



**Havering**  
LONDON BOROUGH

**Strategic Planning  
Committee – Developer  
Presentation  
11 September 2025**

**Pre-Application Reference:**

**W0154.25**

**Location:**

**FORMER HOMEBASE, DAVIDSON WAY,  
ROMFORD**

**Ward:**

**ST ALBANS**

**Description:**

**Demolition of the existing building, followed by a residential-led redevelopment of the site, with some ground floor commercial and community spaces, and the creation of a primary school.**

**Case Officer:**

**Andrew Thornley**

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**Site Description**

The application site comprises a large brownfield site located just south of the Romford Ring Road (Oldchurch Road), east of Rom Valley Way, north of the Seedbed Centre site and west of the River Rom. Within the 1.9 hectare site is a large vacant retail store (formerly Homebase) with the remainder of the site laid to hardstanding, which used to function as Homebase's car park and external storage areas.

The site is surrounded on nearly all sides by development parcels earmarked for predominantly residential developments, which either have extant planning permissions or are currently under assessment, and are likely to be brought forward in the short to medium term. These include the Seedbed Centre site to the south (Ref: P2072.22), the Bridge Close site to the north (Ref: P1765.23) and the Rom Valley Way site to the west (Ref: P0615.21). Collectively, these surrounding development sites will fairly significantly change the character and appearance of this part of Romford through the introduction of large, high-density, predominantly flatted schemes, whereas the current character of these areas consists of low-level industrial, retail and other commercial uses housed within shed-style buildings.

## **Planning Policy Designations**

The application site falls within Romford Strategic Development Area (RSDA), as described in Policy 1 of the Havering Local Plan, which sets out that the council will support the delivery of over 6000 new homes within the RSDA whilst focusing new commercial development within Romford Town Centre. New developments within the RSDA are further expected to improve public transport accessibility alongside enhanced public realm and walking routes to better improve connectivity for Havering's residents, whilst also improving access to social infrastructure including public open spaces, schools and community spaces where appropriate.

The site also falls within the Rom Valley area of the Romford Masterplan SPD, which sets out that this area of the wider Romford Masterplan should deliver a predominantly residential neighbourhood, supported by appropriate small-scale retail, community and leisure uses, taking advantage of the River Rom where possible. It is envisioned that the Rom Valley area provide a transition from the higher-density town centre developments to the more suburban residential areas of Rush Green, and on this basis it is expected that the scale and massing at the northern end of the site will be greatest, tapering down in height further south along Rom Valley Way.

The site has a Public Transport Accessibility level (PTAL) of 6a, measured on a scale of 0 to 6b where, 6b is the best, and therefore a score of 6a is reflective of excellent access to public transport. This PTAL is largely as a result of the many bus routes within the area but also because of access to Romford Train Station which is served by both National Rail and Elizabeth Line services, providing very convenient access westward into Central London and eastward towards Essex.

The vast majority of the site does not fall within a Flood Zone, however it should be noted that eastern edge of the site falls within Flood Zone 3 due to the presence of the River Rom which forms the eastern boundary of the site.

## **Proposal**

The proposed development seeks the complete demolition of all buildings and structures on site followed by comprehensive redevelopment to provide approximately 600 homes, 400 sqm of commercial floorspace, a new public park, and a new primary school (in tandem with the adjacent Seedbed Centre development).

At this stage in the pre-application process, the scheme comprises three main courtyard blocks; positioned in the south-west, north-west, and north-east corners of the site, and with a new primary school and public park positioned in the south-east corner, adjacent to the river Rom. The proposal includes blocks of various heights, with the tallest element being a 16-storey tower sited in the north-west corner, attached to 11 and 8 storey wings, and with heights generally stepping down in scale moving south across the site. The courtyard block in the north-east corner ranges from 8 to 13 storeys, whilst the courtyard block in the south-west corner ranges from 6 to 10 storeys, although it should be noted that these latter two blocks include a smaller (3 storey) element, to allow light into the central courtyard.

The unit mix is set out as comprising 42% 1-bedroom units, 42% 2-bedroom units and 16% 3-bedroom units, equating to approximately 252 x 1-bedroom units, 252 x 2-bedroom units and 96 x 3-bedroom units. The current affordable housing offer is 20%

(by unit), all to be provided as affordable rent, and split evenly between 2- and 3-bedroom units.

### **Quality Review Panel**

The pre-application scheme was presented to Havering's Quality review Panel on the 01/07/25, and the feedback received from QRP is summarised in the table below.

