

Land off Pitsford Road,
Manchester
Biodiversity Impact Assessment
2024



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Client Bellway Homes Ltd (Manchester)
Project Title Land off Pitsford Road, Manchester
Project Reference RHE.3991.02
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Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing a residential development at Land off Pitsford Road, Manchester. This report assesses the predicted changes in biodiversity units resulting from the proposed development.

Biodiversity Impact Assessment

The baseline assessment score is 11.34 habitat units. Post-development assessment score is 5.16 habitat unit. This represents a net loss of 6.18 habitat units (-54.48%) and the trading rules have not been satisfied.

Outcomes

The client has leased with third party biodiversity net gain off setting companies and Defra, and it has been agreed Bellway Homes are to mitigate for the loss of woodland via the purchase of 10.98 habitat units.



1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

- 1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2023 by Bellway Homes Limited (Manchester) to carry out a Biodiversity Impact Assessment of the site (O.S. grid reference: SD 86161 00165– see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Showing the site location courtesy of Google Maps

- 1.1.2 The proposed development site comprises broadleaved woodland. A live railway line is located directly adjacent to the southern boundary. Residential and commercial development surrounds the site in all directions.

Description of Development

- 1.1.3 The site will be the subject of a planning application for residential development and associated infrastructure.

1.2 Scope of Work

- 1.2.1 The Client commissioned Rachel Hacking Ecology to undertake a Biodiversity Impact Assessment to quantify the predicted changes in biodiversity units resulting from the proposed development.

2. Methods

2.1 Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

- 2.1.1 An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the site was undertaken on 17th November 2023. The site was walked, and habitats were recorded and mapped. The survey was undertaken by Ben Crossthwaite (Senior Ecologist).

2.2 Biodiversity Impact Assessment

- 2.2.1 The Statutory DEFRA Metric Auditing and Accounting for Biodiversity calculation tool was used to assess the predicted changes in habitat units resulting from the proposed development.
- The baseline habitats recorded during the Extended Phase 1 habitat Survey were measured using MapInfo GIS software.
 - The baseline habitats were translated into Statutory Metric habitat classification using the translation tool in the metric.
 - Habitat conditions were assessed using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Habitat Condition Assessment sheets.
 - The strategic significance of baseline habitats was assessed on whether they were formally identified in a local strategy or policy, or whether they were in an ecologically desirable location.
 - The proposed habitats, including any retained or enhanced habitats, were assessed based on information provided by Astle Planning & design Ltd and TPM Landscape.
- 2.2.2 The predicted change in biodiversity units was determined by calculating the difference between the baseline units and the post-development units.
- 2.2.3 Ben Crossthwaite (Senior Ecologist) carried out the calculations and assessment in January 2024. Ben is an experienced consultant ecologist and is trained in Biodiversity Impact Assessment.
- 2.2.4 Ben carried out the updated BNG assessment in June 2024 as a result of site layout and landscape changes.

3. Baseline Habitats

- 3.1.1 A summary of the baseline assessment is shown within Table 1. The breakdown of this calculation, for each habitat on site, is presented below.

Table 1 showing summary of the Baseline units on the site	
Metric section	Units Achieved
	Baseline
Habitat Units	11.34
Hedgerow Units	-
River Units	-

Woodland and Forest: Other Woodland; Broadleaved Woodland

- 3.1.2 The woodland on site is included in the Priority Habitat Inventory (Deciduous Woodland – unique ID PHID38617370_040016552). However, the survey appears to show that the woodland does not satisfy the criteria for Priority Deciduous Woodland, due to poor structure and botanical diversity. There is no indication of maturity with the woodland (e.g. no Ancient Woodland Indicator Species were found).
- 3.1.3 This habitat is of medium distinctiveness and low strategic importance. The woodland extends 2.835ha, and was assessed as having a poor condition, as per the condition assessment summarised in Table 2. The broadleaved woodland provides 11.34 habitat units.

<i>Table 2 showing the Indicators within the Woodland Condition Assessment Criteria and the score achieved</i>	
Indicator	Score (1-3)
Age distribution of trees	1
Wild, Domestic and feral herbivore damage	3
Invasive plant species	2
Number of native tree species	3
Cover of native tree and shrub species	3
Open space within woodland	1
Woodland regeneration	1
Tree health	2
Vegetation and ground flora	2
Woodland vertical structure	1
Veteran trees	1
Amount of deadwood	1
Woodland disturbance	1
	22 (poor)

Urban; Sealed Surface (Hardstanding – Bare Ground)

- 3.1.4 The hardstanding access track on site covers an area of 0.066ha. This habitat is classed as Developed land; sealed surface under the UK Habitats classification. This habitat is of very low distinctiveness and low strategic importance. Developed land; sealed surface has a condition assessment of N/A (pre-set within the Metric) and achieves 0.00 habitat units.

