Aval Consulting Group.

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Land on Brendon Avenue, Moston, M40 9DN

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Oseni Musa ('the client') is seeking consent for a Proposed Development at the Land on Brendon Avenue, Moston, M40 9DN (hereafter referred to as the site), which is within the Manchester City Council (MCC).

AVAL Consulting Group Limited (ACGL) was instructed by the client to produce a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment to accompany the planning application to the MCC for consent to undertake the proposed work. Major developments are required to submit a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment demonstrating biodiversity enhancements that contribute to the objectives of the latest MCC Local Plan.

The proposal is for the demolition of the existing development and the construction of 6no. new Semi-Detached C3 Residential Dwellings. The Proposed Development offers ecological improvements to the landscape which are stated in section 4.

A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment has been prepared to assess the site's feasibility and consider improvements to the ecology of both current and proposed habitats.

Local Authorities are tasked with determining new development and local planning applications against a wide range of social, economic and environmental criteria. The purpose of this report is to assess whether the development proposal is compliant with the relevant local policies in terms of ecological impact and whether the Proposed Development will result in a biodiversity net gain.

This assessment has been carried out in accordance with good practice guidelines, including the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) and applicable local supplementary guidance.

The remainder of this report is presented in the following order:

- Section 2: Relevant national, regional, and local applicable policies;
- Section 3: Existing Site Conditions;
- Section 4: Biodiversity Net Gain;
- Section 5: Conclusion.

1.2 Objectives

- Assess the proposed landscape plans and compare this to the current habitats on site to see if the proposed residential development will result in a biodiversity net gain.
- Demonstrate the sites biodiversity loss or gain using Defra Biodiversity Metric 3.1.

2 Legislation and Policy

This section summarises the relevant National and Local legislative and policy background, statutory and non-statutory guidelines relevant to the potential development.

2.1 National Policy

2.1.1 National Planning Policy (July 2021)

The principal national planning policy guidance with respect to the potential development is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The most recent update of the NPPF was published on July 2021 by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). This guidance sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. Three dimensions to sustainable development have been identified in the NPPF: economic, social, and environmental.

The NPPF Section 174 states that:

"*Planning policies and decisions 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 (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

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;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate."

Section 175 states that:

"*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."*

Section 172 states that:

"Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads[59]. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas."

Section 177 states that:

"When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development60 other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;

b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and

c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated."

Section 179 states that:

"To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

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 steppingstones 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 pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity."

Section 180 states that:

"*When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:*

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons58 and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate."

Section 182 states that:

"The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site."

2.1.1 Relevant National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG, 2019)

NPPG is a web-based resource which brings together planning guidance on various topics into one place. It was launched in March 2014 and coincided with the cancelling of the majority of Government Circulars which had previously given guidance on many aspects of planning.

The guidance note on 'Natural Environment' explains key issues in implementing policy to protect and enhance the natural environment, including local requirements. This has been referred to when preparing this report. It states that*:*

"Planning authorities need to consider the potential impacts of development on protected and priority species, and the scope to avoid or mitigate any impacts when considering site allocations or planning applications. Guidance on the law affecting Habitats Sites, protected species and SSSIs.

Natural England has issued standing advice on protected species. A protected species mitigation licence from Natural England may be required before any work can start."

The PPG also states that:

"Information on biodiversity and geodiversity impacts and opportunities needs to inform all stages of development (including site selection and design, pre-application consultation and the application itself). An ecological survey will be necessary in advance of a planning application if the type and location of development could have a significant impact on biodiversity and existing information is lacking or inadequate. Pre-application discussions can help to scope whether this is the case and, if so, the survey work required.

Even where an Environmental Impact Assessment is not needed, it might still be appropriate to undertake an ecological survey, for example, where protected species may be present or where biodiverse habitats may be lost.

As with other supporting information, local planning authorities should require ecological surveys only where clearly justified. Assessments should be proportionate to the nature and scale of development proposed and the likely impact on biodiversity. Further guidance on information requirements is set out in making an application."

Biodiversity net gain is mentioned in the PPG and states that:

"The National Planning Policy Framework encourages net gains for biodiversity to be sought through planning policies and decisions. Biodiversity net gain delivers measurable

improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. Biodiversity net gain can be achieved on-site, off-site or through a combination of on-site and off-site measures. It may help local authorities to meet their duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006."

