

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



Clare Warburton, Principal Adviser, Natural England



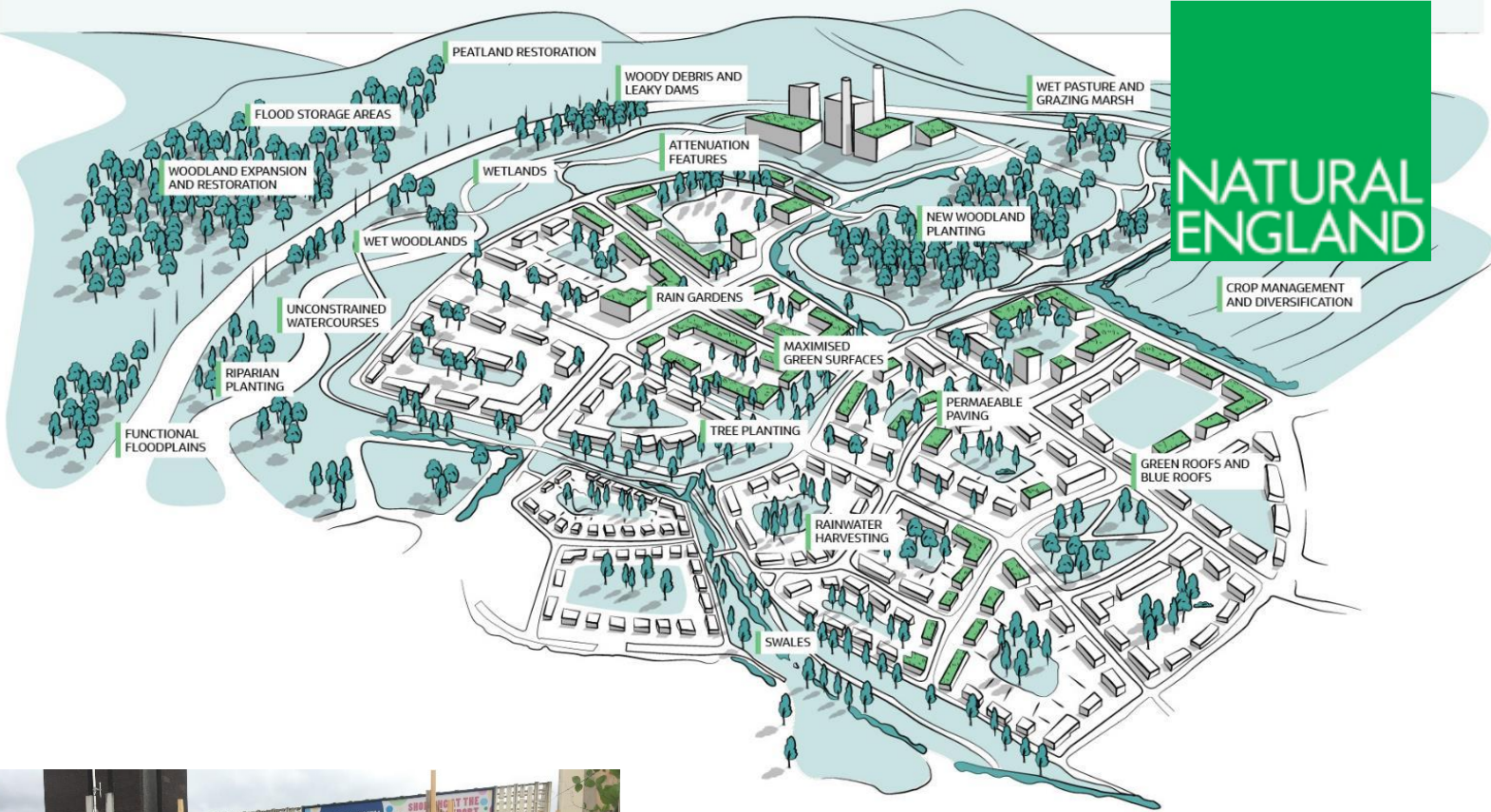
[www.gov.uk/natural-england](http://www.gov.uk/natural-england)

A photograph of a city street with a large planter box in the foreground filled with tall green grasses and purple flowers. In the background, there are brick buildings, a modern glass-fronted building, and a blue bus. A sign for "Archies" is visible on the left, and a "Through traffic" sign is in the middle ground.

