Gender Mainstreaming Holloway Park

A report for Peabody

IN HER PLACE SOCIAL PLACE

FOREWORD

I've had the privilege of working on the Holloway site since Peabody acquired it in 2019, and it's been clear from the outset that this is no ordinary redevelopment. As the former Holloway Women's Prison, the site carries a powerful legacy - one that demanded a strong narrative shaped by women's voices.

Given Holloway's history, it wasn't just an opportunity - it was a responsibility to ensure that women's voices were central to its future. Taking a gender-informed approach to planning and engagement at Holloway Park was an idea partly inspired by the previous work of Julia and Susannah and the great work by the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) on this subject. Bringing Social Place and In Her Place on board felt like a brilliant fit.

Their thoughtful and inclusive methodology enabled us to collaborate meaningfully with a diverse group of women and non-binary people. Through structured learning and lived experience research, participants explored how gender influences the built environment and offered practical, grounded design insights. These contributions have directly informed the architectural and landscape design of Holloway Park.

More than that, they've helped us honour the site's past while shaping its future. I hope this report not only reflects the value of their work but also encourages others to listen deeply to the voices and lived experiences of women and girls when designing new places.

Becky Leaman, Peabody



Community Researchers on site, Holloway Park

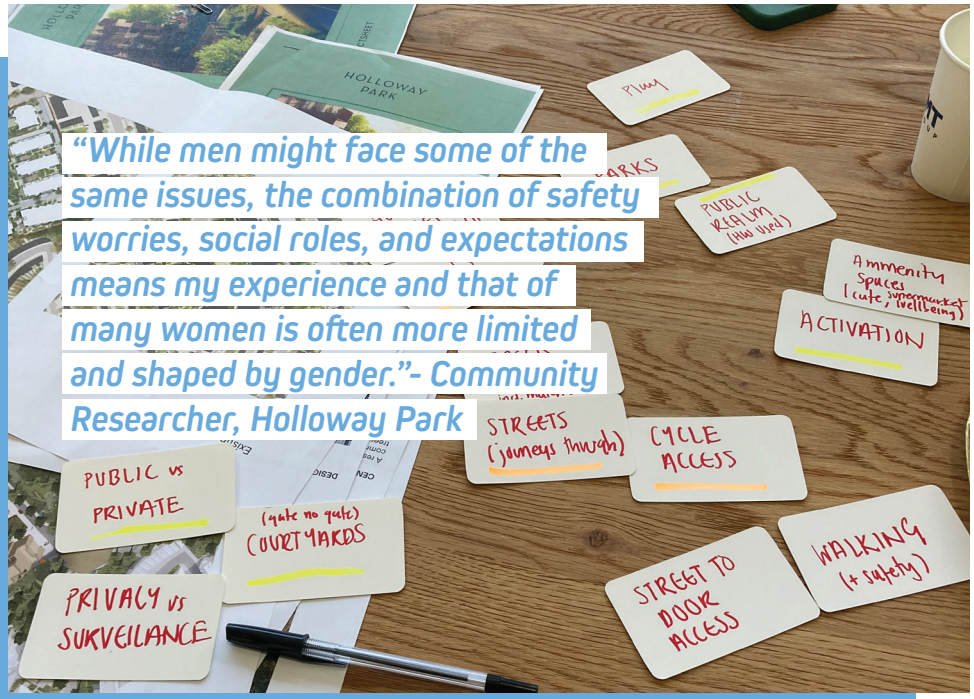
SUMMARY

This report covers the engagement work commissioned by Peabody as part of the redevelopment of the former Women's Prison in Holloway, London. Peabody secured planning permission for the site in 2022 for 985 homes with 60% affordable. At the time of writing, they are developing updated plans for the site for 1,100 homes at 58% affordable.

Social Place and In Her Place worked with a group of women and non-binary people across a range of ages, life stages, racial and religious identities, as well as different family and housing situations.

For the project, the participants followed a structured online curriculum which gave them background on gender-informed planning and architecture, as well as research methods for investigating their lived experience of the built environment. They then used these tools and knowledge to investigate design issues – ranging from safety and cycle parking to bins and lighting – in their local area and propose solutions.

Their work was then used to inform the architects and landscape designers involved in the redevelopment and to produce this report. Because this is one of the first times that this gender-centred approach has been used to inform the design of a housing development in the UK, we also hope that the approach and the results will be of interest to a wider audience and can influence and inspire further engagement and design work.



Community Researchers on site, Holloway Park

INTRODUCTION

The idea that gender influences our experience of the built environment, and in particular that the needs of women and girls are not fully considered in current design, is not new. A more equitable approach – sometimes called gender mainstreaming, or gender-centred design – was pioneered by the City of Vienna in the early 1990s and brought to a wider audience in the UK in 2019 with the publication of Caroline Criado Perez's book Invisible Women.

This approach, however, is not yet fully embedded in architecture and planning in this country. A lot of progress has been made in creating guidance and examples of good practice, particularly in planning. Four councils, including Glasgow and Edinburgh City Councils, have adopted gender mainstreaming as a policy and important work has also been done by the London Legacy Development Corporation. The safety of women and girls is also starting to move up the agenda in several cities and counties, with new policies and safety charters being created across the UK.

