



2 – 4 Whitworth Street West

Response to the Green and Blue
Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester

December 2024

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This ‘Response to the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester’ (“the Statement”) accompanies an application for Full Planning Permission submitted to Manchester City Council (MCC) at Whitworth Street West for the demolition of existing buildings on-site and development of a residential development of up to 44 storeys with associated ground floor amenity and landscaping (“the Proposed Development”).
- 1.2. The Applicant is the Glenbrook WWS Ltd (the ‘Applicant’).
- 1.3. The Statement sets out how the Proposed Development responds to the vision and objectives set out in the Manchester Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2022) (‘The G&BI Strategy’).
- 1.4. In turn, this Statement also demonstrates how the Proposed Development addresses the following policies from the Local Development Plan:

Manchester Core Strategy (2012) – Updated March 2024 following adoption of Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan	Policy EN9 – Green Infrastructure Policy EN15 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
The Places for Everyone Plan (2024)	Policy JP-Strat13 – Strategic Green Infrastructure Policy JP-G2 – Green Infrastructure Network Policy JP-G3 – River Valleys and Waterways Policy JP-G6 – Urban Green Space Policy JP-G7 – Trees and Woodland Policy JP-G8 – A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 1.5. It should be read in conjunction with the Design and Access Statement (prepared by Sheppard Robson), Landscaping Statement (prepared by Layer) and Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (prepared by Hilson Moran) submitted in support of the application.

