

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

131 Radcliffe New Road

Whitefield, Manchester

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This document is to be read in conjunction with:

- The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool– 131 Radcliffe New Road excel tool



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- On 29th November 2024 a site visit to inform the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment was undertaken at 131 Radcliffe New Road, Whitefield, Manchester.
- The survey site encompasses a dwelling, driveway and vegetated garden bounded by a non-native hedgerow.
- The development will result in the loss of 264m² of vegetated garden.
- There will be a resultant loss of 0.05 Habitat Units, which equates to a deficit of 0.12 Habitat Units accounting for the spatial multiplier. It will be necessary to purchase off-site units from a habitat bank to compensate for the loss of vegetated garden.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Application Site

- 1.1.1 This report details a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of 131 Radcliffe New Road, Whitefield, Manchester, M45 7RP. Ordnance Survey grid reference (centre of site): SJ 6209 5577.
- 1.1.2 YS Building Services Ltd commissioned Verity Webster Ltd to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment in order to inform the proposals for the site.

1.2 Objectives

- 1.2.1 The objectives of the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment are to determine:
- Potential for enhancement or compensation (offsetting) on the site for protected species, habitats of conservation interest and overall biodiversity with the aim of achieving 10% net gain in biodiversity.

1.3 Proposals

- 1.3.1 The proposals for the site comprise the construction of a residential property with associated parking.

1.4 Ecologist

- 1.4.1 The Ecological Assessment was undertaken by Verity Webster. Verity is a Chartered Ecologist and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.
- 1.4.2 Verity has worked as an ecological consultant since 2007. She has undertaken Ecological Assessments and protected species surveys for a large variety of projects and schemes, producing the required impact assessment and subsequent mitigation schemes and method statements when necessary.

1.5 Report Limitations

- 1.5.1 This document includes recommendations for measures to achieve BNG. These recommendations do not comprise a landscape design or planting prescriptions as provided by a Landscape Architect and the ecologist has no Design Liability associated with these recommendations.



2. Site Location and Description

2.1 Site Location

- 2.1.1 The survey site is located in a built-up residential area of Whitefield, Manchester, approximately 600m west of Bury New Road which runs north to south.
- 2.1.2 Residential houses and gardens surround the site, although open green space lies within close proximity. Woodland with waterbodies lies approximately 75m to the north, beyond which weaves the River Irwell southwest to northeast through the landscape. Open space extends north from the river encompassing grassland, scrub and trees. A golf course, supporting grassland, trees and waterbodies lies approximately 300m to the south. Open space along the River Irwell is retained in patches through the landscape and Outwood Country Park, which is part of this, lies approximately 1.3km to the west.
- 2.1.3 Linear features, such as the River Irwell, and also a railway line which lies approximately 85m the south of the site, provide habitat corridors for mobile species such as bats and birds, facilitating their movement through the landscape. See Figures 1 and 2.

2.2 Site Description

- 2.2.1 The survey site is roughly square and comprises an existing house with car parking and access to the south and a vegetated garden to the east. The garden comprises modified grassland with ornamental trees and a non-native leylandii hedgerow along the southern and eastern boundary. To the rear of the house there is an area of unvegetated garden; paved with a shed.



Figure 1: Ordnance survey map showing the location of the proposed development site.





Figure 2: Aerial image showing the proposed development site and immediate surroundings





3. Legislation

3.1 Planning Policy and Legislation

- 3.1.1 In England, biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). This is referred to as biodiversity net gain in Planning Practice Guidance to distinguish it from other or more general biodiversity gains.
- 3.1.2 Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to a general biodiversity gain condition to secure the biodiversity gain objective. This objective is to deliver at least a 10% increase in relation to the pre-development biodiversity value of the development granted permission. This increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credits (Gov.Uk Biodiversity Net Gain, 2023).
- 3.1.3 Under the NERC Act 2006, planning authorities are obliged to make sure that they have all the information on the presence of protected species on site before they make a decision on the planning permission.
- 3.1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) encourages Local Planning Authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Chapter 15, Para 180 of NPPF states: *"The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils....*
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures".*

Para 181 states: *"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries."*

Para 185 identifies that plans should do the following to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity:

- a) "Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and*
- b) Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and peruse opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity."*

Para 186 states that *"when determining planning applications, local authorities should apply the following principles:*

- a) if significant harm to biodiversity from a development cannot be avoided...,adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort compensated for, then planning permission should be refused"*

- 3.1.5 The local planning authority has a responsibility, therefore, to obtain all information regarding the potential for protected species on a site prior to making a decision about a proposal.



