

 Havering LONDON BOROUGH	Strategic Planning Committee – Developer Presentation 23 October 2025
---	--

Pre-Application Reference: W0312.24

Location: FORMER ATIK NIGHT CLUB, 108 SOUTH STREET, ROMFORD

Ward: ST EDWARDS

Description: Demolition of the existing building, followed by the erection of a co-living development.

Case Officer: Andrew Thornley

Site Description

The application site comprises an irregularly-shaped plot situated on the corner of South Street and Havana Close, which wraps around the Hilton Romford (a hotel), which faces onto South Street. The site lies within Romford Town Centre (a Metropolitan Centre within the London Plan), immediately adjacent to Romford Train Station, which is served by the Elizabeth Line, the Liberty Line (London Overground) and Greater Anglia Services (National Rail).

The existing building on site has two main parts; a lower rise part one, part four storey (equivalent) section on the corner of South Street and Havana Close; and a taller six storey section to the west, positioned away from the high street, which is understood to have historically been used as a coal store and gas holder. The building's overall appearance is of a fairly neutral character with a lack of a coherent frontage and somewhat oppressive façades, with clear signs of deterioration visible from the outside such as smashed and boarded up windows, and overgrown weeds.

With the exception of the adjacent Hilton Hotel (nine storeys), the host building is of a similar scale to the surrounding buildings, such as the Brewery Shopping Centre multi-storey car park and the Vue Cinema, with a slight stepping down in scale northwards on South Street to predominantly three and four-storey buildings, although it should be noted that immediately to the west of the application site is a large plot occupied

by a small single-storey substation located centrally within its plot, which is largely devoid of built form.

Planning Policy Designations

The site falls within the 'Brewery' area of the Romford Masterplan SPD, which seeks the delivery of a predominantly commercial area, comprised of retail, leisure, culture and business uses that maintains the area's role as a primary destination in Romford. There is also the potential for housing both at ground floor and upper levels, and this approach is consistent with London Plan and Havering Local Plan policies in relation to Metropolitan Centres.

The application site is not specifically discussed within the Masterplan SPD, however the SPD broadly encourages cultural and leisure uses along the eastern side of the 'Brewery' area (between the River Rom and South Street), north of the application site, with social and community uses to the west, but obviously with a predominantly retail focus across the wider area.

There is no specific demand identified for co-living schemes within the Havering Local Plan, however the London Plan sets out that this use provides a form of housing which, provided it meets the criteria set out in Policy H16 (Large-scale purpose-built shared living), is encouraged to broaden the type of housing offered to Londoners.

The site has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 6b (the best) and is within Flood Zone 2, because of an underground brook (Black's Brook) which runs beneath the site (east/west).

Proposal

The proposed development seeks the complete demolition of all buildings and structures on site followed by comprehensive redevelopment to provide a single building ranging in height from six storeys (on the corner of South Street and Havana Close) to nine storeys (in the north-west corner of the site, facing towards the Brewery), with two intermediary eight storey elements.

The scheme would comprise of 294 co-living units (sometimes referred to as shared-living), which is a form of housing designed specifically for single person households who cannot, or choose not, to live in self-contained homes or HMOs. This type of accommodation is seen as providing an alternative to traditional flat shares and includes additional on-site services and facilities, such as room cleaning, working spaces, an on-site gym and a concierge service.

The ground floor comprises most of the shared living facilities, alongside a cycle store, bin store, and mechanical plant, with the main entrance located on the southern side of the building, facing a proposed area of new public realm on the Battis. The residential accommodation is located on the first to eighth floors, with shared external amenity areas provided at roof level on the first, sixth, and eighth floors.

Each unit would be provided with its own kitchenette and bathroom facilities, to provide an element of independence for future occupiers, whilst still relying on the shared facilities for social interaction and engagement, which is in line with London Plan policies on this type of accommodation.

Owing to the excellent PTAL of 6b (the best), the site is proposed as car free, with one wheelchair accessible space provided on-site, accessed from Havana Close.

Quality Review Panel

The pre-application scheme was presented to Havering's Quality review Panel on the 14/08/25, 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.

