

Hebburn Metro Station Replacement Platform Prior Approval Assessment

Nexus Metro Flow

LICHFIELDS

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SouthernGreen |

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Prior Approval Assessment has been prepared by Lichfields and Southern Green on behalf of Nexus, in order to accompany an application seeking 'prior approval' for a replacement Metro station at Hebburn, in South Tyneside.
- 1.2 The proposed works form part of Nexus' Metro Flow Project, which involves the dualling of the three single track sections from Pelaw to Bede. The divested Network Rail track that runs alongside the Metro line in this location will be utilised and upgraded to create the dual tracked sections, creating more network capacity for trains to run more frequently. In order to accommodate freight traffic on the Metro system, track lowers are required in overbridge locations throughout the project area.
- 1.3 This includes Hebburn Metro Station, which has split platforms either side of Station Road bridge and, due to the proximity of the platforms, the track lowers will also result in the need to replace the present station.
- 1.4 Nexus proposes to lower both platforms at Hebburn, which will necessitate the demolition of the current station buildings and their replacement with like-for-like facilities with lower platform heights to accommodate the track lowering works.

2.0 Legislative Context

2.1 This Prior Approval Assessment has been prepared in the context of the requirements of Part 18 Class A of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) ('the GPDO').

2.2 A Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use or Development was issued by South Tyneside Council (the 'Council') to Nexus in December 2020 (ref. ST/0476/20/CLP) in respect of the Metro railway between Pelaw and Jarrow.

2.3 This application was described as follows:

"Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for proposed use or development in relation to the dual tracking of the metro railway (development to pre-existing light and heavy rail network) between Pelaw and Jarrow Stations (the Metro Flow Project, as detailed within the submitted Supporting Technical Note) and all associated development."

2.4 The certificate confirms the use of Part 18 Class A of the GPDO is appropriate for the subject matter of the certificate based upon the provisions of the Tyneside Metropolitan Railway Act 1973, The Railways Clauses Consolidation Act 1845, and the North-Eastern Railway Companies (Pelaw and Other Branches) Act 1865. In terms of the requirements of Part 18 Class A, these Acts collectively confirm that the branch line is an existing railway, owned by Nexus and that as the owner it has all necessary powers to construct a railway (including stations) between Pelaw and Jarrow.

2.5 The information submitted by Nexus also confirmed that the subject development would not amount to Environmental Impact Assessment development.

2.6 Hebburn Station is situated between Pelaw and Jarrow Stations and, as such, the proposed development falls within the scope of the December 2020 Certificate of Lawful Proposed Use or Development. The subject Prior Approval Assessment therefore seeks to address the requirements of the GPDO, which confirms at Part 18 Class A that permitted development comprises:

A. Development authorised by—

(a) a local or private Act of Parliament,

(b) an order approved by both Houses of Parliament, or

(c) an order under section 14 or 16 of the Harbours Act 1964 (orders for securing harbour efficiency etc, and orders conferring powers for improvement, construction etc of harbours)(1),

which designates specifically the nature of the development authorised and the land upon which it may be carried out.

2.7 Such development is, however, subject to the following conditions:

A.1 Development is not permitted by Class A if it consists of or includes—

(a) the erection, construction, alteration or extension of any building, bridge, aqueduct, pier or dam; or

(b) the formation, laying out or alteration of a means of access to any highway used by vehicular traffic,

unless the prior approval of the appropriate authority to the detailed plans and specifications is first obtained.

- 2.8 It is considered that the works proposed to Hebburn Metro Station relate to ‘a building’¹. The prior approval of the Council is therefore required for the works comprising the development of a new Metro station at Hebburn. The GPDO goes on to explain that:

A.2 The prior approval referred to in paragraph A.1 is not to be refused by the appropriate authority nor are conditions to be imposed unless they are satisfied that—

(a) the development (other than the provision of or works carried out to a dam) ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land; or

(b) the design or external appearance of any building, bridge, aqueduct, pier or dam would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood and is reasonably capable of modification to avoid such injury.

- 2.9 The two considerations in approving this Prior Approval Assessment are therefore those set out at condition A2, namely whether the development ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land, or the design or external appearance of the building would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood and is reasonably capable of modification to avoid such injury.

- 2.10 Following an initial analysis of the planning, visual and design context to the subject site, these two considerations are addressed at Sections 4 and 5 of this Assessment respectively.

