

High Peak BC Planning Reference –	HPK/2023/0193		
Site Name –	Marsh Lane BESS, Furness Vale		
Summary of proposals -	Battery Energy Storage Scheme (BESS)		
Consultation Note Subject –	Landscape and Visual Matters (Revision A)		
Planning Case Officer –	James Stannard		
Landscape Comments Prepared By –	Stuart Ryder of Ryder Landscape Consultants		
Date of site visit —	3/8/23	Date of response	Revised note 27/9/23 Initial note 29/8/23
Summary of anticipated landscape and visual effect	There will be a Major/Moderate, Adverse landscape effect at the Site but a Minor, Adverse wider landscape effect with the proposals being relatively well screened and this section of hillside largely separated from more sensitive, publicly accessible areas. There are limited public viewing opportunities other than from the entrance to Site and across the valley. There are no obvious views from the Peak District National Park or effects on the park's landscape setting.		

Dear James

Marsh Lane BESS, Furness Vale – Landscape and Visual Consultation

Thank you once again for appointing us to review the landscape and visual aspects of the submitted planning application. This revised note has been prepared to include more detail on the High Peak Local Plan landscape and countryside policies. They are included in Section 8 with the structure of the note remaining the same;

1. Methodology
2. Site and surrounding's landscape character
3. Proposals for the site
4. Landscape effects
5. Visual effects from surrounding areas
6. Comments on Application LVA conclusions
7. Potential design considerations
8. High Peak Landscape Policy Compliance & Conflict
9. Suggested Planning Conditions

1. Methodology

High Peak Borough Council (HPBC) appointed Ryder Landscape Consultants (RLC) to consider the submitted scheme and supporting documents in July 2023. Stuart Ryder an experienced Chartered Landscape Architect has reviewed the Proposed Site Layout Plan (002-Rev D), the Application Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) by Pegasus Landscape Architects, aerial photography and Derbyshire County Council's Online PRoW Map information before attending Site. At Site local paths were walked, including those that fringe the Peak District National Park, nearby roads driven and views taken from the Goyt Valley footpath route. Views from the adjacent railway line were not taken but were judged from the road bridge that crosses the railway near the north end of the Site.

2. Site and surrounding's landscape character

The Site appears as a single, triangular shaped improved pasture field fringed with maturing trees and outgrown native hedges. Deciduous trees are the predominant tree type in the area with there being a

mix of hedges and drystone walls as field boundaries. The ground has a notable slope from north to south following the valley landform of the Goyt Valley whose base is approximately 80m to the south west. The cross-field slope runs from 163m AOD in the higher north corner to 153m AOD to the lower south side. It is under active agricultural management with the grass appearing cut for silage or haylage rather than being actively grazed at the time of the Site visit. It is separated from Marsh Lane to the south west by an outgrown roadside hedge that extends towards the road edge and over an adjacent grass verge. There is also the Hope Valley railway line to its north east side of the Site set down within a cutting. The boundary and railway cutting face is well vegetated with scrub and occasional taller trees.

To the south east of the main development platform and still set within the redline boundary application is a small clough (narrow steep sided valley) whose landform appears to have been manipulated in the past possibly by the railway construction or the building of the adjacent Ladypit Road sub-station or both. This area does not appear to be actively cropped or grazed.

Visually it forms a heavily screened part of the Marsh Lane road corridor and part of the Goyt Valley's northern slope that encloses the valley within this semi-upland landscape. The Site does not have any public rights of way (PRoW) crossing it or any apparent desire lines that suggest unofficial access.

The adjacent areas are;

- **North east**– Lies the Hope Valley railway line within its cutting and then pasture fields running up towards the higher ground of the Peak District National Park.
- **South east** – immediately to the south east is the Ladypit Road sub-station, the sub-station although bordering the Site's redline boundary is separated from the main development platform by a small clough with a mix of trees and open grassland habitats.
- **South west**– lies Marsh Lane as it traverses up the side of the Goyt Valley after crossing the river and running up towards Low Leighton, beyond Marsh Lane the valley falls away steeply to the River Goyt and the Peak Forest Canal that shares its flatter valley bottom. There is a long layby set approximately central to the Site's boundary.