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



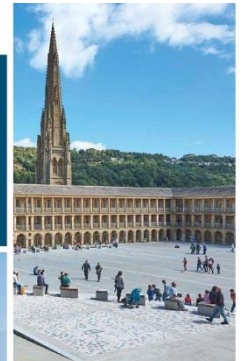
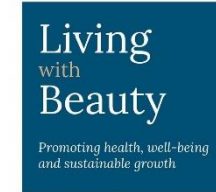
Healthier,  
more resilient  
economy

# Policy drivers for making better places

- Levelling Up White Paper/ Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill
- 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



A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment



The report of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission

JANUARY 2020



Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s

Published July 2019

# 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?



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

Search ▾ | UK edition ▾

# The Guardian

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

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



# 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



## The rise of shorter, close to home nature visits



Average distance travelled

**4.9 miles**

2018/19

**6.8 miles**

2009/10



Adults spending time outside at least weekly

**65%**

54%

**79%**



Visit destinations reached on foot

**64%**

61%



Visits taken to greenspace in town or city

**52%**

41%

A group of children and an adult are gathered around a small pond in a residential area. Some children are sitting on the grass, looking at books or papers. One child is using a net to catch something in the water. The pond is surrounded by green grass and some reeds. In the background, there are brick houses and a cloudy sky.

**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:

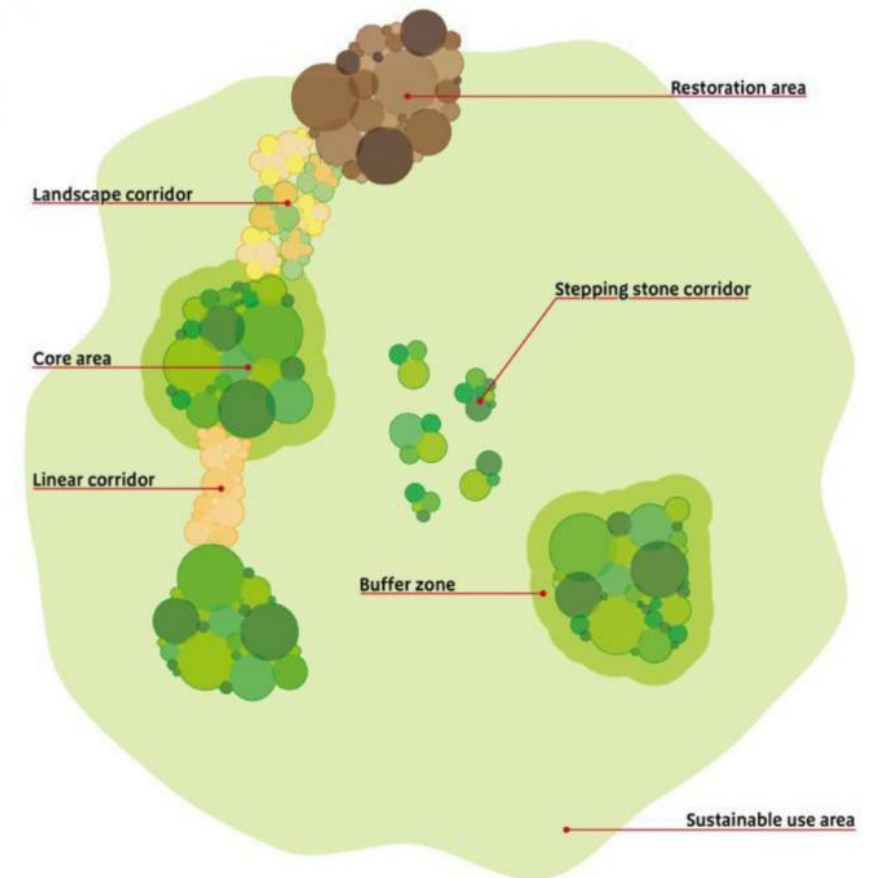
- Environment Act: Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Green Infrastructure Framework to help to bring nature to the doorstep.
- Landscapes Review: New landscape approaches in towns and cities
- Scaling up Green Social Prescribing



