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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Main Road, Romford RM1 3BD
11 December 2025 (7.00 - 9.00 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group Ray Best and Timothy Ryan

Havering Residents' Group Reg Whitney (Chairman) and Robby Misir (Vice-Chair)

Labour Group +Matthew Stanton

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

5 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillor John Crowder and Councillor Jane Keane. +Councillor Matt Stanton substituted for Councillor Keane.

6 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no interest disclosure at the meeting.

7 MINUTES

Members agreed for the Chairman to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 13 November 2025 and 23 October 2025.

8 W0225.22 - 222-226 SOUTH STREET, ROMFORD, RM1 2AD

At the request of the Committee, the Developer Team presented in response to the concerns raised at an earlier developer presentation in respect of the following matters:

Transport and Movement

- Number of attendees and comparison with existing
- Times of day and days of the week
- Where do Mosque users live (confirm that this is a local facility)

- Confirm arrival/leaving patterns of movement and how these can be accommodated within the building / overall site / surrounding highway
- Existing pedestrian crossing / junction (South Street, Oldchurch Road and Thurloe Gardens) capacity / waiting times
- Drop off / pick up numbers and capacity of space in Oldchurch Rise car park
- Impact on ring road (potential for queuing vehicles)

Building Design

- Mosaic tiles (colour)
- Prominence of the Portico
- Scale of the Riverside entrance
- Parity of space for men/women

As set out in the Committee rules, the Developer Team was given 20 minutes to present the scheme.

The Developer Team provided an overview of the proposed mosque development at South Street, including findings from travel surveys and pedestrian modelling. It was noted that most worshippers currently use nearby car parks, with only 7% parking on-street (primarily Blue Badge holders). The new mosque will include eight on-site Blue Badge spaces and contribute towards a signalised pedestrian crossing on Old Church Road to improve safety. Pedestrian modelling indicated acceptable comfort levels during peak Friday prayers, and management plans will address visitor and vehicle movements.

It was stated that the proposal is supported by local and London Plan policies and offers strong public transport accessibility.

A Member of the Council Councillor David Taylor also addressed the Committee on the development presentation. Councillor David Taylor commended the design quality, sustainability, and extensive community engagement. He highlighted the building's architectural merit, its contribution to town centre regeneration, and excellent public transport links.

Members welcomed the detailed travel plan but raised concerns about pedestrian safety, drop-off arrangements, and managing large numbers during peak times. Questions were asked about parking provision compared to other mosques, including Cambridge, and whether traffic light-controlled crossings could be considered.

The Committee noted that there were unlikely to be significant developments requiring further scrutiny at this stage. However, it was acknowledged that the level of detailed information provided on pedestrian and vehicle movements was exceptional. Members expressed appreciation to the applicant for the effort made to demonstrate the potential impact on

the community, noting that the submission clearly reflected consideration for local needs.

One Member commented that given the proximity to residential properties, they were reassured by the information provided and confident that the proposal would not be detrimental to the surrounding area. The Member further stated that places of worship should be beautiful buildings, designed to convey reverence, and that the plans presented achieved this aim. The architectural designs were described as remarkable and unlike anything currently under consideration. While there had been some discussion regarding the heritage of the existing building, it was the opinion of the Committee that the proposed design would preserve and enhance the site, which was currently underutilized and in poor condition.

The Committee heard that the development would provide a landmark building and a much-needed community facility in a sustainable location. The site benefits from excellent public transport links, with a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) rating of 6a, close to the highest possible score. This was considered significant, as it indicated that the facility would be easily accessible without reliance on private vehicles. The surrounding area was noted to have lower housing density compared to the applicant's current location, which was seen as an improvement should relocation occur.

Members commended the applicant for extensive public consultation and pre-application engagement. The proposal was considered to align with relevant planning policies, including the Local Plan and the London Plan. Comments raised in earlier discussions regarding internal religious practices were noted as not being material planning considerations. The Committee was reminded that the planning system respects freedom of worship and decisions should remain focused on land use, transport, and design matters.

In conclusion, Members agreed that the scheme represented a well-designed, community-focused development appropriate for a major town centre. It was felt that the proposal respected heritage, improved the public realm, met local needs, and had been shaped through significant community engagement. The Committee was encouraged to recognise the substantial benefits the development would bring.

The following considerations were summarised as the points raised by the Committee at the meeting:

1. Several questions have been addressed, which was welcomed, but some remain outstanding.
2. Ongoing concern about pedestrian safety, particularly safe routes for crossing roads to and from the proposed site.
3. Clarification requested on whether the Cambridge Mosque has on-site parking and what its drop-off arrangements are.

4. Concern raised about drop-off activity near the proposed site and managing large numbers of attendees arriving and leaving at peak times.
5. Suggestion to consider a full traffic light-controlled crossing (similar to Waterloo Road) instead of a zebra crossing for improved safety.
6. Confirmation sought that the proposed crossing will be signalised and funded through a developer contribution.
7. Clarification that on-site parking will be reserved for Blue Badge holders (disabled users).

9 P1087.25 - PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW SEND SCHOOL, SPORTS GROUND, BALGORES LANE

The report before Members detailed an application that sought planning permission for the erection of a part single, part two storey building with a total floor area of 6339m² (GIA) to provide a new 38 classroom Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) school for both primary and secondary students with associated access and car parking, informal and formal play space, hard multipurpose games pitch (MUGA), hard and soft landscaping.

The school will have a capacity for 300 pupils aged 4-19 years (Key Stage 1 to 5), students with complex learning needs serving children from Havering's local community, and 218 members of staff would be employed on the site to support its operation.

The school would provide a special educational school for children with social, emotional, and mental health needs (SEMH) difficulties, Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and severe learning difficulties; it will help meet a pressing need for additional SEN school places in the Borough and will help ensure students are taught in specialist, purpose-built buildings specifically suited to their particular learning needs.

The proposed school building would be sited on an existing open green field. It would be a part single, part two storey building with a broadly U-footprint designed as a series of interconnected wings arranged logically to meet the needs of the different year groups. The layout groups Early Years, Primary, Secondary, and Post-16 pupils into distinct zones.

In accordance with the public speaking arrangements, the Committee was addressed by an objector with a response by the applicant's agent.

With its agreement, Councillor Keith Prince addressed the committee, expressing strong concerns about the lack of engagement with ward councillors and residents, stating that issues raised had been ignored and the process felt rushed. He highlighted residents' objections regarding the Council acting as applicant, planning authority and adjudicator, questioning fairness and transparency. Councillor Prince raised serious concerns about traffic safety, noting the potential risks posed by 250 daily vehicle

movements near local schools and commuter routes and argued that proposed traffic management measures were inadequate. He also stressed that the application still had seven outstanding conditions identified by the Mayor of London and would require GLA approval even if passed by the committee. Councillor Prince urged the Committee to defer the decision until these issues were resolved and further consultation undertaken, given significant changes since the original proposal.

With its agreement Councillor Taylor also addressed the Committee. He spoke, acknowledging the urgent need for a SEND school in Romford but raising concerns about the site's suitability. He questioned the adequacy of drop-off arrangements, bus capacity for pupils with mobility needs, and suggested TfL engagement to review transport provision and bus stop locations. Councillor Taylor also suggested pavement upgrades for safety and raised concerns about the proposed MUGA's community use outside school hours, urging consultation with residents to mitigate amenity impacts. In response, Officers confirmed that conditions and agreements would address lighting, community use and management plans and reiterated that the application would be subject to GLA and Secretary of State oversight.

Officers also clarified that safeguards were in place including referral to the Secretary of State and the Mayor of London ensuring the Council would not act as sole decision-maker.

Members discussed assumptions in the travel plan noting that the report on page 60 assumes an 85/15 split between minibus and car travel with no allowance for public transport use. A sensitivity test based on a 50/50 split was mentioned but not included in the report, prompting questions about its omission. Officers clarified that this will be addressed through a condition requiring submission and approval of a detailed travel plan, which will also be reviewed by TfL. Concerns were raised about the adequacy of parking provision, with only 29 spaces proposed for 218 staff, and whether assumptions about staff using public transport were realistic given early and late working hours. Officers explained that parking spaces were reduced following TfL's insistence on compliance with London Plan policies promoting sustainable travel, and that a parking management plan will be required.

The Committee discussed concerns regarding the lighting conditions associated with the proposed development. It was noted that the applicants would be required to submit further detailed information to ensure that lighting is properly managed and does not adversely affect neighbouring properties. Officers confirmed that such matters would be addressed through specific planning conditions, including those regulating external lighting schemes and floodlighting. These conditions, together with the required Community Use Agreement, would provide controls over how the sports facilities both the sports hall and the MUGA would operate.

Further clarification was provided regarding the management of the site. Members were advised that the facility would not be left unattended and that

on site supervision would form part of the operational arrangements. This was to ensure that the facility is used appropriately and that the surrounding area is protected, particularly given the proximity to a school. Reference was made to previous discussions with the applicant, during which the management approach was outlined, and it was confirmed that related travel arrangements and supervision expectations were incorporated into the submitted plans.

Members raised questions about the adequacy of parking provision noting that staff numbers were significantly higher than the number of proposed parking bays. Concerns were expressed about potential overspill parking in surrounding streets and the impact on local residents. Officers highlighted that parking provision had been a major point of negotiation, with Transport for London requiring a reduction in the number of spaces in line with London Plan policies promoting public transport. Much of the surrounding area is subject to parking restrictions, meaning staff would not be able to park in nearby streets. Officers reiterated that the scheme must comply with strategic transport policies, even if this resulted in limited on site parking.

It was further noted that the Greater London Authority had consistently taken the view that parking levels should be reduced, and officers advised that the scheme would not likely have progressed without the agreed reductions. Members discussed the practical implications for staff who might rely on private vehicles, but officers emphasised that travel planning and school management practices including incentives to use public transport would need to address such matters.

The Committee explored whether an additional planning condition should be imposed to ensure stronger management controls over the MUGA, specifically to minimise any potential amenity impacts on neighbouring occupiers. Officers advised that while existing conditions already covered lighting, noise and community use, it would nevertheless be permissible for Members to add a bespoke condition relating to the management of the MUGA if they considered it necessary.

Further reference was made to the Community Use Agreement, which would regulate public access to the sports facilities. Officers confirmed that the agreement submitted with the application was only a draft and would be fully finalised and discharged through the conditions process following approval. All such documents would be publicly accessible. The Committee expressed the view that a management plan going beyond the draft agreement might be desirable, and officers reiterated that a specific condition could be added should the committee wish to ensure a more detailed operational framework.

Additional comments were made regarding comparisons with other schools, noting that the proposed development would accommodate significantly more pupils and would generate greater traffic and safeguarding considerations.

Members stressed the importance of ensuring the safety of students, particularly during pick up and drop off periods. Officers explained that most pupils would travel by council provided buses or accessible transport, and that staggered arrival and departure times together with designated waiting arrangements for vehicles formed part of the submitted travel plan. These management measures would also be secured through planning conditions.

Following the debate, the Committee resolved to grant planning permission subject to the report conditions and additional condition discussed.

The vote for approval, was carried by 3 votes for, to 2 abstentions.

Chairman

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