2.2 Local Policy

2.2.1 Manchester Core Strategy Development Plan (Adopted July 2012)

MCC's Local Plan, adopted in July 2012, contains details the priority habitats and species in the borough and through providing information and guidance to protect and enhance biodiversity.

Objective 6 (Environment) states the following requirements for new developments:

"SO6. Protect and enhance both the natural and built environment of the City and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources, in order to mitigate and adapt to climate change, support biodiversity and wildlife, improve air, water and land quality, recreational opportunities and provide networks of high quality green infrastructure, ensuring that the City is inclusive and attractive to residents, workers, investors and visitors."

Policy EN 15 also states that:

"Developers will be expected to identify and implement reasonable opportunities to enhance, restore or create new biodiversity, either on-site or adjacent to the site, contributing to linkages between valuable or potentially valuable habitat areas where appropriate, with reference to:

- *the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy, which provides further details of priority habitats within Manchester and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement including corridors such as the Mersey, Medlock and Irk river valleys, the canals and disused railway lines and areas of managed greenspace particularly in parks;*
- *the Green Infrastructure Framework for Greater Manchester, which encompasses an ecological framework that seeks to guide and inform habitat creation and repair, including identifying large 'biodiversity opportunity areas' including the Moston Brook Corridor and Nutsford Vale;*
- *the Open Space, Sport & Recreation Study, which identifies areas where there is a deficit of natural and semi-natural greenspace, opportunities for green corridors and other linkages;*
- *Manchester's Climate Change Action Plan;*
- *the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for Manchester;*
- *the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for Manchester, which gives detailed consideration to Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), including the Rochdale Canal SAC just outside the district boundary;*

- *the River Basin Management Plan for the Northwest;*
- *the Manchester Tree Strategy.*

Any adverse impacts on biodiversity will need to be justified against the wider benefits of the proposal, assessed against other LDF policies. Where adverse impacts are unavoidable, developers will be required to provide appropriate mitigation and/or compensation."

2.3 Summary

It is considered that the environmental and ecological priorities for development are to reduce the negative impacts on the environment, maximise sustainable development, encourage biodiversity.

3 Existing Site Conditions

3.1 Habitats on site

The existing site currently consists of hardstanding, trees and unvegetated garden.

The site location plan and existing site plan obtained from the client can be seen in figure 3.1 below.

