



Havering

LONDON BOROUGH

Strategic Planning Committee – Developer Presentation

23 October 2025

Pre-Application Reference:

W0210.24

Location:

**LIBERTY SHOPPING CENTRE,
ROMFORD**

Ward:

ST EDWARDS

Description:

**Residential-led, mixed use
redevelopment of Liberty Shopping
Centre.**

Case Officer:

Andrew Thornley

Site Description

The Liberty Shopping Centre site comprises a large site (approximately 3.2 hectares) in Romford Town Centre, bounded by Mercury Gardens to the east and Western Road to the south. It is centrally positioned with excellent public transport accessibility (PTAL 6a), and provides for a range of town centre functions which maintains Romford as a Metropolitan Centre in the context of the London Plan. The existing site includes commercial (predominantly retail) buildings, multi-storey car parks, service yards, and fragmented rooftop parking and servicing areas. Buildings within the site have a varied appearance, with some making a positive contribution to the streetscene and character of the area (such as Lambourne House with unique detailing and modernist character), whilst other buildings have a neutral impact (such as Mercury house in the north-east of the site, which is being retained).

The surrounding context includes a mixture of commercial, residential, and leisure uses with varying building heights. To the north and west are generally lower rise buildings with ground floor commercial or retail uses and either office space or residential uses above, at one to three storeys in height, with the occasional four or five storey building visible on the northern side of Market Place, which is fairly typical of a traditional town centre. To the south of the site the context is probably better described as mid-rise, with four, five and six storey buildings being the dominant scale,

and with Halyard Court directly south of Plot 1 topping out at nine storeys. To the east of the site, on Mercury Gardens, the scale is very mixed with generally low-rise buildings with large footprints (such as Mercury Shopping Centre and the former Wilko building) but also interspersed with tall buildings of 14 or 15 storeys such as Mercury House and the large residential development above and around Asda. As within the site, the quality of buildings in the surrounding context is also mixed, with the high street to the west providing a vibrant, active and busy town centre context whilst Mercury Gardens is very much car dominated and provides an unpleasant and unfriendly pedestrian streetscene experience.

Planning Policy Designations

The site falls within the Romford Strategic Development Area (SDA) as set out by Policy 1 of the Havering Local Plan, which generally encourages new residential, commercial and social infrastructure development, whilst being mindful of general townscape and heritage considerations, all whilst improving town centre connectivity. Moreover, the Romford Town Centre Masterplan (March 2025) seeks redevelopment proposals to focus on providing a commercial-focused area that provides active ground floor commercial, retail, and employment uses with residential accommodation on upper floors. Any development should be sensitive to and supportive of the special character and setting of the conservation area, positively engaging with a rejuvenated Market Place with listed buildings, breaking up the existing large scale blocks to deliver a finer urban grain.

Plots 2 and 3, on Market Place, fall within the Market Place Conservation Area and within the setting of the St Edward the Confessor Church (a Grade II* Listed Building of very high historical value) to the northwest of the site.

Proposal

The proposal seeks to demolish parts of the shopping centre alongside some of the surrounding buildings, followed by comprehensive redevelopment to provide a residential-led, mixed-use development including approximately 700 new homes. The scheme is coming forward seeking a full planning permission for Plot 1 only, with the remainder of the scheme secured as an outline consent, to be delivered in phases over several years.

Plot 1 has evolved significantly throughout the pre-app process, and in direct response to QRP comments, the scale and massing has changed from three point blocks ranging in height from 16-20 storeys, to a single, taller, 25 storey building located centrally within the plot, flanked by two 10-11 storey wings.

A new area of public realm would be created by removing the roof over the southern and south-western parts of the shopping centre, with ground floor commercial/retail uses facing onto these areas, to retain the character and appearance of a town centre. A larger unit is proposed for the corner facing Western Road, which has been earmarked for a flagship store.

