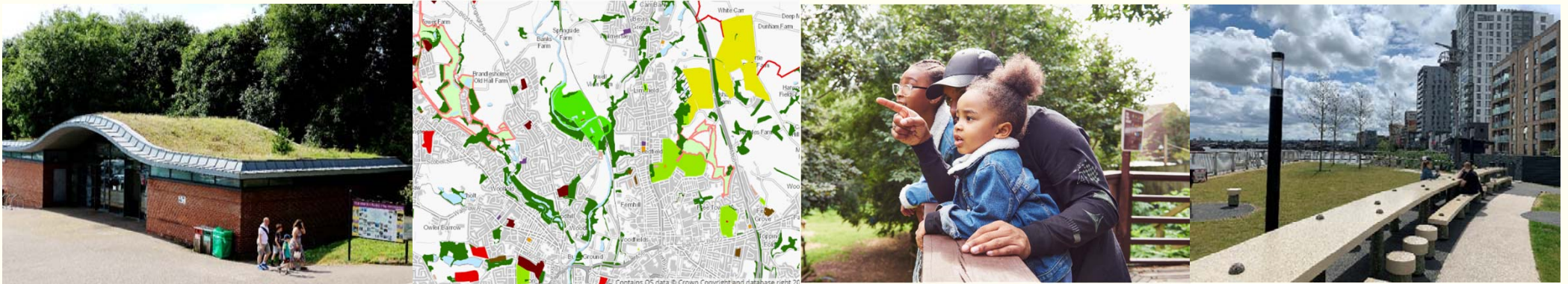# The importance of access to green infrastructure for people and places

Clare Warburton, Principal Adviser, Natural England

www.gov.uk/natural-england

How can access to green infrastructure transform our towns and support levelling up?

Green Infrastructure

"*Green infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity*".
National Planning Policy Framework 2021

Why GI?

Nature rich beautiful places
Active and **healthy** people and places
Thriving and prosperous **communities**
Resilient places that are good for the **climate**
Improved **water** management

Healthier, more resilient nature → Healthier, more resilient people → Healthier, more resilient places → Healthier, more resilient economy
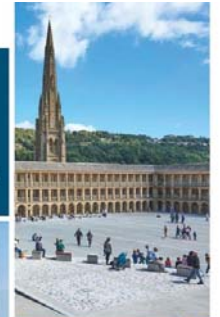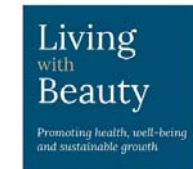
Policy drivers for making better places