# 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

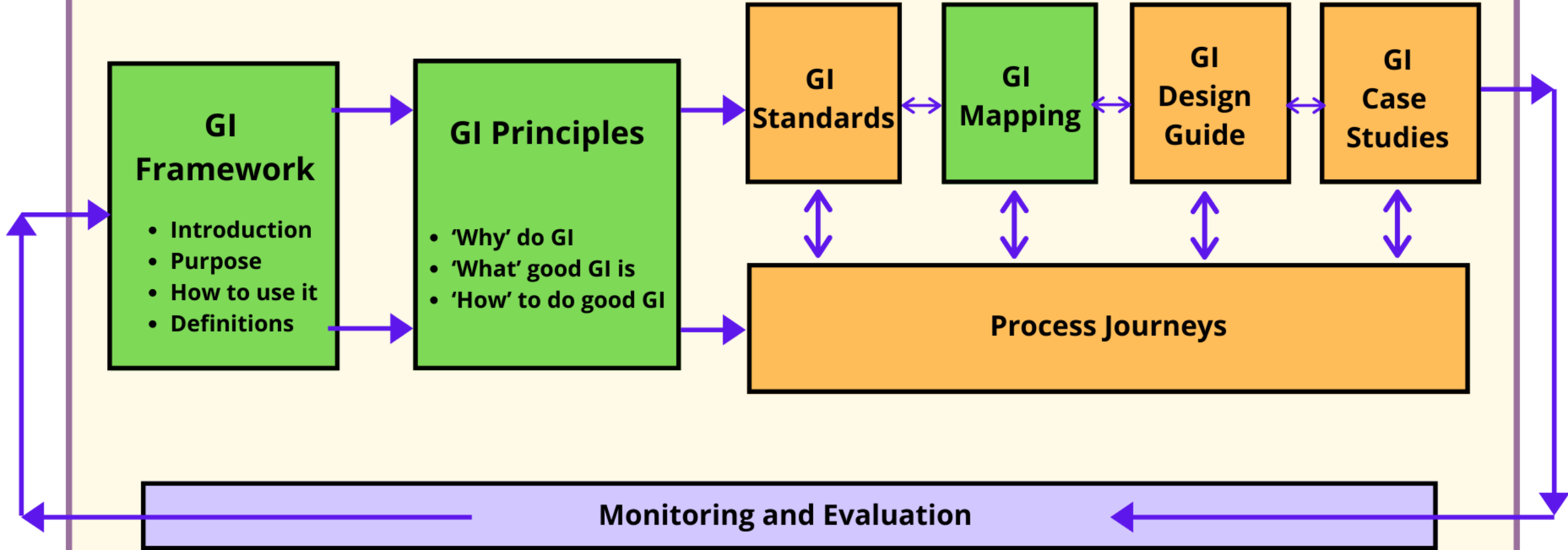


<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/home.aspx>

- 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

# Green Infrastructure Framework - Principles and Standards for England

Principles - The Golden Thread

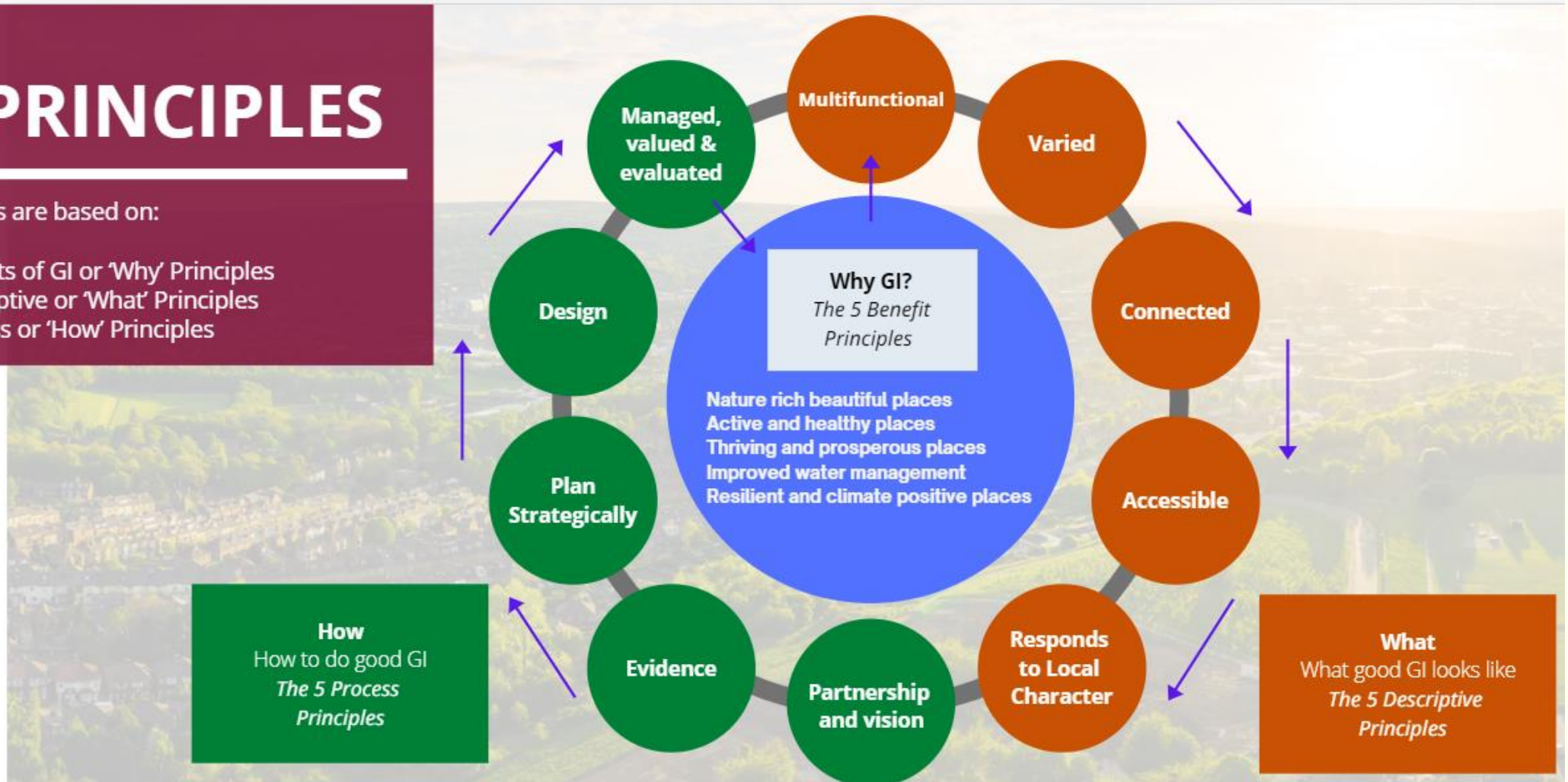


# Green Infrastructure Principles

## 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





# Green Infrastructure Mapping Database

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



## Green Infrastructure

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

