

This is for the majority – from theory to practice

Guidance for Implementing Gender Inclusive Design in Tower Hamlets

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A design guide

Implementing gender inclusivity in London Borough of Tower Hamlets

This design guidance is vital now!

Because it has been written to show how gender inclusive design can be applied in London Borough of Tower Hamlets to improve the experience of women, girls and gender diverse people and create better places for everyone. This is important now and must be implemented in parallel with current plans for high density living. This strategy will mitigate future risks to public health and child development, issues which acutely impact women and girls.

This guidance and the holistic vision are informed by conversations with over 500 women, girls and non-binary people who live and work in the borough and will implement the local plan policies (CG1, PS1, PS4, PS5, Cl1, BO1, BO2, BO4, BO5, BO6, BO7, MC1 & MC2).

The delivery of the green grid must be viewed as a crucial piece of social infrastructure in a borough that is planning for high density. It offers the opportunity to improve green space provision at scale and demonstrates how new development can create inclusive outdoor spaces, connect to the green grid and map opportunity for residents to experience the outdoors in meaningful ways. Delivering green infrastructure will offer residents a green city with greater access to the benefits of play, health and well-being in a natural eco-system, at borough scale. It will also ensure that all new development builds a coherent visual identity across the borough where all places are accessible and inclusive. This is something women, girls and gender diverse people have said would build inclusivity.

This stream of work aligns with policies in the Local Plan- primarily delivering the Green Grid and Inclusive design, active travel/ health/ community infrastructure.

Implementing the green grid, at scale across the borough and ensuring gender inclusivity from the outset is an opportunity to create a unique green network for residents and visitors to immerse themselves in biodiverse, restorative places adjacent to urban high density living.

This conceives of a different kind of city, one in which human life is connected to a much broader set of ecologies from within a dense urban context. This concept is proposed as a feminist architecture because it has been co-designed and imagined with over 500 women and non-binary people from across the borough and interprets what has been learned through both an overarching concept and specific design interventions, to re-imagine and implement new green infrastructure in the borough.

This document will provide design guidance and outline a strategy for the implementation of gender inclusive design in LBTH.

by setting out a plan to write and deliver a design code that is informed by significant engagement with women, girls and gender diverse people. This document provides direction and a strategy for the writing of an area wide design code that will deliver gender inclusive spaces, a green grid, bio diversity and play.

The National Design Guide (2021)

The National Design Guide (2021) defines a design code as 'A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area'. This design guidance will take what has been learned through engagement in London Borough of Tower Hamlets and provide a set of approaches that can be used for future development, with specific design interventions to create welcoming places and strengthen the green grid network. It is proposed that LBTH works in collaboration with other local stakeholders to define a green grid 'kit' (comprised of wayfinding/benches/play/ affordable catering/ infrastructure such as lighting and public toilets and planting schemes etc) to be rolled out across the green grid and adopted by new development to create a holistic joined up experience of the borough and therefore an 'even' and welcoming experience to all. At a later date this initial document should be extended to provide specific design guidance and illustrations on the above.



Scoping:

Geographically the scope of the guidance refers to Tower Hamlets current green grid (see map) and relates to specific policies in the new Local plan relating to inclusive design, the green grid, green space, biodiversity net gain (CG1, PS1, PS4, PS5, Cl1, BO1, BO2, BO4, BO5, BO6, BO7, MC1 & MC2). This need has been identified in consultation with residents and evidence can be found in the sister document to this design guidance- 'This is for the majority'. (2024 LBTH)

Baseline:

The baseline analysis and community engagement are mapped out in the document, 'This is for the majority' an evidence base and set of recommendations looking at gender inclusion in LBTH.

'This is For The Majority' is an evidence base and set of recommendations to support the inclusive design policy in the new Local Plan (PS5).

Findings from the evidence have been aggregated through some of the policies of the Local Plan and consulted on through Reg 18 and Reg 19. This design guidance translates what has been learned through engagement and sets out a constellation of approaches for the implementation and delivery of gender inclusive design in the borough. Recommendations are specific to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and broadly translatable to other boroughs and cities.

This guidance sets out a Vision for gender inclusive design to create:

**Welcoming borough:
Empowering and educating.**



**Inclusive borough: Enabling
individuals and strengthening
community.**



**Restorative borough:
Prioritising health and ecology**



Area Type

This guidance identifies place typologies and suggests design solutions, at scale, for each type of place. The focus of each typology embeds specific design principles identified in 'This is for the majority' at scale across the borough. However, the primary focuses of this guide are movement and establishing a network of connected green walk ways. So, whilst each typology will consider design and place, there will also be an overarching focus on making connections across the borough. This will be addressed in the section 'code- wide guidance'.