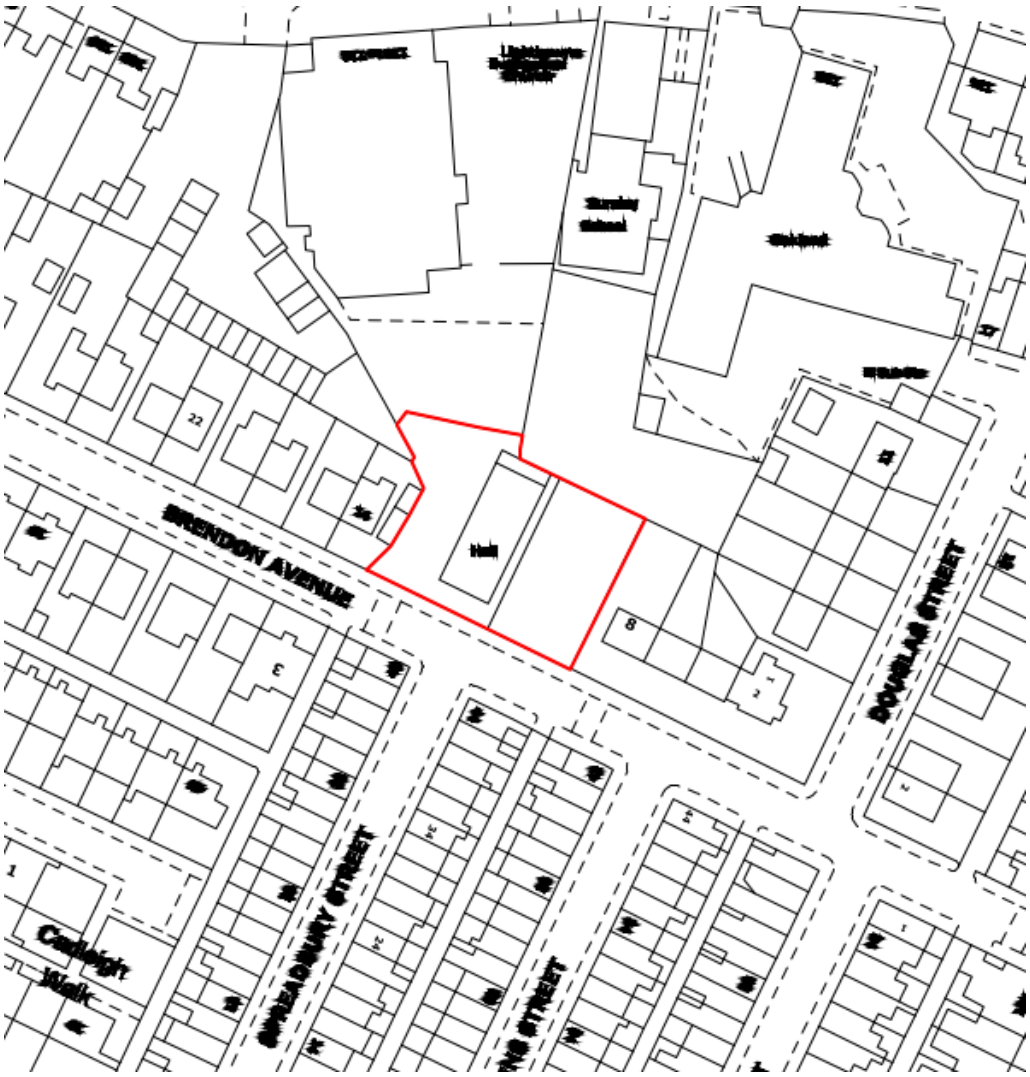


Figure 3.1 – Site location plan

4 Biodiversity Net Gain

4.1 Calculation

As mentioned in previous sections, major development is required to submit an ecology assessment demonstrating the sites biodiversity loss or gain using a Biodiversity Metric.

Biodiversity Net Gain is calculated using the Defra Biodiversity Metric 3.1 calculation tool to determine if the Proposed Development will result in a habitat biodiversity net loss or gain. The tool helps to calculate the biodiversity value of a site before and after the Proposed Development.

The percentage net change by measuring many factors including:

- The existing habitats on site;
- How distinctive the habitats are on site;
- Habitat condition;
- Habitats to be retained and enhanced within the development;
- Habitats to be lost within the development;
- Any indirect negative impacts;
- Habitat creation on site; and
- Habitat enhancement.

The net change result is displayed as a percentage loss (highlighted red) or a gain (highlighted green).

The site received an on-site net percentage change of 337.31%, (Gain) with trading rules satisfied as a result of the Proposed Development which will incorporate vegetated gardens, introduced shrubs, lower level flower beds, hedgerows and tree planting. The proposed landscape plans can be found in Appendix B. Defra Biodiversity Metric 3.1 calculation tool results can be found in Appendix C.

5 Conclusions

This report provides an assessment of the following potential key impacts associated with the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development at Land on Brendon Avenue, Moston, M40 9DN.

- Assess the proposed landscape plans and compare this to the current habitats on site to see if the proposed residential development will result in a biodiversity net gain; and
- Demonstrate the sites biodiversity loss or gain through habitat impact assessment calculations.

The scheme offers ecological improvements to the landscape including vegetated gardens, introduced shrubs, lower level flower beds, hedgerows and tree planting. The site received an on-site net percentage change of 337.31% (Gain) with trading rules satisfied as a result of the Proposed Development. The scheme does achieve over a 10% net gain and as a result, the Proposed Development presents ecological benefits, and this is expected to attract and provide essential habitat for an array of fauna.

