



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

**Developer Presentation
to Strategic Planning
Committee Members
24th September 2020**

Pre-Application Reference:	PE/00969/19
Location:	6-14 High Street, Romford
Ward:	Romford Town
Description:	Demolition of the existing 3 storey retail building. Redevelopment to provide a residential-led mixed-use scheme across 2 buildings (9 storey building fronting Angel Way & 5 storey building fronting High Street) with a central courtyard garden - providing 73 residential units, 412sqm of retail and 81sqm of commercial floorspace
Case Officer:	Ben Dixon

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This proposed development is being presented to enable Members of the Committee to view and comment upon it before a planning application is submitted. The development does not constitute an application for planning permission and any comments made upon it are provisional, without prejudice, and subject to full consideration of any subsequent application, and any comments received as a result of consultation, publicity and notification.
- 1.2 Officers have been in pre-application discussions with regards the redevelopment of this site for many months. The proposed scheme has been subject to review by the Havering Quality Review Panel (QRP) and it is now considered appropriate to seek Members' views before the proposal is developed any further.

2 PROPOSAL AND LOCATION DETAILS

2.1 Proposal

- Demolition of the existing 3 storey retail building and redevelopment of the site.
- Erection of a 9 storey building on the northwest side of the site, fronting Angel Way, providing residential accommodation and a small ground floor commercial unit (81sqm). The building would be constructed in buff brickwork with a setback top floor with metal cladding finish.
- Erection of a 5 storey building on the southeast side of the site, fronting High Street, re-providing a 412sqm ground floor retail unit with residential accommodation above. The building would be constructed in red brickwork, presented as 5 bays fronting High Street, with part of the top floor being a setback mansard roof clad in tiles. A gated archway would provide residential access from High Street.
- A private (for residents) communal courtyard garden area, with gated access from both High Street and Angel Way, would be provided to the centre of the site, between the two buildings, with a porter/management kiosk located near the High Street entrance.
- The scheme would provide 73 residential units. The proposed mix of unit sizes is as follows:
 - 18 x 1-bed 2-person units (24.7%)
 - 16 x 2-bed 3-person units (21.9%)
 - 29 x 2-bed 4-person units (39.7%)
 - 4 x 3-bed 4-person units (5.5%)
 - 6 x 3-bed 5-person units (8.2%)
- No information has been provided on the amount, type or units sizes of affordable housing that would be offered.
- This would be a city centre 'car free' development, within only 6 accessible parking spaces provided for disabled residents at ground floor level within the north-western building.
- The development (residential & retail) would be serviced from Angel Way via a dedicated service bay.

- The proposal includes provision of a policy compliant 115 cycle parking spaces for residents and would include green roofs with PV panels and Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) to generate clean renewable energy.

2.2 Site and Surroundings

- The site is located on the northwest side of Romford High Street, close to the crossroads junction with North Street and Market Place.
- The site is occupied by a large amorphous 3 storey, mid-terrace, post-war red/orange brick commercial building of a functional design.
- The building fronts High Street, where there is a ground floor colonnade with recessed shopfront. Service access to the site is from the rear via Angel Way.
- The property is currently used as two separate retail units by the British Heart Foundation and One Below (£1 shop).
- The High Street frontage of the site is included within the Romford Conservation Area and the northeast edge of the site abuts the Conservation Area.
- The site is covered by the following planning designations: Romford Area Action Plan, Retail Core Area, emerging Romford Masterplan Area, Archaeological Priority Area and Aerodrome Safeguarding, PTAL rating 5-6. The site is not within a designated Flood Zone.
- Directly in front of the site is a taxi rank, which extends southwest along High Street.
- Adjacent to the northeast of the site is a 3 storey building that fronts High Street and is in use as a café. Adjacent to this (further northeast) is the important Grade II Listed Golden Lion public house, which comprises a 3 storey building with a rear pub garden.
- Adjacent to the southwest of the site is a tired-looking, 4 storey, post-war building with a ground floor colonnade, which fronts High Street and accommodates several small retail/commercial units (this property has a Site Specific Allocation: ROMSSA4 – 18-46 High Street). Behind these units (to the northwest) is Angel Way and a 4 storey multi-storey car park.
- To the southeast of the site, on the opposite side of High Street, is a terrace of 3 and 4 storey commercial use buildings of varying age, design and quality.