The focus on green space is informed directly by the co-design process with women and girls, where parks and green spaces were either cited as places of value that had positive benefits on mind and body and were enjoyed by people of all ages and vital for the health and development of children.

OR

as problem areas, that felt unwelcoming and replicate economic inequality. This most acutely impacts children and women.

This design guidance sets out four place typologies that relate to both physical place and community use and strongly suggests that designers consider how a place is set out and how it looks AND also how it is used. This is important because the evidence base, 'This is For The Majority' shows that place activation plays a significant role in making somewhere feel welcoming and inclusive.

| Community infrastructure | Active travel green space | Layering existing provision | Streets & Public spaces |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Hyper local parks and wide verges. | Green, tree lined roads | Small parks | The fifteen-minute neighbourhood. |
| Pocket parks and public gardens | Canals and pathways | Medium & large parks | Streets after dark |
| Public green space around housing | Link roads | Sports pitches | |

This document sets out a framework for the development of a gender inclusive area design code to deliver the green grid in Tower Hamlets. It provides the scope and frame to implement inclusive spaces in line with research set out in the evidence base, 'This is for the majority'.

This document focuses on the 'how' and translates what has been learned to propose a number of interlinked, workable projects that help to ensure greater inclusivity.

Guidance for Area Types

Guidance for Area Types considers how to apply the principles of gender inclusive design to specific places and situations. In this document there will be a focus on working at scale and how gender inclusion can be implemented in different types of places.

Code-Wide Guidance

Code-Wide Guidance will provide guidance applicable to the entire green grid and future development within the code area. The aim of this is to make additional connections along the green grid and ensure adequate green space provision in line with the findings and recommendations set out in 'This is for the majority' and in the local plan.

This design guidance

This design guidance is shaped by the voices of women and girls, and acknowledges inter sectional experiences such as age, class, culture, race, ethnicity sexual and gender identity, that have not traditionally been heard by place shapers. It condenses the breadth of what has been learned through engagement and translates it into a framework that can be adopted and used to improve places through regeneration, to level up parks and green spaces and create more inclusive new developments. This design guidance can be read as a stand-alone document or alongside the evidence base and recommendations outlined in the longer document, 'This is for the majority' (2024)

Listening to women, girls, and non-binary people.

The development of this work has been highly consultative and over 500 women and girls and non-binary people from diverse backgrounds, different age, class, sexual and gender identity have shared their experiences of streets and public spaces in the borough. It is vital that this work does not rely on assumptions about what women and girls and gender diverse people want and instead reflects the lived experiences and priorities of those living in this unique, densely populated, and diverse area of the city.

Participants took part in a range of activity including street interviews, digital walks, listening sessions and surveys and through collaborations across the council with the community safety team, the VAWG team (violence against women and girls) and with input from the Metropolitan Police.

This broad range of voices defined emerging themes and principles which are set out as recommendations in the evidence base, 'This is for the majority'.

Collaboration with Queen Mary University Of London.

Officers from LBTH collaborated with a team of researchers from Queen Mary University Of London on a public engagement program in which women and non-binary people aged 18-30, who live, work or study in the borough and who reflect the diversity of Tower Hamlets, were recruited and paid to work as community researchers.

Community Researchers

The Community Researchers used a specifically designed walking app and kept a journal where they reflected on their walks in the borough. They were asked to walk alone and take three walks, one in a familiar place, one outside their usual area and one regular walk they knew well. Each walker recorded their route through photographs and on the walking app. They also used the walking journals to map their route and reflect on how they felt in different places.

Analysis of the walking journals was used to test initial findings and learn more about the experience of this specific age group and how they felt about walking in the borough. Analysis of the walking journals was used to define eight key themes.

Design Charette

A design charette was attended by 47 residents, people working in architecture, planning, the local authority, community organisations and some of the community researchers. A set of activities were made for groups to discuss each theme and share their own experiences. We then worked together to develop ideas about how to deliver each theme. Having



a broad range of perspectives at the charette meant that ideas could be tested with people working in design teams, community safety and planning as well as people from the area who work as activists and agents for change.

This design guidance is a synthesis of the ideas and designs developed throughout the research period and references key policies in the Local Plan.

It's not what, it's HOW

Considering gender in place shaping is as much about approach as it is about outcomes. Adopting inclusive principles is a strategy that can be used to empower individuals and communities to change their local area. This document is relevant across the breadth of LBTH council and can be applied at scale. Designing-in the needs of women, girls and gender diverse people makes better, regenerative, socially prosperous places for all where there is greater consideration of mobility, difference, the needs of children and young people and a move to prioritise and value social prosperity and ecology.

This document maps a strategy to embed inclusivity in the borough from the fine detail to the big picture. It describes a set of actions and examples for delivery and proposes a series of design interventions towards a feminist architecture.

