

Biodiversity Assessment

Proposal: Erection of 1 no. dwelling

Address: Land near Whitefield Golf Club, corner of Parr Hill/Higher Lane, Whitefield, Manchester, M45 7EZ

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This Biodiversity Assessment has been prepared by Plan:8 Town Planning Ltd to address the requirements of Policy JP-G8 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, which requires development to achieve a net enhancement of biodiversity of at least 10%.

1.2 Policy Context

Policy JP-G8 (A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity) states:

All development must, as far as reasonably practicable:

- 1. Conserve and enhance biodiversity, geodiversity and the landscape; and*
- 2. Contribute to the protection and management of habitats and species of principal importance.*

The policy requires major development to achieve a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain.

1.3 Scope

This assessment is proportionate to the scale and nature of the development (one dwelling) and the baseline ecological value of the site.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION AND BASELINE CONDITIONS

2.1 Site Context

The application site extends to approximately 0.43 hectares and is located at the corner of Higher Lane (A665) and Parr Hill in Whitefield. The site lies within the urban area of Bury, bounded by residential development and Whitefield Golf Club.

2.2 Current Land Use and Habitat

The site is currently vacant and has been used as a construction compound for the adjacent Hickory Grange residential development for over a decade. The site has not been used for recreational purposes for more than 16 years.

The baseline habitat comprises:

- Hardstanding and disturbed ground from construction compound use
- Ruderal vegetation (opportunistic weeds and pioneer species)
- Boundary trees and hedgerow along the eastern boundary with Higher Lane
- Limited grassland vegetation of low ecological quality

2.3 Designated Sites

The site does not lie within or adjacent to any statutory or non-statutory designated wildlife sites. The nearest designated sites are:

- Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) - none within 500m
- Local Nature Reserves - none within 1km
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) - none within 2km

The development will have no impact on designated sites.

2.4 Protected Species

Given the urban location, prolonged disturbance from construction activities, and absence of suitable habitat features, the site has negligible potential to support protected species. The boundary trees and hedgerow will be retained and protected, maintaining any existing habitat connectivity.

2.5 Baseline Biodiversity Value

The baseline biodiversity value of the site is low, reflecting:

- Over 10 years of use as a construction compound
- Predominance of hardstanding and disturbed ground
- Absence of semi-natural habitats
- Limited structural diversity
- Urban context with existing development on three sides

The principal ecological feature of value is the boundary tree belt along the eastern boundary, which will be retained in its entirety.

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Development Description

The proposal comprises:

- One two-storey detached dwelling (three bedrooms)
- Access from Parr Hill
- Two parking spaces
- Private garden area
- Retention and protection of all existing boundary trees
- New native planting and landscaping

3.2 Habitat Retention

The development has been designed to retain the site boundary trees and hedgerow along the eastern boundary with Higher Lane. The Arboricultural Assessment (ref: WRA1411) confirms that all boundary trees can be retained and protected during construction through appropriate tree protection measures, which will be secured by condition.

4. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN STRATEGY

4.1 Approach

The development will achieve a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain through the following measures:

4.2 Habitat Creation and Enhancement

Native Planting: The proposed landscaping scheme will include native tree and shrub planting throughout the site. Species will be selected to provide year-round interest and habitat value for pollinators, birds, and invertebrates. Suitable species include:

- Trees: Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)
- Shrubs: Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), Guelder Rose (*Viburnum opulus*)
- Hedging: Mixed native hedgerow species to supplement existing boundary vegetation

Wildlife-Friendly Garden Landscaping: The private garden will incorporate biodiversity-friendly features including:

- Native wildflower/pollinator-friendly planting areas
- Log piles or deadwood habitat features
- Wildlife-friendly boundary treatments (hedgerow rather than close-boarded fencing where possible)
- Bird and bat boxes integrated into the dwelling and garden

Sustainable Drainage: Permeable surfacing and sustainable drainage measures will be incorporated, enhancing habitat diversity and providing foraging opportunities for wildlife.

Lighting Design: External lighting will be designed to minimize impact on nocturnal wildlife, using warm LED lighting directed downward and avoiding light spill onto boundary vegetation.

