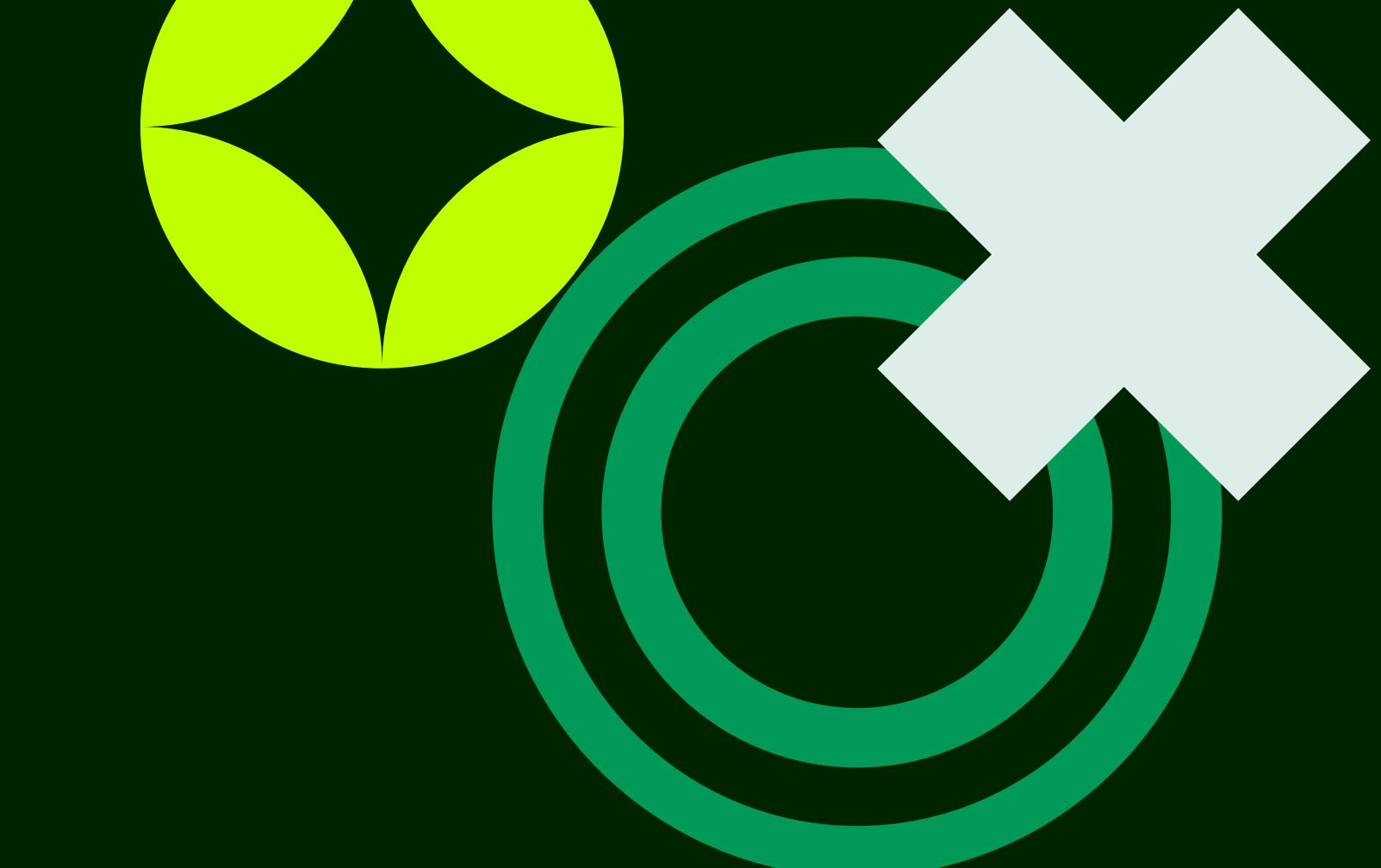
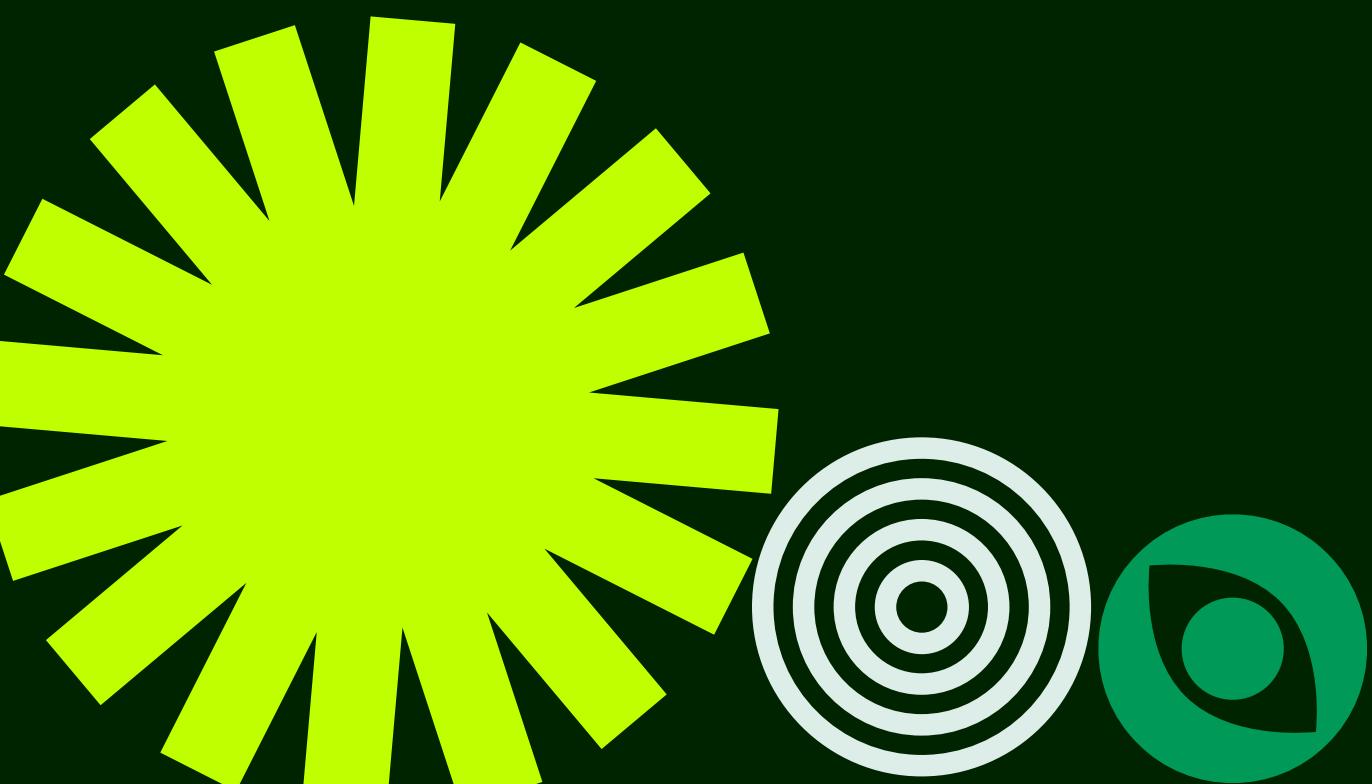


