

Hebburn Metro Station Island Platform Prior Approval Assessment

Nexus Metro Flow

July 2021

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 replace the present split platforms at Hebburn with a single ‘island’ platform in the location of the present Platform 1. Both of the existing platforms would be demolished and, as well as achieving a lower platform height to facilitate the track lowering works, the new consolidated station would provide an enhanced facility for Hebburn and the local area.

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 Lawful 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 development 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 the owner 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 Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, 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,*
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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 South Tyneside 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;

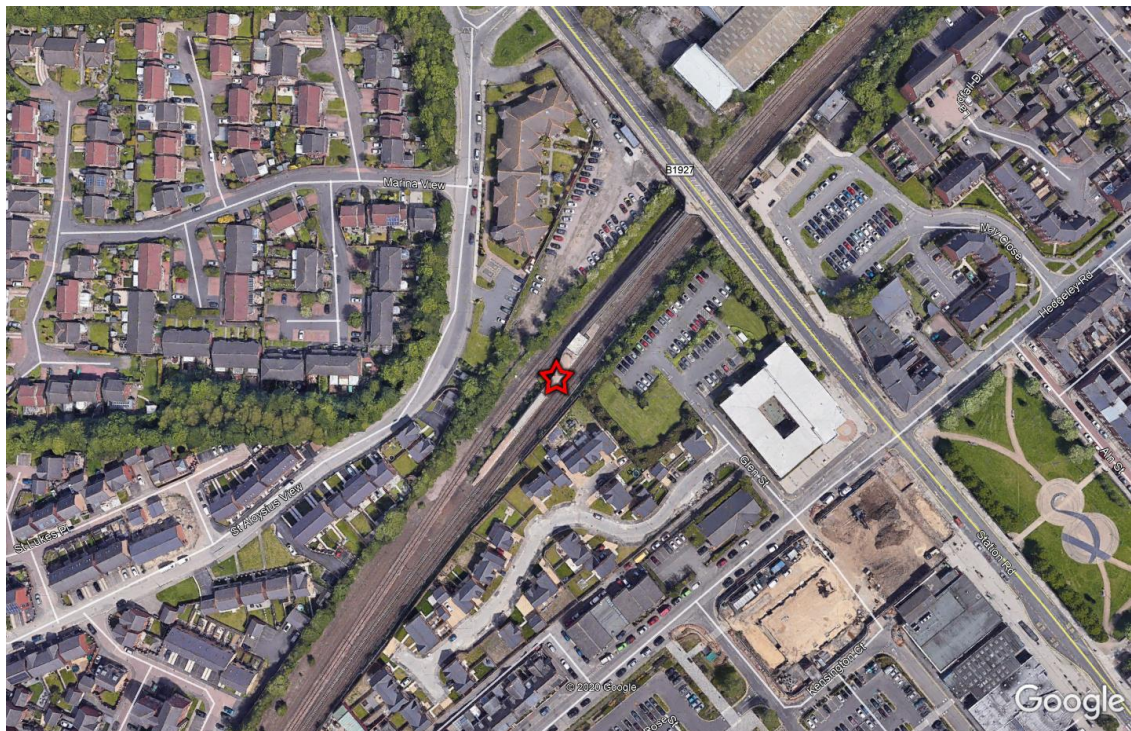
3.0 Planning and Design Context

- 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 prior approval site – 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 (centred on Platform1) 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. 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.
- 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, which would be redeveloped to accommodate the new ‘island’ platform, 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



Source: Lichfields

Figure 3.3 Platform 2, Hebburn Metro Station



Source: Lichfields

3.7 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, following the demolition of Platform 2. A substation is also located immediately adjacent to Platform 2, accessed via the car park, and will be unaffected by the application proposals.

3.8 Following the demolition of Platform 2, the area formerly occupied by the station would be fenced off and secured by Nexus.