The next step is translating these policies into improved design in the public realm. While there are many examples of good practice in Europe and beyond, more detailed work still needs to be done to discover both the specific barriers and issues faced by women and gender diverse people in the UK, and what the best solutions to these might be. In particular, we need to engage with women, girls and other minoritised genders to discover where changes to the built environment can improve their daily lives.

This project is the first step in filling that gap. A piece of long-form engagement with a group of women, girls and non-binary people who were employed as community researchers, it used a gender lens to inform engagement work for a new major housing development. The aim was to make the design more inclusive, both for those who will move in as well as those who live in the surrounding area.

Holloway Park is being developed by Peabody as a mixed-use development providing between 985 and 1,100 homes, with roughly 60% affordable homes as well as retail space and a park. Because the site had housed Holloway Women's Prison for over a century, a Women's Building, providing space for charities and community work, was already part of the masterplan.

For the second phase of the development, the focus was on a gendered approach to the design of the blocks and the area around them, in particular looking at aspects such as safety, leisure, wayfinding and public and private spaces. Social Place and In Her Place created an engagement programme with local residents in order to discover how the development might better meet their needs.

While the results reinforced some things we already know about how women, girls and gender diverse people experience the built environment, the project also produced some new insights into how specific design

details can benefit from being looked at through the prism of gender. In highlighting many additional barriers around the site – from unsuitable bus stops to poor maintenance – it also underlined how a safe and inclusive environment can only be created with the active participation of not just developers but transport planners, councils and the many other stakeholders involved.

WHY DOES GENDER MATTER?

During the course of the project, the community researchers focused on asking three questions about the issues and barriers that they encountered:

What is the problem?

How is it gendered?

How can this influence the design?

These questions also work as a way of understanding the aims of the project as a whole.

The problem is that much of our urban space and planning does not work well for women or gender diverse people.

The issue is gendered because 'neutral' design – i.e. that designed without having gender differences in mind – is rarely that. Instead the imagined user tends to be what Caroline Criado Perez in her book Invisible Women calls the 'default male'.

Four areas in particular impact how women and gender diverse people use the urban realm in a different way to men and why they currently face barriers in the built environment. These are:

- Safety
- Caring responsibilities
- Financial disadvantage
- Biology

Safety is probably the biggest barrier which women, girls and other gender diverse people face in using public space. The statistics are many and shocking, but just to give a few examples:

- Only 5% of young women feel completely safe in public spaces;[1]
- Women are over four times more likely to be the victim of sexual assault than men;[2]
- 86% of women aged 18-24 in the UK have experienced sexual harassment in the last year[3].

These statistics are exacerbated by intersectionality, so those from minoritised ethnic groups or genders are likely to feel even less safe.

The barriers created by this lack of safety include taking longer routes, spending more on taxis or other public transport, not feeling able to exercise in free-to-use spaces and much else besides. It also affects employment prospects and financial security as a result. Taking a wider perspective, it prevents people from being a full member of the community, and it could be argued that design which does not include the needs of women and others is in breach of the Equality Act.

Caring responsibilities tend to fall more greatly on women than men. They are more often primary care givers for children and are 91% of lone parents as well as being more likely to be involved in the care of older people and those with disabilities. These activities are rarely considered as part of housing design, for example in terms of providing safe places for play, as well as storage for pushchairs and scooters as well as bikes.

These responsibilities also have consequences for women's mobility, in particular their patterns of travel. Typically, while men's journeys tend to conform to 'classic' commuting – a single journey in and out of a central office, women often string together a range of shorter journeys within an area, from food shopping to school pick-ups. This pattern, known as 'trip chaining' is made longer by facilities being dispersed across an area, and also because public transportation and active travel routes are less often designed to accommodate these kinds of linked trips.

Financial disadvantage. Women earn less than men across their lifespan and end up with a pension pot less than half that of men. While this is not immediately connected with the built environment, this does mean that women are more likely than men to use public transport, in particular buses. Their lower incomes also mean that they are more likely to be social housing tenants and are a majority of those who are statutorily homeless. And barriers in the built environment – in particular those which restrict their mobility – can further limit their earning potential.

Biology. This is most important in terms of toilet provision, where not having access to appropriate public facilities can limit women's and girls' access to a space (something which is true for many other demographics as well) but also has other impacts.

These factors intersect with the ***design*** of public spaces and the built environment in a myriad different ways. Exploring how this takes place was one of the aims of the project. However, examples include:

In terms of safety, lighting is one of the issues most often raised, because this does not just affect how women, girls and gender diverse people travel at night but also during working hours in winter. At present, there is no guidance or legislation in the UK on lighting for personal safety, which means that provision is often centred around the needs of drivers and good practice is not well understood. Safety also needs to be a key consideration in street design, the maintenance and design of parks and public spaces, housing design, transport planning and in many other areas.

