

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration

Planning Committee: 18 December 2013

DC12/093: Partial demolition and redevelopment of existing retail unit with ancillary uses including a new café, soft play area, outdoor seating with children's play area and associated improvements to the main access, car park, coach parking, landscaping and the provision of a coach drivers rest area and ancillary works at Antartex Village, Bowie Road, Lomond Industrial Estate, Alexandria by the Edinburgh Woollen Mill Group.

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1** This application relates to a proposal which raises issues of local significance and which is considered to be a departure from the adopted development plan. Under the approved scheme of delegation it therefore requires to be determined by the Planning Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1** **Grant** full planning permission subject to the conditions set out in Section 9.

3. DEVELOPMENT DETAILS

- 3.1** The application relates to "Antartex Village", an existing retail outlet covering an area of approximately 1.09 hectares within the Loch Lomond Industrial Estate, and surrounded by the Loch Lomond Distillery. The premises consist of former industrial buildings which were converted to retail use over time, selling a selection of goods aimed primarily at the tourist market including knitwear and clothing, household goods, golfing/outdoor and leisure goods, books, gifts and whisky. There is also a café/restaurant within the building. The existing buildings form a 'U'-shape around the central parking area, but at present only the southern section of the buildings are occupied, and most of the northern half of the buildings are vacant and unfit for use or partially demolished. Access to the car park is from Bowie Road at the north eastern corner of the site of the site, whilst coach parking spaces are accessed directly from Bowie Road along the eastern edge of the site.
- 3.2** It is proposed to substantially reconfigure the development in order to improve its attractiveness as a retail outlet and visitor destination. The key elements of the proposal include the demolition of the unused parts of the building, and construction of replacement retail floorspace. The current buildings which form the Antartex Village extend to 5,235m², of which it is proposed to retain 2,700m² and demolish 2,535m². In its place, 2,700m² of replacement floorspace would be constructed, thereby increasing the overall floorspace by only 165m² to a total of 5,400m². Included within the reconfigured and

extended building would be a café, children's soft play area and coach drivers' facilities, whilst externally, outdoor seating and a children's play area would be formed. The coach and car parking areas are to be remodelled, with the car park capacity being increased from 82 spaces to 112 spaces, with 8 coach spaces. The applicant has indicated that the redevelopment of the site has potential to create an additional 50 full and part time employment opportunities. Figures for 2011 demonstrate that there were over 250,000 visitors to Antartex, with many coming from different regions within the UK and abroad. In 1998, the number of coach parties visiting the premises peaked at 2700, whereas in 2011 this figure was down to 1200.

- 3.3** The main retail floorspace within the southern half of the existing building would be retained, with the new floorspace wrapping around the front of the building to the north and west, thereby creating a new frontage onto the car park, which would itself shift towards the north-eastern corner of the site. The extension would incorporate a significant amount of glazing and would have a modern retail character, in contrast with the existing old industrial type buildings. The size and massing of the proposed buildings would be similar to the surrounding industrial buildings and they would be finished primarily in metal cladding and glazing. The new layout would have the retail frontage facing onto the revised car park in order to make the main entrance more obvious to visitors. Improved boundary treatments and landscaping are also proposed.

4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1** The Health and Safety Executive does not advise against the proposal and Scottish Water has no objection to the proposal.
- 4.2** The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency has no objection to the proposal based on the revised flood risk information which was submitted by the applicant.
- 4.3** West Dunbartonshire Council Environmental Health Service has no objection to the proposal subject to conditions relating to contaminated land, SUDS, hours of work on site, dust control measures and the provision of a grease trap.
- 4.4** West Dunbartonshire Council Roads Service has no objection to the proposal subject to conditions relating to the proposed new access/sightlines, bus parking and drainage.

5. REPRESENTATIONS

- 5.1** None.

6. ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan

- 6.1** Diagram 3 of the SDP sets out the Spatial Development Strategy, which identifies sustainable development locations and which forms of development would be in line with the strategy. The proposed development site does not sit within any of the sustainable development locations identified. Diagram 4 sets out a sustainable location assessment. As the proposal is for a location outwith the network of centres and does not contribute in any other way to sustainability, the proposal is not considered to be in a sustainable location, nor is there a known need/or demand for it. The proposal is not supported by the Spatial Development Strategy or sustainable location assessment of the Strategic Development Plan and therefore requires to be assessed against the local plan.

West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010

- 6.2** The development site is located within an existing industrial and business location, covered by Policy LE1 which states that there is a presumption in favour of uses which positively extend the permanent employment of the site. Whilst the redevelopment of the site is likely to create employment, this would not be related to either industry or business and the proposal is therefore contrary to Policy LE1.
- 6.3** Policy RET1 requires a sequential approach be applied to the selection of sites for new retail development, including proposals to expand existing developments where this would change the role and function of the development. Antartex is in an out-of-centre location as defined by the adopted Local Plan, and there are sequentially preferable locations in the vicinity e.g. Alexandria town centre and Lomond Galleries commercial centre. However, as the proposal would not fundamentally change the role and function of Antartex it is not considered that the sequential approach requires to be applied in this instance.
- 6.4** Policy RET3 sets out the criteria for assessing proposals in out of centre locations. These include that the application is subject to the sequential approach, as discussed above. It then requires that there are no adverse impacts on the vitality and viability of existing centres. Whilst the type of goods to be sold mean that the proposal is unlikely to impact on Alexandria town centre, the redevelopment is likely to have an impact upon trade at Lomond Galleries and Lomond Shores as they are also tourist related retail attractions. The policy further requires that the proposal is assessed in terms of: accessibility, choice of retail provision in the Plan area, proximity to public transport, access and infrastructure implications, environmental impacts and that existing and proposed floorspace can be accommodated by the catchment population. Since the proposal will not enhance the choice in retail provision in the Plan area and is likely to have an impact upon trade at Lomond Galleries and Lomond Shores, it does not accord with all of the listed criteria and is therefore considered contrary to policy RET3.

- 6.5** Policy LE8 indicates that the Council will support tourist industry development subject to certain considerations. The proposal is for the redevelopment of an existing tourist location and will increase its attractiveness and turnover. There will be no adverse environmental, landscape, infrastructure or transport implications. Overall, the proposal is considered to be supported by policy LE8.
- 6.6** Policy F1 relates to flood prevention and policy F2 requires the drainage of development proposals to satisfy the principles of SUDS, and agreement to be reached in relation to ongoing maintenance. A flood risk assessment has been undertaken and it is considered that suitable drainage measures can be implemented without increasing the risk of flooding locally or elsewhere in the catchment area and SEPA have not raised any concerns.
- 6.7** The proposal is considered contrary to policy LE1 and RET3 of the adopted Local Plan for the reasons discussed in paragraphs 6.2 and 6.4 above.

7. ASSESSMENT AGAINST MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

West Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan – Proposed Plan

- 7.1** Antartex Village is identified in Table 5: Network of Centres Retail Strategy of the emerging LDP as a “Destination Commercial Centre”, the preferred role of which is to offer visitor type goods and attractions. Table 5 confirms that Alexandria Town Centre and Lomond Galleries remain sequentially preferred locations, but also indicates that refurbishment of Antartex Village will be supported subject to only limited additional floorspace being provided and to the impact on town centres being acceptable. There is only a small increase in overall floorspace proposed by the development and it is unlikely to have an adverse impact on Alexandria town centre owing to the different nature of goods sold in each centre.
- 7.2** Policy SC1 indicates that proposals for retail development within the network of centres will be supported where they accord with the strategy and the role and functions set out in Table 5 or with Schedule 7 (retail development opportunities). In this case it is considered that the proposed development would be in accordance with Table 5, and thus would comply with Policy SC1.
- 7.3** Policy DS1 expects any development to contribute towards creating successful places by having regard to the relevant criteria of the six qualities of a successful place. These criteria include distinctiveness, safe and pleasant environments, accessibility, resource efficient and welcoming developments, which create an attractive and active street frontage. Matters relevant to access, design and appearance are discussed in paragraphs 7.12 – 7.13.
- 7.4** Policy DS6 requires SUDS to be included in new developments where appropriate, and for arrangements to be made for long term maintenance. It also states that development will not be supported where it would have a significant probability of being affected by flooding or increase the probability of flooding elsewhere. This matter is addressed in paragraph 7.14.