Skills for Planet Blueprint

The critical green skills
that all designers need



Everything that is not made by nature has been designed by someone. Design therefore holds immense power over how our world is shaped. While design has created life-advancing innovations for some, the way that we design – the materials and energy we use, the waste we create, the voices we marginalise – has formed part of the extractive system that has caused the climate and biodiversity crisis.^(1, 2)

So, we need to change the way that we design to regenerate life for all – people and planet.



'Green design' sees all life on the planet as the primary benefactor of design. It is not just about the natural world, but the people that are interconnected with it; its stewards and beneficiaries. Green design takes a systemic approach to achieving environmental impact alongside social, democratic and financial value.*

And it is not just about problem-solving to eradicate today's bad things: reducing emissions, pollution and waste. It is about imagining and creating tomorrow's great things: proposing and building bold, alternative ways of being, shifting systems, and inspiring equity and inclusion.

Our vision is that 'green design' becomes so interwoven into design practice that it simply becomes part of what we mean by 'good design'.

Economics sits at the heart of this. The cost of inaction is felt environmentally and socially (disproportionally in the Global South), but also financially: climate-related disasters have caused \$3.6 trillion in damage since 2000 and unless immediate action is taken, global economic growth could plummet by 50% between 2070 and 2090.^(3, 4) Green design needs to be part of creating a new economy that respects our planetary boundaries and allows life on earth to thrive.

Design moves us beyond critique into action, offering pathways towards regenerative and equitable futures. It helps green technologies become adopted by all, it helps businesses create products and services for a green economy, it helps communities bring their ideas to life.

Without designers, a just green transition is not attainable. The Skills for Planet set out in this Blueprint are not nice-to-haves, they are fundamental to human survival and prosperity.

Cat Drew,
Chief Design Officer,
Design Council

* We acknowledge that the term 'green design' has different implications in different sectors. In academic spheres, 'green design' means avoiding harm and reducing negative impact, as opposed to doing good. For our purposes, 'green design' is an umbrella term that encompasses different approaches, including regenerating the world around us.

The green design skills gap

The concept of considering the needs of the planet alongside the needs of people is not new – indigenous communities have been acting in this way for centuries.

And yet, indigenous wisdom has long been ignored and swept aside by an industrial, colonial mindset that has consumed without care. The design sector has woken up to this reality, and ‘green design’ in all its guises – sustainable design, life-centred design, regenerative design, or other practices – has become an emerging field of expertise, with 66% of designers having designed in this way in 2024.⁽¹⁾

Despite this, there is a green design skills gap: only 43% of designers feel that they have the capabilities to Design for Planet.⁽²⁾

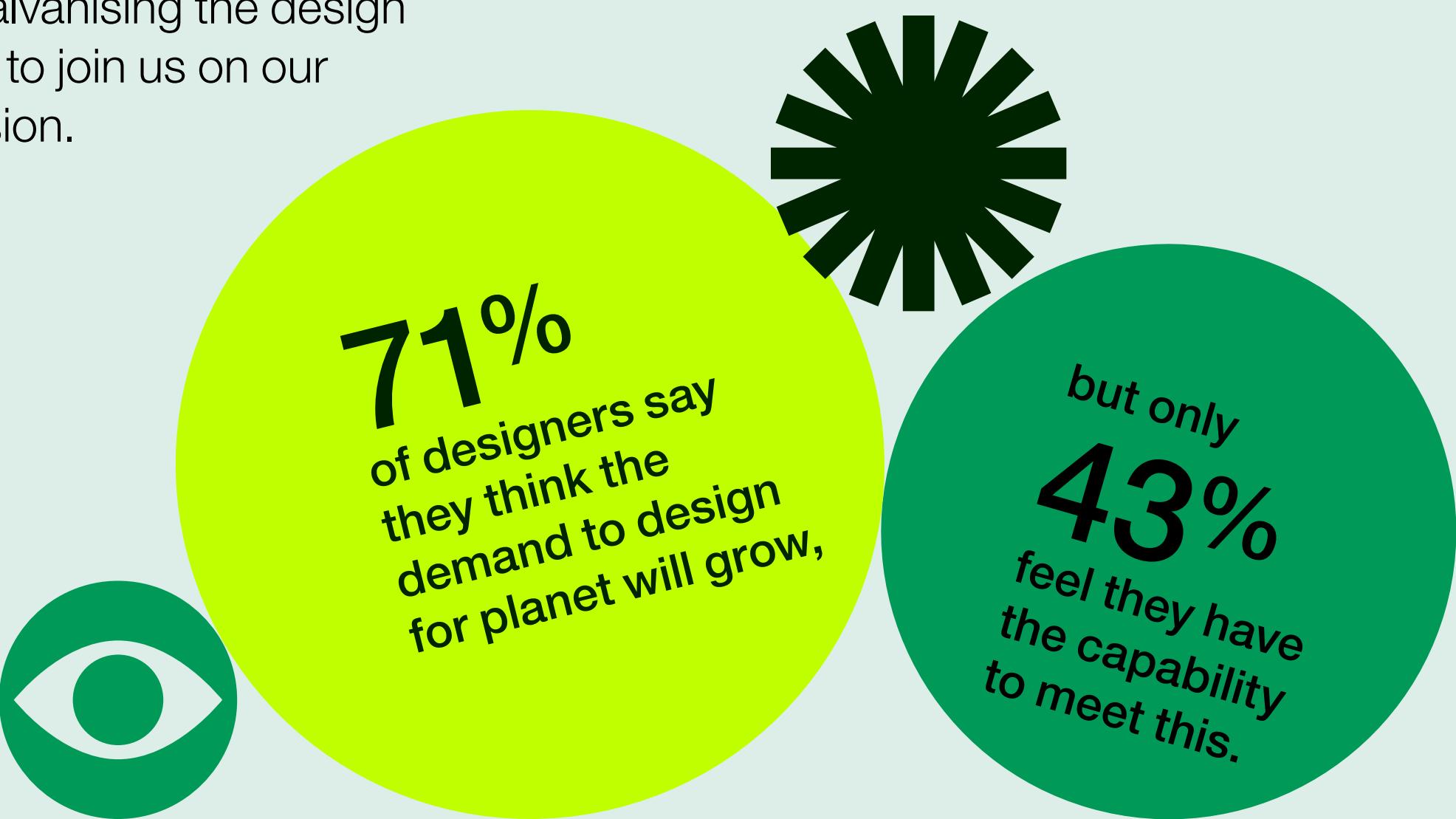
If designers do not possess green design skills, the designs that they create will fall short of delivering positive outcomes for the planet. Design Council therefore sees it as our imperative to support the 1.97 million people in the UK design economy in closing the green design skills gap, driving value for the economy, and moving closer to our ultimate vision: to create a regenerative world for all.⁽³⁾