The G&BI Strategy

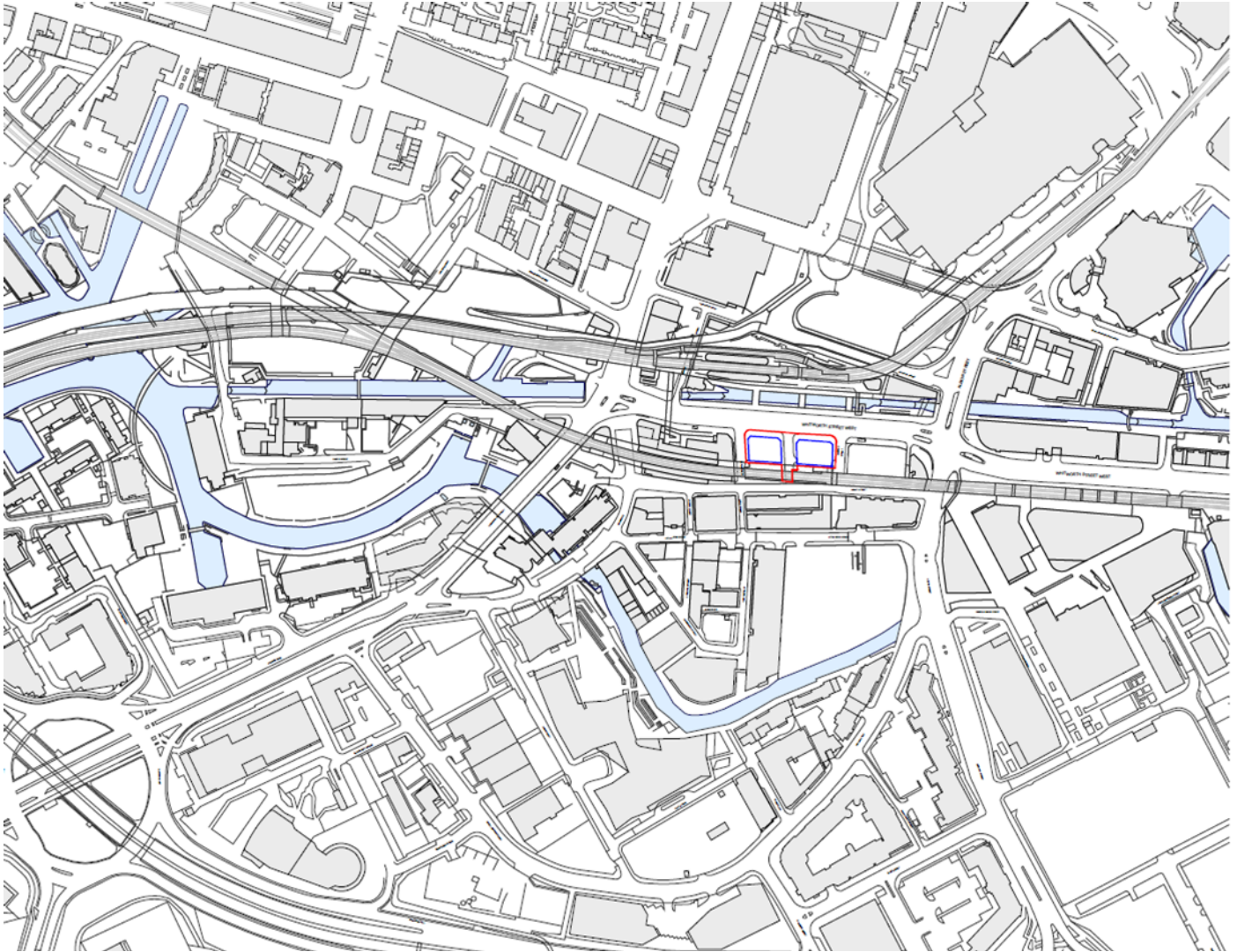
- 1.6. Manchester’s Great Outdoors: A Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester 2015-25 was adopted by MCC in July 2015 and subsequently updated in 2022, highlighting approaches, challenges and projects that will help bring the Strategy to life over the coming years.
- 1.7. MCC recognises that green and blue infrastructure is an essential part of creating a successful, liveable city. Parks, river valleys, gardens, street trees, green roofs, canals and many other components all form part of a rich network that is integrated with the built environment in the world’s most popular cities.
- 1.8. The overarching vision for the Strategy remains as follows:
“By 2025, climate-resilient well-maintained green and blue spaces remains an integral part of all neighbourhoods. The city’s communities will be living healthy, fulfilled lives, enjoying access to parks and green spaces, and safe green routes for walking, cycling and exercise throughout the city. Green and blue infrastructure will be supporting Manchester’s growth.”
- 1.9. Four objectives have been established to enable the vision to be achieved:
 - Improve the quality and function of existing green and blue infrastructure;
 - Use appropriate green and blue infrastructure as a key component of new developments to help create successful neighbourhoods and support the city’s growth;

- Improve connectivity and accessibility to green and blue infrastructure within the city and beyond; and,
 - Improve and promote a wider understanding and awareness of the benefits that green and blue infrastructure provides for residents, the economy and the local environment.
- 1.10. Section 3 of the updated G&BI Strategy outlines the progress to date and noted that the G&BI Strategy has acted as catalysts for some of the most groundbreaking environmental projects in Manchester. The Strategy has encouraged collaboration, bringing together organisations in order to deliver bold, innovative action that will benefit Manchester for many years to come.
- 1.11. Section 3.4 of the G&BI Strategy recognises that Manchester is a growing city, with plans for significant growth and development over the coming decade. High quality, green and open space that is appropriate to its location, well designed and well maintained will be an important and integral part of creating successful developments and supporting the city's growth.
- 1.12. The G&BI Strategy provides initial guidance on how developers can achieve this and recognises that different approaches will be required for different types of development and that different solutions, appropriate to the location, will be needed on each scheme. By considering green infrastructure from the beginning of the design process, developers will be able to understand the surrounding landscape, opportunities to enhance and link to it, and the types of green and open space that could be incorporated within and add value to the development itself.