- Levelling Up White Paper
- Environment Act and 25 Year Environment Plan
- Landscapes Review – Government Response
- National Model Design Code
- Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s
- Strategy for tackling loneliness
- Clean Growth Strategy
- Clean Air Strategy
- 2050 Net Zero target
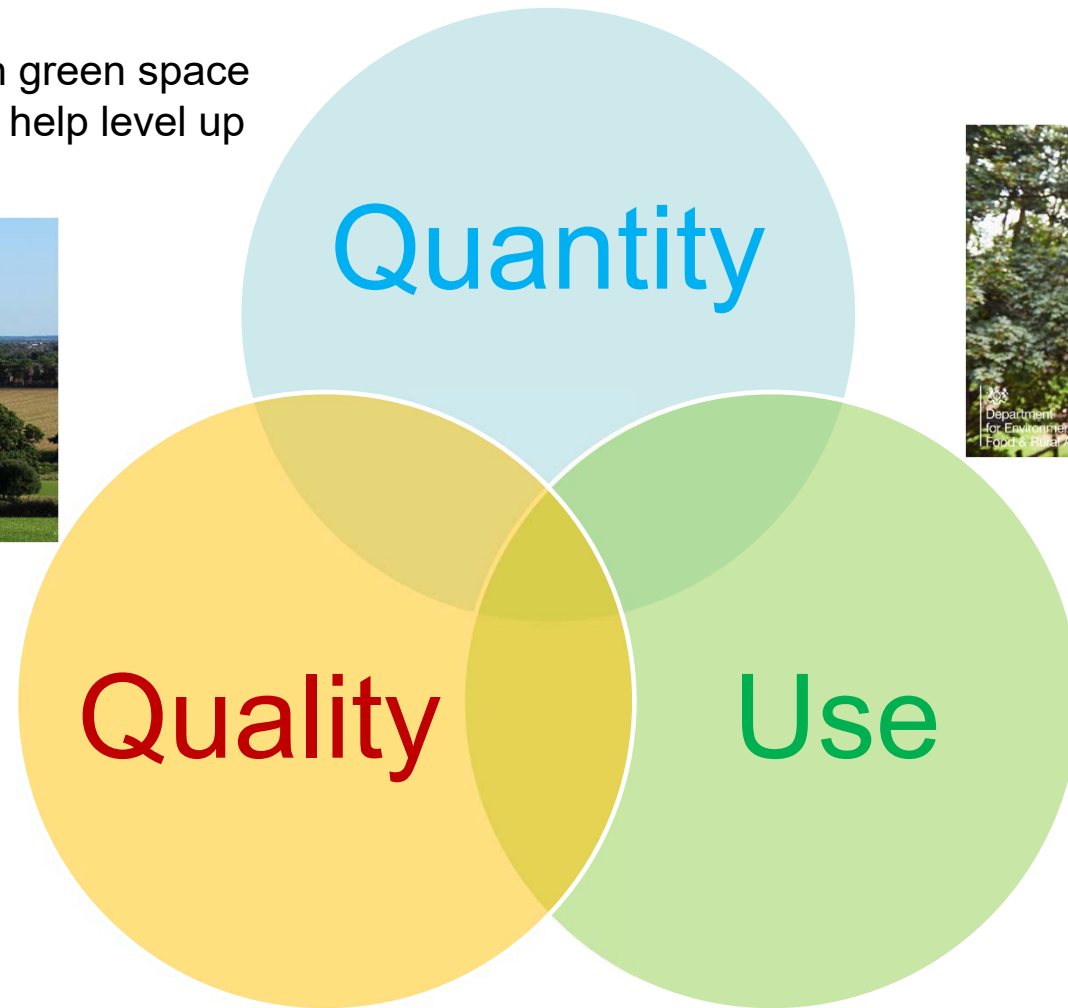
Getting the balance…

Have we got enough green space in the right places to help level up access to nature?

Is there good quality green space close to where people live and work?

Quantity

Quality

Use

What are the barriers to people using green space and how can these be addressed so that everyone can access green space?

The Guardian
UK edition

Search

Two-hour 'dose' of nature significantly boosts health – study

Researchers say simply sitting and enjoying the peace has mental and physical benefits

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During the pandemic- Nature and getting outdoors important for wellbeing & happiness

"Thinking about life since the coronavirus restrictions began, have you noticed or done any of the following?"

People and Nature Survey: Monthly COVID-19 Indicators Apr 2020 – Mar 2021	
Visiting local green and natural spaces has been even more important to my wellbeing.	43%
Nature/wildlife is more important than ever to my wellbeing.	39%
I have spent less quality time outside with family and friends.	35%
I am visiting local green and natural spaces more.	34%

n = 22,911

82% adults agreed that 'Being in nature makes me happy'

n = 23,314

Most people's experience of the natural world is on their doorstep

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The rise of shorter, close to home nature visits

	Average distance travelled	Adults spending time outside at least weekly	Visit destinations reached on foot	Visits taken to greenspace in town or city
		65%		
2018/19	**4.9** miles	54%	**64%**	**52%**
2009/10	6.8 miles	79%	61%	41%

More quality green space can be provided for underserved communities

What are we doing?

Natural England is working closely with partners to tackle barriers to nature in areas where it is most needed:

- – Environment Act: Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain.
- – Green Infrastructure Framework to help to bring nature to the doorstep.
- – Landscapes Review: New landscape approaches in towns and cities
- – Scaling up Green Social Prescribing

Environment Act 2021

Local Nature Recovery Strategies

- Locally developed, spatial strategies for nature working within a national framework.

- Identify opportunities and priorities for enhancing the natural environment

- Inform and underpin the national Nature Recovery Network (NRN)

- Draw on other relevant spatial plans and strategies such as GI strategies.