This has led to our Skills for Planet Mission: to upskill 1 million UK designers in green design skills by 2030.

There is plenty of demand for green design skills and, according to 71% of designers, this demand is only going to grow.⁽⁴⁾ Plus, our research shows that designers have the motivation to design for planet.⁽⁵⁾ We want to harness this growing demand and motivation by galvanising the design sector, and its allies, to join us on our Skills for Planet Mission.

This is an urgent call to action for everyone involved in design.

While designers have a fundamental role to play in facilitating green design, it is the responsibility of everyone involved in design to put the systems and structures in place to enhance green design skills.



(1, 2, 4) [Design Economy: Green Design Skills Gap](#), Design Council

(3) [Design Economy: People, Places and Economic Value](#), Design Council

(5) [Design Economy: The Environmental and Social Value of Design](#), Design Council

Our starting point: defining green design skills

To upskill 1 million designers in green design skills, we first need to know what those green design skills are. This Blueprint sets out the Skills for Planet: the critical green skills that all designers need. Its main purpose is to create a shared language that enables the whole design sector to pull in the same direction and have maximum positive impact on the planet and its people.

Although this is the starting point of our Skills for Planet Mission, it is a natural evolution of our Systemic Design Framework, which provides a high-level methodology for delivering green design. The skills outlined in this Blueprint complement the principles, roles and process shared in the Systemic Design Framework.

Design Council recognises that different design disciplines are best placed to capture their unique technical green skills in detail, and many disciplines have already begun this important work. Our job is to bring these together into a broader skillset, so that the strength of the design sector can be felt as a whole.

This Blueprint serves as a guide to this broader skillset: it is deliberately cross-disciplinary and high-level, so that it can add value as a translation piece across the design sector and beyond. At the same time, it hopes to provide enough content on green design skills, so that a range of actors across the design ecosystem can adopt them. In this way, design can fulfil its potential as a backbone of the just green transition.

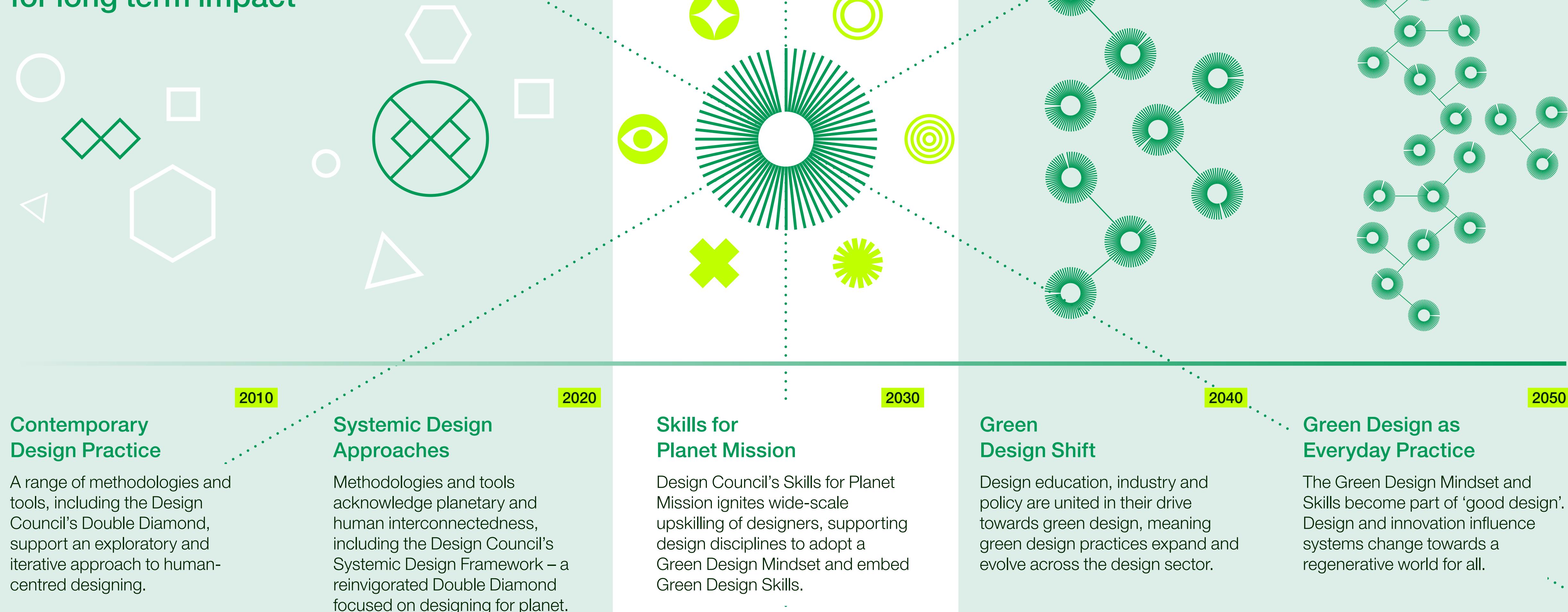
The Blueprint aims to:

- Provide an overview of the core Green Design Skills that all practicing designers need to design for planet
- Create a shared language for the design sector
- Demonstrate the vital importance of design to a just green transition
- Signpost essential existing resources
- Build further momentum for our Skills for Planet Mission

The Blueprint does not:

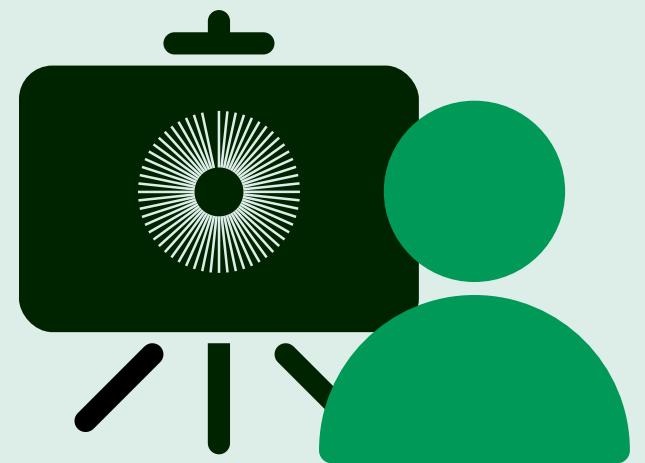
- Cover discipline-specific, technical skills
- Stipulate how Green Design Skills should be taught or acquired
- Suggest what Green Design Skills look like across different levels of expertise, i.e. at school or in higher education
- Capture a design process
- Set out the supplementary activities that need to happen for green design to thrive, i.e. regulation

Skills for Planet as a catalyst for long term impact



An invitation to join our Mission

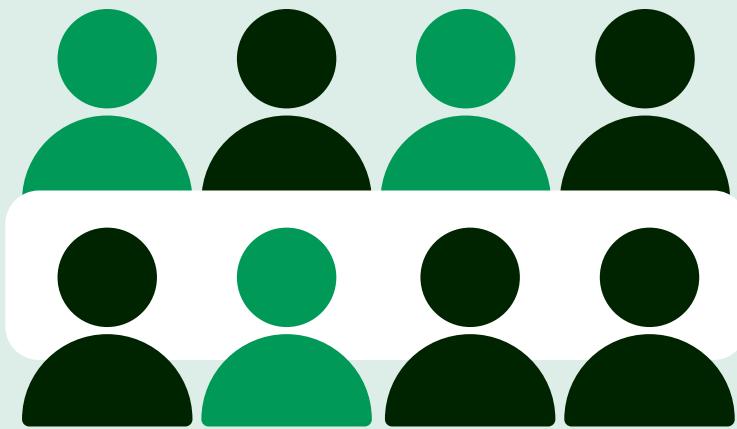
To ensure Design for Planet becomes part of everyday practice, the Skills for Planet Blueprint needs to be adopted and supported across the design ecosystem.



DESIGN EDUCATORS

Provide the designers of tomorrow with the Green Design Skills they need, using this Blueprint to inform learning material within the courses you create or contribute to. Helping students of all stages develop Green Design Skills should be central to learning outcomes, rather than being viewed as an accessory to Foundational Design Skills.

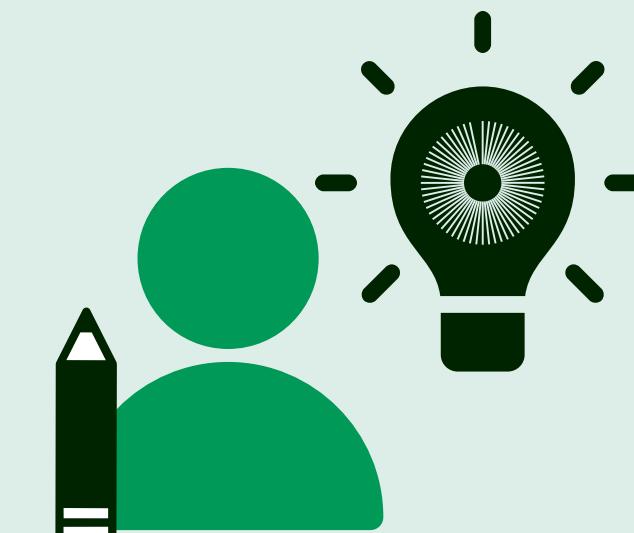
Only 50% of designers feel that their education has provided them (to a moderate or large extent) with green design skills.⁽¹⁾



ORGANISATIONS THAT EMPLOY DESIGNERS

Become a market leader in green design and innovation, weaving this Blueprint into your Continuing Professional Development (CPD) offer. Upskilling the designers within your organisation will enable green design to become the default and, as a result, net zero and other environmental targets will be more likely to be achieved.

Only 27% of designers confirm that green design training, support, and mentoring is available to staff within their organisations.⁽²⁾



