

## **Planning, Design and Access Statement**

Proposed Sub-Station

Car Park Adjacent MyActive Buxton Pavilion Gardens

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## 1.0 Introduction

### Purpose of the Statement

This Planning Statement has been prepared by A-Tech Architectural Design Ltd on behalf of Leisure Energy in support of a full planning application for a new electrical substation and compound within the existing car park adjoining Buxton MyActive Leisure Centre and Pavilion Gardens.

The proposal comprises an electrical substation and two separate metering enclosures within a secure, L-shaped timber-fenced compound, together with hedge screening, protective bollards, underground cabling and alterations to the existing parking arrangement.

This statement describes the site and development, explains the need for the infrastructure and assesses the proposal against the development plan, national planning policy and other material considerations. It should be read alongside the submitted drawings and specialist reports, which provide the detailed assessment of individual technical matters.

### Applicant and Project Background

Leisure Energy specialises in the decarbonisation of leisure facilities and swimming pools. The proposed substation forms part of wider net-zero and energy-efficiency works at Buxton MyActive Leisure Centre and would provide the electrical capacity required to support its lower-carbon energy systems.

The location has been developed in consultation with the Council client team and planning team, taking account of electrical requirements and operational access, vehicle circulation and parking, nearby landscaping and the setting of Pavilion Gardens.

The substation would be situated on existing car-park hardstanding rather than within the landscaped park. A timber enclosure and evergreen hedge planting would screen the equipment and reduce its visual prominence.

### Application Documents

The application is defined principally by the following drawings prepared by A-Tech Architectural Design Ltd:

- Drawing 26026-01001 – Site Location Plan
- Drawing 26026-03001 – Site Plan As Existing
- Drawing 26026-31001 – Site Plan As Proposed
- Drawing 26026-41001 – Compound Plan and Elevations

The application is also supported by:

- Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement and associated tree plans;
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Hydrogeological Risk Assessment
- Heritage Statement and Statement of Significance
- Electrical substation, metering, earthing and cable-route information
- Landscape Statement prepared by EPD Landscape, dated 22 September 2026

The A-Tech drawings define the development for which permission is sought. Where earlier technical or feasibility information differs from those drawings, the current planning drawings take precedence.

## 2.0 Site and Surrounding Area

### Site Location and Existing Use

The application site lies within the car park serving Buxton MyActive Leisure Centre and Pavilion Gardens. The car park is accessed from Burlington Road, close to its junction with St John's Road, west of Buxton town centre.

The car park includes surface parking and spaces above and beneath an upper deck. The proposed compound would occupy part of the surface parking area at its south-eastern edge, adjoining the landscaped boundary with Pavilion Gardens.

The application site also includes underground connections extending northwards to the existing Net Zero Hub installed beneath the upper car park deck and an incoming duct westwards from Burlington Road. These routes would principally pass through existing hardstanding, which would be reinstated following the works.

The wider land is owned by High Peak Borough Council and registered under title number DY393576.

### Pavilion Gardens and Wider Townscape Context

Pavilion Gardens is a historic public park and an important recreational, landscape and visitor destination within Buxton. It contains mature landscaping, paths, water features and a range of cultural and leisure facilities.

The compound would be located within the operational car park and not the gardens. The immediate context of the compound includes parked vehicles, circulation routes and associated infrastructure, while the adjoining park has a greener landscaped character.

The surrounding area contains a mixture of leisure, cultural, hotel, commercial and residential uses. Burlington Road lies to the west, St John's Road to the north and the leisure centre to the north-east. The River Wye passes through Pavilion Gardens to the south.

### Access and Existing Parking

Vehicular access from Burlington Road would remain unchanged. The compound would be accessed directly from the adjoining parking aisle through lockable double gates, allowing authorised installation, inspection and maintenance.

Three existing accessible spaces would be displaced by the compound. Three replacement accessible spaces would be created within the central surface-parking area by converting five standard spaces.

Accessible provision would therefore be maintained at its existing level, while the number of standard spaces would reduce by five. The parking effects are considered further in Chapter 10.

## Heritage and Landscape Designations

The site lies within the Buxton Conservation Area and immediately adjoins Pavilion Gardens, a Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden. The park and surrounding townscape also contribute to the setting of several listed buildings associated with Buxton's development as a spa and visitor destination.

The compound would occupy twentieth-century (C20) car park hardstanding and would not result in the loss of historic park fabric. The principal heritage consideration is therefore its effect upon the character and setting of the Conservation Area, Registered Park and Garden and nearby listed buildings. These matters are considered in Chapter 7 and the accompanying Heritage Statement.