The Site is part of a transitional landscape set between the more sheltered Goyt Valley bottom and the higher slopes to the north. It is also transitional in the sense that there are more buildings set within the valley bottom for shelter, transport and power reasons than there are on the hillside and moorland tops.

A number of power transmission lines radiate from the Ladypit Road sub-station one heading north east towards the PDNP but not quite into it and one heading north across the south eastern clough end of the Site. The transmission lines cannot be considered as attractive features of the landscape and the pylons are of a medium size.

I would not class the Site or the surrounding area as a 'valued landscape' as per NPPF Para 174 a) but it is part of a wider attractive landscape that allows longer cross valley views to the hills set to the other side of the Goyt Valley. Nor would I class it as part of the immediate setting to the Peak District National Park (PDNP) but it is positioned within the PDNP wider contextual landscape.

3. [Proposals for the Site](#)

Construction access is proposed from the south west side of the Site utilising the existing layby to form a construction and then permanent access from. It is unclear whether the layby would continue to function in its current way during construction or operation of the BESS but the redline application boundary only indicates a turning head onto Marsh Lane. I anticipate that Derbyshire CC's Highway comments will give a clearer indication of the layby's function and required end state.

The typical features of a BESS are shown on the Layout Plan by RPS – Dwg No. 12456-0010-02 Rev -;

Site access with at least two trees shown cleared to improve access widths.

The DNO customer sub-station is set near the entrance access road, this would be a contained building with indicated dimensions of 8.1m long by 2.7m wide by 3.25m high set on a plinth estimated to be 0.6m high taking the sub-station overall height to approximately 3.85m above surrounding ground levels. According to the Novus Energy generic substation drawing dated 3/5/22 the building would have a gantry set around its outside and a 1m tall satellite dish set on its flat roof. The building appears functional and industrial in character with little appreciation to aesthetics. There is no reference to colour or materiality on the plan.

Often BESS proposals have an external, open to the elements DNO customer substation and any such request to place such a feature at this prominent location should be resisted.

Clusters of four battery ‘packs’ labelled ‘Generic Battery Packs’ on the Layout Plan serviced by two ‘Power Control Systems’ (PCS) that are effectively transformers each serving two battery packs. In each cluster there are six units (4No. batteries and 2No. transformers/controls) and there are six clusters proposed for Site. The six clusters are set in a roughly rectangular compound set centrally to the triangular site. This compound would have dimensions of approximately 120m x 50m and is shown with a ‘permeable base’ on the layout drawing which is presumed to be unbound stone laid over a geotextile.

The PCS’ dimensions are 10.5m long by 2m wide by 3m tall and the generic battery packs do not appear to be illustrated with a specific drawing but in plan form are of a similar scale to the PCS units. There is no reference to colour or materiality on the plan.

The six clusters would be served by a central access road with four clusters set to the north east side and two to the south west.

There are two types of fencing associated with the proposals. Noise attenuation fencing is set around the edge of the central compound with the exception of the south west ‘nibbed’ corner that has none. The acoustic fence is illustrated as being 4m tall on the submitted drawings but no material or colour is given for the fencing. The second type of fencing is palisade fencing which is shown as 2.37m high (8 feet) with a presumed 0.6m deep footing. It is unclear where the fencing is proposed from the layout plan (green line not discernible on plan) or if it is to be painted. Palisade fencing is a very secure type of fencing with an industrial characteristic.

Bunding is proposed to the south east end of the central compound to allow a flatter development platform to be created. The Novus Energy drawing dated 6/1/23 indicates a bund 90m long, 3m high with side slopes of 1:4 gradient leading to a flat top crest of 7m width. The indicated bunding appears artificial as landform and the drawing is not a true depiction of how it relates to adjacent landform that it has to tie into. There is no indication of what material the bund is formed from or the depths of topsoil over it to allow the indicated planting and seeding.

There are landscape proposals indicated on the layout plan with a block of native woodland/scrub mix on the north western part of the bund, occasional trees to the south western side of the proposals outside of the compound, a native hedge to follow the top of the slope leading down into the south eastern clough and a wildflower, tussocky grass mix for all former field areas outside of the clough which remains unsown. No explanation of seed bed preparation or need for topsoil inversion is given. The species proposed on the landscape masterplan are native and appear appropriate for the creation of missed woodland / scrub and native hedgerows.