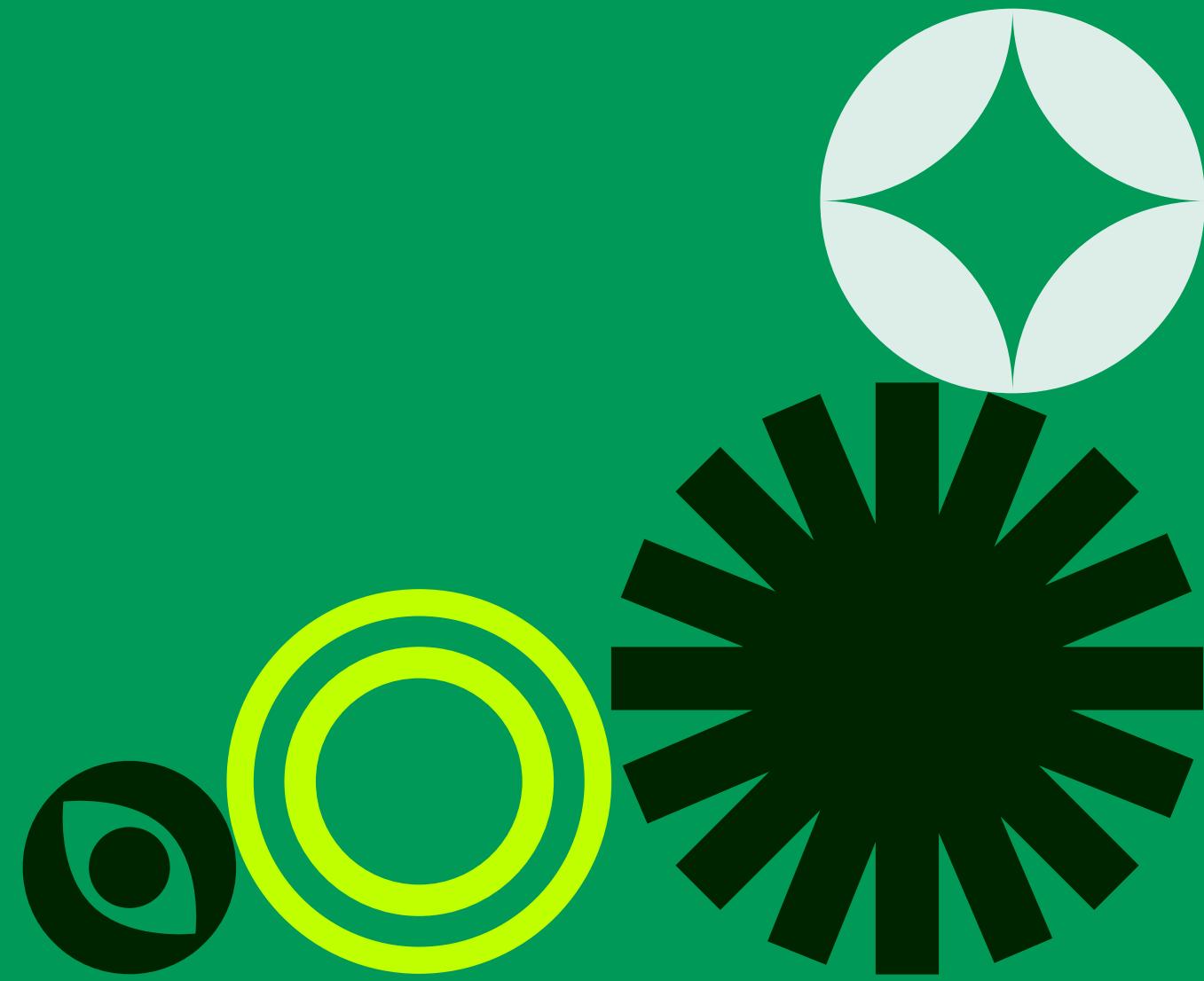
DESIGNERS

Increase your employability in an environmentally-friendly organisation by using this Blueprint to assess your Green Design Skills. Consider which skills you might need to strengthen and put into practice next, and spend some time exploring resources, speaking to other designers and finding suitable training opportunities.

An ambition to increase their understanding is the most influential factor motivating designers to address environmental and social issues.⁽³⁾

We also encourage the design sector's allies – such as policymakers and organisations that commission designers – to place greater emphasis on the need for Green Design Skills and to create the financial and policy conditions required for green design to become the default.

Skills for Planet Elements



ELEMENTS

The Skills for Planet Blueprint consists of three elements:



Green Design Mindset

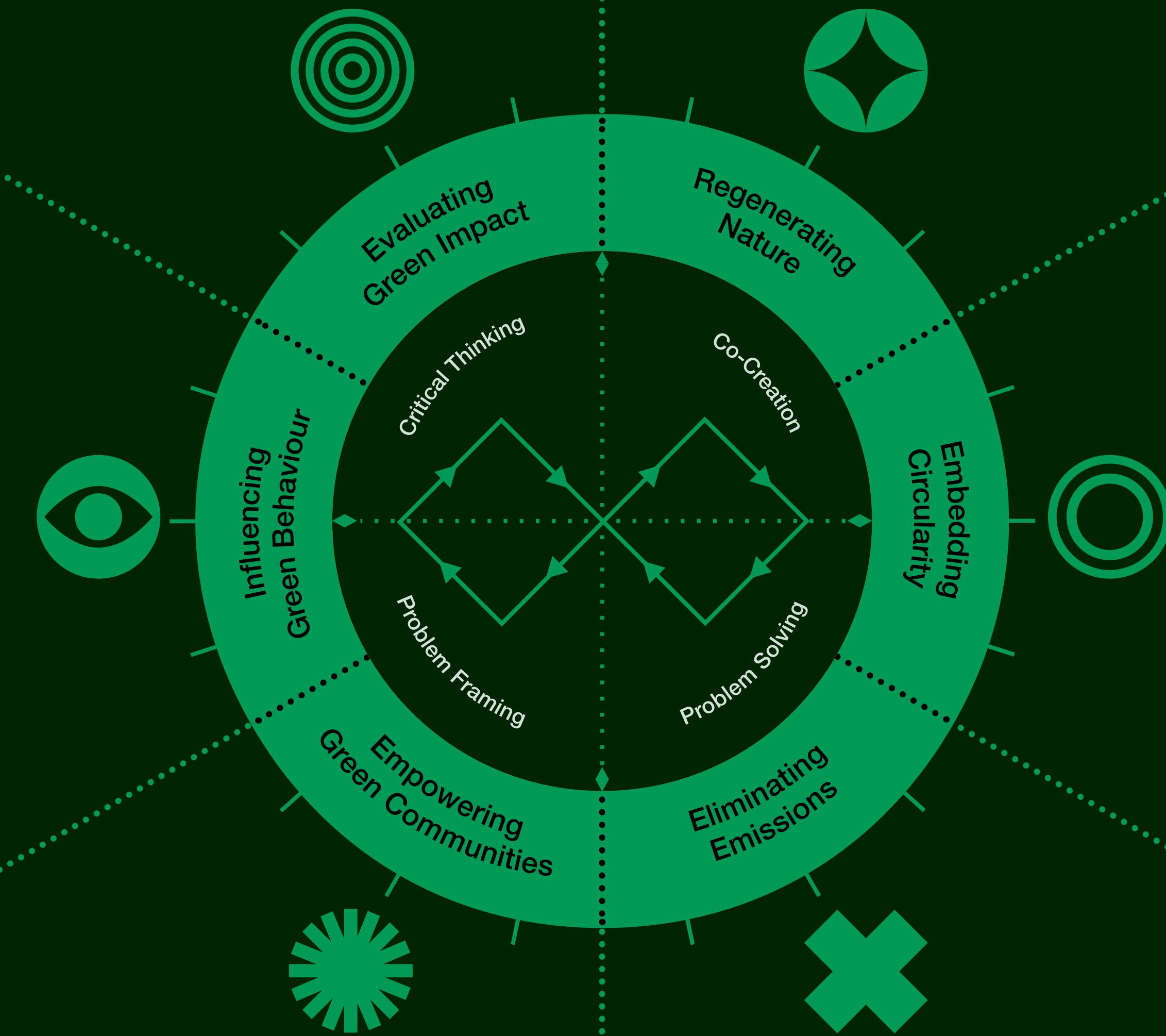


Foundational Design Skills



Green Design Skills

This section provides an overview of each of these three elements, before then outlining the Green Design Skills in more detail in the skills section.





