

Work package 1

Commented [AS1]: Currently written for English planning

This briefing paper is to help researchers navigate some of the complexities associated with the planning system and to think about ways of developing/using/adapting pathways to impact to help influence and inform the future design, delivery and operationalisation of planning. This ties in with my goal within WP1 of my fellowship project to add value to the existing research and through that to identify key gaps. This applies to the individual project pathways to impact but also exploiting pathways from the cumulative impact of the research projects that are investigated.

WP1 Revised goals

- To identify the contribution and focus of research work in NERC and other relevant research on green infrastructure.
- To assess the current directions and foci of individual and cumulative pathways to impact
- To identify additional pathways to impact that reflect key aspects of planning policy, delivery and decision making and add value both to individual projects and to the wider cumulative impact of the research
- To communicate the cumulative impacts of research science in a user friendly interface based on the key questions and policy/practice needs as hooks for initial traction.

Who is a planner anyway

We often use the term planner uncritically. There are MANY types of professional planners out there so it is important to target the bundle of planners that you need. Ideally this should be as early as possible in the research. It does appear that planners are the unusual suspects in much GI research but are key players in the operationalisation of p GI in policy and practice. In many cases you should engage with multiple types of planners to join up the dots in the evidence-policy -decision- delivery policy cycle and to take into account the different sectoral components and specialisms of planners in the urban environment. At its simplest this engaging with those planners who make policy (forward planning) and those who make decisions (development management[]). Given pressures they face it is important to engage using the language and priorities that they are involved in to secure their initial buy in.

NATIONAL LEVEL

There are those work for the civil service (nationally DCLG) or Scottish or Welsh governments. These guys will be responsible for developing and revising aspects of national planning policy guidance and frameworks. Note that the planning systems vary across the devolved countries of the UK. In effect they are different planning systems. Over the last few years DCLG has had large cuts in staff so they are extremely busy and difficult to engage with.

REGIONAL LEVEL

I have included this tier as it was a hallmark of English planning up until 2010 when the coalition government abolished the regional assemblies which at the time were responsible [for Regional Spatial Strategies](#), which were the core component and vehicle of regional planning which then influenced the local authority plans particularly with the imposition of housing and employment land targets. Today we do not have a regional planning tier although the current emphasis on combined authorities and elected mayors has given rise to the development of Spatial frameworks e.g. [Greater Manchester](#) and a kind of regional planning in all but name.

LOCAL LEVEL

local authorities are divided into forward planning (local plans) and development management (planning applications) and planning enforcement (enforcement).

There are also private planners/landscape architects/surveyors/architects and landscape planners who work for large scale consultancies who submit plans on behalf of developers as clients. It is important to target these guys too as they create the masterplans and applications. They have large departments that mean that for the planning applications and SEA/EIAs they undertaken a range of staff are involved in multidisciplinary teams.

There are also mineral planners and infrastructure planners at county level and this can in the larger local authorities lead to highway planners, transport planners, landscape planners and environmental planners. Every authority varies in structures due to resource constraints. Recent cutbacks in public sector means that public sector planners are stretched and becoming an endangered species.

There are also building services (which crucially are often separate form planning departments) which deal with [building regulations \(although private sector also operate in this arena as well\)](#). They provide a vital role in the planning and development chain particularly inked to SUDS and green roofs/walls. [This web site](#) shows how GI might connect at an individual level.

However, all of the above are employed officers who might have some delegated powers to make some non controversial decisions. But crucially there are [elected members as councillors as this Birmingham example shows](#). More attention needs to be placed on working with councillors as they are the key decision makers. Much research does not engage with these decision makers

There are also voluntary sector planners who lobby for change. So we have the [TCPA](#) and [RSPB](#) and [CPRE](#) with their dedicated planning specialists. Here the TCPA is a key player as they have championed green infrastructure for a long time and support the [Green infrastructure Partnership](#)

The professional planning body is the [Royal Town Planning Institute](#). This is a key body as most planners (myself included) need to have MRTPI status to reflect their professional status. Working with RTPI is important pathway to impact in any research. There is both a national body and regional groupings which may be more appropriate to engage with.

