

SK/ST/P08534

Planning and Building Control
London Borough of Waltham Forest
Waltham Forest Town Hall
Forest Road
Walthamstow
E17 4JF

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Consultation on the Waltham Forest Local Plan Part 1 – Proposed Main Modifications Consultation
Representations on behalf The SoCo at Crown Lea, 253 Wood Street, London, E17 3NT**

We write on behalf of our client, The SoCo, to make representations on LB Waltham Forest's Local Plan Part 1 – Proposed Main Modifications in respect of their interest in the Site at Crown Lea, 253 Wood Street, London, E17 3NT.

THE SITE & BACKGROUND

The Site, Crown Lea, Wood Street, is situated entirely within the London Borough of Walthamstow's administrative boundaries. The site measures at 0.63 hectares. At present, the site is currently industrial (Use Classes B2 and B8) in use and comprises two large warehouse units (totalling an area of 11,500 sq.ft), an office building (4,000sq.ft) and an area of hardstanding currently used for open air storage and parking. Overall, the current site is poorly use, dilapidated in many areas and does not significantly to the employment needs of the borough.

The site is allocated within the Waltham Forest Proposed Submission Local Plan (LP2); Allocation SA40 and within the Wood Street Area Action Plan (Preferred Options); Site 18 – Crownlea. The site is not designated as a LSI or SIL and as such is considered a non-designated industrial site. The site does not contain any heritage assets nor is it within a conservation area.

Site Allocation SA40 seeks for development proposals to optimise the site's capacity and deliver around 90 new homes, and the reversion of the existing employment uses. Our client, the SoCo intend to redevelop the site to bring forward a mixed-use scheme comprising co-living units ('sui generis'), affordable housing (Class E) as well as the reversion of the employment uses at the Site.

PROPOSED AREA FOR REVIEW

This representation seeks the review of the wording of Policy 29 (Approach to Non-Designated Employment Land) of the Local Plan Part 1 – Proposed Main Modifications document following Examination in Public (EiP).

REPRESENTATION ON THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN DOCUMENT

Policy 29 of the Local Plan Part 1 previously stated:

Development will be supported on non-designated employment areas where:

- A. *It provides fit for purpose and high-quality business space and upgrades existing poor or old stock;*
- B. *It uses the Agent of Change principle to mitigate design and sensitivity impacts;*
- C. *It delivers co-location of employment space with other uses including C3;E class uses and social and community infrastructure;*
- D. *For non-employment uses, where there is no reasonable prospect of the site being retained or used for employment uses subject to market evidence of at least 12 months; or*
- E. *It delivers intensification, consolidation or co-location.*

Following Examination in Public (EiP), the Policy has been amended to state:

Development for industrial, business and related uses (including creative and artists' workspace) will be supported on non-designated employment areas where it provides fit for purpose and high-quality employment space and upgrades existing poor or old stock. Development which seeks to introduce residential or mixed-use elements to non-designated employment locations will only be supported where:

- A. *It uses the Agent of Change principle to mitigate design and sensitivity impacts (see Policy 31 'Co-location Design Principles'); and*
- B. *It provides replacement or intensified employment floorspace, with the quantum of any existing industrial, storage, or distribution floorspace being - as a minimum - fully re-provided as an industrial use; or*
- C. *The scope for mixed-use intensification with employment uses has been explored fully and any loss of floorspace is justified with reference to marketing evidence of at least 12 months demonstrating no reasonable prospect of the site being retained in business or industrial uses; or*
- D. *The proposal accords with an adopted allocation in a Development Plan Document for residential or mixed-use development.*

Whilst Part B of the policy supports intensified employment space, it still requires that the same quantum of the existing industrial use is re-provided as an industrial use. It is understood from the supporting text of the policy (9.17) that the policy seeks to prevent the loss of well-performing industrial land, given the borough's demand for employment floorspace and changing employment needs.

However, this change of wording is considered to undermine this aim. Firstly, the requirement to reprovide the entire quantum of the existing industrial floorspace does not take into consideration sites that may encompass a large area but are highly underutilised and do not make effective use of the space, such as the existing situation at the Site (253 Wood Street). Further, the wording and supporting text for Policy 29 (B) does not take into consideration the redevelopment of surplus or obsolete industrial land.