ELEMENTS

Green Design Mindset

A systemic worldview, rooted in the understanding that design must bring value to the planet as well as its people.

Contemporary design practice is underpinned by a mindset that includes empathy, humility, curiosity and the ability to embrace the unknown. Typically, this mindset has only extended so far as humans and has focused on delivering a specific solution to a defined problem.

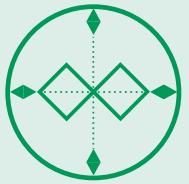
Although this mindset has resulted in innovation, it is ultimately grounded in a narrow worldview that is stopping design from bringing value to the planet and all its life-forms, not just people.

A Green Design Mindset requires a shift from a human-centric to a systemic worldview. How we think determines how we act, and so adopting a Green Design Mindset is essential if designers are to put Green Design Skills into practice.

Our Systemic Design Framework sheds light on the roles, principles and processes needed to adopt a systemic approach. It helps us to zoom out, considering the whole system and all its invisible connections. It also invites us to navigate the chaos that comes with working as part of a wider coalition of change-makers, in complex environments.

Language is critical to a Green Design Mindset: sometimes, a term or word can be a foot in the door to new modes of thinking that challenge what we thought we knew.

A new vocabulary is emerging when it comes to describing people, living species and natural resources. As these definitions are complex, we have chosen to use the simpler terms of 'humans' (to represent us), 'more-than-humans' (to represent non-human planetary life) and 'nature' (to represent the natural world and its resources). Even though we have chosen language that distinguishes us from nature, we fully recognise that we are part of nature. The language we are using is inspired by many sources, including indigenous communities around the world, contemporary ecologists, economists and scientists.



ELEMENTS

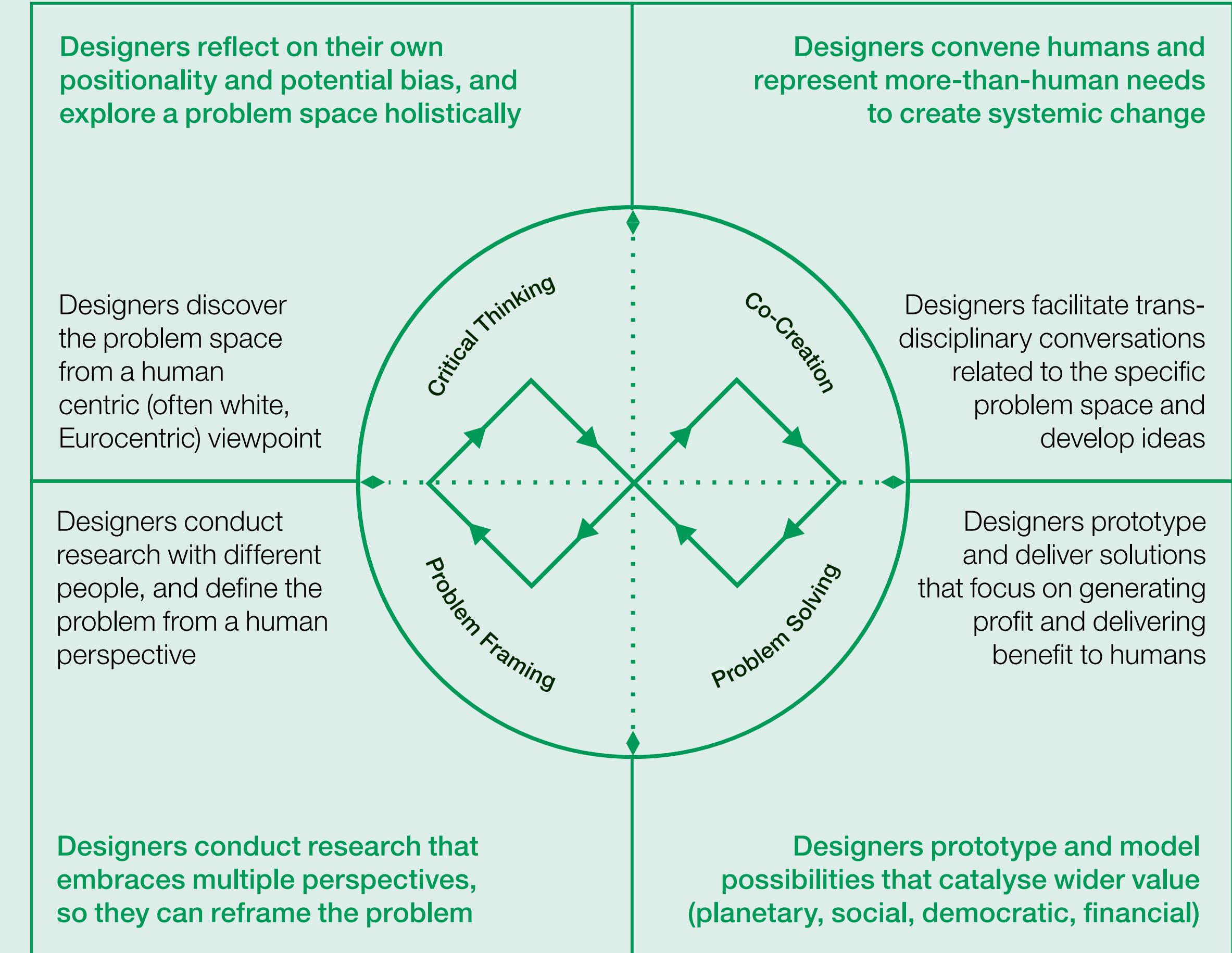
Foundational Design Skills

Capabilities that form the bedrock of contemporary design practice.