- Can be used to target net gain delivery
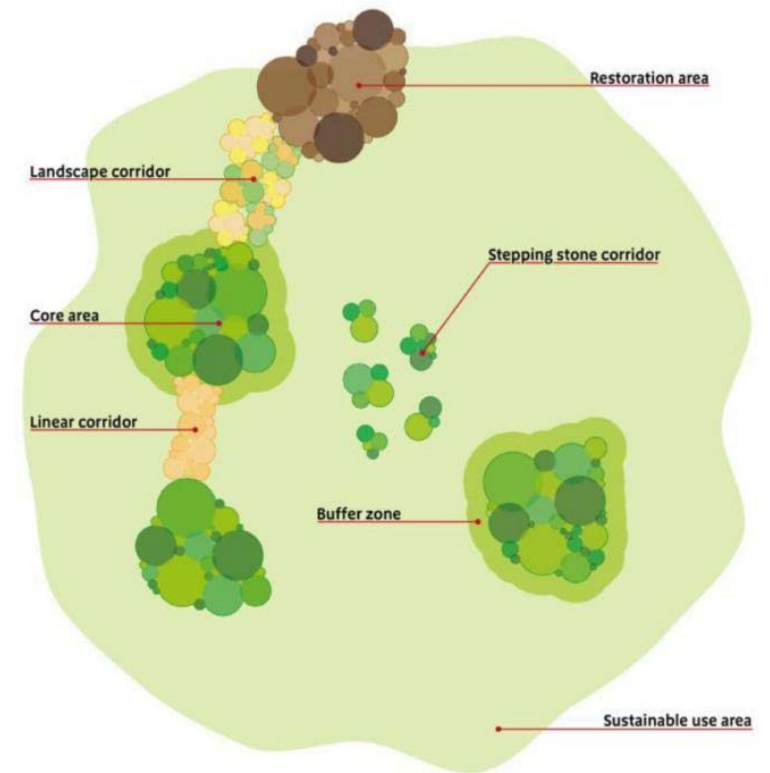
Biodiversity Net Gain
for Parks & Green Spaces

- **Long-term (30+ years) financing**

- **Investment from local developments**

- **Scope to combine with other finance**

- **Existing and/or new parks & green/blue spaces**

- Ensure **Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)** make reference to parks and green/blue spaces

- Gain familiarity with the **biodiversity metric 3 and baseline**
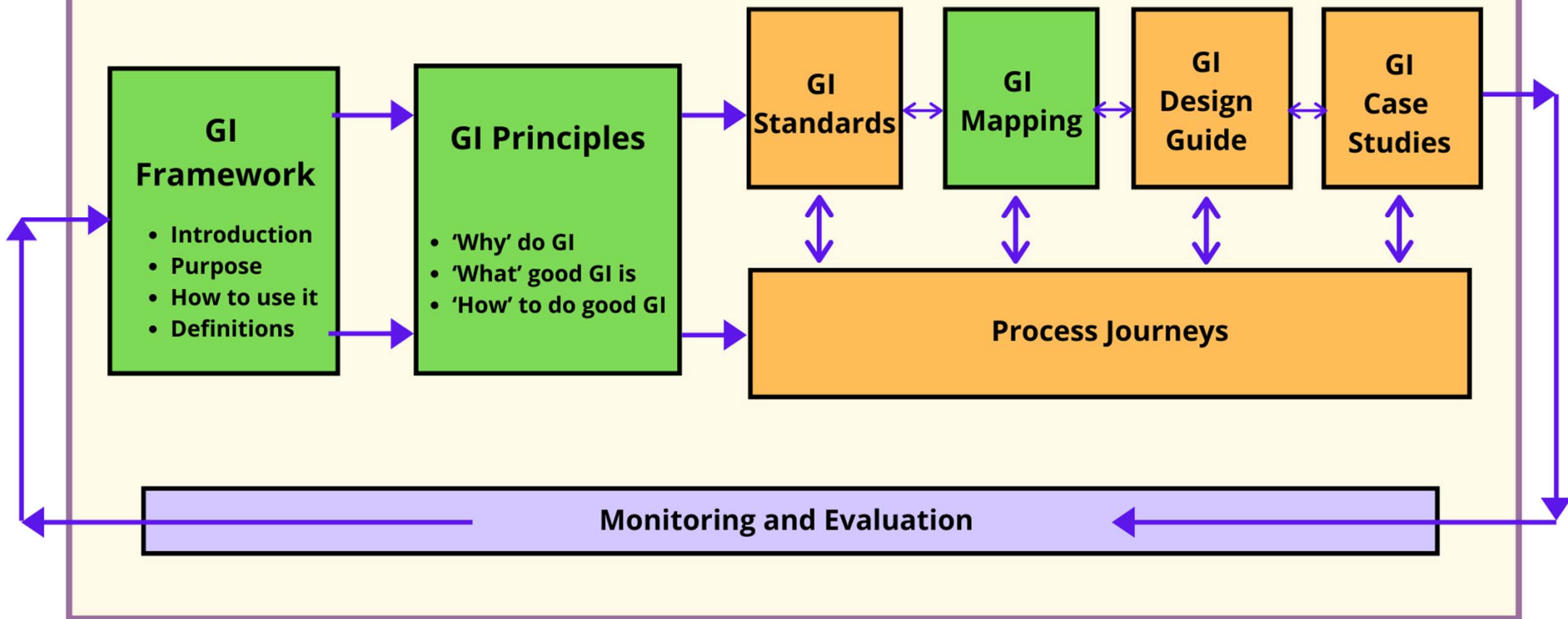
Green Infrastructure Framework