For caring responsibilities, one simple design improvement can be adding rails for prams and pushchairs on every single set of steps or the kinds of storage mentioned above. These responsibilities also affect areas such as active travel – for example those travelling with children will avoid unsafe cycle lanes and possibly choose another mode of transport. At a masterplanning level, grouping the kinds of places that women travel to – schools, shops and elder care facilities for example – can reduce their travel time and thereby increase leisure. Providing free-to-use sports and activity spaces alongside this is also important.

The biggest impact of financial disadvantage is on housing, and providing suitable affordable homes is key. Additionally, designing safe and reliable public transport can help women get better jobs.

Designing safe and easily available public toilets is key to making public space more accessible to women and girls (and pretty much everyone), but biology – in particular relative strength – needs to be considered across many other areas, from gyms to heavy refuse bins.

In practice, all these factors intersect and overlap in complex ways, which is why a focus on the barriers themselves is the most productive way of creating change. This in turn means that the single most important way in which gender should influence the commissioning and design of new public realm and housing is in terms of planning and engagement. As the examples above make clear, any new project or design needs to be considered in terms of gender and its effects from the start, and engagement with a broad group of women and girls and gender diverse people needs to be an integral part of that process. This is the key to understanding and addressing the intersectional needs and barriers which arise in each specific place, and so this was the approach taken at Holloway Park.

THE PROJECT

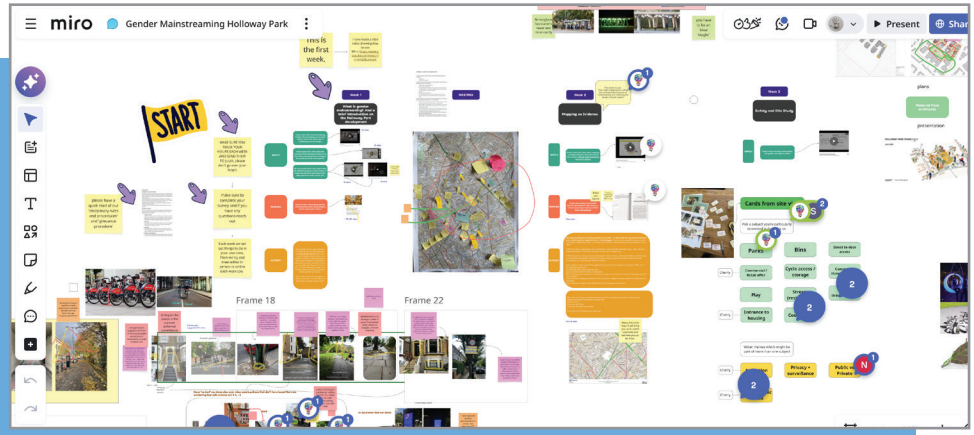
A key aspect of the approach taken by both In Her Place and Social Place is that creating high quality, effective engagement is a two-way process. Before asking participants for their input, ideas and information is shared with the group. This ensures that they have the framework and the confidence to give informed – and therefore useful – feedback. To do this requires working with smaller groups over a longer period, which is more resource intensive but gives the best results for both clients and those who take part.

In this project, a group of eight women and non-binary people were recruited as community researchers. They ranged in age from seventeen to early sixties and represented a broad range of perspectives, family and housing situations, racial and religious backgrounds and interests, but all lived close to the development.

Meetings were both in person and online, and the researchers also had the opportunity for a site visit in order to give them a sense of the scale of the buildings under construction as part of the first phase (and the views!).

For the first three weeks, the curriculum examined the idea of gender mainstreaming as well as giving background on the development. The curriculum covered:

- What is gender mainstreaming and how has it been applied in cities like Vienna?
- The history of the Holloway Park site and development;
- Mapping and other mixed methods as evidence-making;
- Gender and safety;
- Designing around women's care responsibilities, a case study from Bogota.



Zoom in of the Miro Board hosting curriculum and work

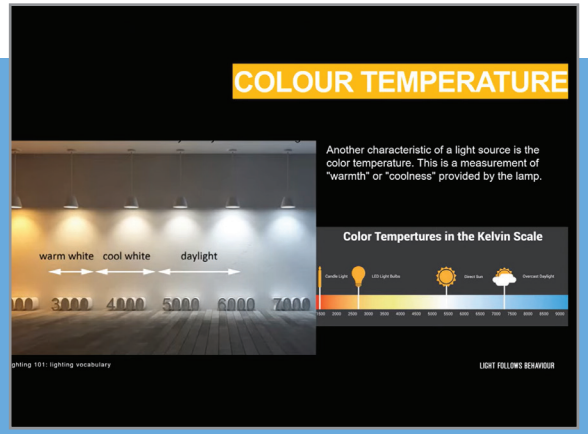
CASE STUDY: Care Blocks, Bogota

Bogotá's Care Blocks (Manzanas del Cuidado) are neighbourhood-based hubs that form the backbone of the city's District Care System, a gender-responsive public policy that recognizes unpaid care as a collective responsibility. Designed primarily to support women—who carry a disproportionate share of care work—the Care Blocks cluster services such as childcare, elder care, disability support, education, training, and wellbeing activities within walking distance of caregivers' homes. By reducing time burdens, redistributing care responsibilities, and making care visible in urban planning, the initiative operationalizes gender mainstreaming, embedding gender equality into service delivery, spatial planning, and social norms around care.