Designers already possess inherently valuable skills. The four Foundational Design Skills should be seen as broad skills that most designers currently practice. We have captured these skills as part of this Blueprint to demonstrate that they provide the groundwork needed to deliver green design.

The Foundational Design Skills map to the design process captured by the Double Diamond and Systemic Design Framework, helping deliver design and innovation in action.

However, they must be built upon and adapted to be fully fit-for-purpose: **it is the mindset that is applied to these skills that determines their impact.** Applying a Green Design Mindset ensures that these skills are adopted in ways that bring value to the planet as well as to people.





ELEMENTS

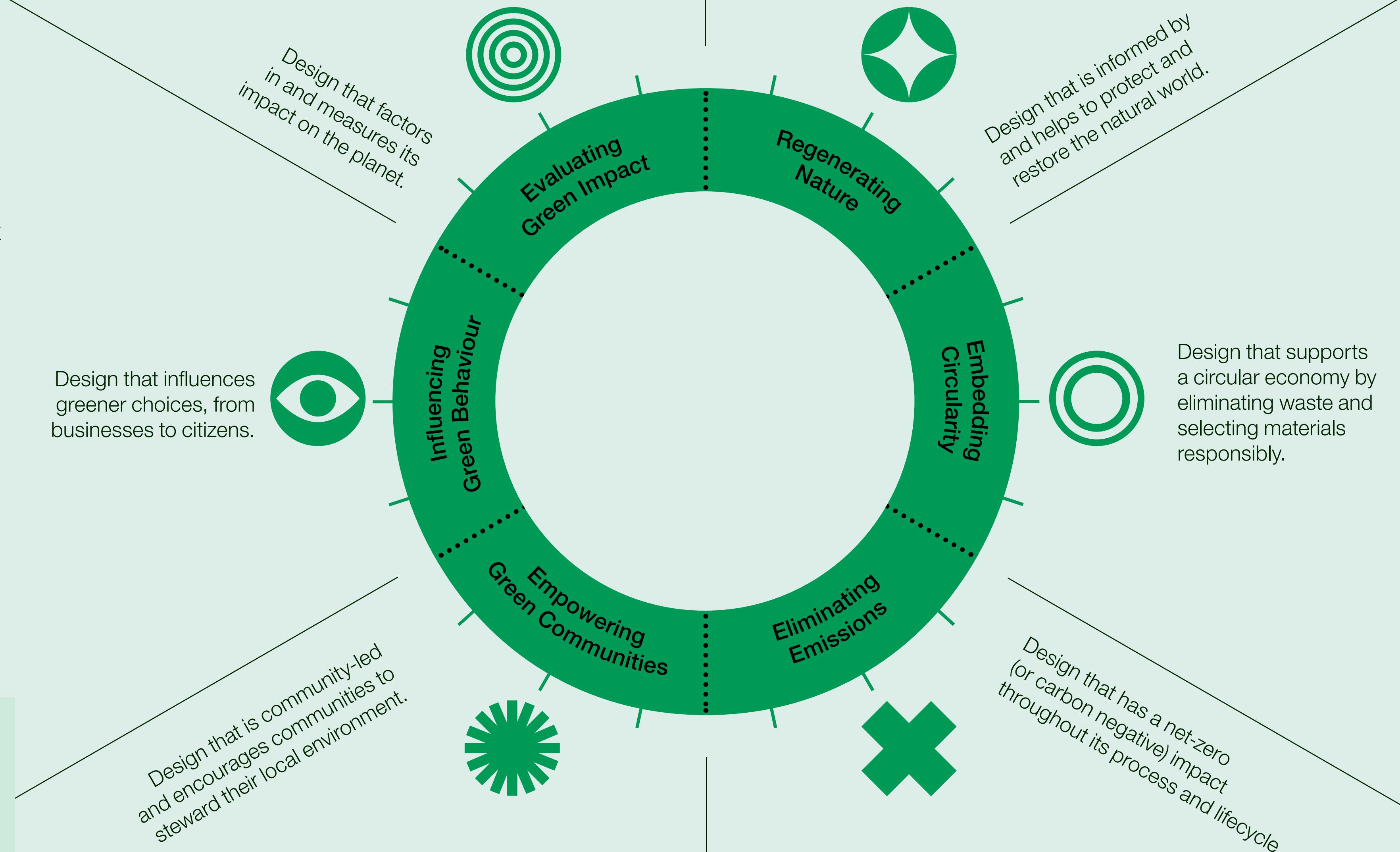
Green Design Skills

Capabilities that support planet and people-centred designing.

The **Green Design Skills** are mapped across six skill areas, which together enable designers to put green design into practice. They build on the Foundational Design Skills that designers already possess, but importantly they apply a Green Design Mindset to achieve positive impact for planet as well as people.

The skills are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. For example, we cannot regenerate nature without eliminating emissions and we cannot eliminate emissions without embedding circularity. In most cases, therefore, all designers should possess all Green Design Skills.

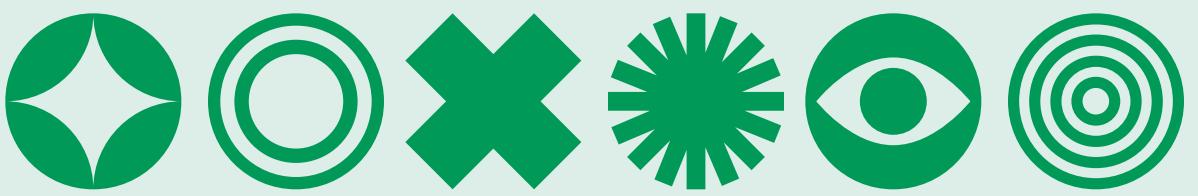
The six skill areas are brought to life by a selection of case studies. Please note, these are all UK-based given that this is where our Skills for Planet Mission is focused. We encourage you to seek out global green design stories for further inspiration. The [Earthshot Prize](#) and [UpLink](#) are good places to start.





