



TECHNICAL NOTE: BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG) ASSESSMENT

SITE NAME & ADDRESS	121-131 Bell Lane, Bury, BL9 6BS
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL	Conversion of existing building at first floor and part ground floor to create 9 no. flats including new window and door openings; retention of existing retail use on part ground floor
PLANNING REFERENCE	70955
DATE	20 January 2025
AUTHOR	Ryan Knight BSc (Hons) MCIEEM - Principal Ecologist

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Knight Sky Ecology Ltd was commissioned to provide a Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculation tool (hereafter referred to as ‘the metric tool’) for the proposed development located at 121-131 Bell Lane, Bury. This technical note has been produced to accompany the metric tool and provide an overview of the results.

In England, the primary legislation for the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain (BNG) is principally set out under Schedule 7A (Biodiversity Gain in England) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This legislation was inserted into the 1990 Act by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021, and was amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

Under the statutory framework for BNG, subject to some exceptions, every planning permission is subject to a condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met (“the biodiversity gain condition”). This objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitat. This increase can be achieved through on-site biodiversity gains, registered off-site biodiversity gains or through statutory biodiversity credits.

METHODS

The latest version of the metric tool (23 July 2024) has been accessed from:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>

The metric tool along with the pre and post development habitat maps have been based on the red line planning boundary and proposed plans provided by the agent. All land within this boundary is referred to as ‘the site’.



DESK STUDY

The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) mapping tool (Available from: <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>) was used to search for ecological information contained within the following datasets:

- Statutory designated sites for nature conservation within a 2km radius.
- The Impact Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Priority habitats (as listed within Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006) within a 500m radius. The priority listed habitats that are also classified as 'irreplaceable' are highlighted where relevant.

Mapping information for locally designated sites (Sites of Biological Importance) was accessed from:

<https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/81cbf1a0-6304-470c-ade8-60272be0d219/sites-of-biological-importance-sbi-in-greater-manchester>

FIELD SURVEY

A site walkover was undertaken on 6th January 2025 by Ryan Knight MCIEEM (Full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management).

All habitats within the site were described and mapped using UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Version 2 definitions (UKHab Ltd, 2023).

The site visit was undertaken outside the standard habitat survey season. However, the site habitats were basic and no significant constraints to assigning the correct habitat categories or condition assessments were encountered (also see results below).

RESULTS

BASELINE

Internationally & Nationally Designated Sites

The proposed development is not located within 2km of any statutory sites primarily designated for their nature conservation interests. The Impact Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI IRZs) indicate that the proposed development is unlikely to have a harmful effect on any SSSI located in the wider area.

Priority & Irreplaceable Habitats

There are no priority or irreplaceable habitats within the site. The relevant MAGIC mapping layer shows that there is an area of broadleaved woodland 315m north. The development scale and type does not present a risk of impacts to such habitats.

Sites of Biological Importance

The site is not within any locally designated site areas. In addition, there are no such sites within 500m.

Habitat Degradation

Within Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021, which sets out the biodiversity gain condition for development, measures are included that allow planning authorities to recognise any habitat degradation since 30th January 2020 and to take the earlier habitat state as the baseline for the purposes of BNG. In January 2024, the site did not contain any habitats of measurable biodiversity value. However, based on aerial imagery (Google Earth) from 22nd April 2020 and Google Streetview imagery from June 2024, there was an area of vegetation comprising young trees in the north-west corner of the site. This area has since been cleared and no vegetation remains.



The tree species were difficult to determine; however, there did appear to be sycamore and possibly willow species present. It is very likely that such trees were small, (i.e., under 30cm diameter), self-seeded trees. It is also considered likely that such trees would be of a low condition. The vegetation layer beneath the trees could not be determined; however, given the urban nature of the site and previous use, it is very likely that the ground vegetation comprised a range of ruderal species typically found in such environments. A habitat category of 81 ruderal or ephemeral scrub (poor condition) has been assigned and is considered to be the most accurate reflection of the cleared habitat. Two trees (as above) have also been added to the metric tool. Given the retrospective nature of the metric tool calculations, a habitat condition assessment has not been provided.

Assessed retrospectively, the combined value of the habitats is **0.05 habitat units**.

Hedgerows

There were no hedgerows within the site.

Watercourses

There were no watercourses within the site or within a 10m radius.

ENHANCEMENTS

No habitats are proposed to be enhanced.