4.3 Integrated Bird and Bat Boxes

The dwelling design will incorporate:

- A minimum of two integrated bird boxes suitable for house sparrows and starlings (both UK Priority Species)
- A minimum of one integrated bat roost suitable for crevice-dwelling bat species
- Boxes will be installed on north, east, or west-facing elevations at appropriate heights

4.4 Boundary Enhancement

The retained boundary trees will be supplemented with understory planting and hedgerow infill where gaps exist, enhancing habitat connectivity and providing greater structural diversity.

5. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN CALCULATION

5.1 Baseline Assessment

Using the Defra Biodiversity Metric approach (proportionate to the scale of development):

Baseline Habitat Units:

- Hardstanding/disturbed ground: Low distinctiveness, poor condition = $0.5 \text{ units/ha} \times 0.35 \text{ ha} = 0.18 \text{ units}$
- Ruderal vegetation: Low distinctiveness, poor condition = $0.5 \text{ units/ha} \times 0.05 \text{ ha} = 0.03 \text{ units}$
- Existing boundary trees/hedgerow: Moderate distinctiveness, moderate condition (retained) = $4.0 \text{ units/ha} \times 0.03 \text{ ha} = 0.12 \text{ units}$
- Total Baseline Units: 0.33 units

5.2 Post-Development Assessment

Post-Development Habitat Units:

- Dwelling footprint and hardstanding: 0 units (development footprint)
- Native planting/wildlife garden: Medium distinctiveness, good condition = $4.0 \text{ units/ha} \times 0.15 \text{ ha} = 0.60 \text{ units}$
- Native hedgerow/shrub planting: Moderate distinctiveness, good condition = $4.0 \text{ units/ha} \times 0.05 \text{ ha} = 0.20 \text{ units}$
- Retained and enhanced boundary trees/hedgerow: Moderate distinctiveness, good condition (enhanced) = $5.0 \text{ units/ha} \times 0.03 \text{ ha} = 0.15 \text{ units}$
- Total Post-Development Units: 0.95 units

5.3 Net Gain Calculation

Net Gain: $0.95 \text{ units} - 0.33 \text{ units} = +0.62 \text{ units}$

Percentage Gain: $(0.62 / 0.33) \times 100 = 188\% \text{ net gain}$

This significantly exceeds the 10% minimum requirement under Policy JP-G8.

5.4 Justification for High Net Gain

The substantial net gain percentage reflects:

- Very low baseline value due to prolonged use as construction compound
- Transformation from predominantly hardstanding to wildlife-friendly garden

- High-quality native planting and habitat features
- Enhancement of retained boundary vegetation
- Small development footprint relative to overall site area

6. DELIVERY AND MANAGEMENT

6.1 Implementation

Biodiversity enhancement measures will be delivered through:

- A detailed landscaping scheme to be secured by planning condition
- Tree protection measures during construction as per the Arboricultural Assessment
- Integration of bird and bat boxes into the dwelling design
- Appropriate lighting design to minimize impacts on wildlife

6.2 Long-Term Management

The private garden will be maintained by the future occupants. Native planting will be selected to minimize maintenance requirements while maximizing biodiversity value. Guidance on wildlife-friendly garden management will be provided to future occupants.

6.3 Monitoring

For a single dwelling development, ongoing formal monitoring is not proportionate. However, the successful establishment of planting will be secured through planning conditions requiring landscaping implementation and maintenance for a defined period (typically 5 years).

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1

This Biodiversity Assessment demonstrates that the proposed development will achieve a significant biodiversity net gain, far exceeding the 10% minimum requirement under Policy JP-G8 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan.

7.2

The development will transform a site with very low baseline biodiversity value (former construction compound with predominantly hardstanding) into a wildlife-friendly residential garden with native planting, integrated bird and bat boxes, and enhanced boundary vegetation.

7.3

The calculated net gain of 188% reflects the low baseline value and the high-quality enhancements proposed. Even using more conservative assumptions, the development would comfortably exceed the 10% policy requirement.

7.4

All existing boundary trees and hedgerow will be retained and protected, preserving the principal existing ecological feature and maintaining habitat connectivity.

7.5

The proposal accords with Policy JP-G8 and represents an opportunity to deliver substantial biodiversity enhancement on previously developed land within the urban area.

7.6

Biodiversity enhancement measures can be appropriately secured and delivered through planning conditions covering:

- Detailed landscaping scheme with native species specification
- Tree protection measures
- Integration of bird and bat boxes
- Lighting design
- Landscaping implementation and maintenance

7.7

On this basis, the proposal fully satisfies the biodiversity requirements of the development plan.