Overall comment on drawings – I found the drawings too generic to provide sufficient detail to understand the choices of materials and colour of most elements and the alignment of such things as fence lines. The details of the proposed bunding are not credible. There is no indicated connection to the nearby Ladypit Road sub-station – will there be one? This is a Full planning application and it is not possible to understand all the implications of the proposals without making many assumptions and should you recommend consent I do not see how you can base the approval with certainty on many of the drawings.

4. Landscape effects

The landscape at the Site and is not designated in any national or local landscape designations, nor does it form the immediate setting to the Peak District National Park. It is however designated as Green Belt and is subject to Policy EQ4 of the High Peak Local Plan – April 2016 amongst other policies.

The proposals will effectively turn the central portion of the pasture field into an industrial styled energy complex with repeated units set with a compound area. The south eastern clough will retain its landscape appearance and act as a separating buffer between the proposals and the existing Ladypit Road substation.

The more important landscape effects derive from how the Site relates to and is perceived with the landscape context around the Site.

The strong existing tree line to the north east (railway side) of the Site means that the Site and these proposals would have no effects on the landscape character to the north east as they will sit below the existing tree line as long as it is protected during the installation of the proposals.

To the south east the proposed bund could appear highly artificial in the landscape without the benefit of more sensitive land forming and disguising the raised edge of the central compound with tree and scrub cover. The current block of native woodland and scrub planting appears angular in shape and would better ameliorate the change in topography by being more naturally shaped and running down the bunded landform.

Continuing to the south east the native hedgerow to the top of the clough appears a sensible proposal and a good way of defining that small valley and adding further screening. Additional hedgerow trees in its length would better its ecological and screening value and scenic appeal.

To the south west the most notable landscape feature which is the Marsh Lane outgrown hedgerow is retained in full with the exception of felling near the Site entrance. This will have the effect of opening up the Site entrance visually and needs to be mitigated with replacement planting and downplaying the appearance of a large power infrastructure facility beyond the boundary. The presence of security fencing should be downplayed with screen planting and possibly retreating it into the Site with more agricultural scaled gates positioned where the existing field gates sit. Painting security fencing a dark colour and fronting or backing it scrub vegetation would limit its adverse appearance within the landscape.

The giveaway in landscape terms that there is a power facility within the field will be the DNO Customer substation set near the Site entrance and a possibility to see up the short, straight access track to the top of clusters set at the end of the track. The DNO Customer substation would appear utilitarian and out of character with the pasture field and surrounding buildings and could receive better and more appropriate architectural detailing so it appears more in keeping. It would also benefit from low screen planting as would the clusters aligned at the top of the short access track where small scrub blocks or a limited hedge length would not affect operational clear space around the units.

Further south west the landscape character of the Goyt Valley would be unaffected given the robust hedge and tree line along the Site's boundary to Marsh Lane as long as it is protected during construction and the entrance break is mitigated with new planting.

In considering the acoustic fence its appearance, height and uniformity has the potential for considerable visual and landscape character impacts creating an artificial enclosure within a rural landscape. Screening the presence of the noise attenuation fence is critical. The railway tree line to the north east and ultimately the bund planting to the south east will screen out the presence of the 4m tall fence. However there is the potential to see it to the north west corner of the Site through the Marsh Lane tree line and this pointed corner of the Site would benefit from more screen planting to ensure this does not happen.

The landscape character of the PDNP to both east and west of the Site is not affected by the proposals.

There are no notable landscape benefits from the proposals but nor are there any wider adverse landscape effects beyond the immediate context to the Site. With BESS developments it is sometimes useful to consider what the landscape legacy would be on their removal and plan for the remediation of the Site after they have ceased operation.

The additional trees and hedgerow would continue to grow after the Site's licence duration. Whether the central development plateau is removed along with the bund that holds it in place can be a matter to be decided at the time depending on the quality of the established woodland. Proposals for secondary uses, say transport or storage hubs should be resisted as its primary purpose is to return to a rural field after the temporary use.