Plots 2 and 3 face toward the Market Place, at the northern end of the site. These plots are proposed to come forward with lower rise (5-6 storeys) fronting onto Market Place,

and taller buildings behind, between 10-14 storeys. The applicant is liaising with the owner of the former Debenhams store to coordinate a way to bring forward these land parcels together in a holistic manner, and it is envisioned that there would be a stepping up in scale from west to east of the taller elements positioned away from Market Place. Ground floor uses within Plots 2 and 3 would be focused on creating a food and beverage area, especially facing Swan Walk, which could contribute to the evening and night-time economy, supporting the more retail focus of the shopping centre as daytime uses.

At this stage, the applicant plans on incorporating Mercury House into their proposal, to be renovated and converted from an office into residential use as part of the wider scheme. This is subject to the applicants acquiring Mercury House, which is currently owned by the council.

As part of the pre-application process, the rooftop of the redundant car park above the shopping centre has been altered from a green/biodiverse roof into 'Makers Place'. It is envisioned that this area would be used to support creative and start-up companies operating in the borough, and provide a level of vibrancy to an otherwise empty space, supporting the wider town centre functions.

Quality Review Panel

The pre-application scheme was presented to Havering's Quality review Panel first on the 01/04/25, and again on the 05/08/25, and the feedback received from the most recent QRP is summarised in the table below.

It should be noted that the scheme presented to members at this meeting is markedly different from the scheme presented to QRP on the 5th August, as the scheme has significantly evolved to directly respond to feedback from QRP, and the applicant team responses below reflect their position as of August 2025, so some comments may no longer be relevant.

QRP Comments	Applicant Team Response
Strategic Approach	
The proposal should look beyond the site's red line boundary, to ensure that the maximum long-term benefits will be provided for Romford town centre. A clear vision for the future character of the town centre should be included in the design code, noting that the scheme's edges are all very different and each will require a specific response to drive lasting and positive improvement.	The applicant team are in agreement with panel members that looking beyond the red line is key in ensuring the vitality of the site + Romford, and are, for example, currently engaging with the Debenhams owner's team, and are in communication with Havering council on meeting with Maccreanor Lavington to discuss their vision for the Market Place, and how our scheme would tie together. There are also commercial discussions taking place around a potential civic centre. There are also discussions taking place with Havering Council around a new potential civic centre on the

	Marketplace frontage, to be delivered by HUB. In the QRP meeting the applicant team shared some initial extracts of the design code that spoke to 'edges' identified which were the Southern Gateway, Market Frontage and Eastern Fringe. We are of the same view that each area is very different and will need to establish its own language and principles. These identified 'edges' we intend to form overarching sections within the design code which will create a clear narrative to each distinct character areal.
A growth strategy should be developed with Havering Council outlining future improvements to the town centre. A series of diagrams should be provided to show how the town centre could change over time on the neighbouring sites, so that the Council and other public sector partners can then take forward more specific policies and interventions to amplify and add value to the investment in the Liberty Shopping Centre.	HUB & Redical are fully committed to supporting Havering Council with their ambitions as set out in the Romford masterplan SPD, and have been through extensive pre-app engagement with the council to ensure their proposals continue to align with the Council's overarching ambitions for the site. As mentioned in point #1, HUB are collaborating fully with a number of other key stakeholders who have land ownership directly adjacent to the Liberty Shopping Centre. As for a wider growth strategy, this would of course rely on land ownership out of HUB/Redical control, but HUB/Redical would be very happy to support Havering Council in the evolution of this.
For example, the ring road around the town centre is currently very busy, but the reliance on cars is likely to diminish in the future. This proposal provides an opportunity to include improvements to the road as part of the strategic vision.	The applicant team are supportive of principles identified in the SPD masterplan such as improved road crossings to enhance pedestrian movement. As part of the design code we are intending to speak to how the future development of plot 02 and Mercury House could look to incorporate appropriate road improvement works with agreement from council members. These works would fall outside of HUB/Redical

