

Site Selection

The site was selected as a suitable location for the development following a comprehensive site search exercise that prioritised brownfield and industrial land before moving onto greenfield sites. The site search eliminated areas covered by sensitive historical and environmental designations including areas of high and medium flood risk (Zones 2 & 3) and the highest quality agricultural land (Grade 1 & 2).

Non-sensitive sites were scored against various technical and environmental constraints and consideration was given to their availability. This robust methodology ensures that the proposed development would have the least impact on the local environment and communities.

Agricultural Land Classification

Throughout the site search process we have prioritised lower quality agricultural land. Once the site was selected, an agricultural land classification survey was undertaken by an independent surveyor in accordance with industry guidelines. The survey determined that over 90% of the site is Grade 3b, meaning it is not the best and most versatile land.

Landscape and Visual

The site selection and layout have been informed by ongoing landscape surveys and assessments. This has led to a site that is:

- Located away from densely populated areas
- Visually well contained within the landscape due to the site topography.
- Suitable for landscape planting to help with screening the development from public viewpoints

A full landscape and visual impact assessment will be prepared and submitted with the application and will include photorealistic photomontages of the proposed development from the main public viewpoints.

Noise

Our specialist acoustic consultant has undertaken background noise monitoring to inform our noise modelling and take account of the noise generated by the A19.

The BESS design has been refined over a number of iterations to maximise the distance from any residential properties with the nearest being over 350m away. Various mitigation measures will be implemented to reduce any potential impacts.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The site lies within Flood Zone 1 and we have carried out detailed assessments to better understand the local hydrology. This means we will be able to:

- Better understand and manage any risk of surface water flooding
- Ensure that any watercourses are not affected by the development
- Ensure that the BESS and its infrastructure are sited away from areas that could impact on flooding and drainage

A flood risk assessment and drainage strategy will be submitted with the planning application.

Fire Safety

All of NatPower's BESS sites comply with all applicable UK Health, Safety & Environmental legislation.

The design integrates all of the recommended guidance from the National Fire Chiefs Council including site design and layout, an on-site emergency water supply and risk mitigation measures.

We have liaised with the local Fire & Rescue Service on our design and they will be reconsulted once a planning application is submitted.

The batteries are high quality using the latest technology and have been tested to Underwriter Laboratories UL9540A standard and fully comply with all other recommended industry standards and guidance.

We have employed an independent fire safety expert to ensure the site will accord with the highest standards of fire safety.

Transport

We have chosen the site due to its good access to the strategic road network via the A19.

We will work closely with National Highways and Durham County Council to maintain highway safety throughout all stages of the development.

We will work with local residents and communities to ensure deliveries are restricted to hours that will cause the least disturbance and we will endeavour to minimise the number of vehicle movement required. This would be outlined in a Construction Traffic Management Plan that would be secured by a planning condition.

Heritage and Archaeology

There are no known heritage or archaeological assets within or in close proximity to the site.

We have conducted a geophysical survey that has not identified anything of archaeological interest. We have also consulted with Archaeology Officers at Durham and Tees to agree a methodology for trial trenching on the site to ensure no unknown archaeology assets are affected.

Ecology

We have conducted a full suite of seasonal ecology surveys to assess the presence of protected species on site. The survey data has informed the design which includes habitat creation and buffer zones.

The proposed development will deliver a net gain in biodiversity of more than 30% compared to existing conditions, as calculated using Natural England's Biodiversity metric.

An Ecological Impact Assessment and Biodiversity Statement will be submitted with the planning application.