QRP Comments	Applicant Team Response
Strategic Approach	
The panel supports the proposal for a shared living scheme on this well-connected town centre site, next to Romford Station.	This feedback is welcomed, the Applicants vision is to provide an exemplar shared living development that realises the full potential of this disused site, especially given the highly sustainable location.
A high-quality development should be delivered, that meets the high standard of the reference presented: Folk's Sunday Mills in Earlsfield.	The project brief is to provide high quality shared living accommodation and to bring forward a well-designed sustainable scheme with public realm that contributes positively to the local area.
In-depth research should be undertaken, to determine how the accommodation proposed meets the needs of the local demographic in the borough, particularly young people.	The Applicants have undertaken in-depth research into demand and need for this type of accommodation in the borough. A Co-Living needs assessment will be provided as part of the planning submission.
The panel suggests integrating some longer-term rental alongside the shared living accommodation.	The proposed scheme will not have restrictions on the maximum length of stay and through well thought out management and community building events the aim of the development will be to retain its renters for the longer term. Shared living can provide longer-term rented accommodation, as there is no upper limit to how long individuals can stay in co-living accommodation. Typically, residents would stay between three months to three years, akin to traditional rented accommodation.

The proposed height works well in the surrounding townscape.	This feedback is welcomed. A Townscape Assessment will be provided within the planning submission that reinforces the massing assumptions.
Ground floor layout, activation and uses	
The panel supports the aspiration to provide open views through the ground floor of the building, between The Battis and Havana Close/Exchange Street. This would contribute positively to the street scene.	This is welcomed, since the QRP, the team have worked to ensure there is a clear sight line through the building.
The cellular layout of amenity spaces should be reconsidered. Some of the residential amenity should be moved to the first floor, to create more space and allow open vistas through the building.	CAL have taken on board the QRPs comments and created a clear sight line through the building from The Battis to Havana Close. Some of the residential amenity has now been located on the first floor opening up on the roof terrace. We now have amenity on Ground, 1st, 7th & 8th floors.
A larger space is needed for the public use on the corner of South Street and Havana Close, to ensure that it will be fully functional and successful.	The team see this as an urban coffee shop at the corner along with the co-working on Havana Close which will be opened up to local residents thereby creating a larger space for public use.
Analysis of the residents' arrival experience should be undertaken. Given the distance to the second lift core from the reception area, it may be necessary to provide higher capacity lifts in the first core, to ensure that residents do not have excessive wait times for the lift.	CAL see the main core as the core by the front entry lobby off the Battis, the secondary core is more to do with fire requirements for the building, none the less analysis of the vertical transportation design has been undertaken by the team to ensure that there are no extended waiting times especially at peak times.
The ground floor of the building should make a greater contribution to Romford town centre. A complementary, or alternative, use to the proposed café should be considered. Uses that remain open into the evening should be provided to contribute to Romford's night-time economy. For example, a bar, event space, or an after-school use.	As noted in the previous comments the corner will be an urban coffee shop along with a complementary co-working space that will be opened up to local residents.
The opportunity to provide outdoor seating for any food and beverage use should be explored.	We have reviewed this option and the location on a busy corner where servicing vehicles are likely to turn into Havana Close was not seen as a safe space for outdoor seating. Therefore, we felt that it is not feasible or practical to achieve on South Street.

Flexible soft start uses could be beneficial, with smaller spaces provided initially that can expand to the scale typically found in the high street. This would also help to ensure a large enough space for a viable night-time use.	The team are working with local charities and youth group to try and facilitate the usage of some of the amenity spaces. We hope that this will help embed the proposed scheme within the town centre and provide varied activation through the day.
Opportunities should be explored to provide greater activation of the long elevation on Havana Close and Exchange Street, given that pedestrians will use this street to access to the future Brewery Quarter development.	CAL have rearranged the Havana Close / Exchange St frontages moving the main refuse store to the West side of the building. The new layouts have a much greater active frontage along the street.
The cycle storage could be relocated to help activate the frontage and/or the bin store layout changed to reduce the area of blank façade.	CAL have also relocated the cycle store again to the central West of the building bring the more amenity scape fronting on to The Battis.
Quality of accommodation	
Any improvements that can be made to bring natural light into the long east west corridor, on the upper levels of the building, would be welcomed.	We reviewed this with the wider team and for fire safety concerns the eastern end of the corridor can not be opened.
The provision of a range of different size accommodation, including larger units, should be tested.	We have a range of unit sizes from 18 sqm, 21m sqm and 28 sqm.
The provision of external green amenity spaces on various levels is positive. Architectural expression	This feedback is welcomed; it is the Applicants intention to provide a high quality amenity spaces for residents and increase the Site's urban greening & BNG.
Architectural expression	
The architectural expression of the café should make a greater contribution to the Romford town centre. Its location, on the corner of South Street and Havana Place, provides an excellent opportunity to deliver a delightful piece of architecture that belongs to the local community.	The team see this an urban coffee shop and in and out space. The façade above the coffee shop will be designed as an ode to the strong presence of artwork and graffiti on this corner of the site. The team will design this feature wall to have artwork in engagement with the local community which we think will help root the building in Romford.
The muscular architecture of the north and west elevations responds well to the complexity of the surrounding context. However, these large repetitive elevations would benefit from further refinement, to add more delight to the scheme. Inspiration should be taken from the reference presented: Bell Philips Architects' Southwark Housing.	CAL have been working on the refinement of the elevations breaking down into three zones around the building.
Designing elevations in response to their solar orientation will provide a further	CAL have been developing the elevations in keeping with their