In addition, the researchers had a specific workshop with a specialist lighting designer (Elettra Bordonaro from Light Follows Behaviour) looking at the specifics of lighting and safety, in particular how brightness alone is rarely the answer and how glare, colour temperature, contrast and angle, among many other factors, are an essential part of making a space feel safer for women and girls in the hours of darkness.

Where the community researchers had a particular interest in a topic, they were given extra information and materials, and this additional research covered areas including women's safety work, designing spaces for teenage girls and design precedents for bike stores in Europe.

The three questions mentioned above - what is the problem, how is this issue gendered and how can this influence the design of Holloway Park - also formed the core of the work undertaken by the community researchers themselves.





Stills from the lighting lecture

What is the problem, and how is it gendered?

In the first few workshops, using mapping and photography, the participants researched their own local area, highlighting where they found both barriers and aspects of the built environment that they liked,

using mapping and photography.

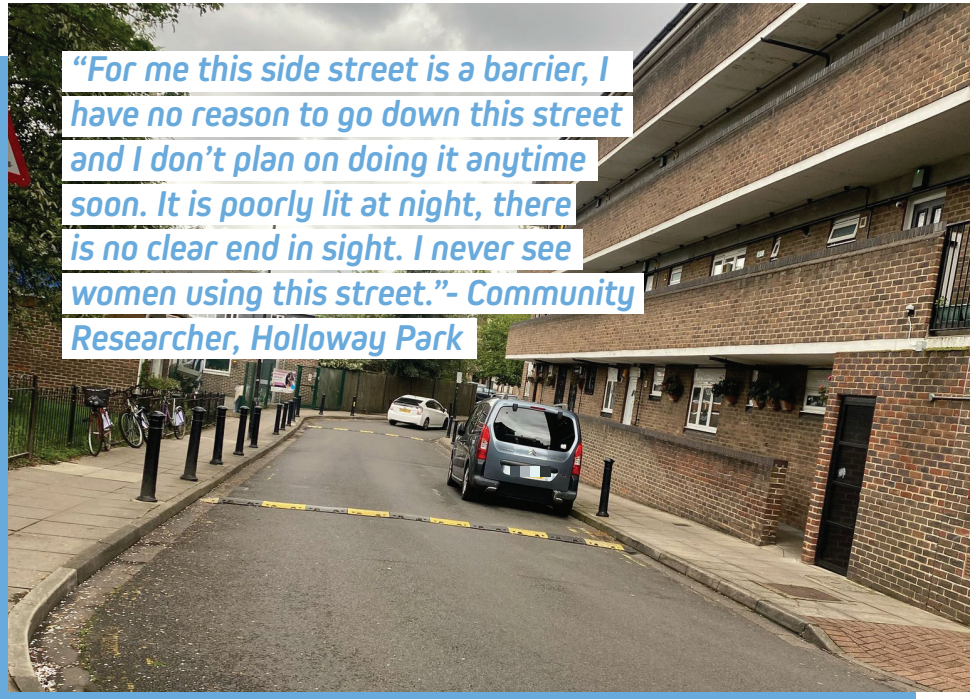
Positive aspects of the area included:

- Generally feeling safe (esp. in comparison to Hackney);
- Some friendly local parks;
- Greenery;
- Safe night bus routes home;
- Some streets – e.g. Tufnell Park Road – feel safe and busy;
- 24-hour shops are a positive.

Three issues came up repeatedly as barriers or areas of concern, all of them overlapping.

<u>Safety</u>

- This was very dependent on issues such as time of day, light vs darkness and very local factors such as Arsenal match day, all of which had a direct impact on how the participants used their local area.
- While the night bus network was seen as safe, the bus stop to doorstep part of the journey was less so, and some participants walked further to use busier roads at night.
- Large groups of teenage boys or young men were seen as threatening in parks or on the street, but with a recognition that there was nowhere else for them to go.
- One participant had been mugged in broad daylight while in the company of other people: fear then becomes a barrier.
- Lower end of Seven Sisters Road was seen as dark and empty as it held a lot of closed shops, so did not feel safe.
- Some estates provided a convenient cut through to local facilities but did not feel entirely welcoming or comfortable.



Photography by Community Researcher

Active travel

- All participants either walked or cycled in the area but local active travel routes were seen as variable, either because they were incomplete, blocked by cars or rubbish, or on quiet streets – so busy roads could feel safer than dedicated cycle paths. Some routes were also not intuitive to follow.
- The new Greenway cycle route did not feel safe when it was quiet.
- Match days at Emirates Stadium were an issue for all forms of transport due to displaced traffic, and the resulting pollution.

Parks and greenspace

- Some parks – Caledonian Park and a small park on Hilldrop Road in particular – felt safe and welcoming.
- Parks being closed at night made routes home longer.
- Cantelowes Gardens next to Camden School for Girls had particular localised issues. While well used, it was often a site for smoking and drug taking so could be off-putting around school hours, particularly for those with younger children. It was also seen as crowded raising the question of how many people would use the area at Holloway Park?