If you would like to provide feedback, please take our [questionnaire](#)

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All Layers | Composite Maps

### All Layers

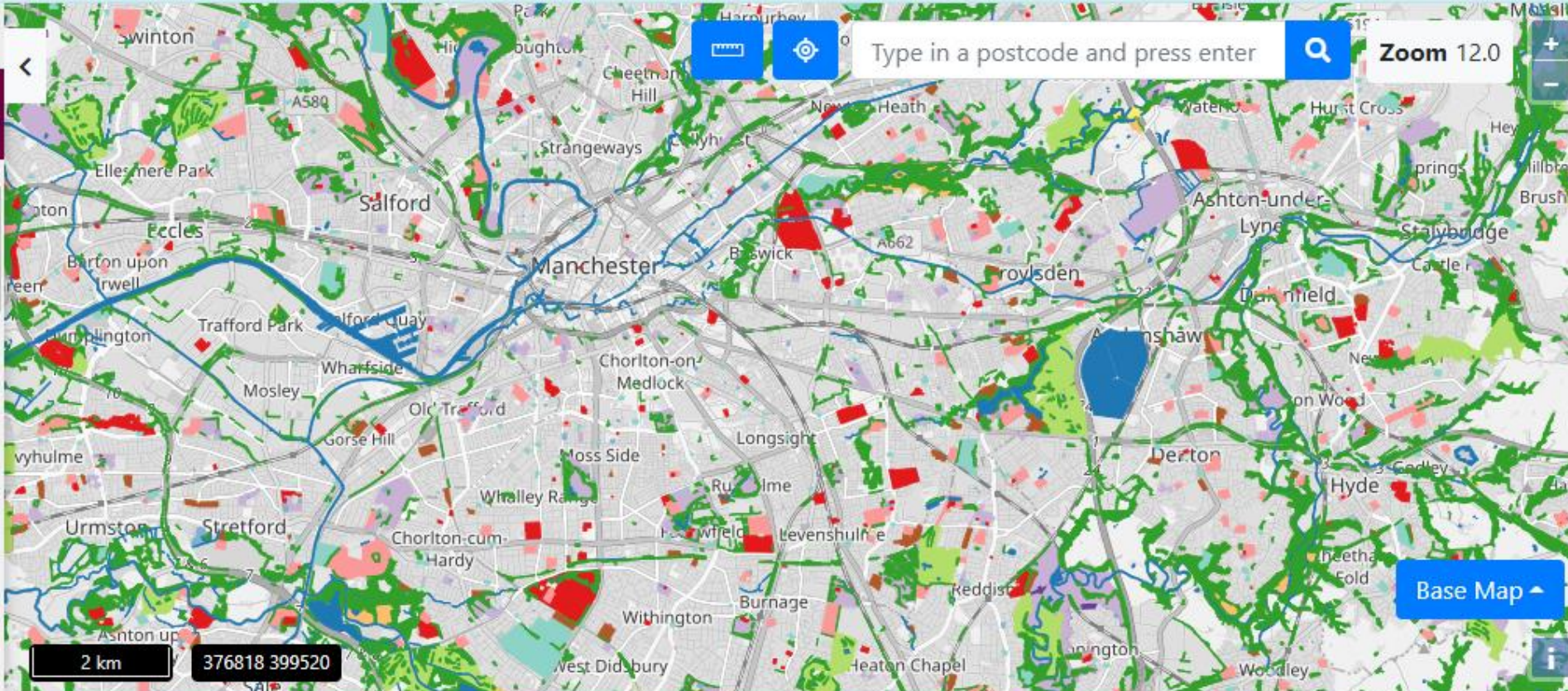
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#### Green and Blue Infrastructure Assets

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)



# Greenness Grid



## Green Infrastructure

If you would like to provide feedback, please take our [questionnaire](#)

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### All Layers

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#### Green and Blue Infrastructure

