



Brighter strategies
for greener projects



Client: Premier Inn Hotels Dominvs Group
Project: One Medlock Street
Report: 551267cm01Sept22DV01_BIA

QUALITY ASSURANCE

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	2
SITE DESCRIPTION	2
METHODOLOGY	3
BIODIVERSITY METRIC	3
BASELINE CALCULATION	3
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT CALCULATIONS	3
COMPENTENCIES	4
CONSTRAINTS	4
RESULTS	5
BASELINE CONDITIONS	5
PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT	6
SUMMARY & CONCLUSION	8
APPENDIX A: SITE PLAN AND HABITAT MAP	
APPENDIX B: LANDSCAPE PLAN	
APPENDIX C: CONDITION ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	
LEGISLATION AND POLICY	
REFERENCES	

Tables

Table 0.1	Baseline Biodiversity Units	5
Table 0.2	Post-Development Biodiversity Units	6

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Greengage Environmental Ltd was commissioned to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment by Premier Inn Hotels Dominvs Group of a site known as One Medlock Street in Manchester city centre.

This document is a report of this survey and has been produced to support a planning submission for the site which seeks to demolish of the existing hotel building and structures and the development of the site for office uses (Use Class E), flexible office/community use (Use Class E/F1/F2) and purpose-built student accommodation (Sui Generis) comprising two separate buildings, along with associated ancillary internal and external amenity space, hard and soft landscaping and associated highway works.

The assessment aimed to quantify the predicted change in ecological value of the site in light of the proposed development to assess compliance against local and national planning policy.

The survey area extends from Medlock Street (to the east) to the recent Canvas Manchester development (to the west) and is bordered by River Street (to the north) and the Mancunian Way (to the south).

Proposed habitat creation includes 0.8298ha of hardstanding, 0.0925ha of introduced shrub, 0.062ha of biodiverse living roof, 0.002ha of green wall, 0.0177ha of rain garden, and 1.5504ha of urban tree canopy. The development seeks to retain 0ha of trees and/or modified grassland.

The proposals stand to result in a net gain of 2.29 biodiversity units associated with area based habitats compared with pre-development value. This is equivalent to a total net increase of 59.79% in ecological value.

Detail relating to the proposed ecological compensation and enhancement actions in relation to habitat creation and management could be provided within an Ecological Management Plan for the site which could be secured through planning condition. Should these recommendations be adhered to, the proposals stand to be compliant with legislation and current planning policy.

INTRODUCTION

Greengage Environmental Ltd was commissioned to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment by Premier Inn Hotels Dominvs Group of a site known as One Medlock Street in Manchester city centre.

This document is a report of this survey and has been produced to support a planning submission for the site which seeks to demolish of the existing hotel building and structures and the development of the site for office uses (Use Class E), flexible office/community use (Use Class E/F1/F2) and purpose-built student accommodation (Sui Generis) comprising two separate buildings, along with associated ancillary internal and external amenity space, hard and soft landscaping and associated highway works.

This assessment aimed to establish change in ecological value of the site in light of the proposed development, taking into account direct and indirect impacts.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The survey area extends to approximately 0.94 hectares and is centred on National Grid Reference SJ 836 972, OS Co-ordinates 383648, 397206.

The site is located within Manchester City Centre. It is bounded by River Street to the north; Medlock Street to the west and south-west; the Mancunian Way, its exit slip road and the Mancunian Way/Princess Parkway junction, to the south' and the River Street Tower PBSA development to the east.

The existing site currently comprises an existing five-storey Premier Inn hotel, providing 200 rooms and designated surface parking for hotel residents (113 car parking spaces).

The site is situated within the 'Central Area' of the First Street SRF. This is an area of the city centre that has been transformed into a mixed-use location through the delivery of large-scale commercial office space, cultural and leisure development and residential uses along with high-quality public realm.

