

Assessment of Biodiversity Baseline

Version 1
23.06.2026

Prepared for: Exemplar

Site: Church Walks care home

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

Amenity Tree was commissioned by the client to undertake a site visit and compilation of UK habitats plan and DEFRA habitat condition sheet to include the Statutory Metric in consideration of a planning application under The Environment Act 2021, which allows for biodiversity gain in the planning system.

1.2 Site location and context

The site is located within the southern area of Rochdale. The survey area consisted of modified grassland (g4), species-rich native hedgerow (h2a5), non-native/ornamental hedgerow (h2b), buildings and sealed surfaces / other developed land (u1b/5), and an urban tree.

1.3 Report purpose and legislative background

- 1.3.1 This assessment was requested by the client for the purposes of supporting a planning application for the site's development in line with The Environment Act 2021, including Part 6 of the Environment Act 2021 'nature and biodiversity', which allows for biodiversity gain in the planning system. Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021 has been brought into force and there are current regulations legally mandating BNG.

The British Standard BS 8683:20211 defines BNG as *"a specific, quantifiable outcome from project activities that deliver demonstrable benefits for biodiversity compared to the baseline situation."*

The National Planning Policy Framework 2025 (NPPF) emphasises the importance of protecting and enhancing the natural environment. The NPPF approach to BNG is set out in Paragraph 187 to 195, which is to *"minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity"*.

- 1.3.2 A Habitat Walkover survey confirmed habitats present on June 11th 2026. Therefore, the habitats present are confirmed and using the UK Habitats

Classification System (UKHAB) it is possible that the appropriate habitat classification is used in the BNG metric.

1.3.3 The scope of the Assessment is therefore:

- Assessment of the habitats within the site in accordance with the UK Habitats Classification (UK Habitats Classification Working Group, 2018).
- Completion of Condition Assessments of each habitat in accordance with those presented in The Biodiversity Metric 4.1 The Statutory Metric Feb 2024 and superseded on the 23rd July 2024 (V1.0.3).