4. Proposed Habitats

- 4.1.1 The proposed site plan from which the proposed measurements have been provided is shown in Appendix 2.

4.2 Retained and Enhanced Habitats

- 4.2.1 No existing habitats are proposed to be retained or enhanced as part of the site proposals.

4.3 Created Habitats

- 4.3.1 The summary of the proposed created habitats is shown within Table 3. The breakdown of this calculation, for each habitat on site, is presented below.

Table 3 showing a summary of the created habitats on site	
Metric section	Units Achieved
	Created Habitats
Habitat Units	5.16
Hedgerow Units	-
River Units	-

Urban; Sealed Surface (Buildings)

- 4.3.2 The proposed buildings on site cover an area of 0.49ha. This habitat is classed as Developed land; sealed surface under the UK Habitats classification. This habitat is of very low distinctiveness and low strategic importance. Developed land; sealed surface has a condition assessment of N/A (pre-set within the Metric) and achieves 0.00 habitat units.

Urban; Sealed Surface (Hardstanding)

- 4.3.3 The proposed areas of hardstanding cover an area of 1.15ha. This habitat is classed as Developed land; sealed surface under the UK Habitats classification. This habitat is of very low distinctiveness and low strategic importance. Developed land; sealed surface has a condition assessment of N/A (pre-set within the Metric) and achieves 0.00 habitat units.

Grassland; Modified Grassland (Amenity Grassland - Public Open Spaces)

- 4.3.4 Areas of amenity grassland are proposed along many of the site's peripheries, extending 0.0197ha. This habitat is classed as Grassland; Modified grassland under the UK Habitats classification. This habitat is of low distinctiveness and low strategic importance. The proposed final condition of the grassland is poor which will take 1 year to achieve and will bring 0.04 habitat units to the site.

Urban; Vegetated Garden

- 4.3.5 Private garden spaces on site have a total area of 0.81ha. This habitat is classed as urban; vegetated garden under the UK Habitats classification. This habitat is of low distinctiveness and low strategic importance. This habitat does not require a condition assessment as this is input automatically by the metric. This habitat will take 1 year to achieve its automated condition and will provide 1.56 habitat units to the site.

Urban; Sealed Surface (Public Open Space)

- 4.3.6 The proposed areas of hardstanding within the areas of POS cover an area of 0.047ha. This habitat is classed as Developed land; sealed surface under the UK Habitats classification. This habitat is of very low distinctiveness and low strategic importance. Developed land; sealed surface has a condition assessment of N/A (pre-set within the Metric) and achieves 0.00 habitat units.

Grassland; Modified Grassland (Wildflower Grassland - Public Open Spaces)

- 4.3.7 Areas of wildflower grassland are proposed along many of the site's peripheries, extending 0.1487ha. This habitat is classed as Grassland; Modified grassland under the UK Habitats classification. This

habitat is of low distinctiveness and low strategic importance. The proposed final condition of the grassland is good which will take 7 year to achieve and will bring 0.9 habitat units to the site.

Urban; Introduced Shrub (Public Open Spaces)

- 4.3.8 Areas of 'Shrub Planting' are proposed in small pockets across the site, extending 0.0214ha. This habitat is classed as Introduced shrub under the UK Habitats classification. This habitat is of low distinctiveness and low strategic importance. No condition assessment is required for this habitat. The habitat will take 1 year to achieve and will bring 0.04 habitat units to the site.

Heathland and Shrub; Mixed Scrub (Public Open Spaces)

- 4.3.9 Areas of 'Native Shrub Planting' are proposed across the site, extending 0.1053ha. This habitat is classed as mixed scrub under the UK Habitats classification. This habitat is of medium distinctiveness and low strategic importance. The proposed final condition of the mixed scrub is moderate which will take 5 years to achieve and will provide 0.7 habitat units to the site.

Individual Trees; Urban Trees

- 4.3.10 34 ornamental trees with a target size of small and target condition of moderate are proposed across the site within areas of POS. The trees will take 27 years to reach their condition targets and will provide 0.42 habitat units.