The Surrounding Area

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

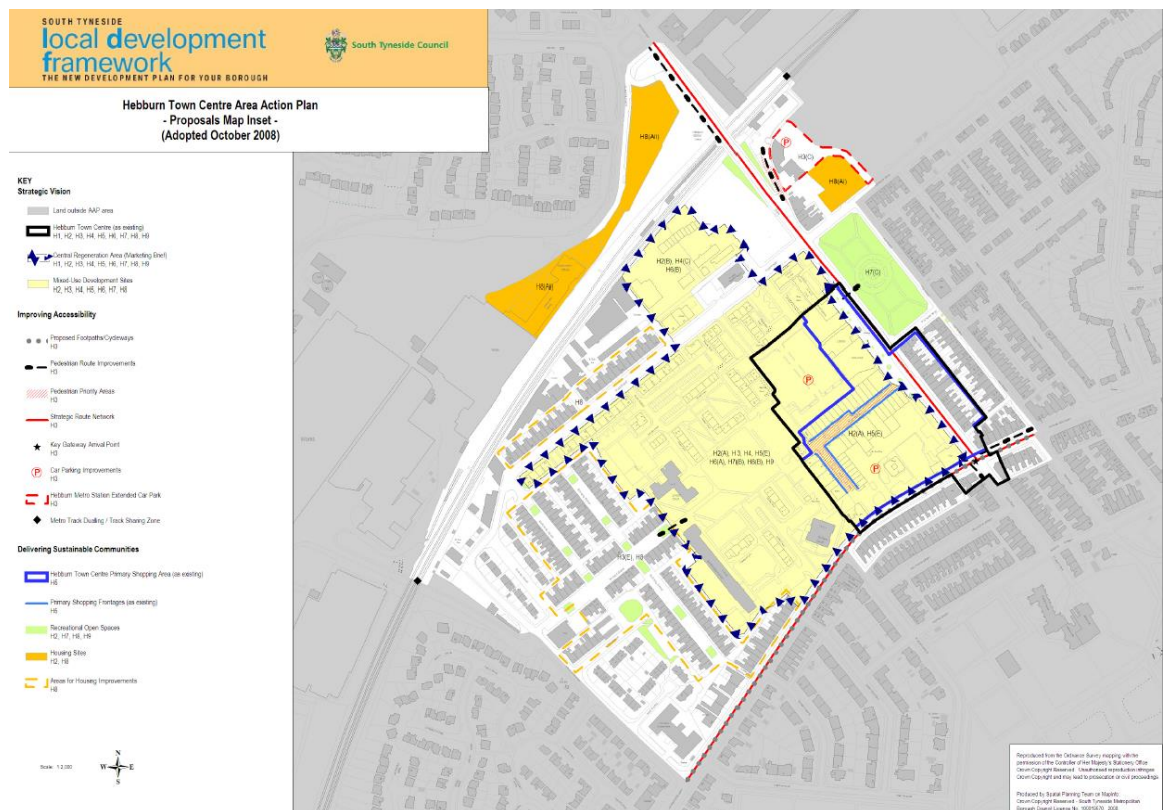
- To the north by a band of mature trees, with residential development comprising Persimmon's Riverside Village, and also Martin Brothers Motor Company car dealership, a residential care home with other housing beyond this;
- To the south by Gleeson's residential development, commercial premises along Glenn Street, an Aldi supermarket 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.

3.10 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.

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

3.12 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.

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



Source: South Tyneside Council

- 3.13 In terms of residential amenity, the site 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.
- 3.14 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 east 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.
- 3.15 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.
- 3.16 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

- 3.17 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, and would benefit from redevelopment. Platform 1 itself, which would be subject to redevelopment as an 'island' platform, is situated within the bounds of the train line itself and is therefore relatively divorced in design terms from the wider area. The platform is accessed directly from Station Road, which offers a clear and legible entrance to the station.
- 3.18 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.

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 unless they are satisfied that the development (i.e. an 'island' platform) 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, the only realistic alternative to the redevelopment of Platform 1 as an island platform serving both the east- and west-bound Metro services would be the construction of an island platform between the rail tracks to the east of Station Road.
- 4.3 Given the width of the track to the east of the Station Road overbridge, it would not be possible to develop an island platform in this location. Moreover, the provisions of the GPDO require an assessment as to whether the building 'ought' to be developed elsewhere. In this regard, it is necessary to utilise the existing ramped access to Platform 1 as the introduction of an additional new ramped access to the east of the Station Road overbridge would render the entire development financially unviable.

