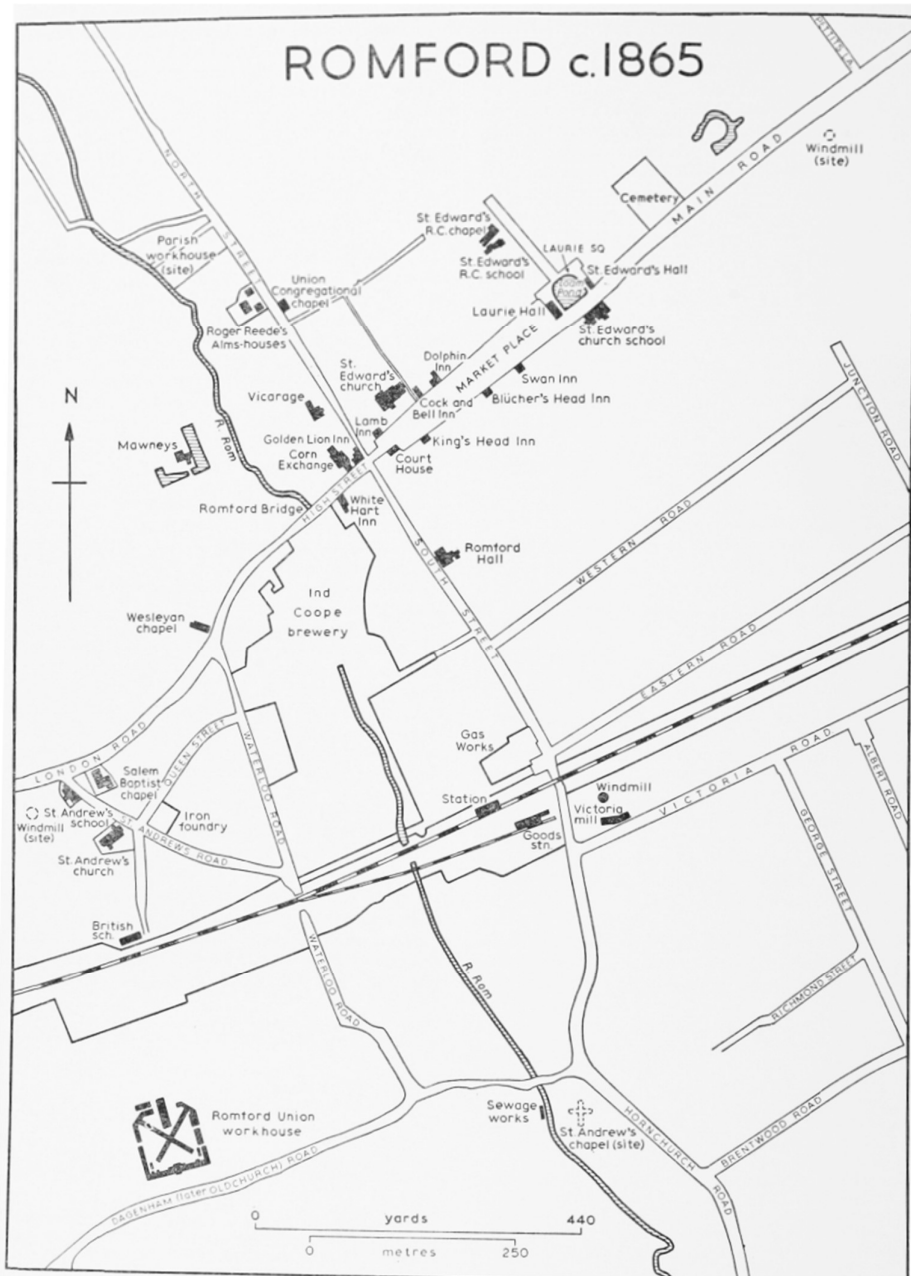
*The Market Place is still the main feature along with the crossroads. Romford Brewery on the open River Rom has begun to occupy the south-west quarter of the town centre but otherwise there is largely open country beyond the back gardens and yards of the frontage buildings. South of Market Place, the long, thin Medieval burgage plots remain a defining feature of the south east quarter.*

The railway on its embankment formed a hard, southern edge roughly parallel to the line of High Street and Market Place. From c.1850, Laurie Town, a small enclave of villas around a square with two a pond and two public halls was

developed adjacent to the market. Laurie Hall separated this new development from the old market but the whole remained the principal route though Romford. The town developed further when the former manor of Stewards east of South Street and the market was laid out by 1854 with first Western Road and then Eastern Road and Victoria Road.



*South Street to the railway embankment looking to south. The Star pub on the right was replaced by the Times Furnishings building.*



DIAGRAMATIC ROMFORD c.1865 from the Victoria County History volume on Essex. Romford is still essentially a market place and cross roads but the railway station parallel to the main east-west road will increasingly define the southern edge of the town centre. The vicarage is shown on North Street and the Corn Exchange next door to the Golden Lion. The moated manor of Mawneys is still in place in the north west quarter. It is notable that a town grid is not emerging. Minor routes in the town centre beyond the cross roads are limited to Chapel Lane leading to St Edward's RC chapel and meeting the path from the Anglican church at right angles. Eastern Road has joined Western Road as parallel routes in the south but these do not form part of a gridded network. Laurie Square is marked – a secondary space to the Market Place east of Laurie Hall.

Commercially, agriculture remained dominant with Romford's Corn Exchange opening in 1845 (enlarged 1861, closed c.1935) in the building adjoining the Golden Lion. The town's post office was originally at the Cock and Bell in the market until it relocated to South Street in 1870.

To the north east, near today's library, was built the Roman Catholic church – also dedicated to St Edward the Confessor and built in 1856 by Daniel Cubitt Nicholls in a Pugin-inspired early Gothic style in stone and brick. A day school was built at the same time then replaced with a larger school (probably by George Sherrin) along with a presbytery and later, in the 1930s, a North Chapel. The school eventually became a social club.

The Anglican Church had itself been recently rebuilt by architect John Johnson using similar materials – some of which came from the demolished Regent Street Quadrant by John Nash. Its spire is 162 feet high and the interior incorporates older memorials.



*The second edition OS map of 1873 showing the steady expansion of Romford including the building up of South Street. Buildings such as the County Court are now located there as well as the relatively newly built Romford Hall. Eastern and Western Roads are slowly being built out and the brewery is growing and has its own sidings. Laurie Town and Laurie Square are more defined and built up but around the Market Place, the long thin plots and yards remain the defining features. Other than the brewery, the open land behind the crossroads frontages is still very present but the wider town south of the railway line is becoming built-up as is the area west of Waterloo Road.*



*Romford High Street as it widened into London Road c.1908*

The central crossroads structure with Romford town centre divided into quadrants was becoming well established and the town expanded again in the 1880s with the development for housing on the manor of Mawneys north west of the crossroads. Development also followed in the north of the town and by 1900, Romford was also expanding westwards and southwards, always around its central cross.

Romford remained unusual in not having either a tangle or a grid of streets beyond its main crossroads and this situation has continued into the present day. Despite the building of Western Road, the town's south-east quadrant was largely impenetrable beyond the yards of the coaching inns around the Market Place and the south-west quadrant became entirely taken up with industry – most notably brewing.





1873: The south-east quarter of Romford in greater detail. The south side of the Market Place is still characterised by long thin burgage (borough) plots with the frontages occupied by inns and other businesses. The yard typology behind this frontage is very evident with outbuildings such as stables surrounding the yards. There is also a side street of the north side of Market Place and the building out of Laurie Town with a formal, axial route towards the site of the present town hall. School buildings are shown – in the vicinity of today’s ring road and Asda. Beyond the yards, the south-east quadrant is still a green space of gardens, orchards and plant nurseries. Beyond the linear High Street and Market Place, the character remains predominantly residential with South Street, Eastern and Western Roads and Victoria Road all partially lined with detached or semi-detached villas. The Rising Sun (now the Goose) opposite the station is shown as is the soon to be defunct windmill.

The Ind, Coope & Co. brewery was set up in 1799, when Edward Ind bought the Star Inn, with a small brewery attached, beside the River Rom in the High Street. The brewery site was greatly extended towards the railway as the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed and in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century it had sidings linked to the station and more than 400 employees – by far Romford's largest single business.

The brewery served a cluster of local pubs, some of which had already been in existence for centuries – serving the market and travellers. According to one source, by 1686, Romford had enough beds in its inns for 139 people and stabling for over 400 horses. This created a pattern of development – particularly around the Market Place and High Street of long, thin buildings occupying medieval burgage plots, often with an arch leading to yards and stabling at the rear. In 1762 there were 22 pubs including the White Hart on the High Street, which had been in business since at least 1489, the King's Head on Market Place and the Golden Lion at the corner of North Street. Most have since been rebuilt or demolished entirely.

Other central industries included tanneries, candle production (a noxious works existed on South Street after 1849, a mineral factory on Market Place and a comb factory near the Old Barrack Ground by Waterloo Road. There were also a number of small metal workshops, a millwright and a coach-builders. There were also three windmills in Romford town, including the South Street mill behind the Rising Sun pub (now The Goose) that literally had the wind taken out of its sails when the railway embankment was built close by.

There was no mains water until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Before this, Romford relied on the Loam Pond east of the market and a public well at the eastern end of the market itself. By 1905 there was mains water throughout the town. Mains sewage arrived with the Oldchurch works from 1862 but the Rom continued to be polluted until new works were built near Hornchurch.

Romford had a town gas works in South Street from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century but a new works was built in 1892 south of the station – this was a 25-acre site by 1938. Before a much-delayed power station for south Essex was built at Barking after the First World War, electricity came from a private sub-station on the Ind Coope site.

Physical public institutions were few with, perhaps, only a single theatre in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and (from 1930) a library in the market place. However, there were many cultural societies and sports clubs using facilities beyond the centre. And well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was much green space within the town centre –

hidden behind the commercial frontages. Dedicated parkland was outside the centre – notably Raphael Park which opened in 1904 on Gidea Hall land.



*Romford Town Mission – in Laurie Hall – with market day animal pens*



*Laurie Hall from the East (c1905) with the greenery of Laurie Square at right*

Romford was also a town – at least in its centre – with remarkably few churches. When the Salvation Army opened in Romford in 1881 it railed against the “brewery blighted town.” The main Anglican church remained St Edward the Confessor which was rebuilt on the site of the medieval church from 1844 by John Johnson in Kentish ragstone with Bath stone dressings.

As well as the Roman Catholic church mentioned above, the Church of St Andrew was erected in 1862 on the former barrack ground by Waterloo Road. Non-conformist places of worship also included an Independent Church on North Street, the Baptist Salem church on London Road and Romford Baptist Church on Main Road. The Zoar (Strict) church existed on the Market Place before moving on to North Street. The Trinity (Wesleyan) church, Mawney Road (now Angel Way), originated by 1827 when a chapel was built in High Street. In 1887 the old chapel was sold to the Salvation Army, and in 1888 the present Trinity church was built and a school added nearby in 1899. It became the centre of the ‘Romford Revival’ but was damaged by bombing in 1840. There is also Romford United Reformed church on Western Road, originating in the late 17th century on another site and rebuilt on this site repeatedly until 1965. A permanent synagogue arrived just before the war, moving to Eastern road in 1954.



By 1896, the picture remains much the same in central Romford (see above map with the notable enlargement of the brewery that is now occupying a significant part of the south west quadrant. There is also a further intensification of building at the West end of the High Street/London Road and its environs. The Mawneys manor estate was also developed (it was sold for building in 1883) with secondary streets occupying the north-west quadrant including Mawneys Road, Linden and Olive Streets.

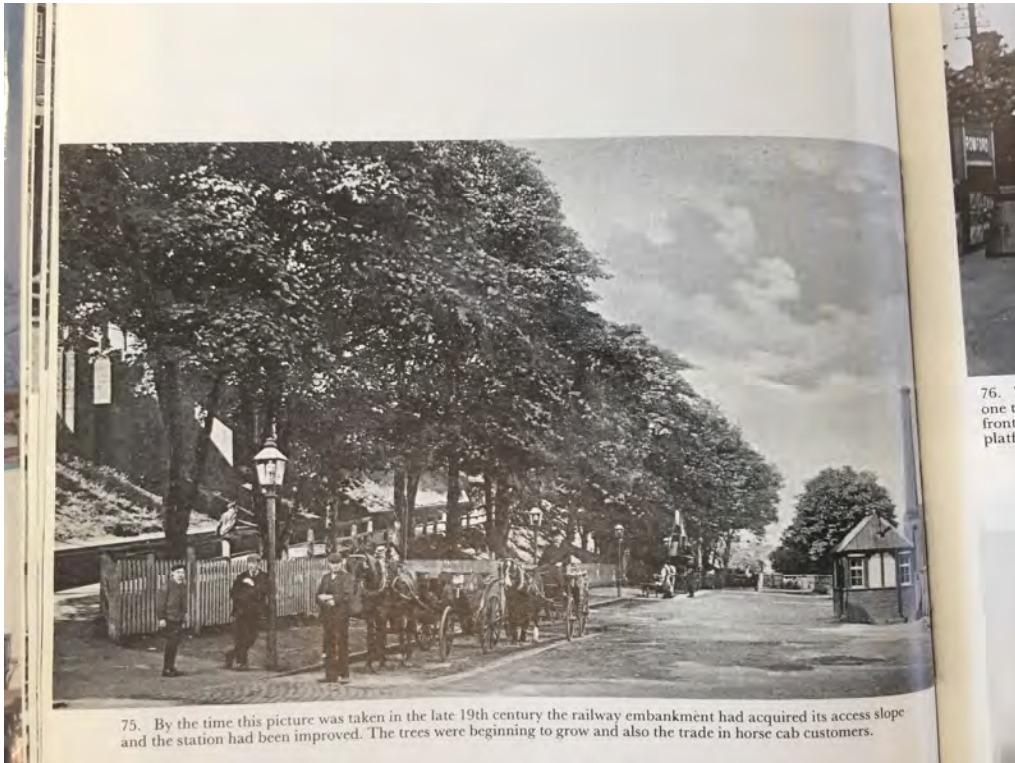
At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century then, Romford's town centre is growing far more rapidly west of the crossroads than east which remains much more green. Mawneys manor house was demolished in 1935 (for the United Services Club)

but ten years earlier the developed estate had already been subdivided into a central and peripheral area by the building of Eastern Avenue.