5. Visual effects from surrounding areas

Six sets of visual receptors have been considered that have actual or possible views back to the Site from publicly accessible areas, views from the nearest two residential receptors have also been included to make eight possible visual receptor groups:

- Marsh Lane road users as they pass by the closest to site and have views through entrance;
- PRoW to the south east (New Mills FP156) has heavily screened views to the Site that may become more apparent in winter time;
- PRoW above Buxton Road to the west side of the Goyt Valley such as Whalley Bridge FP92 have views directly across the valley and would view the proposals in association with the Ladypit Road sub-station.
- PRoW to the south (New Mills FP106) has no views to the Site;
- PRoW to the north (New Mills FP158) that runs up the valley side beyond the railway bridge but does not have summer views back to the Site given the railway cutting vegetation but has some in winter through the vegetative edge;
- Users of the train services along the Hope Valley railway line cannot see the Site due to the trains running in a cutting next to the Site;
- Residents of Gow Hole Farm set on the opposite side of Marsh Lane to the lower south eastern clough end of the Site and who's views of the central development compound are considered to be prevented by landform and intervening vegetation but may some bunding works; and
- Residents of Beardwood Farm set to the north east of the Site and railway who's view back down the valley side to the Site is prevented by a string tree line leading down to the railway and the planting to the north east (railway) side of the Site.

Of these potential visual receptors it is the first three that will realistically be able to see the proposals. The visual change for them is discussed below.

Marsh Lane road users are predominately motorists using this relatively busy cut through from New Mills to Furness Vale. It also forms part of the Pennine Cycleway. If travelling in a southerly direction (from New Mills) the Site is first experienced after crossing the railway bridge where it is passed to the left. There is the outgrown hedge/scrub line and behind that there is a low stone wall grown over with ivy. Given the stroboscopic effect of travelling past vegetation at speed an appreciation of the open field to the left of the road can be built up even though the view is not clear and open. This would allow sight of the 4m high noise attenuation fence.

Travelling further down the lane the existing layby is reached that is proposed as the Site entrance. An appreciation of the proposals and the sense of separate units placed on the land to the left of the road will be gained by looking up the Site access. Once past the access the distance between the road corridor and the development compound increases as does the level difference and amount of intervening vegetation. These all combine to make it unlikely that the proposals will be visible from Marsh Lane once south east of the Site access.

Travelling northwards from Furness Vale the viewing experience is reversed with no anticipated views into the Site until the access is reached and then partial, screened views up to the railway bridge and then road users would have passed the development and have it behind them.

This group of people will experience the largest visual change of all the visual receptors considered however it is a moving (kinetic view), never fully open and is taken in snippets. The sense of development will increase with leaf fall but will not become open, or complete.

Footpath New Mills FP 156 users walk on a north – south route pass the Ladypit Road Sub-station and are able to look north west over the clough at the south end of the Site towards the development platform. They would have the greatest sense of change during the construction period with the bund construction being plain to see. In operation the noise attenuation fence would be clearly visible set to the south east end of the platform until planting on the bund matures and starts to screen the solid fencing behind.

Footpath Whaley Bridge FP 92 users walking at a similar elevation to Site have the opportunity to look directly across the valley at a distance of approximately 2km to see both Ladypit Road sub-station and its radiating pylons and the Site set to the west (left) of the view. As this is an elevated view the tree screening along Marsh Lane is not as effective at screening sight to the open ground in the middle of the field. The regular patterns of units in their clusters will be visible until greater planting occurs on the Site. Users of these paths are typically recreational walkers and have a High sensitivity to change within their views. It will be the regularity and frequency of unit size possibly combined with visually bright colours e.g. white to aid solar heat reflection that will make the site elements notable in the view.

6 Comments on the Application LVA Conclusions

Pegasus Group Ltd Landscape Architects have prepared a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) considering the proposed development. The LVA's summary and conclusion are presented in Section 9. Set below are my remarks regarding certain points contained in the LVA's conclusions.