Individual Trees; Urban Trees

- 4.3.11 107 native trees with a target size of small and target conditions of moderate are proposed across the site within areas of POS. The trees will take 27 years to reach their condition targets and will provide 1.33 habitat units.

Woodland and Forest; Other Woodland; Broadleaved

- 4.3.12 Woodland planting, consisting of 'woodland whip mix', is located across the site with a total area of 0.1088ha. This habitat is of medium distinctiveness and low strategic importance. The proposed final condition of the woodland planting is poor which will take 5 years to achieve and will provide 0.36 habitat units to the site.



5. Assessment

- 5.1.1 The summary of the changes in biodiversity units are included within Table 4. An extract of the results table from the metric calculator can be seen in Appendix 3.
- 5.1.2 The baseline habitats are calculated to provide 11.34 habitat units, no hedgerow or river units are present on site.
- 5.1.3 Whilst the land has been previously developed as railway sidings it has been left unmanaged, with woodland establishing over recent years. The land has been identified for housing development in the Council's housing land supply assessment. To fully remediate the site, remove knotweed and create a development platform for the proposed residential development, Bellway have confirmed all trees across the site require removal.
- 5.1.4 The proposed, post-development habitats are calculated to provide 5.16 habitat units (zero retained/enhanced habitats).

Table 4 showing a summary of the Biodiversity Changes on site							
Metric section	Units Achieved					Results	
	Baseline	Post-development				Change in Units	Percentage Change
		Retained	Enhanced	Created	Total		
Habitat Units	11.34	0.00	0.0	5.16	5.16	-6.18	-54.48%
Hedgerow Units	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
River Units	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

- 5.1.5 The Biodiversity Impact Assessment shows a net loss of -6.18 habitat units (-54.48%). There is no change in the hedgerow or river units on site.
- 5.1.6 To mitigate for the loss of existing woodland, mitigation planting on site in available public open space areas has been maximised. The landscaping proposals create 5.16 biodiversity units on site which is positive and will be subject to long term management to ensure the benefits are realised on site.
- 5.1.7 It is clear that compensation for the loss of woodland habitat cannot be sought through onsite mitigation only, whilst also delivering a viable/deliverable scheme for residential development. The development proposed will fall short of providing a 10% net gain and an off-site solution to the delivery of biodiversity net gain is therefore required.

Trading Rules

- 5.1.8 The site proposals currently do not satisfy the trading standards. This is due to the loss of broadleaved woodland, a habitat of moderate distinctiveness, being replaced with habitats of lower distinctiveness, such as sealed surfaces, introduced shrub and modified grassland or habitats of the same ecological distinctiveness but a smaller area.



6. Summary

- 6.1.1 The proposed development is predicted to result in a net loss of habitat units.
- 6.1.2 For the proposed development to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain it will be necessary to seek mitigation or compensation for any shortfall in units, either by direct management of land by the applicant or the purchase of biodiversity units from a third party, such as the LPA or a third-party landowner.
- 6.1.3 Bellway Homes have contacted numerous third-party biodiversity net gain offsetting companies and Defra, and it has been agreed, to mitigate for the loss of woodland and therefore meet the trading rules, Bellway Homes are to purchase 10.98 Habitat Units. This is shown in Figure 2 below, an extract summary of the trading rules for medium distinctiveness habitats (Broadleaved Woodland).

Medium Distinctiveness Summary		
Medium Distinctiveness Units available to offset Lower Distinctiveness Deficit	2.46	✓
Medium Distinctiveness Broad Habitat losses to be offset by trading up	-10.98	⚠
Higher Distinctiveness Surplus Units minus Medium Distinctiveness Broad Habitat Deficit	-10.98	⚠
Cumulative surplus of units	-8.52	⚠

Figure 2 showing a trading rules extract from the metric calculation tool

Appendix 1: Phase 1 Habitat Map





Phase 1 Habitat Map

Key

- Bare Ground
- Semi-natural Broad-leaved Woodland
- Japanese Knotweed
- Wall

Project Name:

Land off Pitsford Road, Manchester

Project Reference:

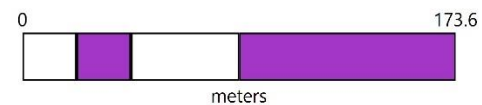
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Drawn By:

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21/11/23



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Appendix 2: Site Plan



Appendix 3: Headline Results

FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-6.18
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	Watercourse units	0.00
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-54.49%
	Hedgerow units	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▲	