METHODOLOGY

BIODIVERSITY METRIC

To calculate the ecological value of the pre- and post-development site, the Defra Metric 3.1 methodology was utilised, following best practice guidance from Natural England,^{1 2} and joint guidance from CIEEM, IEMA and CIRIA.³

This metric uses Biodiversity Units as a proxy for the ecological value of area of linear based habitats. The areas of each habitat parcel are measured, with each parcel assigned a 'Distinctiveness' and 'Condition' score. Distinctiveness is a default score for the habitat classification, representing its inherent ecological value, whereas condition refers to the state each parcel is in relative to predetermined set of criteria outlined in the supplementary Biodiversity Metric 3.1 guidance.

For post-development habitat areas, additional multipliers are applied taking into account the time taken to reach maturity and difficulty of creation of the habitats, and whether the habitat creation is in a strategically beneficial location.

An assessment of the predicted change in ecological value is undertaken comparing the Biodiversity Units and assessing percentage change. Changes in broader habitat types (for example, 'Urban', 'Woodland' and 'Grassland' habitats) are also tracked, and trading habitats is discouraged unless specifically targeted within a local strategy. Trading down of habitats is not permitted.

BASELINE CALCULATION

To calculate pre-development Biodiversity Units, data collected during a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) undertaken by Greengage on 31st August 2022 was assessed (doc ref: 551267cm07Oct22FV02.pdf). Areas of each habitat type were taken from the Phase 1 Habitat Map (Appendix A) and data relating to the condition of habitat parcels was collected in the field.

Additionally, to calculate the Biodiversity Units associated with trees on site, data tables from the BS5837 Tree Survey Report undertaken by Greengage in February 2021 were assessed (ref: 551267dp02Mar21FV04_AIA.pdf). Stem diameters of each tree were used to assign each tree a rating of 'small', 'medium' or 'large', in line with the 'urban tree helper' tool in the Defra Metric 3.1. The rating corresponds to an area value to be used. Default distinctiveness scores are given, and condition is assessed in line with the 'Urban Tree Habitat Condition Assessment Criteria' guidance for the Defra Metric 3.1.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT CALCULATIONS

The existing site currently comprises an existing five-storey Premier Inn hotel, providing 200 rooms and designated surface parking for hotel residents (113 car parking spaces).

The seeks to demolish of the existing hotel building and structures and the development of the site for office uses (Use Class E), flexible office/community use (Use Class E/F1/F2) and purpose-built student

accommodation (Sui Generis) comprising two separate buildings, along with associated ancillary internal and external amenity space, hard and soft landscaping and associated highway works.

The works will result in the removal and loss of existing 'Urban tree' and 'Modified grassland' habitats, to be compensated for by the introduction of a range of urban Green Infrastructure, including 'Urban tree' habitat, 'Introduced shrub' habitat, 'Biodiverse Living Roofs', a 'Green Wall', and 'Rain garden' habitat.

Drawings of the proposed development used for this assessment were:

2072-PLA-XX-XX-DR-L-2000-Softworks.pdf (Appendix B)

Areas of each habitat type were drawn from this plan and communicated to Greengage from Planit-IE. Targeted condition scores were used, considering the likely future use of each area.

COMPENTENCIES

Chris Moss, who surveyed the site for this BIA, has an MSc in Planning and Environmental Management and is also completing a PhD in Green Infrastructure planning. Chris also sits on IEMA's Policy and Practice Steering Group for Biodiversity and Natural Capital.

Morgan Taylor, who reviewed this report, has a bachelors and masters degree in Marine Biology (MSci Hons), a Natural England CL17 Bat Survey Level 2 Class Licence (2015-7369-CLS-CLS) and CL10 Dormouse Survey Licence (2017-30817-CLS-CLS). Morgan is a Chartered Environmentalist, Full member of CIEEM and has over 8 years' experience in ecological surveying, having undertaken assessments of numerous development sites of this type. He leads the Ecology team at Greengage.

This report was written by Chris and reviewed and verified by Morgan Taylor who confirms in writing (see the QA sheet at the front of this report) that the report is in line with the following:

- a. Represents sound industry practice;
- b. Reports and recommends correctly, truthfully and objectively;
- c. Is appropriate given the local site conditions and scope of works proposed; and
- d. Avoids invalid, biased and exaggerated statements.

