



Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

72 Park Road

Prestwich, Greater Manchester

March 2025

Prepared for: Gold Sketch Studios

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This document is to be read in conjunction with:

- The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool– 72 Park Road
- The Statutory BNG Habitat Condition Assessment – 72 Park Road



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- On 4th March 2025 a site visit to inform the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment was undertaken on land at 72 Park Road, Prestwich.
- The on-site area comprises other neutral grassland, bramble scrub, a mature oak tree and ornamental and non-native species hedgerow.
- The proposals will result in the loss of all other neutral grassland and scrub habitat. The mature oak tree will be retained. A proportion (81m) of the ornamental hedgerow will be retained.
- The proposals will include the creation of 0.044ha of vegetated garden.
- There will be a deficit of 1.31 Habitat Units and deficit of 0.04 Hedgerow Units.
- It will be necessary to purchase off-site units from a habitat bank, or off-set the habitat loss on land elsewhere.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Application Site

- 1.1.1 This report details a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of land at 72 Park Road, Prestwich M25 0FA. Ordnance Survey grid reference (centre of site): SD830028.
- 1.1.2 Gold Sketch Studios 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 construction of 6 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 proposals by Gold Sketch Studios, Project number GSS23145.4, Drawing number 502. 04/09/2024.



2. Site Location and Description

2.1 Site Location

- 2.1.1 The survey site is located in a built-up residential area of Prestwich, Greater Manchester, approximately 4km north of Manchester city centre. The site lies approximately 600m south of Heaton Park, an area of grassland and woodland with waterbodies. The A576 Middleton Road runs north to south approximately 500m to the east, and the A665 Bury Old Road runs north to southeast approximately 300m to the west. Although the immediate surroundings are residential, the area is 'green' due to the large numbers of residential trees and gardens.
- 2.1.2 Other areas of open green space in the locality comprise Broughton Park, an area of grassland and waterbody approximately 700m to the south and Kersal Wetlands, which lie approximately 1.3km to the west within the bounds of the River Irwell, which weaves through the landscape approximately 1.1km to the southwest.
- 2.1.3 The survey site is considered to be in a locality with moderate suitability for protected species and habitats of interest. See Figures 1 and 2.

2.2 Site Description

- 2.2.1 The survey site is roughly square and comprises an area of other neutral grassland with tall forb and scattered young trees. There is a small area of bramble scrub around the boundary and a mature oak tree in the northwest corner.
- 2.2.2 There is no evidence of prior clearance of the site (post-January 2020). The site previously supported a house and gardens (2018) prior to demolition and clearance (Google Earth, 2025).
- 2.2.3 See UK Habitat Classification Plans, Figure 3.