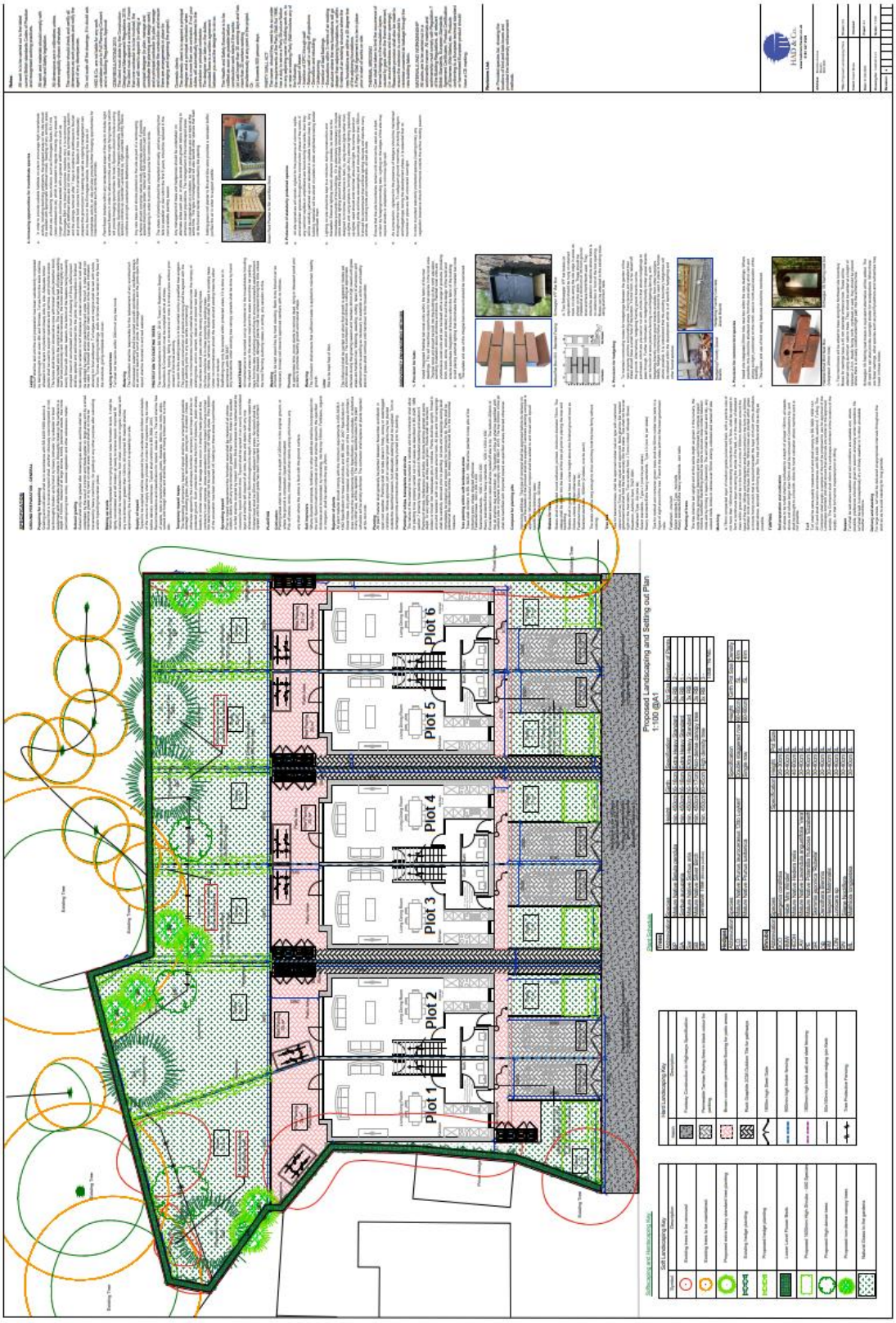
It can, therefore, be concluded that the proposed development is not considered to conflict with any national, regional or local planning policies and offers significant ecological improvements to the site and surrounding area.

Appendices

Appendix A: Existing Site
Appendix B: Proposed Site Plans
Appendix C: Defra Biodiversity Metric 3.1 Results

Appendix A : Existing Site (obtained from HAD & Co)

Appendix B : Proposed Site Plans (obtained from HAD & Co.)



Appendix C : Defra Biodiversity Metric 3.1 Results

Brendon Avenue

Headline Results

Return to results menu

On-site baseline	*Habitat units*	0.03
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	River units	0.00
On-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Habitat units*	0.11
	Hedgerow units	0.37
	River units	0.00
On-site net % change (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Habitat units*	337.31%
	Hedgerow units	0.00%
	River units	0.00%
Off-site baseline	*Habitat units*	0.00
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	River units	0.00
Off-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Habitat units*	0.00
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	River units	0.00
Total net unit change (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Habitat units*	0.09
	Hedgerow units	0.37
	River units	0.00
Total on-site net % change plus off-site surplus (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Habitat units*	337.31%
	Hedgerow units	100.00%
	River units	0.00%
Trading rules Satisfied?	Yes ✓	