PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

BATTERY STORAGE DEVELOPMENT
LAND AT BATHAM GATE, BUXTON

FOR
ASTRA VENTURES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An Ecological Appraisal was conducted within a parcel of land at Batham Gate, Buxton, which identified potential ecological constraints. Measures recommended in this document to safeguard wildlife and/or ensure legal compliance during Development works are summarised in the table below.

Potential ecological constraint	Habitat(s)	Recommended measure
Japanese knotweed	Roadside verge bordering the east of the Development footprint	In order to ensure legal compliance during Development works, it is recommended that a minimum separation distance of 5 m should be maintained between construction activities and Japanese knotweed. If this is not possible an Invasive Species Management Plan will be developed and implemented during works.
Nesting Birds	Poor semi-improved grassland	Vegetation clearance should be avoided during the bird nesting season (March–August inclusive). If this is unavoidable, works will be preceded by a nesting bird survey or pre-emptive mitigation.
Reptiles	Stone wall	Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs), including supervision and sensitive clearance, will be adopted during construction works. A Method Statement for the works would be produced before they commence.

1 INTRODUCTION

Arcus Consultancy Services (Arcus) was commissioned by Astra Ventures to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal within a largely rectangular parcel of land, located as part of a triangular field between the A6 road, Batham Gate Road and Batham Gate, near Buxton, Grid Reference SK 07553 75915 (henceforth referred to as the Site, see Figure 1).

This report is submitted in support of a planning application which has been submitted to High Peak Borough Council (App Ref: HKN/2017/0213) to develop a lithium-ion battery storage development to provide a backup supply to the National Grid (henceforth referred to as the Development). As part of the consultation on the planning application comments were received from the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT) requesting a preliminary ecological appraisal. This document is provided in response to that request.

The Development includes the construction of a battery storage compound within a secure 2.4 m high 'Hit and Miss' wooden fence. Within this fence will be the battery storage containers, inverter units, load banks, transformers, a smaller container housing high voltage infrastructure (switchroom / control room), a welfare unit and storage container. Outside of the main compound will be a Distribution Network Operator (DNO) substation with its own separate access. The compound will be levelled and provided with a crushed stone finish upon which the Development will be laid out. The footprint of the main compound is 95 m by 40 m (0.38 ha). The wider Application site area is 0.63 ha which includes the access track to the public highway and the proposed planting areas.

This report details the ecological baseline conditions and likely potential ecological constraints from the Development, taking into account relevant planning policy, good practice and legislation.

Further surveys and mitigation, where applicable, have been described in order to provide additional information for assessing effects and to inform recommendations to avoid or reduce potential adverse impacts.

Figure 1: The Site, contained within the red line.

2 METHODS

2.1 Desk Study

A consultation response from the DWT to High Peak Borough Council on the submitted planning application for the Development returned "no records of direct relevance to the Site" (dated 16th August 2017). Further email correspondence (dated 6th September 2017) between Arcus and DWT confirmed that this result negated the need to conduct a data search with Derbyshire Biological Record Centre. An ecological walkover was agreed to provide the most relevant data for this appraisal, given the nature of the Site and small size of the Development footprint.

2.2 Site Survey

An ecological walkover was conducted on 5th September 2017 by a suitably experienced ecologist in accordance with standard methods[1,2]. The aim of the survey was to identify potential ecological constraints to inform the planning process. The survey focussed on habitats and notable or protected species that may be affected by the Development. Methods used to assess the likely presence of notable and protected species were based on prevailing good practice.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Site Description

The Site is rectangular in shape and located within a triangular-shaped field surrounded by roads on all three sides. The right-angled corner of the triangular-shaped field formed the north-eastern and south-eastern boundary of the Site and was characterised by stock-proof wire fencing, behind which was a deteriorated stone wall, roadside verge and road. The field which contained the Site comprised cattle-grazed, permanent pasture and so the remaining boundaries of the Site were composed of this habitat.

3.2 Site Survey

3.2.1 Phase 1 Habitats

Table 1: Phase 1 Habitats and their location within the Site.

Phase 1 Habitat Alpha-numeric Code	Phase 1 Habitat description	Location within the Site
B6	Poor semi–improved grassland	Uniformly throughout the Site. This habitat was grazed and contained typical species, such as meadow buttercup, meadow crane's-bill, Yorkshire fog, perennial rye-grass, tufted hair-grass, nettles, docks and small amounts of soft rush.
J2.4	Boundaries – Fence	Along the north-eastern and south-eastern boundaries of the Site.
J2.5	Boundaries – Wall	Along the north-eastern and south-eastern boundaries of the Site, beyond the fence (J2.4).

3.2.2 Birds

Poor semi-improved grassland had the potential to support ground-nesting birds. This habitat would be affected by the Development.

[1] Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2003) *Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey – a technique for environmental audit.*
[2] Institute of Environmental Assessment (1995) *Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment.*

3.2.3 Reptiles

A stone wall bordering part of the Site had the potential to support reptiles. Part of this wall bordering the north-east corner of the Site may have to be removed, to allow access.

3.2.4 Other Protected / Notable Species

A discrete stand of Japanese knotweed, an invasive non-native species, was recorded in the road verge outside of, but bordering, the north-eastern boundary of the Site.

Other notable species not addressed above are considered likely to be absent from the Site, based on the lack of desk study records and/or the lack of suitable habitats and evidence during the survey, or are otherwise extremely unlikely to be affected by the Development.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Site was assessed to be of low ecological value and no further surveys are required to support this conclusion. However, in order to ensure legal compliance during Development works, several measures are outlined below.

4.1 Reptiles

A stone wall within the Development footprint had the potential to support reptiles. Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) including, but not limited to, supervision and sensitive clearance, should be adopted during the works to reduce the likelihood of a legal offence[3]. A Method Statement for the works would be produced before works commence.

4.2 Nesting Birds

Ground works or vegetation clearance within the bird nesting season (March–August inclusive) may disturb or harm nesting birds and therefore constitute a legal offence[4]. To ensure that works are legally compliant, it is recommended that vegetation clearance is avoided during the bird nesting season. If this is unavoidable, an ecologist should be consulted and works preceded by a nesting bird survey or pre-emptive mitigation e.g. bird scarers.

4.3 Invasive Non-Native Species

A discrete stand of Japanese knotweed was recorded bordering the Site and works may cause the spread of the species thereby constituting a legal offence[5]. In order to ensure legal compliance during Development works, it is recommended that a minimum separation distance of 5 m should be maintained between construction activities and Japanese knotweed. If this is not possible, an Invasive Species Management Plan should be developed and implemented during the works.

[3] Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) sub-section 9(1) and all of sub-section 9(5) only
[4] Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
[5] Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Schedule 9