CONSTRAINTS

The assessment methodology does not incorporate ecological features beyond area and linear based habitats. The potential for the site to support protected species, for example, is not captured by this assessment. As such this report should be read in conjunction with all other ecological reports for the site. The mitigation hierarchy in relation to protected and notable habitats and species must be followed. This report should accordingly be read in conjunction with the PEA and any other appropriate protected species surveys.

The BNG assessment at this stage is predictive in nature. To ensure delivery of BNG, requirements outlined within this report must be adhered to, and a rigorous programme of monitoring and maintenance must be implemented.

RESULTS

BASELINE CONDITIONS

The baseline biodiversity value of the site is calculated to be 3.83 biodiversity units. A breakdown of this calculation is provided in Table 0.1:

Table 0.1 Baseline Biodiversity Units

Broad Habitat	Habitat Type	Area (Hectares)	Distinctiveness	Condition	Biodiversity Units
Urban	Developed land; sealed surface	0.9117	V. Low	N/A - Other	0.00
Urban	Modified grassland	0.03	Low	Poor	0.07
Urban	Urban tree	0.0855	Medium	Poor	0.39
Urban	Urban tree	0.3662	Medium	Moderate	3.37
*urban tree areas are not counted towards total site area				TOTAL	3.83

The '**Developed land; sealed surface**' habitat extends across the majority of the site (see the Site Plan and Habitat Map in Appendix A), and accounts for the existing Premier Inn Hotel building, the car park, and some perimeter hardstanding. In accordance with Metric 3.1 guidance, 'Developed land; sealed surface' has no condition assessment and a value of 0 biodiversity units. This habitat has been assessed as having low strategic significance.

The '**Modified grassland**' habitat is concentrated on the southern edge of the site (as outlined in Appendix A). The modified grassland was considered to be of 'poor' condition, principally because it failed criterion 1 of the 'Grassland Low Habitat Condition Assessment' regarding species diversity. If modified grassland does not pass criterion 1, it cannot achieve 'moderate' condition rating.

The '**Urban tree**' habitat is spread across the site, both in the car park and along the southern boundary. A 0.0855ha portion of this habitat has been classed as being of 'poor' condition. These trees pass only 1 out of 6 criteria in the 'Urban Tree Habitat Condition Assessment' (Appendix C). Criteria 2 is passed by default, as it relates to 'continuous tree canopy', which 'individual trees' pass automatically. Insights from the site survey on 31st August 2022 and the comments from an AIA of the site have also been used to inform the judgement, in line with the assessment criterion.

The '**Urban tree**' habitat that was assessed to be of 'moderate' condition, is located towards the southern boundary of the existing site. This 0.3662ha area of tree canopy also passes Criteria 2 (by default), but also Criteria 5 and Criteria 6. In this area of tree canopy, 'micro habitats' habitats were present, along with two abandoned nests. In addition, >20% of this area of tree canopy is oversailing vegetation beneath. As a result, this area passes 3 out of 6 criteria, and is awarded 'moderate' condition status.

Assessment Criteria for the above habitats is given in Appendix C.

PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT

Based on masterplan drawings, the proposed development is predicted to provide 6.12 biodiversity units as shown in Table 0.2.

Table 0.2 Post-Development Biodiversity Units

Broad Habitat	Habitat Type	Area (Hectares)	Distinctiveness	Condition	Biodiversity Units
Urban	Developed land; sealed surface	0.8298	V. Low	N/A - Other	0.00
Urban	Introduced shrub	0.0925	Low	Condition Assessment N/A	0.21
Urban	Rain garden	0.0177	Low	Moderate	0.07
Urban	Biodiverse green roof	0.062	Medium	Good	0.4
Urban	Ground based green wall	0.002	Low	Moderate	0.01
Urban	Urban tree	1.5016	Medium	Moderate	5.28
Urban	Urban tree	0.0488	Medium	Poor	0.16
				TOTAL	6.12

The proposed '**Developed land; sealed surface**' habitat again is comprised of two separate buildings, along with associated ancillary internal and external amenity space, hard landscaping and associated highway works (see the Landscape Plan, Appendix B). In accordance with Metric 3.1 guidance, 'Developed land; sealed surface' has no condition assessment and a value of 0 biodiversity units. This habitat has been assessed as having low strategic significance.