CREATION

Habitats

Figure 2 in Appendix B provides a UK Habitat Classification map of the site as based on the proposed plans. There are to be limited development plans for the land surrounding the buildings. Most of the land is to be used for access and car parking for the residential units. Based on current plans, there would be no habitats of measurable value within the site.

Hedgerows

There is no mandatory requirement for net gain in respect of hedgerows.

Watercourses

There is no mandatory requirement for net gain in respect of watercourses.



SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

The development proposals will result in:

- A net loss of biodiversity value for habitats comprising **0.05 habitat units**.

The development will therefore not currently meet the biodiversity net gain condition for habitats as the 10% net gain would not be achieved. The development will not impact any designated sites, priority habitats or other habitats of significant biodiversity value. Therefore, all obligations relating to the mitigation hierarchy are met.

Recommended Options

There are currently two options for achieving the mandatory net gain:

1) On site habitat creation.

The loss of biodiversity value at the site is very small and it could be possible to achieve net gain within the site via the planting of 4-5 small trees on the boundary. However, the feasibility of this planting in line with the car parking and access requirements would need to be assessed. Other options could include the planting of a mixed scrub margin.

2) The purchasing of biodiversity credits.

A purchase agreement for the required habitat units from a third-party provider (e.g., the Environment Bank) can be sought. This is considered a simple purchasing process in which the third party provides a quote for supplying the required biodiversity units and for all the management and monitoring commitments without any further onus on the developer.

Whichever option is chosen would be fully detailed in a Biodiversity Gain Plan (see below). The information within this document and the metric tool demonstrates that the mandatory BNG condition is more than capable of being discharged successfully at the site.

Post-consent Requirements

The statutory framework for biodiversity net gain requires a Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) to be submitted and approved by the planning authority to discharge the biodiversity gain condition prior to the commencement of development. The BGP should detail the measures undertaken to achieve the required 10% net gain. The metric tool would need to be updated once an option for achieving the 10% gain is chosen.



APPENDIX A. PHOTOS

Photo 1.

Land to rear of
building (January
2024)



Photo 2.

Land to side of
building (Google
Street View – June
2024)

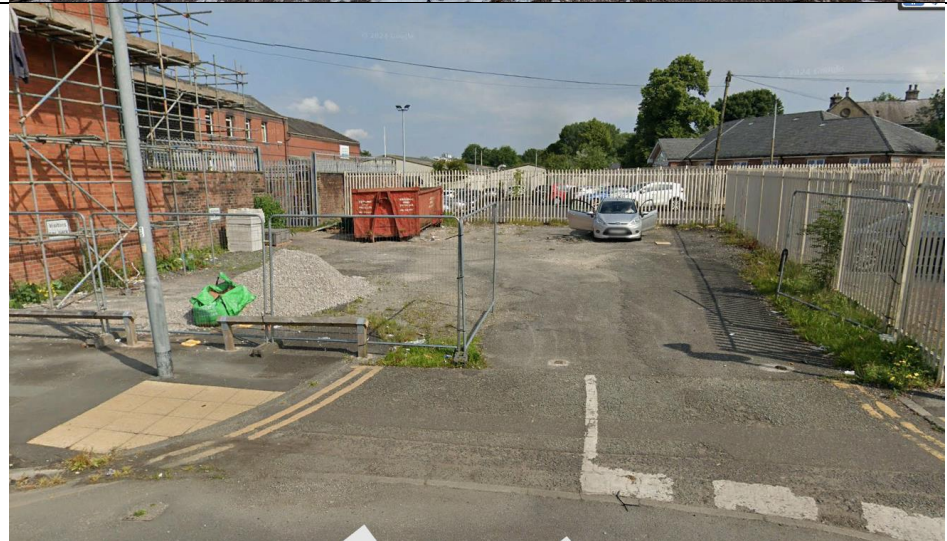




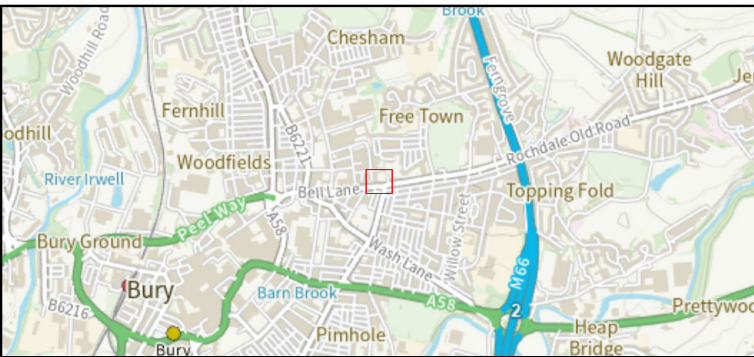
Photo 3.
Vegetation in
north-east corner
(Google
Streetview – June
2024).