Figure 4.1 Platform 2, which could be rebuilt following the track lowering works



Source: Lichfields

- 4.4 Through their extensive and ongoing feasibility work as part of Metro flow, Nexus has carefully considered whether any reasonable alternatives exist to achieve a single "island platform". However, in light of the constraints described above, it was concluded that the opportunity to provide a consolidated platform serving both train lines in a single location in place of Platform 1 is preferable from both an operational, cost and regeneration point of view. In terms of
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accessibility, customers could more easily transfer from one line to the other and the new station would be easily accessed via the existing route off Station Road.

- 4.5 The provision of an island platform offers the opportunity to develop a distinctive and modern building to reflect the wider regeneration of Hebburn. Being set within the confines of the train line itself, in the location of the existing Platform 1, the new platforms would minimise any detrimental impact upon surrounding visual receptors and have a clearly defined and identifiable presence off Station Road.
- 4.6 On this basis, it cannot be said that the development ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land..
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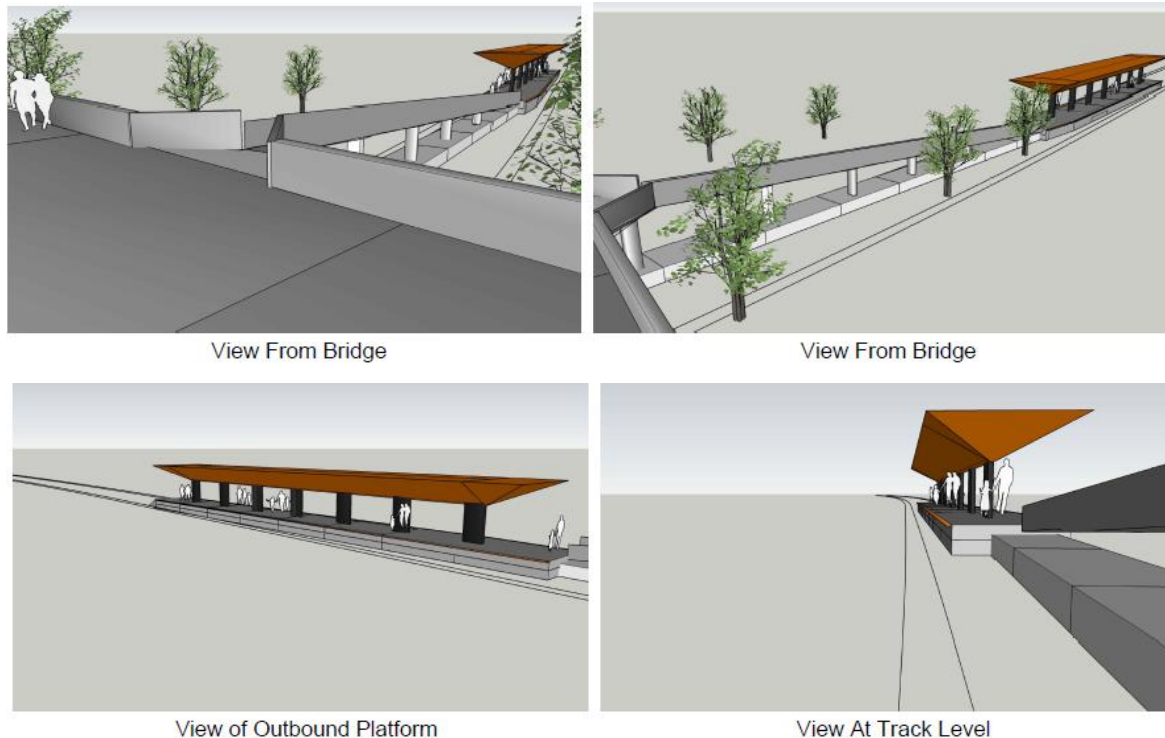
5.0 Amenity Assessment

- 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 is enclosed as part of the subject application, together with a Baseline Lighting Survey and Noise Assessment, prepared by NJD Environmental Associates.

Design and Appearance

- 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, 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 The site and its surroundings are typical of the Urban Landscape Character Type, as defined within the South Tyneside Landscape Character Study (March, 2012).

