



# Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

**74 Sheepfoot Lane**

Prestwich, Manchester

April 2026

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This document is to be read in conjunction with:

- The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool– 74 Sheepfoot Lane



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- On 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026 a site visit to inform the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment was undertaken on land at 74 Sheepfoot Lane, Prestwich, Manchester.
- The site area currently comprises developed land; sealed surface, artificial unvegetated unsealed surface, sparsely vegetated ground and modified grassland. Works have been undertaken since January 2020 that have resulted in the loss of vegetation (vegetated garden). The baseline BNG units have therefore been based upon Google Earth imagery.
- The development will result in the loss of 0.0241ha of vegetated garden. The proposals include creation of 0.012ha of vegetated garden.
- Overall, there is a biodiversity loss of -51.95%, which equates to -0.03% Habitat Units. It will be necessary to purchase this unit deficit from a Habitat Bank.

*Verity Webster*

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Application Site

- 1.1.1 This report details a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of land at 74 Sheepfoot Lane, Prestwich, Manchester, M25 0DT. National grid reference: SD83700361.
- 1.1.2 Shahdoth Ali Shah 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 comprise the clearance of the site and the construction of two dwellings with associated access and landscape.

### 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 Landscape Design and Ecologist Limitations

- 1.5.1 This document includes recommendations for measures to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain (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. This document includes measures to achieve BNG based upon the Existing and Proposed Plans by Gold Sketch Studios. Drawing number 502. 19/08/2025.



## 2. Site Location and Description

### 2.1 Site Location

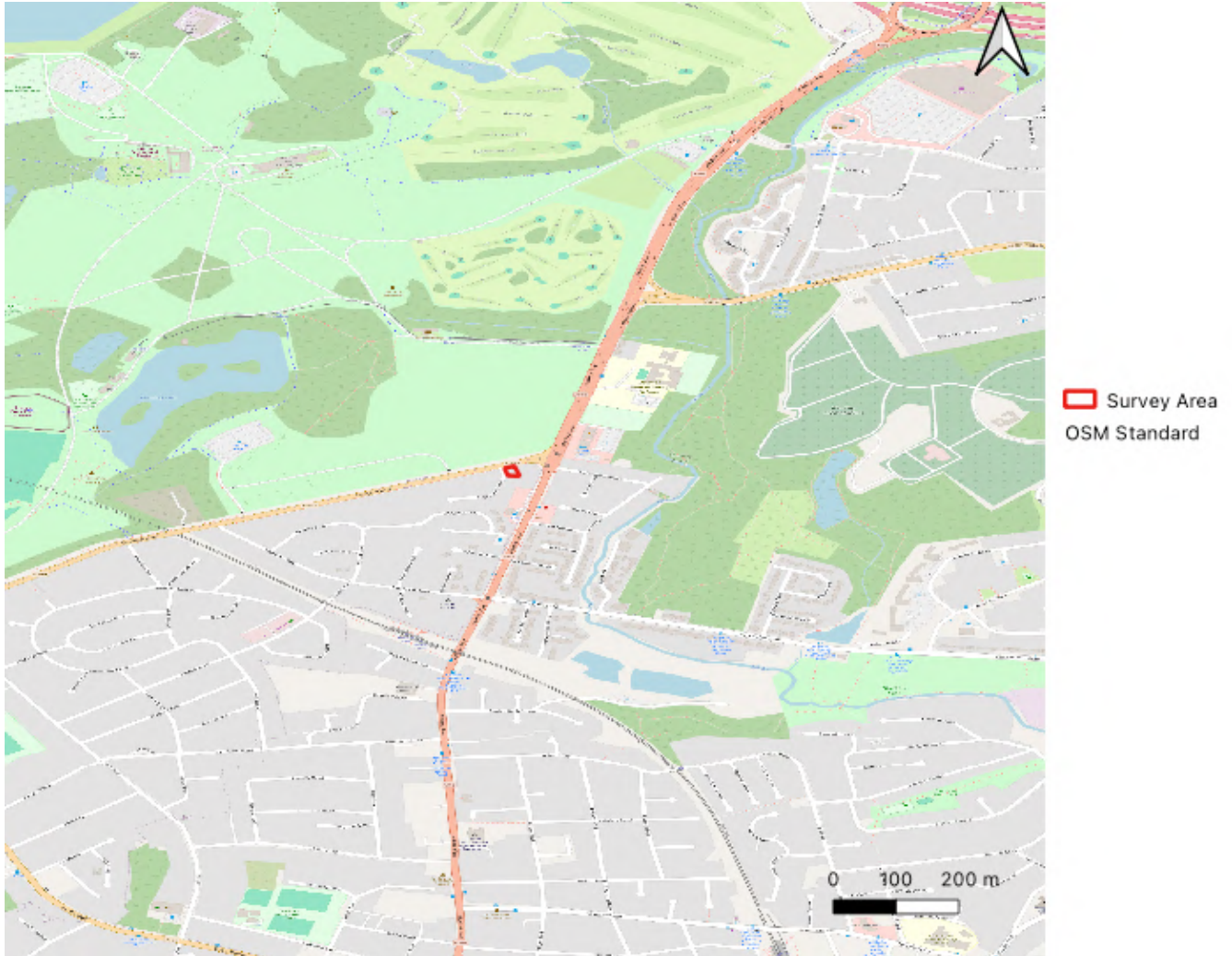
- 2.1.1 The survey site is located in a residential area of Prestwich, Manchester. Sheepfoot Lane runs along the northern boundary. Middleton Road runs southwest to northeast approximately 40m to the east.
- 2.1.2 The site is located in close proximity to extensive areas of open space. Heaton Park, supporting grassland, woodland and standing water lies opposite the site beyond Sheepfoot Lane. Blackley Forest Local Nature Reserve lies approximately 150m to the east. The River Irk weaves north to south through Blackley forest, approximately 230m to the east at the closest point. See Figures 1 and 2.