The '**Introduced shrub**' habitat is located around the perimeter edges of the proposed site, beneath the tree canopy (Appendix B). In accordance with Metric 3.1 guidance, 'Introduced shrub' has no condition assessment. This habitat has been assessed as having high strategic significance.

The '**Rain garden**' habitat is located parallel the northern edge of the proposed site, within the pavement and beneath tree canopy (Appendix B). This habitat has been assessed as being of 'moderate' condition, passing Core Criteria 1 and 3 of the 'Urban Habitat Condition Assessment Criteria' (Appendix C). According to the information contained within the Design and Access Statement, provided to Greengage by Planit-IE (doc ref: 'DAS landscape.pdf'), the proposed planting is to 'include a high percentage of native species and consider other ecology benefits' and 'include high percentages of evergreen and semi evergreen species that will ensure structure and visual interest all year round'. This habitat has been assessed as having high strategic significance.

The '**Biodiverse Living Roof**' habitat should be designed to meet Urban Habitat Criteria 1 - 3 as well as 4c2, meeting the criteria of: vegetation structure is varied, providing opportunities for insects, birds and bats to live and breed. A single ecotone (i.e., scrub, grassland, herbs) should not account for more than 80% of the total habitat area; there is a diverse range of flowering plant species, providing nectar sources for insects; Invasive non-native species (Schedule 9 of WCA) cover less than 5% of total vegetated area; and they should have a varied depth of 100-200mm, have at least 50% at 150mm and be planted and seeded with wildflowers and sedums. Additional habitat, such as sand piles, logs etc should be also present. Assuming the above is met then good condition can be achieved with this habitat being of high strategic significance.

The '**Ground based green wall**' will comprise a 0.002ha section of vertical greening and its design should be considerate of aspect, exposure, proven ability to grow in living wall systems, value for air quality control, year round greening provision and value for biodiversity. This habitat has been assessed as 'moderate' on the grounds that it will meet Urban Habitat Criteria 1 - 3, wherein vegetation structure is varied, providing opportunities for insects, birds and bats to live and breed; single ecotone (i.e., scrub, grassland, herbs) should not account for more than 80% of the total habitat area; there is a diverse range of flowering plant species, providing nectar sources for insects; Invasive non-native species (Schedule 9 of WCA) cover less than 5% of total vegetated area. Assuming the above is met, this habitat will pass these core criteria and 'moderate' condition can be achieved, with this habitat being of high strategic significance.

The proposed '**Urban tree**' habitat is located across the proposed site, predominantly around the perimeter edges, and on River Street and Medlock Street (Appendix B). In line with best practice guidance, size classes for newly planted trees 'should be classified by projected size at 30 years from planting'. A 1.5016ha portion of this proposed habitat (equating to 39 'medium' and 18 'small') was classified as being of 'moderate' condition, passing 4/6 criteria on the 'Urban Tree Habitat Condition Assessment' (Appendix C). These 57 trees were inputted Using the information within the soft landscaping plan provided to Greengage by Planit-IE (doc ref: '2072-PLA-XX-XX-DR-L-2000-Softworks.pdf', see Appendix B), this portion of the proposed tree canopy passed Criteria 2, 3, 5, and 6 (Appendix C). This habitat has been assessed as having high strategic significance.

A 0.0488ha portion of proposed '**Urban tree**' habitat was assessed as being of 'poor' condition. These 12 trees are located within raised planters along Medlock Street, which limits both the projected size of the tree and their ecological value. As such, these trees pass only 1 out of 6 criteria: Criteria 2, by default. They are not native species (Criteria 1), will not reach 'maturity' (Criteria 3), will require regular pruning and management (Criteria 4), are unlikely to provide suitable micro-habitat (Criteria 5), and do not oversail vegetation (Criteria 6).

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Greengage was commissioned by Premier Inn Hotel Dominvs Group to undertake a Biodiversity Impact Assessment of a site known as One Medlock Street in Manchester in order to assess the change in ecological value of the site in light of the proposed development.

This report demonstrates that the development proposals will result in a net gain of 2.29 biodiversity units should existing plans be adhered to, equivalent to a 59.79% increase in ecological value and is in compliance with local policy and the BNG Mandate which states a target of 10% net gain in biodiversity.

