

Core Strategy Matter No. 2

Does the CS take a justified and effective approach to issues relating to the Green Belt (GB) and the natural environment which is consistent with national planning policy?

Representor's ID: 026

Policy CS6 Green Belt

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement responds to Initial Matters and Issues to Examine ID/4B published in February 2012. In particular it responds to Question 8 in respect of draft Policy CS6 Green Belt which asks *“With due regard to the advice of PPG2, is the McLaren group headquarters a Major Developed Site within the GB?”*.

2. Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts

- 2.1 Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts (PPG2) sets out the Government's policies in respect of Green Belts. It sets out the general intentions of Green Belt policy, the specific purposes of including land in Green Belts, specifies the objectives for the use of land in Green Belts, confirms their protection and advises on defining boundaries and on safeguarding land for longer-term developments. It also maintains the presumption against inappropriate development and refines the categories of appropriate development, including making provision for the future of major existing developed sites and revising policy on the re-use of buildings. This final point is of particular relevance to the examination.
- 2.2 Annex C of PPG2 refers to the future of major developed sites (MDS) such as factories, collieries and research establishments in the Green Belt. It states that *“these sites remain subject to development control policies for Green Belts and the Green Belt notation should be carried across them”*. It goes on to state that *“if a major developed site is specifically identified for the purposes of this Annex in an adopted local plan or UDP [now the Core Strategy], infilling or redevelopment which meets the criteria in paragraph C3 or C4 is not inappropriate development. In this context infilling means the filling of gaps between built development”*.
- 2.3 Paragraphs C3 and C4 set out situations where identification of a MDS may be appropriate. These include where limited infilling at major developed sites in continuing use may help to secure jobs and prosperity without further prejudicing the Green Belt and where the complete or partial redevelopment of an MDS, either redundant or in continuing use, may offer the opportunity for environmental improvement without adding to their impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it.

2.4 The Annex goes on to set out criteria that should be met in respect of infilling and redevelopment. In the case of the former these are:

- a) have no greater impact on the purposes of including land in the Green Belt (paragraph 1.5) than the existing development;
- b) not exceed the height of the existing buildings; and
- c) not lead to a major increase in the developed proportion of the site.

2.5 In relation to redevelopment they are:

- a) have no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it, and where possible have less;
- b) contribute to the achievement of the objectives for the use of land in Green Belts (paragraph 1.6 - see also paragraph 3.13);
- c) not exceed the height of the existing buildings; and
- d) not occupy a larger area of the site than the existing buildings (unless this would
- e) achieve a reduction in height which would benefit visual amenity).

3. The McLaren Group Headquarters site

3.1 The McLaren Group has occupied its Chertsey Road site (west of the A320) since 2004, following completion of the McLaren Technology Centre (MTC). Planning permission for its corporate headquarters with research, development and automotive production, an associated museum and associated highway works was granted in 1997 following a public inquiry, which followed a call-in by the Secretary of State. The public inquiry focussed to a large extent on whether very special circumstances existed to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The Secretary of State concluded that such circumstances did exist.

3.2 In 2009 a new McLaren Production Centre (MPC) together with a new pedestrian link and tunnel, entrance rotunda, hard and soft landscape proposals, vehicular and cycle parking and associated infrastructure and works was approved by Woking Borough Council on land adjoining the MTC. At this time the Council accepted that *“given the economic benefits of the proposal which result from McLaren’s unique position in the automotive industry and associated research and development and the close alignment of the proposals to the economic growth principles of the SE Plan and emerging national guidance, it is considered that a highly-compelling argument is advanced”*. The proposals were considered to be key to the health both of the local economy and of the south east region as a whole.

3.3 In January 2012 a further outline planning application for the McLaren Applied Technology Centre (MATC) of up to 60,000 sq.m. floorspace, together with hard and soft landscape proposals, earthworks including creation of new lakes, a new vehicular access, an underground circulation tunnel, vehicular and cycle parking, service areas, and associated infrastructure and

works including a foul water pumping station and electricity sub-stations on land to the east of the A320 was considered by Woking Borough Council. The Council resolved to grant planning consent subject to the completion of a Section 106 legal agreement. This agreement is currently being finalised and the Secretary of State confirmed on 1 February he would not call-in the application for determination.