¹ Article 2 of the GPDO defines “building” as: a. includes any structure or erection and, except in Class F of Part 2, [Classes P and PA of Part 3,] Class B of Part 11, Classes A to I of Part 14, Classes A, B and C of Part 16 and Class T of Part 19, of Schedule 2, includes any part of a building; and b. does not include plant or machinery and, in Schedule 2, except in Class F of Part 2 and Class C of Part 11, does not include any gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure;

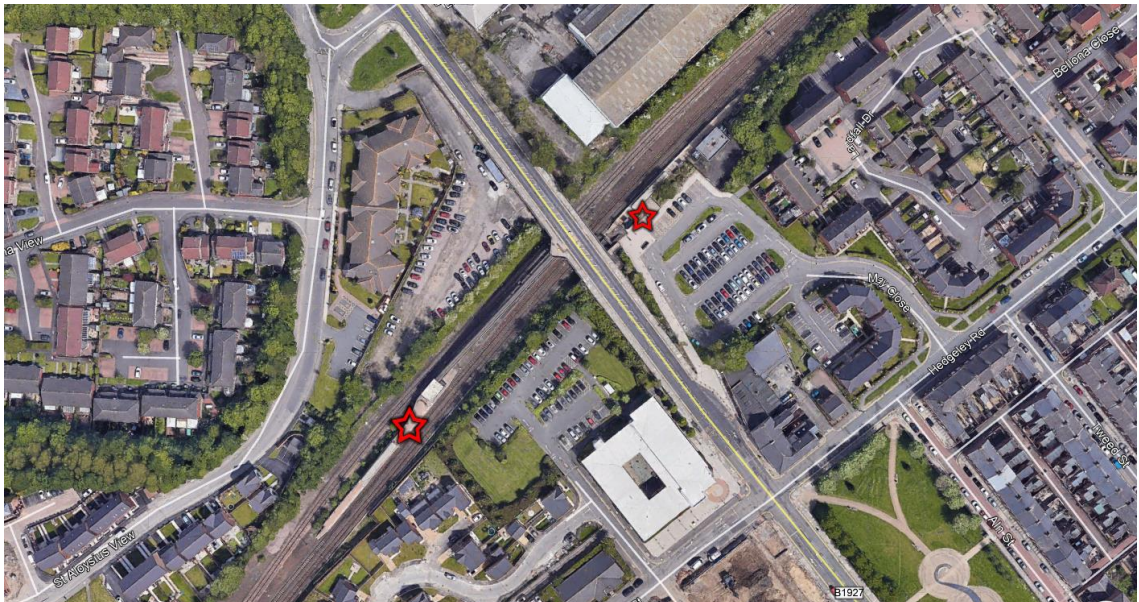
3.0 Planning and Design Context

- 3.1 In the context of the requirements of Condition A2, this Section considers the characteristics of the prior approval site from a planning and design perspective following a site visit and desk-based review.

The Subject Site and the Prior Approval Proposals

- 3.2 The site of the works in relation to which prior approval is sought – hereafter referred to as ‘the site’ – is located on Station Road/Glen Street within Hebburn Town Centre. The site comprises the existing Hebburn Metro Station which provides frequent Metro services across the wider Tyne and Wear conurbation, including in an easterly direction toward South Shields and a westerly direction toward Newcastle Upon Tyne, with a separate connection to Sunderland.

Figure 3.1 Google Earth



Source: Hebburn Metro Station Platforms 1 and 2, and the surrounding area

- 3.3 Hebburn Metro Station consists of split platforms either side of Station Road (B1927) bridge, with step-free access available to both platforms. As outlined above, the subject application proposes to demolish both Platform 1 and 2 at Hebburn Metro Station and reinstate them, in situ, at a level 300 mm below the present platforms. The platforms currently include seating, shelters for waiting and ticket machines. The station also includes cycle parking and a car park adjacent to Platform 2. All of these features would be reinstated.
- 3.4 Both platforms were constructed as part of the original Metro line works in the 1980s and are efficient and functional in terms of their design.
- 3.5 Platform 1 is situated between the Metro line tracks themselves to the west of Station Road, with both the Eastbound and Westbound Metro lines situated to the south of the platform and the separate Network Rail freight line to the north. The platform is accessed via a covered ramp from Station Road, which is the main north to south thoroughfare through Hebburn.