Details on any habitat creation and its ongoing management should be agreed with the Local Planning Authority and described in an EMP (secured by planning condition) for the site.

APPENDIX A: SITE PLAN AND HABITAT MAP



- Site boundary
- Target note
- Tree
- g4 - Modified grassland
- u1b - Developed land, sealed surface
- u1b5 - Buildings

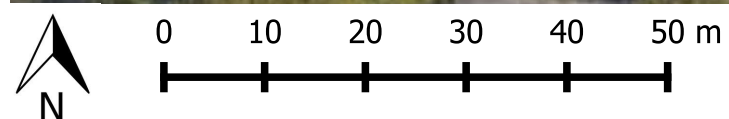


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**Fig 1.0 Site Plan and
Habitat Map**

Project Number 551267
September 2022
1 to 750 at A3
Source: OpenStreetMap



APPENDIX B: LANDSCAPE PLAN



TREE PLANTING SCHEDULE									
TREES	Abbreviations	Species	Common name	Girth/Spacing	Height/Spread	Pot	Quantity	Notes	
Multi-Stem Trees	Bj(ms)	Betula utilis jacquemontii	White-barked himalayan birch	Multi-stem	3.0-3.5m	Rootballed	15	4x; branched; 5 breaks	
Clear-Stem Street Trees	Bj	Betula utilis jacquemontii	White-barked himalayan birch	30-35cm	8-10m	Rootballed	15	Semi-mature RB, 2m clear stem, underground guyed, 4-6xtransplanted	
	Ls	Liquidambar styraciflua	Sweet gum	40-45cm	8-10m	Rootballed	10	5x; Semi-mature; clear stem minimum 200cm	
	Qp	Quercus palustris	Pin oak	30-35cm	8-10m	Rootballed	5	4x; Semi-mature; clear stem minimum 200cm	
	Tc	Tilia cordata	Small leaved lime	35-40cm	8-10m	Rootballed	13	Semi-mature RB, 2m clear stem, underground guyed, 4-6xtransplanted	
	Pxa	Plantinus x acerifolia	London Plane	35-40cm	8-10m	Rootballed	5	Semi-mature RB, 2m clear stem, underground guyed, 4-6xtransplanted	
Evergreen Trees	Pn	Pinus Nigra	Austrian Pine	30-35cm	8-10m	Rootballed	6	Semi-mature RB, 2m clear stem, underground guyed, 4-6xtransplanted	

KEY

Application Boundary

SOFTWORKS

SEMI-MATURE TREE
- Refer to planting schedule.

TREE IN RAISED PLANTER
- Planter size: 4m(W) x 2.5m(D)
- To form part of wind mitigation

SHRUB PLANTING
- Evergreen species

RAIN GARDEN PLANTING

P0228.09.22

P0110.08.22

Updated Schedule

First issue

CB

SF

RM

SF

Revision	Date	Description	Drawn	Apprvd.

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Dominvs Group / ASK

Project

One Medlock

Drg Title

Softworks

Created on

10-08-22

Created by

SF

Approved by

SF

Scale

1:250

Size

A1

Workstage

Information

Drg No.

2072-PLA-XX-XX-DR-L-2000

Suitability

S1

Revision

P02

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APPENDIX C: CONDITION ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