Using these insights as a starting point, the participants investigated their local routes and area in more detail, highlighting specific instances of barriers and issues.

Specific issues included:

Streetscape:

- Cars, vans and trees blocking sightlines along the pavement, particularly at night.
- Vegetation often needs cutting back.
- Dark entrances and bin stores offering concealment.
- Gates and vegetation limiting views into park.
- Lines of visibility often obscured by design – eg curved path or dog leg. This was a particular issue on narrow cut-throughs.
- Gates on cycle routes were seen as a barrier by pedestrians and sometimes led them to avoid the routes. This particularly true for those with a pushchair.
- Groups of men hanging around (e.g. at Mornington Crescent) led to avoiding the place.



Photography by Community Researcher

• Good sightlines were important to making a park feel safe.

• Road crossings and traffic islands were hard to navigate on busy roads; pedestrians should have more priority.

Active travel

• Unnecessary barriers on cycle paths which were not convenient for cyclists either.

• These were also not deterring motorbikes as they were intended to.

Inclusive design

• Several instances of poorly provided or maintained ramps limiting access for disabled people.

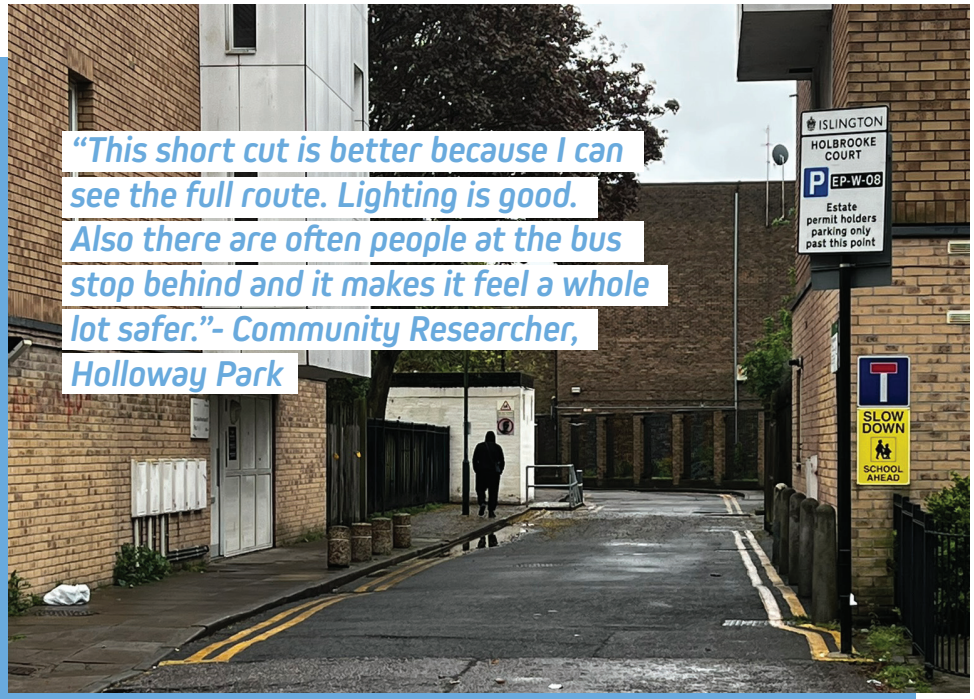
• Poor maintenance of pavements is also an issue.

• Deep puddles on the road could also be a barrier.

Lighting

This was a particular area of concern for the group and affected routes that they had to use in the daytime during winter, not just at night.

• Poorly lit pedestrian pathways occurred in many places.



"This short cut is better because I can see the full route. Lighting is good. Also there are often people at the bus stop behind and it makes it feel a whole lot safer."- Community Researcher, Holloway Park

Photography by Community Researcher

• High contrast between brightly-lit streets and pedestrian routes did not feel safe.

• Dark underpasses and alleys created a feeling of unsafety.

• One cut through had been given artworks on the wall to make it seem more welcoming, but the way that these had been lit made it feel more rather than less dangerous.

Gating/access

• Some kind of defensible space between the street and front door was desirable.

• But this needed to feel friendly as well as owned.

• Some useful cut throughs were gated shut at night in a way that was not helpful.

Other

• People are the best form of surveillance and so need to be designed in.

