

Date: 22nd March 2021

Our ref: 2036/2858

Greater Norwich Local Plan Team
County Hall
Martineau Lane
Norwich
NR1 2DH

Sent via email to: gnlp@norfolk.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Regulation 19 Publication Greater Norwich Local Plan Representations by Lanpro on behalf of Van Dal Footwear Ltd. in relation to Policy R17 'Site of former Van Dal Shoes, Dibden Road, Norwich'

This letter comprise formal representations to the Regulation 19 Publication Greater Norwich Local Plan. They are made by Lanpro on behalf of Van Dal Footwear Ltd who own the Van Dal Shoe Factory Site, allocated for redevelopment as part of Policy R17. The comments are further to our previous comments submitted in March 2020 at Regulation 18 stage.

A representation form has been completed in relation to our comments. This is attached at Appendix A of this letter.

At present, we consider the plan is unsound in respect of draft policy R17 'Site of former Van Dal Shoes, Dibden Road, Norwich'. Our reasons for this, and the modifications we suggest would be necessary to make the policy sound, are set out below.

Background

The draft policy states:

'Policy R17

Site of former Van Dal Shoes, Dibden Road, Norwich (approx. 0.54ha) is allocated for residential development. This will accommodate a minimum of 25 homes.

The development will achieve the following site-specific requirements:

- 1. The existing locally listed shoe factory building should be retained or converted, subject to viability. To this end an assessment of its suitability for conversion either in part or as a whole (taking account of the industrial heritage significance of the site) will be required;*
- 2. Where new buildings are proposed they should achieve high quality, locally distinctive design of a scale and form which reflects its prominent location and the character and context of the surrounding predominantly residential area.*
- 3. Development should be designed to integrate well with the surrounding housing and to make the best of the potential for views over the city;*

4. *Site contamination arising from the former manufacturing use should be addressed and mitigated;*
5. *Address access issues, including the potential stopping up or diversion of the highway subject to maintaining a pedestrian link across the site;*
6. *Provide enhanced pedestrian and cycle links to Mousehold Avenue and Gertrude Road;*
7. *Be designed to promote biodiversity and facilitate green infrastructure links to neighbouring green spaces and connections to Mousehold Heath. Existing trees on site should be retained and protected where practicable.'*

Details of why Policy R17 is unsound (in answer to Question 5 of the Form at Appendix A)

There are two key areas which we consider make the policy unsound:

- i) Approach to retention/reuse of existing buildings
- ii) Development Specification; and

These are dealt with in turn, below.

i. Approach to retention/reuse of existing buildings

In our previous representations to the Local Plan we suggested that the first bullet point of the policy should be removed for the following reasons:

'It is not appropriate to require the retention of the building, either in total, or in part, as there is no evidence to suggest this can viably be done. Pre-application discussions to date explore the possibility of retaining parts of the locally listed building, as well as removing it.

The local listing status has not been subject to any update or review. Through the course of our pre-application discussions we have researched the local listing and can confirm that the building no longer meets with the criteria against which it was originally judged. We would suggest that the Local Listed reference be removed from the emerging policy and the heritage merits of the building being considered through the planning process. We also consider that the Local Plan can not continue to make reference to buildings being local listed when the assessment work was undertaken by a third party in 2011. The passage of time with potential deterioration of buildings, changing circumstances and direction of travel for planning policy would indicate that the 2011 assessments are not evidence that can be relied upon for the new Local Plan.

A letter from the Norwich Society (please refer to our previous representation March 2020) outlined that should the building lose its active use as a shoe factory this will result in its loss of community value and result in it no longer meeting the criteria the local listing. This would it result in the building being removed from the Local List.

As stated above we do not consider that the building meets with the criteria of the

local listing status that has been placed on it, however we welcome that the Council has acknowledged that any possible retention or conversion of the existing building will be subject to viability considerations’.

