

 <p>Havering LONDON BOROUGH</p>	<p>Strategic Planning Committee</p> <p>14 November 2024</p>
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Application Reference:	W0023.24
Location:	Harold Hill District Centre, Harold Hill
Ward	Heaton
Description:	Comprehensive redevelopment of the site comprising the demolition of existing buildings and construction of a mixed-use development to provide residential and retail floorspace, landscaping and associated works.
Case Officer:	Richard Byrne
Reason for Report to Committee:	The application has been deferred from the previous Strategic Planning Committee, 18 th July 2024, pending additional information.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This proposed development is being presented to enable Members of the committee to view it before a planning application is submitted and to comment upon it. The development does not constitute an application for planning permission and any comments made upon it are without prejudice and along with the comments received as a result of consultation, publicity and notification subject to full consideration of any subsequent application.
- 1.2 The proposal has been the subject to a series of pre-application meetings with officers. There has been a QRP meeting undertaken in April 2024 followed more recently with a further meeting on 14 October. The proposal has been presented to the GLA on 22 October.
- 1.3 Informed by the feedback gained from the initial QRP meeting and the following discussions with officers, the scheme has gradually developed.

1.4 The scheme is not finalised and it is anticipated that the proposals will further evolve over the coming months before submission of a planning application next year. At this stage however, Member feedback in regard to broad principles for the development will be constructive in taking the scheme forward.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1 The site forms phase three in the Council led regeneration project in Harold Hill built in conjunction with a developer partner (Wates). Phase one is to the north on the opposite side of Hilldene Avenue and comprises a Family Welcome Centre (P0461.22). Phase two is to the south off Chippenham Road (P1150.24) and is a residential led scheme straddling a central plot (which is outside of the application site) occupied by St. Georges Church, a funeral parlour and vicarage.

2.2 The site is broadly 'T' shaped bound by Hilldene to the north, Chippenham Road to the south and bordered by West Dene Drive and East Dene Drive. The site is occupied by the Harold Hill district centre, which is a purpose-built 1950s council-owned commercial area to serve the wider residential estate to the north-east of the Borough. Most of the retail units are independently owned though a handful of familiar High Street names have established themselves in the centre. The main focus of the retail offer is the provision of convenience goods and some services such as banking and hairdressing. Residential apartments occupy the three upper floors with ancillary servicing areas / parking situated to their rear (accessed off West and East Dene Drives).

2.3 The buildings are arranged to face Hilldene Avenue and Farnham Road (either side) and are a typical appearance, form and scale of the 1950s new town movement. Farnham Road flanked by ground floor commercial units forms a spine road which connects Chippenham Road to the south and the internal 'T' junction in the north area where it then branches to connects with Hilldene Avenue at the two furthest arms of the site. Bay car parking flanks either side of Farnham Road with further parking areas between the commercial units facing Hilldene Avenue and the main carriageway.

2.4 Pedestrian movement generally follows the road direction with a foot connection between West Dene Drive and Farnham Road. This was historically mirrored on the side of Farnham Road connecting to East Dene Drive, however, this no longer exists given the later erection of the library which is set back from the building lines of the commercial row.

2.5 There are currently 118 dwellings located above retail units. Over 50% of existing housing is occupied by council tenants – therefore any proposals would be subject to a ballot process.

2.6 Public open space is largely along the northern area and narrow strips along walkways to Hilldene Avenue. On Farnham Road, there are only planters around the junction with the Library.

2.7 The site has a PTAL rating of 2 and is not in a Conservation Area. However, it is allocated as a District Centre in the Local Plan. Furthermore, Farnham Road and Hilldene Avenue are primary frontages with the row between Farnham Road and West Dene Drive allocated as a secondary frontage.

3.0 THE PROPOSAL

3.1 The proposal comprises the demolition of the buildings on the site (with the exception of the library which will remain) and the redevelopment of the District Centre. The scheme proposes to erect mixed use blocks to provide a range of non-residential spaces and circa 479 flatted homes.

3.2 The layout proposes to principally face onto Hilldene Avenue to the north and to the south along Chippenham Road. The scheme has been designed with a north to south axis (offset to the existing Farnham Road) linking the Family Centre to the north and St George’s Church to the south. Key routes have been provided to link with West and East Dene Drive providing connectivity with the surrounding street network. The intervening routes and spaces have been reimagined in providing pockets of public movement and rest, street parking and servicing areas with landscaping.