- 3.4 The MTC and MPC parkland site currently occupy around 50 hectares. The proposed MATC will occupy a further 23.4 hectares. All of this land lies within the Green Belt, and it is the intention that the development will be known as the McLaren Campus at Woking. The extent of this Campus is shown in the illustrative campus masterplan at appendix 1. It is evident that the development comprises a major physical presence within the Green Belt, although this has been very carefully designed to assimilate with its surroundings and not detract from the Green Belt function.
- 3.5 The McLaren Group has made a significant commitment to Woking through siting its headquarters and other facilities here. It makes a significant contribution to the local economy, currently employing over 1,800 people, with a further 350 people anticipated to be employed at the MATC. It is one of the largest employers in the local area with 58% of employees living in Surrey in 2010 (23% within Woking Borough itself).
- 3.6 The McLaren Group is intrinsically linked to Woking and wishes to remain so for the foreseeable future. This is evidenced by the intention to make a significant investment in the MATC. The McLaren Group contains a number of companies that are intrinsically linked and it is crucial that as the need for further business space arises it is possible to accommodate it at McLaren's Woking site.

4. The implications of identifying the McLaren Group headquarters site as a Major Developed Site

- 4.1 As set out above PPG2 allows for infilling or redevelopment at MDS subject to various criteria being met. It can be seen that the developments which have been completed, or are subject to a resolution to grant, at the McLaren Group site does not fall easily within either of these two types of development. The facilities are state of the art, are specifically designed for the purpose for which they used and are not readily suitable for infilling. Given the headquarters has only been constructed in recent years there is little likelihood of the site being redeveloped. While flexibility to undertake minor infilling, extension and change could be advantageous to McLaren, the identification of the site as an MDS would not necessarily be the most appropriate policy response for McLaren's particular circumstances. This may potentially hinder the site's further development, making it more difficult for the company to develop in the future, should development be limited to that permitted within the MDS.
- 4.2 The McLaren Group is at the forefront of British high tech engineering and innovation. It provides significant economic benefits not just at a local level

but also at a regional level. The Group capitalises on its ability to translate technological and scientific prowess into viable commercial opportunities, a skill which must be supported if Britain is to become more competitive in the global economy. If McLaren is to continue to build on its success a positive planning policy framework is necessary to support it. It is not considered that its identification as an MDS would necessarily assist this.

- 4.3 Whilst the McLaren Group Headquarters will remain in the Green Belt under the Core Strategy, PPG2 and the emerging National Planning Policy Framework would not prevent further development of the site, provided that very special circumstances could be demonstrated. Continuation of the status quo would not impose any greater restrictions than currently exist whereas the identified of the site as an MDS could.