	control, but could be captured through S106 agreements that this development facilitates.
The panel is disappointed that the Liberty Shopping Centre multi-storey car park site has been removed from the red line boundary. Engagement should be undertaken with Havering Council and the owners of The Brewery car park, to establish if the two car parks could be consolidated, to enable the delivery of additional homes.	Retaining the current multi storey is fundamental to the viability of the shopping centre. Redical have daily analysis from the car park and it's never much more than 50% occupied. Moving the car park further from the centre would be detrimental to the shopping centre, as well as surrounding business who currently use this parking for their employees. Separately, Redical are exploring alternative uses for public amenity on the rooftop of the multi storey car park which is likely to come forward as a separate application. This is to be considered on balance with the proposed uplift and redevelopment of the Liberty site as a whole. As a result of this development though, the ancillary car parking in places e.g. phase 1 and 2 are indeed being consolidated on site to the current MSCP.
The vision for the Liberty Shopping Centre car park site should be included in the drawings, to give officers confidence that a cohesive development will be delivered in the eastern corner of the urban block.	In meeting 02, the applicant team presented a review of the adopted masterplan based on their knowledge of the existing site and the requirement for the core of the shopping centre, and its servicing, to remain as far as the hybrid application is concerned. This study showed how the MSCP may come forward in the long term. In future this site may come forward but for now it plays a very important role and most parking on site will be consolidated here through removal of other spaces. Redical are in the process of agreeing terms for a leisure use on the top floor (given it's rarely fully occupied) which contextually compliments the neighbouring Sapphire Ice + Leisure Centre. This rooftop proposal will be included within the illustrative masterplan.

Engagement with the Debenhams Store landowner and Havering Council is needed to coordinate plans for the development of the store site. Its location, fronting onto Market Place and otherwise surrounded by the proposal's red line boundary, will mean that any development on this site will have an impact on the proposal. The Debenhams Store site proposal should therefore be included in the application.	The applicant team advised the QRP panel in the meeting that engagement with the Debenhams store landowner was already underway and would be continued to ensure that plots 02 + 03 coordinate and synergise with the proposals for the Debenhams site, and likewise, what is proposed by the other party does not prejudice the applicant teams outline application. In the masterplan portion of the meeting the applicant team shared the illustrative masterplan which included the latest proposals for Debenhams obtained from their team. It remains our intention to include the proposal for the Debenhams store within the applicant team's illustrative masterplan to show how all market fronting plots would come together to form a cohesive vision for Market Place.
The panel supports the provision of a new, high-quality façade over the retention of the existing store façade, albeit acknowledging that this is outside the direct control of the applicant.	As noted, this is outside of the applicant team's control.
Alongside the vision for the masterplan, detail should be provided to show how the proposal will be stitched into the existing urban fabric. The detailed treatment of the different edge conditions, including the Liberty Shopping Centre, will need to be understood thoroughly to underpin a coherent and robust design code.	This will be provided within the design code.
A model should be provided to show how all the aspects of the masterplan will fit together and how the proposal interfaces with each boundary condition.	Appropriate material will be provided that speaks to the interfaces between new and existing as part of planning submission.
Social Infrastructure	
Details should be provided on the proposed relocation of the Community Health Centre, which is currently located in Lambourne House. The first floor of the block to the east of Liberty Square, overlooking Western Road, could be a suitable location. A street entrance and lift will need to be provided.	In future this site may come forward but for now it plays a very important role and most parking on site will be consolidated here through removal of other spaces. Redical are in the process of agreeing terms for a leisure use on the top floor (given it's rarely fully occupied) which contextually

