3. Contributing to the city’s plans for growth and reform: vision and objectives

3.1 Vision

Building on the context and analysis the Vision for Manchester’s GI is:

By 2025 high quality, well maintained green and blue spaces will be an integral part of all neighbourhoods. The city’s communities will be living healthy, fulfilled lives, enjoying access to parks and greenspaces and safe green routes for walking, cycling and exercise throughout the city. Green and blue infrastructure will be supporting Manchester’s growth. Businesses will be investing in areas with a high environmental quality and attractive surroundings, enjoying access to a healthy, talented workforce. New funding models will be in place, ensuring progress achieved by 2025 can be sustained and provide the platform for ongoing investment in the years to follow.

The delivery of the strategy will mean;

- Our river valleys are well managed, accessible and safe – providing a key recreational resource to residents;
- Our canal network is rejuvenated as a key asset for the city centre and beyond;
- Our parks and green spaces are attractive and accessible to residents;
- Our networks of smaller scale urban green connect more residents with urban nature and provide corridors and stepping stones for biodiversity;
- Our green spaces, both permanent and temporary, work harder, providing multiple social, economic and environmental benefits to the city.’;
- Our growth is supported by green and blue infrastructure, as a key part of creating attractive, successful neighbourhoods.

3.2 Objectives

The following objectives are based on the context and analysis in section 2, and the accompanying technical report. They are set within the unique Manchester context, one of ongoing population growth and development, at the heart of a growing city-region, and with access to green and blue spaces within the city and Greater Manchester, and beyond to nationally significant parks and greenspaces in locations such as the Peak District, Lake District, and Snowdonia National Parks.

In order to realise the city’s vision Manchester and its stakeholders will:

1. Improve the quality and function of existing green and blue Infrastructure, to maximise the benefits it delivers;
2. Use appropriate green and blue infrastructure as a key component of new developments to help create successful neighbourhoods and support the city’s growth;
3. Improve connectivity and accessibility to green and blue infrastructure within the city and beyond;
4. Improve and promote a wider understanding and awareness of the benefits that green and blue infrastructure provides to residents, the economy and the local environment.

Headline citywide actions have been identified for each objective, providing the framework for all stakeholders in the city to play an active part in the strategy’s delivery. They are set out in the following sections, with further detail on specific projects provided in the Implementation Plan.

3.3 Objective 1: Existing GI

As Manchester, and cities around the world, continue to grow, making best use of limited land resources is critical to ensuring that the needs of the local population, economy and environment can be met.

An estimated 58% of Manchester is made up of GI, varying in its quality and functionality, and the benefits it provides to the city. Focusing on making best use of existing GI is therefore a priority, ensuring that it has a designated function and use, clear ownership and maintenance arrangements, and that it delivers tangible and relevant benefits to the local community and businesses. In some instances this may mean a net reduction in the quantity of existing GI in a specific location, in order that resources can be focused on improving the quality and functionality of the retained area, delivering more net benefits to the surrounding communities as a result.

Improvements to the city’s existing GI are important at all scales, and can be delivered by a range of stakeholders, from the City Council and major landholders, through to individual residents and community groups. The headline actions for the delivery of this objective are structured with this in mind and are provided in Figure 5 on page 18.

3.4 Objective 2: New Development

As set out above, Manchester is a growing city, with plans for significant growth and development over the coming decade. The key focus for new housing development will be within the city centre, and areas to the east and north of the city centre. Employment will be focused on the city centre, including the Corridor area, Central Park, Eastlands and Airport City. Retail development will be concentrated within the city centre and supplemented by that in district centres across the city.

High quality, green and open space that is appropriate to its location, well designed and well maintained will be an important and integral part of creating successful developments and supporting the city’s growth. The strategy is intended to provide initial guidance on how developers can achieve this. It recognises that different approaches will be required for different types of development and that different solutions, appropriate to the location, will be needed on each scheme.