## Trees and Existing Landscaping

Mature trees and established landscaping around the car park make an important contribution to the separation between the parking area and Pavilion Gardens.

The arboricultural survey identifies 16 individual trees and two tree groups within the area assessed. The current layout has been coordinated with the survey and positioned to avoid the root protection area of T6. No trees would therefore be removed.

Retained trees would be protected in accordance with the Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan. New hedge planting around the compound would provide additional evergreen visual screening.

## Flood Risk

The submitted Flood Risk Assessment confirms that the substation lies within Flood Zone 1 and outside the nearby floodplain. Although areas of surface-water risk are identified within the wider surroundings, the proposed substation position is shown as unaffected. The assessment also records local groundwater susceptibility but identifies no evidence of groundwater flooding at the site.

The substation housing would be raised 300mm above the surrounding car-park level on a dedicated concrete plinth in accordance with the Flood Risk Assessment recommendation. The remainder of the compound would remain at car-park level.

### 3.0 The Proposed Development

#### Description of the Proposal

Full planning permission is sought for the installation of a new electrical substation within the existing car park adjoining Buxton MyActive Leisure Centre and Pavilion Gardens.

The proposed development comprises:

- A new electrical substation and associated GRP housing
- Two separate metering enclosures within the compound in GRP housings
- A secure, L-shaped timber-fenced compound with lockable double gates
- A concrete compound slab at car-park level and a separate 300mm-high concrete plinth supporting the substation housing
- Hedge planting around the exposed sides of the compound
- Surrounding bollards to front and side elevations
- Underground electrical cable connections to Burlington Road and the existing Net Zero Hub
- The displacement of three existing accessible parking spaces
- The provision of three replacement accessible spaces within the existing car park, resulting in the loss of five standard spaces

The proposed compound would be positioned at the south-eastern edge of the surface car park. Although close to Pavilion Gardens, it would occupy existing hardstanding and would not extend into the landscaped park itself.

The development would not alter the established use of the surrounding car park or the principal vehicular access and circulation arrangements. Its footprint has been limited to the area required to accommodate the electrical equipment, operational clearances, enclosure, access and landscape screening.

#### Substation and Metering Equipment

The principal item of equipment would be a nominal 500kVA electrical substation housed within a purpose-designed glass-reinforced plastic enclosure. The associated technical information identifies an anticipated electrical load of approximately 320kVA.

The substation housing would measure approximately 3.2m by 3.7m in plan and would be raised 300mm above the surrounding compound level on a dedicated concrete plinth, in accordance with the recommendation of the submitted Flood Risk Assessment. The two metering enclosures would each be supported on a concrete plinth raised 150 mm above the compound level. The remainder of the compound would remain at the level of the adjoining car park.

Two separate metering enclosures would be installed alongside the substation within the compound. These comprise a 1,000A metering cubicle within its own GRP housing and a smaller customer metering cubicle. The L-shaped arrangement provides access to the equipment while retaining the required operational clearances for inspection and maintenance and minimising encroachment onto the adjacent car park.

The electrical specifications, internal arrangement, earthing requirements and equipment connections are addressed within the supporting technical information. The submitted architectural drawings define the external siting and appearance of the development for planning purposes.

### Compound, Enclosure and Security

The substation and two metering enclosures would be contained within a secure, L-shaped compound. Its layout allows space required for the equipment, operational clearances and access as shown on the submitted plans.

Access would be provided through a lockable, ledged-and-braced timber double gate facing west into the car park. The gate would provide sufficient width for authorised installation, inspection, servicing and equipment replacement while preventing unauthorised public access.

Black metal, removable but lockable bollards that will match with the aesthetic of the wider pavilion gardens, but also provide the security and support needed for ICP (Last Mile) sign-off, would be installed along the front and side elevations of the compound. These would protect the enclosure and equipment from accidental vehicle impact while allowing authorised access through the double gates when required. Their simple black finish would provide a restrained appearance within the car-park setting.

The compound would be formed on a new concrete floor slab set at the level of the adjoining car park. The substation housing would stand on a 300mm raised concrete plinth, while the two metering enclosures would each stand on a 150mm raised concrete plinth. The detailed structural design, equipment foundations, earthing and construction build-up would be determined as part of the technical design stage.

### Hedge Screening and Landscape Treatment

A new hedge would be planted around the compound, except directly in front of the maintenance access gates. A planting strip approximately 500mm wide would generally be provided between the timber enclosure and the surrounding car park or landscaped edge.

The hedge would be planted at maturity, with a minimum plant height of 2m at the time of planting, to provide screening from the outset. It would thereafter be maintained at a height broadly corresponding with the fencing and equipment enclosure, helping to obscure views of the compound from surrounding ground-level viewpoints.