	compliments the neighbouring Sapphire Ice + Leisure Centre. This rooftop proposal will be included within the illustrative masterplan.
Early engagement with the National Health Service is needed to ensure that any specific requirements are delivered.	As above. Redical will engage with the NHS to understand the specific requirements of the health centre to potentially be provided in Plots 02 and 03.
Additional social infrastructure, such as an optician, should also be provided to support the needs of the local community.	The applicant team intend to apply for a variety of Use Classes that could enable additional social infrastructure.
Character and Identity	
Analysis of the town centre, including how it functions and the demographic of visitors, should be undertaken with the aim of improving the experience of visitors and residents. The findings of these studies should inform the plan, layout and ground floor uses.	Redical are retail experts and anticipate crafting a tenant mix that responds to the needs of the local population and provide commercial spaces that remain viable in both the short and long term. The project team are also working with socio-economic experts Trium who have completed detailed demographic research and mapping of the area, supplemented with extensive local stakeholder engagement by HUB, to ensure all proposed ground floor uses of the scheme compliment the wider offering in Romford, and cater for the needs of both visitors, local people and new residents.
One singular approach to architecture and character does not work here, the design code should recognise that the different sides of the shopping centre will need very different architectural responses to enhance or transform the immediate context.	See QRP response item 1. Furthermore, the applicant team have undertaken a review of existing architecture and character which has been shared in strategic meetings with the council.
For example, groups of school children often congregate on Western Road after they disembark from buses at the end of their school day and when visiting the Sapphire Ice and Leisure Centre. This should inform the new character of Western Road, Liberty Square and the new entrance to the shopping centre.	The applicant team are conscious of the busy nature of Western Road and the proposals seek to create a new generous public realm that will create more space for children to spill out.
A survey of the bus activity on Western Road is needed. Engagement should be	A traffic survey has been undertaken at the Western Road/Chandlers Way

undertaken with Transport for London and Havering Council to determine how the pedestrian experience of Western Road and Liberty Square could be improved. Traffic calming measures could be considered to improve pedestrian safety, as well as reducing the number of buses and idling vehicles to improve air quality.	junction (to be submitted as part of the application) which captures the section of Western Road where the most buses 'pass' Phase 1, which is broadly opposite proposed Block A. In the worst-case hour, which was 11am 12pm on a Wednesday, there were 167 buses (east & westbound) included in a total of 177 vehicles using Western Road. This is less than three vehicles per minute, considered a relatively low total for a road of this type/use. Engagement has been undertaken with both Havering and TfL officers as part of the pre-application process. As per the response to feedback item no.15 above, the proposed civic square provides a significantly enhanced pedestrian space and environment. With reference to idling buses, the London Mayors website states: The current target date for a zero-emission bus fleet is 2034. With additional funding from the government this could be moved forward to 2030, as detailed in Transport for London's (TfL's) recent Business Plan." This will have a positive impact on air quality along Western Road given over 90% of vehicles using it are buses.
Rooftop amenity and play space	
A fresh approach is needed to reimagine how the rooftop space could provide high-quality amenity and play space alongside the service road.	During previous pre-application meetings (Landscape and Service Road Pre-app 19.6.2025) the applicant team have communicated the intention for the service road and roofscape. The retention of the service road is vital to the continuous operation of the shopping centre including how it currently functions. The transport consultant has undertaken surveys of how the road is currently used, which has identified an extensive use of this road in terms of vehicle trip numbers, which will increase significantly again when the scheme is delivered as the residential buildings also rely on this