There is also an intensification of activity around the two railway stations (plus the Goods Station) but the workhouse and infirmary remained isolated, outside the town proper.



*Residential and tree-lined Eastern Road in 1908*



*The wooded railway embankment ramp*

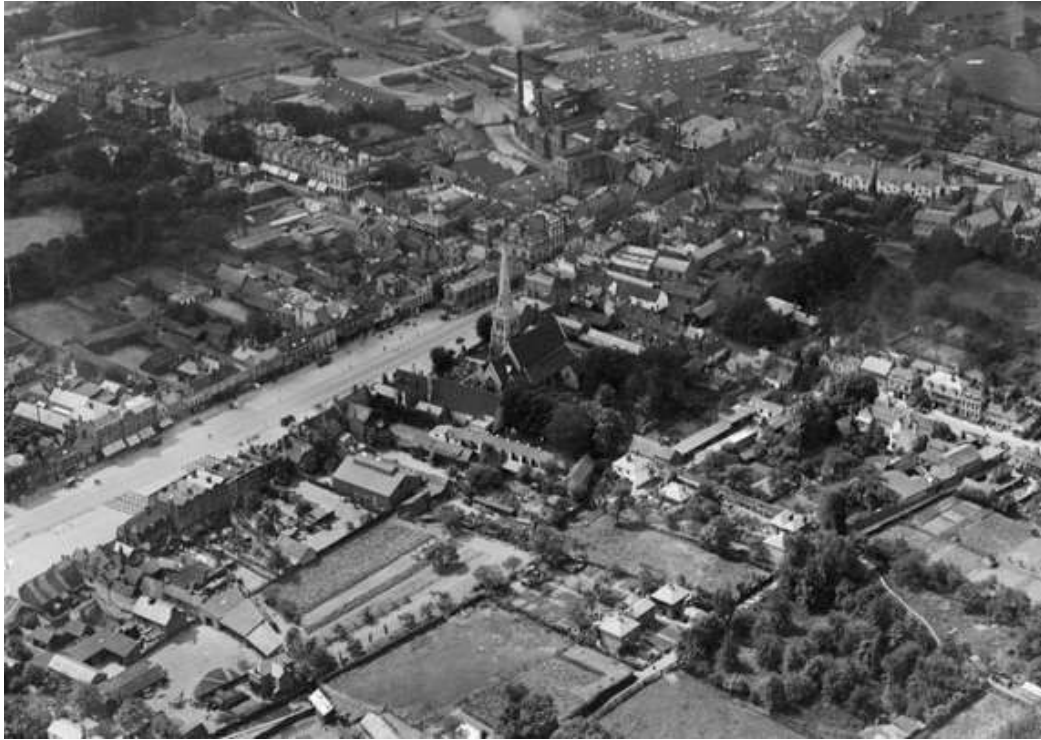


*Weatherboard buildings propped in Bazier's Yard (1905)*

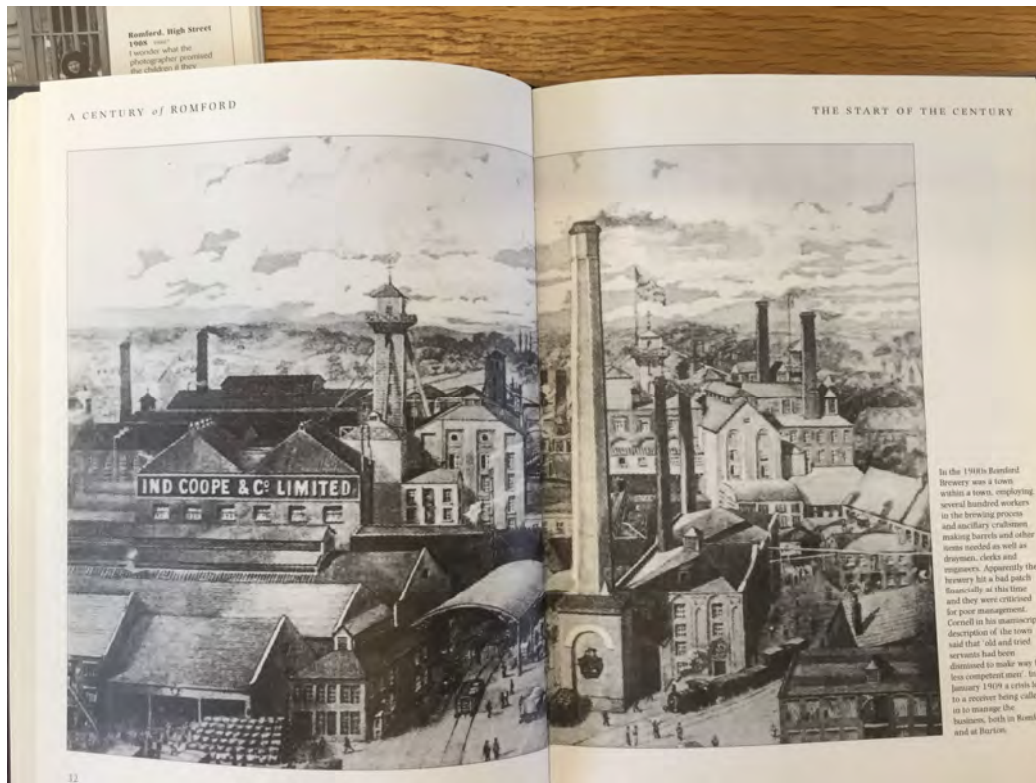


*Remarkably, central Romford just after the First World War was not essentially different from the 1870s or 1890s. The brewery had grown relentlessly but otherwise the early morphology of the town centre remains, organised around the original market and crossroads. Secondary routes are still few within the town centre – an unusual pattern of development for English towns of this size – as can be seen by the remarkable amount of greenery and open land in the town centre east of the cross in an aerial photograph of the time (below). This was before the 1930s developments that were about to bring great change.*





*Rumford Shopping Hall – the beginnings of the indoor market – now remodelled as Romford Shopping Hall. There was still a village scale to much of the Market Place.*



*Ind Coope brewery c.1900. Its stacks and towers would have been prominent, vertical but slender elements in the townscape.*

### 2.3 Romford Between the Wars

It was the inter-war period that saw Romford's next most defining time of expansion and physical change. London was burgeoning and modernising with Metroland spreading across the Home Counties. This was not just a matter of housing but new building types such as cinemas and new styles such as Art Deco, its more simplified sister, the Moderne, and a Neoclassical revival – particularly Queen Anne inspired. Romford became a municipal borough, with its town hall opening in 1937. After the First World War Romford expanded from 19,442 people in 1921 to 35,918 in 1931. This necessitated building housing, from 1924, on the largest green area left close to the centre, the Marshalls Estate that once covered the area behind the civic row from North Street to Pettits Lane from 1924.

In the spirit of the age, Romford modernised rapidly, demolishing historic buildings in the process – the Market House, for instance. The Laurie Cinema had opened at Laurie Hall at the end of the Market Place in 1913 (and had

closed by 1939) and was followed by others between the wars. The Havana on South Street opened in 1936. its Art Deco design was by well-known cinema architects Kemp & Tasker. It later became an Odeon before closing and reopening as two nightclubs. The large building adjacent to the Odeon (112-116) South Street is often taken to be part of the Odeon but was built as the Times Furnishing Store and very much in the chain's house style. More cinemas arrived and there were four operating in Romford by 1951.

South Street was widened to accommodate a new and brighter shopping era. The plain Romford Arcade was first, followed by a much grander venture, The Quadrant, that was built from 1934 in Art Deco style with dog-leg arcades running from South Street into the Market Place. It was developed in phases beginning in 1934 with its double fronted façade to South Street (with a dance hall above) and was completed in 1935 with the demolition of Market Place buildings including the historic Market House. It was an enormous commercial success and marked the beginnings of a new character for central Romford.

Glitteringly lit in green and gold neon, the Quadrant was also the first large-scale retail incursion into the greenery of the south east quarter of the town centre. South Street's widening caused the loss of many historic structures and shifting its character substantially to retail uses.

On the opposite side of the market, the interwar Romford Shopping Hall provided an indoor facility to stallholders but South Street had now taken over from High Street as prime shopping frontage.

In the same period, the railway station was remodelled and given a veneer of inter-war classicism.

101a James Walker's two shops lined either side of the Market Place of the Quadrant Arcade entrance until the 1970s.



*Display cases and neon lighting gave the Quadrant Arcade enormous glitter*

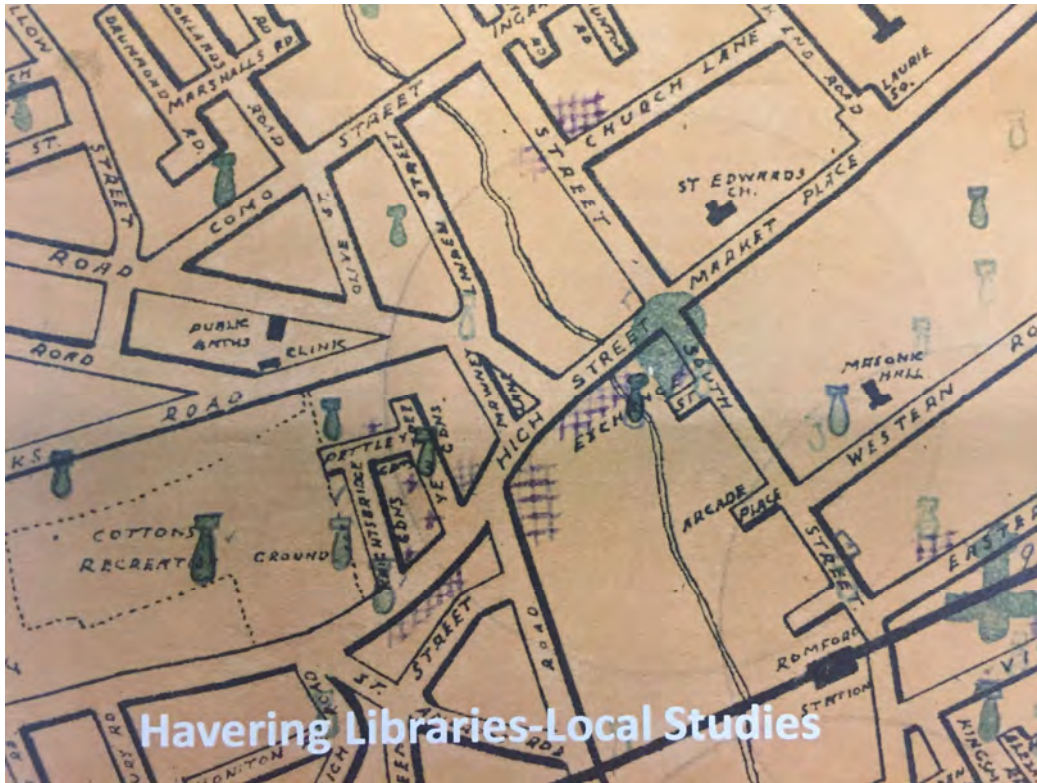


*1938 Ordnance Survey map of Romford: It is unclear if The Quadrant shopping arcade is partially shown (the map may have been based on an earlier survey).*



*1939: This map is on an older base so not entirely up to date but usefully shows the expansion of Romford on its periphery before the Second World War. The stations have been combined and rebuilt.*

## 2.4 Post-War Romford



*Bomb damage map for Romford. Particularly devastating was the destruction of the area around the crossroads and the High Street.*

The 1950s saw some building activity in the town centre including replacements for bomb damaged buildings along the High Street but it was most marked by rapid expansion on the town periphery with, for example the massive Harold Hill housing estate imposed on the area in 1948-58. The population of Romford rose from 88,000 in 1951 to more than 114,000 only a decade later and in 1965 it was united with Hornchurch U.D. to form the London borough of Havering.

However, in the 1960s comprehensive clearance and renewal was the prevailing doctrine for town and city centres. Both the town and the county (under the County of Essex Plan) began a programme of radical change with a schema for Romford that proposed an encircling ring-road and the rebuilding of virtually all the town centre, emptying out much of the residential population and creating extensive new shopping facilities.

Much demolition ensued and the town's inner wards and hinterland were cut off from a centre that became increasingly mono-cultural and reached by mostly unpleasant subways – standard procedure for Modernist post-war planning and

its large-scale zoning and desire to segregate pedestrians from free-flowing cars. Many facilities were to be re-provided outside the centre.

Laurie Square and Laurie Hall were demolished to make way for St Edward's Way (leaving the market without an end stop) and a new central library near the town hall. The market was closed to through traffic by 1969 when there were still some 300 or more regular stall-holders.

Proposals for a major new shopping centre for Romford had been underway since at least the early 1960s and in 1962 the council compulsorily purchased the extensive bowling greens that had existed since 1898 behind the Kings Head Hotel. It was to be a major transformation from green space in the town centre into shopping that had been seen previously with the demolition of much of South Street and the building of the Quadrant Arcade.