The updated draft includes new subtext which acknowledges that it may not be viable to convert the buildings, in which case their loss is acceptable. The draft policy wording has not been updated to reflect this.

As currently worded, draft bullet point 1 could be interpreted that at least part of the building should be retained as a minimum, when it is clear now from the updated subtext, this is not the intention of the policy. We suggest the policy needs to be clarified in this regard to make it effective.

Whilst in theory retention of at least part of the building may be viable in the future, it's retention should not be required by the policy. This is because a significantly better scheme may be achievable following demolition of the building. The merits of this should be discussed with stakeholders, and should not be pre-determined through the Local Plan.

There is insufficient justification for requiring the retention of any part of the building. The policy as worded would be ineffective as a brief for the redevelopment of the site. The policy as worded can therefore not be considered to be sound.

ii. **Development Specification**

In our previous representations to the Local Plan we suggested that the second bullet point of the policy should be removed for the following reasons:

‘The emerging policy seeks to introduce additional development criteria, as follows: The policy outlines that new buildings should achieve:

- *high quality design;*
- *be locally distinctive; and*
- *use energy and water efficient measures.*

Whilst these criteria may be appropriate for the site, we suggest that it is not necessary or helpful to include them within the policy text. The basis for this is that we consider the requirements are replicated elsewhere within the plan.

We do not consider that this site requires a higher quality of design, a more locally distinctive design, or needs more efficient energy or water measures than other sites within the Plan. Including these criteria within the site allocation policy could allow for misinterpretation in this regard’.

The references to energy and water efficiency have been removed from the policy as requested. However, there is no justification for development on the site to need to be a higher quality design or a more distinctive design than other sites within the Plan.

We consider that rewording the phrasing on design in part 2 of the draft policy (as suggested below) would be justified, and therefore sound. The re-wording suggested still requires that development respects and positive responds to its surroundings.

Modifications that would be required to make Policy R17 sound (in answer to Question 6 of the Form at Appendix A)

Further to the comments made in our answer to Question 5 (above), proposed modifications to the policy are outlined below. Suggested deletions have been stricken and proposed amendments are underlined.

'Policy R17

Site of former Van Dal Shoes, Dibden Road, Norwich (approx. 0.54ha) is allocated for residential development. This will accommodate a minimum of 25 homes.

The development will achieve the following site-specific requirements:

- 1. ~~The existing locally listed shoe factory building should be retained or converted, subject to viability. To this end an assessment of its suitability for conversion either in part or as a whole (taking account of the industrial heritage significance of the site) will be required;~~
An assessment of the suitability of the locally listed shoe factory building for re-use (taking account of the industrial heritage significance of the site) shall be undertaken. Following assessment, development could involve either conversion of the existing locally listed buildings or redevelopment if this is not practical. If redeveloping the site, the heritage significance of the locally listed buildings should be recorded and included on the Heritage Environment Record. Some form of heritage interpretation to commemorate the former use of the site would be appropriate in redevelopment proposals.*
- 2. Where new buildings are proposed they should ~~achieve high quality, locally distinctive design~~ be of a design scale and form which reflects its prominent location and the character and context of the surrounding predominantly residential area.*
- 3. Development should be designed to integrate well with the surrounding housing and to make the best of the potential for views over the city;*
- 4. Site contamination arising from the former manufacturing use should be addressed and mitigated;*
- 5. Address access issues, including the potential stopping up or diversion of the highway subject to maintaining a pedestrian link across the site;*
- 6. Provide enhanced pedestrian and cycle links to Mousehold Avenue and Gertrude Road;*
- 7. Be designed to promote biodiversity and facilitate green infrastructure links to neighbouring green spaces and connections to Mousehold Heath. Existing trees on site should be retained and protected where practicable.'*



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For completeness, the subtext of the policy should also be updated to state that development 'could', rather than 'should' 'involve either conversion of the existing locally listed buildings or redevelopment if this is not practical' (paragraph 2.289).

If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Clinch MRTPI
Associate Planner