



PLACES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:

Romford Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document

ELT Lead:

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Policy context:

- National Planning Policy Framework 2024
- London Plan 2021
- Havering Local Plan 2016-2031

SUMMARY

1. This report provides a briefing on the development of the Romford Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document, for the final stage of seeking approval to adopt the Romford Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as planning policy at the Cabinet meeting of March 12 2025. The Masterplan has been drafted and consulted on in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Places Overview and Scrutiny Sub- Committee are asked to note the contents of this report and the Romford Masterplan SPD (appendix 1). Supporting documents have been provided, (appendices 2-5).
3. The documents appended to this report are:
 - Appendix 1: Romford Town Centre Masterplan (SPD)
 - Appendix 2: Romford Masterplan Baseline Report, including Heritage Audit
 - Appendix 3: Romford Masterplan Consultation Statement
 - Appendix 4: Romford Masterplan Health Impact Assessment
 - Appendix 5: Romford Masterplan: Findings of No Significant Effect Report

REPORT DETAIL

Background

4. The Council has prepared a Romford Town Centre Masterplan (SPD) in conjunction with consultants Maccreeanor Lavington. The Masterplan has emerged over a number of years, with extensive early community engagement taking place in 2019. Further community engagement took place early in 2024 in order to underpin and inform the preparation of a full draft Masterplan and a formal, statutory public consultation took place in September-November 2024.
5. Cabinet gave approval to formally consult for six weeks on the draft Masterplan on 09 September 2024.
6. The representations received from the formal statutory consultation in September – November 2024 have been fully considered with amendments being made. This final draft of the Romford Masterplan is proposed for adoption, and publication, by Cabinet.
7. The Havering Local Plan sets out the detailed policy for Romford and commits to the delivery of a Supplementary Planning Document for the area, recognising the significant opportunities that Romford offers. The Masterplan develops and supplements the Havering Local Plan and sets out a framework to shape and guide development in Romford over the next 15-20 years.

Purpose of the Romford Masterplan

8. Romford is the borough's primary centre and supports a vibrant mix of shopping, employment, leisure, night-time economy and housing, and is identified as a Metropolitan town centre in the London Plan. It is a key transport hub within the borough and benefits from improved accessibility since the Elizabeth Line opened.
9. The Masterplan will be instrumental in guiding Romford's ongoing evolution over the next 15-20 years. Its aim is to draw on Romford's unique character and to continue to evolve it into a place which respects and reveals its history whilst looking forward to deliver growth and opportunities that will benefit the entire community.
10. Romford offers exciting regeneration and development opportunities and is expected to accommodate significant levels of housing and economic growth in the coming years. It is identified as an Opportunity Area in the London Plan and designated as a Strategic Development Area (SDA) in the Havering Local Plan. The Masterplan is needed to guide these opportunities in a way that respects Romford's qualities and history, strengthens pride in the town, and makes it a distinct and attractive place to live, work, and visit.

11. The Masterplan does not repeat policies in the Local Plan, and should be read in conjunction with it. As an SPD the Masterplan cannot introduce new planning policies but will shape and guide future development. The Masterplan will be a material consideration when determining planning applications. This means that in addition to satisfying the requirements of national, regional and Havering's local planning policies, development proposals will also need to demonstrate how the guidance in the SPD has been considered.

Summary of Masterplan Content

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

Vision for Romford:

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

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

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

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- New and improved station entrances - Creating a new station entrance that acts as a gateway to the town centre and improving the existing station entrance with public realm enhancements, seating and wayfinding.

14. The Vision is expanded through the key themes and objectives to guide its delivery.

Key themes:

- **Space and landscape** - The Masterplan promotes a wide range of safe, public spaces including high quality streets, pocket parks, squares and roof gardens. Blue and green networks through the town centre will be strengthened. The River Rom will be the centre piece of these networks as a new linear riverside park.
- **Movement and Connectivity** - The Masterplan improves access, connectivity and permeability across Romford. Public transport and active travel choices, such as walking and cycling, are promoted to encourage healthy lifestyles and considered equitably with other modes of travel. Reconfigured streets and public realm will create a more attractive, safe and inclusive Romford.
- **Sustainability** - ensuring growth is built on a platform of sustainable infrastructure with environmental and wellbeing benefits. Environmental, social and economic sustainability is a golden thread that runs through the Masterplan.
- **Inclusivity, Health and Wellbeing** - all developments, public realm, transport and projects will have inclusive design at their heart. The Masterplan provides guidance to promote social cohesion and to create opportunities to diversify and to also improve health and wellbeing through better accessibility, infrastructure and resources.
- **Character and Townscape** - The Masterplan draws on the existing qualities and unique assets of Romford. The setting of Romford's historic places and buildings will be enhanced. New developments will contribute by positively supporting existing or evolving character areas through new and enhanced buildings, streets and spaces.
- **Uses and Mix** - The Masterplan promotes a diverse Romford that is active throughout all times of the day. In the central area smaller shops and a more varied food and drink offer will support the vibrancy of the centre and an enhanced early evening economy. Employment and business space will be enhanced. Key locations and public spaces will be anchored by cultural and leisure uses to drive footfall. New residential within the town centre will support existing and new businesses but will also require corresponding social infrastructure including schools, public spaces, health facilities and transport.
- **The Economy** - The Masterplan capitalises on Romford's unique position at the interface between Essex and London to promote Romford as a destination, to support existing businesses and attract new occupiers. The Masterplan seeks to

