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Planning Policy Team
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22 July 2015

Our Reference: 135726

Dear Planning Policy Team

Reference: Woking Site Allocations DPD public consultation (18 June 2015 to 31 July 2015)

I am writing on behalf of McLaren Technologies Group Limited (hereafter McLaren), in respect of the consultation on Woking Borough Council's draft Site Allocations DPD. McLaren's headquarters is located within Woking Borough on land to the west of the A320, within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

It is acknowledged that the main purpose of the draft site allocations DPD is to assist Woking Borough Council in the identification of sufficient land to ensure it has and maintains a five-year housing land supply. Not surprisingly therefore the draft plan subject to consultation focuses on the identification of land around the periphery of the built-up area that has necessitated a review of the green belt boundary.

However the DPD is much more as it indicates it's purpose is to:

'... allocate land for a range of uses to deliver the spatial vision and objectives of the Woking 2027 Core Strategy.

... By allocating land for particular purposes, the Site Allocations DPD establishes in principle the land uses that will be supported by the Local Planning Authority for development of that land. The Site Allocations DPD provides a framework for clear and consistent decision making, giving greater certainty to both the local community and developers.'

Consequently, the plan is not limited to housing land allocations but should accommodate a range of uses that will deliver the spatial vision. This includes the identification of employment and economically beneficial sites.

In past years, following the establishment of the McLaren Technology Centre (MTC), discussions took place with the council over recognising the importance



of the site and use to the local, regional and national economy. At the time there was pressure for additional development as the company expanded. To provide certainty for the company and community it was investigated whether or not there was merit in identifying the site through the development plan as a major development in the green belt. Such a designation would support in principle a limited amount of additional development quantum at the site. It would not remove the need to seek planning approval but would, within set parameters, remove the need for 'very special circumstances' to be demonstrated for any or all scales of development.

The suggestion was not taken up, but since that time we have progressed approval and implementation of the McLaren Production Centre (MPC) and permissions for the McLaren Applied Technology Centre (MATC), each time presenting a set of very special circumstances to justify the green belt development.

At the planning committee meeting on 5th May 2015 some councillors raised the question of what controls exist at the site and what will come next, and during the preceding site visit we were asked by more than one councillor if there was merit in having a site specific policy covering McLaren's site and activities.

In the light of these comments McLaren wishes to raise, through this DPD consultation opportunity, once more the possibility of a site specific policy, potentially highlighting the suitability and appropriateness of allocating their headquarters site as a 'major developed site in the green belt'.

For nearly 50 years the McLaren Group has operated at the forefront of British automotive engineering and design from its base in Woking. Its consistent success within Formula 1 has led to its automotive components being incorporated into other race cars, the success of the McLaren Formula 1 road car, the Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren road car, and the Group's confidence in its new range of McLaren road-going sports cars. The most recently created company, McLaren Applied Technologies (MAT), has led to the diversification of the Group into new markets.

The primary objective of MAT is to explore and develop commercial opportunities that leverage the technology, assets and brand of the McLaren Group, and bring them into markets far removed from motorsport such as consumer goods, healthcare, software and sports technology.

To secure the success of any future growth and expansion, investment must be at the right time and in the right place. To stay at the forefront of open innovation, ahead of competing companies and nations, McLaren needs to be better equipped and resourced.

Woking has always been home to McLaren, and this is where the Group believes its future is. To a large extent this is because of the degree of fit between the Group and the locality. Many of McLaren's employees live within Woking, and McLaren has also established a large supply chain network within the locality.

There were no suitable sites for McLaren within Woking or immediately adjoining the built up area when the MTC was proposed. As the company has developed,



its choice of site and the council's support of it has proven ideal for the beneficial growth of the business. It is not known how much growth the company will go through in the future or whether that growth should be, or could be, located at Woking. Nevertheless, and acknowledging that further planning applications would be required, the identification of the site through a positive policy would provide some flexibility to allow the company to react quickly to changing market conditions with some certainty.

McLaren's headquarters site is located within the metropolitan green belt. Each planning application to date has therefore had to demonstrate that very special circumstances exist to outweigh harm to the green belt. As well as this, each application has also had to be referred to the Secretary of State as the proposed development represents a departure from green belt policy. Each application has clearly demonstrated the presence of very special circumstances that significantly outweigh any harm caused to the green belt. The nature of McLaren's operations, and the world-class design approach employed, will continue to ensure that these very special circumstances exist. The current process is resulting in significant delays and costs, in having each time to present very special circumstances and referral to the Secretary of State, when these are now well accepted and rehearsed. Removing that necessity would assist both the company and council in any future development proposals.

Woking Borough Council's adopted Core Strategy defines major development sites within the green belt as follows:

'Green Belts contain some Major Development Sites such as factories, collieries, power stations, water and sewage treatment works, military establishments, civic airfields, hospitals, and research and education establishments... These sites remain subject to development control policies for Green Belts, and the Green Belt notation should be carried across them, however, infilling or redevelopment is not inappropriate development in sites allocated as Major Development Sites in DPDs.'

Policy CS6 allocates sites as major developed sites within the green belt. The policy stipulates that it allows for the limited infilling and redevelopment of the sites without compromising the integrity of the green belt, with the suitability of any scheme measured against this requirement.