Potential pathways to impact

National

1. **HIGH IMPACT BUT IMMEDIATE EVIDENCE REQUIRED The National Planning Policy Framework** [NPPF](#) (DCLG, 2012) is effectively the planner and decision making bible which informs both local plans and development management decisions through its 209 paragraphs. and is currently being reviewed for release in early 2018. Crucially the SOS recently released [a consultation](#) showing a standard method for calculating housing need for local authorities (previously this was done by each local authority using their own methods which were often challenged at local plan inquiries). The new methodology is [here](#) p8ff within a [consultation document](#) with key questions on viability (33ff). Both these methodologies could have important implication for GI resources/opportunities. Current policy guidance for GI focuses on the integrity of the green infrastructure network, ecological connectivity and the vdelviery. On page 52 I defines GI as “A network of multi-

Commented [AS2]: This is an opportunity to present some evidence to this

functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities” (Glossary p52)

2. **HIGH IMPACT National Policy** :- the [National planning practice guidance](#) is in effect guidance to help operationalise the NPPF as circumstances change. It is regularly updated by DCLG and uses different evidence sources to change guidance and advice on key topic areas. This does not require public consultation and appears to be done currently on an ad hoc basis. In my view there is case for collective submissions from relevant GI research from WP1 to help inform new and improved guidance. In the past green infrastructure guidance was removed from the NPPG without warning which sent a signal to developers that it was no longer a government priority. After a campaign by TCPA and the Landscape Institute the guidance was reissued but it shows the importance and impact potential of this on line portal. [GI guidance is here](#) on 3rd October 2017!
3. **HIGH IMPACT Within the National Planning Policy Framework there is a duty to cooperate function** which has potential to treat GI as a strategic cross boundary matter in much the same way that housing need is treated. Currently, the objective assessment of housing need tends to dominate the DTC function in both local authority work and planning inspectors decision making on the soundness of local plans. However the recent government response to the parks select committee inquiry (2017;13) stated the following *“If inspectors find that local authorities haven’t appropriately assessed and planned for green infrastructure to meet health and wellbeing needs (alongside other functions of green infrastructure such as urban cooling and sustainable urban drainage) then they would not find the plan sound”* **This is a really important hook to build GI work on.**
 - a. **This gives rise to another key gatekeeper the planning inspectorate** who make the decisions on a soundness of a local plan or deal with public inquiries and appeals. This is a neglected group in much research who are hard to reach and involve. In my view they are key and I have secured access to them as participants in my research project.
4. **GLOBAL IMPACT There are some voluntary accreditation schemes such as BRREAM** which incentivises developers to produce high quality designs. A high impact here would be to raise the profile of green walls and green roofs and SuDs as part of building design which at present do not command sufficient scorings to adopt widespread use. Evidence to change this would be global in its impact as BRREAM is a global scheme. There is a GI innovation project looking to establish a GI benchmark (Daniele Sinnett UWE) which may incentivise improved quality of GI developments and policy.
5. **HIGH IMPACT NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE COMMISSION** This key national body deals with the design and delivery of large scale infrastructure needs and thus is a key player to influence in the design of GI into thinking and schemes. Indeed is there something that could be a national GI network? Key to engagement here is the need to get GI incorporated into the early design phases.

Strategic planning

6. As part of the devolution agenda there has been an ad hoc growth in [city deals](#) and [combined authorities](#) with elected mayors. This has led to the emergence of several spatial plans (being proposed ; none are finalised). Interestingly many do not give a high profile to

Commented [AS3]: Under the NPPF and Localism Act 2011, the park is carrying out its DTC function to ensure that ES are protected and enhanced. From their interim statement on DTC (SDNPA, 2015: 4.2) the following strategic principles are identified for collaborative work with the surrounding 15 district authorities:

- Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area
- Conserving and enhancing the region’s biodiversity (including GI issues)
- The delivery of new homes, including affordable homes and pitches for Travellers
- The promotion of sustainable tourism
- Development of the rural economy
- Improving the efficiency of transport networks by enhancing the proportion of travel by sustainable modes and promoting policies which reduce the need to travel.

Commented [AS4]: <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/communities-and-local-government/2017-19-Correspondence/Government-Response-Future-of-Public-Parks-Accessible.pdf>

Commented [AS5]: this offers a chance to engage as they start their work. The mayor is a key person to try to work with.