By considering GI from the beginning of the design process developers will be able to understand the surrounding landscape, opportunities to enhance and link to it, and the types of green and open space that could be incorporated within and add value to the development itself.

Further detail is provided in Figure 6 on page 20.
3.5 Objective 3: Connectivity and Accessibility

Green linkages across the city provide an effective means to improve access to green space in Manchester, specifically in areas where the existing urban form does not allow new large areas to be easily created.

Providing permeable, safe and attractive green routes between existing green infrastructure assets can be effective in providing ease of access and a means of extending off-road routes for recreation and health benefits. There is potential for both extending the provision of green routes, and improving the quality of existing routes to improve access to Manchester’s green spaces and using them to increase GI levels in their own right.

The strategy seeks to ensure that all communities can have access to high quality GI, both within their local area, and out to other areas of the city and wider conurbation. This objective should be read with sustainable transport in mind, both in terms of existing provision but also in terms of increased capacity through new and improved cycle routes, bus routes and further expansion of the Metrolink.

The headline actions in Figure 7 on page 22 provide further information on the delivery of this objective.

3.6 Objective 4: Understanding and Awareness

This strategy is built on a good initial understanding of the important role that GI has to play in supporting the city’s objectives for growth and environmental improvement. Further work will allow us to continue to develop this understanding and provide evidence that will enable the development of new funding and delivery mechanisms. The local universities are well-placed to lead on this activity, hosting a number of academics with expertise in this area.

As set out above, all stakeholders in the city have an important role to play contributing to the city’s GI in and making best use of it for health, recreation, employment and other outcomes. Wider communication, education and awareness raising covers the second key area of activity under this objective. This is a priority for M.A.C.F. our stakeholder lead climate change action group.
The following section of the Strategy uses plans to illustrate assets and opportunities, at city and regional scale. The plans are used for spatial illustration purposes only, they do not show every asset, park or open space. The strategy needs to be flexible and adapt over time so the intention is to indicate where principles may be appropriate for action based on the identified assets and needs of an area, rather than to identify specific intervention.

Figure 5
Objective 1: Existing GI - Headline Actions

**Action 1:**
River valleys: continue to invest in the river valleys to provide attractive settings for residential communities, leisure and recreation, health, and biodiversity benefits.

**Action 2:**
Enhance existing parks and green space to maximise their potential in making Manchester a world class city.

**Action 3:**
Enhance existing and introduce new green infrastructure within large estates and land holdings e.g. schools, colleges, registered housing providers, cemeteries.

**Action 4:**
Schools: enhance school grounds for environmental education and biodiversity.

**Action 5:**
Trees and woodlands: effective and appropriate tree and woodland management and planting.

**Action 6:**
Community greening and food growing: delivery of local and focused green infrastructure projects.

**Action 7:**
Gardens: protect and enhance private gardens as important areas of green space.

**Action 8:**
Sites of Biological Importance: increase the number SBIs in active management to conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity.

**Action 9:**
Local Nature Reserves: increase the coverage of LNRs in line with national guidance to 1 ha of LNR per 1,000 residents.

**Action 10:**
Health and wellbeing: deliver GI projects with a particular focus on improving health and wellbeing.
Improving water quality, enhancing biodiversity, increasing access and other improvements to the river valleys will ensure that these significant green and blue areas can play their full part in a healthy, liveable city. They are already an important part of creating successful neighbourhoods, with potential for this role to be further enhanced in areas which could accommodate new communities.

**Case Study: Renaturalisation of River Medlock to restore biodiversity value and flood resilience**

Parks are an important and iconic part of the city’s landscape. They are at the heart of vibrant neighbourhoods, often with potential for further improvements to access and usage. Realising this potential, with regular and active participation from local communities, will be a key part of the city’s success over the next 10 years.

**Case Study: Heaton Park: Enhancing the functionality of a destination park**

Communities that can define and achieve the outcomes they want to see are the ones that tend to prosper, creating their own unique sense of place and long term success. Community greening and food growing can often be part of this success, with many projects already underway across the city.