7.5 The proposal is considered to accord with the Proposed Plan.

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)

7.6 The SPP supports development that will contribute to sustainable economic growth and to high quality sustainable places. It acknowledges that the tourism industry is one of Scotland's largest business sectors, and indicates high quality tourism related development should be supported. This proposal would result in improvements to a significant and successful tourism related facility and it is therefore considered to be consistent with the SPP.

7.7 Paragraph 64 of the SPP requires that when a retail development is contrary to the development plan, planning authorities should ensure that: the sequential approach to site selection has been used; there is no unacceptable impact on the vitality and viability of the network of centres; the proposal will help to meet qualitative or quantitative deficiencies identified in the development plan; and the proposal does not conflict with other significant objectives of the development plan or other strategy. The sequential approach is not required to be applied in this instance due to the existing and proposed role and function of Antartex and this has been addressed above.

Site History and Status of Current Retail Permission

7.8 Antartex Village originated as a sheepskin goods factory with a small factory outlet selling products made on the site. In 1987 planning permission was granted for an expanded sales area and coffee shop (decision VL.3722). At that time it was intended that the principal use of the site would remain as industrial/manufacturing, and that retail should remain ancillary to this. Planning conditions were imposed which restricted not only the area available for retail sales but also the nature of goods to be retailed. At least 90% of retail sales were to be reserved for the sale of clothing, leisure and tourist related products manufactured by Antartex Ltd or by its parent company Edinburgh Woollen Mill Ltd. In addition, the remaining 10%, although manufactured by other companies, was also restricted to items of clothing, leisure or otherwise tourist related in nature.

7.9 In 1990 a further planning permission (decision VL.4061) allowed the formation of a series of small craft workshop/retail units within the building. That application required that the goods retailed, would be manufactured exclusively in the units concerned, and the permission was granted subject to a condition that sales from the craft workshop units were restricted to goods manufactured on the site. By that time, Antartex Village was being actively promoted as a visitor attraction and in addition to the retail element and coffee shop, a significant use within the premises remained the manufacturing of sheepskin products, with tours of the factory being available for visitors.

7.10 In 1992 a subsequent application (VL.4061/1) sought to vary the conditions of the earlier permissions in order to allow all of the floorspace to be used for retail purposes. By that time the significance of the manufacturing and the associated workshop tour had diminished significantly, and it was noted that some of the craft workshops were offering significant ranges of goods not

manufactured on site. That application was approved, subject to a condition which required that:

“a minimum of 50% of the retail floor area now approved shall be solely reserved for the display/retail of goods manufactured by Antartex/The Edinburgh Woollen Mill Ltd, under their associated brand names”.

This allowed all of the existing buildings on site to be used for retail use although a significant portion of the floorspace is reserved solely for the sale of goods manufactured by Antartex/The Edinburgh Woollen Mill Ltd.

Reasons for Proposed Development

- 7.11** Antartex Village attracts over 250,000 visitors per year and is rated as a 4 star visitor destination by Visit Scotland. Whilst the manufacturing use ceased over 20 years ago and the property has since been used solely for retail purposes aimed at a tourist/destination market, the buildings themselves remain of an industrial character and the site is located within an industrial estate. Given the origins of the site, the buildings were not originally designed for retail and no longer meet the needs of a modern visitor attraction. In order to preserve the Visit Scotland accreditation and remain an attractive destination, the Edinburgh Woollen Mill wishes to invest in the premises to improve the visitor experience and the appearance of the buildings. Although Antartex Village is not located in an ideal location, it is a very successful visitor destination.

