

Landscape Observations for 2024/0447/01/DET

Date 13 February 2025

North East Concrete Ltd High Street, Newburn, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE15 8LN

Proposal: Erection of Battery Energy Storage facility with associated plant and equipment and supporting works including installation of retaining walls, boundary treatment, drainage and landscaping and relocation of substation following demolition of existing buildings on site.

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Summary

There is insufficient information in the submission to assess the full implications of the proposal. Notwithstanding this there are significant concerns relating to loss of trees and associated vegetation on the perimeters of the site and this loss that will result in a negative impact on the surroundings

Until adequate provision is made for the protection and retention of the perimeter vegetation and a proposal for supplementing this with additional screening, the development does not meet the requirements of policies DM20 DM27 and 28 and should be refused

Assessment of the proposal

1.0 Visual impact

The site is in a prominent position at the gateway into Newburn village. The views of the development are likely to have a profound impact on appearance and public perceptions of the village and surrounding area.

The existing buildings due to be demolished, whilst not attractive, are fairly neutral, they provide a stop to the vista and screen the industrial clutter behind. The lower site is contained within an envelope of trees and shrubs. The substation is taller than the existing building and as such is a more prominent feature in the setting. Removal of vegetation will open up views into the site and consequently the development will have a negative impact on the quality and character of its setting.



Fig 1 Approach from the east. Note existing buildings and note the trees and vegetation at risk along site boundary fence



Fig 2 embankment vegetation to be removed at the lower end of Walbottle Road (southern end Tree Survey Group5)



Fig 3 View from Hospital Lane – Trees and vegetation at risk from retaining wall excavations (Tree survey Group 4)



Fig 4 exposed entrance into the site – note the trees proposed for removal at rear of building (fig2) and vegetation at risk immediately outside the site, adjacent to brick wall (not surveyed in TreeSurvey right hand side of image)

2.0 Trees

The tree survey has not identified the individual trees. There are prominent trees throughout, and these are set within a lower storey of developing woodland, scrub and ground flora

There are trees on the south and west boundaries that have not been included on the survey. This information is required.

The proposals for works to trees in Group G4 appear to be rather vague. There are some significant trees at the top of the embankment (figure 3) and in the absence of a detailed condition assessment, it appears that these should be retained. Excavation for the construction of a retaining wall here is likely to kill or destabilise these trees and unless there is a detailed construction plan and method statement to prove the contrary, it should be assumed that all these trees will be lost.

At the southern end of group 5 there is a significant block of dense vegetation proposed for removal. This will have a significant impact on the visual containment of the site (fig 2). The layout should be amended here, and the vegetation should be protected and retained

More detail is required, and a construction method statement should be provided to indicate how the embankments can be safely reprofiled.

3.0 Boundary Treatment

The green palisade security fence indicated on the drawings is not appropriate for the setting. If a high security fence is required, a 358 'prison mesh' type fence may be less intrusive. The fencing will need supplementing with soft landscaping, but the detail provided for a green boundary appears impractical, particularly as the ground conditions are not detailed. The height of the screen must have potential to grow to a height that breaks the skyline above the overhead plant

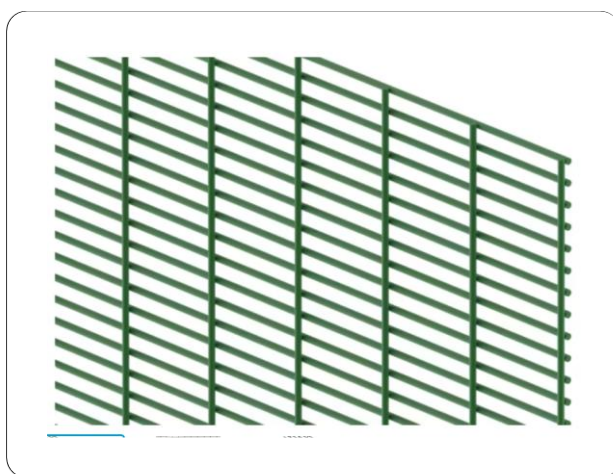


Fig5 358 mesh potential alternative to palisade fencing

4.0 Landscaping

A Landscape scheme is required to help integrate the development into its setting and to reduce the impact on the neighbourhood (see fig 6). It is considered essential to provide a strong landscape buffer of trees and shrubs along the boundaries indicated in Green below.