- To the northwest of the site runs Angel Way, beyond which is a vacant brownfield development site with extant planning permission for a large major residential (350 units) and hotel development (63 beds). The building approved adjacent to this site would be 9 storeys high and provide residential accommodation. This site has a Site Specific Allocation: ROMSSA1 – Angel Way.
- The site is located approximately 30m from the Market Place and 75m from the Grade II* Listed Church of St Edward the Confessor.

2.3 Planning History

The following planning decisions at neighbouring sites are relevant:

Application No. P2246.07

Address: Angel Way Retail Park

Decision: Refused then Allowed on Appeal

Date of Decision: 23/06/2009

Description of Development: Mixed use development of 350 residential units, 63 bed Hotel, ground floor mixed retail, basement car parking and new public square.

Notes: This scheme has been implemented and remains live although it has not been built out.

Application No. P0498.19

Address: 22-44 North Street

Decision: Approved

Date of Decision: 12/08/2020

Description of Development: Demolition of existing buildings on site and erection of a four to six storey development comprising 46 residential units (30 x 1 bed, 12 x 2 bed and 4 x 3 bed) and 340sqm flexible commercial floor space at ground floor (Use Classes A1, A2, A3, B1(a) and D1), plus associated plant space, bin storage, cycle parking and external landscaping, including disabled parking.

Application No. P1157.03

Address: 21-23 North Street

Decision: Approved

Date of Decision: 24/05/2004

Description of Development: Construction of an eight storey building comprising 24 apartments, an A1/A3 commercial unit and 14 residential parking spaces.

Notes: This scheme has been implemented and partially constructed.

3 CONSULTATION

3.1 At this stage, it is intended that the following agencies will be consulted regarding any subsequent planning application:

- London Fire Brigade
- Historic England – Archaeology
- TfL

4 MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 The main planning issues raised by the development proposal, which the Committee should consider are:

- Principal of Development
- Scale of Development & Heritage Impact
- Quality of Design
- Affordable Housing
- Housing Mix
- Living Conditions for Future Occupiers
- Public Realm Improvements
- Parking & Servicing
- QRP Feedback

4.2 Principle of Development

- The proposal to deliver 73 residential units, as part of a mixed-use re-development of this brownfield site, with re-provision of retail use at ground floor fronting the High Street, would support the Council in meeting its housing requirements and support the function of the Town Centre. The principle of such a development would accord with the aspirations of Local Plan land use policies.

4.3 Scale of Development & Heritage Impact

- The relationship of the proposed development to the surrounding sensitive townscape context needs to be carefully considered, particularly with respect to the impact on the character, appearance and setting of the Romford Conservation Area, the Grade II Listed Golden Lion public house, and the Grade II* Listed Church of St Edward the Confessor.

- It is proposed to erect a 5 storey building on the southeast end of the site fronting High Street and a 9 storey building on the northwest end of the site fronting Angel Way.
- The proposed height and bulk will need to be clearly justified through a detailed townscape and contextual analysis ensuring the development sits comfortably within identified important views into the Conservation Area and views of the Listed Buildings, and does not impact negatively on the setting of these important designated heritage assets.
- At 5 storeys, the High Street building would be 1-2 storeys taller than adjoining buildings, stepping down in height towards the lower and more sensitive north-eastern side near the Golden Lion.
- At 9 storeys, the Angel Way building would be taller than existing surrounding buildings and would match the height of the approved but not constructed 9 storey residential building to the north on the opposite side of Angel Way.
- The Council's Urban Design Officers and Heritage Consultant are currently working to carefully review and advise on the impact on important views and local heritage assets.

4.4 **Quality of Design**

- Given the prominent and sensitive location of the site within Romford Town Centre, adjacent to the Conservation Area and close to listed buildings, it is important the design, form and finish of the development is of particularly high quality, preserving and enhancing the character, appearance and setting of the heritage assets and surrounding townscape. The Council's Urban Design Officer and Heritage Consultant are still working with the applicant to refine the design and finish of the development.