It should be noted that as the scheme evolves and responds to feedback, some of these QRP comments may no longer be applicable to the latest version of the scheme. Moreover, a revised version of the pre-app proposal is scheduled to go forward for a second QRP meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2025.

<b>QRP Comments</b>	<b>Applicant Team Response</b>
<b>Strategic Approach</b>	
The arrangement of the blocks should follow the established orientation, rhythm and structure of the neighbouring Seedbed Centre, Ice Rink and Bridge Close sites, to deliver a seamless new piece of city.	Block plan reviewed to be 3 distinct urban blocks, each of which is broadly rectangular, extending the pattern more obviously from the Seedbed site in proportion and rhythm, whilst addressing the corner of the site positively.
Following the urban grain established on the neighbouring sites will provide welcome breaks in the elevation along Rom Valley Road. Providing gaps between the blocks will allow pedestrians to navigate their way out to Rom Valley Road without needing to walk to the north or south end of the site.	As above, each block has been redesigned to provide a clear sequence from the Seedbed site, with the primary wings 'paired' to maintain that rhythm. This move ensures the East-West route extends more directly towards Rom Valley Way to form a more legible layout.
Additional permeability will also improve the experience of pedestrians and cyclists using the new Rom Valley Way route and provide welcome views, from the upper floors of Queen's Hospital, through to the new open space beside the river.	The layout and block form has been amended to provide longer views to the west.
A clearly defined street frontage is needed to guide pedestrians through the neighbourhood to the proposed new pedestrian crossing over Old Church Road, which will connect to Bridge Close to the north.	The North-South route incorporates more active frontage (the school and series of commercial spaces, plus residential entrances). This character is distinctive, reflected architecturally and creates a lively, busier street scene on this NW route.
More thought is needed to activate and enliven the streets. For example, a cafe and/or community space should be located close to the primary school, to provide a place for parents to gather and socialise.	Priority for non-residential uses to be located through this North-South route, including activating the area immediately outside the school and park, attractive to parents at drop-off/pick-up to congregate.

A movement strategy is needed to provide service and emergency vehicles unobstructed access to the site at all times of the day. This will be particularly important during peak traffic times when the roads intersecting the Old Church Road roundabout are heavily congested.	Circulatory servicing route now defined extending around the perimeter of Block C which enables the existing exit onto Oldchurch Road to be utilised.
The access off Old Church Road should be retained to provide restricted access and egress. The panel encourages further engagement with the Council's highways team.	As above – access onto Oldchurch Road retained to be used for servicing and emergency as a left-only egress.
<b>Scale, Height and Massing</b>	
Block D should be removed and the massing redistributed elsewhere across the site. This will provide a more generous public space next to the River Rom, fronted by the new primary school and adjoining the north-south route through the site.	Block D has been removed from the layout which has enabled the provision of a more generous public park in the heart of the site – a positive USP for this site, a destination space and expansion of the school.
The panel feels that Block B and Block C2 could be taller, with shoulders introduced to mediate between the variation in heights. The setback and chamfering of the massing should also be considered. Further testing will be needed to determine the appropriate scale and massing for the area.	Taller elements rise to the North-West. Within this massing an 8 storey shoulder is used frequently, particularly around the park space to provide articulation and relief.
Alternative layouts for Block C should be explored, to mitigate noise and air pollution from the busy ring road and to help provide quieter internal streets and amenity space.	Block C redesigned to provide a more distinct U-shaped block, with a lower frontage to the south.
The separation distances between some of the blocks should be tightened and deck access considered to increase the number of dual aspect homes. Alternatively, the courtyards within the blocks should be made more generous to improve the quality of daylight to homes and into the communal open space.	The layout has been reviewed and tightened up where appropriate, including between Blocks B and C (north/south route) which is circa 16.5m wide. Ground floor commercial steps forward. Managing the impact of overshadowing remains important.
The layout of Block A should be reconsidered. The three linked finger blocks, with townhouses facing onto the busy ring road, will make it challenging to provide high-quality homes and outdoor amenity space.	Block A redesigned to provide two-interlinked L-shaped blocks. Lower triplex homes on the Western edge maintained, inward looking with rooftop amenity.
The panel suggests visiting the Marks Gate development, which has similar	No response.