Figure 3.2 Platform 1, Hebburn Metro Station



Figure 3.3 Platform 2



Source: Lichfields

3.6

Platform 2 is situated to the east of Station Road and is accessed at grade via a large surface level car park. The car park would be retained by Nexus for the use of their customers. A substation is

also located immediately adjacent to Platform 2, accessed via the car park, and will be unaffected by the application proposals.

The Surrounding Area

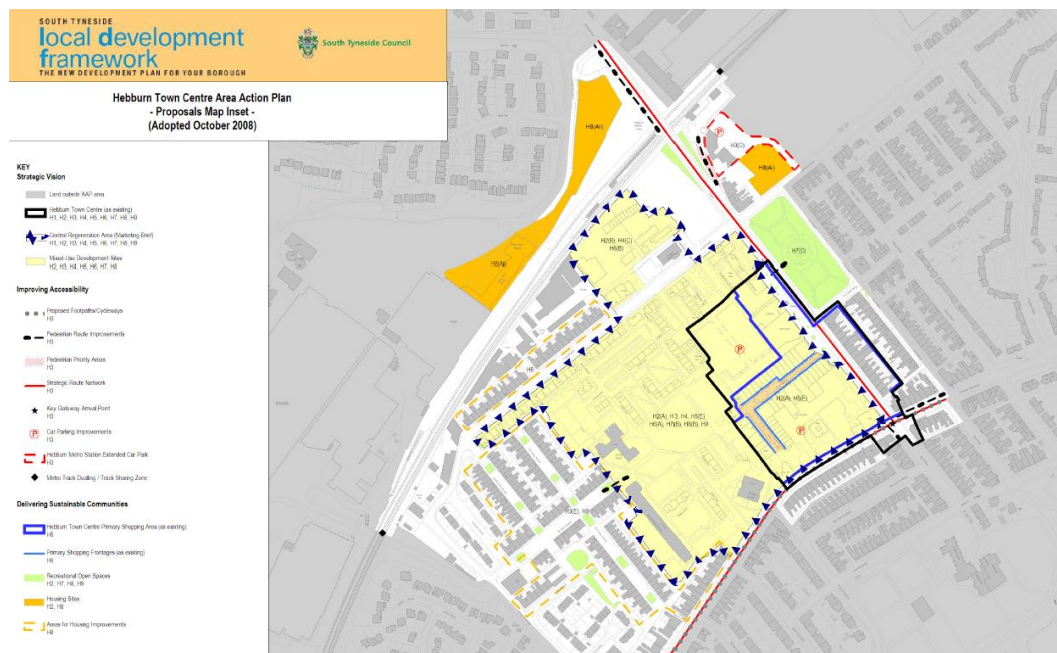
3.7 The subject site is located within Hebburn Town Centre, and is therefore bounded by a variety of uses, as follows:

- To the north by a band of mature trees, with residential development comprising Persimmon's Riverside Village, and also Martin Brothers Motor Company car dealership, a residential care home with other housing and industrial development beyond this;
- To the south by Gleeson's residential development, commercial premises along Glenn Street, an Aldi supermarket, the station car park, and the wider facilities and services of Hebburn Town Centre beyond including a swimming pool, library and retail provision;
- To the east by Station Road and Nexus' car park, with further areas of housing beyond this;
- To the west by the Tyne and Wear Metro Line, residential properties and other commercial businesses.

3.8 The site is located within an area characterised by a mix of land uses, including commercial, residential and community facilities. The design and character of the area varies, with the modern style residential development to the North West of the site, and the new contemporary design Aldi store combined with the existing commercial properties along Glen Street and traditional brickworked properties to the east of the site. There is no clear design or visual vernacular or character tying together the various buildings and uses in the vicinity.

3.9 In addition, further to the south east of the site, lies Fountain Park providing an attractive landscaped open space for the public.

Figure 3.4 The adopted development plan for the site, showing the lack of any sensitive design or landscape designations



Source: South Tyneside Council

3.10 Indeed, the adopted development plan (the Hebburn Town Centre Area Action Plan, adopted October 2008) confirms that the site sits within an area characterised by regeneration and redevelopment opportunities.