The Site

- 1.13. The Site comprises circa 0.17 hectares of brownfield land located within Manchester City Centre at 2 – 4 Whitworth Street West. A Site Location Plan is provided in Appendix 1.
- 1.14. The Site is bound by Whitworth Street West to the north, with the listed railway viaduct and Deansgate Station platform immediately to the south and at first floor level to the existing buildings. Rowendale Street bisects the Site travelling under the railway viaduct providing vehicle and pedestrian links to Hewitt Street to the south. The Site is bound by Cameron Street to the east and Bugle Street to the west, which also provide vehicle and pedestrian access into the Knott Mill area, characterised by a mix of employment and residential buildings. Beyond Bugle Street is a live music venue (Rebellion) and Deansgate Station is beyond this.
- 1.15. The Site currently comprises two buildings. 2 Whitworth Street West is a four-storey, red-brick building which is vacant. 4 Whitworth Street West is a three-storey red brick building which is also vacant.
- 1.16. Whitworth Street West separates the Site from Deansgate Locks and the associated outdoor seating areas and the Deansgate Castlefield Metro Station located to the north and adjacent to the Rochdale Canal.
- 1.17. The Site is located within the Deansgate Ward, an area that has witnessed significant investment and regeneration over the last 20 years.
- 1.18. The Site presents a strategically important location for the city and within a cluster of high-rise buildings within the southern gateway of the City Centre, close to key public transport hubs, to the south of the Civic Quarter and to the north of Knott Mill.
- 1.19. It is also located within the Whitworth Street West Strategic Regeneration Framework area (2008). The Site is also adjacent to the Knott Mill Masterplan area and is part of the zone of interest of the Masterplan. It is also located within the Whitworth Street West Strategic Regeneration Framework area (2008).
- 1.20. The Great Northern Manchester Central and Castlefield Quay Strategic Regeneration Framework (2017) area is located to the north of the Rochdale Canal and Whitworth Street West.

Figure 1.1: Red Line Site Location Plan (Source: Sheppard Robson, 2024)



The Proposed Development

- 1.21. The Site sits within a cluster of tall buildings in this portion of the City Centre and provides an opportunity to contribute to this group of tall buildings, enhancing its profile and silhouette to enhance this recognisable landmark in the cityscape which was first established by the Beetham Tower. The design and materiality of the buildings is sensitive to its context, complementing other buildings in the cluster.
- 1.22. The Proposed Development comprises the demolition of existing buildings on-site, the stopping-up of Rowendale Street and the delivery of 364 residential apartments in a new development rising to 44-storesys and consisting of a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bed apartments. Entrance into the building will be from Whitworth Street West into the Ground Floor residents' amenity space, which also occupies Levels 1 and 2.
- 1.23. 182 secure cycle parking spaces and residents' bin storage will be provided at the Ground Floor and further residents' bin storage is proposed underneath the Viaduct, with a secure boundary and access point to the bin storage from the Hewitt Street elevation. Plant equipment will be provided internally at Ground Floor and Level 1. The proposals include new public realm comprising hard and soft landscape including rain gardens, associated seating and lighting.
- 1.24. The Proposed Development will be delivered in a single phase.

- 1.25. The landscape strategy aims to create a multi-functional space that encourages dwelling, socialising, and reflection while honouring the site's industrial heritage.
- 1.26. The landscaping will look to the city heritage with its selection of materials, creating a visual link to the city's past. Vertical structures like arches are introduced to provide interest and break up the landscape, while also serving as a framework for climbing plants. These climbing plants, along with green gap paving and strategically placed greenery, soften the impact of the hard landscaping, resulting in a more inviting and biodiverse space. The "rooms" created by the landscaping provide intimate areas for people to enjoy coffee, socialise, work, or simply appreciate the surrounding planting. The overall design prioritises safety and visibility, incorporating lighting to eliminate dark or hidden areas.
- 1.27. The landscaping proposals are shown in Figures 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 below.