- Improve existing green infrastructure (GI) and create more GI to provide benefits for health, nature, climate and prosperity

- Help the country recover from Covid 19 by ensuring that everyone has access to good quality GI and by focusing on areas of poor GI provision especially in areas of multiple deprivation and health inequalities

- Support Local Authorities in refresh of local plans by 2023

- Mainstream GI as a key asset/ infrastructure in creating and maintaining sustainable places

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Green Infrastructure Framework - Principles and Standards for England

Principles - The Golden Thread

GI Framework
- Introduction
- Purpose
- How to use it
- Definitions

GI Principles
- 'Why' do GI
- 'What' good GI is
- 'How' to do good GI

GI Standards

GI Mapping

GI Design Guide

GI Case Studies

Process Journeys

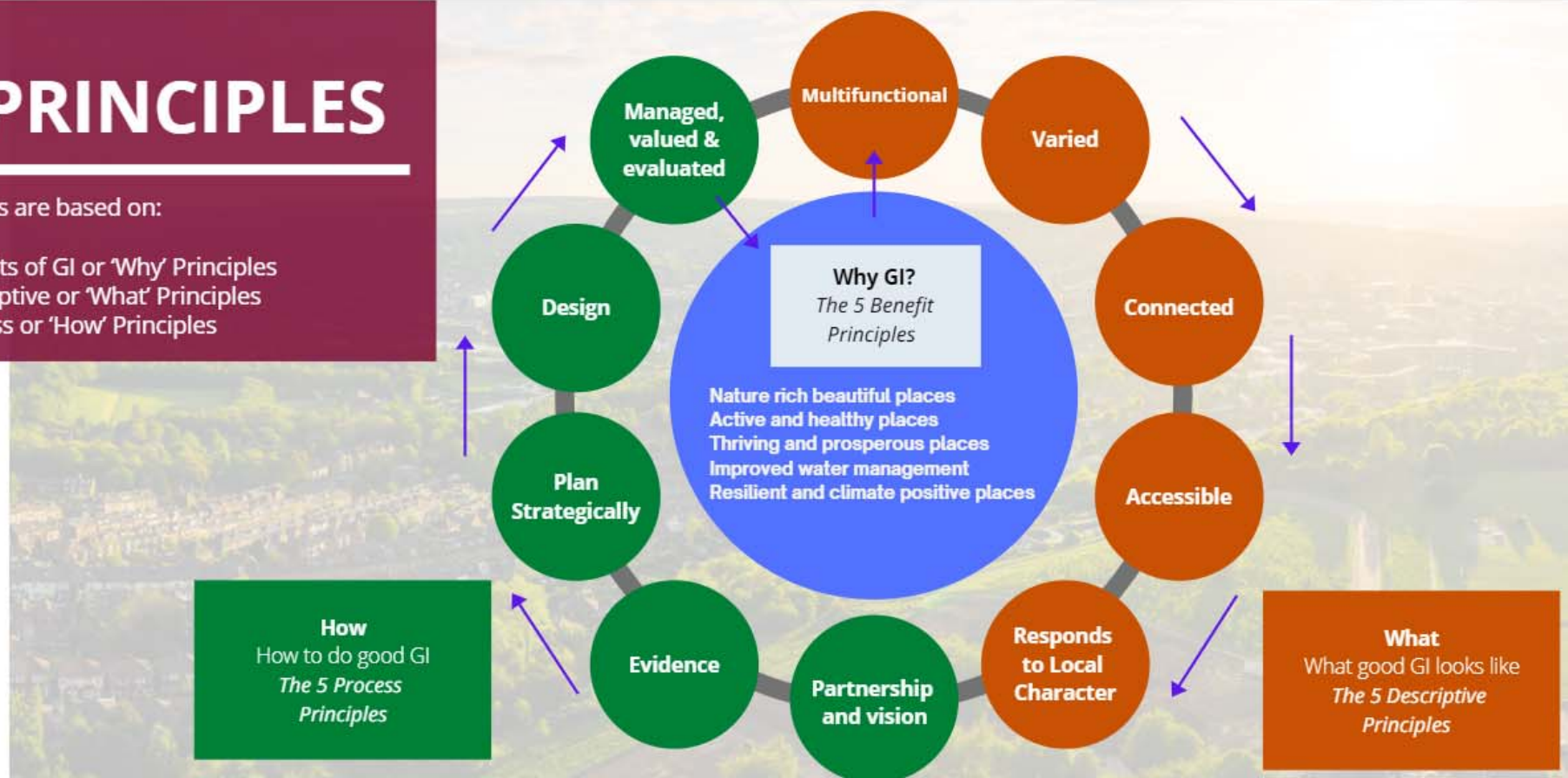**Monitoring and Evaluation**

Green Infrastructure Principles

THE PRINCIPLES

The 15 Principles are based on:

- The 5 Benefits of GI or 'Why' Principles
- The 5 Descriptive or 'What' Principles
- The 5 Process or 'How' Principles

Multifunctional

Varied

Managed, valued & evaluated

Design

Why GI?
The 5 Benefit Principles

Nature rich beautiful places
Active and healthy places
Thriving and prosperous places
Improved water management
Resilient and climate positive places

Connected

Plan Strategically

Accessible

How
How to do good GI
The 5 Process Principles

Evidence

Partnership and vision

Responds to Local Character

What
What good GI looks like
The 5 Descriptive Principles

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Green Infrastructure Mapping Database

https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/map.aspx

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Green Infrastructure

Home   GI Principles ▾   Map   User Guide ▾   FAQ/Glossary ▾

If you would like to provide feedback, please take our questionnaire   Don't show this again