Skills for Planet In practice





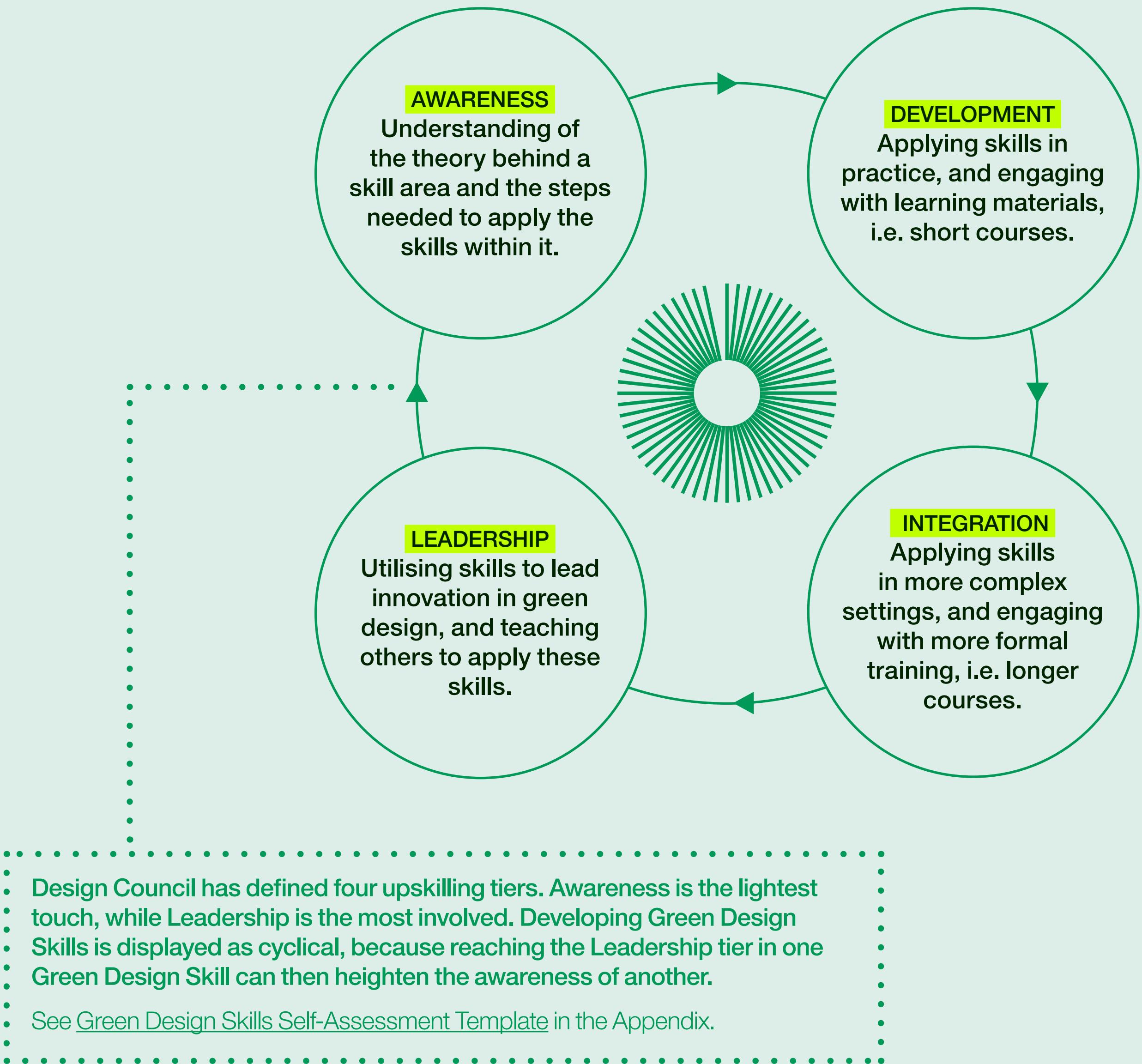
Developing Green Design Skills

Skills are the practical application of knowledge and, ultimately, will only be gained through practice. Each Green Design Skill captured in this section is a snapshot of what that skill might look like in practice. Skills are dynamic and will shapeshift as a designer gains awareness, practices the skill in different or more complex contexts and applies multiple Green Design Skills simultaneously.

Designers should feel confident to test any of the activities set out under each Green Design Skill. The skills can be explored or applied in any order. Where designers start will depend on where they are in their own green design journey; what

knowledge, skills and behaviours they already possess. What is important is that designers start somewhere, perhaps with a skill area that they are more familiar with, before testing out skills they are less comfortable with. Some skills will be best learned under supervision or on a taught programme.

Green design upskilling is not solely the responsibility of designers themselves. Rather, Green Design Skills must be woven into the breadth of the design education system: from primary through to higher education and from apprenticeships through to Continuing Professional Development (CPD).



Developing Green Design Skills

All Green Design Skills are interconnected and can be explored or applied in any order.



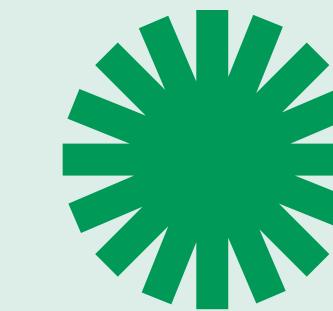
Regenerating Nature



Embedding Circularity



Eliminating Emissions



Empowering Green Communities



Influencing Green Behaviour



Evaluating Green Impact

SKILL 1
Implementing nature-focused strategy

SKILL 4
Implementing circular strategies

SKILL 7
Implementing decarbonisation strategy

SKILL 10
Gathering community insight

SKILL 13
Facilitating green choices

SKILL 16
Setting measurable goals

SKILL 2
Representing nature in decision-making

SKILL 5
Adopting a circular business model

SKILL 8
Analysing emissions data

SKILL 11
Nurturing community stewardship

SKILL 14
Communicating business value

SKILL 17
Reviewing benefits and risks

SKILL 3
Collaborating with nature

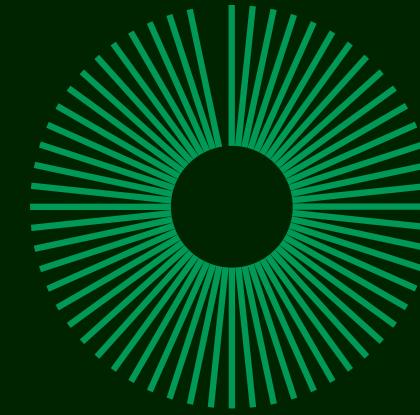
SKILL 6
Selecting materials responsibly

SKILL 9
Planning for future climate scenarios

SKILL 12
Prioritising justice and equity

SKILL 15
Sharing success stories

SKILL 18
Iterating based on evidence



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