

7 Case Studies of GI activity in regenerating urban areas.

7.1 Most recent GI strategy in the UK has focussed on Growth Areas which are often formed by new settlement of open land, where urban designers have a reasonably clean slate. The growth of Greater Manchester is constrained by the existing urban fabric, both physical and social. Case Studies of how environmental quality improvements are being implemented in similar situations were examined.

New York

7.2 PlaNYC is an ambitious 30 year growth strategy, seeking to attract 900,000 new residents. It is branded as a carbon-reduction strategy because of the reduced per-capita emission levels of urban New Yorkers. The Plan proposes a number of GI activities to create a liveable and attractive city, including re-imagining the public realm to make it more human, extensive street-tree planting, ensuring all New Yorkers live within 10 minutes walk of a play/greenspace, completing several “destination parks” and cleaning waterways.

7.3 The New York Plan was derived from extensive public consultation and uses a series of highly visual topic papers covering issues such as energy, transportation and open spaces. The GI proposals form part of a suite of measures which broadly coincide with the priorities of the GM Commissions such as transport, climate change, housing. A Mayoral imperative has undoubtedly helped the NY plan to develop so thoroughly, but it is clear that there are action plans for project delivery across many neighbourhoods. There is a clear evidence base showing areas of “deficit” or “priority” for GI eg areas where there is shortfall of access to neighbourhood greenspace; or areas where public parks are inadequate.

The East London Green Grid (ELGG)

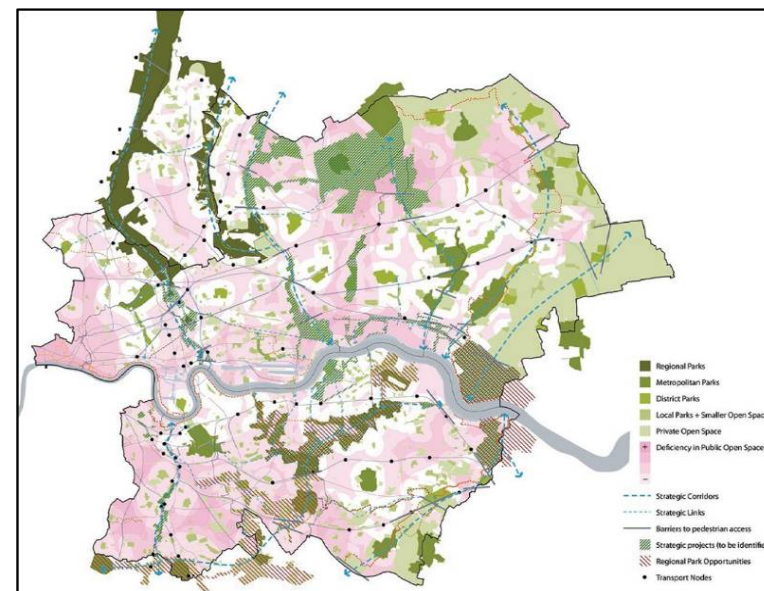
7.4 ELGG covers eleven London boroughs. It is a component of the East London Sub Regional Development Framework.⁴ ELGG represents the sub regional framework for open space enhancement, identifying where

stakeholders will be able to shape their policies and actions to deliver projects which build a strategic green network delivering social, economic and environmental regeneration.

7.5 An ELGG Framework⁵ maps the evidence base (health, flood management, culture and townscape distinctiveness, biodiversity, deficiencies in access to greenspace and regeneration).

7.6 The Framework has Supplementary Planning Guidance⁶ which advises planners and developers how they should shape their policies and actions to deliver the Grid by:

- Setting out a vision and spatial framework;
- Promoting cross boundary partnership working;
- Providing advice on delivery;
- Identifying the range of functions and benefits;
- Identifying deficiencies in the provision of public open space and in access to nature; and
- Identifying strategic open space opportunities.



7.7 A 'Primer'⁷ supports the SPG by communicating in plain English the basic concepts and wider value of multi-functional strategic open space.