Figure 1.2: Proposed Landscape General Arrangement (Layer, 2024)



Figure 1.3: Proposed Landscape Sections (Layer, 2024)

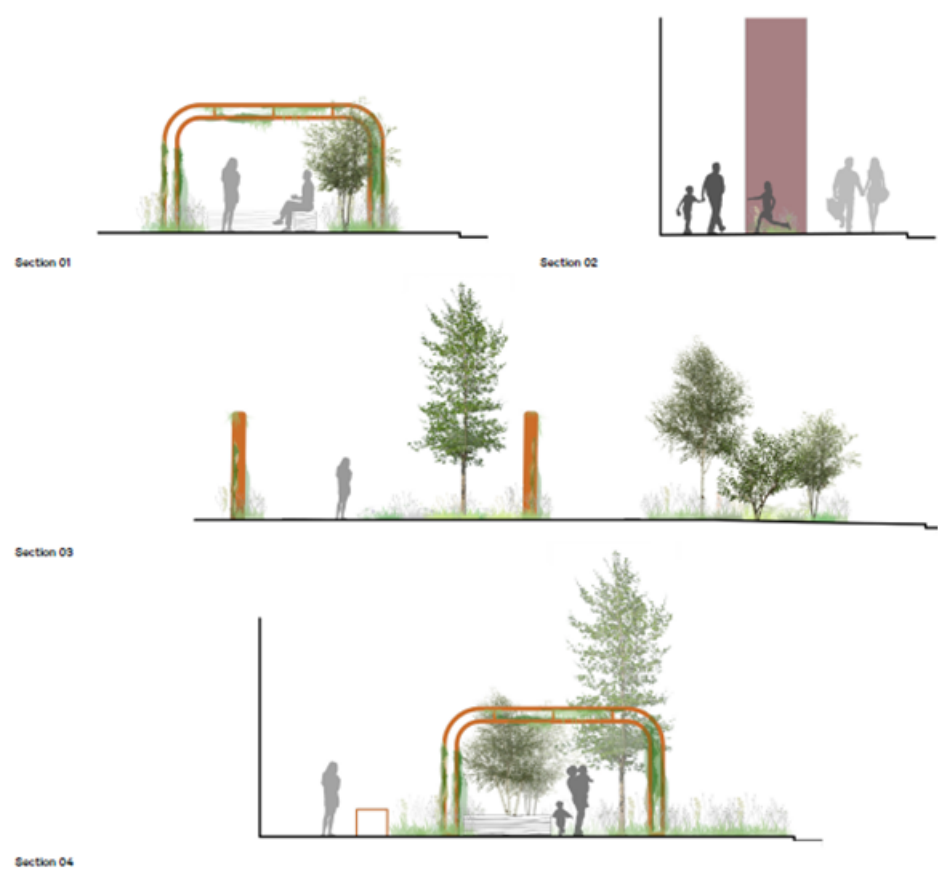


Figure 1.4: Proposed Landscape Material Concept (Layer, 2024)



2. Assessment of the Proposed Development

2.1. This section outlines the vision and objectives of the Manchester Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2022 and response from the Proposed Development.

Green and Blue Infrastructure Objectives

2.2. As set out in Section 1, the G&BI Strategy establishes four objectives to enable the vision to be achieved. Table 2.1 below considers the Proposed Development (as described in Section 1) against these objectives.

Table 2.1 the Proposed Development’s Response to Green and Blue Infrastructure Objectives