Para	Nature of conclusion	Review remark by S Ryder
9.1	Landscape Character of Site – the proposals will adversely alter the physical and perceptual attributes of the Site. This is judged as Moderate long-term effect.	I agree with the first part of the statement. However I consider the change to be a Major/Moderate, Adverse long term landscape effect on Site character for the central development platform area and a lesser Moderate/Minor Adverse

Para	Nature of conclusion	Review remark by S Ryder
		for the clough end with the new bund positioned above it.
9.2	Landscape Character Areas – Settled Valley Pastures LCT / Pastures with Industry are both unaffected by small scale of proposals.	Agree the proposals are small in scale when compared to the LCT total area but it should be remembered that a LCT is not the same as a Landscape Character Area (LCA) that displays the LCT's characteristics.
9.3	Landscape Character - Site linkages very limited or no effects on other LCT's in proximity.	Agreed.
9.4	Landscape Features – Landform There would be notable change to landform on Site to accommodate development. This is a Moderate, Temporary, Adverse effect that would reduce to Minor in long term.	A Moderate, Adverse effect to the Site's landform is considered as a fair assessment but it is judged as a permanent effect until it is removed on remediation of the Site after it has ceased operation. The flat platform on the side of a valley, combined with artificially uniformed gradients will remain at odds with the wider and localised landform.
9.5	Landscape Features – Land use change from an agricultural field to an operational energy storage facility. A Moderate, Adverse level of effect is predicted in the longer term.	Agree that the proposals would alter the land use character as described and agree that this is a Moderate, Adverse sense of land use change for the longer term. It would be a higher sense of change if it was not for the local precedent of the Ladypit Road Sub-station.
9.6	Landscape Features – Vegetation Limited areas of clearance for access but wider planting proposals would enhance landscape structure giving rise to landscape and wildlife benefits.	Agree that the Site would have a greater degree of vegetation with the proposals and it would be more ecologically diverse. The perception of this planting improvement would be local to the Site and in part necessary to screen the noise attenuation barrier,
9.7	Visual Receptors – sought to integrate and minimise harmful effects through retention and addition to trees and hedges on Site.	Agree but there is little benefit to clearing boundary vegetation on a sloping Site where development is not proposed. The new planting is the primary source of additional screening and should be added to further at the entrance and to the north of the Site.
9.8	Visual Receptors – Marsh Lane A single Moderate to Major adverse effect in the short term for views at the Site entrance and no greater than Moderate, Adverse for other stretches of the route running pass the Site.	Agree, this appears as a fair assessment as it has identified that there will be a greater degree of visibility at the site entrance. However what the LVA does not explain is what mitigation proposals can be achieved to reduce the adverse effects and typically the design proposals would be amended to seek reduction of the harmful effects.
9.9	Visual Receptors – New Mills FP156 Limited part of path would experience Moderate, Adverse and Short-Term change to their views with filtering occurring in the long term.	Agree that the visual effect on views from the section of FP156 is reasonably assessed as a Moderate, Adverse effect and I would consider given the opportunity and depth of possible planting to the south east that the proposed development could be totally screened within an estimated 8 to 12 years.
9.10 & 9.11	Visual Receptors – Footpaths near The Haugh and above Buxton Road	Agree that this is a reasonable assessment noting the elevated nature and panoramic scale of the view and association with the existing sub-station. The effect is

Para	Nature of conclusion	Review remark by S Ryder
	Limited part of paths would experience Moderate, Adverse and Short-Term change to their panoramic views reducing to Moderate/Minor, Adverse with filtering from planting.	more likely to be notable in winter when the planting around the Site provides less screening benefit.
9.12	Visual receptors - In general Other receptors are mostly considered to experience Moderate to Minor or Minor Adverse effects	Having reviewed the assessment tables to see who these other receptors are I think the lower assessment of visual change is a reasonable one.
9.13	Effects upon National Park Due to very limited landscape and visual effects recorded within and adjacent to the PDNP it is concluded that the proposals do not affect the setting or purpose of the National Park.	Agreed given difficulty in discerning the Site from the edge of the PDNP and the lack of a role in the setting to the park.
9.14	Conclusion Any effects on landscape character would be confined to the Site itself and the surrounding local area. Visual effects reduced by the proposed mitigation planting and no adverse effects on PDNP.	Agree that the landscape effects are primarily local and that the mitigation planting will reduce but not remove all visual effects whilst looking at the Site from Marsh Lane and from the other side of the Goyt Valley. As stated at 9.13 the landscape and visual qualities of the PDNP and its setting are not altered by these proposals.
9.15	Conclusion – Total Extent	Agree that landscape effects would be localised in nature but visual effects from the opposite side of the valley cannot be classed as localised.