The timber enclosure would provide immediate visual containment, supplemented by the initial height of the proposed planting.

EPD Landscape has reviewed the proposed hedge screening. Its accompanying Landscape Statement considers the planting suitable for this location, providing year-round screening without adverse effects on the wider landscape of Pavilion Gardens.

### Underground Cable Connections

The proposal includes underground electrical connections between the new substation, Burlington Road and the existing Net Zero Hub at the north-eastern side of the car park below the deck.

The incoming below-ground duct would extend from the connection point at the footway adjoining Burlington Road, follow the southern edge of the car park and enter the proposed compound. A further underground duct would extend northwards from the compound through the car park to the Net Zero Hub.

The proposed routes principally follow existing areas of hardstanding, access routes and car parking. Trenches would be backfilled and the affected surfaces reinstated following completion of the installation.

Where excavation is required close to retained trees or within identified root protection areas, the work would be undertaken in accordance with the submitted Arboricultural Method Statement.

Deeper excavations could also be subject to the Buxton Thermal Springs Code of Practice and the safeguards established through the Hydrogeological Risk Assessment and Source Protection Strategy.

### Accessible Parking Reconfiguration

The proposed compound would occupy the position of three existing accessible parking spaces. These spaces would be displaced by the development and could not remain operational alongside the compound.

Three replacement accessible spaces would be created within the central part of the surface car park. The spaces would be formed by overmarking five existing standard parking bays to provide the necessary bay widths and access zones.

The proposal would therefore maintain accessible provision at its existing level, with three replacement spaces provided for the three spaces displaced. The resulting number of accessible spaces would remain above the national recommendation for 6% of the overall car park provision.

Because the replacement spaces would occupy five standard bays, the development would result in a net loss of five standard parking spaces across the car park. The proposal would not change the established vehicular access or obstruct the principal internal circulation routes. The parking effects and justification for the proposed arrangement are considered further in Chapter 10.

## 4.0 Need for the Development

### Buxton Leisure Centre Net-Zero Works

The proposed substation forms part of wider net-zero and energy-efficiency works at Buxton MyActive Leisure Centre. These works are intended to reduce reliance upon fossil-fuel-based systems and support the transition towards lower-carbon operation.

Leisure centres and swimming pools have substantial energy requirements associated with heating, ventilation, filtration, lighting and other building services. Their decarbonisation therefore requires sufficient electrical capacity and supporting infrastructure.

The proposed substation would connect to the existing Net Zero Hub beneath the upper car-park deck and should be regarded as enabling infrastructure for the decarbonisation of an established public leisure facility.

The wider Net Zero Pod works are anticipated to deliver an annual carbon saving of approximately 140 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e). The proposed substation is necessary enabling infrastructure for those works and would therefore make an important contribution towards achieving this saving.

### Electrical Capacity and Operational Requirements

The supporting technical information identifies the requirement for a nominal 500kVA substation, with an anticipated electrical load of approximately 320kVA. The existing arrangements cannot accommodate the additional demand associated with the wider energy improvements.

The proposal would provide the necessary electrical capacity, metering, earthing and underground connections within a secure and maintainable installation.

### Public and Environmental Benefits

The development would support the continued operation and long-term sustainability of Buxton MyActive Leisure Centre while enabling a transition towards lower-carbon building services.

Its principal benefits are:

- Providing the electrical capacity required for the leisure centre's energy improvements
- Supporting the continued operation of an established community facility
- Facilitating lower-carbon energy systems
- Contributing towards local and national decarbonisation objectives

These public and environmental benefits carry significant positive weight in the assessment of the application.

## 5.0 Site Selection and Design Development

### Location Options and Constraints

The substation location has been developed in response to the physical, technical and environmental constraints affecting the site. It requires connections to the incoming supply from Burlington Road and the existing Net Zero Hub, together with space for the equipment, operational safety clearances and maintenance access.

Other constraints include existing trees, parking and vehicle circulation, flood risk and the sensitive setting of Pavilion Gardens.

Alternative locations within the external car park were also considered. These would have occupied more than three existing parking spaces and were discounted following consideration of their effects upon parking, operational requirements, connection routes and the wider site context.

The selected south-eastern location provides a workable connection between Burlington Road and the Net Zero Hub while remaining on existing hardstanding and outside the landscaped part of Pavilion Gardens. Its effects upon parking and views from the Gardens have informed the enclosure, screening and replacement parking arrangements.

### Engagement with the Council and Planning Team

The location has evolved through discussions between Leisure Energy, the High Peak Borough Council client team and the planning team over approximately 12 months. These discussions considered tree protection, vehicle circulation, operational requirements and accessible parking.