4. Methodology

4.1 Site Survey

- 4.1.1 A site visit was undertaken on 29th November 2024 to inform the Biodiversity Net Gain Metric and Assessment. Habitats on site were assessed and described in accordance with UK Habitat Classification (UK Hab Ltd, 2023) and a list of conspicuous species recorded. The condition of the habitats was determined using the condition sheets provided for the Statutory Metric (DEFRA, 2023).
- 4.1.2 The Ecological Assessment was undertaken by Verity Webster BSc MSC CEcol MCIEEM. Verity is a Chartered Ecologist and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.
- 4.1.3 Verity has worked as an ecological consultant for over 17 years. She has undertaken Ecological Assessments and protected species surveys for a large variety of projects and schemes, producing the required impact assessment and subsequent mitigation schemes and method statements when necessary.

4.2 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

- 4.2.1 Biodiversity Offsetting was developed by Defra. The pilots of the study were first published in 2012.
- 4.2.2 The Biodiversity Calculator is a system created by Defra to quantify change in biodiversity of a site in biodiversity units.
- 4.2.3 *The Biodiversity Offsetting Pilots: Guidance for Developers* (Defra, 2012) details the original metric for calculating biodiversity loss or gain as a result of development proposal.
- 4.2.4 *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric* (DEFRA, 2023), *Condition Assessments* (DEFRA, 2023), *The Statutory Metric Use Guide* (DEFRA, 2024) and associated biodiversity metric principles were used to inform the assessment and the habitat condition and calculate potential change in biodiversity within the survey site.
- 4.2.5 To determine strategic significance of the habitats at baseline and post-development, the relevant documentation was considered including Local and Neighbourhood Plans, Priority Habitats, Local Biodiversity Action Plans and Local Ecological Networks. When available the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be utilised for this purpose.
- 4.2.6 The Mitigation Hierarchy and the Biodiversity Net Hierarchy and was used to inform recommendations about habitat retention, loss, enhancement and creation as per the Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice principles for development (CIRIA C776a, 2019).
- 4.2.7 The site areas were calculated based upon Site- Existing & Proposed, Project Number GSS24100, Drawing Number 502, Gold Sketch Studios.



Biodiversity Net Gain Principles (Table 4, p. 19, The Statutory Metric User Guide, 2024)

Principle 1 – The metric assessment should be completed by a competent person.

Principle 2 – The use of this biodiversity metric does not override existing biodiversity protections, statutory obligations, policy requirements, ecological mitigation hierarchy or any other requirements. This includes consenting or licencing processes, for example woodlands.

Principle 3 – This biodiversity metric should be used in accordance with established good practice guidance and professional codes.

Principle 4 – This biodiversity metric is not a complex or comprehensive ecological model and is not a substitute for expert ecological advice.

Principle 5 – Biodiversity units are a proxy for biodiversity and should be treated as relative values.

Principle 6 – This biodiversity metric is designed to inform decisions in conjunction with locally relevant evidence, expert input, or guidance.

Principle 7 – Habitat interventions need to be realistic and deliverable within a relevant project timeframe.

Principle 8 – Created and enhanced habitats should be, where practical and reasonable, local to any impact and deliver strategically important outcomes for nature conservation.

Principle 9 – This biodiversity metric does not enforce a minimum habitat size ratio for compensation of losses. Proposals should aim to:

- Maintain habitat extent – supporting more, bigger, better and more joined up ecological networks.
- Ensure that proposed or retained habitat parcels are of sufficient size for ecological function.

4.3 Limitations

4.3.1 The survey work was undertaken in November 2024. The species list constructed is not comprehensive, and some plant species more conspicuous at other times of the year may have been missed. However, given the habitat types present, a survey at this time of year is considered sufficient to inform the BNG Assessment.



5. Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

5.1 Baseline condition and potential impacts on Biodiversity

Offsetting and the Biodiversity Calculator

5.1.1 The baseline condition of the habitat and the predicted change as a result of the proposals has been assessed with the use of the Biodiversity Offset principals.

5.1.2 Biodiversity offsetting principal: What is it?

“Using the biodiversity offsetting approach means that an offset provider delivers quantifiable amount of biodiversity benefit to offset the loss of the biodiversity resulting from the development. The losses and gains are measured in the same way, even if the habitats concerned are different. In the biodiversity offsetting pilot, the measurement is done in **‘biodiversity units’**, which are the product of the **size of an area**, the **distinctiveness** and the **condition** of the habitat it comprises. The assessment of biodiversity units lost and gained can be calculated” (Defra, 2012).

5.1.3 The Biodiversity Calculator is a system created by Defra to quantify change in biodiversity of a site in biodiversity units. The current calculator is known as Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Gov.UK Statutory Biodiversity Metric Tool, 2023).

5.1.4 This quantitative assessment will be considered in relation to the other qualitative ecological functions of the site in order to assess the impact (i.e. functionality for protected species), but is a useful tool to show predicted or potential loss of habitat, change in condition and enhancement (net gain).