Multi-layered, multifunctional and flexible:

Historically a singular logic has been applied to planning and place shaping. In simplified terms the outcome of this approach is that places do one thing.

A football pitch, a play park, a high street.

The problem with this is that place becomes performative and excluding. If a person is not playing football on a football pitch, then they are out of place. If a group of teenage girls are using the kids swings in a play park, then they are seen to be causing trouble. If a person is not shopping on a high street or engaging in consumption, they are redundant, and if a woman is doing something like, walking at night, and something happens to her, then she is definitely perceived to be at fault.

This sense of being 'out of place' or wrong is familiar to women and girls. When places replicate and reproduce inequality, they amplify a level of subconscious discomfort and a low-level anxiety, a feeling of being in a borrowed place. Because planning and design has historically been done by and for men there are many instances where women, girls and gender diverse people feel they are out of place. This sense of being out of place is communicated through fine details- the placement of a bench, the lift that stinks of urine, the poor lighting at an underground exit. It is also communicated clearly and explicitly through design and materials.

The primary reason for this inequality is that women and girls have not been consulted or asked and historically there has not been enough diversity in architecture, urban design and planning teams to build in multiplicity and consider diverse perspectives. Ensuring balance is called gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming is not only a numbers game. Gender mainstreaming means enabling diverse teams to work together to effect change.

Gender inclusive design

Gender inclusive design is a whole system approach that embraces multiplicity with a focus on generosity and making flexible, multi-use places for a range of interlinked activity.

For example. A public square is a multi-use place that should be designed for a range of activity by multiple generations. It is a place to socialise, a place to increase biodiversity, a spot that could offer shade in summer and soak up rain in winter, a place for community building, exercise, leisure and play. It could be a place that is restorative and offers local interest and access to culture. A place that feels safe because it has multiple uses and therefore passive surveillance, a place that is welcoming because it is well designed and because there are social infrastructures in place.

When you apply gender inclusive design the square becomes somewhere that changes throughout the day, where certain activities are programmed for parents and toddlers in the morning, after school activity or early evening youth clubs. They could be partly maintained by a gardening club which is perhaps made up of people who have been given a socially prescribed course of outdoor activity to improve their health, perhaps managed by a group of apprentice urban gardeners. As the seasons change activity in this place reflects the weather, a regular running group meet in the autumn or outdoor exercise class in the summer and seasonal activity reflects holidays or cultural celebrations with planned events.

Design must reflect and support flexibility. It must be a facilitator and encourage activity and be an actant that strengthens community.

A further consideration is governance of this space. Who has a voice? Who gets involved? Are these activities council led? Has this place been co-designed? Can users take part, get involved, have a say? Can they help design a place, can they help programme the space or run events and activities, classes or meet ups?

If there is a problem, can users be part of the solution?

Gender inclusive design creates welcoming multi use spaces, that are flexible and adapt over time. Using this expansive approach to design requires whole system thinking to ongoing maintenance, programming, governance, and management.

Deadlines to plan and complete projects must change to accommodate people's views through engagement, at the outset and ongoing management post completion to, for example set up and facilitate resident participation. This means that new development, should also consider the social frameworks and hyper local governance that needs to be in place post occupancy and provide the finance to support ongoing social projects.

Applying gender inclusive approaches is worthwhile, because it shapes better more welcoming places that feel safer to all. A focus on hyper local neighbourhoods improves the experience of children and young people, increases biodiversity, and create more socially prosperous places This in turn promotes cultures of caring for the neighbourhood and local ownership that comes through participation in decision making.

Delivery Tools

The key delivery tools needed to implement gender inclusive design are gender mainstreaming, to ensure greater balance in all sectors of the built environment industry, co-design and co-production, to understand how women and girls and gender diverse people use the a particular place or area and what needs attention in that specific place and lastly to utilise expertise within the council so that large scale development is shaped by those with expertise from across the local authority.

Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming acknowledges that when workplaces are diverse there are better outcomes for everyone. This is because an individuals professional expertise can be enhanced by empathy and an understanding of difference either through inter-sectional experiences due to institutional barriers, or lived experience that comes from circumstance or personal narrative.

If a woman's success is measured in terms defined by a patriarchal system whose values have historically been constructed without her, her success will be measured by how well she can replicate established inequality.

If she is enabled to draw on both professional expertise and lived experience there are more opportunities for growth, to challenge systemic inequalities and to imagine new pathways to change.

Change is never easy. So if gender mainstreaming is to be successful there must also be consideration of how to support, listen and enable diverse perspectives and what change looks like in very practical ways.



Acknowledging the added value this brings is the first step to improving the built environment industry, an industry which is creating not only the environment around us but also the relational frame through which we participate in public life.