### 2.2 Site Description

- 2.2.1 The site area currently comprises an area of artificial unvegetated unsealed surface, developed land; sealed surface, sparsely vegetated ground and modified grassland. Based on Google Earth imagery, the garden space was previously modified grassland and ornamental shrubs which is classed as vegetated garden.
- 2.2.2 See UK Habitat Classification Plan, Figure 3.



**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 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026 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. Verity has botanical skills FISC Level 4 suitable for NVC survey.
- 4.1.3 Verity has worked as an ecological consultant for over 19 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 Mapping

- 4.2.1 Habitats on site were mapped in accordance with UK Hab Classification (UK Hab Ltd, 2023). The minimum mapping unit adopted is 15m<sup>2</sup>.

### 4.3 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

- 4.3.1 Biodiversity Offsetting was developed by Defra. The pilots of the study were first published in 2012.
- 4.3.2 The Biodiversity Calculator is a system created by Defra to quantify change in biodiversity of a site in biodiversity units.
- 4.3.3 *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.
- 4.3.4 *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.
- 4.3.5 For inclusion in the Statutory Metric, habitats below 25m<sup>2</sup> have been grouped where appropriate, that is, where they have the same distinctiveness level.
- 4.3.6 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.
- 4.3.7 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).

### 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 ration for compensation of losses. Proposals should aim to:

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

## 4.4 Limitations

- 4.4.1 The survey work was undertaken in February 2026. February is a suboptimal time of year to undertake botanical survey. Although some species may not be conspicuous, given that they may not be emergent at this time of year, the species list is considered sufficient to inform the BNG Assessment given the habitat types present and the fact that Google Earth is also used to ascertain likely habitat type.



## 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 than 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 survey baseline is based upon the habitat types that remain at the site and that present from Google Earth Imagery.

5.1.6 The UK Habitat classifications are as follows:

- u1 Vegetated garden
- u1b5 Developed land; sealed surface (buildings)
- u1b6 Developed land; sealed surface (other)

#### u1 Vegetated garden

5.1.7 Google Earth Imagery shows areas of modified grassland with shrubs that have been cleared. The grassland is likely to be of poor condition as is typical for regularly mown garden space.

#### U1b5/6

5.1.8 The developed land; sealed surface refers to the existing building and hard standing.



*Showing the cleared areas of artificial unvegetated unsealed surface.*



*Showing the cleared areas of artificial unvegetated unsealed surface, sparsely vegetated land and small area of modified grassland.*



*Showing the Google Earth image of the site from 2020. Site clearance has took place in 2025.*

Figure 3: The Survey Site – UK Habitat Classification Plan



### Distinctiveness of the Habitat and Trading Rules

- 5.1.9 Under the Biodiversity Calculator principals each habitat is categorised into a distinctiveness band.
- 5.1.10 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 has low distinctiveness

### Trading Rules

- 5.1.11 Habitats of low distinctiveness, if lost, must be compensated for with the same distinctiveness or better habitat. Medium distinctiveness habitats, if lost must be compensated for with the same distinctiveness or better habitat.

### Habitat Condition Assessment

- 5.1.12 The condition the habitat on site can be categorised as low, moderate or good and is based upon the Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. However, vegetated garden does not require a condition assessment.

### Strategic Significance

- 5.1.13 The strategic significance of the habitat present is based upon the value of the habitat in the wider landscape. Consideration is given to the draft local nature recovery strategy, local and neighbourhood plans, priority habitats, local nature reserves and local ecological networks.
- 5.1.14 Vegetated garden is in the local policy and are not of conservation value. For this reason, the habitat has been recorded as 'not in local strategy/no local strategy'.



## 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 the overall net change in Biodiversity Units as a result of the development and creation of new habitat.

### Habitat Lost and Trading Rules

- 5.2.6 As a result of the proposals 0.0241ha of vegetated garden will have been lost.
- 5.2.7 Habitat of the same distinctiveness or better habitat is required to meet the trading rules.

### Area habitats to be created (See Figure 4)

- 5.2.8 The following habitats have been created on site:
- **0.0120ha of vegetated garden.**
- 5.2.9 This habitat creation will reduce the habitat unit deficit but cannot off-set the trading rules.

Figure 4: The Survey Site – Proposed Habitat



### 5.3 Percentage Change in Biodiversity Units

**Baseline Habitat Units:** 0.05

**Habitat Units Change:** -0.03

**Total percentage change in Habitat Units:** -51.95%

- 5.3.1 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric shows there will be a loss of -0.03% Habitat Units. There is no requirement for hedgerow units or watercourse units.
- 5.3.2 With the addition of the spatial multiplier there is a deficit of 0.06 Units of A1 habitat types (vegetated garden). It will be necessary to purchase these units from a Habitat Bank.



## 6. References

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