URBAN

Number	Condition Assessment Criteria
CORE CRITERIA - applicable to all urban habitat types:	
1	Vegetation structure is varied, providing opportunities for insects, birds and bats to live and breed. A single ecotone (i.e. scrub, grassland, herbs) should not account for more than 80% of the total habitat area.
2	There is a diverse range of flowering plant species, providing nectar sources for insects. These species may be either native, or non-native but beneficial to wildlife. NB- To achieve GOOD condition, criterion 2 must be satisfied by native species only (rather than non-natives beneficial to wildlife). Note that Biodiverse green roofs are exempt from this requirement, and can include non-native sedums as set out in footnote 1.
3	Invasive non-native species (Schedule 9 of WCA) cover less than 5% of total vegetated area. NB - To achieve GOOD condition, criterion 3 must be satisfied by a complete absence of invasive non-native species (rather than <5% cover).
ADDITIONAL CRITERION - only applicable to Open mosaic on previously developed land habitat type:	
4a	The site shows spatial variation, forming a mosaic of at least four early successional communities (a) to (h) PLUS bare substrate AND pools. (a) annuals; (b) mosses/liverworts; (c) lichens; (d) ruderals; (e) inundation species; (f) open grassland; (g) flower-rich grassland; (h) heathland.
ADDITIONAL CRITERION - only applicable to Bioswale and SUDS habitat types:	
4b	The water table is at or near the surface throughout the year. This could be open water or saturation of soil at the surface.
ADDITIONAL CRITERION - only applicable to green roof habitat types (select as necessary)	
4c1	Intensive green roofs - have a minimum of 50% native and non-native wildflowers - 70% of the roof area is soil and vegetation (including water features)
4c2	Biodiverse green roofs - have a varied depth of 80 - 150mm at least 50% is at 150mm and is planted and seeded with wildflowers and sedums or is pre-prepared with sedums and wildflowers. To achieve Good condition some additional habitat, such as sand piles, logs etc should be present.

Condition Assessment Result	Condition Assessment Score
If 3 criteria assessed:	

Condition Assessment Result	Condition Assessment Score
Passes 3 of 3 core criteria; AND Meets the requirements for good condition within criteria 2 and 3	Good (3)
Passes 2 of 3 core criteria; OR Passes 3 of 3 core criteria but does not meet the requirements for good condition within criteria 2 and 3	Moderate (2)
Passes 0 or 1 of 3 core criteria	Poor (1)
If 4 criteria assessed:	
Passes 3 of 3 core criteria, AND Meets the requirements for good condition within criteria 2 and 3; AND Passes additional criterion 4a or 4b	Good (3)
Passes 2 or 3 of 4 criteria; OR Passes 4 of 4 criteria but does not meet the requirements for good condition within criteria 2 and 3	Moderate (2)
Passes 0 or 1 of 4 criteria	Poor (1)
Notes	
Footnote 1: For Biodiverse green roofs only- experience has shown that a range of sedums species (native, naturalised, and non-native) support wildflowers during hot periods. Therefore, for criterion 2 a Biodiverse green roof can have non-native sedums and still achieve Good condition. Footnote 2: For criteria 3- For green roof habitat types only - Buddleja davidii should be assessed alongside Schedule 9 species. This species impairs the health of the local ecosystem and reduces the biodiversity potential of the roof. It is also a sign that a roof has not been planted and seeded correctly in sub-sequent years.	

URBAN TREE

Number	Condition Assessment Criteria
1	The tree is a native species (or more than 70% within the block are native species).
2	The tree canopy is predominantly continuous, with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5m wide (individual trees automatically pass this criterion).
3	The tree is mature (footnote 2) or veteran (footnote 3) (or more than 50% within the block are mature or veteran).
4	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by anthropogenic activities such as vandalism or herbicide use. There is no current regular pruning regime so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.

Number	Condition Assessment Criteria
5	Micro-habitats for birds, mammals and insects are present e.g. presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark
6	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.

Condition Assessment Result	Condition Assessment Score
Passes 5 or 6 of 6 criteria	Good (3)
Passes 3 or 5 of 6 criteria	Moderate (2)
Passes 0, 1 or 2 of 6 criteria	Poor (1)

Notes

"Footnote 1 - This covers all trees in artificial urban habitats such as private gardens, private land, institutional land and land used for transport functions; roads, streets, canals, rail, footpaths etc. Trees in urban areas can under the right conditions provide a large range of habitat opportunities, supporting lichens, invertebrates and birds. Tree planting in urban areas has for over two hundred years also introduced non-native species into towns and cities. In the context of biodiversity native species are the preferred option. However, non-native tree species can contribute positively to biodiversity richness particularly in relation to providing a seasonal food source for nectar feeders and other invertebrates as well as supporting vertebrates that feed on species that are hosted by non-native trees. Examples are early and late flowering species of Prunus and aphids on varieties of Acer providing food for species higher up the food chain. The species of trees (native or non-native) together with the intensity and type of management they are subject to will determine the biodiversity value of the trees in question. Trees in urban areas provide opportunistic sites for biodiversity to colonise and re-colonise, increasing connectivity and contributing to biodiversity critical mass between already established patches or sites. This is especially so where transport corridors are populated with mixed native species

Footnote 2 - A mature tree in this context is one that is at least 2/3 expected fully mature height for the species.