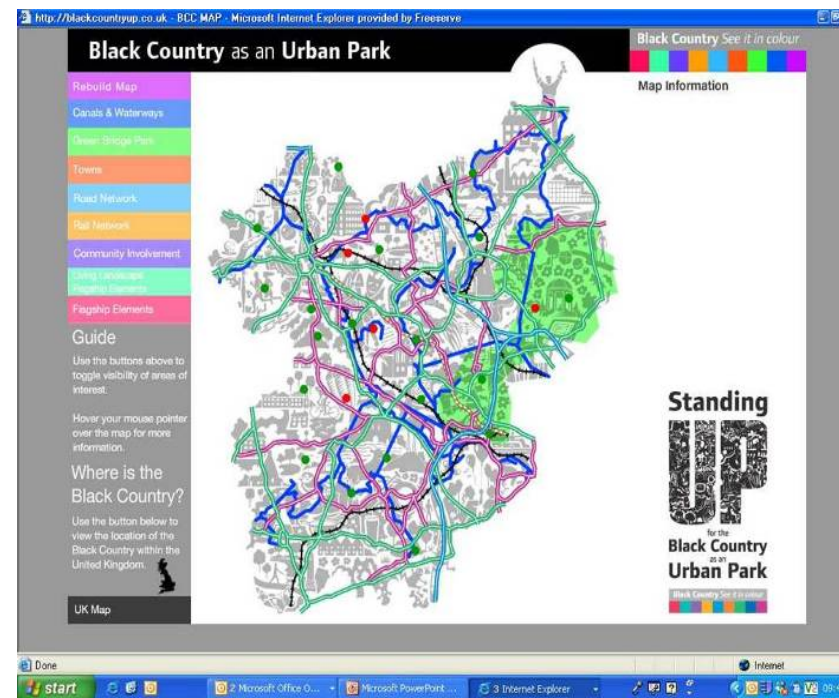
7.8 There are a number of learning points from the East London Green Grid approach:

- the suite of documents promotes strategic coordination of activity in the sub region ensuring that policies and actions contribute to the delivery of the wider GI network;
- the strong 'Primer' document clearly communicates the GI concept to a wide audience;
- There is a good evidence base through mapping of open spaces typologies, functions and deficiencies ;
- There is a Mayoral imperative to formulate GI policy - although this is not directly applicable to the Manchester City Region, a GI Coordinator and/or GI Championing Body could have a strong role in advocating GI.

Black Country Urban Park

7.9 The Black Country recognises that radical environmental transformation is needed to generate economic growth and attract people to choose to live, work and invest in the area. The concept of the Black Country as an Urban Park seeks to deliver a high quality environment by:

- Restoring the qualities that once made the Black Country great;
- Creating a powerful, unique, visual code to bind the Black Country together, while emphasising local distinctiveness;
- Connecting the hidden gems within the Black Country – such as the unique topography and hidden away open spaces; and
- Defining the culture and ethnicity of the urban centres.



7.10 The evidence base to support this is provided through the Black Country Study, which was endorsed by Government in January 2008 in the West Midlands RSS. The study functions as the principal urban renaissance strategy for the Black Country outlining priorities for regeneration of its physical, environmental, social and economic fabric. The environment element of this study covers a wide range of issues including air quality, historic environment, biodiversity, energy, canals, contaminated land, waste and recycling, water, open space and urban design.

7.11 The Black Country Urban Park is expected to form a key part of the Spatial Framework for the Black Country and may comprise the following layers: topography, beacons, corridors and communities. An Environmental Infrastructure Guide (Landscape Masterplan) will form a framework for a high quality environmental transformation.

7.12 The Urban Park concept is hosted on a website which includes an interactive map to illustrate the different components of the Urban Park and priorities within it. This allows wide conveyance of key messages. The simple and effective illustration of the concept also means that information can be easily transferred into LDFs.

7.13 The 4 constituent local authorities work together as the Black Country Consortium, and will formulate a joint Core Strategy to take account of the cross boundary and strategic nature of many of the issues affecting the sub-region, including the Urban Park. However, at the time of writing, the 4 authorities are still trying to resolve how to identify and present the GI priorities in their Core Strategies.

Examples from Greater Manchester

7.14 The River Irwell catchment drains much of east Lancashire and north Manchester, its rivers flowing through Rochdale, Salford and Manchester City Centres. 2 million people live in the Irwell catchment, with 18,500 houses in its 1:100 year floodzone. The major urban centres affected, Rochdale and Salford, are both Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Areas, experiencing high levels of multiple deprivation, with poor community health prevalent.