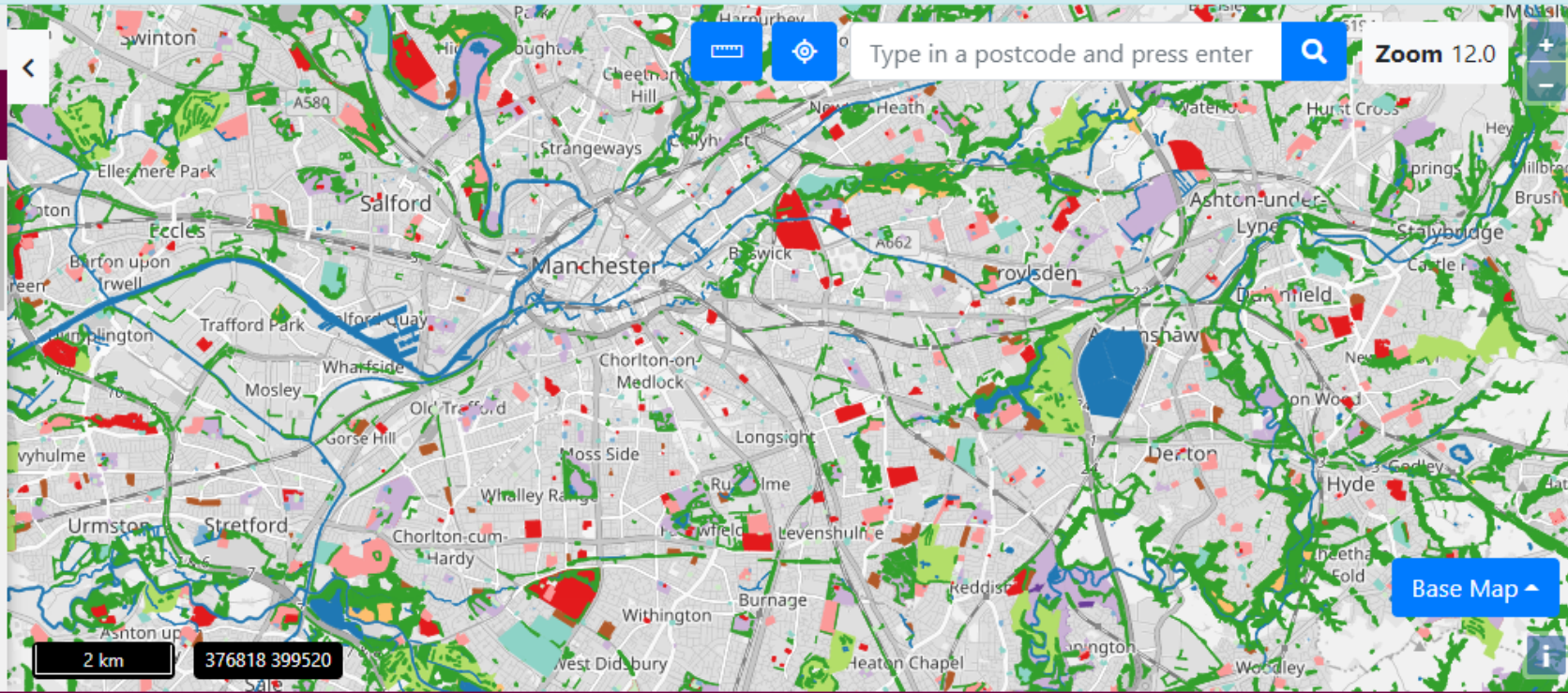**All Layers**   Composite Maps

All Layers   Reset Layers

˅ **Green and Blue Infrastructure Assets** ⓘ

🔵 All Green and Blue Infrastructure ⓘ

Opacity ▬▬▬▬▬▬●

Typology
Public Park - General
Public Park - Country Park
Millennium or Doorstep Green
Local Nature Reserve
National Nature Reserve
Playing Fields
Other Sports Facilities
Access Land (CRoW)

Type in a postcode and press enter 🔍   Zoom 12.0

2 km   376818 399520   Base Map ▲

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Map colors based on ColorBrewer, by Cynthia A. Brewer, Penn State