The client team requested replacement of the accessible spaces displaced by the compound. Three replacement spaces are therefore proposed, maintaining accessible provision at its existing level.

### Trees and Root Protection Areas

The submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment identifies 16 individual trees and two tree groups within the area considered. Their positions and root protection areas have informed the compound location and cable routes.

Locating the compound tight to the existing kerb would have resulted in a slight incursion into the root protection area of T6. The current layout has therefore been offset into the car park to avoid that incursion. No trees would therefore be impacted.

### Vehicle Circulation and Operational Access

The compound would remain outside the principal internal vehicle route and would not alter the existing access from Burlington Road.

Lockable double gates facing the adjoining parking aisle would provide controlled access for installation and maintenance. Bollards would protect the compound from accidental vehicle impact without obstructing the gates or circulation route.

The associated parking changes are considered in detail in Chapter 10.

## Design and Screening Approach

The design adopts a landscape-led approach appropriate to the site's relationship with Pavilion Gardens and the Buxton Conservation Area.

The equipment would be enclosed by timber fencing and gates, providing security and immediate screening. Evergreen hedging would provide a dense screen around the compound, with the exception of directly in front of the access gates.

Removable protective bollards in a black finish have been selected to provide the required vehicle protection while retaining authorised access and a restrained appearance within the surrounding car park.

The substation housing would be raised 300mm on a dedicated concrete plinth in accordance with the Flood Risk Assessment recommendation. The two metering enclosures would each stand on a 150mm raised concrete plinth, while the compound floor would remain at car-park level.

Together, the enclosure, planting and bollards would reduce the prominence of the infrastructure and assist its integration into the parkland-edge setting.

The L-shaped layout accommodates the substation and two metering enclosures while limiting encroachment into the adjoining car park.

## 6.0 Planning Policy Context

### The Development Plan

Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The principal development plan document is the High Peak Local Plan, adopted in April 2016. The site lies outside the Peak District National Park and is not covered by an adopted neighbourhood plan. The National Planning Policy Framework and other relevant guidance are material considerations.

### High Peak Local Planning Policy

The following Local Plan policies are particularly relevant:

- Policy S1 – Sustainable Development Principles
- Policy S7 – Buxton Sub-area Strategy
- Policy EQ1 – Climate Change
- Policy EQ2 – Landscape Character
- Policy EQ5 – Biodiversity
- Policy EQ6 – Design and Place Making
- Policy EQ7 – Built and Historic Environment
- Policy EQ8 – Green Infrastructure
- Policy EQ9 – Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy EQ10 – Pollution Control and Unstable Land
- Policy EQ11 – Flood Risk Management
- Policy CF4 – Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities
- Policy CF5 – Provision and Retention of Local Community Services and Facilities
- Policy CF6 – Accessibility and Transport

Policy S1 supports sustainable development which contributes to environmental, social and economic well-being, makes effective use of land and infrastructure, protects environmental assets and responds to climate change.

Policy S7 seeks to consolidate Buxton's role as a principal service centre while protecting its spa heritage, townscape and natural environment. It identifies Pavilion Gardens as an important town-centre quarter and seeks to protect the quality and supply of Buxton's natural mineral water.

Policy EQ1 supports renewable and low-carbon technologies where their environmental, ecological and landscape effects are appropriately addressed. The proposed substation would provide enabling infrastructure for the decarbonisation of an existing leisure facility.

Policies EQ2 and EQ6 require development to respond positively to landscape character, local distinctiveness, site context and amenity through appropriate siting, scale, appearance, materials and landscaping.

Policy EQ5 protects biodiversity and ecological networks and encourages appropriate biodiversity enhancement. Policies EQ8 and EQ9 protect green infrastructure, public open space, trees and hedgerows and support their integration into development.

Policy EQ7 requires heritage assets and their settings to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Development within a Conservation Area must respond appropriately to its distinctive character, open spaces and natural features.

Policy EQ10 addresses pollution, groundwater protection, noise, vibration and other effects upon the environment and amenity. Policy EQ11 requires development to avoid flood risk and incorporate appropriate resilience measures.

Policy CF4 protects open-space, sport and recreation facilities from development which would harm their value or function. The compound would occupy existing car-park hardstanding rather than the landscaped area of Pavilion Gardens.

Policy CF5 supports proposals which protect, retain or enhance community facilities. The substation would facilitate energy improvements supporting the continued sustainable operation of Buxton MyActive Leisure Centre and therefore draws positive support from this policy.