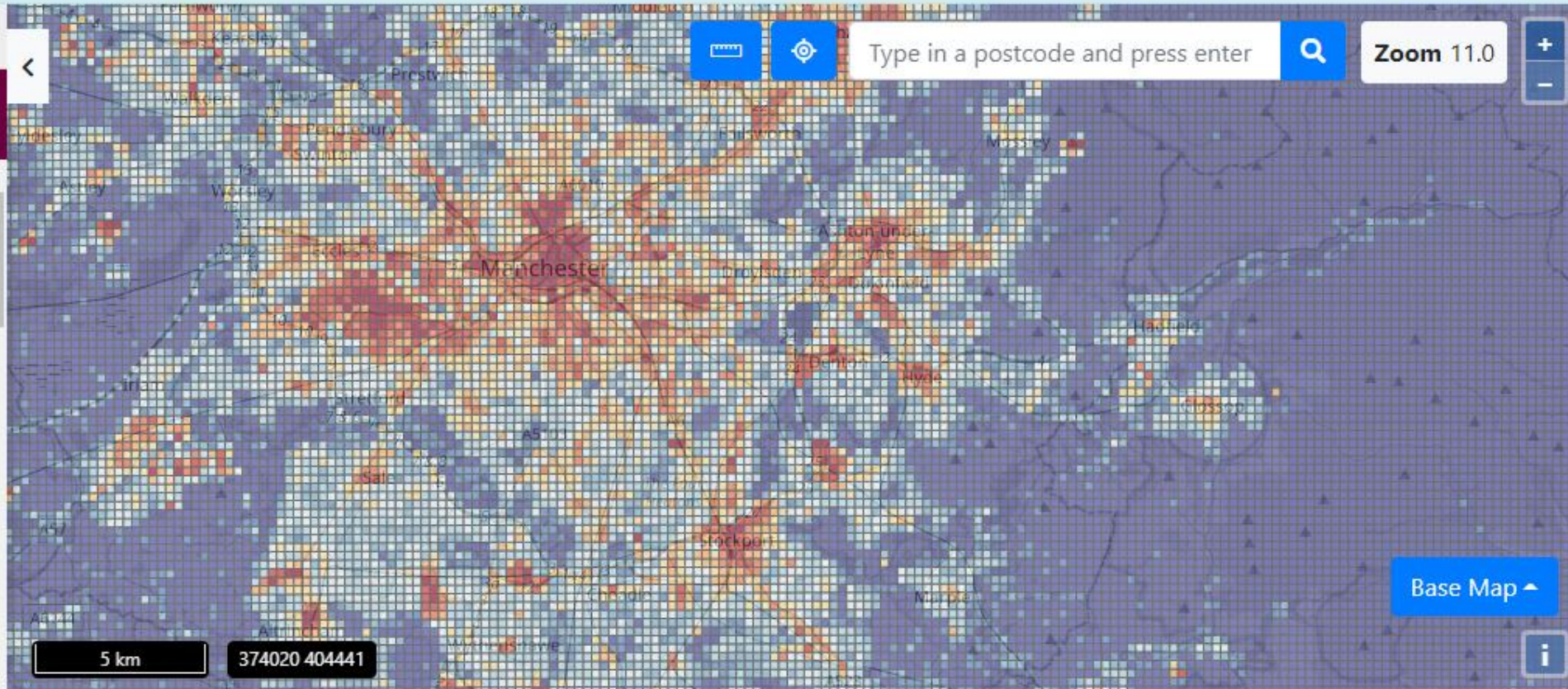
##### Assets

- All Green and Blue Infrastructure
- Accessible Green Infrastructure
- Woodlands and Access
- Greenness Grid