	route for their servicing strategy. There are however areas for improvements to be made, and these have been identified and provided the design team with where there is scope to make changes, for example introduce landscaping, consolidated refuse management etc. The applicant team, and Redical the owner of the Liberty Shopping Centre have major concerns about introducing a public element to the rooftop, which has been voiced at multiple meetings. This highlights a major health and safety concern, as well as concerns around anti-social behaviour by introducing spaces without natural surveillance which has continually been raised as a fundamental concern by local people across all consultation events held by HUB to date. Instead, the applicant team have explored options for managed access to the rooftop, which would negate the concerns around security and safety from making the space publicly accessible with no management in place. The applicant team are proposing a creative hub on the central car park rooftop, featuring various 'makers spaces' that can be leased by creatives. This enables access on to the rooftop to be managed and limited only to those who have access to the makers yard. The makers yard is proposed to come forward as part of the outline application due to further work involved to do a structural survey of the car park and assessment of the impacts to viability of Plot 01. With regards to the service road, it is the view of the applicant team that the first floor should remain a functional servicing route, ensuring the continual viability of
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	the shopping centre throughout the construction period, with all feasible improvements made which don't involve introducing pedestrians to a heavily used vehicle route e.g. landscaping, ecology enhancements. The residential development's servicing strategy always requires retention of this route, the positive being this doesn't require servicing trips to be made at ground floor, maximising the area that can be given back to pedestrianised public realm. The entirety of the ground floor will be pedestrianised (one huge positive of the first-floor service road), creating safe, enhanced spaces for people of all ages to use.
A management strategy should be provided to ensure that pedestrians are prioritised over vehicles. For example, access to larger vehicles could be restricted at certain times of the day. Maximising greening across the whole of the rooftop will also help to make it feel like it belongs to the residents.	See QRP item 17.
Details should be provided on the provision of blue roofs and the strategy for grey water management. These would make a valuable contribution to irrigating the living roofs.	This will be included with supportive planning documents and we will provide a suds strategy as we develop the scheme design and receive topo / below ground services info. Wider greywater strategies will be developed by the project engineers and any potential for blue roofs will be fully implemented.
A variety of habitats, including water, should be provided to improve the ecological value of the roof space, improve residents' quality of life and provide a pleasant outlook for residents. Inspiration should be taken from relevant high-quality precedents, including the Beech Garden at The Barbican and the roof gardens at the University of Greenwich.	BD are in continued discussions with the project ecologists as to how we can best maximise biodiversity potential on rooftop green spaces. Provision of habitat features (bat boxes, bird bricks, habitat piles) actively encourage a range of wildlife For the public, there are significant benefits to having nearby green roofs which include, but are not limited to, a reduction in Urban Heat Island effect, improved stormwater runoff

	management, air quality improvements + a reduction in noise pollution.
The rooftop affords an opportunity to provide a creative access route and onsite play space for children aged 12 years and over. This would be preferable to children having to cross the busy ring road, accompanied by an adult, to access suitable play space.	We are currently providing 773 sqm of play to roof terraces which is an overprovision of 138 sqm. 95 sqm of play is required for the 12+ group therefore provision on plot 01 is achievable onsite without having to rely on the central roof, as suggested. It is also worth recognising that there is a shopping centre with targeted retail that is, and will continue to be a big draw for this age range, which is understood from the quantum of 12+'s that currently use the shopping centre, which was also highlighted by panel member.
Public realm and landscape design	
The proposal for a multifunctional landscape in Liberty Square is positive. However, the panel has concerns that the public realm will have to work very hard, given the heavy footfall expected. Wherever possible trees with adequate canopy height should be prioritised. Softer landscape should be specified in locations where it will be able to endure the wear and tear.	The public realm to the Liberty Square is generous and gives opportunities for multiple uses - shopping, relaxing and dwelling, outdoor dining and social seating. Planting beds are strategically placed to delineate spaces. We are working to design in wide, comfortable and legible routes through site, to ensure the public realm can accommodate the increased footfall. Tree planting within the public realm will have a min 3m clear stem to ensure clear sightlines.
The panel has concerns that the level change required for rain gardens to function effectively may conflict with play space safety requirements. Rain gardens should be specified only if they contribute to water management. Otherwise, an alternative type of green infrastructure should be provided.	The rain gardens form an important part of the surface water strategy picking up surface water run off from the newly created public realm so do form a valuable landscape feature. BD have worked on a number of award winning projects where incidental play combined with suds create resilient and biodiverse public realm. SuDs if designed correctly does not require irrigation. This is a hard-working space in central Romford so any planting will need management and maintenance - suds is no different and no more management than any other landscape planted area.