Policy CF6 addresses safe access, transport and parking. It also supports community assets and facilities which meet local needs or improve community well-being. The proposed parking reconfiguration and reduction in overall capacity must be considered alongside the community and environmental benefits of the development.

## National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework identifies sustainable development as the purpose of the planning system. Its environmental objective includes mitigating climate change and supporting the transition towards a low-carbon economy.

Paragraph 161 states that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050, including renewable and low-carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

Paragraph 167 requires significant weight to be given to energy-efficiency and low-carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, including non-domestic buildings. Where such works affect designated heritage assets, the policies within Chapter 16 must also be applied.

Paragraph 168 provides support for renewable and low-carbon energy development and associated infrastructure. Applicants are not required to demonstrate the overall need for such energy, and significant weight should be given to its benefits and contribution towards net zero.

Chapter 12 requires development to function well, be visually attractive and respond sympathetically to local character, history and landscape setting. Appropriate landscaping is an important component of good design.

Paragraphs 112–116 address parking, access and highway safety. Safe and suitable access should be achieved, while development should only be refused on highway grounds where there would be an unacceptable effect upon safety or severe residual effects upon the road network.

Paragraph 170 seeks to direct inappropriate development away from areas at risk of flooding and requires development to be safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

Chapter 15 requires planning decisions to protect valued landscapes, biodiversity and the natural environment and to avoid unacceptable effects from pollution, noise or land instability.

Paragraphs 207 and 208 require the significance of affected heritage assets, including the contribution made by their settings, to be identified and assessed.

Paragraphs 212 and 213 require great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. Pavilion Gardens is a Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden and is therefore an asset of the highest significance. Any harm to its significance requires clear and convincing justification.

Where less than substantial harm is identified, paragraph 215 requires that harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

The substation's role in enabling the decarbonisation of an established community facility attracts significant positive weight. That benefit must be considered alongside its effects upon heritage, landscape, trees and parking.

### Other Relevant Guidance and Material Considerations

- Relevant supporting guidance and evidence includes
- The Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement
- The Flood Risk Assessment
- The Buxton Thermal Springs Code of Practice for Excavations
- The Hydrogeological Risk Assessment and Source Protection Strategy
- The Heritage Statement and Statement of Significance
- National Planning Practice Guidance
- Relevant accessible-parking standards and guidance (Building Regulations Part M)
- EPD Landscape Statement

These documents provide the technical evidence necessary to assess the proposal and the measures required to make the development acceptable.

## 7.0 Heritage Assessment

### Buxton Conservation Area

The site lies within the Buxton Conservation Area, whose significance derives from the town's development as a spa resort, its Georgian and Victorian architecture, landscaped public spaces, mature trees and association with its natural mineral water.

Pavilion Gardens and the adjoining historic buildings make an important contribution to this significance. The proposed compound would occupy modern car-park hardstanding and would not involve the demolition or alteration of historic fabric, the removal of trees or development within the landscaped park.

The compact layout, timber enclosure and evergreen screening would reduce the compound's prominence. Subject to the establishment and maintenance of the planting, its effect upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be limited.

### Pavilion Gardens Registered Park and Garden

Pavilion Gardens is recorded at Grade II\* on Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest and is therefore a designated heritage asset of high significance.

Its significance derives from its historic layout and designed landscape, relationship with the River Wye, mature planting, serpentine paths, recreational use and association with the cultural buildings along its boundaries.

The proposal would not physically affect any historic park fabric, path, water feature, tree or planted area.

The existing car park already forms part of the surroundings. The compound would introduce a small new built element, but its principal elevations would be screened by timber fencing and evergreen hedge planting.

The proposal would therefore preserve the ability to understand and appreciate the overall historic layout, landscape character and significance of Pavilion Gardens.

### Setting of Listed Buildings

Pavilion Gardens contains and is associated with several listed cultural and leisure buildings. These include the Grade II listed Pavilion, Octagonal Concert Hall, Playhouse and Conservatory and the Grade II\* listed Buxton Opera House.

Their significance derives from their architectural and historic interest, group value and relationship with the park and Buxton's development as a spa town.

The proposed development would not physically affect any listed building and would be situated entirely within the existing C20 car park.

Its limited scale, enclosure and landscape screening would prevent it from competing with the architectural prominence of the listed buildings or interrupting their relationships with Pavilion Gardens. The proposal is therefore not expected to materially diminish their significance or the contribution made by their settings.