The new, open-air Liberty Shopping Centre, between the Market Place and Western Road was begun in 1968 and completed in 1972. It had over 100 shops, including branches of the major department stores. Debenhams, on the Market Place, occupied the site of the earlier Stones department store and a row of older buildings on narrow plots. Tall buildings including the Mercury House office block were erected at the Ring Road end. Romford also became devoted to the car, building many multi-storey car parks across the town centre.

In the quarter west of South Street, the brewery was also expanding after becoming part of Allied Breweries and had some 1000 workers in its 20-acre, closed-off site by 1970. From the 1960s on then, the town's historic fabric was steadily reduced.

The 1976 County Plan for Essex was a product of its age with its vision of large-scale use zoning, free flowing traffic and segregation of vehicles from pedestrians. It also had little regard for Romford's heritage with large areas of the town designated for rebuilding – including the new Liberty shopping centre and vast areas including Church Lane, the west end of the High Street and the east end of Market Place among those parts of the medieval, Georgian and Victorian fabric scheduled for demolition.

The movement plan envisaged drew the tight belt of the ring road around the town centre north and south of the railway. At its heart was still the cross roads but with its arms truncated and pedestrianized. This central zone was segregated from its natural hinterland by traffic and underpasses. Service roads would wind into each quarter of the town including Exchequer Street (the lengthening of an inter-war service road). With multi-storey parking in each quarter too, the car had priority over people in the new Romford.

A new town square with links to the Market Place and Western Road was envisaged. While this new public realm created the vital secondary connections that Romford had never previously had, this was limited to one corner of the town and came at the price of the removal of historic fabric and the city centre's green spaces.

On their own terms, the 1960s and '70s proposals were successful in that they were largely implemented. Shopping, offices and cars became virtually the only players within the ring road apart from the brewery. For a time, the changes assisted with the retail-led growth of Romford but, arguably, in the long term the radical changes marked the beginning of the town's environmental decline. The large-scale zoning removed the vitality that mixed-use places offer and the positive aesthetic qualities – the heritage assets, housing and green spaces – aspects that attract the contemporary citizen and foot-loose shopper – were removed from the town centre.

In their place was proposed an orthogonal town, a rectilinear environment that took little account of the morphology of the town as it had developed over several hundred years. Little was to survive with the exception of the interwar buildings of South Street. Even the Golden Lion was slated for redevelopment and the Market Place was to be almost entirely rebuilt in Modernist fashion. The only cultural and recreational uses identified for the town centre were a bowling alley and ice rink envisaged for the north side of the market with an adjoining restaurant. It was a functional view of the world that had little regard for pleasure.





1959: The expansion of retail and commercial activity along South Street is particularly evident but Laurie Square remains in place, as does Chapel Lane. Junction Road meets Main Road but there is still very little porosity within the town centre beyond the traditional routes leading from the crossroads.



1961: The eastern end of Market Place, and the first hints of radical change are apparent. Buildings have been cleared along Church Lane where there is now an empty site and a car park. Laurie Square too has been partially demolished,



1961: The southern end of the town centre. The de-densification of the western end of High Street and beyond (including the north west quarter in preparation for Angel Way) is in progress pending large-scale rebuilding but the brewery still dominates the south west quarter of the town centre. In the south-east quarter, much greenery remains behind the frontages including two bowling clubs.



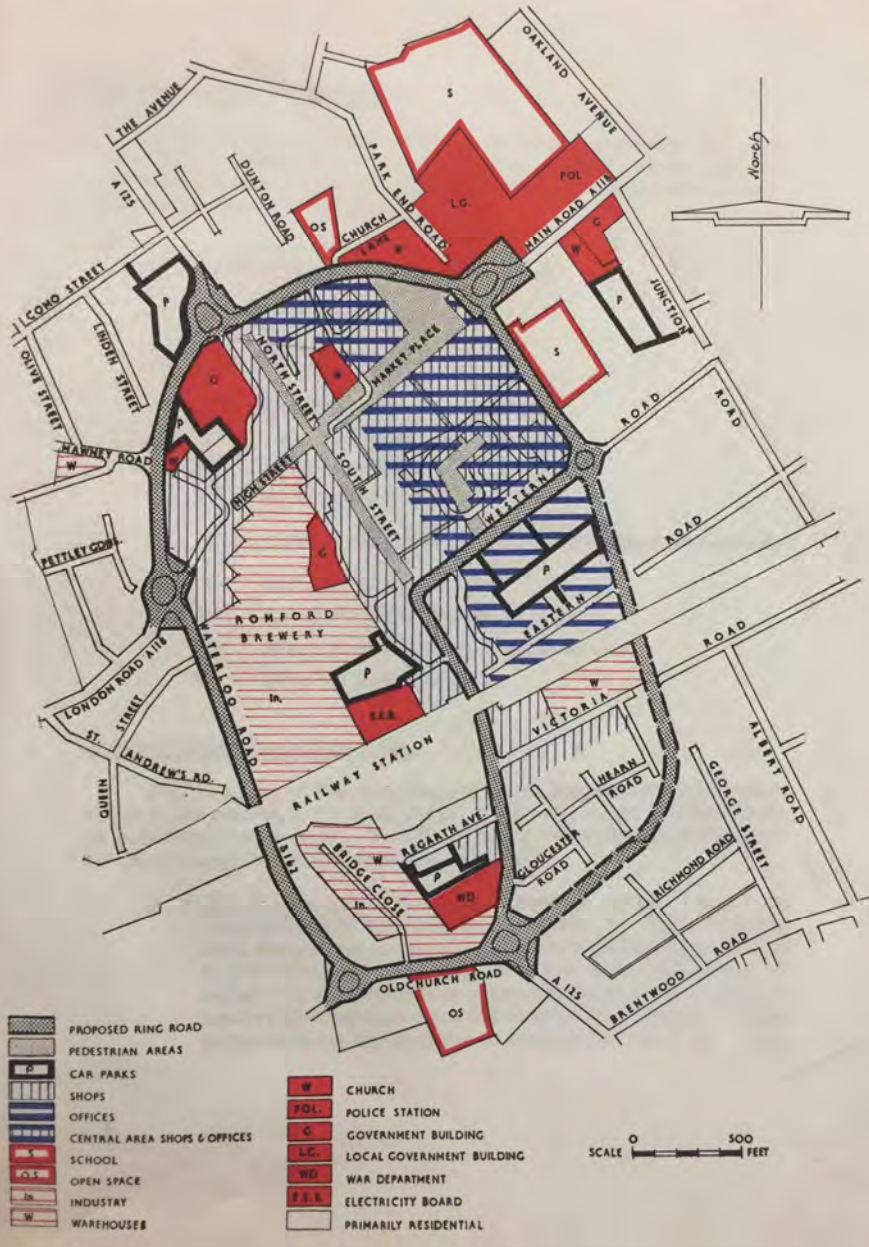
*Laurie Square with its paired villas and informal green spaces some decades before their demolition.*



*The movement plan envisaged with ring road around the town centre north and south of the railway and segregated central zone.*

**MAIN USES OF LAND**

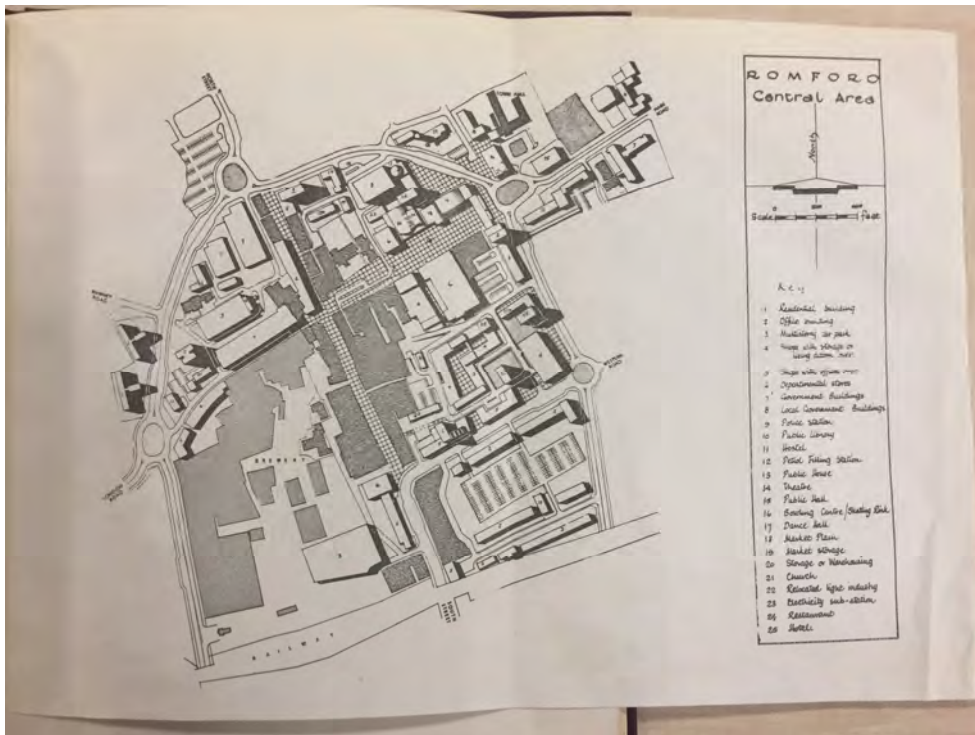
**PLAN No. 2**



*Land use zones in the 1960s plans*



*The 1976 County Plan for Essex proposed large-grain zoning, free flowing traffic and segregation of vehicles from pedestrians.*



The new, rectilinear environment took little account of the morphology of the town as it had developed over several hundred years





*Three dimensionally, the rectilinear box was to be the dominant form as captured here in the main square of the Liberty shopping centre. It was fundamentally a different Romford from barely a decade earlier.*

By the early 1970s, little remained of the Romford prior to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. As well as the Market House, the parish workhouse, North Street (1787), and the Corn Exchange, High Street (1845) had also been demolished, as well as St. Edward's Hall and the Laurie Hall. Romford Hall, a large house off South Street had already been demolished after the First World War. The public baths on Mawney Road (Angel Way) that had been built in 1900 were levelled in 1975 and the former Market Place central library, housed in 1930 in the former St Edward's charity school was cleared away. In 1967, the Salvation Army opened a new citadel and its previous home, the Wesleyan chapel in High Street was demolished to make way for the London Road roundabout. The old alms-houses in North Street were sold in 1959 and later demolished with new housing provided elsewhere.

Among the few pre-20<sup>th</sup> century survivors within the Romford ring road were some of the inns around the market, the 19<sup>th</sup> century brewery buildings and Church House next to St Edwards (for many years itself a pub). Other slivers of an older Romford survived just beyond the ring road including a house on North Street and the St Edwards RC church complex close to the library and town hall. Georgian Romford, such as the townhouses once facing the market, has almost entirely disappeared. Apart from the brewery with its tall chimney, industry was also largely confined to the outskirts of Romford including on several large industrial estates and in the mid-1970s there were still some 50 factories in existence. On the other side of the tracks, close to the station and along Victoria



Road it is the interwar incarnation of Romford that survives alongside more recent infill.

Green space was now only to be found outside the Ring Road and that mostly some distance away with the exception of Coronation Gardens (1953) on the site of an old cemetery. Romford's War Memorial was relocated here in 1970 from the demolished Laurie Square. The roofing over of the Liberty Centre effectively closed off much of the town centre outside shopping hours, leaving a very limited active frontage behind – a monoculture of closed shops after working hours.

More recently, Romford's most radical changes have been retail related – the roofing over of the Liberty centre and its 1990 extension beyond the ring road (now the Mercury Mall and joined to the Liberty by an underpass) and the building of the Brewery big box retail park and parking over much of the former Star Brewery site after its closure in 1993.

Since then, some small blocks of residential have returned to the town centre, most notably along the north-east edge of Market Place and in the backlands to its rear. This new development is notably taller than earlier buildings around the market and has been joined by Tollgate House a neoclassical pastiche market hall that was completed after delays some five years ago. At the same time, there has been a steady chipping away of historic fabric including the loss of entire locally listed buildings on Western Road and North Street and unsympathetic changes to other buildings that, if restored, could contribute positively to the character and appearance of the town centre. In terms of cultural investment, the Havering Museum opened within the former brewery buildings on the High Street and the Sapphire Ice and Leisure Centre opened on Western Road in early 2018.



*The pastiche Tollgate House, completed c.2013 to close the east end of the market in a manner akin to the prior Laurie Hall.*

### 3.0 Summary of Principal Morphological Changes

Romford shifted as a settlement from the high ground of Marshalls to vanished St Andrews (at Oldchurch) then to lower ground by the ford of the Rom. From then on, the town developed over centuries in, at first, a linear manner along today's London Road, High Street, Market Place and Main Road, with the wide Market Place being its focus. This linearity quickly took the form of a cross with the routes to Colliers Row and Hornchurch intersecting at the Market Place crossroads. These later arms of the cross remained secondary routes for many more centuries but they established Romford as a town divided into four quarters or quadrants. It is a pattern of development quite different from English towns that developed from, say, a Roman colonia grid or where local topography influenced a more meandering street pattern that responded to landforms.

For hundreds of years these quarters remained largely open land with only a few incursions such as the moated manor of Mawneys until the arrival of the Star Brewery. Expansions instead consisted of intensification along the four main routes or satellite developments such as New Romford.

The arrival of the railway in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century created a parallel route to the main road but was also a significant barrier to southern expansion apart from outlying uses such as the infirmary and workhouse.

Over time, these four quarters became in-filled – notably by the brewery and the redevelopment of the Mawneys Manor lands. Eastern Road and Western Road were added as parallel routes but still a town centre grid of streets did not emerge.

Around the market, however, some depth was provided by the yards of the coaching inns and other secondary alleys and spaces off the main market place. Similarly, small-scale infill occurred behind St Edward's church including the along Church Lane that led to the later RC church.