7.15 In January 2008, there was intense rainfall, with Rochdale recording 32mm rain in 2 hours. Two areas of green infrastructure played a part in avoiding flood damage to property.

7.16 The Littleton Road playing fields in Salford had been constructed by Environment Agency and Salford City Council to act as an emergency flood attenuation basin. Normally they host 19 football pitches and the headquarters of Manchester's Football Association. As the floodwaters rose, the Environment Agency diverted water from the River Irwell into the basin for the first time. Although several pitches were rendered unplayable for months as a result of the flooding, hundreds of downstream properties were saved from flooding. It will also have built confidence in investors and local residents that, although the HMR area is largely within floodzone, robust "green" flood defences can be

effective. However, a further flood basin is needed to ensure the HMR area is fully protected to 1:100 year levels.

7.17 In Rochdale, Forestry Commission, Rochdale Council and Groundwork Trust are working together on the Belfield Urban Forest. Started in 2007, this 28 hectare, £1.7m community woodland scheme creates a clean and green river corridor from the Belfield housing estate downstream to Rochdale town centre. The Belfield project creates new woodland, greenways and wetlands to help transform the ethnically diverse but deprived area. The new greenspaces helped attenuate and store floodwaters in the January floods, meaning that the water levels in the main river as it passed through Rochdale town centre stayed 50mm below the top of the flood defences

8 Route Map for AGMA to implement a City-Regional approach to GI

8.1 TEP's report makes 10 recommendations to AGMA:

Core Recommendation:

- o Draw up a Green Infrastructure Framework for the City Region

Early-action Recommendations:

- o Identify an operational champion to enable and promote GI activity across the City Region.
- o Promote GI policy in Local Development Frameworks.
- o Secure a mandate for GI in other community, physical and regeneration strategies.
- o Ensure targets for GI are adopted in Local/Multi Area Agreements and infrastructure delivery plans.

Other Recommendations:

- Publish a primer document explaining GI and creating enthusiasm.
- Audit existing delivery bodies to improve effectiveness.
- Establish a network of interested parties.
- Identify a patron to advocate GI in higher spheres of influence.
- Produce a consistent digital landuse and landcover typology for the City Region

8.2 The main report details these recommendations. The core recommendation is summarised below and detailed in an annexe to this summary report. Early actions are also summarised.

Core Recommendation: Draw up a GI Framework

8.3 A GI Framework will guide and stimulate a GI approach for the City Region. The Framework will set out the City-Regional objectives for GI. It will identify spatial and thematic priorities for GI activity – in other words, the places and projects where GI is most needed to support the sustainable growth of the City Region.

8.4 The Framework will encourage:

- existing GI initiatives to identify which City-Regional objectives they can meet;
- existing GI initiatives to consider the full range of GI's growth-support functions during project design and implementation;
- the development of new GI initiatives and programmes to meet City-Regional objectives.

8.5 The Framework will not in itself be an Action Plan, but it should provide enough detail to allow a City-Regional GI champion (see below) to facilitate existing and emerging delivery bodies in their activities.

8.6 A Framework could be drawn up in a relatively short space of time, perhaps 6-8 months. It would require some primary research to fill gaps in the spatial evidence base illustrated in this report. However, the amount of available evidence and the relatively non-controversial nature of the evidence, means that work on the Framework could commence immediately. It should be drawn up in partnership with existing GI delivery bodies and with City Regional Planning, economic development and infrastructure officer groupings. One of the City Regional Commissions should steer the drafting of the Framework.

8.7 The Framework could relatively easily be turned into a strategy document if there is a desire at City-Regional Governance level to drive environmental improvements from the top-down. This is the successful East London model, where the Mayoral support for the Green Grid has led to its adoption in a range of area-based strategies, initiatives and policies.

8.8 Annexe 2 of this summary report provides TEP's recommendation for how the Framework might be structured. The maps presented earlier in this report could, with refinement and consultation, illustrate priority areas i.e. act as the spatial aspect of the framework.

Early Action: Operational Champion

8.9 TEP recommends that AGMA champions GI planning until the City Region Commissions are fully established. Championing of GI could be carried out by the Planning and Housing Commission, or perhaps the Environment Commission.