3.3 Retail anchor stores at key points have been identified on the Hilldene Avenue frontage and corner of Chippenham Road / Farnham Road. The central axis and interconnecting routes would be fronted by other retail space, community uses to complement the existing library and central landscaped civic square. Break out spaces are imagined to create aprons for key uses to bring activity into the street with further areas to celebrate key community uses such as the Harold Hill Library.

3.4 The blocks are shown to range from two up to eight storey. An eight-storey marker building is proposed to the junction of Farnham Road and Hilldene Avenue, with six storey along the north and central area (Farnham Road), and this would lower to four storey on Chippenham Road near to existing properties. Amenity spaces are created at podium level and pockets of terrace gardens within the blocks.

3.5 The non-residential spaces are proposed as follows:

	Existing	Proposed
Commercial Space	8,825 sqm	5,700 sqm
Community Space	540 sqm	1,040 sqm
Total	9,365 sqm	6,740 sqm

3.6 Primary retail frontages are considered to be adjacent to Hilldene Avenue and Chippenham Road which would be occupied by anchor stores and independent stores that require a street visibility and presence. Intervening streets are mainly independent stores, community uses and food and beverage units.

3.7 The quantity and tenure type of the residential homes are proposed as follows:

	Affordable	Shared Ownership	Private	Total
1 Bed	20 (15%)	51 (34%)	91 (40%)	162
2 Bed	50 (36%)	53 (47%)	124 (55%)	227
3 Bed	58 (42%)	10 (16%)	8 (4%)	76
4 Bed	9 (7%)	3 (16%)	2 (1%)	14
Total	137	117	225	479
In brackets is the percentage of home size within tenure type				

3.8 The scheme has been designed to provide 70% of homes to be dual aspect with no north facing single aspect.

3.9 All homes are intended to be compliant with National Space Standards (NDSS) and the London Housing Design Guide. 10% of affordable, 11% of shared ownership and 12% of private homes are Approved Documents M4 Cat 2 (Accessible and Adaptable Homes) compliant.

3.10 The proposed parking strategy would provide:

	Existing	Proposed	Blue Badge
Commercial	248	105	6% of provision
Residential	104	99	3% of units
Shared	N/A	76	

3.11 The development proposes all to be surface parking no basement or under podium parking due to viability issues. The shared provision would include 6% for blue badge spaces, two spaces would be allocated for a car club.

3.12 50 short stay cycle stands would be dispersed within the site. 880 long stay cycle parking stands are proposed within the blocks for residents. It is anticipated to meet GLA standards.

3.13 The footprint of the proposed built form allows for the retention of trees along Hilldene Avenue and to create markers within the site.

3.14 75% of the total play space required is provided within the site with the remainder identified to be provided on Newbury Close existing open space (230m west of the site).

3.15 The scheme is currently showing to achieve an urban greening factor score of 0.38.

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 None relevant within the site.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 Members should note that the proposal being presented to them now may have taken on board the QRP's comments below.

QRP Comments – 14 October 2024
<i>Masterplan vision</i>
Commends the project team for taking a step back to analyse the existing demographics and uses in the Harold Hill District Centre and the wider area that it serves. This has informed a deeper understanding of the role that it plays as a town centre for approximately 20,000 people.
The development of a masterplan vision is welcome, as a basis for continuing work to establish clear, place-specific aspirations. Although Harold Hill District Centre needs investment, it has been an important hub for the community for many years and remains attractive to major retailers. Protecting this sense of authenticity and providing a meaningful new town centre, will ensure that local people recognise it as their own.

Building on what works well already will ensure that the centre retains a sense of its identity and purpose throughout the phased transformation. There is an opportunity to translate the learnings from the contextual analysis and community engagement into a unique proposal.

Sustainability

Limited information on sustainability was presented at the review, and the panel asks that more detail is provided at a future review. This should include analysis of the feasibility of retaining existing structures.