- 3.11 In terms of residential amenity, Platform 1 is situated approximately 20 m to the nearest property to the south, across the Metro line, at the Gleeson's residential development off Glenn Street. The Gleeson properties closest to the metro line are bound by a high fenceline, minimising the visual impact of the current Metro Station. There is also the Persimmon Riverside Village approximately 30m to the north of the site. The Riverside Village is separated from the Metro line by a mature band of trees and a close boarded fence, again reducing the visual impact of the Rail line on the residential properties. The closest residential properties to Platform Two, are situated around 35m to the east on Landfall Drive.
- 3.12 Following a review of Historic England's list of designated heritage assets, there are no identified listed buildings within the vicinity of the site. The closest listed building is the Church of St Aloysius (Grade II), approximately 200 m to the north of the site, to the north of Station Road bridge. In addition, the site is situated approximately 450m from the nearest Conservation Area, Hebburn Hall Conservation Area. Hebburn Hall itself is Grade II listed and is located to the south of the site, beyond Hebburn Town Centre.
- 3.13 By its very nature, the site is accessible by a choice of means of transport. As well as the frequent services of the Tyne and Wear Metro system, connecting the site with the wider Tyne and Wear conurbation, the site is easily accessible for pedestrians and by car. A network of pedestrian footways link the site both to Hebburn Town Centre, and the surrounding residential areas. The site is approximately 25m walk from the nearest bus stop on Station Road, from which bus services provide frequent access to nearby residential areas including Hebburn, Monkton and Bill Quay. There are also bus stop located on Hedgeley Road, a short distance to the east of the site.
- 3.14 The site is also easily accessible by car from Hebburn Town Centre and surrounding areas via Station Road and Prince Consort Road, with a dedicated Metro Car Park to the east of Station Road. This car park would be retained by Nexus for the use of customers as part of these prior approval proposals.

Summary

- 3.15 The subject site comprises the existing Hebburn Metro Station, which dates from the 1980s and is split across separate platforms to the east and west of Station Road. The station is functional in terms of design. The subject application proposes to demolish both Platform 1 and 2 at Hebburn Metro Station and reinstate them, in situ, at a level 300 mm below the present platforms. Both platforms are accessed directly from Station Road, which offers a clear and legible entrance to the station.
- 3.16 The site and the wider surrounding area are relatively unconstrained from a townscape and visual impact perspective, with no statutory listed buildings or conservation area within the vicinity, and there is no clear design or visual vernacular or character typifying the various buildings and uses in the area.
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4.0 Alternative Locations

- 4.1 Condition A.2(a) to the permitted development described at Part 18 Class A of the GPDO confirms that prior approval should not be refused by the local planning authority, nor conditions imposed, unless they are satisfied that the development (i.e. the redevelopment of both platforms in situ) ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land.
- 4.2 In light of the site context described at Section 3, there is no realistic alternative to the prior approval proposals outlined in this Prior Approval Assessment in order to facilitate the redevelopment of both platforms in situ.
- 4.3 On this basis, it would not be possible for the development to be located elsewhere on the land. Therefore, it cannot be said that the development ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land.

5.0 **Amenity Assessment**

- 5.1 In accordance with Condition A.2(b) of Part 18 Class A of the GPDO, this Section considers whether the design and appearance of the proposal would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood. This is based upon a Landscape and Visual Appraisal, prepared by Southern Green, which accompanies this application, together with a Baseline Lighting Survey and Noise Assessment, both prepared by NJD Environmental Associates.