7. Potential design amendments

The following summary of potential design amendments are given as a way of improving the landscape, visual and maintainability aspect of the proposals. Their inclusion should be sought if you are minded recommending consent for the proposals. Their provision by the Applicant should not be seen as a route for automatic approval of the scheme but rather as way of bettering the landscape and visual effects it brings about;

1. Greater level of information regarding the equipment and fencing in terms of colour, materials and positioning seeking muted, matt colours that recede into the landscape, particularly in long cross valley views;
2. Detailing the Site entrance so it appears more agricultural in nature and replanting felled trees to limit views in at the entrance;
3. Judicial planting along site access track and possible track realignment to prevent straight views along it.
4. Considering alternatives to palisade security fencing as it strongly industrial in character and out of keeping in a rural location;
5. Tree protection is key to the successful retention of character on and around Site and tree protection measures should be put in place in accordance with the Arboricultural Officer's direction in advance of any works commencing on Site and comply with BS5837:2012;

6. Further tree planting is shown to the pointed north end of the Site to limit views to the noise attenuation fencing;
7. No site lighting other than emergency lighting should be included to reduce light pollution on the valley side and in the adjacent ecological area;
8. More accurate landform modelling of the south eastern bund and confirmation that all of it could take tree and scrub planting with a view to a more naturalistic bund and tree screen to this side of the development platform;
9. Improvement to the architectural treatment of the DNO Customer Substation so that it appears in keeping with the local stone buildings near to the Site; and
10. Confirmation of a darker, recessive coloured stone for surfacing of the central compound area.

In addition, the submission of a long-term Landscape Maintenance and Management Plan (LMMP) for the duration of the development's operation will be required so the initial establishment and ongoing upkeep of the various landscape features and ecological habitats can be confirmed and suitably Conditioned.

8. High Peak Borough Council and NPPF Landscape Policy Compliance & Conflict

National Planning Policy Framework Landscape Policies

- NPPF §174 a) – The Site although pleasant in character is not considered a 'valued landscape' as per this NPPF paragraph so this part of NPPF 174 is not engaged.
- NPPF §174 b) – The intrinsic quality of countryside is however engaged because the Site displays rural character and is set within a wider area of countryside, its intrinsic qualities are reduced but not totally removed. They could be returned on the closure and remediation of the central platform where the land form changes are proposed.
- NPPF 176 – National landscapes paragraph is not deemed engaged.

High Peak Landscape Policies

EQ2 – Landscape Character – of the four strands that seek to '*protect, enhance and restore the landscape character of the Plan Area for its own intrinsic beauty and economic benefit..*' the following areas of compliance and conflict are found.

Bullet 1 – the majority of landscape features on Site are retained and increased in scale such as woodland, species rich grassland and hedgerow but this is offset by the change to the Site's existing landform with a large development platform built up and loss of typical pasture grass. Overall the aesthetic quality of the north western part of the Site is not retained, whilst the character of the south eastern clough is. There is found to be **conflict** with this first bullet when the site is judged as a whole with the potential to mitigate some, but not all of the adverse changes to the landscape features.

Bullet 2 – the submitted LVA references existing landscape character but the proposals cannot be considered as sensitive to the overall landscape character, however there is in proximity the Ladypit Road Sub-station that adds a degree of precedent to the area. There is no discernible landscape impact on the setting of the Peak District National Park. Finally landscape mitigation measures have been included with the proposals. Overall there is found to be **compliance** with this part of the policy.

Bullet 3 – the third bullet requires development proposals to protect and/or enhance the character, appearance and local distinctiveness of the landscape and the landscape setting of the Peak District National Park. It does not achieve the former with both the Application LVA and my own assessment recording adverse effects for the character of the Site. The landscape setting to the National Park is however unaffected. There is therefore both **conflict** at a local level but **compliance** with regards to the protection of the setting to the National Park.