While some parts of the Harold Hill District Centre are failing, other parts are successful and could be retained. The panel asks for further exploration of a refurbishment approach. This would reduce embodied carbon, contributing to meeting Havering Council's net zero target.

The panel encourages more ambitious sustainability targets. These should be set at an early stage to become anchors for developing all other aspects of the design.

For example, during the next stage of development, the project team should consider how the window sizes, external shading and balcony designs can contribute to operational performance and internal comfort.

The project team is also encouraged to develop the proposals for biodiversity net gain and urban greening, retaining as many existing trees as possible.

Masterplan layout

It is positive that the central spine has been retained in the masterplan. The symmetry of this layout has a distinctly 1950s feel, maintaining an echo of the existing layout, which will contribute to the place making character.

The panel also supports the breaking of this symmetry to provide a new public open space on the central axis, next to Harold Hill Library. Harold Hill District Centre currently suffers from anti-social behaviour problems along the eastern and western edges where the rear of the housing is not well overlooked. It is important that the masterplan provides clarity around fronts and backs for the housing. The panel recommends further thought about the edges of the scheme to achieve this, especially to the west, where the boundary is adjacent to private gardens and garages. The scheme should establish positive relationships with houses beyond the site boundary.

Masterplan drawings should include the phase 1 and 2 developments to the north and south. This will clarify onwards connections beyond the site boundary that have shaped the layout.

The challenge of achieving as many dual aspect homes as possible is acknowledged. While the panel understands the negative community feedback around deck access due to residents' current experience, it thinks that this could still be explored as a potential solution.

The potential for deck access housing to be a good place to live could be illustrated with reference to contemporary precedents. If deck access is not a viable option, the panel asks that any necessary single aspect homes are carefully located to consider orientation and liveability.

Streets

The design of streets should reinforce their hierarchy in the masterplan, with primary, secondary or tertiary streets having different characters and widths. The panel would support flexibility on 18m street widths in relation to building heights, if this can be shown to benefit place making. For example, some of the side streets could be narrower to create a more domestic sense of containment.

The panel also recommends making the public open space more enclosed through a tighter surrounding street structure, to create the feeling of a civic square. The street to the north of the open space could be downgraded or removed. These spatial gains could also improve the deliverability of the scheme if they can be added to the internal footprints.

The panel recognises the challenge of providing the necessary parking provision while creating a high-quality public realm. However, the streets are overly dominated by parking and vehicular movement at present.

The panel recommends removing as much parking as possible from the central spine. It is important that this space functions as effective public realm for the locals who will arrive on foot, rather than prioritising space for those arriving by car to use the shops.

The panel is concerned about the quality offered by side streets with parking and dead frontages. Further exploration to show the ground floor uses together with the public realm would test the success of the proposals.

The east-west streets with cars parked on both sides are not an ideal environment for children, and could be worsened by delivery vehicles loading and unloading. The panel encourages the project team to prioritise child friendly design, as streets that work for children are likely to work for all.

The panel suggests making the two 'L'-shaped routes around the blocks on the western side of the masterplan pedestrian only, or if that is not feasible, making them accessible by car to residents only.

Sections through each street would help to determine the appropriate amount of space for walking, playing, retail spill-out, greening and servicing. These decisions, plus the microclimate conditions and the street width will help to create the character of each street.

As the proposal evolves further thought is needed on the fronts and backs of the retail units facing Hilldene Road to find the best locations for entrances and servicing.

Landscape and play

As design work continues, the landscape proposals should be developed to define the various character areas and what type of spaces they offer. The architecture can then be developed in response to the unique conditions of each street or space.

The panel welcomes the addition of a public open space to the north of Harold Hill Library off the central axis. There is a significant amount of green space in the wider area, but not of this type, and it will complement the surrounding community and commercial uses.

The play strategy diagram appears to be counting every available space, including some narrow slithers. The panel questions how usable some of these smaller spaces will be.
It suggests developing a play strategy with a clearer sense of scale, as well as an understanding of how the different spaces connect and what they offer for various age ranges.
<i>Height and massing</i>
The eight-storey block will cross the height threshold requiring a second stair core to meet current fire safety building regulations. The project team could consider increasing the height slightly further if it would make the scheme more affordable. However, any increase would need to be balanced with the impact of parking ratios and overshadowing on the public realm.
<i>Architecture</i>
The panel recommends that the masterplan vision and key moves, such as the street hierarchy, are settled before further exploration of architectural character.