### Design Response and Heritage Effects

The design has been developed to reduce the prominence of the installation within its sensitive heritage setting. The principal measures comprise:

- Locating the compound on existing car park hardstanding
- Limiting its footprint to the operational area required
- Arranging the substation and two metering enclosures within an L-shaped compound to meet operational clearances while limiting encroachment into the car park.
- Retaining all existing trees and landscaped areas
- Enclosing the equipment with timber fencing and gates, surrounded by evergreen hedge screening
- Using removable protective bollards in a restrained black finish

The proposal would cause no loss of historic fabric and no alteration to the designed layout, circulation routes, planting structure or recreational function of Pavilion Gardens. Its effects would be confined to a small area of C20 car park hardstanding and moderated by its compact scale, enclosure and planting.

The proposal is therefore assessed as preserving the character and appearance of the Buxton Conservation Area and avoiding material harm to the significance of Pavilion Gardens and nearby listed buildings. This assessment should be read alongside the accompanying Heritage Statement.

Any identified heritage impact should be weighed against the public benefits of enabling the decarbonisation and longer-term sustainable operation of an established community leisure facility, while giving considerable importance and weight to the conservation of the affected heritage assets.

## 8.0 Landscape and Visual Impact

### Existing Visual Context

The site occupies a position between the character of the existing C20 car park and the landscaped edge of Pavilion Gardens.

The car park is dominated by hard surfacing, parked vehicles and circulation space, while the adjoining Gardens have a greener character defined by mature trees, ornamental planting and the wider designed landscape.

### Views from the Car Park and Pavilion Gardens

The clearest views would be from the adjoining parking area, where the compound gates and bollards would be visible as part of the operational car park environment.

Visibility from Pavilion Gardens would vary according to location, intervening vegetation and season. The greatest change would occur closest to the compound, where a new enclosed feature would be introduced along the car-park boundary.

The proposal would not alter the wider landscape structure of Pavilion Gardens or interrupt its principal designed views. Its effects would be localised and would reduce as the proposed planting establishes.

### Hedge Screening

The proposed evergreen hedge forms the principal visual mitigation. It would provide year-round screening and soften the transition between the compound and Pavilion Gardens. EPD Landscape has reviewed the proposed planting and considers it suitable for this location, without adverse effects on the wider landscape of Pavilion Gardens.

### Materials, Enclosure and Street Furniture

The timber enclosure and gates would provide immediate screening without the industrial appearance of exposed metal security fencing.

Removable bollards in a black finish would provide vehicle protection while retaining a simple and unobtrusive appearance within the operational car-park setting.

Together, these elements would provide a restrained treatment, allowing the hedge to become the dominant external feature.

### Establishment and Maintenance of Planting

The new hedge would be planted at maturity during an appropriate season and maintained through watering, weed control, pruning and replacement of failed plants.

It would thereafter be retained as a dense evergreen screen without obstructing the compound gates or required operational clearances. These measures could be secured by planning condition.

The screening would not make the installation wholly invisible but would substantially reduce its prominence and provide an appropriate transition between the compound and Pavilion Gardens.

## 9.0 Trees and Arboriculture

### Surveyed Tree Population

The application is supported by a BS 5837:2012 Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement prepared by EPD Landscape / Glendale Countryside Ltd.

The survey records 16 individual trees and two tree groups:

- Category A: T11 and T12
- Category B: T1, T2, T3, T9 and T16
- Category C: T4, T5, T6, T8, T10, T13, T14 and T15, together with groups G1 and G2
- Category U: T7

The Category U classification of T7 reflects its existing condition and does not indicate removal to facilitate the development. No trees are proposed for removal. The relevant tree references are identified on the submitted site plans, allowing the application layout to be read alongside the arboricultural information.

### Root Protection Areas

Tree positions and root protection areas have informed the development of the scheme.

Positioning the compound tight to the existing kerb would have resulted in a slight incursion into the root protection area of T6. The current layout has therefore been offset into the car park so that the compound and its planting area remain outside that area.

Where underground cable excavations approach or enter other root protection areas, the specialist working methods within the Arboricultural Method Statement would apply.

### Development Impacts

The compound would be formed principally within existing hardstanding and would not require the removal of any surveyed tree.

The established tree cover along the edge of Pavilion Gardens would be retained and would continue to provide visual separation between the car park and the historic park. The proposal is therefore not expected to result in unacceptable effects upon the retained tree population.

### Tree Protection and Construction Measures

Tree-protection measures would be installed before relevant construction works begin and retained for their duration. Protected areas would operate as construction-exclusion zones, with storage, vehicle movements and other potentially damaging activities prohibited.

Where excavation is required within or close to a root protection area, hard surfaces would be removed using hand-held tools. Roots would be located by careful hand excavation, with appropriate arboricultural supervision.

Temporary welfare facilities, materials, plant and spoil would remain outside protected areas. Compliance with the Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan could be secured by planning condition.