constraints related to the delivery of homes adjacent to the A12 near the Moby Dick roundabout. Phase One of the housing estate infill project is now occupied.	
<b>Primary School</b>	
The design team should collaborate with the council to undertake strategic design work on the primary school. This will help to unlock the proposal, including how the school and its playground will work successfully alongside the residential development.	Design work undertaken with officers to develop a preliminary school plan in an L-shaped form to offer greater frontage to the public realm and park, and greater enclosure and protection to its own private amenity space.
Thought should be given to the location of the main entrance and to positioning the playground to address the river.	As above – frontage onto the central street, and primary edge to park.
Access for service vehicles and the drop-off and collection of children needs more thought, as it is likely that the school will serve a larger catchment area beyond the site.	Drop off space incorporated (note the Seedbed site already incorporates space for bus pick-up/drop-off, servicing within the approved plan).
Clarity is needed regarding whether access will be provided to the school within the Seedbed Centre development or in this site.	Pedestrian. Servicing from Seedbed as above, but the whole plan is predicated on car free, and no car drop off as per the approach approved as part of the Seedbed scheme.
<b>Public Realm and Landscape</b>	
The provision of a generous public open space beside the River Rom will tie in with the upgrade to the river and create a strong identity that will draw people into the neighbourhood.	The removal of Block D from the layout has enabled the provision of a generous park space which links to the River Rom frontage. Naturalisation to the River Rom incorporated. Coordinated and coherent approach with the wider regeneration sites.
Spaces should be provided where people of all ages and abilities, including teenage girls and other vulnerable groups, will want to gather and linger.	A comprehensive landscape strategy is being developed.
Additional trees and greening should be planted along Rom Valley Road, to provide a good landscape buffer for homes fronting onto the busy ring road, and for pedestrians and cyclists using the Rom Valley Way.	Provision for improvements to Rom Valley Way incorporated (spatially) and the design of this frontage being developed and following the pattern and approach established by the Seedbed site to the south.
The large poplar tree next to the Old Church roundabout should be retained.	3 of the 4 key mature trees maintained, including the main tree on the roundabout frontage. A second tree behind the Poplar tree will be removed.

<b>Environmental Sustainability</b>	
Ongoing daylight/sunlight testing should be undertaken alongside further tests on scale and massing for the site.	Ongoing testing being undertaken as part of pre-application discussions and will inform design options and design development.
Residential amenity areas should be designed to receive good levels of daylight/sunlight all year round, in line with BRE guidance.	As above – new park receives really good sunlight. Roof areas also being considered.
The mitigation of noise and air pollution from Old Church Road and Rom Valley Road will need to be addressed.	No response.
Dual aspect units should be maximised, to ensure that residents enjoy a high quality of life.	We are seeking to deliver 60% as dual aspect units, which is particularly important on the busy northern and western frontages.
The panel supports the design team's ambition to deliver Passivhaus homes. Detail should be provided to show how the aspiration to deliver homes to Passivhaus standards have been embedded into the design.	This approach is embedded in the overall design of the scheme.

## **Key Planning Considerations**

### **- Principle of Development**

The application site is considered suitable for comprehensive residential redevelopment in accordance with the principles set out in the Romford Masterplan SPD, recognising that the existing site, which is predominantly undeveloped hardstanding and a large shed-style outlet store, is underutilised and does not make efficient use of the edge-of-centre site.

Moreover, due to its specific location; surrounded on all sides by other development sites (the Seedbed Centre, the Bridge Close site and the Rom Valley Way site), it is considered an important parcel within the wider Rom Valley area of the Romford Masterplan SPD which would act to link together these four sites.

### **- Layout, Scale and Massing**

The layout makes efficient use of the site, with courtyard blocks of varying heights in three of the four corners, whilst leaving space for the school (delivered in tandem with the Seedbed Centre) and a new public park in the south-east corner. This allows for legible routes dissecting the site in a broad north/south and east/west pattern, although some concerns remain about the visible sightlines, particularly the north/south route, and whether this provides a clear and obvious route through the site connecting Rom Valley Way and Oldchurch Road.

In terms of massing, it is acknowledged that the proposal would introduce buildings of a significant scale onto the plot, with the height of the tallest building at 16-storeys, and stepping down in scale to more of a mid-rise character at 6 to 9 storeys towards

the southern end. This would represent a fairly dramatic change in scale compared to the existing plot, which is largely undeveloped, however would be broadly contextual with the surrounding sites, including Bridge Close (14 storeys), Rom Valley Way (12 storeys) and Seedbed Centre (12 storeys), and is indicative of the step-change in scale as set out in the Romford Masterplan SPD and the Romford Strategic Development Area.