Footnote 3 - All ancient trees are veteran trees, but not all veteran trees are ancient. A veteran tree may not be very old, but it has decay features, such as branch death and hollowing. These features contribute to its biodiversity, cultural and heritage value. Veteran trees can be classified if they have four out of the five following features:

1. Rot sites associated with wounds which are decaying >400cm²;
2. Holes and water pockets in the trunk and mature crown >5 cm diameter;
3. Dead branches or stems >15 cm diameter;
4. Any hollowing in the trunk or major limbs;
5. Fruit bodies of fungi known to cause wood decay."

GRASSLAND LOW

Condition Assessment Criteria	
1	There must be 6-8 species per m2. If a grassland has 9 or more species per m2 it should be classified as a medium distinctiveness grassland habitat type. NB - this criterion is essential for achieving moderate condition.
2	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for insects, birds and small mammals to live and breed.
3	Some scattered scrub (including bramble) may be present, but scrub accounts for less than 20% of total grassland area. Note - patches of shrubs with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.
4	Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.
5	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens).
6	Cover of bracken less than 20%.
7	There is an absence of invasive non-native species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA, 1981).

Condition Assessment Result	Condition Assessment Score
Passes 6 or 7 of 7 criteria including passing essential criterion 1	Good (3)
Passes 4 or 5 of 7 criteria including passing essential criterion 1	Moderate (2)

Condition Assessment Result	Condition Assessment Score
Passes 0, 1, 2 or 3 of 7 criteria; OR 4, 5 or 6 of criteria but failing criterion 1	Poor (1)

LEGISLATION AND POLICY

LEGISLATION

The Environment Act, 2021⁴

The Environment Act, 2021 mandates the requirement for new development in England to deliver a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG), as measured by the agreed metric (the current relevant version being the Natural England Metric 3.0), secured through planning condition as standard (as per schedule 14 of the Act). Approach to the delivery of BNG must follow the mitigation hierarchy, with avoidance of impact and on-site compensation/gains prioritised, ahead of the use of offsite biodiversity unit offsets, or the purchase of biodiversity credits.

The Act introduces the condition that no development may begin unless a biodiversity net gain plan has been submitted and approved by the local planning authority (LPA).

The Act also amends requirements of the NERC Act, 2006, adding the need to not just conserve, but enhance biodiversity through planning projects. Furthermore, it introduces the need for the LPA to have regard to relevant local nature recovery strategies and relevant species/protected site conservation strategies, when making their decision.

POLICY

National

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021⁵ sets out the Government's planning policies for England, including how plans and decisions are expected to apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Chapter 15 of the NPPF focuses on conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, stating plans should 'identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity'.

It goes on to state: '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'. Alongside this, it acknowledges that planning should be refused where irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland are lost..

Regional

Places For Everyone Joint Development Plan Document – Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford, Wigan

Policy GM-Strat 13 Strategic Green Infrastructure

The following strategic green infrastructure assets will be protected and enhanced as key features within Greater Manchester:

2. 1. River valleys and waterways (see Policy GM-G 3 'River Valleys and Waterways')
3. 2. Lowland wetlands and mosslands (see Policy GM-G 4 'Lowland Wetlands and Mosslands')
4. 3. Uplands (see Policy GM-G 5 'Uplands') 4. Trees and woodland (see Policy GM-G 7 'Trees and Woodland').

The protection and enhancement of these key strategic green infrastructure assets is complemented by a suite of policies to protect and enhance Greater Manchester's network of green infrastructure, including protecting and enhancing sites of ecological value. This will enable Greater Manchester's residents to access and maximise the benefits of green infrastructure on their health and wellbeing.