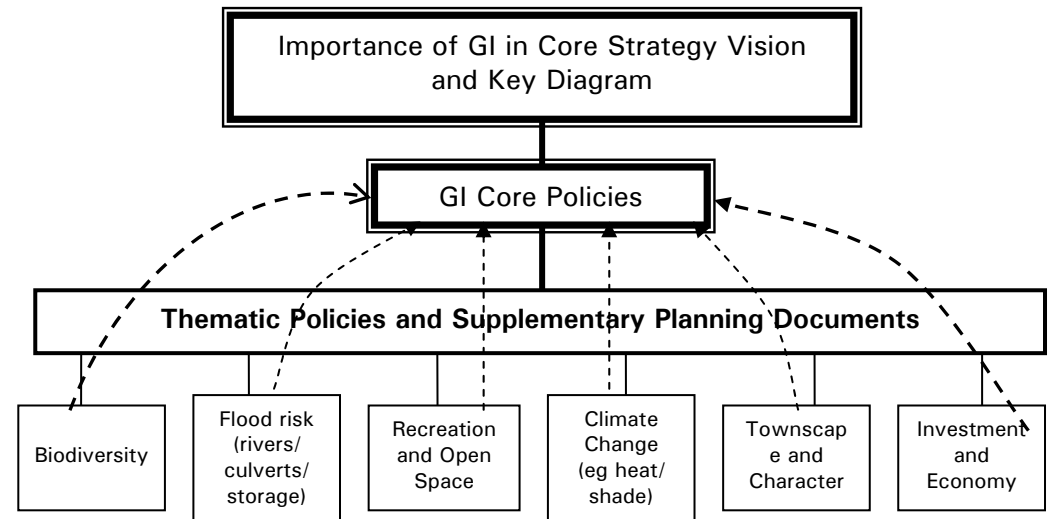
Early Action: Promote GI Policy in Local Development Frameworks

8.10 The main report examined different approaches to GI policy and recommends the following:

- a. The Core Strategy’s Vision and Objectives should note how GI is a means of achieving environmental transformation, quality of life, quality of place, climate resilience and economic growth – in short, the “growth support function” of GI should be promoted.
- b. GI assets and priority areas should be highlighted in spatial portraits or descriptions – the GM-wide framework can be highlighted as evidence.
- c. Core Strategy should promote GI in both spatial policy and “sustainable development principles” policy.
- d. Thematic policies relating to the individual functions of GI (such as biodiversity, flood risk, climate adaption, heritage) should promote a multi-functional GI approach, referring back to the core GI policies.
- e. Supplementary Planning Documents (such as the Manchester Guide to Development and Development Contributions SPD’s) should provide more detail on how new developments should enhance GI assets and functions in and around the area of development. These SPDs should provide more evidence on particular deficiencies or priorities and may signpost planners onto even more detailed evidence such as PPG17 (open space) audits and biodiversity audits.

8.11 Specific GI policy can sit in the ‘over-arching’ section of Core Strategy; beneath which thematic policies follow and can refer back. This assists particularly in the emphasis of the multi-functionality of GI and maximising each opportunity. An action or opportunity relating to, say mitigating flood risk, can be ‘cross-checked’ for maximising other GI function opportunities, such as recreation and biodiversity.

8.12 This relationship between policies can result in a ‘virtuous circle’ as is presented diagrammatically as below.



ANNEXE 1: GRAPHIC TO ILLUSTRATE HOW GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CAN BE PLANNED AND DELIVERED AT DIFFERING SPATIAL SCALES



ANNEXE 2: TEP'S RECOMMENDATION FOR HOW A GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK MIGHT BE STRUCTURED

PART 1: BACKGROUND

Definition of GI

This section will introduce terminology and a Greater Manchester-specific definition of GI.

The economic, social and environmental imperatives for GI

This section will describe the reasons why a GI approach is needed as the City Region accelerates its transformation into a 21st-century world class city.

The need for Greater Manchester City Regional GI Framework

This section will explain why a “do-nothing” or laissez-faire approach to GI planning will result in missed opportunities; hence the need for a City-Regional Framework. This section will also stress that a City-Regional Framework cannot substitute for local strategies and action plans. The message that the City Region's GI will be built through “a thousand small changes and a few major actions” will be reinforced.