broaden the early evening and night-time economies, revitalise Market Place and enhancing retail, business and residential offers. This diversification will create new jobs and support the vitality and long-term viability of Romford.

Site Guidance:

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

- Market Place
- St Edwards Way
- Brewery
- Station Gateway
- Rom Valley
- Liberty
- Mercury
- North Street
- Civic Campus
- Crow Lane

Previous Community Engagement

16. The Masterplan has been influenced by an extensive public engagement process both for the initial development of the Masterplan in 2019 and for the Masterplan refresh in 2024 (see Appendix 3, Consultation Statement). Throughout the development of the Masterplan, feedback from the engagement process has been incorporated to create and refine the vision, objectives strategies and site guidance.

17. In April and May 2024, the public engagement included:

- A digital launch and online survey on www.yourromford.co.uk
- Five pop up engagement events in the town centre
- Five workshops with children and young people
- A stakeholder workshop

18. Overall, the sentiment about the Masterplan was positive, reflected in 73% of respondents either strongly or somewhat agreeing with the principles of the Masterplan. The ideas with the most public support were:

- The Market place: focusing on the Market as a key transformation area for Romford
- The River Rom: opening up the Rom and creating a high quality, exciting pieces of public realm
- Public Realm: creating improved public realm so people want to dwell in the town centre

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- Behaviour: The above goals were identified in the context of addressing challenges with antisocial behaviour in the town centre.

19. Preparation of the Masterplan has also included engagement with a range of partners and stakeholders including landowners, developers key partners and statutory consultees such as the Greater London Authority (GLA), Transport for London (TfL) and the Environment Agency.

Statutory Public Consultation

20. Following approval from Cabinet on the 9th September 2024, the draft Romford Town Centre Masterplan SPD went out for statutory public consultation for a period of six weeks, between the 30th September to the 11th November 2024. This was in line with the published Statement of Community Involvement (adopted in 2021).

21. The following organisations were contacted by email:

Statutory Consultees:

- Canal and River Trust
- Coal Authority
- Department for Education
- The Environment Agency
- Historic England
- The Marine Management Organisation
- Natural England
- Network Rail
- NHS
- Highways England / Highways Agency
- Office of road and rail
- Transport for London
- UKPN
- Thames Water
- Anglian Water
- Essex and Suffolk Water
- National Grid
- Cadent Gas
- Port of London Authority
- Homes England
- GLA
- Local nature partnership Sport England
- HUDU - Healthy Urban Development Unit

22. Notifications were also sent to 18 local schools, 67 landowners, all those on the Havering Planning Policy database of 138 contacts, and 55 volunteer groups and charities. A reminder was sent during the week of the 21st October. Further details of this can be found in Appendix 3 Consultation Statement.

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23. A consultation page was launched on Citizen Space with the Your Romford website being updated with a link to the consultation page. The Living in Havering e-newsletter included details of the consultation on 6 occasions, along with 3 press releases and a formal notice was placed in the Romford Recorder on the 4th October 2024.
24. Three consultation drop-in events were held in Romford Central library on:
- 3rd October 2024, 10am – 12pm, at Romford Central Library
 - 17th October 2024, 5pm – 7pm, at Romford Central Library
 - 23rd October 2024, 12pm - 2pm, at Romford Central Library
25. The drop-in events were held for residents and stakeholders to be able to ask questions. Notes were made of the enquiries and people were encouraged to submit comments on the consultation website.
26. Responses were received from statutory consultees, representatives for land owners, councillors, residents, and community groups.