2. Survey Methods

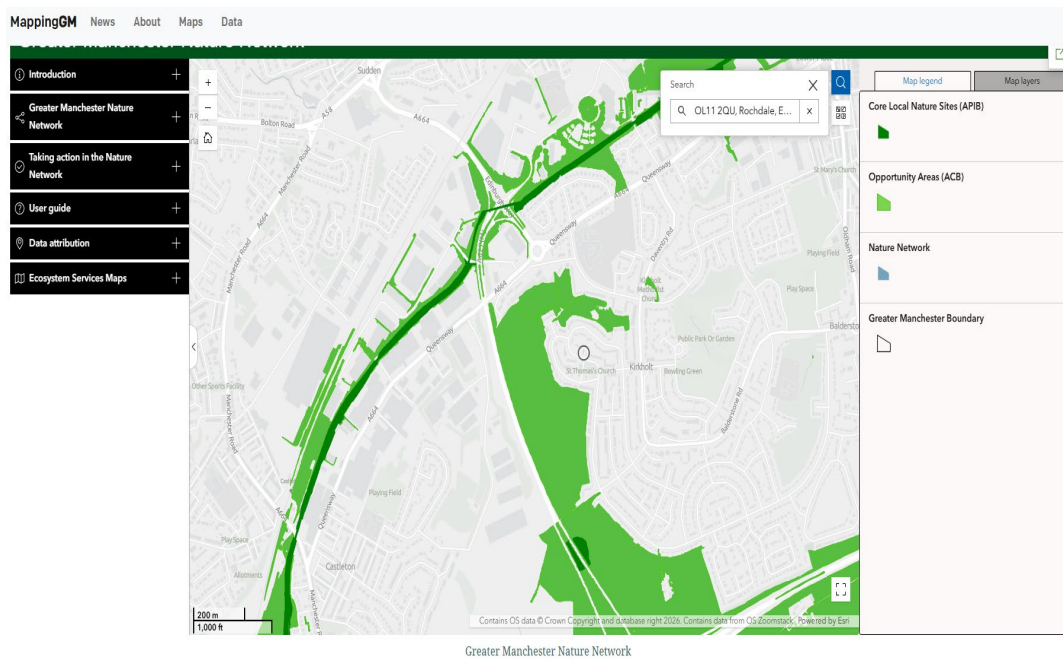
2.1 Vegetation and Habitats

2.1.1 A habitat survey walkover was conducted on June 11th, which confirmed the habitats present. Appendix 1 is the habitat mapping based on the UK Habitat Classification system (UK Habitats Classification Working Group, 2018).

2.1.2 Whilst on the site, the habitat survey searched for all plants, including those that are considered rare, uncommon or are statutorily protected, such as those listed in Schedule 9 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended).

2.1.3 Site strategic significance

The strategic significance of a site will be determined by the areas included in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for a region. The final LNRS documents and the online map have been published. <https://www.mappinggm.org.uk/maps/nature-network/> The map shows there are no areas of core local nature, Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIBs), nature networks, and Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (ACBs).



As those habitats that are present on site do not align with the formally identified LNRS these areas of site can be assigned low strategic significance.

2.2 Surveys results

- 2.1 The biodiversity baseline value of the site is calculated by the Statutory Metric and reproduced below for the main site in habitat units.

On-site baseline	<i>Area habitat units</i>	0.03
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.70
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00

2.3 Limitations

The survey was conducted in the optimal survey period for vascular plants as determined by JNCC (2010).

Habitats have been assessed to determine whether they meet those described in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan – Priority Habitat descriptions which are used to form Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

3. History of site

The recent history of the site can be examined using historic aerial imagery. The site does not appear to have changed since 2020, and no habitat degradation has occurred.

4. Opportunities for enhancement and habitat creation to satisfy the mandatory 10% gain

The principles of BNG are that the most effective method to deliver biodiversity units for habitats is on site habitat retention and enhancement. The retention and enhancement of existing habitats will be key to the on site BNG percentage result.

The BNG process requires formal identification of habitat distinctiveness, ranging from low to very high, as defined by DEFRA. Because distinctiveness is tied to trading rules that require a 10% improvement across all habitat types and to the biodiversity gain hierarchy, there is a requirement to ensure that habitats of medium distinctiveness are retained and enhanced.

The only habitat that could, in theory, be retained is the existing modified grassland, which could be enhanced to a better condition.

Urban tree planting will also create on site medium distinctiveness habitat and help to offset any areas of existing medium distinctiveness habitats that cannot be retained.

In the first instance landscape design will need to be developed using the advice provided in section 4 of this report.

5. Summary conclusion

The sites habitats are mixed and they design challenge is to enhance and create habitats to achieve a 10% gain and, also, to satisfy trading rules which is relevant to how distinctive the habitat is and achieving a 10% gain in each habitat.

There are various habitats and techniques available to increase the biodiversity value of the land but they require retention and creation of habitats as discussed in section 4.

The UKHAB criteria shall be used to monitor all habitat improvements and it is normal that the monitoring of enhancements shall be required, at least until they have attained the intended condition.

Appendix 1 Habitat mapping based the UK Habitat Classification system

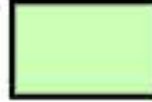
Appendix 2 BNG opportunity areas plan



12968 Church Walks Care Home, Exemplar

Red Line Boundary Area: **0.144 ha**

Total Area (of visible polygons): **0.144 ha**

-  Redline boundary
-  **g4** Modified grassland
-  **h2a5** Species-rich native hedgerow
-  **h2b** Non-native and ornamental hedgerow
-  **u1b5** Buildings
-  **u1b6** Other developed land
-  Trees



1 : 157

10 m



Amenity Tree

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Appendix 3 Habitat Condition Assessments and baseline metric