**Case Study: Meanwhile community produce growing on vacant site, McDonalds Wythenshawe**

Trees play a key role in defining the character and attractiveness of Manchester’s neighbourhoods, as well as myriad biodiversity, climatic, air quality and other benefits. Maintaining and developing tree stocks will be an important priority, particularly in the face of a changing climate and threats from tree disease.

**Case Study: Sensitive forest management at Clayton Vale to maximise biodiversity & recreation functionality**

Meeting the needs of both people and wildlife is important, particularly in a city context. Local Nature Reserve designation is awarded to those areas that are able to achieve both, through good management and maintenance. Manchester’s 36 SBI’s are focused more towards the needs of wildlife and play an important role in supporting the diverse range of species that live in Manchester.

**Case Study: Blackley Forest is a Local Nature Reserve & Grade B Site of Biological Importance**

Improving the quality and access of green routes and green spaces to increase utilisation for active pursuits such as walking, cycling, jogging and sports is important in helping to improve the health of both residents and the city’s large working population.

**Case Study: Park Run. Free weekly running event encourages use of green space with exercise and social benefits in a number of Manchester Parks**
High levels of residential development are planned to support the growing numbers of people choosing to live and work in Manchester, particularly on the edge of the city centre. The Irk and Medlock river valleys, which extend from the north and east of the city centre, provide an attractive setting to create new neighbourhoods. The communities in these areas will enjoy access to high-quality greenspace on their doorsteps and throughout the river valleys, including easy reach to major parks such as Heaton Park and Philips Park.

A range of different GI interventions can be considered within new residential developments. Gardens and balconies can provide private areas for residents, new pocket parks and public open space can provide spaces at the heart of the community for shared enjoyment, and areas designed for nature can help ensure that people and wildlife both have space within a dense city setting, provided long-term maintenance arrangements are in place.

As with other types of development, new housing schemes should include GI that is appropriate to and informed by the wider landscape. Linkages to existing areas will help add to the new spaces within the development, and help encourage residents to travel by sustainable modes of transport.

As with all types of green infrastructure, long-term management and maintenance is key to ensure that it can contribute towards the creation of successful neighbourhoods. Developers will need to consider the arrangements that will work best for their scheme, including opportunities to work with local partners and communities to design sustainable solutions for the long-term.

**Case Study: New green infrastructure through dense residential development at New Islington**
The greatest opportunity for new green infrastructure in the city centre is likely to come from major new developments. Major developments, including those at St John’s on the site of the old Granada Studios, the Piccadilly Strategic Regeneration Framework area, and First Street on the border with Hulme, will deliver transformational change to large areas of the city centre.

Successful developments will need to have a number of different components in order to contribute to the creation of attractive neighbourhoods and the city’s growth. Developers should consider how green and open space can work best to achieve this and form an integrated part of the overall scheme. They should also consider how the development can link to the wider city centre environs, to support residents, workers and visitors in accessing green and open spaces across the city centre and areas outside.

The rivers Irwell and Medlock run through the city centre, in some areas providing an important part of the landscape and an attractive setting for offices, apartments, hotels and restaurants. In other areas the rivers are covered, a legacy of development from a period where green and blue infrastructure was less well valued. Taking opportunities to make the most of these rivers should be maximised through new development, encouraging views and access as part of the city centre’s overall green and blue resource.

The canals also provide an important part of the city centre’s character and the city’s heritage. Enhancing and encouraging increased access to these areas through new development will also be part of making the most of existing green and blue assets in the city centre. Using the canals and rivers as an important setting attracting new investment will also be an important part of the growth of the city centre.

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New models for the maintenance of city centre GI and public realm should continue to be explored and implemented, to ensure that sustainable funding and management arrangements are in place for the long-term.