opportunity to incorporate more delight into the architecture. Increasing the depth of window reveals will improve solar shading, as well as adding visual interest through the play of light and shadow.	orientation and exploring ideas for passive solar shading.
The reference to the language of the adjacent railway arches should be celebrated more.	CAL note that the celebration of the arches on The Battis is still very much the architectural way forward.
Further work is needed to give architectural weight and distinction to the top of the building.	CAL note that detailed façade panel zones will be included in the DAS which will demonstrate our approach to creating a distinctive top to the building.
Collaboration with Nathan Bowen or a local artist is encouraged, to include street art on the façade, given that the existing artwork will be lost. This will help to ground the new building in Romford.	The team really appreciated the suggestion and have taken the comment on board. The wall facing South St is now being designed as an art wall.
The specification of high-quality materials and careful detailing will be essential to the success of the development. The panel supports the use of planning conditions to ensure that the quality shown in the drawings is delivered.	The scheme intends to use high-quality construction materials & finishes.
Public realm and landscape design	
The panel welcomes the provision of a new public square adjoining The Battis.	This is welcomed, the intention of the scheme is to use the amenity spaces to activate this new square and the Battis as much as possible.
While it supports the residents' entrance being located off the square, it is essential that a generous space is provided that is welcoming and accessible to all.	Since the QRP, the team have worked with LBH to ensure the residents entrance is safe, welcoming and accessible to all.
Additional trees and greenery should be provided. More detail is needed to demonstrate that a robust and high-quality design will be delivered and thrive long-term in an area of high footfall. Softer landscape should be specified in locations where it will be able to endure the wear and tear.	A landscaping strategy will be provided within the planning submission; this will include the Site's Urban Greening Factor Score and the BNG.
Thought should be given to how Lime bikes discarded in the public realm will be managed.	Lime, or other shared public hire bikes, do not currently operate in the borough. However, the public realm includes a marked area public shared hire bikes to encourage them to be parked in an appropriate location, should they operate in the borough and local area in future.

Servicing	
A strategy is needed for the management of deliveries, particularly take-away food deliveries and residents moving into and out of their accommodation.	Servicing and deliveries, with the exception of waste collection, will be undertaken from the existing loading bay on South Street, a short distance east of the main entrance to the building. Deliveries will be carried/trolleyed along the Battis from the loading bay to the main entrance and a concierge reception is provided to assist with the arrival of goods, along with a dedicated post and parcel room. An analysis of the expected servicing and delivery trips to the proposed development has been undertaken, including assessment of vehicle types and arrival times. This has been presented to LBH during pre-app discussions and will be included within the Transport Assessment supporting the planning application. A survey has been undertaken of existing servicing activity in the South Street loading bay and this demonstrates that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the expected servicing demand associated with the proposed development. A Delivery and Servicing Management Plan is being prepared to support the planning application.
Refuse storage should be provided for the café/corner unit.	A separate commercial bin store is provided and is shown on the ground floor layout plans.
Environmental sustainability	
The design of each elevation should be orientation-specific, to help address overheating.	The design will meet the requirements of Part O Overheating of building regulations. The strategy will ensure the design can meet requirements by natural ventilation means first and foremost, but also that thermal comfort can be achieved indoors with the windows partially or fully closed, should the occupants so choose, for any facades where the noise assessment may show a risk of noise ingress (in line with the Part O methodology).