- Access, Transport and Parking

The site has a PTAL of 6a, which is reflective of excellent access to public transport. This PTAL is largely down to the many bus routes within the area but also because of access to Romford Train Station which is served by both National Rail and Elizabeth Line services, providing very convenient access westward into Central London and eastward towards Essex.

The London Plan sets out that developments in areas of high PTALs should be car free, with a focus on sustainable and active modes of travel. The proposed development would be car-free, providing only wheelchair-accessible car parking on-site.

Cycle parking would be provided in accordance with the London Plan standards, and laid out in accordance with the London Cycling Design Standards. The layout would include dedicated cycle stores comprising a mix of cycle parking types at the ground floor level, with Sheffield stands provided at various locations within the public realm to provide space for visitors.

- Detailed Design

Whilst no specific details have been provided, it is anticipated that the proposal will come forward largely using brick as an external material, in keeping with the general vernacular of new developments coming forward in this part of Romford. The indicative CGIs show a pale or yellow brick across the façades.

- Unit Mix

The unit mix is set out as comprising 42% 1-bedroom units, 42% 2-bedroom units and 16% 3-bedroom units, equating to approximately 252 x 1-bedroom units, 252 x 2-bedroom units and 96 x 3-bedroom units.

The borough target, as set out in Policy 5 of the Havering Local Plan (Housing Mix) is that proposals come forward as set out in the table below:

	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4(+)-bed
Market Housing	5%	15%	64%	16%
Affordable Housing	10%	40%	40%	10%

- Affordable Housing

As a major residential development, the policy target for on-site affordable housing is 50% (by habitable room), although a scheme which provides 35% on-site affordable

can benefit from the 'fast-track' route set out in the Mayor's Affordable Housing SPG which means that the submission of a viability assessment would not be required.

At this stage, the applicant has committed to delivering 20% on-site affordable housing (by unit), all to be provided at the affordable rent tenure, with a 50/50 split between 2 and 3 bedroom units. This would equate to the provision of approximately 120 affordable units.

Given the scale of the proposed development, and as an important central parcel within the wider Rom Valley area of the Romford Masterplan SPD, the inclusion of affordable housing is critical to achieving mixed and balanced communities and the applicant will be encouraged to maximise the amount of on-site affordable housing throughout the remainder of the pre-app process and at application stage.

Having said that, due to a combination of external factors including high build costs, low land values (comparatively with other parts of London), and a somewhat weak economic climate, the delivery of 20% affordable housing on site would represent a fairly significant planning benefit of the scheme, despite being below the London Plan policy and Local Plan target. Moreover, there is significantly greater demand within the borough for affordable rent tenures (such as social housing or London Affordable Rent) than intermediate tenures (such as shared ownership or first homes), and therefore only targeting the most in-demand tenure is considered acceptable in this instance.

- Provision of a School

The provision of a new primary school, to be delivered by the council on land given in part by this site and in part by the adjacent Seedbed Centre site is a necessary and critical piece of social infrastructure, required to support the increase in population caused by this and the Seedbed developments. Nonetheless, whilst the creation of a new school is considered necessary to support the scheme, it would be open and available to all children in a wider catchment area than just these two developments and therefore represents a fairly significant planning benefit.

- Ecology, Biodiversity and Naturalisation of the River Rom

The proposal would be required to achieve an Urban Greening Factor (UGF) of 0.4 whilst also achieving a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) score of 10% (representing a 10% increase in biodiversity value when compared to the existing site). This should be easily achievable for this site, recognising that the existing site is characterised by a large extent of hardstanding and built form.

It should further be noted that the naturalisation of the River Rom as it runs through the borough is a strategic priority for the council, as set out in the Romford Masterplan SPD, and this proposal seeks to provide naturalisation as part of its overall landscaping strategy.



- Open Space and Play Provision

The proposal would deliver a new publicly accessible park as part of the development, to be provided in the south-east corner of the site, to sit alongside the new primary school.

The scheme would provide all of the required play space for 0-11 year olds, and would meet some of the requirement for 12+ year olds play space on-site, however would partially rely on existing parks to cater for this additional demand for children aged 12 and older, and would fund improvements to existing parks through s106 contributions to cover this partial shortfall.

## **Conclusions**

The proposed development is still at pre-application stage. The scheme will be further progressed through a design led approach. At this stage we would welcome Members thoughts and comments on the proposals to be incorporated in the scheme which is to be taken back to the QRP for a further review in October.