The self-contained world of the brewery meant that the south-western quadrant was, until the last few decades, outside the limited public realm of Romford – an impermeable industrial enclave. Remarkably, the south-eastern quadrant between Market Place and Western Road remained a green hinterland for centuries up until the radical redevelopments of the 1960s.

This large-scale reordering of Romford threw a ring of traffic around the quadrants and crossroads, severing the outer areas from the town's centre. And while, at first, the Liberty shopping centre introduced some limited permeability to the town that was otherwise notably absent, the subsequent enclosure of this area has created a private enclave that is closed-off to the public realm.

Central Romford's public realm and active frontages today remain essentially those leading off the crossroads. The complexity of yards and alleys that once added variety, depth, and lengthened the active frontages – like an indented coastline – have largely been smoothed out.

The unsentimental redevelopment of this morphological armature has also seen the character of Romford change utterly. For much of its existence, the country town had a medieval appearance with many timber-framed buildings with weatherboard and gables – very much the pattern of rural Essex and eastern England. There were Georgian additions, now almost entirely lost, but while the Victorian age transformed the face of Romford – as it did most places across the country – it was the steady absorption of Romford into London – notably in the inter-war period – that began to change the character of Romford from a distinct Essex market town with a still active agricultural hinterland to a Metroland extension of London. This transformation was completed by the radical restructuring of the 1960s that erased much of central Romford's remaining more rural identity at the same time as turning the town centre into a monocultural zone devoted almost exclusively to shopping.

## 4.0 Town Centre Heritage Assets

### 4.1 Introduction

The list of heritage assets below includes designated heritage assets (listed buildings and conservation areas) and non-designated assets – in this instance, locally listed buildings. The latter enjoy more limited protection against demolition or alteration – especially if outside a designated conservation area.

The list below is startlingly short given Romford's long history. There are only four statutorily listed buildings within the ring road and a handful more on the town centre's fringe.

The locally listed buildings within and close to the town centre are also set out. Excluded are those locally listed buildings that had been demolished between 2011 when Havering published its list and a review of 2014. Further changes are likely in the future.

### 4.2 Romford Conservation Area

Romford Conservation Area was designated in 1968 soon after the legislation facilitating the creation of conservation areas was passed by Parliament. It is one of 11 conservation areas in Havering. These focus on historic settlements or substantial institutions. The conservation area boundaries have remained unchanged since.

An undated report (but c.2008) by heritage consultant Paul Drury has since served as a conservation area appraisal document. Central government guidance is that such documents are reviewed at least every five years.

With the exception of the inclusion of the area to the rear of the Parish Church of St Edward the Confessor, the boundary of the conservation area was tightly drawn along property frontages ie around the public realm, the streets themselves, rather than around entire buildings or building plots. The area protected was limited to the Market Place, the High Street and North Street within the ring road and a short stretch of South Street.

Such a tight drawing of a boundary – one that excluded many of the buildings that provided the framing and context of the historic market and crossroads – has been regarded as inadequate and not meeting good conservation practice. This was also identified in the Romford Heritage Strategy (2000).

The consequences of the tightly drawn boundary mean that Havering's ability to preserve and enhance the area and its setting have been limited and many buildings that once contributed positively to Romford's town centre have been lost or radically altered.

The Drury report makes logical and limited recommendations for change – including the expansion of the boundary – that have been carried over into its adaptation as a conservation area appraisal. These recommendations have not been acted upon.

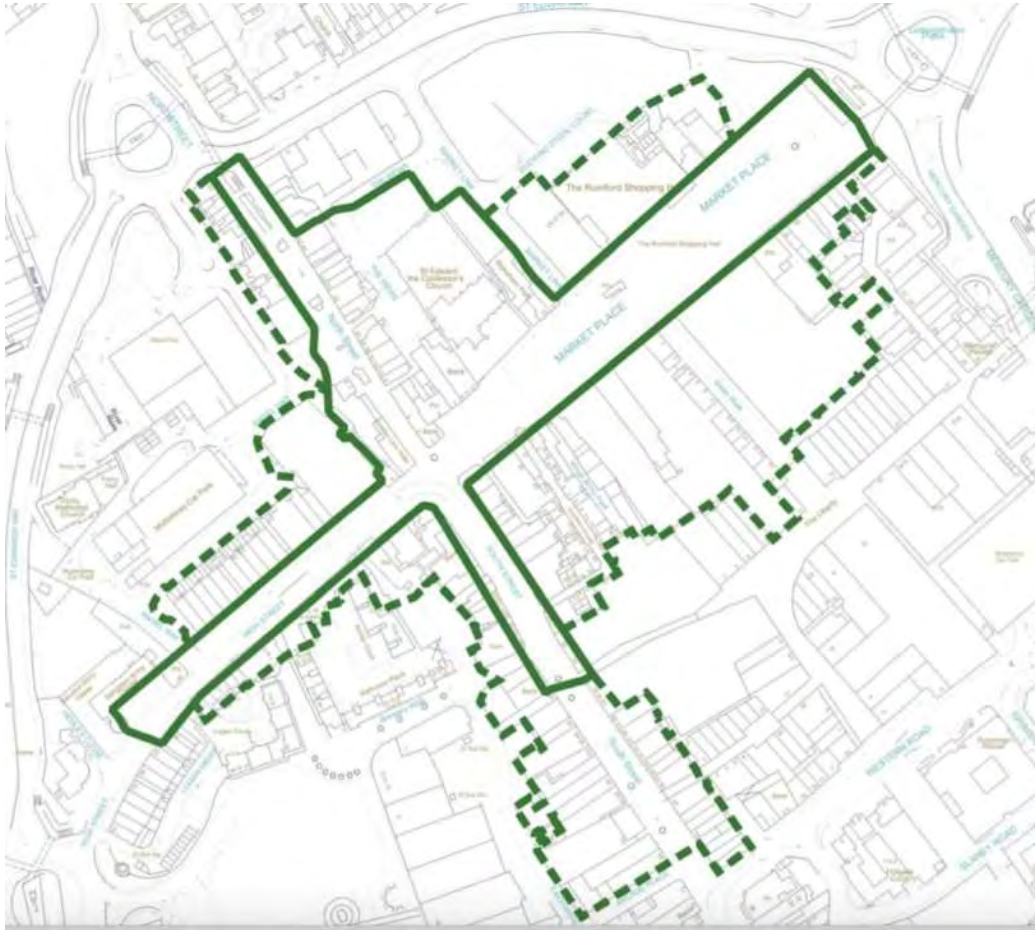
The report/appraisal contains limited content regarding the conservation areas qualities, townscape and views analysis. It does, however, note that the original boundaries of the conservation area were based on where views were available of the listed buildings. This is not a sound basis for the designation of conservation area boundaries or for making planning decisions within them.

The report also notes many blank facades to streets, the loss of architectural details, shopfronts that relate poorly to their host building, and the development of an unsympathetic backdrop to the conservation area as a result of tall buildings and highways decisions.

The appraisal is somewhat out-of-date and does not take into account changes such as the developments at the eastern end of Market Place or a re-evaluation of inter-war buildings since the original designation.

The entire conservation area is now on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register where it is regarded as being in very bad condition and vulnerable although improving.

There have been recent planning decisions that have sought to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area such as the refusal of the Premier Inn proposal on the Market Place on the former C&A/T J Hughes site (today the B&M store).



*The existing conservation area boundary and the unimplemented extension recommendations (dotted). Interwar buildings further down South Street and the RC Church of St Edward group should be among those considered for inclusion in any future boundary.*

#### 4.3 Statutorily Listed Buildings

The number of listed buildings – ie those of national importance that demand great weight be attached to preserving the special interest of the structure and its setting – is extremely limited in Romford town centre. They are:

##### i. Parish Church of St Edward The Confessor, Market Place

Grade II\*listed (TQ5119588957)

*Listing description summary: 1849 by J Johnson in a curvilinear Decorated style. Rubble, ashlar dressings, patterned red tile roof 162 ft spire. Three excellent C16 and early C17 monuments, especially that of Sir Anthony Cooke died 1576. (RCHM).*

**ii. Church House, 15, Market Place**

Grade: II

TQ 5088/5188 5/3 4.7.52 II

*Listing Description Summary: C15 or C16 with early C19 alterations. Painted plaster; old tile roof. Two storeys and attic. Ground floor has 2 canted bays, with door between, continuous frieze and cornice. First floor 2 double hung sashes in reveals. Gable with sash at attic level. West side return elevation facing the Church of St Edward has oversailing 1st floor on moulded beam and 2 brackets. Restored 4-centre moulded arch to door. Plaque between 1st floor windows with armorial cresting.*

Some historians describe this building as a former chantry house wch others dispute. It was a pub for many years until 1908 when it reopened as Church House. It may once have been part of a larger building that fronted the market with a yard to the rear.

**iii. The Lamb Public House, 5, Market Place**

Grade II

TQ 5088/5188 5/4 I

*Listing description summary: Early to mid C19. Painted brick, modern tile roof. Two storeys central recess with parapet, pedimented side bays breaking forward. One-one-one 1st floor casements. Blind semi-circular openings in pediment tympana. Ground floor sashes, stucco entablature. Reeded pilasters with paterae to central door and windows.*

**iv. The Golden Lion Public House, 2, High Street**

Grade II

TQ 51156 88880

*Listing description summary: Inn of various dates from the C17 onwards. Front to High Street late C18 or early C19; 3 storeys, 4 bays, rendered with stucco rusticated quoins; ground floor has carriage entrance on left hand side and C19 bar front with central doorway, pedimented door hood on scrolled brackets and moulded cornice. First floor with 4 flush sashes*



*with moulded hoods on scrolled brackets; 2nd floor 4 sashes with moulded wooden frames. Cornice with fragment of parapet above. Old tile roof hipped at east. Front to North Street: return wall of High Street front jettied above ground floor, the jetty projecting further at the north than the south. Two sashes to 1st floor with architraves and 2 small modern windows to 2nd floor. Further north is a C17 or early C18 timber-framed building of 2 storeys with a jettied 1st floor. Brick plinth, ground floor partly weatherboarded, partly rendered with a variety of window openings. Rendered 1st floor with 5 sashes. Old tile roof with one stack through ridge. To the north are the remains of a further timber-framed range. In the angle between the High Street and North Street ranges is an early C19 brick addition of 3 storeys with hipped slate roof.*

v. **96-102, North Street**

Grade: II

TQ5100189142

*Listing description summary: Nos 96 to 102 (even) Late C17 timber-framed building consisting of 2 parallel ranges, that in front taller than the one behind. Two storeys, rendered, altered ground floor with modern shop fronts. Three modern windows to 1st floor. South end wall tile hung, rear wall rendered. Rebuilt stack in valley at south.*

Although listed as BMS Insurance on statutory list, the building is now occupied by a solicitor's office.

vi. **Roman Catholic Church of St Edward the Confessor, 5 Park End**

Grade II

*Listing description summary: Roman Catholic Church built in 1856 by Daniel Cubitt Nicholls with donations by the Twelfth Lord Petre. Gallery added 1917. North Chapel added 1934 and gallery rebuilt. C13 Early English style. Coursed ragstone with red tiled roof and Bath stone dressings. Chapel of yellow brick laid in English bond. Aisle-less nave, chancel, sacristy to north-east and porch/gallery stair tower to south-west. Later North Chapel at west.*

*The chapel has windows in a more elaborate Decorated style, door set in a Tudor arch and pitched roof with flat-roofed vestry.*

*The stained glass in the east window dates from 1885. It depicts scenes from the life of St Edward, is by Hardman and Co of Birmingham, a major supplier of stained glass during the Gothic Revival, notably for the Palace of Westminster. A relatively rare example of a gentry-funded, mid-C19,*

*rural Roman Catholic church, in a period where most Catholic churches built were in urban locations.*

#### **vii. Havering Town Hall, Main Road**

Grade II

List description summary: *Built as Romford Town Hall, designed in 1935 by architects H R Collins and A E O Geens in International Moderne style and extended by three bays to the south west in 1960 in matching style and materials. The 1988 south eastern wing is not of special interest. Steel-framed with Leicester silver grey facing bricks and Swanage stone facings and plinth. Flat roof. Plan was L-shaped and a proposed refreshment hall and assembly hall was never built. Staircase Hall has large imperial staircase with metal handrails, hall lined in Bath stone with rusticated courses and columned entrances to Council Chamber and Committee corridor. Council Chamber retains Austrian oak Public Gallery with giant piers, dado panelling and dais and large skylight to ceiling.*

#### **viii. Romford War Memorial, Coronation Gardens, Main Road**

Grade II

List description summary: *A First World War civic memorial, 1921 designed by the architect JW Hammond, recording the names of the fallen of that conflict and the service and the civilian dead of the Second World War.*

*It consists of a plain wheel-head cross on a tall tapering plinth with a moulded cap and base on a two-stepped plinth. Sunken panels on the faces of the plinth are inscribed on the front.*

*Although it has been moved, it retains its interest as an elegant monument, which is redolent of its interwar date. The inscription was amended to include the dates of the Second World War and to pluralise 'WARS', but the main commemoration for that conflict was the Romford*

*War Memorial Old Folks (now Social) Club, opened in 1953. Portland stone.*

**ix. Church of St Andrew, St Andrews Road**

Grade II

TQ5085788400

*List description summary: 1862 by John Johnson. Ragstone church comprising nave, chancel and south aisle. Windows mostly small and of 2 lights with Decorated tracery. Large west window above 3 small circular windows. West tower inside the gable with battered plinth and angle buttresses. Shingled broach spire; stone turret with hexagonal cap with ball-flower ornament and small quatrefoil windows over west end of south aisle. Prominent south porch. Ornamental slate roof with decorated red ridge-tiles. Octagonal vestry to north-east with paired lancet windows under trefoil heads.*

**x. Salem Chapel, London Road**

Grade II

TQ 50843 88470

*Listing description summary: 1847 (date plaque on building). Baptist Chapel; stock brick, principal elevation to London Road 3 bays wide 2 storeys high. Projecting central bay with stucco quoins to ground floor and wide central doorway with stucco pilasters: paired brick pilasters to upper floor with open pediment and central Egyptian window with stucco architrave. Flanking bays with small square windows to ground floor and Egyptian windows above with hoods on tapering brackets, plain stucco plaques over. Stucco parapet. Return elevation to St Andrews Road of 3 bays with segmental-headed windows in recessed panels. Original cast-iron railings, standards and gates by Wedlake Thompson of Hornchurch. Additional buildings include lecture room added in 1868.*

**4.4 Locally Listed Buildings**

The 2014 Heritage Asset Register Buildings of Local Heritage Interest sets down the locally listed buildings in Romford. It updates a previous list of 2011 after a

number of inclusions and losses. Five out of 12 of these losses have been in Romford. There have been some additional losses from the list since such as the former doctors' and nurses' home on Union Road – the former infirmary and workhouse (including other buildings on the local list) has been demolished despite a 2013 GLA objection on heritage grounds. The list of those locally listed buildings that remain in the town centre and its fringe follows. The text and most images are from Havering's 2014 Register.