Objective:	Responses:
1. Improve the quality and function of existing Green and Blue Infrastructure to maximise the benefits it delivers.	The Site currently consists of hardstanding and vacant buildings, making no significant contribution to the quality or function of existing Green and Blue Infrastructure (G&BI). However, the Proposed Development aims to change this by incorporating several key features: • New Public Realm: A key element of the proposal is the introduction of a new public realm along Whitworth Street West. This space will incorporate hard and soft landscaping, including rain gardens, seating, and lighting. The rain gardens will contribute to sustainable urban drainage, while the planting will offer opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and a more pleasant pedestrian experience. • Landscaped Areas: The Proposed Development will introduce landscaped areas within its footprint, breaking up the existing hardstanding and introducing greenery. While limited in size, these areas will provide small pockets of green space and contribute to a more pleasant living environment for residents. • Planting: The Proposed Development will incorporate climbing plants on vertical structures (without impacting any listed structures). This will further enhance the G&BI provision within the development, contributing to biodiversity, improving air quality, and creating a more visually appealing environment.
2. Use appropriate green and blue infrastructure as a key component of new developments to help create successful neighbourhoods and support the city’s growth.	The Proposed Development presents a unique opportunity to transform a vacant site into a vibrant and active part of the city centre, utilising high-quality landscaping as a key driver. While the existing site lacks appeal and activity, the development leverages its prominent location along Whitworth Street West to create an attractive and engaging public realm that contributes significantly

Objective:	Responses:
	to placemaking. The Proposed Development achieves this by doing the following: • Activating a Key Route: The introduction of a new public realm along Whitworth Street West, a significant city centre artery, transforms a previously underutilised stretch into a vibrant pedestrian experience. This is achieved through a combination of hard and soft landscaping that creates visual interest and encourages pedestrian flow. • Placemaking through Design: The landscape strategy goes beyond functional greenery, incorporating distinct “rooms” designed to encourage lingering and social interaction. These spaces, featuring seating, lighting, and opportunities for passive recreation, foster a sense of community and transform the streetscape into a destination rather than just a thoroughfare. • Green Infrastructure as a Placemaking Tool: The strategic use of climbing plants, green gap paving, and lush greenery softens the urban environment, creating a more welcoming and attractive public realm. This not only enhances the pedestrian experience but also contributes to a sense of place, making the area more desirable for residents, businesses, and visitors. The Proposed Development will also act as a catalyst for further investment both within the remainder of the SRF Area and the wider City Centre. In doing so, the Proposed Development aligns to the vision of the Greater Manchester Strategy 2013 – 2020, maximising the sustainability potential of the Site, through capturing new opportunities for growth in the commercial economy, creating jobs across the City Region, as well as being a place at the forefront of action on climate change with clean air and a flourishing natural environment.
3. Improve connectivity and accessibility to Green and Blue Infrastructure within the City and beyond.	Currently, the Site offers limited connectivity to surrounding green and blue infrastructure. However, the Proposed Development aims to significantly improve this by creating a welcoming public realm that enhances accessibility and permeability for pedestrians. The Proposed Development achieves this by doing the following: • Creating a Welcoming Public Realm: The development will transform the existing streetscape along Whitworth Street West with a new public realm. This realm, incorporating both hard and soft landscaping elements, will create a more pleasant and accessible pedestrian environment. • Enhancing Permeability: By removing visual barriers and incorporating clear pedestrian pathways within the public realm design, the development will enhance

Objective:	Responses:
	permeability, encouraging pedestrian movement through the site and connecting surrounding areas. This demonstrates that the Proposed Development is dedicated to improving connectivity and accessibility to green and blue infrastructure within the city and beyond.
4. Improve and promote a wider understanding and awareness of the benefits that Green and Blue Infrastructure provides to residents, the economy and the local environment.	The Proposed Development, while primarily residential, presents an inherent opportunity to enhance the understanding and awareness of Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) benefits for residents, the local economy, and the environment. While the current site lacks any significant GBI features, the development integrates several elements that serve to highlight the importance of these spaces. The Proposed Development achieves this by doing the following: • Showcasing High-Quality Public Realm: The creation of a new public realm along Whitworth Street West will act as a tangible demonstration of GBI benefits. By incorporating attractive landscaping, seating areas, and rain gardens, the development will provide a direct experience of how these features can enhance aesthetics, social interaction, and environmental performance. • Creating an Educational Opportunity: The distinct "rooms" within the landscaping, each designed for different uses, offer a unique opportunity to subtly educate the public about GBI. • Promoting Health and Wellbeing: The development's emphasis on creating a green and welcoming environment intrinsically promotes the health and wellbeing benefits associated with GBI. Residents and visitors will experience first-hand how these spaces can reduce stress, encourage physical activity, and improve air quality. • Attracting Investment and Economic Activity: The inclusion of high-quality GBI has been shown to increase land values and attract businesses to an area. By showcasing the economic benefits of GBI, the Proposed Development can inspire further investment in green infrastructure throughout the city. Providing a new public realm environment for all to enjoy will promote the benefits associated with the blue and green infrastructure environment, including supporting active travel, community cohesion, and health and wellbeing.