London Plan Policy E2 relates to providing suitable business space. Part C of the policy requires development proposals that involve the loss of existing B Use Class business space in areas identified in a local Development Plan Document where there is a shortage of lower-cost space or workspace of particular types, uses or sizes, should ensure that an equivalent amount of B Use Class business space is re-provided. The supporting text for the policy (6.2.7) states that where it is demonstrated that business space is obsolete or surplus to requirements, it should be redeveloped for housing and other uses.

London Plan Policy E7 (Industrial intensification, co-location and substitution) states that mixed-use or residential development proposals on non-designated industrial sites should only be supported where:

- It has been allocated in an adopted local Development Plan Document for residential or mixed-use development; or
- industrial, storage and distribution floorspace is provided as part of mixed-use intensification.

In light of the above, the proposed wording for Policy 29 offers developers less flexibility than the strategic guidance contained within the London Plan. Specifically, London Plan Policy E2 highlights that the equivalent re-provision of employment space should be sought where there is an identified shortage of low-cost workspace – which is not the case at the identified site. Under the London Policy only, the site would have the flexibility to re-provide an intensified employment use, that encompasses a smaller area whilst still providing an uplift in employment density and generating enhanced benefits to the local economy. An intensified employment use at the site would also allow for the more efficient use of floorspace and allow the site to cater to a range of business needs, including those of small to medium enterprises. London Plan policy would also allow the site to bring forward a non-industrial employment use that would be complimentary to the increasingly residential character of the wider area, especially as part of a mixed use development. Notwithstanding, any forthcoming development proposals would deliver the requisite 10% affordable workspace. Without this flexibility, non-designated employment sites could suffer from long-term vacancy due to the difficulty associated with their redevelopment, and would not therefore benefit from the protection of the use that would come from the increased activity and utilisation of the site.

The requirement for a like-for-like re-provision even on underutilised industrial land will have significant adverse impacts on the deliverability of any forthcoming schemes on non-designated employment land. We recommend that the wording of the policy be amended to consider both the equivalent re-provision of industrial, storage and distribution land as well as the intensification of employment that does not require the provision of the quantum of pre-existing industrial space. This will in turn ensure that well-performing and well utilised employment land will be protected, and that where employment land is underutilised, any re-provision would be representative of the pre-existing situation at the Site.

Whilst our client is cognisant of the need to protect and enhance employment space, we feel that the approach within the London Plan better aligns with the Council's aim to protect well-performing industrial land, whilst allowing developers the flexibility to deliver co-location schemes successfully and viably.

As such, we feel that the wording of Policy 29 should be amended in order to align with the London Plan's flexible approach to allow for either the like-for-like re-provision OR the intensification of the existing employment use on-site. There are also individual circumstances on each site which would need to be taken into account, on this basis, the wording of Policy 29 should allow for the re-provision requirements to be assessed on a case by case basis.

PROPOSED WORDING

We would recommend the wording of Policy 29 be amended as follows:

*Development for industrial, business and related uses (including creative and artists' workspace) will be supported on non-designated employment areas where it provides fit for purpose and high-quality employment space and upgrades existing poor or old stock. Development which seeks to introduce residential or mixed-use elements to non-designated employment locations will **only** be supported where:*

- A. *It uses the Agent of Change principle to mitigate design and sensitivity impacts (see Policy 31 'Co-location Design Principles'); and*
- B. *It provides replacement or intensified employment floorspace, with the quantum of any existing industrial, storage, or distribution floorspace or employment numbers being ~~–as a minimum– fully~~ re-provided as an industrial use; or*
- C. *The scope for mixed-use intensification with employment uses has been explored fully and any loss of floorspace is justified with reference to marketing evidence of at least 12 months demonstrating no reasonable prospect of the site being retained in business or industrial uses; or*

D. The proposal accords with an adopted allocation in a Development Plan Document for residential or mixed-use development.

SUMMARY

We trust the above will be taken into consideration and as part of this process we would welcome the opportunity to discuss our comments above further with officers. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully

Susan Kaweesa

For and on behalf of
Rolfe Judd Planning Limited
19 September 2023