The mechanism is already therefore in place to allow major developed sites to be identified through the DPD without compromising the Core Strategy, and would allow the policy to be tested such that Secretary of State referral would be unnecessary. McLaren's headquarters site is ideally suited to such a designation, as it would provide greater certainty of future development, whilst providing the security to Woking Borough Council that the proposals will still need to be fully assessed in accordance with the NPPF and Development Plan.

Page 3 of the draft Site Allocations DPD outlines that the purpose of the document is to deliver the spatial vision and objectives of the Core Strategy. It is explained that:

'The site allocation makes clear where development will take place in the future, what kind of development that will be and when it is likely to take



place. By allocating land for particular purposes, the Site Allocations DPD establishes in principle the land uses that will be supported by the Local Planning Authority for development of that land. The Site Allocations DPD provides a framework for clear and consistent decision making, giving greater certainty to both the local community and developers.'

Table 6 within Appendix 5 of the draft DPD outlines the principle Core Strategy policies and strategic objectives that the DPD's site allocations will assist in delivering. The previous planning applications have highlighted that the developments adhere to, and deliver the development aspirations of the Core Strategy. However, McLaren's contribution to the delivery of the Core Strategy's strategic objectives is outlined within the table below.

Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:

Core Strategic Objective	McLaren's contribution
Objective 1: Diverse range of development in Woking Town Centre	McLaren's headquarters site would not be an appropriate land use for a town centre location. It does not compete with or prejudice development coming forward within Woking Town Centre, and therefore does not conflict with Objective 1.
Objective 2: Enable attractive and sustainable development of district and local centres	As per response to Objective 1 above.
Objective 3: Enable provision of well designed homes of different types, tenures and affordability	The site does not prejudice the delivery of housing within the borough.
Objective 4: Protect integrity of the Green Belt	Each planning application has demonstrated the many benefits the development provides that outweighs any harm to the green belt. McLaren also employs a world-class design approach to all their development, which looks to reflect its surroundings and minimise any landscape and visual impacts, as well as minimising environmental issues. The site is also self-contained, with opportunities to extend beyond the current boundaries not available. Allocation of the site would therefore not prejudice the protection of the Green Belt's integrity.
Objective 5: Enable a buoyant local economy	The operations taking place within McLaren's headquarters site is of national economic significance. At the local level McLaren is a significant employer (currently c.2,800 people are based at McLaren's headquarters site), and has also established an extensive local supply chain network. Many employees also live within Woking, which further supports the economic growth of the town and wider job creation.
Objective 6: Lead the way in high quality sustainable development that minimises the adverse impacts of climate change	As per response to Objective 8.
Objective 7: Maintain and improve air and water quality	All development delivered within the headquarters site to date has had no detrimental impact upon air or water quality. McLaren's commitment to a world-class design approach will ensure that any future development would not result in any detrimental impacts upon air or water quality.
Objective 8: Encourage high quality design of buildings, neighbourhoods and the public realm	McLaren applies a world-class design approach to their headquarters site. This covers every spectrum of design including the architectural appearance of the development, how it responds to the surrounding landscape and green belt location, sustainable design and development approaches to reduce energy consumption and minimise climate change



	impacts, the choice of materials chosen, and how the development sits within the landscape with high quality planting also encouraging biodiversity.
Objective 9: Ensure provision of community infrastructure	N/A.
Objective 10: Work in partnership with Surrey County Council and other stakeholders	McLaren has established strong working relationships with Woking Borough Council, Surrey County Council and other key stakeholders. This has ensured the delivery of high quality development within McLaren's headquarters site to the satisfaction of all involved.
Objective 11: Provide an integrated effective transport interchange improving Woking Railway Station as a focus	McLaren actively promotes sustainable transport options for their staff commuting to and from the site. This has included the introduction of a staff minibus service, which runs between the site and Woking Town Centre, stopping at the railway station and encouraging use of rail travel as a means of transport.
Objective 12: Preserve and enhance the cultural, historic, biodiversity and geodiversity features of the Borough	The development of the headquarters site has improved biodiversity through a varied planting and landscape scheme including the provision of lakes and surface water ponds and widespread planting of trees and other vegetation including wildflower meadows. Development at the site does not impact upon the cultural, historic or geodiversity features of the Borough.
Objective 13: Significantly reduce absolute and relative deprivation	McLaren is a significant local employer (currently c. 2800 people are based at McLaren's headquarters site), and has also established an extensive local supply chain network. They also therefore support job creation, with many employees living within Woking, further supporting the economic growth of the town and wider job creation.

It is clear that there would be huge benefits in allocating McLaren's headquarters site within the Site Allocations DPD and any further Development Plan documents. Allocation of the site would provide greater certainty to McLaren, Woking Borough Council and the wider community, as it would outline the level development acceptable going forward.

McLaren's headquarters site is a truly unique development that is at the forefront of science, engineering and innovation. The McLaren group of companies are continually evolving, developing and expanding and is a global leader in the science and engineering fields. The greater certainty provided through a site allocation would provide the ability to be able to effectively plan for growth, ensuring the continued success of McLaren to the benefit of the Group, its employees, Woking Borough Council and the residents of Woking.

McLaren would very much welcome the opportunity to discuss these proposals with you further.

I very much look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

pp 

Haydn Morris
Director

cc

Simon Lake

McLaren Technologies Group Limited