Figure 5.1 Sketches illustrating the appearance of the new Metro station



Source: Nexus

- 5.5 The prior approval proposals are predominantly located to the west of the Station Road overbridge, with a new platform and canopy centred in the tracks and therefore potential to affect the local character of the Hebburn North and Hebburn Centre character areas. Taking
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into consideration the limited extent of works, and that the existing station is merely being replaced, it is considered that the proposals will not adversely affect the local landscape character. The proposals are minimal and in keeping with the existing land use and wider Landscape Character Type 'Urban'.

- 5.6 Visual receptor analysis undertaken by Southern Green demonstrates how features along the site boundaries, and within the immediate adjacent landscape, currently help to contain and minimise views to the site. Moreover, the topography of the site and surrounding area and the nature of the vegetation adjacent to the site also restrict views.
- 5.7 There are a limited number of residential receptors within the immediate local area which are likely to experience a change in view. These include a small number of properties along St Aloysius View which back on to the Metro line and are in close proximity Platform 1. Existing broadleaf vegetation forms the boundary between the rear gardens of these properties and the tracks, filtering the majority of views, however the existing canopy can be seen. Due to the increase in height of the proposed canopy it is expected that views toward this canopy from residents, as well as footpath users, would be possible. The existing close boarded fence, as well as boundary vegetation acts to partially screen this view, and it is considered that seasonally the views would be heavily filtered by the existing the tree line. However, given the increase in height creating a more prominent structure, this is likely to have a limited effect on a small number of residential receptors.
- 5.8 To the south of Platform 1 there are four properties along Glen Street which are oriented north to south with direct views toward the site. From the ground floor of these properties, the existing tracks and canopy cannot be seen. However, the indicative massing of the new canopy, given its increase in height, would be visible above the fence line. Vegetation here is minimal so residents would likely experience uninterrupted views of the top of the canopy where this rises above their boundary fence, therefore it is anticipated that the proposals would have an effect on a limited number of residential receptors on Glen Street.
- 5.9 To the west of Station Road, four properties oriented east-west have mid distance views toward Platform 1. These views are partially screened by the topography of Station Road and adjacent broadleaf trees. Furthermore, views would only be possible from second and third storey windows.
- 5.10 Local road and footpath users will experience changes in view, notably from Station Road which has an elevated position above the Hebburn Metro Station. Given the transient nature of both pedestrians and vehicle users across the bridge, as well as the scale and nature of the proposals, the change in view is considered to be minimal.
- 5.11 As a result, and taken together with the mitigation described below, it is deemed that there would be no injury to the amenity of the neighbourhood from a landscape or visual perspective.

Noise

- 5.12 The proposed island platform is larger in scale than the present Platform 1 and, by virtue of the fact it serves both east and westbound services, will be used more frequently. Given the platform is also situated in relatively close proximity to residential properties on St Aloysius View and Glen Street, any potential noise impacts arising from prior approval proposal have been carefully considered in a Noise Assessment prepared by NJD Environmental Associates, which forms part of the subject application.
 - 5.13 In line with the British Standard, the noise assessment was conducted using archive data from Metro and freight movements in the vicinity of the site, with noise sources associated with platform operations assessed using spot measurements. Detailed noise models were populated
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accordingly to calculate the resultant noise levels. The assessment found that the impact is likely to reside between 'negligible' to 'minor adverse' at the nearest noise sensitive receptor locations, during both the day and night time periods. On this basis, it is concluded that no additional mitigation is required to control noise, and the proposed development would not injure the amenity of the neighbourhood in this regard.

Lighting

- 5.14 Due to the increased height of the proposed new island platform, the proposed scheme design has taken into account the potential for lighting associated with the platform to injure the amenity of the neighbourhood. NJD Environmental Associates has undertaken a baseline lighting survey as part of this application to determine existing conditions in the vicinity of the site, and used the results to classify the brightness of the surrounding area. This in turn has established a set of parameters to inform the final lighting design and avoid excessive light spill at sensitive locations.
- 5.15 A lighting design in accordance with the parameters set out in NJD's Baseline Lighting Survey would control light spill to a level which would not exceed the criteria for the site's environmental zone classification. As such, the changes to the light levels resulting from the proposed development would not injure the amenity of the neighbourhood.