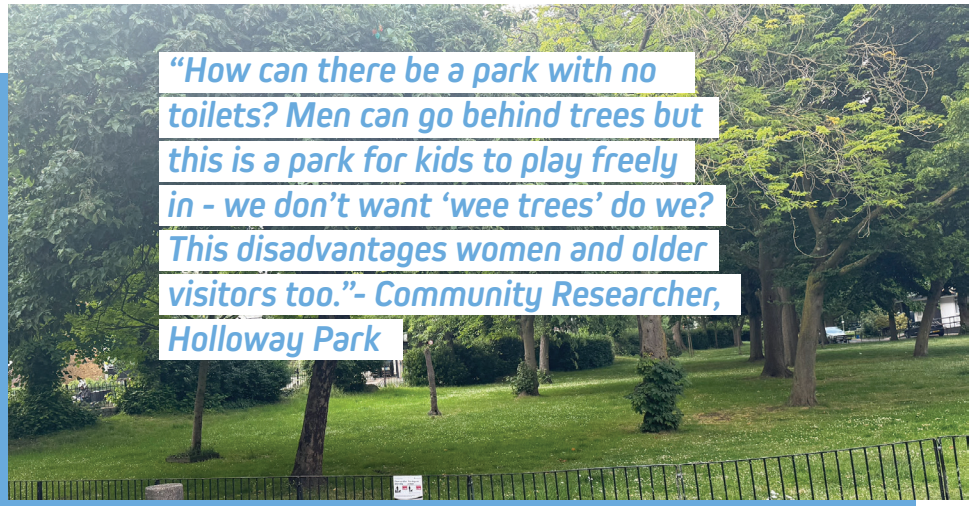
• Maintenance is key.

• Visual clutter is also sign of poor maintenance/oversight.

• Play streets also change the balance of a place but not being used.

• Advertisements for sex workers on a telephone booth makes the area feel threatening.

• Lack of public toilets is an issue for women, as well as many other groups.



"How can there be a park with no toilets? Men can go behind trees but this is a park for kids to play freely in - we don't want 'wee trees' do we? This disadvantages women and older visitors too."- Community Researcher, Holloway Park

Photography by Community Researcher

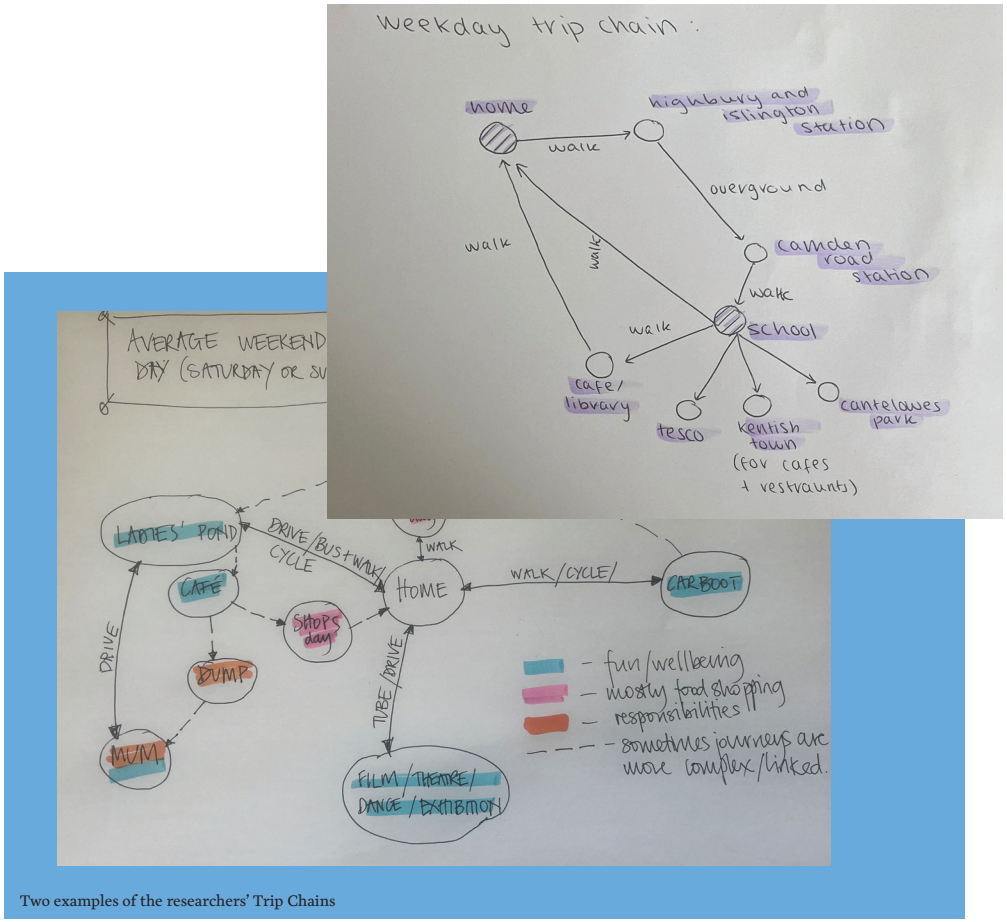
TRIP CHAINING

The researchers also looked at their travel patterns and whether these were linear or consisted of a number of linked journeys.

The group were very diverse – including students, single people at work, parents, those with care responsibilities and volunteers – and so the routes were very varied and were unique to each person.

However, the overwhelming conclusion is that the direct home-work commute is relatively rare, and most people were doing complex and linked journeys.

This part of the project work also produced a number of insights into the way that public transport was not always designed for the needs of the researchers, often in a very basic way. For example Lime and other hire bicycles were seen as being very heavy and therefore off-putting to use, while the 'perching' seats at some bus stops (but interestingly not all) were positioned too high for the average woman.



Two examples of the researchers' Trip Chains

How can this gendered approach influence the design?

