

### 3. SITE & SETTING

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#### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations sets out what should be included within an ES. Part 1a requires a description of the location of the development. Whilst part 3 requires:

*‘3. A description of the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment (the “baseline scenario”) and an outline of the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the development as far as natural changes from the baseline scenario can be assessed with reasonable effort on the basis of the availability of relevant information and scientific knowledge.’.*

3.1.2 This chapter provides details of the application site, including the site location, site access, and details of relevant designations and receptors that could, if unmitigated, be impacted upon by the development proposed.

3.1.3 The baseline environment is further considered within topic specific ES Chapters.

#### 3.2 Application site

3.2.1 The application site is approximately 1.64 hectares and is located within the Hownsgill Industrial Estate in Consett, Durham, DH8 7EQ (Grid reference E 410469 N 549814). The application site is identified in plan 010 and figure 3.1 below:



**Figure 3.1: Proposed development site**

3.2.2 The Site is relatively level, falling in a south-east direction from 246.27 metres Above Ordnance Datum (m AOD) in the northern corner, to 244.36m AOD at the Site entrance. The fall of 1.91m over 157m gives a gradient of 1:82.

3.2.3 Plan 011 provides the existing topographical data for the site.

3.2.4 This ground is subject to some low-lying vegetation as identified in figure 3.1 above.

### 3.3 Utilities

3.3.1 Northumbrian Water asset plans show there is a Ø375mm S102 surface water sewer and Ø150mm S102 foul sewer, beneath Knitsley Lane to the east of the Site.

3.3.2 No utilities currently cross the application site.

### 3.4 Access

3.4.1 Access to the site is gained from the A692 Castleside/Gateshead road to the north and Knitsley Lane to the east of the proposed development site.

3.4.2 Consett is situated to the northwest of County Durham. It is at the centre of a number of transport corridors. The A691 links the north-west of the county with Durham City and the A692 provides connectivity to Gateshead and Newcastle. The A693 links directly to the A692 and provides access to Stanley, Chester le Street and the A1 motorway.

### 3.5 Surrounding Land Uses

3.5.1 The development site is located within the centre of the Howns Gill Industrial Estate. The Estate is currently made up of a number of industrial units and a consented solar farm which has yet to be implemented.

3.5.2 These buildings to the south cover approximately 3,872m<sup>2</sup> and are 7.3m at their highest point.

3.5.3 The nearest residential areas are:

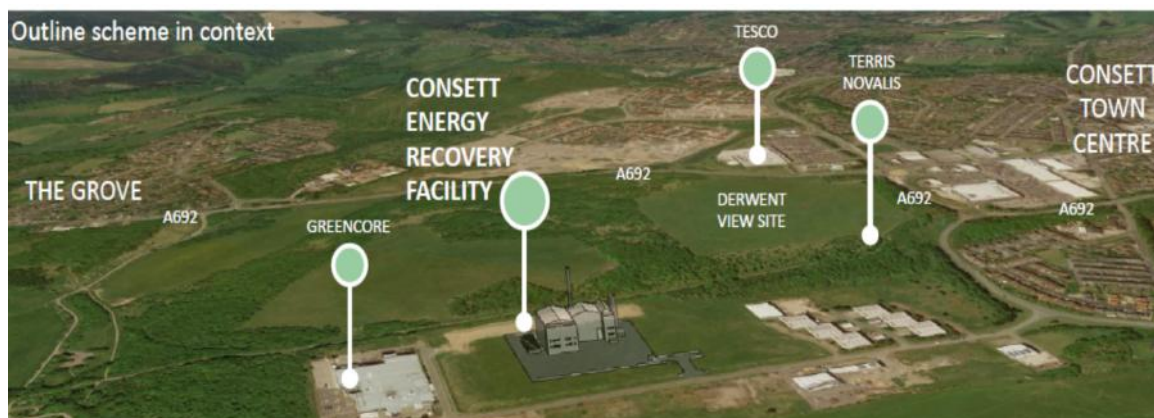
) Properties north of Consett Road, to the north.

) Properties on The Chequers, to the east.

) Properties on Knitsley Lane, to the southeast.

) Howns Farm, to the southwest.