## 10.0 Parking, Access and Highways Considerations

### Existing Parking Arrangements

The application site forms part of the car park serving Buxton MyActive Leisure Centre and Pavilion Gardens. Vehicular access is from Burlington Road, with internal routes serving the surface parking, upper deck and parking beneath the deck.

Accessible spaces are located at the south-eastern edge of the car park, within the proposed compound position. The development would not alter the existing entrance or principal circulation routes.

### Loss and Replacement of Accessible Bays

The three accessible spaces affected by the compound would be removed. Three replacement accessible spaces would be provided within the central surface-parking area by converting five standard spaces.

This arrangement, requested by the Council client team, would maintain accessible provision at its existing level.

### Overall Change in Parking Capacity

The conversion of five standard spaces into three accessible spaces would reduce standard provision by five. This reduction is acknowledged as an adverse operational effect given the car park's role in serving the leisure centre and Pavilion Gardens. It must, however, be considered alongside the need for the electrical infrastructure and the retention of the existing level of accessible provision.

### Accessible Parking Provision

Following the alterations, accessible provision would remain above the national recommendation 6% benchmark for the car park.

The replacement bays and shared access zones are shown on the submitted site plan and would be marked and signed in accordance with applicable accessible-parking guidance.

The proposal would therefore maintain a strong level of provision for users who rely upon designated accessible spaces.

### Substation Access, Servicing and Safety

The compound would be accessed directly from the adjoining parking aisle through lockable timber double gates. This would allow authorised installation and maintenance without obstructing the principal circulation route.

Servicing would be intermittent and limited to the operation and maintenance of the electrical equipment. Removable bollards would protect the compound from accidental vehicle impact while retaining authorised access through the gates.

The proposal would not alter the Burlington Road access, generate regular operational traffic or materially change vehicle movements within the site. It is therefore considered compatible with the access and highway-safety requirements of Local Plan Policy CF6.

The reduction in overall parking capacity carries some adverse weight but should be balanced against the retention of accessible provision and the community and environmental benefits of the development.

## 11.0 Flood Risk and Drainage

### Flood-Zone Classification

The submitted Flood Risk Assessment confirms that the proposed substation lies within Flood Zone 1 and outside the functional floodplain. It is therefore at low risk of flooding from rivers.

### Surface-Water and Groundwater Risk

Although areas of surface-water risk are identified within the wider surroundings, the proposed substation position is shown as unaffected. The assessment also records local groundwater susceptibility but identifies no evidence of groundwater flooding at the site.

### Flood-Resilience Measures

The substation housing would be constructed on a concrete plinth raised 300mm above the existing car-park level, in accordance with the recommendation of the Flood Risk Assessment. The two metering enclosures would each stand on a 150mm raised concrete plinth. The compound floor would remain at car-park level.

### Effect on Surface-Water Drainage

The proposal occupies a small area of existing hardstanding and would not materially increase impermeable coverage or surface-water runoff. Existing drainage arrangements would therefore remain substantially unchanged.

## 12.0 Hydrogeology and Protection of the Thermal Springs

### Core Protection Area

The proposed works intersect the Core Protection Area associated with the Buxton thermal springs. Excavations must therefore have regard to the relevant Code of Practice.

### Proposed Excavations

The works would include foundations and underground cable trenches, with parts of the cable route extending more than 1m below ground level. These exceed the 500mm depth at which the Code of Practice applies.

### Hydrogeological Risk Assessment

A Hydrogeological Risk Assessment accompanies the application and assesses the potential effects of the proposed development upon groundwater and the Buxton thermal springs.

The assessment provides the technical basis for identifying the necessary protection measures and demonstrates how the works can be undertaken without unacceptable risk to the thermal-spring system, subject to compliance with its recommendations and the relevant Code of Practice.

The Hydrogeological Risk Assessment has been prepared with regard to the Environment Agency's groundwater-protection framework and associated Groundwater Protection Position Statements. The proposed methodology has also been developed to reflect the protection principles applicable to works within a Source Protection Zone 1.

### Construction Safeguards and Consultation

The works would follow the recommendations of the Hydrogeological Risk Assessment and relevant Code of Practice. Appropriate safeguards would be adopted to control excavation, fuels, materials and potential sources of contamination. Consultation with the relevant thermal-spring interests and the Environment Agency will inform the final protection measures.

A Source Protection Strategy is being prepared to supplement the Hydrogeological Risk Assessment. This will set out the detailed working methods, monitoring requirements, pollution-prevention measures and procedures necessary to protect groundwater and the Buxton thermal-spring system during construction. The strategy will be submitted as an addendum to the planning application.