5. Conclusion

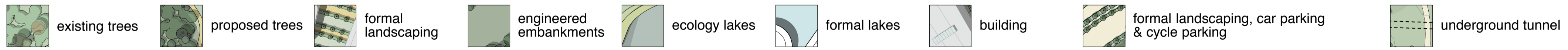
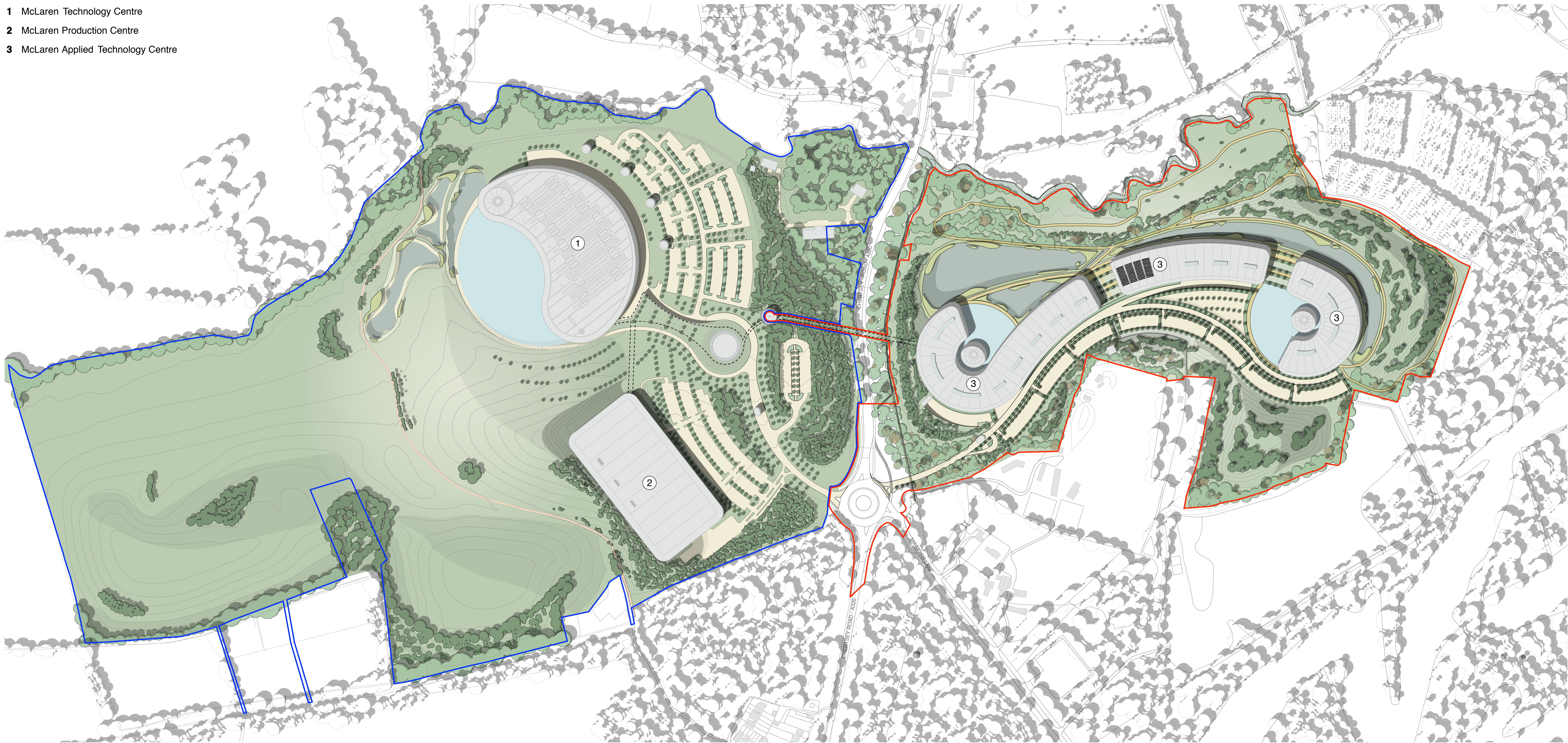
- 5.1 In conclusion it is not considered appropriate to designate the McLaren Group headquarters site as a Major Developed Site. This would potentially stifle further development at the site. The site is unique in terms of its development of advanced technologies and its contribution to the economy of Woking and the south east region in economic terms and in terms of employee numbers.
- 5.2 A more appropriate strategy would be to recognise the McLaren Group headquarters unique position within the Green Belt and its particular accommodation requirements. We therefore request that Policy CS6 include the following paragraph:

“The McLaren Group headquarters is established within the green belt, north of Woking. This is a unique situation in recognition of the very special circumstances arising from McLaren Group operations and their particular accommodation requirements, which cannot always be met in existing industrial estates or urban employment sites within the Borough. The Council will continue to work with McLaren to seek to accommodate the Group's specific requirements within the Borough.”

Appendix 1

**Illustrative Campus Masterplan, September 2011, reference:
*135717/P002 Rev A***

- 1 McLaren Technology Centre
- 2 McLaren Production Centre
- 3 McLaren Applied Technology Centre



The McLaren Campus at Woking