The ornamental, non-native plant species included to date are not appropriate for the setting. Native/ naturalised species with a proven contribution to wildlife should form the structure of all planting on and around the site.

Due to the potential impact of constraints the detail of the landscaping should be resolved prior to determination of the application.

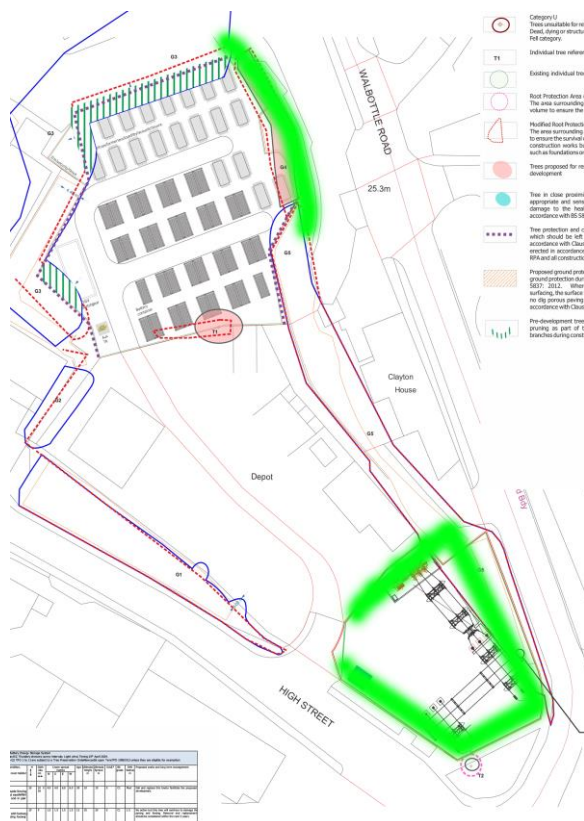


Fig 6 Areas (highlighted green) considered essential for landscape screening using trees and shrubs (including evergreen species)

6.0 Mine workings

The exact position of the mine shafts has not been determined accurately. Changes resulting from the actual location must not be accepted as grounds for eroding any existing and/or planned landscaping required for landscape integration and mitigation of the scheme

7.0 Utility routes and overhead structures

Cabling between the two areas and routes out of the site should be identified to enable an assessment of impact on the surrounding landscape and trees

8.0 Conclusion and requirements

- As presented, the visual impact of the plant and proposed retaining walls is **unacceptable** in terms of landscape, visual impact and green infrastructure (Policies DM20 DM27 and DM28). The site will require screening with trees and shrubs and will likely require the arrangement of plant and vehicle access to be reconfigured to allow the site to be fully screened from the key viewpoints.
- The tree survey must be updated to show individual trees. The root protection zone must be shown before modification. If the zone is to be modified, explanation and justification is required.

- Method statements will be required to demonstrate how harm to trees and perimeter vegetation is avoided.
- Construction details for the retaining walls are required and detail is needed to demonstrate how adjacent roads, vegetation and structures are not undermined or damaged during construction.
- If there remains an unacceptable threat to the existing tree cover, it may be necessary to consider a tree preservation order.
- A full landscape scheme will be required including effective screening of the plant within the site. Clarification of the fence detail is required. Any vegetated perimeter treatment will require adequate space both underground and above ground. This is needed to ensure the vegetation to establish and thrive. Dimensioned construction details are required.
- Plant species must be appropriate for the location.
- The tree protection measures proposed must be put in place prior to start of the construction works.