Careful thought should be given to the depth of soil needed on the rooftop, to avoid reliance on irrigation.	Each planting typology (tree planting, herbaceous, and extensive green roofs) will be provided with adequate and sufficient depth of planting medium. BD are working with the project engineers to locate heavier planting in appropriate locations on the roof terraces, so as to ensure no issues with loadings.
A detailed planting plan should be provided along with a tree and planting specification, including information on their long-term climate resilience. The parameter plans should be updated to accurately reflect the proposal.	Detailed planting plans would form part of the planning condition discharge level of information - within the planning soft landscape layouts plans outline schedules will form the submission including tree planting and soil depths. We are developing planting palettes for each specific microclimate across the site that will be included within the design + access statement, taking into consideration both current and future needs, future-proofing the proposal for a changing climate.
A maintenance plan should be provided, to ensure that the greenery will continue to thrive long-term.	A Landscape and Ecology Maintenance Plan would typically form part of the planning condition discharge level of information however we will include landscape management + maintenance information within the landscape chapter of the design + access statement.
An Urban Greening Factor score should be provided for both the masterplan and for Plot 1. Greening located inside the shopping centre should be excluded from the Urban Greening Factor score.	UGF has been calculated for Phase 1 at 0.23 and will continue to be calculated for the wider masterplan as proposals for the remaining plots are developed, and will not include any internal improvements. A target sitewide UGF score will be provided in the submitted planning documents. It should be noted that if the service road was excluded from the detailed application boundary, then a score of 0.3 would be achievable for Phase 01.
Environmental sustainability	
Microclimate and daylight/sunlight analysis should be provided, to demonstrate that the development will not have an adverse impact on the surrounding townscape and private amenity space.	Naturally this is being tested as part of the design process and findings will be shown as part of the planning submission.

A circular economy strategy should be developed, including information supporting the retention or demolition of buildings, and explaining how materials will be reused.	This will be provided as a supporting document to the planning application. HUB have also committed to providing the GLA and local authority a pre demolition audit and circular economy calculations ahead of formal planning submission.
While the panel does not feel that Mercury House warrants retention, details of the retrofit assessment should be provided to determine whether the former office block could be converted into high-quality residential accommodation.	HUB's ongoing commitment is to retain and re-purpose any buildings that are structurally viable. In addition, Mercury House grounds itself directly in Redical freehold ownership, so demolition is incredibly complex and would be disruptive to the day to day function of the shopping centre which is crucial. Final structural testing has just been completed, which will inform the decision making, however at this stage HUB remain committed to the retrofit of Mercury House to high quality residential accommodation, to compliment and stitch into the wider phase 2 area of the masterplan.
Market Place	
The six-storey massing proposed for the northwest edge of the site, fronting onto Market Place, sits comfortably with the surrounding context. However, further thought is needed to ensure the taller blocks to the rear have a positive relationship with the Liberty Shopping Centre.	The applicant team are continuously exploring and testing the parameters for plots 02 + 03 in addition to engaging with the Debenhams team. Any proposal that comes forward will have reviewed height and massing from streetscape and townscape context.
High-quality architecture should be referenced to inform the design. Further drawings should be provided to show how the references to verticality in the existing architecture are integrated into the Market Place façades.	The applicant team make reference the history of the market and high quality architecture as part of the evolving design to the market place. Further detail of facades and architectural quality will be provided within the Design Code and Design and Access Statements.
Plot 1	
A bolder ambition is needed for Plot 1. The dispiriting nature of Western Road provides an excellent opportunity to establish a new character for the street.	The team agree that plot 01 represents an exciting opportunity to establish a new character for the street, which is currently quite a hostile zone with ad hoc approaches to building design. The concept of linear blocks providing a strong frontage to Western Road, with any buildings of height pushed back