Policy GM-G 9 A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Across the plan as a whole, a net enhancement of biodiversity resources will be sought, including by:

1. Increasing the quality, quantity, extent and diversity of habitats, particularly priority habitats identified in national or local biodiversity action plans and those that support priority species;
2. Improving connections between habitats, to protect and enhance the provision of corridors, ecological networks (including Nature Recovery Networks) and stepping stones that enable the movement of species, especially as the climate changes;
3. Enhancing the management of existing habitats, including through habitat restoration, avoiding habitat fragmentation and combating invasive species;
4. Protecting sites designated for their nature conservation and/or geological importance, with the highest level of protection given to international and then national designations in accordance with legislation and national policy;
5. Facilitating greater access to nature, particularly within urban areas;
6. Supporting the development and implementation of the Greater Manchester Wetlands Nature Recovery Network; and
7. Safeguarding, restoring and sustainably managing Greater Manchester's most valuable soil resources, tackling soil degradation/erosion and recovering soil fertility, particularly to ensure protection of peat-based soils and safeguard 'best and most versatile' agricultural land.

Development will be expected to:

- a. Follow the mitigation hierarchy of:
 - i. Avoiding harm to biodiversity, particularly where it is irreplaceable, and including consideration of alternative sites where appropriate, then;
 - ii. Mitigating (within the local area) any harm to biodiversity, then iii. Compensating (within the local area) for any remaining harm to biodiversity;
- b. Avoid fragmenting or severing connectivity between habitats;
- c. Achieve a net gain in biodiversity;

- d. Make appropriate provision for long-term management of habitats and geological features connected to the development; and
- e. Provide robust evidence in accordance with relevant government and other guidance, including field surveys wherever development of 'best and most versatile' agricultural land is proposed or to establish the status of the land within the Agricultural Land Classification system.

Whilst off-site habitat enhancement and creation required as part of the mitigation hierarchy (or to achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity of no less than 10%) should be local to the site regard should be had to supporting strategic biodiversity priorities and initiatives.

Policy GM-G 6 requires existing urban green space to be retained and enhanced and promotes the incorporation of new green spaces.

Local

Manchester City Council Core Strategy 2012

Policy EN 9 – Green Infrastructure

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 Green Infrastructure Strategies 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. Where the benefits of a proposed development are considered to outweigh the loss of an existing element of green infrastructure, the developer will be required to demonstrate how this loss will be mitigated in terms of quantity, quality, function and future management.

Key features of Manchester's green infrastructure will include:

- The continued development of a network of green spaces, water bodies, canals, paths and cycleways, with priority given to those parts of the City where there is an identified existing lack of open space. The Council will seek to protect existing street trees and promote new planting, particularly where this can enhance green links in the urban area.
- The continued maintenance and management of the Rivers Mersey and Irwell and their tributaries, for example the River Irk, River Medlock, Chorlton Platt Gore, Gatley Brook, Moston Brook and adjoining land, with regard to their multiple functions including recreation, flood management, and biodiversity.
- The provision of new, and improvements to the quality and accessibility of existing green infrastructure assets, to mitigate for any loss of green infrastructure as a result of development such as the Metrolink extension programme.
- The encouragement of green roofs, green walls, tree planting and other forms of green infrastructure to allow for the adaption to climate change in heavily urbanised areas.

New green infrastructure provision should be an exemplar of best practice and innovation in terms of both its design and management.

Policy EN 15 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

The Council will seek to maintain or enhance sites of biodiversity and geological value throughout the City. Particular consideration will be given to:

- Sites with international or national designations for their biodiversity value. Manchester contains one Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Cotteril Clough); there is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and an SSSI just over the border in Oldham (both on the Rochdale Canal within Oldham);
- Other sites of biodiversity value, including Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs); Manchester currently has 35 SBIs (including the Rochdale and Ashton Canals) and 7 LNRs; priority habitats found within Manchester, as listed in the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy and included in the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (GM BAP);
- Protected and priority species, as listed in the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy and included in the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (GM BAP);
- Sites that are recognised for their geological importance;
- The Council's objective to protect and conserve the City's existing trees and woodlands and the aim for a net increase in trees across the City.

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 North West;

- 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.

Development should wherever possible seek to maintain, enhance or restore existing geology.

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⁵ GOV.UK. (2021). *National Planning Policy Framework*. [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework>