

 <b>Havering</b> LONDON BOROUGH	<b>Strategic Planning Committee – Developer Presentation 22 January 2026</b>
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**Pre-Application Reference: W0154.25**

**Site: 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**

## **1. Site Description**

1.1 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.

1.2 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 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.

## **2. Planning Policy Designations**

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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.

## **3. Proposal**

- 3.1 The proposed development seeks the complete demolition of all buildings and structures on site followed by comprehensive redevelopment to provide 584 homes, approximately 200 sqm of commercial floorspace, a new public park, and space set aside for a new primary school (in tandem with the adjacent Seedbed Centre development).

3.2 This proposal was previously presented to this committee on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2025, and during this intervening period, the proposal has been significantly revised, mainly as a result of the need to amend the layout to avoid affecting a large sewerage pipe which runs diagonally through the site. This pipe cannot be built over, and redirecting it would be prohibitively expensive and would severely impact the overall viability of the scheme, and therefore the layout has been amended to avoid it entirely.

3.3 These amendments, whilst necessary from a viability perspective, have nonetheless resulted in a number of positive amendments to the proposal, and as noted in the QRP comments below, the constraints imposed by the pipe's location lead to a revised scheme with enhanced public realm and a significantly larger public park, which runs linearly with the adjacent River Rom, whilst maintaining unit numbers at a relatively similar level.

3.4 The amended scheme comprises of two main courtyard blocks in the west of the site, near to Rom Valley Way, alongside two linear blocks positioned within the centre of the site, framing the proposed new public park. As with the previous version of the scheme, the approach to building heights has sought to increase height as you travel northwards on Rom Valley Way, with the tallest element located on the corner of the Roundabout, and dropping down in scale moving into the site. The current scheme still includes buildings of a significant height, with the tallest building proposed at 16-storeys (with an attached 10-storey wing), with a reduction in height moving southwards and eastwards into two 14-storey buildings (with attached 8 and 6 storey wings), a courtyard block ranging in height from 4 to 13 storeys, and a smaller linear block adjacent to the park and school proposed at 6 storeys.

3.5 The unit mix is set out as comprising 50% studio and 1-bedroom units, 40% 2-bedroom units and 10% 3-bedroom units, equating to approximately 292 x studio and 1-bedroom units, 234 x 2-bedroom units and 58 x 3-bedroom units respectively. The current affordable housing offer is 20% (by habitable room), with 60% of these to be provided as Social Rent and 40% provided as Discount Market Sale, and split evenly between the 2- and 3-bedroom units.

#### **4. Quality Review Panel**

4.1 The pre-application scheme was presented to Havering's Quality review Panel on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025 and again on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025. The feedback from the most recent QRP, and the applicant team responses, are summarised in the table below:

QRP Comments	Applicant Team Response
<b>Height and Massing</b>	
The panel supports the proposed layout, height, massing and density which better define the routes and open spaces within the site.	No further changes required in layout, height, massing and density.
The relocation of the blocks to accommodate the existing sewer has resulted in a much-improved scheme with enhanced public realm, creating a destination which benefits the wider community.	Recognition of the impact of the sewer and positive design response acknowledged.
The reduction in the length of the façade and therefore accommodation overlooking Oldchurch Road is a great improvement.	Redesign of blocks C1/C2 into block C positively opens the frontage to Oldchurch Road
<b>Public Realm and Landscape</b>	
The inclusion of the indicative school layout has helped to define the school's relationship with the residential development and the public realm, particularly through the creation of the plaza.	Panel recognise the importance of defining a responsive school layout (to the constraints) to guide other proposed design principals.
The introduction of the park is a great benefit to the scheme for residents and the public.	Increased park space received positively.
Further consideration should be given to ground floor uses in Blocks A and B, to create a more active street frontage on Rom Valley Way. Additional views into the communal courtyards could help to relieve the building elevations along Rom Valley Way.	Triplex homes with front doors added to enliven the Rom Valley Way frontage.
Adding windows into cycle stores could help increase surveillance and activity at street level. The addition of a cycle maintenance hub along Rom Valley Way would be welcomed.	Continue to explore the design and connectivity at ground floor including a cycle hub.

Building entrances within the site should be better emphasised to improve wayfinding and give the buildings clearer individual identities and add moments of joy.	Continued detailed design development of entrances as a coherent and unified strategy.
The increased retention of existing trees is welcomed.	Noted.
Daylight penetration to Block B courtyard could be improved. The applicant is encouraged to investigate this further.	Limited design changes proposed but wider SE corner likely to enhance Daylight & Sunlight. Subject to ongoing technical assessment.
The inclusion of a gathering space in the park should be considered.	Captured in the developed Landscape design.
The duplex units work well, and the inclusion of individual front doors help to break up the scale of the buildings at the ground floor. There is the opportunity to introduce further duplex units and this would benefit the scheme	Positive design move to enhance the street.
Surface treatment of the entrance loop road should be considered to integrate this with the landscape and avoid a large area of tarmac. There could be a shared surface adjacent to Block C to create a better relationship with this block which is public on all sides.	More carefully landscaped, with softer surface materials and minimal hard surfacing.
<b>Architectural and Internal Layout</b>	
The eastern end of the ground floor of Block B3 could be more successfully reconfigured with an entrance directly from the street. The panel queries the success of the commercial unit in this location.	Reviewing this. Opportunity to introduce a community space here (less commercially sensitive) to maintain an active use in a more challenging location
Entrances within the site should be better emphasised to improve wayfinding and give the buildings individual identities.	Continued detailed design development of entrances as a coherent and unified strategy.

The panel generally likes the calm elevational treatment and absence of full height windows.	Noted.
However, further consideration should be given to the change of brick colour within blocks. A simpler approach, using one colour, could be more elegant and successful.	Brick palette being developed further.
The length of the access deck to Block B could be reduced by reconfiguring the end apartments.	Design development has reduced the amount of access deck.
Whilst the calm approach to the elevations is welcomed there is an opportunity for more moments of joy that celebrate entrances, key corners and moments within the scheme that would add a greater sense of richness and hierarchy.	Further design character work undertaken particularly on key public areas, where detail and texture will be most noticeable – for example commercial spaces and at residential entrances.
Open balconies above eight storeys should be reconsidered to ensure amenity will be useable. Inset balconies would be better used. The design of the balconies should also consider a degree of screening to maintain residents' privacy.	Where balconies are particularly exposed, these are inset. Consideration of balustrade design taken to alleviate mis-use and maintain quality.
The panel notes the length of internal corridors, particularly in Block A, and asks for natural light to be introduced to relieve this.	End windows at upper floors allows daylight into corridors. At lower floors, where corridors extend these have windows added to bring light in.
<b>Access Servicing, Parking</b>	
Vehicle and pedestrian routes and movement are now more legible and coherent.	Noted.
The access from Oldchurch Way works well, but the detailed design of the	We have reviewed the extent of hard surfacing and minimised.

road treatment and public realm will be important and should be further developed.	
Revised Greater London Authority cycle storage guidelines may reduce the amount of storage required. Any reduction may incorporate more active frontage.	Updated layouts show reduced cycle space. Allows cycles to be consolidated and active frontage enhanced.
The panel recommends the applicant contributes to creating links to the local cycle network at the roundabout. This would increase permeability through the site.	No comments.
<b>Sustainability</b>	
The panel congratulates the applicant on the commitment to achieving Passivhaus certification and would welcome more detail on how this will be achieved.	Noted.
The applicant should undertake a wind study to ensure the comfort of external spaces.	Ongoing to assess quality and comfort of external spaces.

## **5. Key Planning Considerations**

### **- Principle of Development**

5.1 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.

5.2 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**

5.3 The layout makes efficient use of the site, with a combination of courtyard and linear blocks of varying heights, whilst leaving space for the new school (to be delivered in tandem with the Seedbed Centre) and a new public park running parallel to the river. 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.

5.4 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 prevailing heights of 12-14 storeys across the site. In this respect, the proposal no longer includes many mid-rise buildings, with the exception of Block D (six storeys), and the smaller wings of the main towers (6 to 10 storeys), which is somewhat expected noting that unit numbers are broadly similar to the previous iteration, whilst the buildable space has been reduced.

5.5 This would represent a significant 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

5.6 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.

5.7 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.

5.8 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



5.9 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

5.10 The unit mix is set out as comprising 50% studio and 1-bedroom units, 40% 2-bedroom units and 10% 3-bedroom units, equating to approximately 292 x studio and 1-bedroom units, 234 x 2-bedroom units and 58 x 3-bedroom units respectively.

- Affordable Housing

5.11 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.

5.12 The current affordable housing offer is 20% (by habitable room), with 60% of these to be provided as Social Rent and 40% provided as Discount Market Sale, and split evenly between the 2- and 3-bedroom units.

5.13 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.

5.14 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.

- Provision of a School

5.15 The provision of a new primary school, to be delivered by the council or an education provider 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 significant planning benefit.

- Ecology, Biodiversity and Naturalisation of the River Rom

5.16 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.

5.17 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

5.18 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.

5.19 The scheme would provide all of the required play space for 0-11 year olds and 12+ age ranges. This is very welcomed, noting that public play provision within the borough is often at or near capacity.

## **6. Conclusions**

6.1 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 ahead of a submission later in the year.