	towards the Liberty, is a key design principle which has been supported by council officers and local stakeholders from a very early stage. The building line itself is going to be pushed back considerably from its current positioning, sitting hard against the pavement edge, creating a street that can now be fully accessed by pedestrians at ground floor with a range of ground floor uses adding vibrancy to this space. The team fully believe in the approach being taken along Western Road, and continue to work in close collaboration with local stakeholders and council officers on the emerging architectural intent for the linear blocks in particular. HUB are fully committed to delivering a frontage along Western Road that local people are proud of, that ties into wider Romford.
The quantum of development proposed in three point blocks feels excessive and too dense for the site to comfortably accommodate. The panel encourages testing of fewer buildings, possibly even one elegant tower, as a marker for Romford town centre, which could work alongside two lower buildings. Inspiration should be taken from the references presented, including Karakusevic Carson Architect's Hoxton Press in Hackney and Howells' Octagon in Birmingham.	The applicant team have tested with council officers over the past 7 months a host of different design responses including the option suggested of a taller marker building, mansion blocks, taller western Road blocks, and varying height considerations have been continually tested throughout the process through townscape views, alongside reducing building footprints to create more elegant buildings. The applicant team has taken on board the feedback received from the QRP and Havering and presented further design options to Havering since the QRP. The scheme has evolved to slim down the building footprint of building A from square to rectangular, Building C has moved further away from the neighbouring MSCP creating a 9m offset, Building A + C have reduced in height moving away from point block expressions and Building B has increased in height to strengthen this building as a 'marker' and create clear hierarchy. This was a clear endorsement made by the QRP in terms of the height

	ambitions which should be sought for Block B.
There could be scope to increase the height of some of the massing fronting onto Western Road. The proposed five storey height is appropriate in the block at the South Street end of the road. However, the panel feels that there is potential for additional height to the east of Liberty Square. Given the deep plan of the block, a mansion block typology should be tested which may provide better high-quality residential density relative to the size of the site.	An increased height to the Western Road streetscape had been tested by the team and reviewed in terms of streetscape, micro-climate and daylight sunlight of amenity spaces. The massing height has increased on Western Road in response to the QRP feedback to create improved streetscape that ties into existing datums to the South.
The materiality and tone of the buildings should be simplified and elements of the architecture highlighted where necessary. This will help to create a coherent family of buildings, which sit comfortably together on Plot 1.	The design team agree with this comment and have already started to explore simplifying the expression of the buildings. The materiality and tone of the buildings will be continually explored as part of the design process to ensure that there is appropriate cohesion with the applicant team exploring a simplification of articulation and material palette as suggested by the panel.
Drawings should be provided to show the new character of the road, including views from Romford Station and from the corner of South Street.	These have been explored and shown in pre-application meetings and will be updated and provided within the Design and Access Statement.
Townscape views should be provided to show the proposal in context, including the emerging and future development in and around Romford town centre. This should include proposals for the Liberty Shopping Centre multi-storey car park site and the Debenhams Store site.	Cumulative wireframe townscape views of emerging approved developed will be provided. Outline details of any potential MSCP enhancements will be provided and the Debenhams' applicant teams proposals will be shown in any illustrative information submitted.

Key Planning Considerations

- Principle of Development

There are four main elements to the Liberty Masterplan; Southern Gateway (Plot 1); Market Frontage (plots 2 and 3); Eastern Fringe (Plot 4) and the Shopping Centre. Some elements of the proposal align with the Romford Masterplan SPD, however some elements (i.e. comprehensive redevelopment of the shopping centre itself) have not been progressed because of the financial constraints associated with the shopping centre ceasing trading, a rationale that is accepted.

There is clear policy support within the London Plan, Havering Local Plan, and the Romford Masterplan SPD for redevelopment of the shopping centre, and it is

recognised that to make most efficient use of this well-connected brownfield site, a significant quantum of residential development is needed.