### **Trinity Methodist Church, Angel Way, Romford**

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Church. Current Use: Church.*

*Construction Date/Period: 1888.*

#### *Full Description*

*Cross-shaped plan in red brick with slate roof. Later additions to eastern end in similar materials. Detailed western elevation with central pitched gable and two smaller pitched gables flanking. Three-light window above central double door with triangular pediment. Brick detailing at first floor level.*

#### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*Trinity Methodist Church was founded in 1827 in a chapel on Mawney Road (later Angel Way). In 1887 the chapel was sold to the Salvation Army and a new church was built to serve the rapidly developing Mawneys Estate. Later elements were added in 1923 and 1936, and the church was bombed during the Second World War in 1940.*



### **Romford Brewery, High Street, Romford**

*Conservation Area: Romford. Original Use: Brewery. Current Use: Residential and commercial. Construction Date/Period: 1799.*

#### *Full Description*

*Extensive range of late C19 buildings fronting the High Street. Central section 3 storeys high, stock brick, 6 windows wide, with red brick piers and window arches to ground floor. Semi-circular headed windows to ground floor under relieving arches with a pair of small circular windows overhead. Above a stucco band terminating in flat scrolls. 6 sash windows to upper floor set in square recessed panels. Brick on edge cornice. 2 large gables and large semi-circular headed windows. Later additions to E. and W. in similar style.*

*2 stones set in front wall with the following inscriptions:*

*'GEORGE II REGIS / Anno Imperii Decimo / Readificatus'*

*'This stone was removed from the parapet of the old bridge in the High Street. Demolished 1906'.*

*Architectural and Historical Interest*

*Ind, Coope & Co.'s brewery was established on the High Street in Romford in 1799. It was greatly extended in the later 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and again after the Second World War, steadily becoming Romford's main industry. At the height of its operation during the 1970s, the brewery covered 20 acres and employed over a thousand workers.*

*The brewery was closed in 1993 and much of the site was demolished. The buildings fronting High Street remain as testament to the brewery and its significance in the history of Romford. Today the buildings have been redeveloped to form part of a shopping centre, and to house the Havering Museum.*



**Prudential Building, High Street, Romford**

*Conservation Area: Romford. Original Use: Commercial. Current Use:*

*Commercial. Construction Date/Period: 1930s.*

*Full Description*

*Four storey brick construction with mansard slate roof, forming the shoulder of South Street and High Street. Ground floor has been converted to shop fronts. Sash and case windows throughout, with arched lintels at first floor level. Two pedimented window surrounds to two windows on first floor. Fourth storey at roof level, with dormer windows protruding.*

*Architectural and Historical Interest*

*The Prudential building is part of the principal group of buildings for which the Romford Conservation Area was designated to protect. It is part of a key view from South Street to North Street through the crossroads, and makes a positive contribution to the street scene in the town centre. It is a high quality historic building, forming one corner of the historic crossroads at the bottom of Market Place, and complements the classical design of the other two locally listed buildings.*



## The White Hart (The Bitter End), High Street, Romford

*Conservation Area: Romford. Original Use: Public House. Current Use: Partial commercial use, majority vacant. Construction Date/Period: 1896.*

### *Full Description*

*A large rectangular brick building with a pitched plain tile roof and three small chimney stacks. Shop/venue frontages on ground floor of front elevation divided by a vehicular entrance to a rear yard. Rebuilt in 1896 in English Domestic Revival style, with a symmetrical upper floor of big oriel windows joined under a cornice running the length of the elevation. On the upper floor, four pairs of twelve-over-twelve sash and case windows with gauged brick lintels, below four dormers which break the eaves.*

### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*The White Hart Inn can be traced as far back as 1489 when it was a significant coaching inn. During the Civil War in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> Century, the building was used to hold meetings between Deputy Lieutenants and Parliamentary Commissioners. The White Hart Inn was Romford's main hotel during the 18<sup>th</sup> and much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The current building was built in 1898, and stands on the same site as the 15<sup>th</sup> century coaching inn.*

*Linked to the coaching inn, the White Hart had a large yard containing a stables and farrier, so this area has been a significant hub of activity for much of its past. Today, the White Hart Inn is renamed The Bitter End. The building stands at the top of the High Street near the Market Square, and is a significant entity in this row. It contributes to the historic core of Romford, which is designated as a conservation area.*





### The Woolpack Inn, High Street, Romford

*Conservation Area: Romford. Original Use: Public House. Current Use: Residential. Construction Date/Period: c. 1890s.*

#### *Full Description*

*'L'-shaped plan, three storeys with projecting gables over third floor windows. Dental string course around both frontages at first floor level, with moulded corbels. Casement windows of differing sizes.*

#### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*The development of the Mawneys Estate saw the creation of Mawneys Road, the south eastern end of which is now called Angel Way. The Woolpack was built sometime after 1888 when severe flooding damaged much of the property at the site. It was mainly occupied by dwellings and shops.*

*Today, the Woolpack occupies a key site on the corner of Angel Way. It is an important historic building on this streetscape and that of the High Street, sitting amongst much modern development. The building retains much of its external features and aesthetic, and the recent (2013/14)*

*works to refurbish and reuse the building have respected this.*



### **The Sun Public House, London Road, Romford**

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Public House. Current Use: Public House. Construction Date/Period: Late 1930s.*

#### *Full Description*

*1930s Art Deco design. Brick construction with one-three- one bay pattern. Plain tile hipped roof with three dormer windows in the centre of the front elevation. Three brick chimney stacks, one on each flank wall and a smaller one centrally in the roof. Central entrance under portico with two pillars supporting. Two balconies at first floor level, either side of entrance. These display attractive sun-ray designs typical of Art Deco.*

#### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*An inn by this name was first built on this land in 1632. This building was*

*demolished in 1936, and the present building was constructed.*

*The Sun Inn uses many architectural features which are typical of the Art Deco style. It is a substantial building, a prominent building in the streetscape, and notable for its clear architectural design.*



### **Romford Baptist Church, Main Road, Romford**

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Church. Current Use: Church.*

*Construction Date/Period: 1934.*

#### *Full Description*

*Large red brick building with tiled pitched roof over main body, flat-roofed transepts to northern end. Large round headed windows. Single storey extension on northern elevation with central entrance under pitched roof. Two storey later extensions to rear.*

#### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*The Romford Baptist Church was built in 1934 and by 1971 was one of the largest Baptist churches in England. It is an example of the proliferation and diversification of religious dissent away from the Church of England from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century.*



### **The Bull Inn, Market Place, Romford**

*Conservation Area: Romford. Original Use: Public House. Current Use: Public House. Construction Date/Period: 1928.*

#### *Full Description*

*Two-storey red brick building with white render detailing and a pitched roof behind flat parapet. Main entrance in centre of front elevation under substantial entablature and oriel window. Two bays of leaded casement windows either side, with smaller entrances at the outer edges of the front elevation. Arched coach entrance to rear courtyard at the eastern end.*

#### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*There have been three different buildings called the Bull Inn on this site since the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first was demolished and replaced in 1880, and the second was demolished and replaced in 1928 giving us the current building.*

*Where the market place was once almost surrounded by drinking establishments, the Bull Inn is one of few which remain. It is an important venue in the centre of town, with a long association as a popular meeting venue. The building itself has an attractive frontage, with visual and historic interest when compared to its low-quality 1960s and 70s neighbours.*



### **88 and 90 North Street, Romford**

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Unknown. Current Use: Commercial and Residential. Construction Date/Period: Unknown.*

#### *Full Description*

*88 North Street is a 2 1/2 storey rendered building with tile mansard roof and dormers creating an attic storey. The ground floor of the building has been much altered by a poor quality shop frontage.*

*90 North Street is constructed of painted brick and has had a modern roof and window replacement. The ground floor of the building has been*

*much altered by a poor quality shop frontage.*

*Architectural and Historical Interest*

*The provenance and history of these buildings is unknown.*



### **Lloyds Bank, North Street, Romford**

*Conservation Area: Romford. Original Use: Bank. Current Use:*

*Bank. Construction Date/Period: Late 1930s.*

*Full Description*

*Rebuilt in the late 1930s in Classical style with red brick and Bath stone and lotus leaf columns.*

*Architectural and Historical Interest*

*Lloyds bank is part of the principal group of buildings for which the Romford Conservation Area was designated to protect. It is part of a key*

*view from South Street to North Street through the crossroads, and makes a positive contribution to the street scene in the town centre. It is a high quality historic building, forming one corner of the historic crossroads at the bottom of Market Place and complements the classical design of the other two locally listed buildings.*



**95 South Street, Romford**

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Commercial. Current Use: Commercial. Construction Date/Period: c. 1920s-30s.*

*Full Description*

*2 storey site with a narrow frontage and a flat roof and parapet. White rendered. Commercial shop frontage on the lower floor. No openings on the upper floor, but there are remains of a window, now filled in.*

#### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*This building has seen much unsympathetic external alteration, so its heritage value is harder to discern. It is likely to have been built in the 1920s or 30s, evidenced by the flat roof, white render, and the formation of the window still discernible in the upper floor. As such, the building has group value in its relationship with other buildings on South Street of that era.*

*There may also be internal fixtures and fittings which speak of the building's provenance. An aerial view of the building also shows it to have been extended from a partially demolished earlier house to the rear, built of brick with a grey tiled roof.*





## 97-101 (odd) South Street, Romford

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Commercial and possibly residential.*

*Current Use: Commercial. Construction Date/Period: 1920s-30s.*

### *Full Description*

*97 South Street – now Betfreds. Two-storey, three-bay brick building with brick detail quoins and window lintels. Flat roof and brick parapet, with stone capping and pediment. Unsympathetic modern shop frontage on ground floor, but three surviving sash and case windows above. Central window has prominent surround and pediment above.*

*99-101 South Street – now The Moon and Stars public house. Three-storey, seven-bay brick building with stone detailing. Hipped roof hidden by brick and stone parapet. Modern venue frontage on ground floor, with casement windows above. Centre second and third floor windows have blind balcony between, and a blind arch above filled with brick laid in herringbone bond.*

### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*97-101 South Street are buildings demonstrative of a wave of Art Deco-style construction on South Street during the 1920s-30s, which, for example, included the neighbouring buildings at no.95 and the Quadrant Arcade. The ground floors would originally have been used for commercial purposes, however the upper floors may have been used either for the same or as residential space.*

*The buildings have been altered extensively on their ground floors to accommodate modern shop frontages, however much architectural detailing, indicative of the era, remains on the upper floors giving the buildings good aesthetic value.*



### 103-111 (odd) South Street Romford

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Commercial and possibly residential.*

*Current Use: Commercial. Construction Date/Period: c. 1920s-30s.*

#### *Full Description*

*3-storey, 8-bay building with a white-yellow render. Flat roof with a stone clad parapet with a zig-zag design. Upper two storeys project over the ground floor frontage, supported by seven Tuscan pillars.*

#### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*103-111 South Street are buildings demonstrative of a wave of Art Deco-style construction on South Street during the 1920s-30s, which, for example, included the neighbouring buildings at no.95 and the Quadrant Arcade. The ground floors would originally have been used for commercial purposes, however the upper floors may have been used either for the same or as residential space.*

*The ground floor pillars may be original, creating a covered walkway commonly found in inter-war shopping venues. The building has been altered extensively on their ground floors to accommodate modern shop frontages, however much architectural detailing, indicative of the era, remains on the upper floors giving the buildings good aesthetic value.*



### 110 South Street, Romford

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Commercial. Current Use: Commercial. Construction Date/Period: c. 1930s.*

#### *Full Description*

*Narrow building frontage, flat roofed and completely rendered, with low quality modern shop frontage below, and three small windows above.*

#### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*The original frontage to this building consisted of tiling in a linear formation, much like that seen on the neighbouring cinema. However, this was removed and replaced with off-white render in 2205, at which point the windows frames were also replaced with uPVC.*

*Despite the loss of much of the building's external architectural detail, it still retains a sense of its provenance in the 1930s. It is also valuable in terms of its relationship with other buildings on South Street, demonstrative of a wave of Art Deco-style construction on South Street during the 1920s-30s, which, for example, included the neighbouring buildings at no.95, the Quadrant Arcade and the World's Inn.*



**113-117 South Street, Romford**

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Commercial and possibly residential.*