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

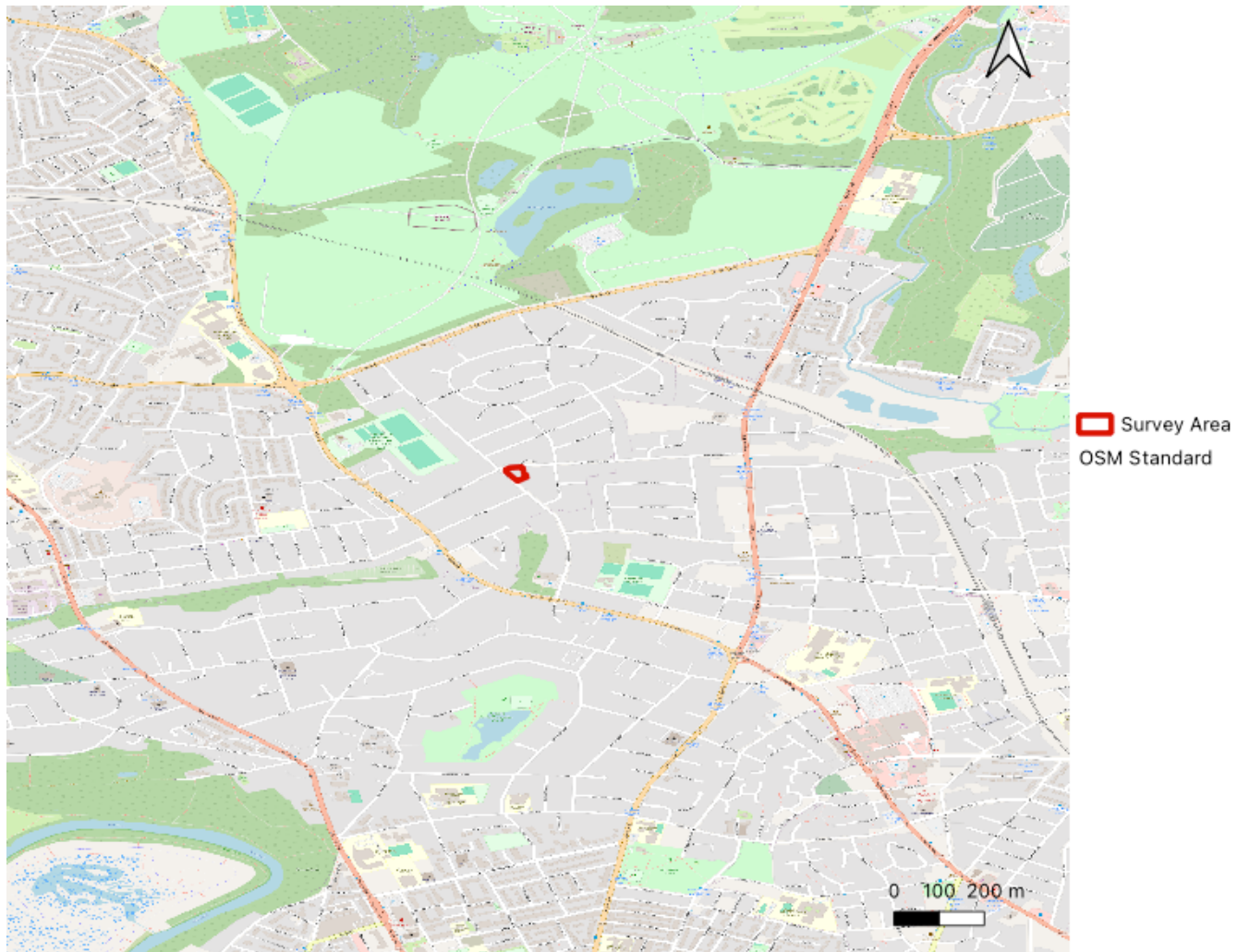




Figure 2: Aerial image showing the proposed development site and immediate surroundings





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 5th February 2025 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).



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 March 2025. The species list constructed is not comprehensive given that some species that may be present may not be visible at this time of year. However, given the habitat types present, the survey undertaken 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: On-Site

5.1.5 The survey area supports hard standing and a building with mown modified grassland, artificial unvegetated unsealed surface and sparsely vegetated land with tall forb vegetation. There is a non-native ornamental hedgerow along the southwest boundary. Mature trees around the wider site boundary do not lie within the survey area.

5.1.6 The UK Habitat classifications are as follows:

- Other neutral grassland g3c with secondary codes 16 'tall forb', 202 'self-set trees', 521 'unmanaged'
- Mature broadleaved tree g 203
- Bramble scrub h3d
- Ornamental or non-native hedgerow h2b

g3c, 16, 202, 521 – Other neutral grassland

6.1.2 The majority of the survey site supports other neutral grassland. The stand is dominated by grasses, Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), fescue (*Festuca* sp.), creeping bent-grass (*Agrostis stolonifera*), meadow grass species (*Poa* sp.) and cock's-foot grass (*Dactylus glomerata*). Compact rush (*Juncus conglomeratus*) is frequent and conspicuous.



Showing other neutral grassland

- 6.1.3 Herbs are frequent, comprising over 20% of the vegetation cover in March, and are likely to be more abundant in April and May. Herbs include colt's-foot (*Tussilago farfara*), yarrow (*Achillia millefolium*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.), ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*), agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), mallow (*Malva* sp.), mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), strawberry (*Fragaria* sp.) and rosebay willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*).
- 6.1.4 Some species reflective of the prior garden status are also present including montbretia (*Crocsmia* sp.), tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*) and a *Rhododendron* shrub in the northeast corner.
- 6.1.5 Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) is present in the centre of the site and sparsely around the boundary in the areas of bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) scrub.
- 6.1.6 Sapling trees are mainly birch (*Betula* sp.), oak (*Quercus* sp.) and willow (*Salix* sp.) and are under 7.5cm DBH.
- 6.1.7 Given the density of herbs, the fact that white clover and rye grass are rare or absent and there is more than one grass species not sown for agricultural production, the site is considered other



neutral grassland. Average species per m² is 7sp. in early March and is considered likely to reach 8 or above later in the year when herbs are more conspicuous and annual grasses appear.