5.2 A Meeting was attended by the GLA with the applicant on Tuesday 22nd October. However, written feedback has not been received at the time of drafting this report. Initial feedback from the GLA noted that the officers support several key considerations, including the principle of estate regeneration, the reduction of retail floorspace, and various key design matters. However, GLA Officers also raised concerns on the quality of the public realm noting the extent of parking proposed.

5.3 It is intended that the following will be consulted regarding any subsequent planning application:

- Mayor of London
- London Fire Brigade
- Thames Water
- Essex and Suffolk Water
- EDF Energy
- National Grid
- Transport for London
- NHS Trust
- Department for Education
- Place Services (Ecology)

6.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

6.1 The applicant has held a number of consultation events at the Harold Hill Library with the latest on 26 and 27 June 2024. These include resident consultation and public consultation. The feedback received was generally positive with the majority of respondents supporting the statement that the proposals would provide a more welcoming and attractive town centre for local residents and visitors to Harold Hill, agreeing that the addition of a new shopping parade and inclusion of space for independent retail units would enhance the shopping experience for both businesses and visitors and supporting the principle of new housing. Local residents identified that creating a more welcoming and safer town centre environment, was the

objective most important to them, Concerns raised centred largely around current issues associated with crime and security and how these would be dealt with alongside the impact on local infrastructure including GPs and education.

- 6.2 Retailers engagement was in December 2023 and June 2024. Feedback related to queries on the level of retail parking that would be proposed, whether a replacement shop would be provided within the new scheme for businesses currently on site and how continuity of trade would be maintained.
- 6.3 Direct contact was made by Havering's Regeneration Community Liaison Officer to the 47 Right to Return residents, either by visiting them, calling them or emailing them, to notify them of the digital survey, the event and to encourage their participation in the exercise.
- 6.4 Further consultation has been undertaken in the form of 1:1 conversations and focus groups with key stakeholders such as The Felix Project, Youth Unity, Harold Hill Wombles and Local Metropolitan Police. Feedback includes communication with children is crucial, development should strive to give people hope a sense of opportunity and pride in the place. There is a need to build from within and for the community to congregate and have a conversation.
- 6.5 The feedback from residents and stakeholders will form part of the Statement of Community Involvement submitted by the Applicant at submission.

7.0 MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 The main planning issues raised by the proposal relate to:

- Principle of Development
- Proposed site layout and function
- Design Quality and Scale
- Commercial and community uses
- Mix of housing
- Quality of accommodation
- Access and parking
- Open spaces
- Energy and Sustainability
- Impact on infrastructure provision and mitigation

7.2 Principle of Development

- The site is within the built up predominantly residential area relatively close to schools, open space, leisure centre and is the nucleus for the community. Although there would be a reduction in floorspace the consolidated cumulative space still falls under the definition of a District Centre (Annex 1 of the London Plan) and provides a balance of uses (commercial and community) that are associated with a centre that serves the local community. There would be loss of existing buildings on the site, however, the applicant has considered adaption of the existing buildings within the site and has come to the view it is more appropriate for the site to be fully re-developed. There is subsequent scope for new housing within the

site and would contribute to meeting the borough's need in respect of affordable and privately owned homes.

- It is acknowledged this site is a standalone proposal. However, issues that are likely to impact other phases of the masterplan and in the wider area should still be considered. For example, how parking is likely to be distributed, provision of play/amenity space, potential to improve key pedestrian/cycle routes.

7.3 Proposed site layout and function

- The layout maintains clear vistas to allow good visibility through the site. The central axis allows a clear physical and visual connection between the Family Welcome Centre to the north, the central civic space and library within the site and St George's Church to the south to foster stronger links between the three phases of the regeneration of Harold Hill District Centre.
- The proposal has sought to create a high quality civic space within the district centre. The central square is further enhanced to improve the public realm, incorporating spill out spaces from the surrounding commercial uses and library.
- The layout allows some limited traffic movement for servicing and town centre parking. By increasing the traffic movement it does contribute to street activity and increases the footfall around the site while increasing the chances of the viability of businesses on the secondary streets and the fringe units of the development. The limitation of traffic around the central square allows for pedestrian activity to take precedent and foster social activity.
- The proposal has further explored appropriate community functions and incorporating these into the scheme to further foster links between the redeveloped District Centre and surrounding community. Phase I of the development would include a youth centre where it is envisaged a training cafe (for people with learning difficulties run by a society) would be situated centrally and a food hub towards the south facing Chippenham Road.
- Officers agree with the QRP in the need for the scheme to define a stronger street hierarchy.