3.5.4 A plan which identified the wider context of the application site is provided in Figure 3.2 below:



**Figure 3.2**

### Public Rights of Way

3.5.5 The area is generally accessible via public roads and footpaths in the urban areas to the east of the site. The nearest PRoW include:

- ) Footpath FP 23 which extends south through Howngill Farm;
- ) Footpath FP 49 which extends northwest from Howngill viaduct to the A692; and
- ) Footpath FP 21 which meanders east from Howngill viaduct through Hown's Wood and Knitsley Wood.

3.5.6 The Consett and Sunderland Railway Path is approximately 50m north of the site, which is a promoted route also forming part of the Sustrans Coast to Coast (C2C) long-distance path/cycleway which follows the route of a former railway line. This connects with the Lanchester Valley Railway Path approximately 600m to the southwest of the site.

### Conservation Areas

3.5.7 The application site is not in or near to a conservation area. The nearest conservation areas are Shotley Bridge approximately 3km northwest of the site alongside the river and the urban areas of Bridgehill and Shotley Bridge and Blackhill in Consett approximately 1.5km to the north.

### Landscape Designations

3.5.8 The site is not in a designated landscape. The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty at its nearest boundary is approximately 2.5km to the southeast of the site.

### **Listed Buildings**

3.5.9 There are no listed buildings on the application site, there are listed buildings in the study area, mainly in the town, those nearby include:

- ) Howns Gill Viaduct Grade II\* approximately 1km southwest;
- ) An arch under the former railway line,(now the Consett and Sunderland Railway Path) Grade II, approximately 650m southwest; and
- ) High Knitsley Farmhouse and barn Grade II and , approximately 1km southeast;

### **Scheduled Monuments**

3.5.10 There are no scheduled monuments on the site. The 17th century Allensford blast furnace scheduled monument is in the study area approximately 2.5km northwest of the site.

### **Nature Conservation Designations**

3.5.11 There are sites of nature conservation importance on the western edge of the study area these include Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and National Nature Reserves. There is a Local Nature Reserve (local designation) at Allensford Woods to the northwest of the site.

### **Flood risk**

3.5.12 The Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning identifies that there is no risk of flooding from the rivers or the sea. The area to the south of the access road is identified as being at risk of surface water flooding.

### **Geology**

3.5.13 Borehole records close to the site show Made Ground over Alluvial clay and superficial gravels (Diamicton) and bedrock comprising sandstone and mudstone. Coal was encountered at 6mbgl and 15mbgl (0.2 and 0.5m thick).

3.5.14 The site has been subject of contamination and remediation from its industrial past, this is presented in detail within Chapter 8 of this ES.

### 3.6 Development History

3.6.1 The site (and wider area) has been historically used as part of the quarry to the north, railway to the south and then part of the Consett Steel Works as identified in figure 3.3 and 3.4 below.