Relevant Local Development Plan Policies

Manchester Core Strategy (2012)

Policy EN9 Green Infrastructure

- 2.3. Core Strategy Policy EN9 sets out that new development will be expected to maintain existing green infrastructure in terms of its quantity, quality and multiple function. Where the opportunity arises and in accordance with current G&BI Strategy, the Council will encourage developers to enhance the quality and quantity of green infrastructure, improve the performance of its functions and create and improve linkages to and between areas of green infrastructure.

Policy EN15 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

- 2.4. Core Strategy Policy EN15 states the Council will seek to maintain or enhance sites of biodiversity throughout the City and that developers will be expected to identify and implement reasonable opportunities to enhance, restore or create new biodiversity, contributing to linkages between valuable or potentially valuable habitat areas where appropriate.

Places for Everyone Plan (2024)

Policy JP-G2 – Green Infrastructure Network

- 2.5. Policy JP-G2 states *“a strategic approach will be taken to the protection, management and enhancement of our Green Infrastructure in order to protect and enhance the ecosystem services which the Green Infrastructure Network provides, including flood management, climate change mitigation and adaptation.”* Where it is deemed feasible, new and existing green infrastructure should be integrated into new development so as to protect, enhance, and expand the green infrastructure network.

Policy JP-G3 – River Valleys and Waterways

- 2.6. Policy JP-G3 states *“river valleys and waterways will be protected and improved as central components of our Green Infrastructure Network and a vital part of a Nature Recovery Network, making a major contribution to local identity, quality of life and the natural environment.”*

Policy JP-G6 – Urban Green Space

- 2.7. Policy JP-G6 stipulates that existing urban green space will be protected whilst new urban green space is encouraged to be delivered. Development should be designed to support the positive use of nearby green spaces, such as by offering a high-quality setting, providing natural surveillance, and facilitating easy access by walking and cycling.

Policy JP-G7 – Trees and Woodland

- 2.8. Policy JP-G7 references there should be a considerable increase in provision of street trees within urban areas, and public access to trees should be enhanced particularly by sustainable travel models.

Policy JP-G8 – A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 2.9. Policy JP-G8 promotes biodiversity enhancement through various initiatives and put strong emphasis on nature conservation, access to nature, and habitats enhancement.

Applicant's Response to Relevant Planning Policy

- 2.10. This Section provides our response to the planning policies referenced above, where relevant.
- 2.11. The Proposed Development at Whitworth Street seeks to transform an underutilised site into a vibrant residential development while adhering to the principles outlined in the Manchester Core Strategy (2012) and the Places for Everyone Plan (2024), particularly regarding green infrastructure. While the existing site, consisting mainly of hardstanding and vacant buildings, lacks significant green elements, the proposed scheme incorporates features designed to enhance this aspect and create a more sustainable and attractive urban environment.