Bullet 4 – seeks the resistance of development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape or the setting of a settlement as identified in the Landscape Impact Assessment. The proposals would be detrimental to the local landscape character but not the wider appeal of the Goyt Valley, leading to a policy **conflict** for local landscape but **compliance** with regard to the wider landscape. The field does not currently contribute to the immediate setting or act as a ‘gateway’ to Furness Vale, albeit it is close to it, so the second part of this bullet is **not engaged**.

Overall there is both **compliance** and **conflict** with the varying bulleted parts of EQ2. Overall I would consider there is **more conflict than compliance** and that the proposals do not comply with the intent of EQ2 which is to protect, enhance or restore the landscape character of the Borough. This conflict is not surprising given the nature of the development and its proposed location at a green field location and should be taken into account in your planning balance exercise.

The design considerations outlined in Section 7 could further reduce the level of perceived landscape change and improve the mitigation proposed. It should also be noted that the landscape change is also largely reversible with the removal of the BESS equipment, removal of hard surfacing and reinstating the pasture field land usage so it returns to looking like any other sloping field within the Settled Valley Pastures landscape character type.

EQ3 – Rural Development explains that outside the settlement boundaries and sites allocated for development (as defined on the Policies Map), including the Green Belt which is applicable to this location, the Council will seek to ensure that *‘new development is strictly controlled in order to protect the landscape’s intrinsic character and distinctiveness, including the character, appearance and integrity of the historic and cultural environment’*. It then lists seven development types, or eight if you include residential development. The proposals do not fit into any of the eight development types and appears in **conflict** with this policy as landscape character is not protected.

However it is acknowledged that energy infrastructure is at times located within rural areas, particularly where the the predominant character is largely rural. The seventh bullet makes reference to, *‘Ensuring that all development is of a high quality design and protects or enhances landscape character and the setting of the Peak District National Park.’* As already explored in EQ2 the setting of the National Park is not affected by these proposals but local landscape character is. Increased design quality for such things as the control building and site fencing could reduce these adverse effects to an acceptable level where there is still a reduction in landscape quality but it becomes a minor scaled effect even at a local scale.

EQ4 – Green Belt – is not strictly a landscape policy as it concerns itself with spatial planning and the conservation of ‘openness’ in designated Green Belt areas. I am not qualified to conduct a planning review of the exceptional circumstances tests from the NPPF but note that there will be an increased sense of enclosure and reduction in openness at the Site with the noise attenuation fencing running around three sides of the central development platform. However as explained above in my main note this 4m high fencing could be successfully screened by landscape planting with some modifications to the existing proposals.

EQ6 – Design & Place Making – The overarching aim of this policy is stated as *‘All development should be well designed and of a high quality that responds positively to both its environment and the challenge of climate change, whilst also contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place.’* After this statement there are 11No. bullet points with Bullets 1 to 5 & 11 appearing applicable in part to the proposals. In considering how this policy applies to these proposals there is a contradiction as BESS developments can contribute to the challenges of climate change by storing renewable energy generated during periods of low demand and returning it to the grid when required. However to do this

their form does not respond positively to its local environment. One area of criticism I have of the proposals is the generic nature of the design detailing of the equipment and the resulting inability to understand what the final form of the BESS kit and fencing will look like in terms of colour and materiality. There would be no certainty at the moment if you were minded to recommend approval that you could successfully condition the final appearance of the works.

Looking at the identified bullet points in EQ6, my comments are:

- *Bullet 1 - respect the character, identity and context* – not achieved so there is **conflict** but it could be improved;
- *Bullet 2 - development on the edge of settlement is of high quality* – marginally applicable but high quality of proposals is not demonstrated, overall **conflict**;
- *Bullet 3 - contributes positively to an area's character ...and landscape features* – the proposals do not contribute positively to the area's character but will lead to an increase in tree cover as a landscape feature, both **conflict and compliance**.
- *Bullet 4 - achieves a satisfactory relationship to adjacent development and does not cause unacceptable effects by reason of ... noise, light pollution or other adverse impacts on local character and amenity* – noise is mitigated by the noise attenuation fencing but this has the potential to be an intrusive feature with the rural scene without mitigation planting, overall general **compliance**.
- *Bullet 5 - private spaces are well-designed, safe, attractive, complement the built form and provide for the retention of significant landscape features such as mature trees* – the proposals cannot be described as attractive but mature trees are generally retained leading to both **conflict and compliance**.
- *Bullet 11 - takes account of ... Supplementary Planning Documents* in this case High Peak Design Guide SPD. Within the design guide Section 3 – Designing in Context and Section 7 – Details & Materials appear the most applicable to the proposals and its greater and obvious application would make the scheme more acceptable within the local landscape.