The group made a site visit to the Holloway Park development, which gave them the chance to visit some of the blocks that were already under construction and see the floor plans of proposed social housing apartments, and also to meet the architects and find out more about the plans, and in particular where their input would be most useful.

From this, a number of areas were identified:

- Parks and open spaces
- Bins
- Street to door access
- Commercial and retail space
- Cycle access and storage
- Community spaces
- Play
- Streetscapes
- Entrances
- Courtyards

There were also a range of themes which ran across the whole development:

- Activation
- Privacy vs surveillance
- Public vs private
- Uses of public realm

Some further themes emerged during the discussions and research:

- Maintenance

Each of the researchers chose one of these areas to examine in detail through research and lived experience.

RESEARCH AREAS

The community researchers each focused on one particular aspect of the design through a gender mainstreaming lens, sharing references and inspiration with the group.

The results were then shared with the architects, again using the three questions:

- *What is the issue?*
- *How is it gendered?*
- *How can this influence the design of Holloway Park?*



Photography by Community Researcher

Bins and refuse

Bin stores and outside bins can be:

- Unsightly – and smelly
- Unmaintained – which feels unsafe
- In spaces which feel unsafe

The safety and maintenance aspects of this are clearly relevant to gender, but getting rid of rubbish can also be part of women's care responsibilities. There is also a specific barrier in that large communal bins can have heavy lids which are difficult to lift. Furthermore, poor maintenance of bins and their surroundings led to a sense that the area was uncared for, and therefore unsafe.

Potential improvements included:

- More attractive bins (which appeal to all five senses).
- Better looking bin stores (Shadwell estate as example).
- Including windows in bin stores for safety.
- Education and culture change to ensure waste is disposed of properly.
- Integrating rubbish drop-off into journeys in and out of estate.

This is a complex issue due to regulations, issues around oversight on estates and the differing technologies used by local authorities. More is available in our report, "Safer Bin and Bike Stores."



Image Credit: Turkington Martin

CASE STUDY: Shadwell Estate

The bin stores on Peabody's Shadwell Estate provide many of the design features suggested by the community researchers. In particular, they are not fully enclosed and so feel safer to use, and because they are positioned on main routes through the estate, rather than at the back of buildings, they are more convenient and less time-consuming to access when residents leave their flats.

Courtyards and public space

The specific approach to this was that parents needed a safe and enclosed space for younger children to play close to home. Gated areas not only provided this but also allowed for protection and maintenance of the property.

Childcare is still heavily gendered, and so the ability to get on with other tasks while allowing children to play is key to reducing women's additional care load. This is particularly crucial for single parents, who are 91% women.

Open courtyards are also likely to attract trespassers and anti-social behaviour or rough sleeping, which can also make women feel less safe.

- Secure play for younger children needs to be considered on a block-by-block basis, particularly where larger flats are part of the plan.
- Areas which are secure and visible from the apartment allow for women to do other things.
- Consider places which allow the creation of smaller communities as well as the wider community of the whole development, encouraging connections for shared childcare etc.



Why I think gates would be good to have in courtyard/park
Increased in safety and security

I believe the most compelling reason to have gates in court yard is safety, especially I'm a mother with kids I feel like when I have gates protecting the kids from running around it makes me feel secure my kids are in a safe environment. In both residential and public settings, open courtyards can attract trespassers, vendors, or even criminal activity. A gated entrance acts as physical and psychological barrier, discouraging unauthorised barriers making residents feel more safe and secure.

Protection of property and environment

Courtyards often features gardens, benches and small parks like an example I took of an estate where they had sn protecting it. Without gates, these c Gates help to preserve the appeara maintenance costs and increasing r encourages users to take pride and clean and undamaged.

Controlled Access and Privacy

Gates allow for better managemen especially useful in shared spaces li businesses, where access may need Gates provide a sense of seclusion which also prevent users feeling like they are being watched or invaded.

- Overall we must balance openi communities. Gates provide security, maintenance order, protect property and allows a sense of privacy without eliminating the function or beauty of a courtyard. Adding gates to courtyards is not a restriction it's a necessary enhancement.

"I'm a mother with kids. I feel like when I have gates protecting the kids from running around it makes me feel secure, my kids are in a safe environment. A gated entrance acts as physical and psychological barrier."- Community Researcher, Holloway Park

A manifesto by one of the Researchers

Bike storage

Currently in the area bike storage was seen as either:

- Expensive
- In the wrong place
- Unsafe feeling (result of both design and maintenance)
- Difficult to use (for example relying on lifting the bike)
- Unsuitable for certain kinds of bikes

The main gendered issues that came up are safety, particularly in large storage facilities such as the one at Finsbury Park, and difficulty of use – as with anything which requires lifting a bike. It's likely that lack of provision for cargo bikes may also affect women disproportionally.

- A variety of different storage options could be provided (large spaces more likely to feel unsafe).
- Make bike stores more attractive.
- Include windows for surveillance and safety.
- Not close to bin stores because of smell.
- Provide space for bike maintenance and adjustments.
- Make access to bike stores part of 'natural' travel routes.