Case Study: Spinningfields: creation of new public green and open space, and innovative arrangements for its long-term management and maintenance.

Case Study: Noma: landscaping for enjoyment and benefit of building occupants

Outside of the city centre a number of major employment developments are anticipated, including at Airport City and Central Park. By creating and maintaining attractive green environments at these sites developers and employers will be helping to ensure that they have a motivated workforce with lower levels of sickness and improved health.

Where sites are located next to or near to existing areas of greenspace and the city’s character and the city’s heritage. Enhancing and encouraging increased access to these areas through new development can link to the wider city centre environs, to support residents, workers and visitors in accessing green and open spaces across the city centre and areas outside.

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Objective 3: Connectivity and Accessibility - Headline Actions

**Action 1:**
River valleys and canals: enhance river valleys and canal tow paths to improve accessibility and use as active transport corridors

**Action 2:**
Green routes: create, enhance and promote green routes to reduce car dependency, improve health and increase biodiversity

**Action 3:**
Green boulevards and linkages: use green infrastructure on roads, verges to improve environmental quality and links between neighbourhoods

**Action 4:**
Working with neighbouring authorities to improve access and connectivity

**Action 5:**
Use active and sustainable transport to access green infrastructure in the city and beyond

**Figure 7**
Metrolink (Existing And Proposed)
Key Green Spaces
Fallowfield Loop
Trans-Peninne Trail
Existing Green Link
Green Corridor Route
Canal
River
Proposed Velocity Cycleways
City Centre

**Key**
Manchester’s canal and river network provides existing routes which could be further developed as green links to connect areas of Manchester with the city centre, improving connectivity and promoting sustainable transport options. Whilst towpaths and riverside pathways exist in part along Manchester’s waterways, these are typically fragmented, particularly towards the city centre. Improving the quality and permeability of waterside pathways will effectively link neighbourhoods to the city centre.

The improvements to the Ashton Canal as part of the Velocity cycling project will be an important part of this work.

Case Study: Medlock Valley Way: Improving river corridor access to encourage health benefits

There is potential for both extending the provision of green routes, and improving the quality of existing routes to improve access to Manchester’s green spaces, whilst contributing in their own right to multi-functional green infrastructure and city resilience.

Case Study: Manchester Green Corridor: Promoting green routes and spaces for health & exercise benefits

Whilst green routes could utilise existing infrastructure e.g. canals, rivers, disused railway lines to provide traffic-free routes, other green linkages may be developed through the provision of intelligent street tree planting and verge-side planting to provide an attractive and safe route adjacent to roads. Management of existing transport corridors could integrate multifunctional green infrastructure, including key routes such as Princess Parkway and the metrolink network, in line with the UK pollinator strategy.

Case Study: Red Rose Forest iTrees demonstrated the role street trees can play in enhancing urban green assets

Green infrastructure linkages and their benefits cross local authority boundaries, for example river valleys, canals and green corridors. Cross boundary working between local authorities, businesses and local communities is therefore essential to maximise the extent of green linkages and connectivity.

Case Study: Moston Brook Partnership Project between MCC, Oldham MBC and Groundwork

Manchester has an existing network of footpaths, cycle routes and public transport. There are also opportunities to improve and extend these networks to increase access to open spaces within Manchester, the city region and beyond. Metrolink provides easy access out from the city centre to Heaton Park, Wythenshawe Park and Sale Water Park.

Velocity 2025 is an ambitious plan to make cycling safer and easier, by delivering a major new network of strategic, integrated and – where possible – segregated cycle routes to employment centres, schools and leisure facilities.

Case Study: Cycle Hub is the ideal place to park your bike in Manchester, providing cycle parking spaces, lockers and showers

Action 1: Enhance river valleys and canal towpaths

Action 2: Create, enhance and promote green routes

Action 3: Green boulevards and linkages

Action 4: Working with neighbouring authorities

Action 5: Use active and sustainable transport to access green infrastructure in the city and beyond