*Current Use: Commercial. Construction Date/Period: 1920s-30s.*

*Full Description*

*Three-storey brick building with linear features between windows picked out in white render. Panels between second and third floor are laid in a vertical stretcher bond. Four-pane crissal windows remain in upper floors, whilst ground floor is taken up by a modern pub frontage. Flat roof with brick and stone pediment.*

*Architectural and Historical Interest*

*113-117 South Street is demonstrative of a wave of Art Deco-style construction on South Street during the 1920s-30s, which, for example, included the neighbouring buildings at no.95, the Quadrant Arcade and the Odeon Cinema. The ground floor would originally have been used for commercial purposes; however the upper floors may have been used either for the same or as residential space.*

*It has clear architectural and historic interest in its Art Deco style and detailing, and group value when seen amongst several other 1920s-1930s buildings on South Street.*



131 South Street, Romford

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Commercial. Current Use:*

*Commercial. Construction Date/Period: 1937.*

*Full Description*

*Two-storey building with generous roof space. Brick construction with brick quoin detailing. White rendered detailing around main entrance in apex of building, with arched pediment and dentillation. Plain tile hipped roof. Sash and case windows, three with balconettes.*

*Architectural and Historical Interest*

*131 South Street was built as a gas company showroom, but has most recently been converted for use as a series of social venues and night clubs.*

*It is demonstrative of a wave of Art Deco-style construction on South Street during the 1920s-30s, which, for example, included the neighbouring buildings at no.95, the Quadrant Arcade and the Odeon Cinema. The building uses high quality materials and design indicative of its era, and has a substantial presence in the street scene as you exit the station onto South Street. In terms of group value, 131 South Street is also similar in design to the locally listed 1930s buildings at the northern end of South Street, namely the Co-op, the Prudential Building and Lloyds Bank.*



## The Co-op Bank, South Street, Romford

*Conservation Area: Romford. Original Use: National Provincial Bank.  
Current Use: Co-operative Bank. Construction Date/Period: 1932.*

### *Full Description*

*Three-storey building in red brick and portland stone, with anthemion leaf detail over corner entrances. Crittal casement windows survive, with three Juliet balconies at second floor level.*

### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*The Co-op bank is part of the principal group of buildings for which the Romford Conservation Area was designated to protect. It is part of a key view from South Street to North Street through the crossroads, and makes a positive contribution to the street scene in the town centre. It is a high quality historic building, forming one corner of the historic crossroads at the bottom of Market Place, and complements the classical design of the other two locally listed buildings.*



**The Moreland Arms (The Goose), South Street, Romford**

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Public House. Current Use: Public House. Construction Date/Period: 1931.*

*Full Description*

*Off-white render with black paint detailing. Central gable flanked by flat-topped bays with a hipped roof and ridge tiles and chimneys on either side. Leaded casement windows on upper storey of front elevation, four single and two three-bay. Main entrance is in centre of front elevation, two pairs of doors.*

*Architectural and Historical Interest*

*The Moreland Arms has previously been named The Rising Sun, and is now called The Goose. As well as its 1930s Art Deco design, this building is notable for its social associations and value as it was often used as an*



*after-show venue for artists performing at the nearby Havana/Odeon Cinema (also locally listed).*



### **Odeon Cinema (112-116), South Street, Romford**

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Cinema. Current Use: Commercial.*

*Construction Date/Period: 1935.*

#### *Full Description*

*Four-storey square-plan construction with cream tile cladding. Ground floor converted to shop frontage. Five bays of three windows, divided by strong vertical linear projecting features.*

#### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*112-116 South Street was not the Odeon Cinema, which actually sits behind the locally listed building. This building was originally a Times Furnishings store, with the entrance to the cinema at the right hand side*

*of the building, opening onto the street. This is probably where the misnomer arose; where the signage for the cinema was in close proximity to the frontage of 112-116. The two-storey curved portion on the north elevation of the building was a public house called The Star.*

*The store was built in the 1930s, and its original use as a furniture store is indicative of the emerging social trend of owner-occupied housing, where large numbers of people were beginning to own and furnish their own houses.*

*The building is of a striking Art-Deco style, with characteristic strong linear features and proportions, and a tile façade. It is demonstrative of a wave of Art Deco-style construction on South Street during the 1920s-30s, which, for example, included the nearby buildings at no.95 and the Quadrant Arcade. The building uses high quality materials and design indicative of its era, and has a substantial presence in the street scene as you exit the station onto South Street.*

*The Times Furnishings Company boomed in the 1930s, and there were several stores across London. Because of this, 112-116 South Street has group value with other surviving buildings, the nearest of which is in Ilford and shares a distinctive Art Deco style.*



## **Page Calnan Building, South Street, Romford**

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Timber Merchants. Current Use: Restaurant. Construction Date/Period: c. 1933.*

### *Full Description*

*Brick construction with stone cladding to front elevation. Diocletian window to rear.*

### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*The Page Calnan building was constructed in the early 1930s, and was used as a timber merchants. The building has many of the architectural features of the 1930s.*

## **Quadrant Arcade, South Street, Romford**

*Conservation Area: Romford. Original Use: Shopping Arcade. Current Use: Shopping Arcade. Construction Date/Period: 1934-35.*

### *Full Description*

*An 'L' shape building with frontages onto Market Square and South Street. Market Square frontage: three-storey brick construction, with a partial brick parapet to the left side. Linear feature above main entrance, which is covered by a semi-circular canopy. Crittal windows with multiple lying panes typical of the Art Deco style.*

*South Street frontage: three-storey brick and stone. Strong horizontal emphasis in stone work on front elevation, and strong vertical emphasis in six brick pilasters and the central stone element with 'Quadrant Arcade' engraved. Semi-circular pediment at roof level over main entrance, and semi-circular canopy over main entrance on ground level.*

### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*The Quadrant Arcade was designed and built by W. Goodchild between 1934 and 1935. It is an L-shaped arcade with frontages on the Market Place and South Street.*

*Built of brick, it is of a classic Art Deco design with critical windows and strong linear features. Originally, the building frontage was lit at night using green and gold neon lights. The arcade highlights a period of Romford's history, when it had a reputation as a significant shopping hub in the south East of England.*

*The old Council Chamber [Market House] was demolished to make way for this arcade, and the building scheme gained support because of its potential to create jobs both during construction and afterwards in retail. During the Second World War W. Goodchild offered space within the arcade to accommodate the Romford wing of the Air Training Corps.*



### **Romford Station, South Street, Romford**

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Station. Current Use: Station.*

*Construction Date/Period: 1830s.*

#### *Full Description*

*Red brick building with brick corner detailing, stone cornice, and stone door and window surrounds. A mixture of circular and six-over-six sash and case windows. Interior largely modern. Four covered platforms with*

wrought iron railings. Platform canopies have timber valances edging roofline.

#### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*Romford Station was opened in June 1939, and was the eastern terminus of the Eastern Counties Railway line from Mile End. In 1893 a second station was opened on the site to serve the London, Tilbury and Southern Railway, and later in 1934 the two stations were combined.*





### The Prince Albert Public House, St Andrews Road, Romford

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Residential. Current Use: Public House. Construction Date/Period: 1842.*

#### *Full Description*

*Three-bay wing with projecting gable in centre of front elevation. Slate tile hipped roof with central chimney stack. Brick construction, with roughcast render on second floor and smooth white render below. Sash and case windows, with shutters to the upper floor.*

#### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*The Prince Albert is a good example of an early Victorian building, surviving in an area which has seen a large amount of modern housing development. It is also significant for its long association as a social meeting point in the area. The building itself is a simple design typical of pub architecture.*

---



**Old Mill Parade, Victoria Road, Romford.**

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Steam Flour Mill. Current Use: Commercial. Construction Date/Period: 1851.*

*Full Description*

*Two-storey brick construction. Six bays, each with a shop on ground floor with three windows above. Painted brick parapet on roof, with metal railings.*

*Architectural and Historical Interest*

*Old Mill Parade originated as a flour mill, working in conjunction with a windmill which stood in South Street. The building was enlarged later in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, closed in 1928, and occupied by a parade of shops in 1928. The Old Mill Parade is an important building for highlighting the more rural nature of Romford's past, and the development of different industries in the town.*



### Station Parade, Victoria Road, Romford

*Conservation Area: No. Original Use: Commercial. Current Use: Commercial. Construction Date/Period: 1920s – 30s.*

#### *Full Description*

*Three-storey parade, with modern shop frontages on the ground floor. Storey and bays divided by stone string courses and quoins. Two frontages onto South Street and Victoria Road. Stone parapets above third floor, with 'Station Parade' engraved. Casement windows replaced.*

#### *Architectural and Historical Interest*

*An inter-war shopping arcade, common among London suburbs, which contributes towards the representation of Romford's history and reputation as a significant shopping hub in the south east of England.*

---





#### 4.5 Beyond the Town Centre

As identified elsewhere in this report, there are clusters of assets remaining outside the town centre proper. Chief among these are what remains of the New Romford area developed on the former barracks site from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. These include St Andrews and The Prince Albert and, on London Road, The Sun pub, the Salem Chapel and the neighbouring row of cottages.

#### 4.6 Unidentified Heritage Assets

The list of designated and non-designated assets above is comprehensive but additions might include the railway viaduct which is an impressive piece of brick engineering with finely shaped recesses and the inter-war bus garage on North Street but the latter is beyond the town centre fringe. Further investigation of the building adjacent to the Golden Lion should also take place – the location of Romford's Corn Exchange.

#### 4.7 Historic Park and Gardens

Havering's 2011 Heritage Supplementary Planning Document identifies historic parks and gardens in the borough.

Those identified at borough level include:

Lodge Farm Park

Raphael Park

Romford Cemetery

St Edward the Confessor Churchyard

The churchyard is also included on the London Inventory of Historic Green Spaces. Raphael Park is a section of the former landscaped estate of Gidea Park. It includes the listed Black's Bridge but is not included on Historic England's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. The Park's Management Plan (2016, reviewed 2017) is very detailed in some respects but does not pay particular attention to the park as a whole as a heritage asset or any potential heritage structures within it.

The SPD also includes historic views in the borough including townscape views but does not include any views within Romford. This is an omission as the role of the parish church spire within Romford is important. Other views should include those across the Market Place and High Street.

#### 4.7 Archaeology

This report does not address below-ground archaeology but it is noted that large areas of central Romford are included within an Archaeological Priority Area (APA) including the whole of the Romford Conservation Area and the area around the former Mawneys manor and sections of the Roman Road.

## 5.0 Opportunities, Threats, Responses

### 5.1 Overview

Urbanistically, Romford has two major problems. The first, well recognised, is the barrier between centre and hinterland put in place by the inner ring road.

The second is that the retail street frontages have, in large part, lost their immediate hinterland. The rear blocks have been swallowed up by covered shopping centres so that the long, narrow plots, that were once characteristic of Romford, have almost vanished. This is compounded by Romford not being, historically, a town with a grid of streets.

There is actually very little of Romford that is an active frontage after dark – most is locked away internally. There are very few actual streets in Romford in comparison to other town centres. Too much of the town centre has been lost to service yards and the degree of blank walls to such yards, to multi-storey car parks and shopping centre flanks is problematic – and especially acute in places such as Exchequer Street which is an exposed service street opened up as a route between the backs of properties.

The front-back confusion with the resulting blank walls is also evident in other parts of the town – particularly where the ring road has sheered through the backlands of properties – few properties probably face Romford's largest and busiest road. Even recent developments have compounded this relationship such as the mixed-use buildings in the north-east corner of the market that, while offering more enclosure to Market Place, add to the barrier of the ring road between the retail and civic areas outside the ring. This pattern continues between the Main Road roundabout and Western Road where pedestrians are driven underground.

The consequences of 1960s, large-scale zonal planning has also meant that Romford town centre has become far less diverse with limited uses beyond retail and parking.

Taken together, this means that it is, at present, very difficult to foster a post-work vitality. This is reflected in the marked lack of independent or multiple cafés and restaurants in the town that serve an evening clientele (as opposed to shoppers on a break). At weekends, late-night revellers fill bars and clubs again but this is a very different pattern of use from an early evening economy where an attractive public realm is essential. This is compounded by most of Havering's cultural uses such as theatre being located elsewhere in the borough.

This large-scale zoning of previous masterplan proposals does, unfortunately, continue in some more recent plans that envisage office enclaves in one part of the town, residential in another, civic functions in a further zone, instead of ensuring that mixed-use developments across the town centre create activity at different times of the day and evening across the centre.

The demolition of much of the historic fabric of Romford is a loss that cannot be rectified. This means that what remains is all the more important as the context-setting armature for new developments and for the inspiration that the heritage fabric provides for reinforcing local identity – for example, knitting back together severed routes within and beyond the ring road with more continuous routes lined with appropriately scaled buildings with active frontages.

This includes the morphology of Romford. Most of its alleys and yards have been lost to post-war redevelopment but some remain, particularly around the market place and offer variations in space and place, a memory of the past and opportunities for surprise and discovery that are common in many towns and cities but largely absent in Romford.

In addition, there has been an accumulation of small slights that has diminished the quality of what positive pre-war fabric survives. Poor shopfronts, insensitive signage, and replacement windows have chipped away at the character of these survivors beyond the clutch of statutorily listed buildings.

Until c.2008, Romford's strategy of relying on the pull of its retail offer was successful but changes to patterns in shopping – particularly the rise of online shopping and the rise of mega-centres such as Stratford Westfield as well as issues such as rising business rates – mean that Romford is now suffering.

Today, some 25 percent of fashion purchases, for instance, are made online instead of on the high street and if shopping centres are to thrive, they need to diversify their streets and activities to allow more services, food and beverage, local specialists to thrive.

At present, the town's poor-quality environment is mitigating against the success of such a strategy.

Many of the above issues have been recognised within Havering's recent planning and regeneration policies and initiatives, however, the heritage environment and its relationship to an urban design approach for central Romford has yet to be fully explored.