Opacity

##### Percentage Manmade

- 0-10
- 10-20
- 20-30
- 30-40
- 40-50



# 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



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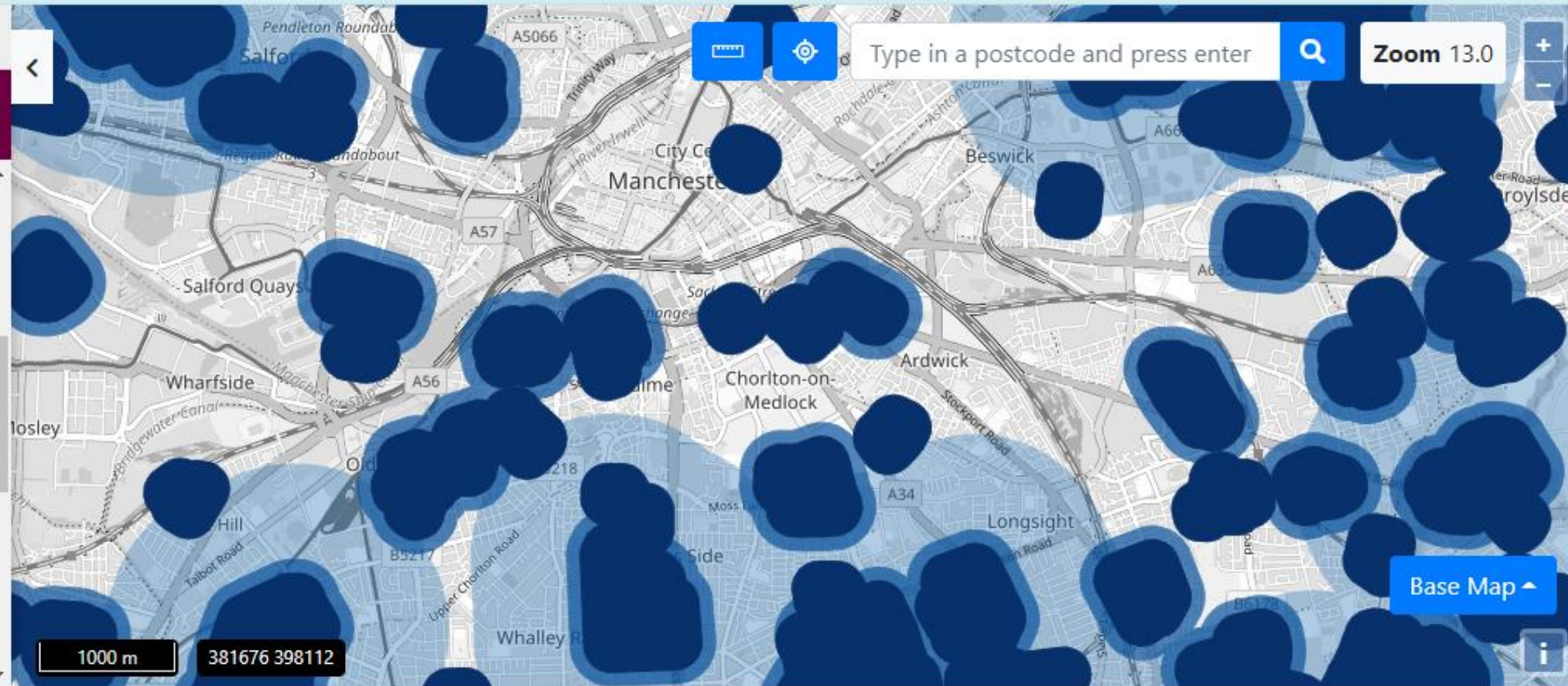
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#### Space Standards (ANGSt)

- ANGSt Doorstep Standard ⓘ  
Opacity
- ANGSt Local Standard ⓘ  
Opacity
- ANGSt Neighbourhood Standard ⓘ  
Opacity
- ANGSt Wider Neighbourhood Standard ⓘ
- ANGSt District Standard ⓘ
- ANGSt Sub-Regional Standard ⓘ
- ANGSt Profile ⓘ



# Natural Green Space Accessibility and IMD



## Green Infrastructure

Home GI Principles Map User Guide FAQ/Glossary

If you would like to provide feedback, please take our [questionnaire](#)

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Accessible Natural Greenspace Inequality and Deprivation. Doorstep Buffer Coverage.