The Place of the GI Framework in the ‘family tree’ of sustainable development strategies for the City Region

This section will explain how the Framework is meant to link to City-Regional strategies and action plans, and how it is meant to inform Local Development Frameworks and stimulate local and thematic actions.

PART 2: VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Vision for GI in the City Region

This section will outline a vision for the green infrastructure of the City Region. This vision is supportive of the City-Region's overall transformational vision.

Strategic Objectives for GI

This section will highlight the eight strategic objectives for the GI Framework. The terms “objective” and “function” are interchangeable.

PART 3: THE CITY-REGION'S GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE RESOURCE

Geography of the City Region

This section will summarise the physical, landscape, ecological, social and economic conditions of the City Region, emphasising the variety and distinctiveness of the area's outdoor environment and the value it has for Greater Manchester's communities, economy and biodiversity.

Challenges and Changes affecting the City-Region's green infrastructure

This section will explain the challenges, threats and changes which will affect existing GI, and will affect the way we plan for its continued benefit.

Existing Green Infrastructure Activity

This section will outline the range of existing GI initiatives, programmes and actions that are taking place across the City Region. Maps will illustrate the scope of key initiatives such as the Community Forests, Regional Parks, NEWLANDS, cross-border initiatives.

PART 4: PLANNING FOR THE CITY-REGION'S GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS

This section will describe the City-Region's GI assets. The main report identifies five classes of asset (greenspaces and waterways, green corridors, landscapes of distinctiveness, a sustainable movement network and “urban green”).

This section will also explain how some assets are of City-Regional importance, by virtue of the wide and/or strategic benefits they bring. Other assets are of more local importance. The section will suggest criteria by which City-Regional and local assets can be identified.

Maps of existing assets will be produced, and a gap analysis will show areas of deficiency. Criteria will be proposed to identify where a deficiency of GI assets is of City-Regional significance; and where it is of local significance.

PART 5: PLANNING FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FUNCTIONS

For each of the eight City-Regional objectives (functions), maps will be produced to show where the function:

- is present
- is absent
- is deficient (absent but needed)

In some cases, mapping alone is not sufficient to identify priorities for action. Sometimes this is because the mapped evidence is inadequate to make a full analysis. Sometimes this is because the function does not lend itself to mapping.

This section will make recommendations for safeguarding and enhancing each of the GI functions individually and in combination.

TEP's main report makes a first draft of this functional analysis and describes what further evidence and mapping is needed to fully identify priority areas.

PART 6: SPATIAL FRAMEWORK

This section will draw together evidence from Parts 4 and 5 to present an overall spatial framework for GI activity in the City Region. The framework will describe and illustrate priority areas for multi-functional GI planning.

Key Diagrams will illustrate priority areas; allowing the range of programmes and initiatives necessary to implement City-Regional GI to be identified.

PART 7: IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation in Spatial Plans

This section will describe how spatial plans, particularly Local Development Frameworks and supporting documents, can be used to manage development and guide GI activity to areas of City-Regional (and local) importance. Development Management policies and procedures will be discussed.

Implementation in Other City-Regional Strategies and Action Plans

This section will highlight which other documents could or should promote and deliver GI and will make recommendations for how GI activity can be encouraged.

Reinforcing existing initiatives

This section will audit existing delivery capacity in terms of the City-Regional objectives and will identify where new delivery capacity may be needed.

Partnerships and Championing

This section will propose how the Framework might become widely "owned" by partner organisations across the City Region. It will also propose how the Framework might be championed.

REFERENCES

¹ Final Draft North West RSS (March 2008) Policy EM3: Green Infrastructure

² Greater Manchester Ecology Unit and University of Salford – research study on behalf of AGMA, expected to report in 2009

³ Newlands is the NWDA-funded Forestry Commission programme to create new community woodlands for socio-economic benefit. Starting in 2003, it received £23m for sites in the Mersey belt. A further £34m was granted in 2007 for work across the region.

⁴ The London Plan: Sub-Regional Development Framework East London, Mayor of London, May 2006

⁵ East London Green Grid Framework Report, Report of Consultants Studies, August 2005

⁶ East London Green Grid Framework: London Plan (Consolidated with Alterations since 2004) Supplementary Planning Guidance, Mayor of London, February 2008

⁷ The East London Green Grid Primer, Greater London Authority, November 2006