## 5.1 Conservation Area Extension

There has been a previous recommendation to expand the Romford Conservation Area to protect the setting of assets and the public realm and strengthen the council's hand in raising the design quality bar in the town centre but this opportunity has not been realised to date.

This has become a priority and its extension should also consider the setting of the conservation area as a whole and examine the length of South Street to the station for potential inclusions.

## 5.2 Valuing Romford's Interwar Heritage

Very often the heritage focus in Romford is on its 19<sup>th</sup> century fabric and (understandable) lamentations for what has been lost. Yet Romford also has an unusually extensive collection of interwar buildings from the Times Furnishing Store and Odeon to the Quadrant Arcade, from the former Post Office and train station to the Town Hall and a number of well-made inter-war pubs.

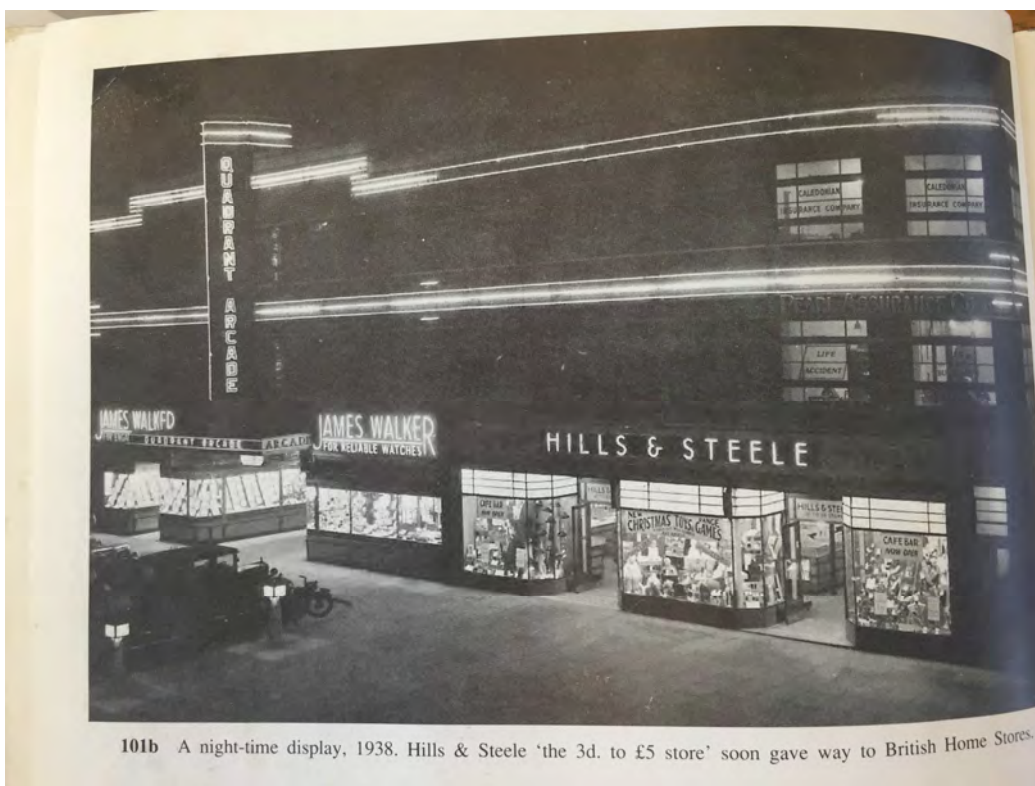
Despite the inclusion of some buildings from this period, a number of inter-war buildings have been lost to redevelopment and others are threatened.

It is true nationally that interwar buildings which are not Modernist but other styles, have been overlooked as potential heritage assets. However, within Romford, the fate of many of these buildings may be an expression of a desire that the town reinforce its sense of itself as a market town separate from London's Metroland. However, this is not an either/or choice, especially within the context of the prior loss of many heritage assets from all periods and the value of what remains.

The qualities of many buildings have been hidden by later alterations that have diminished their worth – but not irreversibly. For the immediate present, at least, these buildings remain in sufficient numbers and groups to form a distinctive local environment in the town centre whose story can be marketed following their restoration. The Quadrant in particular has many qualities as a 'vintage' locale and features such as its green and gold neon could be restored as part of a refurbishment. It provides an opportunity for small independent retailers. Occupancy rates fell to some 50 percent in 2014 but this has now risen again to some 95 percent with initiatives such as pop-ups and diversifying the tenant mix. The building, especially if lost detail and lighting is restored, has the potential to

be positive local attraction within the retail mix offered by the town. This should be a priority.

The loss of the Romford Arcade means that the Quadrant is also one of the few central shopping arcades that offer smaller scale units centrally (apart, that is, from the very different environment of indoor market stalls). The arcades also offers a small degree of permeability that is notably lacking in Romford town centre as a whole. Those arcades without architectural merit – such as Laurie Walk could be unroofed – akin to the ‘daylighting’ of the River Rom while others could be redeveloped in a manner that looks to successfully refurbished arcade districts such as those in central Leeds, Melbourne or Paris.



101b A night-time display, 1938. Hills & Steele 'the 3d. to £5 store' soon gave way to British Home Stores.

*Quadrant Arcade shortly after opening.*



*Romford's Post Office survives, much altered, on South Street*

### 5.3 Other Frontage Improvements

There are many buildings within the conservation area with inappropriate signage, replacement windows and lost details that detract from each building's, and the totality's, overall quality. Restored shopfronts and upper floor frontages within the conservation area would provide an improved appearance, enhancing the shopping, living, and cultural environment for Romford. Opportunities for living or working on vacant floors above shops should also be explored to bring back more intensity and diversity of activity back to the town centre. Maintaining separate access to upper floors is vital to allowing this to happen.

Some key heritage assets need attention to restore their frontages and act as exemplars for improvements elsewhere – these including the White Hart and The Lamb. Public sector involvement in key buildings can encourage private sector investment elsewhere.

### 5.4 Reinforcing Local Identity – smaller scale, plot and secondary circulation

Re-establishing a physical environment that is more distinctively Romford cannot be achieved quickly but is a long-term, steady task that will rely on years of development control decisions backed by a strong design guide, development briefs and other actions such as extending the conservation area boundary.

Future developments should learn from local typologies where these work and which have relevance in contemporary life and assist in Havering achieving its strategic goals. This includes embracing the best legacies of all eras but particularly those that have helped establish Romford's particular character.

Resisting the loss of yards and alleyways and in some circumstances recreating them. This is of particular importance around the market place where long deep plots with yards and small backland developments once dominated and could, to some degree again, re-establishing a particular feel. In the post-war period many of the former, long narrow plots and yards have been combined or lost altogether. This is inevitable as life and economies change but Romford has lost the variety of spaces that once made it distinctive. Arguably, there are more than sufficient retail spaces of sufficiently large size that, in redevelopments, some smaller grain plots can be reintroduced as well as narrow side streets to add interest, variation, surprise and different economic opportunities – including after retail hours.

Those alleys that survive should be protected and activated but not roofed in and enclosed separately from the public realm. This includes, if possible, Swan Walk and, perhaps, other failing retail sites including some of the minor malls such as Laurie Walk that could be transformed into an internal street – part of a network of small secondary routes between the Market Place and the Liberty shopping centre. This would have the effect of reinstating Romford's lost second scale spaces, grain and buildings and creating the secondary grid that Romford failed to develop historically.

The once important yard at the rear of the White Hart (later, the Bitter End) pub. could also be re-established among others.





82 Motor vehicles are beginning to appear in the High Street in about 1921. On the left, an upper storey is lettered with the sign 'Motors', but there were probably still more horse-drawn vehicles on the road at this time than there were motor cars.

*The decorative frontage of the White Hart, right, could be restored*

These can be attractive spaces in their own right as the varied rear forms of the Golden Lion demonstrates. Smaller, narrower arcades may also have a place if extended opening hours are possible but this is not ideal because they limit the public realm.

Essex has a strong history of design codes dating back to the Essex Design Guide and an urban version particular to Romford could provide a powerful decision-making framework, allowing planning officers to up the design quality threshold. This could begin to reintroduce an Essex typology in places to sit alongside the later outer London typology and subsequent 'anywhere' typology that entirely lacks local distinctiveness. Such objectives are more easily achieved within a conservation area with the requirement to preserve or enhance in place.

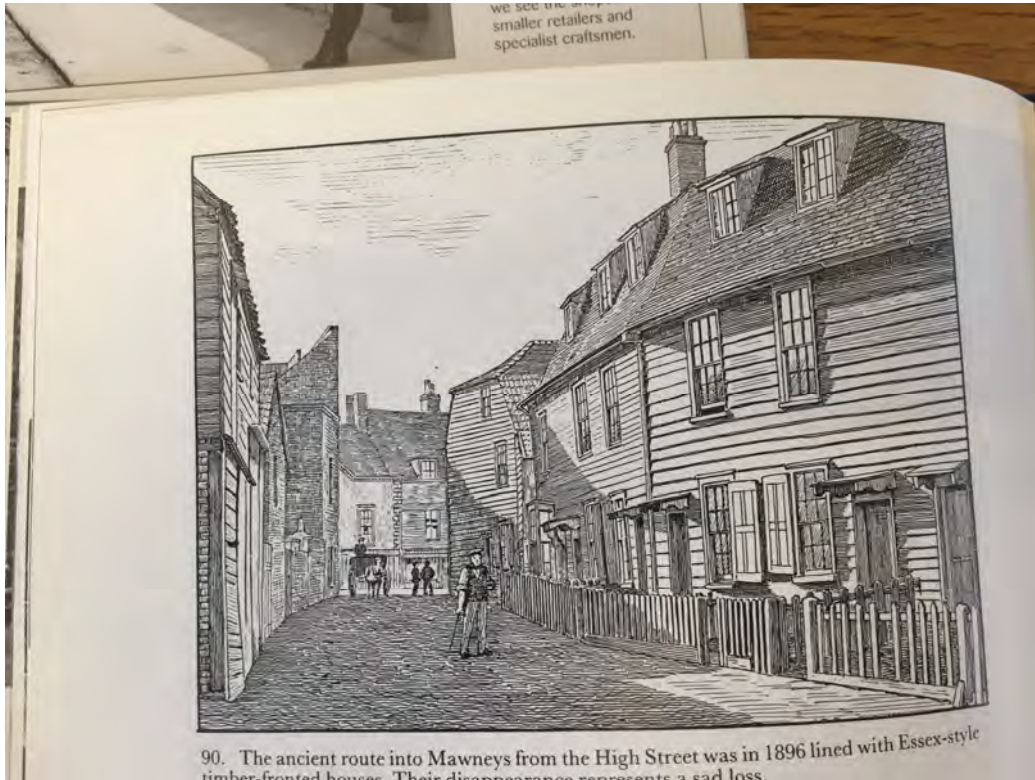
...had been refronted several times to follow the current fashion. The Swan  
yard was a hive of activity during the coaching era.



100. The *Coach and Bell* viewed from another angle in April 1895. The shop on the right is a ladies' hairdresser. The man with the bucket is probably carrying water from a standpipe in one of the High Street yards to a house without water.

101. A rare glimpse of backyard Romford in 1895. The less public side of the *Coach and Bell* is a neatly-kept house. On the top of the roof, to the right, the brewery frontage can be seen.





*Weatherboarding – an Essex vernacular*

## 5.5 Activating the Market Place

Market Place has been much studied and various proposals have come forward to re-energise the space. The halted Market House proposal was an interesting attempt to move in this direction. Arguably, however, it was in the wrong place, adversely affecting the setting of the heritage assets including the parish church.

The desire to break down Market Place into smaller elements has a rationale in seeking to create two more intimate and manageable spaces but it runs counter to the foundational space of Romford and suggests a lack of confidence in the ability to make the market work as one, grand space.

There are three major issues to resolve – the public realm and activity within it, the frontages surrounding the market, and its connections beyond the ring road. Market Place is unlikely to be revived without tackling all three.

Removing car parking and surface works would be a strong statement of commitment to a revived market place. It can then be used for more activities (including non-retail entertainment uses) on non-market days. Arguably, there is also an opportunity – without being kitsch – to re-introduce a softer, more

agrarian character to Market Place – using timber rails and bollards, for example, as well activities such as a more frequent farmers market that re-animates Romford’s connections to its Essex hinterland.

Physical connections to the wider area also have a role and tackling the ring road from the flank of Mercury Gardens around to North Street would reintegrate centre and periphery, reinstating severed connections to assets such as the RC Church, the Town Hall and the parklands further east.

The proposals in the previous section regarding yards and alleys are, of course, most pertinent here. The buildings and secondary spaces on the market place need more complexity and to better respect the grain of the area.

The redevelopment of key frontage sites such as Littlewoods and B&M represent opportunities to reinstate narrower frontage bays, secondary hidden spaces (including green spaces) and some smaller scale plots as part of mixed-uses including housing above active frontages.

Some past studies have suggested that Romford’s town centre needs more large format retail premises rather than less. Those old assumptions need revisiting in the current retail environment where high quality physical spaces, historic interest, and the individuality and localism of the offer are becoming an essential part of a sustainable mixed-use economy.





*Stone's department store stood on the site of today's Debenhams – note the carriage entrance to a rear yard*

The traffic lights at the western end of the market regulate the traffic passing through. This scene has many points of interest for a student of twentieth-century changes in the town. At the very end of the 1960s the plan to re-route the traffic around the centre finally came to fruition.



The Market Place in the 1960s. Many of the old public clocks in Romford have now disappeared like the one in

## 5. 5 Softening the Ring Road

Breaking the neck-lock of the inner ring road, replacing subways with surface crossings where possible and re-connecting attractive areas such as the Town Hall and Roman Catholic church grouping back to the town centre is essential.