## 13.0 Ecology and Biodiversity

### Existing Site Characteristics

The compound would be located on the existing surfaced car park. The principal ecological features nearby are the established trees and landscaping around the site boundaries.

### Potential Ecological Effects

No trees would be removed, and the compound has been positioned to avoid their root protection areas. Given its location on existing hardstanding, the proposal is expected to have limited direct ecological effects.

### Biodiversity Net Gain

The development would principally affect existing sealed surfaces having no biodiversity value. It would not result in the loss of any priority habitat, trees or existing hedgerows. The proposal is therefore considered to fall within the de minimis exemption from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. The relevant exemption will be identified within the planning application form.

Regulation 4 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 provides an exemption where development does not affect any on site priority habitat and does not affect 25m<sup>2</sup> or more of onsite habitat having a biodiversity value greater than zero, or 5m or more of onsite linear habitat.

The proposed works would be undertaken principally on the existing tarmac car-parking area. This surface is classified as developed land / sealed surface and has a biodiversity value of zero under the statutory metric. The proposal would not result in the loss or degradation of any priority habitat, habitat having a biodiversity value greater than zero, or existing linear habitat. All existing trees and established landscaping would be retained.

The proposal therefore satisfies the criteria for the de minimis exemption from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. The exemption and supporting reasons will be identified within the planning application form.

### Landscape and Habitat Enhancement

A new hedge would be planted around the compound, providing additional evergreen vegetation and reinforcing the existing landscaped character of the car park. Its establishment and maintenance can be secured through an appropriate planning condition.

## 14.0 Noise and Residential Amenity

### General Operations

The substation would operate continuously but would generate no regular staff, visitor movements or deliveries. Access would be limited to occasional inspection and maintenance. The installation site is not in close proximity to any residential areas.

### Noise and Vibration Considerations

Operational noise would principally comprise a low-level transformer hum from equipment within the substation housing. In the context of the existing car park and leisure-centre activities, the proposal is not expected to cause an unacceptable effect on amenity.

### Construction Effects

Construction noise and vehicle movements would be temporary and at levels typical of trenching works and general external electrical installations. Works would be undertaken during appropriate daytime hours using normal good-practice measures to limit disturbance.

## 15.0 Sustainability and Climate Change

### Contribution to Leisure Centre Decarbonisation Operations

The proposed substation forms part of wider works to reduce the carbon emissions associated with Buxton MyActive Leisure Centre. It would provide the electrical capacity required to support the transition towards lower-carbon building services. As enabling infrastructure for the decarbonisation of an established community facility, the proposal should be afforded significant support.

The development would provide modern electrical infrastructure serving an established community facility. This would support its continued operation and enable greater use of electricity in place of fossil-fuel-based systems.

### Sustainable Development

The proposal supports national and local objectives for reducing carbon emissions and improving the energy performance of existing buildings. Its environmental and community benefits would be delivered through a compact development within an existing car park, with landscape screening and no loss of trees.

## 16.0 Conclusion

The development is required to provide the additional electrical capacity needed for the wider decarbonisation of the leisure centre. It would support the transition towards lower-carbon building services, improve the resilience of the centre's energy infrastructure and assist the continued operation of an established community facility.

The substation would be positioned entirely within the existing C20 car park. Its compact scale, timber enclosure and surrounding planting would help integrate the development into its surroundings and limit views from Pavilion Gardens. The proposal would not physically impact any listed building, and no trees would be removed.

The parking alterations would result in the loss of five standard spaces, while three accessible bays would replace the three displaced by the compound. Although the resulting reduction in overall parking capacity is acknowledged, accessible provision would be maintained at its existing level and would remain above the national recommendation of 6% of the overall car park provision. Existing vehicle circulation and access for inspection and maintenance would be retained.

The site lies within Flood Zone 1. The substation housing would be raised 300mm above the car-park level in accordance with the Flood Risk Assessment. Excavations within the thermal-springs Core Protection Area would be undertaken in accordance with the relevant Code of Practice and the recommendations of the specialist Hydrogeological Risk Assessment.

The works would principally affect sealed surfaces of no biodiversity value and would not require the removal of trees or existing hedgerows. New hedge planting would provide screening and a modest ecological enhancement. Operational and construction effects would also be limited and are not expected to result in unacceptable effects on neighbouring amenity.

Overall, the proposal represents necessary energy infrastructure within an established operational site. Its limited local effects have been reduced through careful siting, landscape screening and flood-resilience measures. These considerations, together with the substantial environmental and community benefits arising from the decarbonisation of Buxton MyActive Leisure Centre, weigh strongly in favour of the development.