Design and Appearance

- 7.12** Parts of the existing premises are disused and have a dilapidated appearance, and it is accepted that the design and configuration of the current accommodation is not appropriate for an important tourist destination. The proposal would remove the unused industrial buildings and provide a purpose-built extension to the existing retail area, with a glazed frontage onto the reconfigured car park. These alterations would transform the appearance of the development from a dilapidated collection of buildings into a single modern structure. The appearance of the proposed new buildings would represent a significant improvement over the existing buildings, and would enhance the appearance of the development and of the surrounding industrial estate. It would therefore be more likely to attract additional visitors which in turn will bring the economic benefits to the surrounding area.

Transport and Access

- 7.13** The existing road layout around the site would not be affected by the proposal. However, the vehicular entrance to the site would be relocated to a more central position to improve visibility for visitors arriving by foot, car or coach. Part of the existing coach parking area would be retained and an additional coach parking area would be provided at the rear of the building, next to the driver's rest area. There are currently 8 coach parking spaces and this level of provision would be retained, even though the applicant indicates that the number of coach trips to the site has declined from a peak of 2,700 during 1998 to 1,200 in 2011. It is hoped that the proposed redevelopment will encourage an increase in coach trips to the premises and increase visitor

numbers to previous levels. The number of car parking spaces would increase by 30. Existing servicing arrangements at the rear of the property would remain. It is considered that the alterations to the access and parking will improve the accessibility of the premises by vehicles, and the modifications to the access would improve road safety.

Flood Risk and Contaminated Land

- 7.14** Due to the former industrial nature of the site, it would be necessary for a contaminated land survey to be undertaken, and this could be addressed by way of a condition. There is a history of flooding at this location and due to a flood in 2006, Antartex Village had to temporarily relocate in order to allow the flood damaged premises to be refurbished. A flood risk assessment has been undertaken which states that the main cause of this flooding stems from the nearby Mill Lade which can be affected by the River Leven. Based on the content of the flood risk assessment, SEPA have not objected to the proposal although it will be necessary for the drainage at the site to incorporate the principles of sustainable urban drainage systems, particularly with regard to the car park and landscaped areas.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1** As discussed in Section 6 above, the proposal is contrary to the adopted local plan as the site is zoned for industry and business and cannot be justified against all the criteria of policy RET3. However, Antartex Village has developed over the years into a successful tourism-related retail facility, and in recognition of the fact that it already functions as such, the proposed Local Development Plan designates the site as a Commercial Centre and supports refurbishment with limited additional floorspace. It is considered that the proposal would be consistent with the emerging local plan, as the actual increase in floorspace over the existing consented floorspace is very modest.
- 8.2** On balance, it is considered that the benefits which the development would have for tourism and employment, are sufficient to outweigh the departure from the adopted local plan and can be justified as it is tourist related retailing. It would however be undesirable for Antartex Village to develop into a more general (i.e. non-tourist) type of retail facility in the future, and it is therefore considered appropriate to impose conditions reiterating the existing limitations on the types of goods which may be sold from the site. On balance, the proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable.

9. CONDITIONS

- 1. Exact details and specifications of all proposed external materials, including cladding panels, the roof, render and roller shutters shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority prior to any work commencing on site and shall thereafter be implemented prior to the occupation of the approved development.**