Design and Appearance

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 5.2 As set out above, the site's immediate context is a built up urban environment and includes car parking (associated with the Metro station), key road infrastructure (Station Road) and associated footways, and nearby residential properties to the north and south of Platform 1, and east of Platform 2. There are also a number of commercial buildings to the south of the metro station and a small industrial estate to the north of Platform 2.
- 5.3 Within the immediate context of the Metro line, much of the track is lined with broadleaf trees and shrubs, which offer a degree of seasonal screening between the tracks and adjacent built form. The vegetation lining the tracks is also evident to the east and west. There are some deciduous shrubs and small trees between Platform 1 and the adjacent Metro tracks, and two trees and ornamental shrub planting are evident between Platform 2 and the station car park.
- 5.4 Based on the characteristics described within the National Character Areas NCA14: Tyne and Wear Lowlands it is considered there will no adverse effects on the landscape character within the surrounding area due to the small scale and minimal nature of the proposals. Changes to both the local landscape character type 'Urban' as well as the two landscape character areas the site falls within are considered to be negligible. The nature of the proposals to reinstate Platforms 1 and 2 at a lower level associated with the track lowering will therefore not be out of context within the local surroundings.
- 5.5 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal found that views toward the site are limited to the immediate corridor of the metro line, as well as localised roads and footways, primarily around Station road which allows elevated views east and west to both platforms.
- 5.6 There are a small number of residential receptors within the immediate local area, however due to the minimal nature of the proposals which includes reinstatement of the existing canopies and lighting it is anticipated that there will be no perceived changes in view and therefore no effect on these receptors.
- 5.7 Local road and footpath users have uninterrupted views toward both Platforms 1 and 2 from Station Road. Given the transient nature of both pedestrians and vehicle users across the bridge, as well as the scale and nature of the proposals it is considered there will be no effect on these receptors.
- 5.8 As the proposals do not introduce features uncharacteristic of the existing urban environment and immediate surrounding of Hebburn Metro Station, it is deemed that there would be no injury to the amenity of the neighbourhood from a landscape or visual perspective.

Noise

- 5.9 Both redeveloped platforms would remain in their present position but would sit 300 mm lower than the current station buildings. All shelters, lighting, station facilities such as ticket machines, and Tannoy systems will remain as per the current arrangements. On this basis, and

as confirmed within the Noise Assessment, the proposed development will not injure the amenity of the neighbourhood compared to the existing situation.

Lighting

- 5.10 The lighting of the proposed platforms will replicate that of the current platforms, albeit 300 mm lower in height. On this basis, and as confirmed within the Baseline Lighting Survey, there is unlikely to be any increase in light spill as a result of the proposals, and the amenity of nearby residents and the neighbourhood will be unaffected.

Modification

- 5.11 Southern Green identified several potential modifications to the development, which are incorporated into the prior approval proposals, to ensure there is no injury to the amenity of the neighbourhood. These include the retention of existing vegetation surrounding the Metro line and platforms, and the selection of materials for the new platforms which tie into existing surfaces and are in keeping with the present design. These modifications are detailed within the Landscape Visual Appraisal.
- 5.12 On this basis, it is not considered that the design and appearance of the proposed development would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 This Prior Approval Assessment has been prepared by Lichfields and Southern Green, on behalf of Nexus, to consider the acceptability of proposals for the redevelopment of Hebburn Metro Station in the context of the relevant planning regulations.
- 6.2 As part of the Metro Flow Project to dual the single track element of Metro rail infrastructure between Bede and Pelaw, with associated track lowering works, Nexus is required to replace the present station platforms at Hebburn. The subject application proposes to demolish both Platform 1 and 2 at Hebburn Metro Station and reinstate them, in situ, at a level 300 mm below the present platforms. Both platforms would be accessed directly from Station Road, which offers a clear and legible entrance to the station.
- 6.3 Following the approval of a Lawful Development Certificate in December 2020, these works comprise permitted development in accordance with Part 18 Class A of Schedule 2 of the GPDO, subject to an application seeking prior approval from the local planning authority.
- 6.4 The two considerations in the determination of this prior approval application are set out at Condition A2, namely whether the development ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land, or whether the design or external appearance of the building would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood and is reasonably capable of modification to avoid such injury.
- 6.5 In this regard, being situated in exactly the same location (albeit 300 mm lower) as the present platforms, within the confines of the railway itself, the prior approval proposals across both platforms would maintain the same functional and operational characteristics of the current facilities. On this basis, it is considered that it would not be possible for the development (i.e. the redevelopment of both platforms in situ) to be developed elsewhere on the land. As such, it cannot be said that the development ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land.
- 6.6 In addition, a detailed Landscape and Visual Appraisal undertaken by Southern Green confirms that the proposals do not introduce features uncharacteristic of the existing urban environment and immediate surroundings of Hebburn Metro Station, and it is deemed that there would be no effects on the landscape or visual receptors within the immediate surrounding area.
- 6.7 As both platforms would remain in the same location as the present structures, there will be no injury to the amenity of the neighbourhood as a result of noise or lighting.
- 6.8 On this basis, it is not considered that the design and appearance of the proposed development would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood.
- 6.9 In conclusion therefore, and in accordance with the provisions and conditions of Part 18 Class A of Schedule 2 of the GPDO, prior approval should be issued by the Council for the proposed development without the imposition of conditions.
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