hd3 Bramble scrub

- 6.1.8 The bramble scrub stretches around the site boundary and supports some tall forb growth between.

h2b Ornamental hedgerow

- 6.1.9 The privet (*Ligustrum* var) hedgerow around the site boundary (H1) is considered ornamental because it was previously in a garden and is composed of an ornamental privet variety and rarely, holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). There is a short stretch (H2) of leylandii hedgerow on the northeast boundary.

g 203 - Broadleaved tree

- 6.1.10 A single mature oak (*Quercus* sp.) is present on site.



Showing other neutral grassland and bramble scrub along the eastern boundary of the site.



Showing bramble scrub along the northern boundary of the site.



Looking northwest across the survey site. Showing the other neutral grassland, young self-sown trees and the large, mature oak tree.

Figure 3: The Survey Site – UK Habitat Classification Plan



Distinctiveness of the Habitat and Trading Rules

- 5.1.7 Under the Biodiversity Calculator principals each habitat is categorised into a distinctiveness band.
- 5.1.8 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).
- Other neutral grassland is considered to have MEDIUM distinctiveness.
 - Bramble scrub is considered to have MEDIUM distinctiveness.
 - Urban trees are considered to have MEDIUM distinctiveness.
 - Non-native and ornamental hedgerows are considered to have VERY LOW distinctiveness.

Trading Rules

- 5.1.9 Habitats of moderate distinctiveness, if lost, must be compensated for with the same broad habitat or that of a higher distinctiveness.

Habitat Condition Assessment

- 5.1.10 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.
- 5.1.11 The other neutral grassland is considered to be of poor condition because it does not represent a good example of the habitat type, there is not bare ground and there is damage from fly tipping and vandalism. At the time of survey the average number of species per m² was 7.
- 5.1.12 Bramble scrub and non-native and ornamental hedgerows do 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 local and neighbourhood plans, priority habitats, local nature reserves and local ecological networks. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Greater Manchester has not yet been finalised, but is available in draft form.
- 5.1.14 The other neutral grassland, bramble scrub and urban trees are not in local policy and are not of conservation value in this regard. For this reason it 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, all the other neutral grassland and bramble scrub will be lost. A proportion (81m) of the ornamental hedgerow will be retained. The mature oak tree will be retained.
- 5.2.7 The loss of the other neutral grassland and bramble scrub must be compensated for with the same broad habitat type or a habitat of higher distinctiveness.

Area habitats to be created on-site

- 5.2.8 The following habitats are to be created on-site:



- **0.044ha of vegetated garden will be created on site. This will deliver 0.08 Habitat Units.**

5.2.9 There is no requirement under Biodiversity Net Gain for specific habitat creation or management within vegetative gardens, so these recommendations have not been included in this biodiversity net gain assessment.

Trading Rules

5.2.10 Vegetated gardens are of low distinctiveness and will not, therefore, satisfy the trading rules required to offset habitats of medium distinctiveness such as other neutral grassland and bramble scrub. The units attained do not compensate for the loss of the habitat on site.

Figure 4: The Survey Site – Proposed Development



5.3 Percentage Change in Biodiversity Units

On-Site Baseline Habitat Units: 1.07

On-site Baseline Hedgerow Units: 0.09

On-Site Habitat Units Change: -0.55

On-site Hedgerow Units Change: -0.01

On-Site Baseline Habitat Unit Net Change: -51.09%

On-Site Baseline Hedgerow Units Change: -11.96%

Trading rules not met.

5.3.1 The loss of area habitat on site and the creation of garden will result in a habitat loss of 51.09% and a deficit of 1.31 Habitat Units required to attain 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.

5.3.2 The loss of the ornamental hedgerow will result in a hedgerow loss of 11.96% and deficit of 0.04 Hedgerow Units required to attain 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.

5.3.3 **It will be necessary to purchase off-site units or off-set the habitat loss on land elsewhere.**



6. References

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