Habitats at Baseline

5.1.5 The UK Habitat classifications are as follows:

- **g4 108 - Modified grassland frequently mown**
- **h2b - Non-native and ornamental hedgerow**
- **u1 – Ornamental planting**
- **u1b5 Developed land; sealed surface: Buildings.**
- **u1b6 Developed land; sealed surface: Other developed land.**

5.1.6 The modified grassland, small ornamental trees and non-native hedgerow are classified under vegetated garden within the Statutory BNG Metric.



Modified grassland

- 5.1.7 The modified grassland is dominated by rye grass (*Lolium perenne*) with the moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*. Fescue (*Festuca* sp.) is abundant with frequent daisy (*Bellis perennis*), occasional dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.) and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*). The species richness is poor and the sward is highly maintained; regularly mown with little heterogeneity in structure. *Area of non-cereal crop (November 2024)*

Non-native ornamental hedgerow

- 5.1.8 This comprises a tall non-native leylandii (*Cupressus x leylandii*) hedgerow.

Ornamental planting

- 5.1.9 Ornamental planting includes planted fruit trees and non-native shrubs.



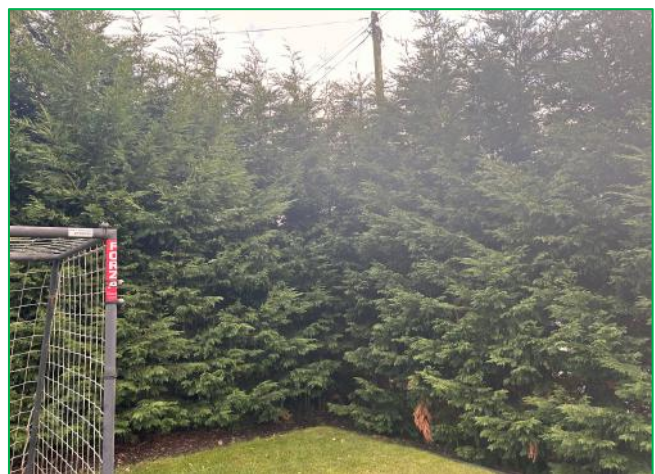
The modified grassland and ornamental hedgerow



The modified grassland regularly mown



The species-poor modified grassland



The non-native ornamental hedgerow



The house – Developed land; sealed surface



Unvegetated garden



*Ornamental planting and driveway -
Developed land; sealed surface*

Figure 3: The Survey Site – UK Habitat Classification Plan



Distinctiveness of the Habitat and Trading Rules

5.1.10 Under the Biodiversity Calculator principals each habitat is categorised into a distinctiveness band.

5.1.11 The distinctiveness of the habitat is based upon parameters such as species richness, diversity, rarity (at local, regional, national and international scales) and the degree to which a habitat supports species rarely found in other habitats (Treweek *et al*, 2010)

- Vegetated garden is considered to have LOW distinctiveness.

Trading Rules

5.1.12 Habitats of low distinctiveness, if lost, must be compensated for with the same distinctiveness or better habitat.

Habitat Condition Assessment

5.1.13 Vegetated garden does not require a condition assessment under the Statutory BNG Metric.

Strategic Significance

5.1.14 The strategic significance of the habitat present is based upon the value of the habitat in the wider landscape. Consideration is given to local and neighbourhood plans, priority habitats, local nature reserves and local ecological networks.

5.1.15 There are no habitats of Principal Importance under the NERC Act, 2006 or any habitats identified in the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) on site. The vegetated garden and developed land is classified as 'not in local strategy' for the purposes of this assessment.

5.2 Achieving Biodiversity Net Gain

5.2.1 The EU is committed to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services by 2020. The Biodiversity Strategy sets out 6 targets and 20 specific actions geared towards this overall objective. Action 7 is to ensure no net loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

5.2.2 The 'mitigation hierarchy' is included with current planning policy, aiming to halt the loss of biodiversity. The National Planning Policy Framework, consolidating planning guidance states that '*if significant harm cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for, planning permission should be refused*'.

5.2.3 Defra's biodiversity offsetting pilot was developed to address this requirement and ensure development, economic growth and biodiversity conservation are compatible (British Ecological Society, 2013).

5.2.4 Biodiversity net gain, as a good practice principal, has been developed by Ciria, CIEEM and IEMA (BNG, 2016). At the very least developments should aim for no net loss as part of the proposals.



- 5.2.5 The Headline Results in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric show a deficit in Habitat Units at 131 Radcliffe New Road due to the loss of vegetative garden.**

Habitat Lost, Trading Rules and Compensation

- 5.2.6 Due to the loss of vegetated garden, the trading rules within the metric are not met and there is a deficit of 0.05 Habitat Units. This equates to a deficit of 0.12 Habitat Units with the spatial multiplier added.**
- 5.2.7 To compensate for the loss of the vegetated garden it will be necessary to offset the loss by purchasing Habitat Units off-site from a Habitat Bank.**



6. References

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