Responses

27. Breakdown of Respondents:

Respondent type	Number
Resident	69
Community Group	6
Landowner/planning representative	9
Statutory consultee	10
Councillors	3
Other	4
TOTAL	101

28. These have been presented within the Consultation Statement and its appendices.
29. Overall, the comments made were supportive of the Masterplan. Valid issues that were raised covered minor errors in referencing or descriptions, terminology, and the status of documents or projects referred to. In other cases, further clarification was sought.
30. Some issues raised in relation to site guidance were not appropriate to be picked up, as they requested further detail beyond what the site guidance can offer, or requested changes that would conflict with other policy such as the Local Plan.

Main Issues Raised

Townscape & height

Relating to the description of the existing townscape and of references to the historic urban grain.

Viability

Relating to the viability of projects within the site guidance sites, and of infrastructure projects such as the potential new station entrance. Suggestions were made around viability testing.

Safety

Suggesting further reference to the need to make Romford safer. With this, comments referred to documents and work elsewhere that could be referenced in the Masterplan.

Public transport

Reassurance that the bus network and associated bus infrastructure were safeguarded and that any alterations to depots etc would require re-provision.

Parking

Highlighting the importance of retaining and providing more blue badge parking.

Culture

Comments were made requesting more focus on cultural events and uses in Romford. It was requested that Havering's cultural strategy 'A Good Life' be referred to.

Amendments Made

31. Changes made to the Masterplan were corrective, to add clarity, alter or refresh references, refine terminology, and add further emphasis. Corrective changes were made to respond to outdated information, or grammatical refinement.
32. Clarity was added to certain elements, such as adding definitions to, for example, pocket parks.
33. The status of the Romford Conservation Area being on the 'Heritage at Risk Register' was given direct reference, to ensure that this is positively responded to and rectified going forward. Reinforcing the role of Romford's heritage in shaping its future has been made through the strategic approach.
34. Greater emphasis was made to the positive impact that the Masterplan intends to promote in relation to safety and inclusivity were bolstered, and an additional 'key move' was added in this regard. Changes to objectives were kept to a minimum, but specifically these were:

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- MC5 [alteration]: Roll out a town centre public car parking strategy which rationalises car parking including removal of surplus, under-used or poorly located spaces and creates attractive car parking areas that people feel safe to use.
- MC8 [alteration]: Promote active travel as an attractive alternative to vehicular travel, in line with the Healthy Streets Approach.
- MC9 [new]: Ensure that the town centre is as inclusive and safe as possible for all, including women and girls, day and night.
- CT2 [alteration]: Curate, nurture and enhance existing assets, including Romford Conservation Area and other designated and non-designated heritage assets and buildings of character, in order to collectively build a distinctive Romford character.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

The cost of producing the Romford Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been funded through the Regeneration (Capacity and Feasibility) budget.

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

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

Legal implications and risks:

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Findings of No Significant Effect Report, containing a statement of reasons has been prepared and will be published alongside the Romford Masterplan (Refer to Appendix 5).

Human Resources implications and risks:

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

Equalities implications and risks:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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ensuring equality and improving the quality of life of all residents including those with protected characteristics.

In particular, the Masterplan supports:

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

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

Health and Wellbeing implications and risks

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

The Masterplan recognises the importance of the places in which people live, learn and work in supporting health and wellbeing. 'Inclusivity, Health and Wellbeing' is one of the seven key Masterplan Themes, with specific elements relating to health and wellbeing having been embedded across a number of the underlying design principles and objectives and scheme guidance.

The Masterplan was assessed as largely having a positive impact on health, with a number of previous recommendations deemed to have been suitably addressed in the post-consultation version. The HIA recommends prioritising a number of key actions as the delivery of the RMP is progressed, to support the successful realisation of the potential health and wellbeing benefits:

- Developers, the Council and NHS partners to continue to collaborate as RMP schemes are brought forward to ensure that healthcare infrastructure planning is effectively informed by and aligned with population growth and needs over the lifetime of the masterplan.
- Developers to ensure that local residents and partners are meaningfully consulted regarding individual schemes, to make sure that their needs and views form an integral part of delivering liveable, accessible neighbourhoods.
- Ensure that individual schemes brought forward within the RMP area embrace and respond to the planning vision, principals and objectives laid out in the RMP, enabling the potential health and wellbeing benefits for the local area to be fully realised.
- Ensure that developers deliver high quality, robust HIAs for individual schemes, and give early consideration of health and wellbeing impacts of schemes from the point of pre-application.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

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

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

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

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

» *Climate Change Committee Guidance ([havering.gov.uk](https://www.havering.gov.uk))*

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None