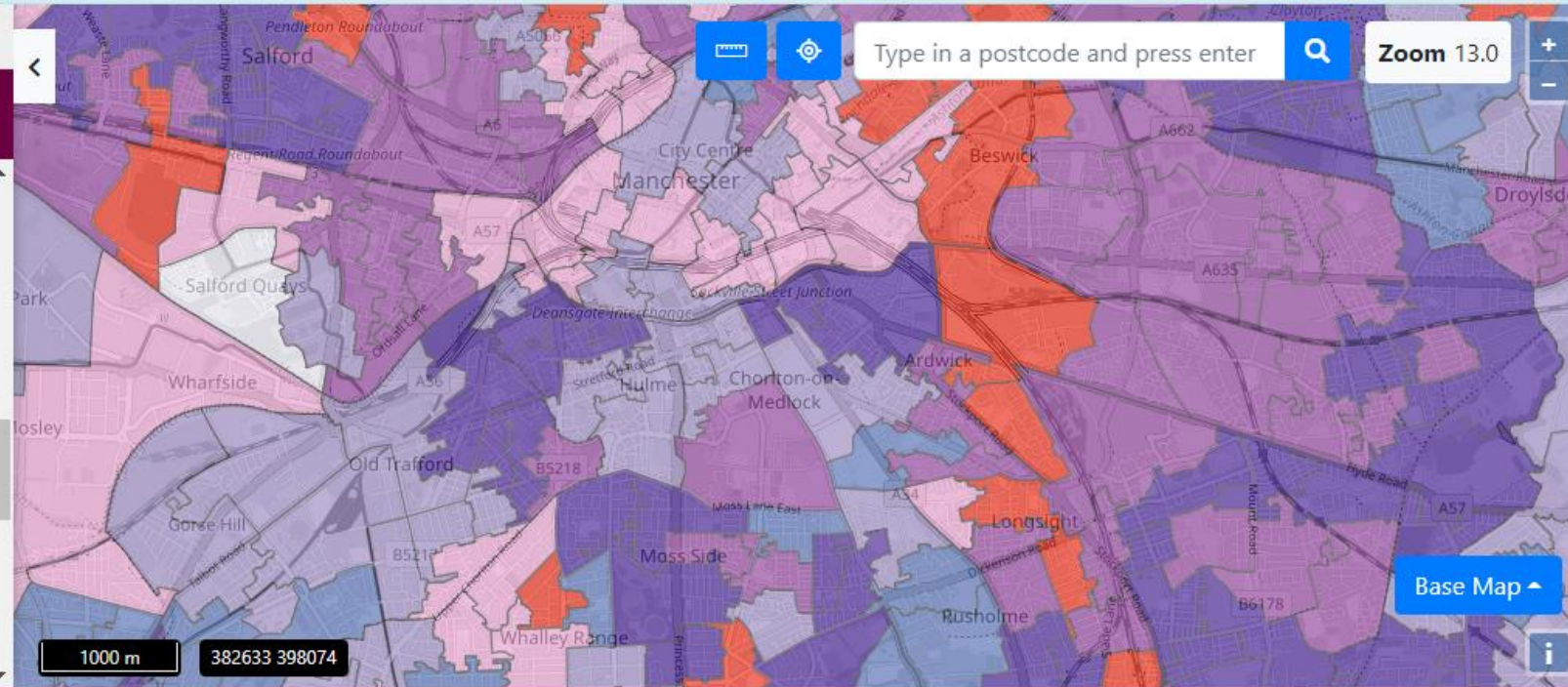
Opacity

Class

L1	M1	H1
L2	M2	H2
L3	M3	H3

Accessible Natural Greenspace Inequality and Deprivation. Local Buffer Coverage.

Accessible Natural Greenspace



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

H3 – Most Favourable (High accessibility low deprivation).

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Map colors based on [ColorBrewer](#), by Cynthia A. Brewer, Penn State