- 2.12. One key area where the Proposed Development aligns with local plan policies is through its contribution to a more permeable and connected network of green spaces. Currently characterised by limited public access, the redevelopment, as encouraged by Policy EN9, will introduce new pedestrian routes through the site. This enhanced permeability will be particularly evident along Whitworth Street West, where a new public realm incorporating soft landscaping and street trees, in line with Policy JP-G7, will create a more inviting and pedestrian-friendly environment.
- 2.13. Furthermore, the incorporation of landscaping within the development itself, featuring climbing plants, greenery, and distinct "rooms" for various uses, demonstrates a commitment to integrating green infrastructure within the site boundary. This approach aligns with Policy JP-G2, which promotes a strategic approach to green infrastructure provision, ensuring that new developments contribute to the overall network.
- 2.14. The Proposed Development's contribution to green infrastructure, while modest in scale, demonstrates a clear understanding of the relevant local development plan policies. By incorporating features that enhance permeability, introduce new green spaces, and promote a more pedestrian-friendly environment, the scheme aligns with the city's vision for a more sustainable, liveable, and attractive urban environment.

Biodiversity Net gain

- 2.15. The Proposed Development at Whitworth Street demonstrates a commitment to enhancing biodiversity within its urban context, aligning with the principles outlined in both the Manchester Core Strategy (2012) and the Places for Everyone Plan (2024). The existing site, characterised by hardstanding and vacant buildings, offers negligible biodiversity value. However, the proposed scheme incorporates key features designed to significantly improve the site's ecological contribution.
- 2.16. In line with Core Strategy Policy EN15 and Places for Everyone Policy JP-G8, both of which emphasise the importance of biodiversity enhancement, the development integrates a variety of landscaping elements. These include rain gardens, biodiverse planting schemes featuring trees, shrubs, and climbing plants, and raised planting beds within the ground floor areas. As outlined in the biodiversity net gain assessment, these features contribute to a significant increase in the site's ecological value, generating a net gain of 0.82 habitat units from a starting point of 0.
- 2.17. The inclusion of these elements contributes to a more diverse and functional ecological network within the immediate urban fabric. The proposed planting will provide valuable foraging resources and shelter opportunities for invertebrates, birds, and other fauna. Additionally, the variety of planting heights and layers will create a more structurally diverse habitat, further enhancing its ecological value.
- 2.18. The Proposed Development's approach to biodiversity, while acknowledging the site's urban context and constraints, demonstrates a clear understanding of the relevant local plan policies. By incorporating features that create new habitats, increase biodiversity value, and contribute to a more ecologically diverse urban environment, the scheme aligns with the city's wider sustainability goals.

3. Summary

- 3.1. The existing Site, consisting of hardstanding and vacant buildings, currently makes little to no contribution to Manchester's green and blue infrastructure network. This Proposed Development, however, presents an opportunity to significantly improve the site's contribution to the city's green infrastructure and align with the key objectives outlined in the Manchester Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2022.
- 3.2. The Proposed Development will achieve this by incorporating several key features. A new public realm along Whitworth Street West will provide a more pleasant and accessible pedestrian experience, incorporating soft landscaping, trees, and rain gardens. This contributes to a more permeable and connected network of green spaces, a key principle of Policies EN9 and JP-G2. Furthermore, the integration of landscaping elements within the development itself, such as climbing plants, greenery, and distinct "rooms" for various uses, further enhances the site's green infrastructure provision.
- 3.3. The Proposed Development's biodiversity will also be significantly enhanced through the incorporation of rain gardens, biodiverse planting schemes, and raised planting beds. These elements will provide new habitats and foraging opportunities for local fauna, contributing to a net gain in biodiversity. This aligns with Core Strategy Policy EN15 and Places for Everyone Policy JP-G8, which emphasise the importance of biodiversity enhancement.
- 3.4. While modest in scale, the Proposed Development's contribution to green infrastructure, biodiversity, and the creation of a more pedestrian-friendly environment demonstrates a clear understanding and commitment to fulfilling the relevant policies of the Manchester Core Strategy and the Places for Everyone Plan. The scheme aligns with the city's wider vision for a more sustainable, liveable, and attractive urban environment.
- 3.5. The Proposed Development therefore accords with the vision and objectives of the G&BI Strategy and the relevant Local Development Plan policies when taken as a whole.



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