Modification

- 5.16 Southern Green identified several potential modifications to the development which are incorporated into the prior approval proposals. These include:
- The retention of existing vegetation surrounding the Metro line and platform;
 - The selection of appropriate materials and surface finishes to provide an enhanced aesthetic;
 - The installation of an appropriately designed and finished fence around the substation and Platform 2 after demolition; and
 - The selection of materials for the proposed canopy structure which are in keeping with the surrounding area and represent an enhancement relative to the existing platform.
- 5.17 With the incorporation of this mitigation, including the retention of existing boundary vegetation and the use of sympathetic materials, it is considered that the proposals will assimilate with existing views toward Platform 1. As the proposals do not introduce features uncharacteristic of the existing urban environment and immediate surroundings of the Metro station, there would be no effects on the landscape receptors within the study area, and only limited effects on a small number of residential receptors located within the immediate vicinity of Platform 1.
- 5.18 On this basis, it is not considered that the design and appearance of the proposed development would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood.
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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 proposed redeveloped station comprises a single 'island' platform in the location of the present Platform 1. Both of the existing platforms would be demolished and, as well as achieving a lower platform height to facilitate the track lowering works, the new consolidated station would provide an enhanced facility for Hebburn and the local area.
- 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, the present Hebburn Metro Station dates from the 1980s, is functional in terms of design, and would benefit from redevelopment. Platform 1 is situated within the bounds of the railway line itself and is therefore relatively divorced in design terms from the wider area. The site and the wider surrounding area are also relatively unconstrained from a townscape and visual impact perspective, with no clear design or visual vernacular or character.
- 6.6 In terms of the location of the development, the provision of an island platform presents the opportunity to develop a distinctive and modern building to reflect the wider regeneration of Hebburn. Being set within the confines of the railway line itself, in place of the existing Platform 1, the new platform would minimise any detrimental impact upon surrounding visual receptors and utilise the existing clearly defined and identifiable access off Station Road. For the reasons set out at section 4, above, the proposed development (i.e. an island platform) could not be developed in any alternative location within the vicinity of the existing station.
- 6.7 In addition, a detailed Landscape and Visual Appraisal undertaken by Southern Green confirms that the proposals will assimilate with existing views toward Platform 1. As the proposals do not introduce features uncharacteristic of the existing urban environment and immediate surroundings of the Metro station, there would be no effects on the landscape receptors within the study area, and only limited effects on a small number of residential receptors located within the immediate vicinity of Platform 1. On this basis, and subject to the mitigation outlined above, it is not considered that the design and appearance of the proposed development would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood.
- 6.8 Given the platform is also situated in relatively close proximity to residential properties on St Aloysius View and Glen Street, any potential noise impacts arising from the prior approval proposal have been carefully considered in a Noise Assessment prepared by NJD Environmental Associates. In line with the British Standard, the noise assessment was conducted using archive data from Metro and freight movements in the vicinity of the site, with noise sources associated with platform operations assessed using spot measurements. Detailed noise models were populated accordingly to calculate the resultant noise levels. The assessment found that the
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impact is likely to reside between ‘negligible’ to ‘minor adverse’ at the nearest noise sensitive receptor locations, during both the day and night time periods. On this basis, no additional mitigation is required to control noise, and the proposed development would not injure the amenity of the neighbourhood in this regard.

- 6.9 The proposed scheme design has also taken into account the potential for lighting associated with the platform to impact upon the amenity of surrounding residents. NJD Environmental Associates has undertaken a baseline lighting survey to determine existing conditions in the vicinity of the proposed development site, and used the results to classify the brightness of the surrounding area. This in turn has established a set of parameters to inform the final lighting design and avoid excessive light spill at sensitive locations. A lighting design in accordance with the parameters set out in NJD’s Baseline Lighting Survey would control light spill to a level which would not exceed the criteria for the site’s environmental zone classification. As such, the changes to the light levels resulting from the proposed development would not injure the amenity of the neighbourhood.
- 6.10 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.