Greenness Grid
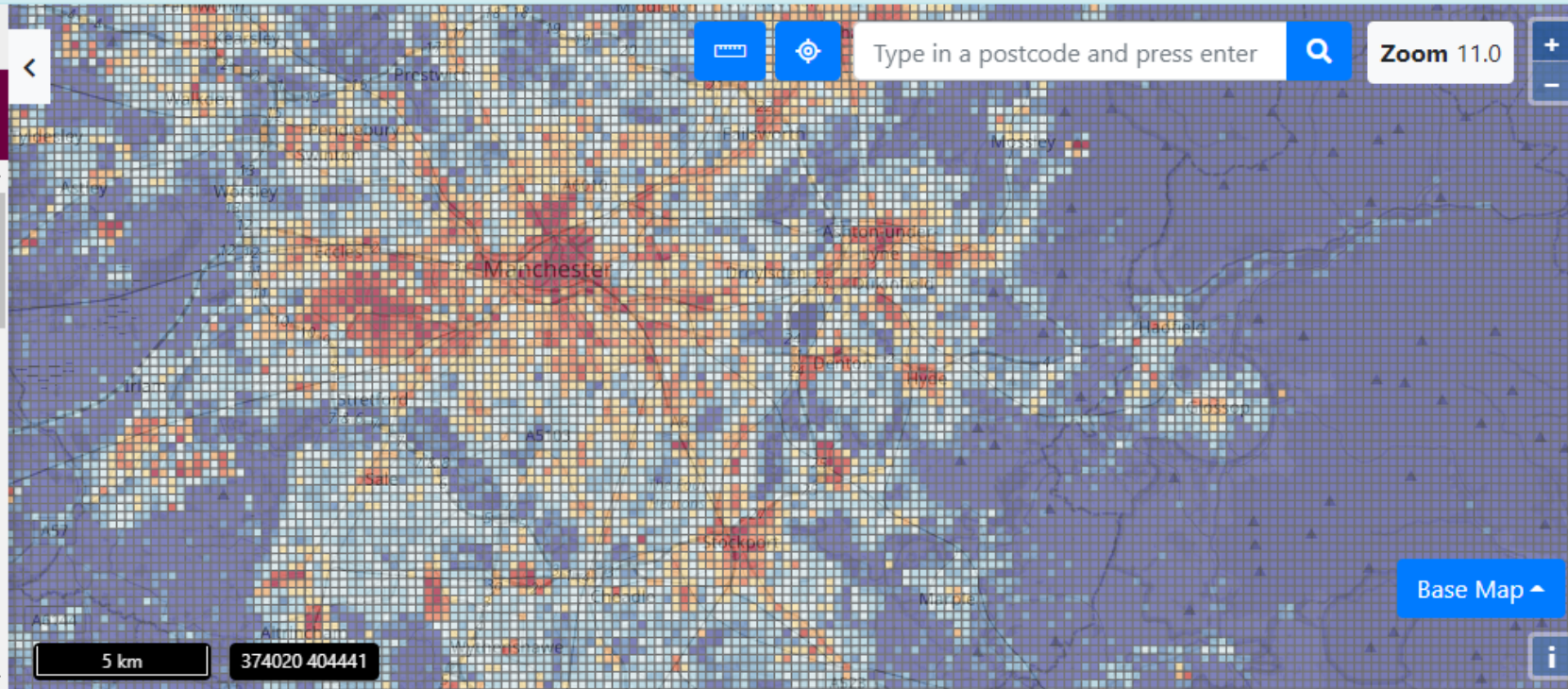
Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards
(Draft Updated)

Name of criterion	Size distance criteria	Walking & Cycling Times
Doorstep Greenspace	At least 0.5 ha within 200 metres	Under 5 mins walk
Local Natural Greenspace	At least 2 ha within 300 m (straight line route) or 500 m (actual route)	5- 10 mins walk 2 mins cycle
Neighbourhood Natural Greenspace	10 ha within 1 km	15 mins walk (4 mins cycle)
Wider neighbourhood	At least 20ha within 2km	35 mins walk
District	100 ha within 5 km	20 mins cycle
Sub-regional	500 ha within 10 km	40 mins cycle
Local Nature Reserves	At least 1 ha per 1000 population	

Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards

Natural Green Space Accessibility and IMD

L1 = Least Favourable (Low accessibility and high deprivation).

H3 – Most Favourable (High accessibility low deprivation).
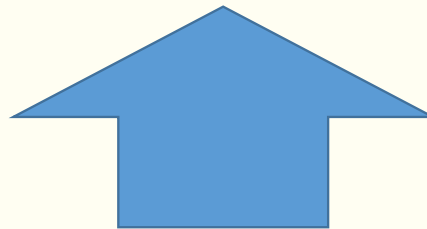
Menu of GI Standards to raise the bar

