# Tower Hamlets joins ROMULUS digital reuse marketplace to divert reusable building materials from waste



According to the original BBC report, Tower Hamlets Council has signed up to expand a pilot that reuses good‑quality surplus building materials by placing them on a digital “reuse marketplace”. The scheme — known as ROMULUS (Reuse Of Materials Using Local Unitary Stakeholders) — aims to divert reusable items such as reclaimed bricks, kitchen units and bathroom suites away from waste streams and into new projects, and the council says it views the move as part of its response to the climate emergency.

The pilot operates like an online auction or listing site where materials from council‑owned sites, including schools and offices, can be offered for sale or transfer. Surplus stock from public and private developments will also be made available to community projects, with the intention of making second‑hand components more visible and easier to claim than at present. Local planning policy in Tower Hamlets already encourages trials of reuse hubs and circular measures, signalling political backing for such redistribution of resources.

The ROMULUS concept is being developed through a public–private federation that seeks to act as an urban “mine” for secondary construction materials. According to the platform operator, the portal combines photographed inventories, pre‑demolition audits and an AI‑supported matching system so owners can declare reuse needs and receive offers, backed by a dedicated resource management team. The operator further says the system will calculate environmental indicators such as waste and CO2 avoided, enabling partners to report on the climate benefits of reuse.

Mainstreaming reclaimed components into everyday procurement depends on predictable quality, logistics and clear product information. Guidance produced for London practitioners emphasises the need for procurement routes, condition checks, documentation of provenance and careful design integration so reclaimed items meet durability and regulatory expectations. Market entrants offering curated digital listings tell would‑be buyers they can also expect location filtering, logistics support and carbon‑impact data to help with compliance against sustainability frameworks.

For Tower Hamlets the scheme sits alongside local planning instruments and the borough’s broader waste and climate strategies. The council’s reuse and waste supplementary planning guidance, adopted in 2021, identifies opportunities to trial material reuse hubs and to build community benefit into projects that would otherwise generate construction waste. That policy context reduces one barrier to reuse by signalling official support for applicants who propose circular approaches to materials management.

There are practical hurdles to scale. Providers and practitioners caution that storage, transport costs, condition assessment and compatibility with new builds can limit uptake unless systems for cataloguing, testing and logistics are properly resourced. Proponents argue ROMULUS and similar marketplaces will industrialise reuse by connecting authorities, contractors and manufacturers, but this remains an ambition that will need sustained co‑ordination, funding and quality assurance to deliver measurable carbon and waste reductions at scale.

The pilot in Tower Hamlets adds another municipal partner to a growing regional network of reuse initiatives and portals that say they will track environmental benefits while linking supply and demand across demolition and build cycles. The council describes the move as part of its climate response; the platform operator claims the marketplace will create routes for second‑life materials and quantify the emissions savings that follow — but whether that promise is fully realised will depend on take‑up, logistics and the rigour of condition and provenance checks.

### 📌 Reference Map:

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckgy4g46116o?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss), [[4]](https://upcyclea.com/en/romulus-portal/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckgy4g46116o?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss), [[7]](https://talk.towerhamlets.gov.uk/rrwp), [[4]](https://upcyclea.com/en/romulus-portal/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://upcyclea.com/en/romulus-urban-reuse/), [[4]](https://upcyclea.com/en/romulus-portal/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://relondon.gov.uk/resources/guide-sourcing-reclaimed-construction-materials), [[6]](https://shop.thereclaimedcompany.co.uk/home/reclaimed-construction-materials-marketplace/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://talk.towerhamlets.gov.uk/rrwp), [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckgy4g46116o?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://relondon.gov.uk/resources/guide-sourcing-reclaimed-construction-materials), [[3]](https://upcyclea.com/en/romulus-urban-reuse/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[4]](https://upcyclea.com/en/romulus-portal/), [[3]](https://upcyclea.com/en/romulus-urban-reuse/), [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckgy4g46116o?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckgy4g46116o?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckgy4g46116o?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss> - BBC News reports that the London Borough of Tower Hamlets has joined a pilot scheme to expand a reuse marketplace for reclaimed building materials. The article explains the initiative is intended as part of the council’s response to the climate emergency and will make use of good-quality surplus construction supplies. Items listed can include reclaimed bricks, kitchen units and bathroom suites and are traded in a system similar to online auction sites. Materials from council-owned sites such as schools and offices will be offered for reuse, and surplus stock from public and private developments will be made available to community projects.
3. <https://upcyclea.com/en/romulus-urban-reuse/> - Upcyclea’s ROMULUS page outlines the ROMULUS concept (Reuse Of Materials Using Local Unitary Stakeholders) as an urban ‘mine’ and federating marketplace for secondary construction materials. The page details functions including sharing pre-demolition audits, importing inventories with photographs and quantities, declaring reuse needs and receiving offers via an AI-supported matching system and dedicated Resource Management team. ROMULUS is presented as a public–private collaboration designed to industrialise material reuse, calculate environmental indicators (waste and CO2 avoided) and create reuse ecosystems. The initiative aims to connect local authorities, landlords, contractors and manufacturers to scale up circular construction practices in cities such as London.
4. <https://upcyclea.com/en/romulus-portal/> - The ROMULUS London portal on Upcyclea’s site describes a regional reuse platform and digital portal where thousands of reusable deposits and product passports are catalogued. The portal notes sponsor boroughs and welcomes partners including the City of London and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, emphasising how materials from dismantled buildings can be stored and offered for a second life. It highlights searchable listings (doors, architraves, vanity units and more) and frames ROMULUS as an auction-style, federated marketplace enabling owners, contractors and manufacturers to consult inventories, declare needs and establish take-back or reuse routes while tracking environmental benefits for reporting.
5. <https://relondon.gov.uk/resources/guide-sourcing-reclaimed-construction-materials> - ReLondon’s guide to sourcing reclaimed construction materials summarises practical steps and policy considerations for incorporating reclaimed and salvaged components in new developments. Produced as part of the CIRCuIT project, the guide explains procurement routes, quality checks, integration into design and logistics for reclaimed items, and benefits for embodied carbon reduction. It lists existing marketplaces and reuse networks and offers advice on specifying reclaimed products, assessing durability and compatibility, and documenting provenance. The resource is aimed at local authorities, developers and practitioners seeking to mainstream reuse in the built environment and to meet increasingly stringent sustainability standards and planning expectations.
6. <https://shop.thereclaimedcompany.co.uk/home/reclaimed-construction-materials-marketplace/> - The Reclaimed Company describes plans for a dedicated reclaimed construction materials marketplace offering curated listings of salvaged timber, steel, bricks, flooring and fixtures. The page argues that a dedicated digital marketplace helps cut embodied carbon, reduce landfill and connect supply and demand across demolition and build cycles. It highlights features such as location filtering, logistics support and carbon impact data to assist procurement decisions and compliance with frameworks like BREEAM and LETI. The platform positions itself to serve contractors, architects and self-builders by making reclaimed materials economical and traceable, thereby helping embed circular practice into mainstream construction procurement.
7. <https://talk.towerhamlets.gov.uk/rrwp> - Tower Hamlets’ Reuse, Recycle and Waste Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out local planning guidance to support reuse, recycling and waste management in the borough. Adopted in 2021, the SPD explains design and operational expectations for development, and identifies opportunities to trial material reuse hubs and circular measures within local projects. It explains how the borough intends to encourage reuse of materials, reduce construction waste and integrate community benefit from surplus resources. The document is part of Tower Hamlets’ broader waste and climate strategies and signals local policy backing for initiatives that redirect surplus building materials to community projects and reuse markets.