- 2. Exact details and specifications of all ground surfaces, bins, seating, outdoor furniture, external lighting, external CCTV cameras, play equipment and boundary treatments shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority prior to any work commencing on site and shall be implemented within a timescale agreed by the Planning Authority.**
- 3. Notwithstanding the approved plans, final landscaping details to include the number, siting and type of trees and shrubs to be planted shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority prior to any work commencing on site and shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the approved development.**
- 4. During the period of construction, all works and ancillary operations which are audible at the site boundary, or at such other places that may be agreed with the Planning Authority shall be carried out between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 1pm on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays or Public Holidays.**
- 5. Prior to the commencement of development full details of the foul and surface water drainage system shall be submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority. The drainage system shall incorporate the principles of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems within its design, and thereafter shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the approved development. The proposed drainage details are required to include a suitable overland flow path through the site to mitigate the risk of flooding.**
- 6. The presence of any previously unsuspected or unencountered contamination that becomes evident during the development of the site shall be brought to the attention of the Planning Authority within one week. At this stage, if requested, a comprehensive contaminated land investigation shall be carried out and any remedial actions shall be implemented within a timescale agreed with the Planning Authority.**
- 7. Prior to the commencement of development a comprehensive contaminated land investigation shall be carried out and its findings submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The investigation shall be completed in accordance with a recognised code of practice such as British Standards Institution "The Investigation of Potentially Contaminated Sites- Code of Practice" (BS 10175:2001). The report shall include a site-specific risk assessment of all relevant pollutant linkages as required in Scottish Government Planning Advice Note 33.**
- 8. Where the risk assessment identifies any unacceptable risk or risks as defined under Part 11a of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, a detailed remediation strategy shall be submitted to the**

Planning Authority for the written approval. No works other than investigation works shall be carried out on the site prior to receipt of written approval of the remediation strategy by the Planning Authority.

- 9. Remediation of the site shall be carried out in accordance with the approved remediation plan. Any amendments to the approved remediation plan shall not be implemented unless approved in writing by the Planning Authority. On completion of the remediation works and prior to the occupation of the approved development, the developer shall submit a report to the Planning Authority confirming that the works have been carried out in accordance with the remediation plan.**
- 10. A monitoring and maintenance scheme for the long term effectiveness of the proposed remediation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. Any actions ongoing shall be implemented within a timescale agreed with the Planning Authority. Following completion of the actions/measures identified in the approved remediation scheme, a further report which demonstrates the effectiveness of the monitoring and maintenance measures shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.**
- 11. Prior to the commencement of development, full details of an adequately sized grease trap shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority and shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the approved development.**
- 12. Prior to the commencement of development, a scheme for the control and mitigation of dust shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority and shall be implemented prior to the demolition of any building or structure on site.**
- 13. Not more than 5% of the overall floor area (275m²) of the building shall be used for the sale of food or drink.**
- 14. A minimum of 40% of the overall floor area (2,160m²) of the building shall be solely reserved for the display/retail of goods manufactured by Antartex/The Edinburgh Woollen Mill Ltd, under their associated brand names.**
- 15. Prior to the commencement of development, full details of the proposed new vehicular access, including sightlines, shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority and shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the approved development.**

16. Prior to the commencement of development, full details of the proposed coach parking shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority and shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the approved development.

Informatives

1. The development hereby approved shall commence within a period of 3 years from the date of this decision notice.
2. The developer shall submit to the Planning Authority in writing upon the forms specified for the purpose and attached to this decision notice:
 - a) A Notice of Commencement of Development as soon as practicable once it is decided to commence the development hereby approved (which shall be prior to the development commencing);
 - b) A Notice of Completion of Development as soon as practicable once the development has been completed.
3. The plans referred to as part of this decision are: Drawing No(s). 01 Rev. A, 010 Rev. A, 13 Rev. A, 16, 17, 020 Rev. C, 21, 22 & 23.
4. A grant of planning permission does not authorise works under the Building (Scotland) Acts. A separate Building Warrant may be required.
5. If any external signage is proposed, it may require the benefit of separate express consent under the terms of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements)(Scotland) Act 1984.
6. This planning permission does not authorise the sale of hot food to take away from the premises.

Richard Cairns
Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration
Date: 3 December 2013

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Appendix:

None.

Background Papers:

1. Application forms and plans;
2. Consultation responses;
3. Scottish Planning Policy;
4. West Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan
Proposed Plan;
5. West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010;
6. Planning Permission(s): VL.3722, VL.4061 &
VL.4061/1.

Wards affected:

1 (Lomond)