7.4 Design, Quality and Scale

- Officers note the surrounding low-rise suburban location and that the heights of buildings are more central with the marker building forming a gateway set back from Hilldene Avenue.
- Further consideration is needed regarding the relationship between Chippenham Road proposal (as a live application) and the southern side of the emerging District Centre in respect of scale and relationship within the streetscene.

7.5 Commercial and community uses

- Primary retail would face Hilldene Avenue and Chippenham Road. Secondary retail is interspersed with community uses through the District Centre to draw visitors through the site and provide opportunities for independent retailers to occupy commercial spaces.

- It is proposed to incorporate a youth centre which would come forward in Phase I. A community café is in the central part of the site adjacent to the open space with a food hub facing Chippenham Road. The community uses would be sited along the central axis through the site linking with the existing library and bolster the ties with the local community.

7.6 Mix of housing

- The proposals would provide 53% of the housing as affordable housing in line with the requirements of Policy 4 of the Local Plan. Of the affordable units 54% would be social rent or London Affordable Rent and 46% shared ownership, Policy 4 of the local plan seeks a split of 70/30%. In respect to the affordable units 78% of the units would be 2 or 3 bed units in line with the aims of Policy 5 of the local plan.
- In terms of the overall mix, the proposals would only provide 19% of the units as either 3 or 4 bedroom dwellings. In respect to the private housing only 5% would be 3 or 4 bedroom units.

7.7 Quality of accommodation

- Need to demonstrate that adequate light can be provided to all units and equally that the scale of the scheme does not adversely affect the light to any nearby residential properties.

7.8 Access and Parking

- Given there is no proposed podium or basement parking there is a significant amount of surface parking to meet the needs of residential homes, commercial and community uses. It is understood that some of the parking is shared giving flexibility for shared use (between residents, community and commercial uses). However, further understanding is required on how the parking would affect the quality of the public realm and the viability of non-residential uses within the site.
- Consideration of parking, access and servicing issues required and how this interacts with residential homes and street activation.
- Review of the edge of site car park bays, its location and proximity to the buildings as current positions are not particularly over looked.

7.9 Open spaces

- The applicant has identified that there is a shortfall of play space within the site and an offsite open space has been identified on Newbury Close for play as mitigation. It should be noted that the on-site under-provision builds on the previous phase for family sheltered housing scheme across the road. The proposal is currently being considered by Officers but it would be interesting to hear Members' views on the proposal for play space.

7.10 Energy and Sustainability

- The design will follow the energy hierarchy approach of 'Be Lean', 'Be Clean', 'Be Green', 'Be Seen', with a zero carbon target across the development.

- The residential parts of the proposed development will aim to achieve a minimum 10 per cent reduction in carbon emissions through energy efficiency measures, and the non-residential will aim for a minimum 15 per cent reduction.
- It is proposed to use heat pumps as the source of heat for space heating and hot water. The residential will aim to exceed the minimum 35 per cent overall on-site carbon reduction and will target the GLA benchmark of 50 per cent as a minimum.
- The appropriate non-residential parts of the proposed development will be assessed using the BREEAM scheme. Buildings are rated and certified on a scale of 'Pass', 'Good', 'Very Good', 'Excellent' and 'Outstanding'. The scheme is aiming to achieve 'good'.

7.11 Impact on infrastructure provision and mitigation

- At this stage of the scheme development, options for any on-site infrastructure requirements arising from the development should be considered taking into account the viability of the scheme and the current affordable housing offer.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The proposed development remains in the pre-application stage and additional work remains to be carried out. The scheme will be progressed through a design led approach over the coming months. At this stage, Members' guidance will be most helpful to incorporate as the various elements are brought together.