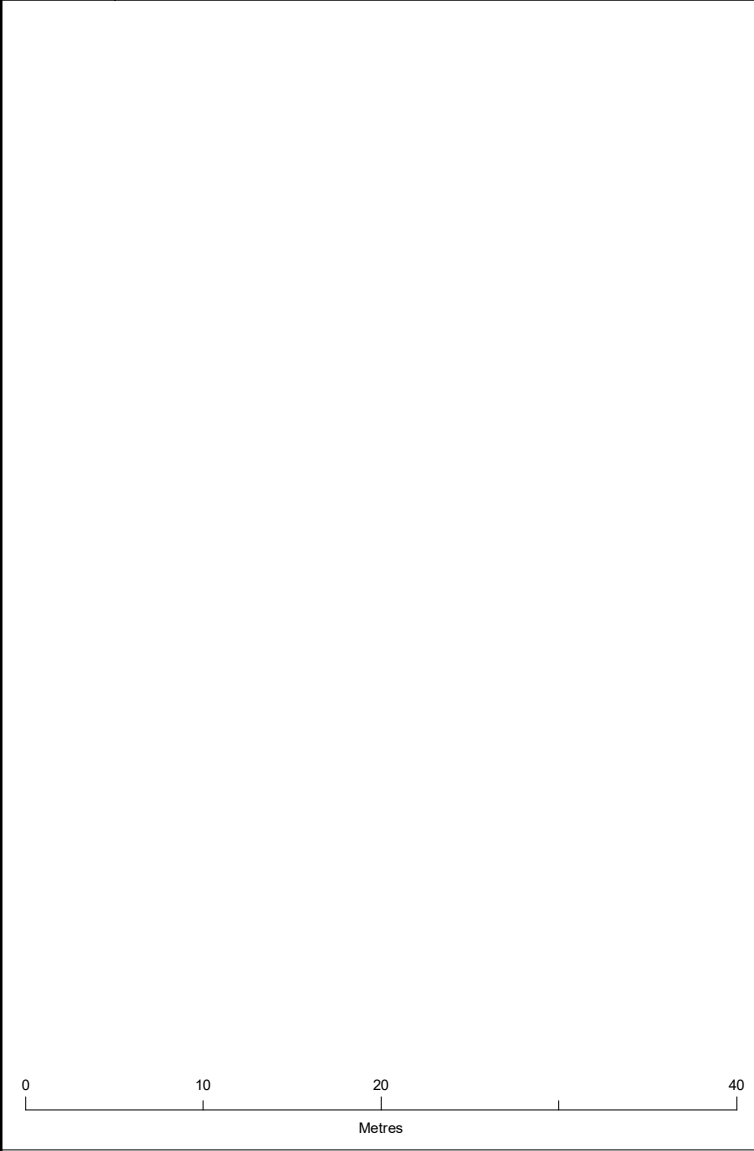


APPENDIX B: FIGURES (NEXT PAGE)

- **FIGURE 1. UK HABITAT CLASSIFICATION MAP (BASELINE)**
- **FIGURE 2. UK HABITAT CLASSIFICATION MAP (POST-DEVELOPMENT)**



Survey Information	
	Site boundary (1,208.8m ²)
UKHab Habitat Survey	
	u1b5 - Building (486.3m ²)
	u1b6 - Other developed land (722.5m ²)



PROJECT TITLE							
121-131 BELL LANE, BURY							
DRAWING TITLE							
Figure 2: UK Habitat Classification Map (Post-Development)							
VER	DATE	REMARKS	Drawn	Checked			
1.0	17/01/25	Post-Development	MP	RK			
DRAWING NUMBER:							
KSEcology/121-131BellLane/Post-Development							
SCALE	1:425	PLOT SIZE	A3	DATUM	OSGB	PROJECTION	BNG
Source: Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright 2025, All rights reserved. Licence Number 100049837.			  KNIGHT SKY ECOLOGY				