This would also have a great heritage benefit – creating far greater continuity of frontages along historic streets such as North Street and linking heritage assets in the centre with those further out – creating a greater sense of a grouping of heritage assets.

One example would be the reconnection of High Street with what remains of New Romford – there is a cluster of heritage assets and well designed buildings on and near London Road such as the Salem Chapel and Sun pub that could be re-integrated with the town centre given alterations to the ring road and the re-development of intervening buildings that have a negative impact on the physical environment. Instead large-scale proposals in these locations threaten to overwhelm these assets and their potential group value.



*The cluster of assets including St Andrews at New Romford. These survive amid redevelopment*

It is also an opportunity to introduce further greenery back into the town centre. As set out in the map-regression above, the lack of greenery in Romford Town Centre is only a phenomenon of recent decades. For many centuries, inner Romford was immensely green – especially east of the North Street-South Street axis. There are substantial green areas beyond the centre including Coronation Gardens and Raphael Park as well as notable avenues of mature street trees but these do not at the moment connect with the town centre.

The remaining ring road could itself be boulevardised with the introduction of grass verges/suds and avenues of street trees on either the outer-edge of the carriageways or on a central reservation or both.

Developments and the remodelling of existing buildings should have frontages that address this calmed ring road as well as the town centre itself which presently turns its back on the encircling route.

The council has long recognised that the ring road acts as a barrier to pedestrian and cyclist movement and cuts off the heart of the town centre from its suburban hinterland.

The 2008 AAP notes that : “Remedying this will help encourage more people to walk and cycle into the town centre and cut the number of unnecessary car journeys with potential benefits in regard to reducing congestion, and environmental and amenity benefits”.

Pedestrians and cyclists should be at surface level and the removal of subways would facilitate this. Even the most attractive of the subways – that from the Market Place, which is only a short stretch underground and opens onto greenery beyond the ring road – militates against a thorough reintegration of the town centre with the rest of Romford.

### 5.6 Mixed-Use Developments

Character is generated by uses as well as the physical form of buildings and the spaces between. While more housing has been reintroduced to the town centre and its periphery over recent years, the large-scale zoning separation of the 1960s and 70s needs to be further undone.

There is also evidence of large-scale zoning thinking in some more recent Havering planning documents. For instance, the identification of Eastern Road and Western Road as an office enclave. This is not especially useful when attempting to re-activate the town centre (particularly in a time of retail flux) when fine-grain mixed uses would bring activity at different times of day and the evening across the town centre. Arguably, all new developments should be mixed developments – work, retail, housing in order to bring life to all Romford’s town centre streets.

This includes a food and drink offer that a present caters to either late-night revellers or is about chains within malls. This does not encourage residents or visitors to dwell longer in the town centre and does not cater well for office and other works at lunchtimes. Food and drink offers should consider micro-climate and adjacent activities.

The covered market still has a part to play and, with changes, could function like Oxford, Borough, Leeds or Brixton’s covered markets – providing evening activities as well as daytime retail. Permanent stalls are able to stock some rapidly perishable foodstuffs that temporary stalls within the Market Place itself struggle.



Romford's town centre is also notably devoid of cultural uses beyond the museum and the skating/leisure centre and the cineplexes within the malls. The only independent appears to be the Brookside Theatre on Western Road.

Solutions for Romford need to be found within an understanding of Havering's cultural offer – such as the theatre at Hornchurch – and which identifies gaps in provision. This could include educational uses and it is noted that the redevelopment of the central library is under consideration. The present library, while an interesting design has had many original elements removed and cannot be regarded as a heritage asset. It is also very poorly sited and inhibits making stronger connections between the town centre and the periphery. Its relocation into the town centre or a placement that facilitates connections across the ring road would improve the mix of uses and activities within the town centre. The notion of civic quarter zone is unnecessary beyond the practical need of proximity for council departments.

### 5.7 Recognising Embodied Heritage Value

Nurturing diversity and the encouragement of creative uses, start-ups and other small enterprises is difficult to achieve in new-build premises. This is because new buildings have to recoup their construction costs in higher rents.

The value of long-standing buildings to a diverse and flexible economy is important in this respect. Non-prime shopping parades can also house such business at ground level – especially where they provide activity to the street. Basic, turnkey premises with simple remediation are best suited to new businesses who cannot afford large outlays of fitting-out capital.

### 5.8 Working with Positive Fragments

While much of Romford's historic environment has been degraded over the decades, what remains of these assets within the town centre, even if fragmented should provide the starting point for improving the built environment. The focus should be on vacant site and the redevelopment of buildings that detract from the town's character and appearance even ahead of relatively low-value assets (as locally listed buildings are usually regarded).

A prime example would be North Street which at present is blighted by poor frontages and incomplete construction sites. Yet the Golden Lion and the bank

corners provide high quality fabric to which designs can respond. The modern weatherboard building behind the Golden Lion is a pastiche response but contemporary interventions can contribute equally if of appropriate scales and materials. Horizontal boarding and framing, for instance, can be used in a more contemporary manner. There are alleys and routes off North Street that can be activated with small-scale, more intimate development that leading to backland developments and network of smaller routes instead of surface car parks to frame the rear churchyard of the parish church.

Similarly, the listed building at 96-102 (even) North Street beyond the ring road is an important building for Romford but sits within a degraded group of older buildings that could be sensitively restored and reconnected to the inner part of North Street by the remodelling of the roundabout that separates them. This would restore continuity between centre and periphery in this direction.



*The Roman Catholic Church enclave is now isolated outside the ring road*

## 5.9 Revealing the River Rom

Open up the River Rom has been a long-standing local ambition and would re-establish the centrality of the river to Romford's history. It could also be part of a new blue-green infrastructure and perhaps relate to a SUDS strategy so that the initiative is purposeful rather than simply decorative.

The opening up of lost rivers is being considered in a number of places around the country and has been achieved in some town such as the River Roch in Rochdale town centre.

For this 'daylighting' of the Rom to be successful, a sufficient length of the Rom needs a dedicated study that examines matters such as the degree of water extraction that has reduced its flow over the last century, flood-management and any authorised and un-authorised sewage connections.

In north London, where there is a similar ambition to daylight part of the Moselle river, un-authorised sewage connections on the upstream stretch have been reduced from around 100 to a handful – and soon to be zero.

The possibility of creating a new riverside route from Bridge Close, under the viaduct and across the brewery site and High Street can be explored. It is unlikely that this could be achieved without demolitions but these should not adversely affect the rare heritage assets that survive in the town centre.



*Romford's Star Brewery with railway sidings and the River Rom running through*

#### 5.10 Front/Back Confusion and Blank facades

It can be particularly damaging to the public realm (although not always) to have the rear of premises facing the public realm. This is a particular issue with modern service yards to shopping malls that create dead frontages in key locations.

Exchange Street is a significant problem in this respect. Between South Street and the Brewery shopping mall it reads as part of the public realm but is degraded and off-putting to people moving between shopping frontages. The same street sets up blank facades for much of its length – notably where the Sainsbury's service yard faces the railway viaduct creating a dead street for much of its length.

Tackling these front-back clashes should be a priority when discussing future changes to malls. Service yards need to be rationalised and, where, possible, given active frontages to the street. Parts of Exchange Street could be inhabited by new development (this is already happening in at least one location).

Blank facades are also a product of highways decisions – for instance between the town centre and the Mercury Mall where blank facades of all periods (including the relatively recent large residential development at the corner of the roundabout next to the shopping centre) compound the lack of connections between the town centre and the remainder of Romford. This situation is made worse by changes in level such as the east west ramp that runs parallel to the Mercury Gardens section of the ring road.

#### 5.11 Greening the Centre

As has been set out above, Romford town centre is notable for its lack of greenery but this is a very recent condition. The opportunity exists to breach the ring road and bring greenery back to the town centre.

It could be an ambition that each of Romford's centre quarters includes a green space (could one re-provide a lost bowling green?) with street trees linking them where possible. Smaller green spaces and specimen trees can create breathing spaces in the town – for instance on North Street behind the Golden Lion where, historically, the street frontage was broken by the garden planting of the parish church's vicarage.

Other locations have never had a character where greenery has played a strong role – most notably the Market Place where the introduction of any trees or greenspace would need to be limited (if at all) and respect the essential and long-standing urbanity of the space.



*North Street with a glimpse of the vicarage garden beyond the flank of the Golden Lion and further trees closing the vista.*

## 5.12 Density, Tall Buildings and Landmarks

There is a prevailing assumption that tall buildings – especially those with a novelty form – are icons of regeneration. This is not the case and there is a danger that tall buildings of the wrong form and in the wrong place can work against regeneration.

Romford, despite its few towers, is essentially a low-rise town with large Essex skies. This is part of its character and, arguably, developments that seek to go above mid-rise are unnecessary and damaging outside carefully chosen locations. High buildings can also concentrate investment and activity rather than activating the centre more widely.

That said, densities in some parts of Romford are far too low at present and mitigate against a proper sense of urbanity. The Brewery surface car park is one example where building at density can much improve the character of the town centre and facilitate new routes between core and periphery.

Taller buildings carefully placed can act as wayfinding landmarks. Historically, Romford had two major landmarks, the Brewery chimney and the parish church spire. The chimney's replacement (at the car parking ramp) does not fulfil the intended purpose.

However, the spire of the church still plays an important role in Romford. Users of the train station, for instance, are guided to the crossroads and market by the spire as a landmark above the general height of the roofs. It is worth exploring a town centre height limit that is no higher than the base of the spire. Additionally, or alternatively, viewing corridors need establishing to guide the location of taller developments. Tall buildings within the immediate context of heritage assets including individual and groups of assets (including the conservation area) can damage the setting and heritage significance of not only individual assets but Romford town centre as a whole and should be resisted.

## 5.13 Parking

Romford is notable for its many multi-storey and surface car parks. While these may serve a need, their provision needs balancing against Romford's physical environment that, increasingly, will be vital to its economic fortunes as an office and retail location. Parking provision needs to be rationalised – perhaps in fewer locations and less sensitive locations.

Surface car parks can also be damaging to the public realm – providing gaps in the urban fabric where there should be buildings. Examples of this include the parking behind the churchyard the Brewery car park. Conversely, their may be opportunities to increase the provision of parking at other locations such as Dolphin Approach.

And while car use is high, more than a third of people travelling to Romford arrive by bus and others by train. This is likely to shift further with Crossrail. A balance needs to be struck between car users and other transport modes. In the post-war period, catering to the car has damaged the physical environment of the town as much as serving its economic needs.

#### 5.14 Interpretation and Events

Within the context of a heritage restoration drive, the physical environment can be activated and better understood through activation and events. The revival of the Market Place's summer fair, the use of projections to illuminate buildings and a Thirties event on South Street are just initial, outline ideas that need to be fully developed within the context of a cultural strategy for the town.

Such participatory events are often more successful at engaging local people and visitors than plaques or permanent interpretation signage that point to past losses rather than present life. However, they need to take place alongside genuine investment in the historic environment rather than substituting for this – otherwise local people can be put offside rather than engaged.



*Driving Sheep over London Bridge by the Worshipful Company of Woolmen*

## 6.0 Addressing Recent Change and Emerging Proposals

With the economy in flux – particularly the retail landscape – changing transport modes and housing needs there is the opportunity for Romford to rebalance its town centre. The potential sale of the Liberty shopping centre and remodelling of the Brewery are chances to implement physical environment changes that would be of great benefit for the future of the town.

However, improved public transport such as Crossrail and factors such as the rise of online shopping are also threats that could drain the town centre of its raison d'être – fast transport links can take shoppers elsewhere as well as bring them in. A mixed-use town centre with an improved environment helps mitigate threats.

Proposals are still coming forward (such as Swan Walk) that seek to turn more of the street frontage into covered, private space. For all the reasons set out above this endangers Romford's already fragmented identity and specificity and would miss opportunities to undo current problems.

The role played by heritage as a cultural economic driver and in reinforcing local distinctiveness could also be more firmly recognised as the loss of some buildings from the local list attests. Recent proposals threaten further potentially negative change – including the demolition rather than remodelling, frontage restoration and provision of appropriate upper floors at the Page Calnan Building on South Street. Inter-war heritage is still undervalued and design guidance specific to interwar buildings would be a welcome move.

Other proposals are coming forward that threaten potential assets in North Street or which are inappropriate within the setting of vital heritage assets. The proposed Premier Inn on the B&M site is a prime example, a building whose redevelopment is to be otherwise warmly welcomed in principle.

Given the pace of change, there is an urgency to put in place the necessary protective and enhancement measures or what remains of the cohesion of Romford's historic environment and its role in supporting high-quality regeneration will be lost. Romford has a better chance of holding its own in a troubled economy by reinforcing local identity – by becoming more intensively itself.

**November 2018**





Some sources

Ballard, E. G. *Our Old Romford and District*. Swan Libraries, Upminster, 1981.

Evans, B. *Romford; A History*, Phillimore & Co, 2006

Evans, B. *Romford Through Time*. Amberley Publishing Ltd, 2010.

Grimwood, B. *The Cinemas of Essex*. Mercia Cinema Society, 1995.

Pound, P. *Romford's Pubs*. Tempus Publishing Limited, Gloucestershire, 2006.

*A Victoria History of the County of Essex Volume 7*. Oxford University of Press, Oxford, 1978

*The Quadrant Arcade, Romford*. Author, publisher and publication date are unknown. Sourced from Romford Central Library Local Studies, reference number LC658.87/ROM

Robert Bevan, Director

**AuthenticFutures**

[www.authenticfutures.com](http://www.authenticfutures.com)

+44 7963 319352

Ground Floor

72-74 Mare Street

London E8 4RT