GI and there is scope to inform these more strategic plans. Manchester spatial plan is perhaps the furthest advanced. <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/GMSF>

7. **HIGH IMPACT Local plans:** these provide the statutory land use planning framework at a district level for the next 15-20 years with periodic 5 year reviews. All local authorities must have an up to date local plan with a 5 year housing supply otherwise planning decisions can be taken using the NPPF as a **guide**. There is usually an environmental policy section within which GI sits. The quality of GI policy is variable. There is potential for some research to directly inform policy to **consider advice on how to set good, clear and SMART policy wording**. In some local plans there are higher level policies or objectives which recognise the value of ecosystem services or natural capital which can serve as a catalyst for GI **work**.
 - a. Key impact is to secure research outputs as part of an evidence base. This can be through mandatory processes such as through a **strategic environmental assessment** (Plans, policies or programmes) or **environmental impact assessment** (project) or as a data set. You should work with forward planning departments and consultancies on these.
 - b. You will often find a **GI strategy that has been prepared as a non statutory plan** to inform the local plan. There is an important opportunity to look at how this document has or could inform the plan. See a recent **NERC report** in linkages between the GI strategy and local plan
8. **HIGH IMPACT As part of local plans there is an opportunity to inform supplementary planning guidance** which then carries weight when incorporated within the local plan policies. **Bridgend** and **London** provide good examples here and this can be useful if you are producing any guidance tool or principles. The Tree design tool is a good example of this.
9. **VERY HIGH IMPACT The concept of viability** is another key area of planning policy to develop pathways to impact. Currently viability is defined in strict economic terms and thus it is important when arguing the case for GI that an economic argument needs to be made incorporating GI values in both monetary and non monetary terms. Linking GI with health and well being and economic benefits for UK PLC is key here both qualitatively and quantitatively. **In the longer term a case needs to be made for a broader definition of viability with environmental limits and capacities built in.** This would be a good use of current NERC research if evidence could be linked to asset values and growth. Associated with local plan and masterplan formation is the quotas for green infrastructure that are normally developed. Most start at around 40% but are often then reduced by developers claiming that such quotas inhibit viability. Currently the NPPF has a strong policy presumption that developers need to make profits on development (20%). Thus working with developers to highlight added financial values that might accrue from injecting GI into developments might be a very profitable impact pathway (pun intended)
10. **HIGH IMPACT There are other key plans that are important to engage with particularly mineral plans** (here issues and opportunities to do with aftercare offer real chances to optimise new GI resources. and infrastructure plans which are prepared at county level. Important to engage with different planning teams involved in these projects.

Commented [AS6]: Useful to check in your area of work what the status of the local plan is. It cant be used in decision making unless it has been found sound by an inspector after an extensive examination in public process.

Commented [AS7]: This is the South Downs Policy I talked about
Draft Core Policy SD2: Ecosystems Services SDNP 2015 Local Plan Preferred Options document
1. Proposals that deliver sustainable development and comply with other relevant policies will be permitted provided that they do not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the natural environment and its ability to contribute goods and services. Proposals will be expected, as appropriate, to:
a. provide more and better joined up natural habitats;
b. conserve water resources;
c. sustainably manage land and water environments;
d. improve the National Park's resilience to, and mitigation of, climate change;
e. increase the ability to store carbon through new planting or other means;
f. conserve and improve soils;
g. reduce pollution;
h. mitigate the risk of flooding;
i. improve opportunities for peoples' health and wellbeing;
j. stimulate sustainable economic activity; and
k. deliver high-quality sustainable design

11. **HIGH IMPACT** As part of the localism agenda there are [neighbourhood plans](#). These are becoming important as when finalised they in effect become part of the local plan. Within these plans are provisions for the creation of [local green space designations](#) and other proposals with significant GI implications. There may be important impacts working from the bottom up with these plans.

Commented [AS8]: I have used Cotswolds District Council example here.

12. **HIGH IMPACT Green belt reviews.** Many local authorities as part of local plans review are undertaking GB reviews. There is increasing pressure on green belts particularly in light of housing need calculations. In Birmingham a recent inspectors decision that the scale of unmet housing need was so serious that an incursion into green belt could be justified on exceptional circumstances grounds may be highly influential. Green belts are **looked at as forming a core part of the GI network of an area.** They are viewed in isolation and often viewed as wasted resources given the housing need that is now being developed. There is an opportunity to influence the way GB are currently valued (they rarely are) as part of the GI network and here measures of connectivity and multiple ecosystem service flows and benefits are useful pathways to impact. This examples of [Vale of White Horse DC](#) provides scope for inclusion of some of the GI work methods. There is current work going on to design [Dissington garden village](#) as a SMART -environmental development exemplar within a green belt location . This has potential to tie into your strategic concept and could be worked through as it is still in that design phase..