Figure 3.3

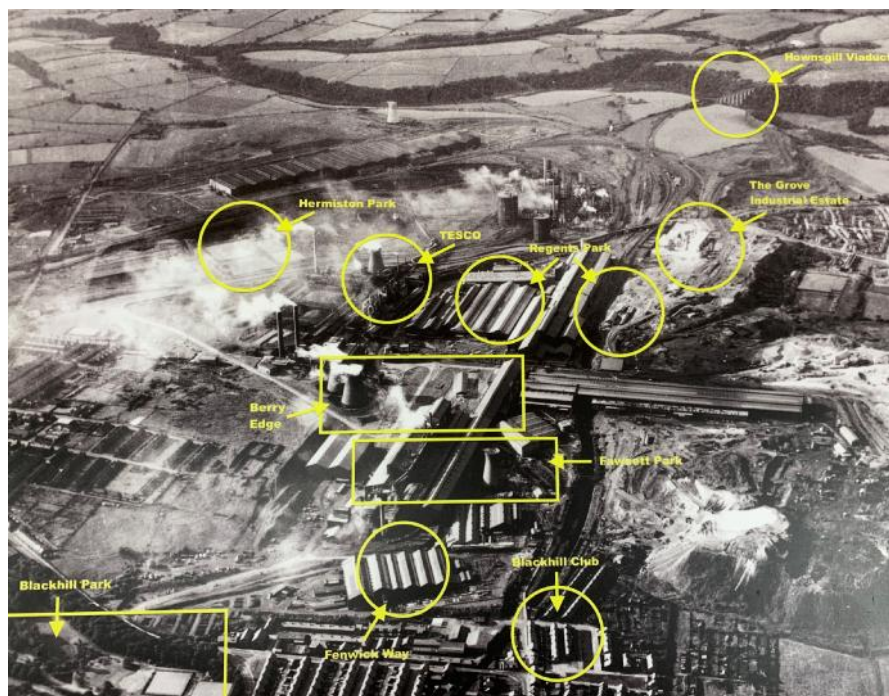


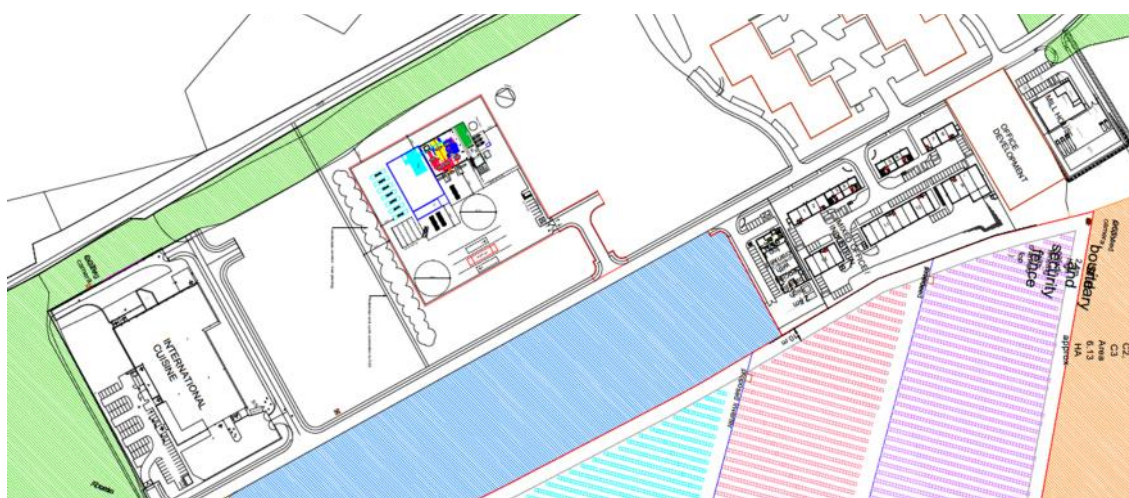
Figure 3.4

3.6.2 The proposed development site can be identified by the Hermiston Park label in figure 3.4 above which was operational in the 1960s and 70s and was fully demolished by 1987.

- 3.6.3 Mapping records indicate that the site was part of the open land within the Hownskill Industrial Park between 1988 and 1995.

### 3.7 Recent Planning History

- 3.7.1 Since the restoration of the area, the proposed development site has remained as vacant brown field land.
- 3.7.2 A review of the Local Planning Authority's planning application webpage has been undertaken and the site is not subject to any pending or recently decided planning applications.
- 3.7.3 The wider area has a number of extant consents as illustrated in figure 3.5 below:



**Figure 3.5: Site Plan**

- 3.7.4 Of most relevance is a development, Bessemer Court, Unit 1 at the Hownskill Industrial Park which has outline planning consent for the development of 14 units for business use (B1) and general Industry (B2) with associated car parking, access and enabling works (1/2012/0600/85504). This was varied in 2019 to change the level of car parking (DM/19/01834/VOC). This site is located to the south east of the access road and is under construction.
- 3.7.5 A planning consent for a Solar Park has also been granted under consent DM/15/02364/FPA and is identified in figure 3.4 (red, purple and sky-blue shading).
- 3.7.6 More recently, in February 2020 planning approval was granted for an outline application for a mixed use scheme including community hospital (C2) and pharmacy (A1); sheltered care unit (C2); residential care unit (C2); gym and wellbeing centre (D2); hotel (C1); public house (A4); micro-brewery (B2/A4); and vets practice (D1) at land to the South of Puddlers Corner

Roundabout (planning reference DM/19/01987/OUT). This land is located to the north west of the industrial Estate.