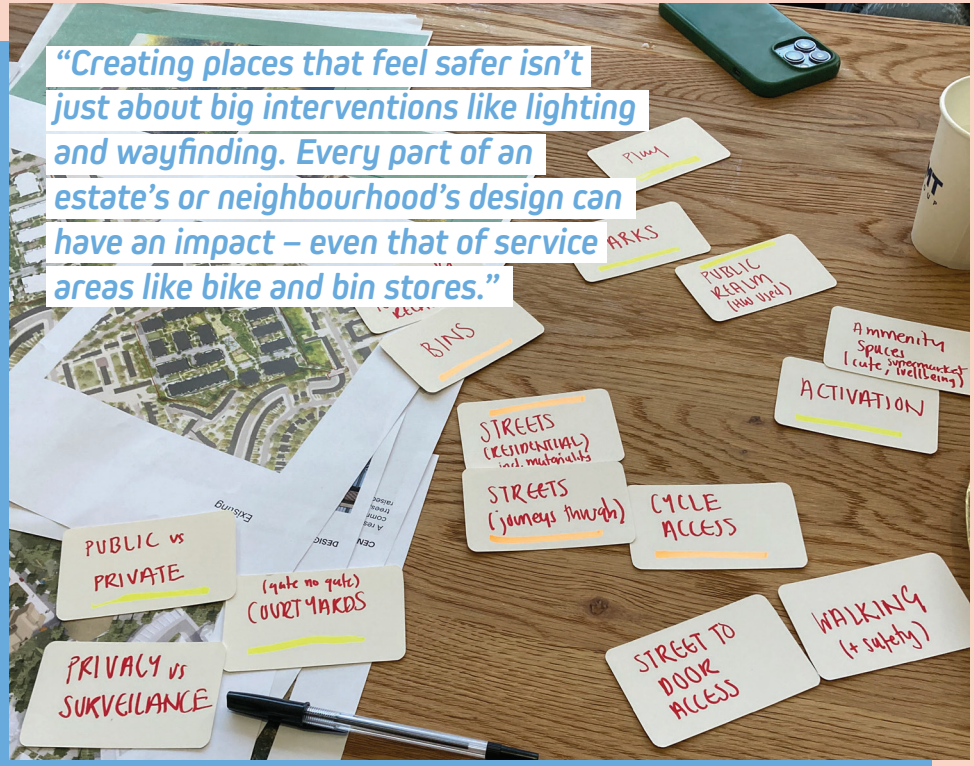
Safer and better bin and bike stores

A report for Peabody



Site visit and discussion

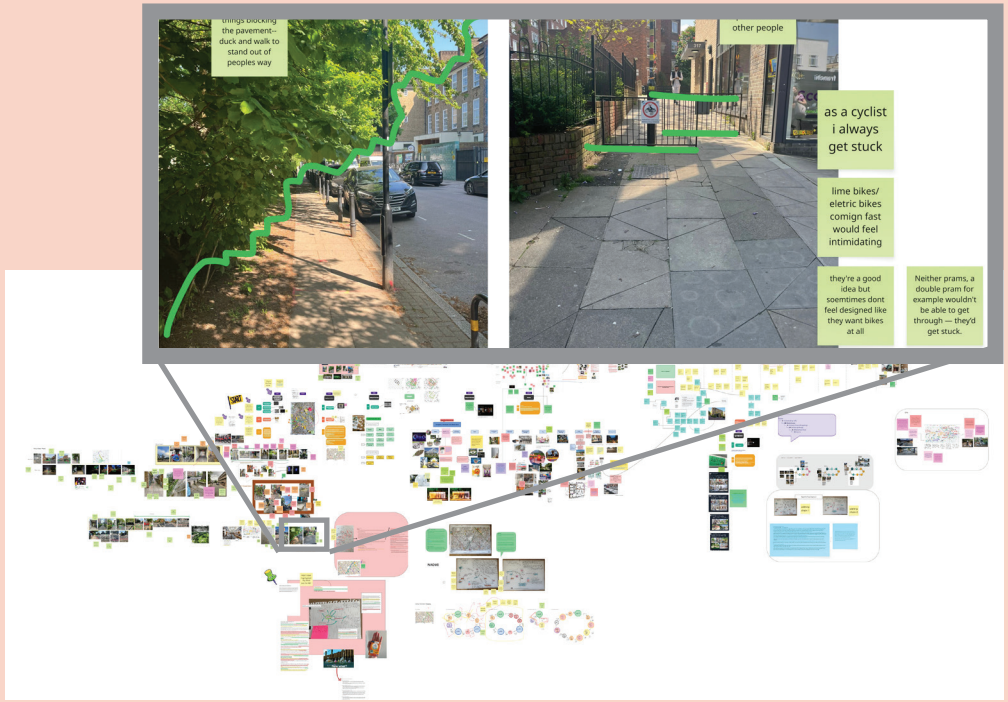
This guide shares key findings and design guidance for making bin and bike stores safer and more accessible.