Development Management

1. **HIGH IMPACT The development management functions** relate primarily to the operationalisation of local plans through applications for planning permission. There is an impact pathway to try and help planners assess the GI values as part of that process. In current planning assessments these relate primarily to the structure and information requirements of [planning application forms](#). Amazingly each authority designs its own version and this also gives an opportunity to change to incorporate information that might help the running of a particular GI tool. Again to do this impact pathway you would need to be working with the planning authority at the outset of the project. There is a danger that too many separate tools will only serve to confuse and alienate planners who have high case workloads.. This again is where a hub approach to the research tools being created may help planners navigate to tools that help them with specific queries. It is important that the front end design of tools recognises what those queries are.

Commented [AS9]: You can make applications through a portal but these track into the specifics of a particular authority. Planning application requirements.

2. There is also a need to look at how added value can be generated in [planning conditions](#) which can be negotiated by planners to deliver greater environmental and land use benefits and to try to mitigate any environmental damage. [Section 106](#) or planning obligations offer a wider scope for delivery of GI as they do not necessarily relate to on site land use matters and can be used in mitigation off site. These tools become important when trying to add value to planning applications and relate back crucially to the power and efficacy of the development plan policies (see the south downs example).

3. **HIGH IMPACT** As part of the betterment aspect of uplift in land values with the securing of planning permission the government have introduced [the community infrastructure levy](#) which provides an important opportunity to incorporate GI within it as a core piece of infrastructure. At present this is not occurring on anything other than an ad hoc cases. Thus introducing examples and case studies where it has been successful would generate high

impact. In most cases here work on natural capital and ecosystem services valuation would be useful.

4. [Building regulations](#) This a core part of the planning service but is usually distinct and houses the building surveyors. Developments need to have both planning permission and building regs approval. There are core aspects of building regulations where GI sits and include aspects associated with waste (SuDS, green roofs/walls and air quality, sound etc). Any work that gets beyond the threshold of minimum standards is important in upping the quality standards. One useful application of SuDs is to ensure that they are designed as multifunctional green spaces to maximise ecosystem service benefits. Important to ensure we don't work in our own GI silos perhaps.

Planning tools

Bespoke tools WHERE DO YOU START. There are a lot of projects that create tools or toolkits. The key issue is to understand how difficult it is to engage with planners unless it is on current projects and initiatives and where the added value of tools is clear to them in making decisions. Many planners do not come with strong environmental credentials and this is a key barrier to overcome. Translating the research to planners at the end is too late. Ideally they need to be in at the outset helping to shape the impact pathways to their own work or making sure that it solves a particular problem that they have

One point is to develop your own GI tools to work and fit within the existing core tools that are used in planning. These are the most commonly employed tools where I think impact from research can be greatest.

1. Strategic environmental assessment (focus particularly on scenarios and evidence as this is where many plans have been unfound due to failure of plans to consider alternatives. All local plans and any other public plans need a SEA.
2. Environmental impact assessment ditto with above.
3. Cost benefit assessment; ways of trying to get the natural capital and ecosystem services values from GI fed into such assessments undertaken by planners in response to major development applications. **At present they are determined by the [Treasury Green Book](#). This is key to engage with if you are trying to input new value and costings.**
4. Market based instruments e.g. Payment for ecosystem services biodiversity offsetting no net gain. Many of these exist in research projects but it is getting them understood and accepted by planners and decision makers. **Ideally need demonstration projects where planners and decisions have bene actively involved in them.**
5. [Tax incremental financing schemes](#) based on advance investment in business rates uplift from a development.
6. SuDs here Ciria have produced [guidance for planning and their design](#) and should be a key impact pathway and professional institute to work with
7. BRREAM assessments.
8. Viability The methodology for viability is hidden in commercial secrecy. However useful work could be done trying to broaden the scope and definition ideally to reform the NPPF revisions in early 2018.

Key questions that could help to structure impact pathways

I am intending to work with policy and practice planners to try and develop the key questions that they want answered. In this way I can help shape the workshop in December to translate the research to meet the practice requirements where it can but also then to exploit the gaps within new research contracts.