Rationalisation of the shopping centre is further considered to be broadly necessary to support the wider functions of the town centre, so that Romford (as a Metropolitan Centre within the London Plan) can continue to function at a high level, supporting a very wide catchment area.

- Layout, Scale and Massing

The proposal would introduce buildings of a significant scale and height across Plots 1, 2 and 3, notably a 25-storey building within the centre of Plot 1, which is designed to act as a landmark feature within the area. This design response has been put forward to directly respond to QRP comments in August, who raised significant concerns with the previous approach of three point blocks of 16-20 storeys in such close proximity to one another.

Within Plots 2 and 3, the general approach taken has been to avoid an overbearing impact on the Romford Conservation Area, centred on Market Place, whilst still optimising the site's potential for accommodating residential development. As such, both of these later phases propose smaller 5-6 storey blocks fronting directly onto the Market Place (with the top floor set back) to closely match the height of the existing Debenhams store, with the taller buildings positioned behind these, closer to the shopping centre. This approach seems sensible, and a views analysis has been undertaken to understand the impact of taller buildings on the nearby listed church, the Conservation Area and on wider views, to understand their relationship. The tops of these taller buildings would be visible from some views within Market Place, however this is unavoidable if the site's are to be optimised.

- Detailed Design

Only Plot 1 would come forward as a detailed application, the first phase of development. This plot would be largely finished in brick, with projecting balconies, however it is likely that the taller 25-storey building will be finished in an alternative material, to better provide a level of distinctiveness. Discussions are currently ongoing, with some discussions around an aluminium finish, however final materials are yet to be selected.

- Public Realm

The proposal seeks to create or enhance several areas of public realm, notably to the south of the Shopping Centre facing Western Road, to the west at Stewards Walk and to the north on Swan Walk, together with a managed semi-public space on the rooftop of the redundant car park (as Makers Place). The areas of public realm to the south and west would provide a predominantly retail focus, whilst the areas to the north around Market Place would look to create a new restaurant/dining focused area, to complement the existing town centre uses in Romford.

Any enhancements to public realm within Romford would be welcomed, recognising that the existing pedestrianised High Street provides a wide, open boulevard for

shoppers to roam freely, whereas the external areas around the shopping centre are relatively narrow and unappealing. The open character of the high street should be built upon to further promote Romford as a town centre destination for the wider area, and enhanced areas of public realm would support this aim.

- Transport, Parking and Servicing

Owing to the excellent PTAL of 6b, the proposal would come forward as car-free, with wheelchair accessible parking provided on the existing service road above the shopping centre.

This service road is adopted highway, and can therefore serve multiple functions in addition to continuing to serve the existing shops within the Liberty, and would provide the delivery and servicing areas for the future residents of Plot 1. Moreover, this area is proposed to become more pedestrian and cycle friendly, to better create a residential setting for any new homes, with the introduction of clearer demarcation lines and urban greening.

- Affordable Housing

Discussions around affordable housing provision are ongoing, however at this stage, the applicant's latest position is that the proposal is unviable and on a purely fiscal basis, no affordable housing can be provided. However, the applicant recognises that a scheme of this size and nature would be unacceptable without the provision of any affordable housing, and has therefore offered to provide in the later phases of the development 5% of Plot 2 and 10% of Plot 3 as Discount Market Rent (DMR) housing (approximately 5% of the overall scheme).

It should be noted that DMR is considered to be an intermediate tenure (i.e. equivalent to Shared Ownership or First Homes), rather than an affordable rent tenure, noting that the discount offered would not qualify under the affordable rented tenure. DMR is being proposed as the scheme would come forward under the 'Build to Rent' model, rather than market housing for sale. Build to Rent models have the potential for greater yields over time, but typically present themselves as receiving less return on investment in the short term.

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.