Peabody's experience was that some bike stores were better used than others – e.g. at Fish Island – so further research may reveal what works in these places.



this is a cycle storage in finsbury park, it

after doing some research and reading reviews as people find it difficult to use and unsafe, but it is significantly cheaper than the dome ones

I see a lot of these but after talking so someone who uses it they have said they are expensive and majorly inconvenient to get bikes in and out of and they take up a whole parking space but arguably we don't want lots of cars on the road anyways,

"If people are inconvenienced to get their bikes, the access is bad or out of the way, or it is a struggle to access they won't cycle as much. Similar to how if cycle paths are inconvenient at all, people don't use them." - Community Researcher, Holloway Park

Thoughts by a Researcher on bike storage

Retail

A specific concern here was to use retail for social value and to create communities which do not exclude the most vulnerable. So rather than only seeing this as leasing spaces to large chains, alternatives could include spaces for vans and smaller community start-ups. Examples locally included the Dusty Knuckle bakeries which train and mentor at-risk youth.

Given the location of the development, it seemed appropriate to do this through a gendered lens at Holloway Park. But providing spaces for food vans and small enterprises could potentially increase the sense of safety and community within the development as well as activating the outdoor areas.

Some of this is down to management and providing reduced rental rates or other opportunities, but spaces could be provided for either food vans or local markets / events.

Parks and Playgrounds

Although the main play area formed part of Stage 1 of the development, there were opportunities for additional spaces for play and leisure. Concerns included spaces for teenage girls, creating visually attractive additions to the streetscape and potentially being an opportunity to reference the prison's past.

The most obviously gendered aspect of this is provision for young people as in general, facilities for teenagers are predominantly used by boys and young men. In addition, areas where only groups of young men gather can be intimidating for women and make a place feel less safe.

- Creating a variety of different social spaces across the site allows different groups to use them with no one group dominating.
- Activation can make outdoor spaces feel safer.
- Providing facilities for girls and young women is important.
- Audit both stage 1 and the wider area to identify current provision and create something different within Holloway Park.
- Social seating where people can face each other is preferred by teenage girls.
- Co-design can give girls and young women a greater sense of ownership over public space.



Photograph by Andreas Nilsson

CASE STUDY: Frizon Årstidernas park, Umeå, Sweden

Frizon (Free zone), made by Tyréns AB in collaboration with artist Kerstin Bergendal, is one of Swedens' first public outdoor environments fully focused on teenage girls' needs to take their places in public areas. Through dialogues between local teenage girls and the Umeå municipality, the resulting design has resulted in a series of light up social swings for multiple groups to use at once and a welcoming place for conversations after dark.

Streetscape

This was approached from the first principles of 'what would a feminine street look like?'

Key factors were creating a shared space for all forms of transport, making it work for the local community as a space and being attractive to walk through.

- Colourful
- Soft edges
- Reducing speed
- Planting for softness and drainage
- Fluid and curving, with no blind corners
- Clean and breathable
- A destination not just a through route
- Range of textures and treatments
- Good wayfinding.
- Good lighting (person centred rather than designed around the needs of cars)
- Creating opportunities for other uses (eg circular running or walking track)

Frontages

Where the street or public area meets the block was a key area of concern as it could get forgotten or left as an afterthought in some mixed use blocks, but it was very important to residents. The researchers also felt that poor design and maintenance might facilitate anti-social behaviour.

Many of the issues were around safety:

- Doors were set back in the façade with dark areas around.
- Bin stores were foregrounded, making the door dark and hard to find.
- Parking spaces restricted access and visibility.
- Unused spaces near the front door felt unsafe.
- Benches close to the door meant that rough sleepers were very close to the entrance.
- Lighting was poor – either too dark or dazzling.

This did not only affect personal safety. Where a front door had glass or easy access to the post, this could lead to repeated identity fraud.

- Safety needs to be a key consideration in the design of these spaces.
- Activation of the ground floor – particularly in the hours of darkness – can improve the sense of safety.



A local study of 'frontages' by a Researcher

The findings in this report span a wide range of issues, from the deep-rooted and difficult work of cultural change—such as tackling misogyny and how women experience and are treated in public space—to elements of the built environment that are comparatively easier to get right, like the design and location of bin stores. Taken together, these insights show that inclusive placemaking operates at multiple scales, combining social norms, everyday experiences, and practical design decisions. Ultimately, the project demonstrates that the most meaningful outcomes emerge when people are actively included in the journey of how places are designed, managed, and shaped over time.



We would like to thank all the Researchers who contributed to this work.

References

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In this report we refer to women and gender diverse persons. As a report which reflects the findings of a group of women and gender diverse people it is important our language reflects these identities. We also acknowledge that inequalities and discrimination intersect with issue of race, ethnicity, sexuality and class and that these too are manifest in the built environment and can only be partially addressed by working with a small group such as this one.

This report was written by Susannah Walker (In Her Place), and Julia King (Social Place). It accompanies a longer report on the wider project 'Gender Mainstreaming Holloway Park'. For further information visit www.inherplace.co.uk or www.social-place.org.

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