# Menu of GI Standards to raise the bar



## Draft Core GI Standards

1. National Urban Greening Factor
2. Trees/Canopy cover
3. Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards

Quality of green space  
Sustainable Drainage Systems

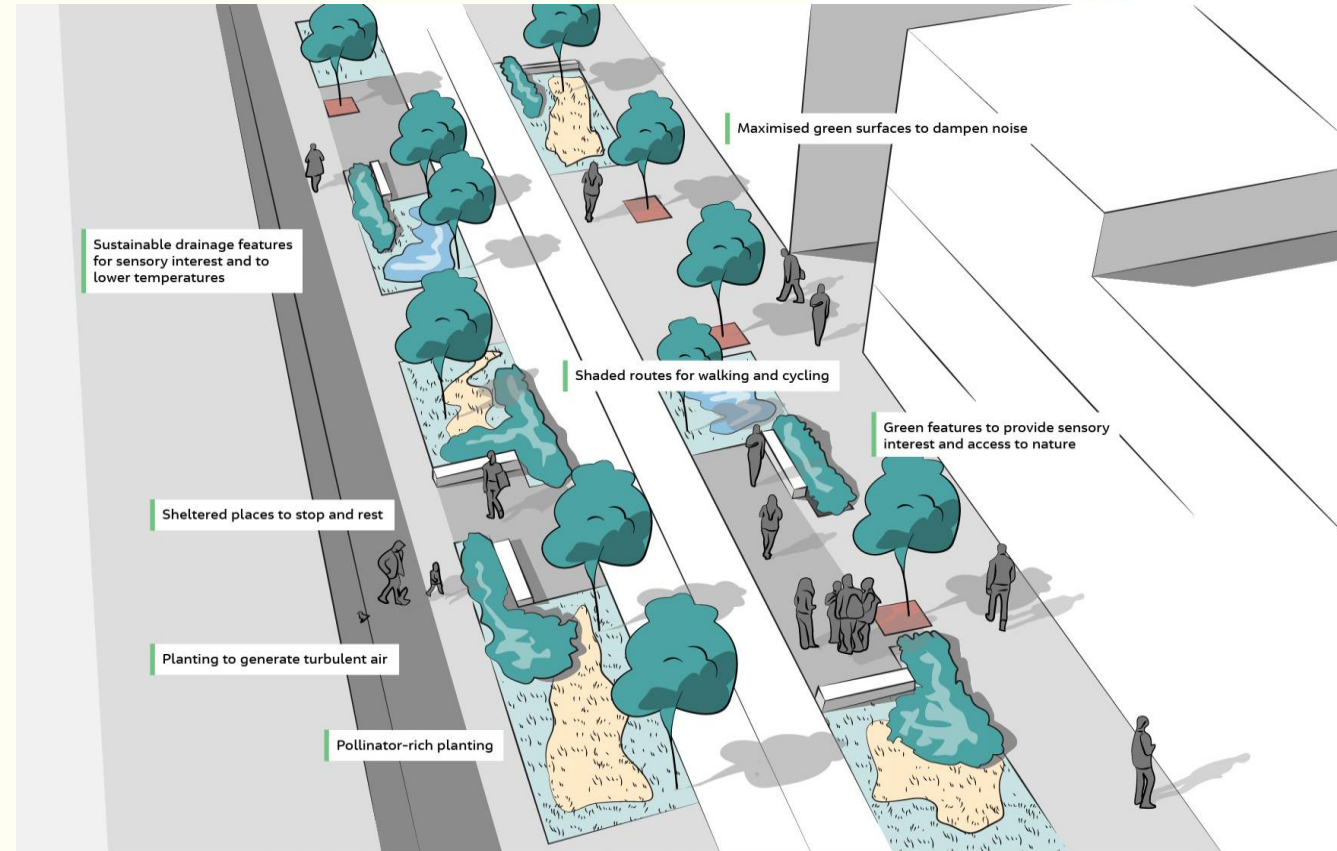


## Benchmarks

- 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)



# Making it real

## Trials locations

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Greater Manchester

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Cheshire and Mersey Forest (inc Liverpool City Region)

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Carlisle St. Cuthbert's Garden Village

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West Yorkshire Combined Authorities

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Cornwall - Bodmin

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Birmingham City Council

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Birmingham/ Tyseley & Hay Mills

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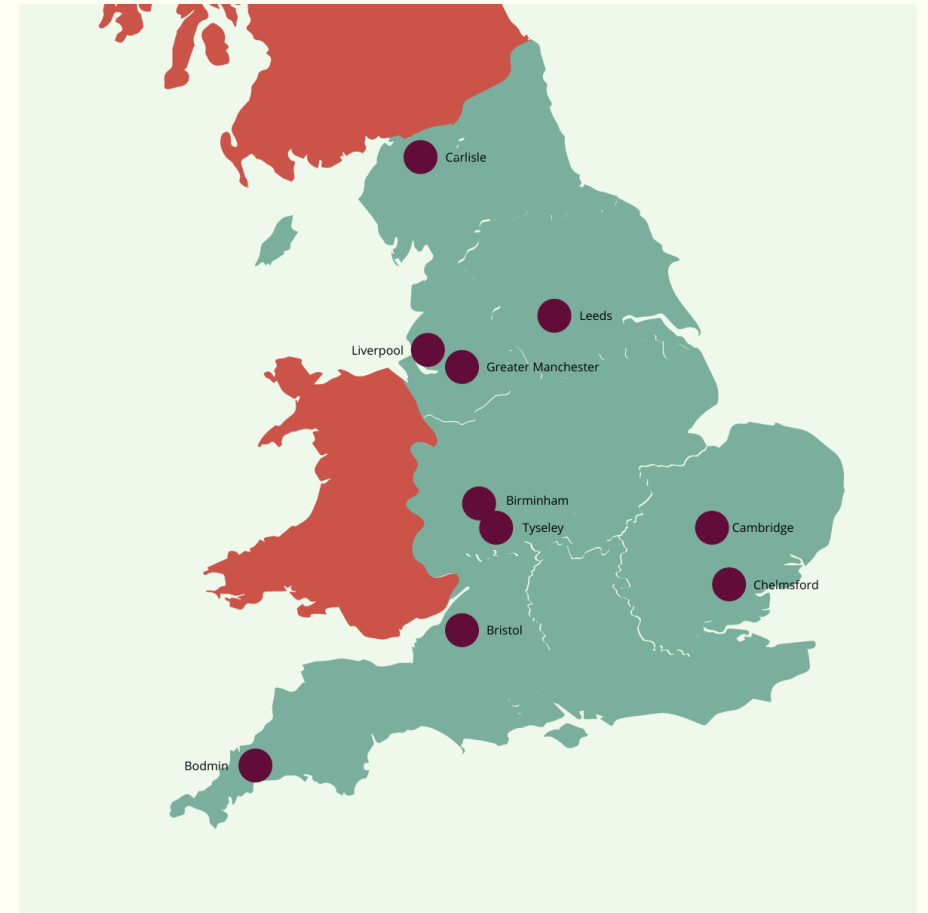
West of England GI Partnership

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Greater Cambridge and Cambridgeshire

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Essex





# 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, local plan policies, local design codes
- Apply the GI Standards (from Dec 2022)





# Next steps

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

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