EQ8 – Green Infrastructure – The provision of the proposed planting to the periphery of the proposals combined with the ability to retain the majority of existing trees and scrub around the Site indicate that there is **compliance** with this policy. The Site has the potential to become a 'stepping stone' habitat with successful management.

EQ9 – Trees, Woodlands & Hedgerows – The proposed planting combined with the ability to retain the overwhelming majority of boundary planting and the fact that no veteran tree stock is affected means that there is **compliance** with this policy. If granted consent the protection of retained stock should be conditioned with suitably robust planning conditions.

The above granular review shows that there is a balance in landscape planning policy terms with the proposals not totally in conflict, nor in total compliance. They have the potential to appear more in keeping with the locality with more specific and sensitive design proposals that reflect local building character and materials. Put in a nutshell, this landscape is an attractive one and a standard layout using ubiquitous kit will not be appropriate here.

9. Suggested planning conditions

As explored above there is landscape and visual harm to be put in the planning balance at the Site. Should you be minded to recommend planning consent and notwithstanding the already submitted landscape proposals the following Planning Conditions are suggested;

- A. That full material and colour choices are required for the BESS equipment and fenestration at the Site with particular attention paid to detailing of the DNO Customer Sub-station and the general entrance area where the greatest opportunity to see into and appreciate the development is taken. *Reason – To ensure that the proposals have the greatest opportunity to assimilate with the local landscape and be visually recessive when viewed from more distant locations.*
- B. Confirmation of all earthworks through the provision of an earth modelling plans and sections are provided to and agreed with the Local Planning Authority along with a Materials Management Plan produced by a suitably qualified Geotechnical Engineer including the source of material to ensure that the bunding associated with the central development platform is assimilated into the local landform, is structurally stable set on its valley side location and can receive tree and scrub planting. *Reason – To ensure stability of earthworks and assimilation of the feature into the local landscape.*
- C. That a detailed hard and soft landscape mitigation scheme, including plant and material schedules are submitted for consideration. *Reason – to ensure that the proposals maintain the boundary character and respect the neighbouring landscape.*
- D. The soft landscape proposals should be implemented in the first growing season after the project has commenced and replacement of dead, diseased or dying stock should be undertaken in accordance with a Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan for a minimum period of 10 years. *Reason – to ensure the quality of the landscape mitigation measures and appropriate maintenance until they become effective.*
- E. That no tree felling is undertaken on , or excavation within root protection areas, without the express written agreement of High Peak Borough Council's Arboricultural Officer and after consideration of tree sensitive construction processes – *Reason to protect the mature tree and hedge stock that contributes to the local landscape.*
- F. That a Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan (LMMP) is prepared for implementation by the site owners / tenants / operators for the full operational life of the development and that an arrangement for continuation of the LMMP by any future owners is entered into – *Reason – to reflect the importance of the soft landscape mitigation proposals for the local landscape character.*
- G. Low light level scheme – *Reason – to reduce the intrusive nature of lighting in the rural landscape in the hours of darkness.*
- H. That a schedule of works activities in the form of a site restoration plan is produced to explain the removal of the battery storage facilities, transformer, ancillary equipment and tracks as part of full restoration of the Site back to pasture fields is submitted for agreement with SMDC prior to the Site becoming operational – *Reason to protect local landscape character and rural amenity on the cessation of use as a power storage park.*

I recognise that the suggested conditions could be combined with others that you may be considering and will require careful wording to be enforceable but wished to explain the reasoning behind them. I trust you find these comments useful as you consider the determination of this application. Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Stuart Ryder – 27/9/23