External shading should be used to reduce solar gain, particularly on the west and south elevations.	Passive means of solar shading will be incorporated to avoid solar gains.
A noise impact assessment is needed, to mitigate any adverse impact of the air source heat pumps on the residents' and neighbouring hotel guests' quality of life.	A noise impact assessment has been undertaken, and this will be submitted in support of the planning application.
Assessment of the noise impact from neighbouring sites, including the substation, the railway line, the Brewery car park building and hotel plant is also needed.	A noise impact assessment has been undertaken, and this will be submitted in support of the planning application.
A ventilation strategy should be provided.	The proposed ventilation strategy comprises: - MVHR in dwellings. - Natural vent to plant room with external walls. - Mechanical extract to internal plant rooms - MVHR or NVHRs to amenity spaces Relevant information relating to the ventilation strategy will be provided in the Energy Strategy report as part of the planning submission.

Key Planning Considerations

- Principle of Development

The site falls within the 'Brewery' area of the Romford Masterplan SPD, and is an underutilised brownfield site in a very sustainable town centre location, and is therefore considered suitable for redevelopment.

There are no known co-living schemes currently operating within the borough of Havering, and this form of accommodation is considered to broaden the type of housing offered for residents, providing an alternative to renting alone in a one-bedroom flat, or in a shared flat or house (HMO). There is therefore general support for this type of accommodation, subject to further evidence being provided to demonstrate that there is an unmet need within the borough.

In this respect, it is recognised that this type of development can provide a meaningful positive contribution to the borough's supply of new homes by reducing pressure on the private rented market housing sector and the need for existing homes to be converted into HMOs (noting that conversion into HMOs can reduce the availability of family-sized houses being used for their original purpose).

- Layout, Scale and Massing

The overall scale and massing of the scheme would be of a similar height (nine storeys) to the Hilton Hotel, to the south, stepping down in scale to six-storeys facing South Street. The massing illustrations appear slightly bulky, however, high-quality detailed design of the facades would be needed to break up the perception of massing, especially given the fairly restricted plot size.

- Detailed Design

The proposal would be finished in predominantly red brick, with lighter brickwork used to highlight vertical elements, with soldier courses further expressing storey heights. At ground level, arched openings are proposed, to complement the railway arches opposite, alongside extensive glass façades facing towards Havana Close and South Street.

- Quality of Accommodation

The internal space standards for residential developments set out in the nationally described space standards and the London Plan do not apply to this form of accommodation. Instead, the quality of accommodation is assessed on a case-by-case basis, using a qualitative assessment to determine whether each unit is provided with adequate functional living space and has a sensible layout, whilst sufficient communal facilities are provided. Each unit would be provided with its own kitchenette and bathroom facilities, to provide an element of independence for future occupiers, however the proposal also includes a communal kitchen, communal space and dining areas.

- Affordable Housing

In accordance with Policy H16 of the London Plan (Large-scale purpose-built shared living), on-site affordable housing is not sought, and instead developments are expected to provide a contribution that is equivalent to 35% of the units, and will be subject to the Viability Tested Route for assessing affordable housing.

- Public Realm

The inclusion of a new small public square facing towards the station is a very welcome addition, and is a clear betterment compared to existing conditions, which would make the pedestrian route to the side of the railway arches much more welcoming. The Masterplan SPD seeks to improve the pedestrian environment along these routes as important link routes between South Street and the Brewery shopping areas.

- Transport, Parking and Servicing

The proposal would be car-free, which is supported for this town centre setting in very close proximity to Romford Train Station, with excellent access to public transport. Moreover, the provision of on-site parking would severely restrict the optimisation of the site due to its fairly limited size, and basement parking is not possible due to the presence of an underground culverted river (Black's Brook). It is further recognised that the type of accommodation offered (for single-occupancy shared living) is unlikely to attract people who would rely on a car for their day-to-day lives.

Servicing arrangements will need to be carefully managed in this part of the town centre, which is relatively busy with the frequent movement of buses and other vehicles. It is proposed that the existing loading bay on South Street is utilised for delivery vehicles, whilst refuse collection would take place once a week from Exchange Street.

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 prior to submission of a formal planning application.