Draft Core GI Standards

1. Green cover – National Urban Greening Factor
2. Trees/Canopy cover
3. Access - Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards
4. Quality of green space/experience
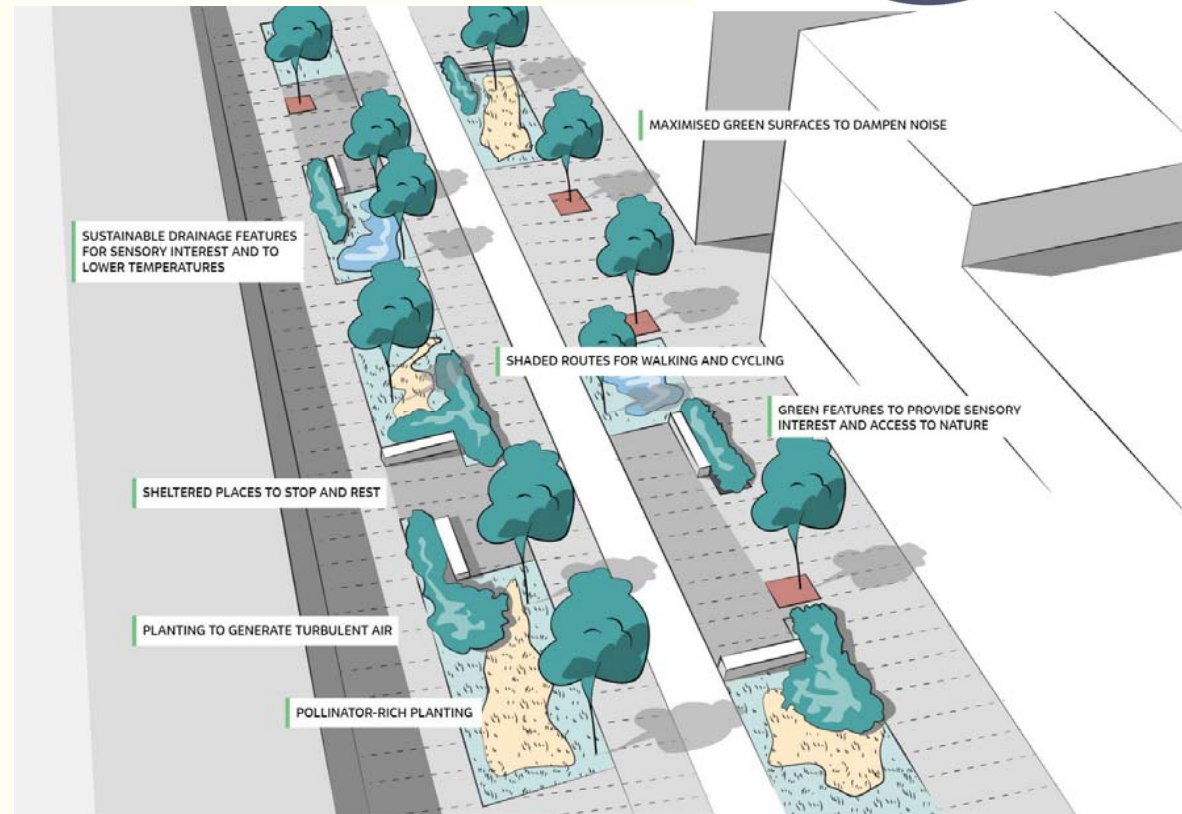5. Multi-functional benefits

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Benchmarks
- New
- Existing

Designing Green Infrastructure for Area Types

- Deep urban including High Streets
- Urban
- Peri-urban
- Rural
- Commercial, Business and Industrial
- Schools and Healthcare
- Parks and Gardens
- Linear infrastructure (road, railways, waterways)

www.gov.uk/natural-england

Green Urban Streetscape: Credit@Jacobs

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Making it real

Trials locations

Greater Manchester
Cheshire and Mersey Forest (inc Liverpool City Region)
Carlisle St. Cuthbert's Garden Village
West Yorkshire Combined Authorities
Cornwall - Bodmin
Birmingham City Council
Birmingham/ Tyseley & Hay Mills
West of England GI Partnership
Greater Cambridge and Cambridgeshire
Essex

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What can be done locally?

- Incorporate GI into Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- Biodiversity Net Gain baselines
- Use the GI Mapping Database to identify inequalities in access to nature
- Adopt the GI Principles as part of GI Strategies and GI local plan policies
- Apply the GI Standards (from Dec 2022)

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Next steps

- Further development and testing of Core GI Standards
- Launch of GI Framework in Autumn 2022
- Consultation on GI Framework – post-launch - refinement
- Rollout 2022 onwards
    - Collaborative approach
    - Training

Clare.Warburton@naturalengland.org.uk