It springs from observations and proposals put forward as part of an engagement project to influence the design of the new Holloway Park Estate. A group of women and non binary people were hired as community researchers for an eight week, intergenerational working and learning programme and their work included mapping their experiences of safety locally. They were hired as community researchers (referred to as the researchers) and their work included mapping their experiences of safety where they lived.

This focus brought up a number of ideas on how functional spaces, like bin and bike stores, could be designed better, and feel safer and more welcoming to use for everyone.

The answers were generally straightforward: helping people feel safe is a simple and inexpensive step that can form part of a broader approach to improving safety overall. Enhancing service spaces not only encourages their use but also ensures that everyone benefits.

But these basic objects like bin and bike stores are fundamental to our daily lives, and so can be instrumental in whether residents feel safe, or not.



Our collaborative whiteboard (Miro) ^ and the backbone of the project used to share the learning and working components undertaken by the Researchers, track our discussions as well as for the Researchers to share their thoughts, ideas, and activities.

BIKE STORES

A number of the community researchers were keen cyclists, but bike stores were not generally seen as feeling safe or being pleasant places. Safety concerns included:

- Not being able to see who else was in the store before entering.
- Lack of sight lines across the whole space.
- Dark entrances.
- Doors which are difficult to use when pushing a bike in or out.

Other issues for women included:

- Double height bike racks being difficult to use.
- Lack of space for cargo bikes and trailers.
- Bike stores often being close to the bins and smell being an issue.

Design improvements suggested by the community researchers included:

- Windows or grilles in bike stores for passive surveillance and safety.
- Breaking up bike storage into several different areas across a site.
- Providing storage for a diverse range of bikes.
- Inclusive access: level for both wheelchairs and pushchairs, and not relying on strength to open doors or put a bike on an upper rack.
- Creating a welcoming space that people want to use (including smell).



Extract from Miro Board



Image Credit: Dutch Cycling Embassy

CASE STUDY: Dutch Bike Stores

So many people visit the beach front at Scheveningen by bike that the local municipality needed to build two new bike stores, with space for over 700 cycles. To increase uptake and ensure use of the facilities, the spaces needed to feel safe and be accessible for everyone. As a result, the stores have large windows and parking for larger cargo bikes, trikes and electric bikes. They also have wide entrances for wheelchairs – and there are beach wheelchairs and trikes available to rent. This approach both encourages people to use bike stores, by creating a place that feels comfortable to use, and contributes to the uptake of cycling across the board.



Image Credit: Dutch Cycling Embassy

BIN STORES

Many of the safety concerns here were the same as those for bike stores including:

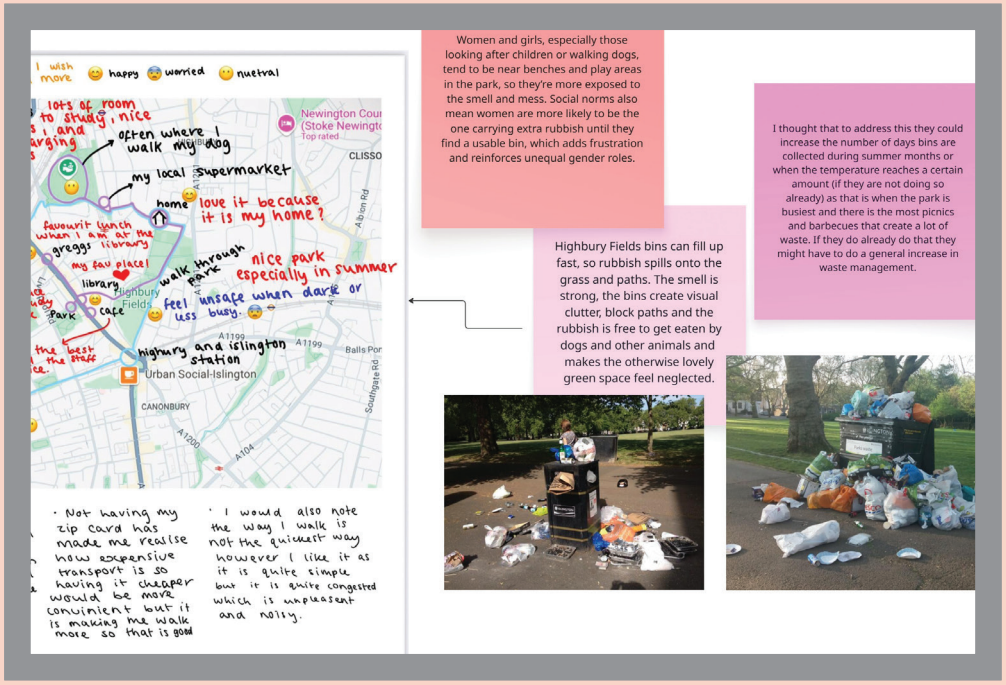
- Not being able to see in before entering.
- Hidden corners.
- Dark entrances.