4.5 **Affordable Housing**

- Policy seeks to secure 35% affordable housing (of which 70% should be social rented and 30% intermediate/shared ownership), unless it is clearly demonstrated that the maximum viable quantum of affordable housing (less than 35%) is being provided.

- In initial discussions the developer was proposing not to provide any affordable housing due to viability issues. The applicant provided a draft Financial Viability Assessment (FVA) to justify this position, which concluded that the scheme would not generate any surplus profit to fund provision of affordable housing. This FVA was independently reviewed, on behalf of the Council, with the conclusion that the scheme would generate a surplus of £173k to fund affordable housing provision.
- Following officer advice that a scheme providing no affordable housing would be very unlikely to be considered policy compliant, or something that could be supported by officers, the developer has now advised that the scheme would deliver some affordable housing. However, no details of the proposed amount of affordable housing offered, the affordable housing tenure (affordable rent, shared ownership), or affordable housing mix have been provided.

4.6 **Housing Mix**

- The following housing mix is proposed:
 - 18 x 1-bed 2-person units (24.7%)
 - 16 x 2-bed 3-person units (21.9%)
 - 29 x 2-bed 4-person units (39.7%)
 - 4 x 3-bed 4-person units (5.5%)
 - 6 x 3-bed 5-person units (8.2%)
- Given the town centre location of the site and the density of development proposed, with limited space for private gardens, it may be considered that providing a smaller number of large family units (3+ beds) is acceptable in this instance, subject to an appropriate balance of 1 and 2-bed units, including a high percentage of larger 2-bed 4-person units suitable for accommodating small families.

4.7 **Living Conditions for Future Occupiers**

- It is important that the proposal provides high quality accommodation for future residents, including: provision of high quality private/communal outdoor amenity/play space, avoiding single aspect units, and providing satisfactory privacy and outlook from habitable rooms.

4.8 Public Realm Improvements

- Careful consideration is required as to the quality and safety of the pedestrian environment and public realm to be provided/improved adjacent to the site on High Street and Angel Way. Of particular concern is the potential creation of a pinch point on the High Street public footway to the northeast corner of the site where the footway narrows due to the taxi rank.

4.9 Parking & Servicing

- Given the site's town centre location, with good access to public transport and close proximity to shops and services, the development is proposed to be 'car free', with only 6 on-site accessible parking spaces provided for disabled residents.
- The design/layout of the disabled parking requires a mechanical turntable to allow vehicles to enter and exit the spaces. The applicant will need to demonstrate that the proposed turntable is an acceptable, viable, cost effective accessible parking solution with a management plan in place.
- The development (residential & retail) would be serviced from Angel Way via a dedicated service bay.

4.10 Quality Review Panel (QRP) Comments

An earlier iteration of the scheme was presented to the Havering Quality Review Panel on 19th February 2020. Members should note that the proposal being presented to them has been amended since the QRP review in response to QRP and officer advice, although many issues raised are still relevant. The following comments were made by the QRP:

- The panel is broadly supportive of breaking the building into parts, which offers the potential to respond appropriately to each of the contexts that it addresses, while creating some breathing space around the Grade II Listed Golden Lion.
- The approach to the massing of development on the frontage to the High Street is considered broadly appropriate, responding to the scale of the context.
- The panel feels that the scale and massing of the rear building is much less successful in its relationship to its context, both in views from around the site and in its relationship with the public realm.
- The panel is largely comfortable with the heights proposed, but feels that the

massing of the rear block overwhelms its context and this is exacerbated by the uniformity of the proposed facades. It is difficult to see how this bulky building will sit lightly within the townscape; more finely detailed visualisations of the facades, including the materials to be used, will be necessary to understand further design development.