Bin storage areas also have additional issues, in part because of the smell and potential disorder (dropped rubbish, etc) but also because of the associations of rubbish with a place which is potentially unsafe.

Every resident has to use the bin storage areas. Access could be difficult for women because of caring responsibilities, most notably when they had sole responsibility for small children).

In addition, heavy doors and bin lids were also identified as a problem for some women (and also to cause accessibility issues for other groups).

Bin stores were also seen by residents as being generally ugly areas which were designed as an afterthought, but which significantly impacted how residents felt in and about their estate or neighbourhood. The researchers felt that improving how bin stores looked would encourage people to use them and prevent dumping of rubbish.



Extract from Miro Board

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.

Perhaps as a result of this good design, the stores are well used and the community looks after this facility.

Creating guidance for bin stores is complicated by the fact that their siting and arrangement are in great part determined by local authority requirements and provision.

Even so, there are some general points which can be considered in every situation:

- Bin stores could be made brighter and more welcoming.
- Again, windows or grilles increase surveillance and make the space feel safer.
- Bin stores situated on already-used routes are more likely to be used and are easier to access for women with caring responsibilities).
- The design of bins themselves needs to be evaluated to ensure that aspects like its access height and the weight of the lids are accessible for all residents.

As mentioned above, wider links with rubbish and perceptions of safety also need to be considered. Providing good quality bin stores which are easy to use, thereby increasing compliance, can result in women, girls and other marginalised groups feeling safer in an entire estate or neighbourhood.

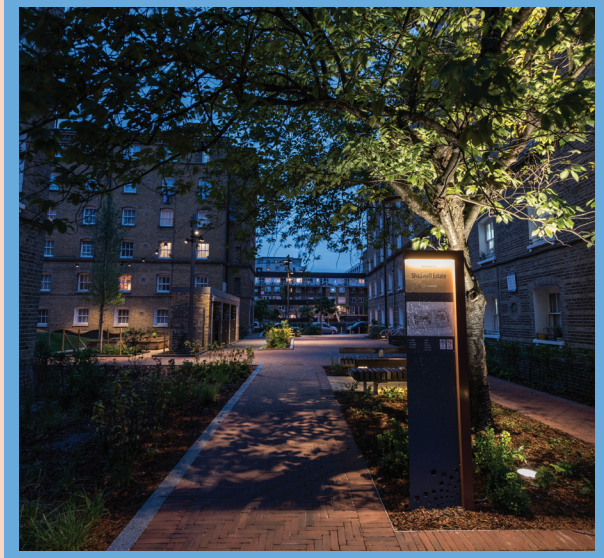




Image Credit: Turkington Martin

MAINTENANCE

Good maintenance is key to feeling safe - bike stores and bin areas that feel cared for will often also feel safer for users.

The researchers note that issues such as broken or malfunctioning lighting, low-level graffiti, and stickers on bins and doors can all make a space feel less safe — and should therefore be included in any "good maintenance" agenda.



One of the researchers noted that the stickers for "Massage Girls' on her local bins, contributed to the area feeling less safe for her as a woman.

Extract from Miro Board



As part of the engagement, one of the researchers produced a feminist manifesto for bins, based on sensory experience:

Sight: they should be good to look at, colourful and approachable, but smooth and even reflective to encourage users to keep them clean

Hearing: soft close hinges and rubber dampeners would make the space less jarring.

Touch: Handles should be warm and pleasant feeling; openings ergonomic and easy to lift so that everyone can access the bins.

Smell: Filters or charcoal liners to make the space smell better; ventilation can also help.

Extract from Miro Board



This report was written by Susannah Walker (In Her Place), and 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.

SOCIAL PLACE

IN HER PLACE