- The scheme's architectural expression is currently underdeveloped, with too much reliance on the language of the New London Vernacular and no real engagement with the character of Romford. Responding more closely to the town's sense of place would help to situate the scheme more comfortably within what is a sensitive historic context. As the proposals develop, the panel would expect to see more refined drawings of the architecture being proposed, drawing inspiration from the architecture of existing buildings in Romford town centre, as well as reducing its bulk.
- In the panel's view, the scheme has a number of problems which indicate that the quantum of development proposed is greater than the site can accommodate. For example, the difficulty arriving at a satisfactory parking solution, and the lack of amenity and play space, suggest that too much development is proposed.
- The proximity of balconies to the beer garden of the Golden Lion Hotel creates potential issues that will require careful attention. The panel feels that early and detailed conversations with the management of the hotel will be necessary to avoid compromising the operation of this historic inn.
- Further thought needs to be given to the way in which the proposed colonnade will work in relation to the narrow pavement, the adjacent taxi rank, and access to the retail unit at the ground floor. There is, the potential for creating a pinch-point here, and without more thorough visualisations it is not clear that this has been fully resolved.
- The panel feels that the approach to landscape design is broadly successful, drawing inspiration from the Market Place. It would like to see this approach informing the design more generally, not least in terms of the relationship between the scheme and its wider setting.
- Some of the spaces created by the buildings are unlikely to be successful. In particular, the spaces at first floor level are significantly overshadowed, making it much harder to create successful planting or even pleasant places to be. There is little indication that thought has been given to how these spaces will be experienced, and the panel would like to see further attention given to this.
- There is a risk the play space proposed onsite will be under-used, because of the number of barriers between it and the residential units.
- The design team should have greater ambition for the proposed green roofs, going beyond sedum to consider wild flowers and other more attractive solutions appropriate to this sensitive location.
- The parking provided within the scheme creates significant problems for an already congested ground floor layout. Instead, one panel member suggests that the potential for flexible / responsive blue badge parking on-street should be explored, especially if a High Street entrance is introduced.

- The panel highlights in particular the inefficiency within the design, with relatively large areas of circulation space in proportion to the accommodation it serves. Improving the efficiency of the building layout may help to unlock some of the critical challenges facing the scheme, many of which arise from the quantum of development being proposed. By reducing the amount of development proposed, even modestly, the design team may find that many of the issues identified by this review are more easily resolved.
- The approach to sustainability is underdeveloped and much more thinking is needed on the environmental performance of the building fabric itself and how façade design should respond to different orientations.
- The approach to affordable housing within the scheme is unclear and without an early conversation with a potential partner RSL, there is a risk that the scheme will require substantial revision later on. The panel encourages the design team to work with Havering to facilitate those discussions.
- The panel is particularly concerned to ensure that this scheme fits within the emerging Romford Masterplan and development brief for this quarter of the Town Centre.
- The panel feels this is one of the most significant sites in Romford town centre, because of its location at the crossroads between South Street, the High Street and Market Place, next to the Golden Lion Hotel. It is therefore essential that the scheme sets a high benchmark for the future development of this significant quarter of the town centre.
- In summary, the panel feels that further work is needed to resolve some of the very clear challenges around scale, massing, amenity space, architectural expression and the relationship with its sensitive context.

Financial and Other Mitigation

4.11 The proposal would attract Section 106 contributions to mitigate the impact of the development, covering the following:

- Improvements to public realm (particularly pedestrian spaces/highway in the vicinity of the site – including Liveable Neighbourhoods)
- Transport improvements including: cycling, public transport, CPZ
- Romford Market Improvements
- Carbon Offset

4.12 The proposal would attract the following Community Infrastructure Levy contributions to mitigate the impact of the development:

- Mayoral CIL - £25/sqm - towards transport infrastructure
- Havering CIL - £125/sqm for residential & £175/sqm for retail

4.13 Other Planning Issues

- Alignment with aspirations of emerging Romford Masterplan
- Sustainable design and construction measures
- Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS)
- Secured by Design
- Archaeology

Summary of Issues

4.14 Officers have discussed the following matters with the developer team and Members may wish to comment in relation to these points in addition to any other comments/questions that they may wish to raise:

- Height and massing
- Design and materials
- Affordable housing
- Housing mix
- Layout of units
- Sunlight & daylight
- Amenity & play space
- Parking & servicing
- Access
- Landscaping
- Public realm improvements

Conclusion

4.15 The proposals are still at pre-application stage and input from Members would help to influence the final details of any development. There are still many aspects that require further work as identified in this report and Members' guidance will be most helpful to incorporate as the various elements are brought together.