- Ensure teams are balanced and that all members are empowered to shape the gender.
- Nominate a gender champion
- Gender budgeting through Cil and section 106

Co-design

Historically women and girls and gender diverse people have not been consulted and because the sector is not evenly balanced, what women and girls and gender diverse people want and need has been assumed. The built environment has been shaped without voices.

Because women and girls and gender diverse people have not been asked we do not know what a holistically designed world looks like. That is why it is crucial that future development is made in collaboration and gives women, girls and gender diverse people a voice.

Co-design is empowering and synthesises lived experience and local knowledge with professional skills and know how. When the expertise of 'locals' and practitioners is brought together it creates opportunities for better, deeper, and more rigorous understanding and improved outcomes for all.

Co-design is an inspiring and creative process for practitioners that can provide gender disaggregated data- i.e. measuring the impact on users and considering their difference. A good example of this is provision of transport and cycle routes. A recent analysis by TFL showed that "At present, those most likely to cycle are white men aged 25 to 44. Current cyclists have a higher than average income and are more likely to be resident in inner London". This highlights the importance of gender disaggregated data and how it can be used to inform inclusive design.

Co-design and engagement are a useful tool in planning and development and although it may initially be perceived as slowing down a process, overall good engagement, and co-design leads to greater support and less resistance at application stage. This means there are longer term benefits in terms of overall time scales, cost savings and improved design outcomes.

- Appoint a professional with experience in co-design and co-production
- Connect the co-designer with design teams and create feedback loops so that local knowledge can inform design teams.
- Create gender disaggregated data and consider intersectional experiences to ensure that a range of voices and perspectives are considered.
- Ensure approaches to co-design consider barriers to participation.
- Design iterative engagement strategies that build in feedback loops, opportunities to test ideas and flexible response.
- Adopt innovative and creative approaches to engaging people on new site developments.
- Include your co-design practitioner in planning and design phase.

Sounding board

In-house resources, working across the council.

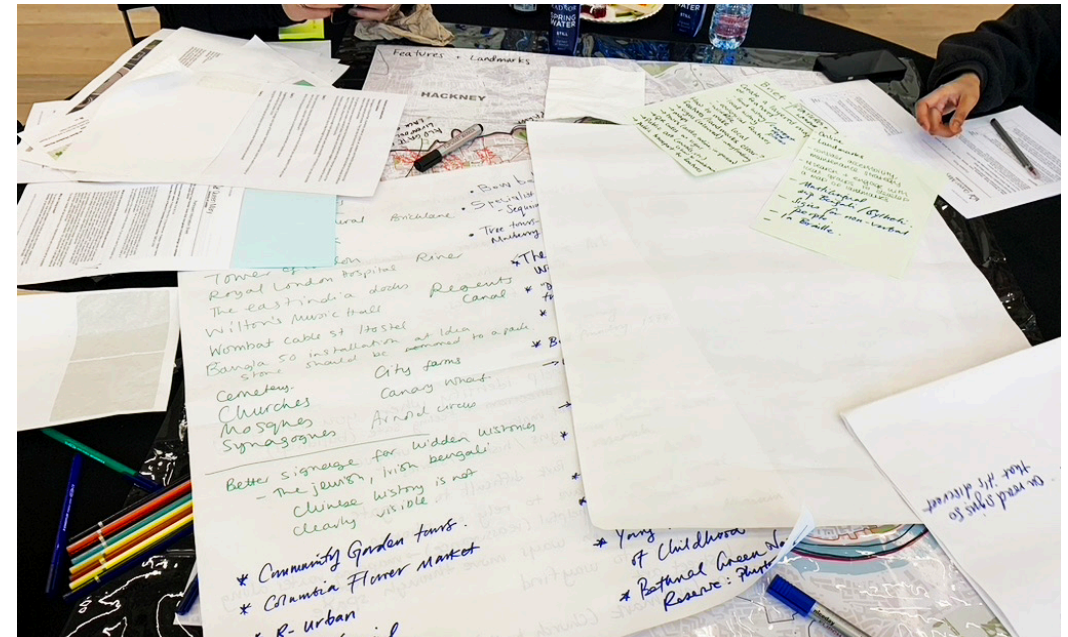
There is a great deal of local knowledge and expertise within the council. Developing a mechanism whereby officers from development management and workers from across the authority can input future development, regeneration and housing schemes would be hugely beneficial both in terms of consolidating and sharing skills and expertise, strengthening networks across teams, and improving outcomes.

For example an officer with many years' experience working in social housing will be well placed to offer input onto new housing schemes and will be able to offer insights to development management and place shaping officers about problems they have noticed. Similarly those working in community safety and VAWG should be consulted (and have been part of the writing of this document) to input place shaping projects.

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Explore how expertise from across the council could inform new development and devise an inclusive approach to gathering and consolidating knowledge and feeding back to Development Management and place shaping teams.

- Create a mechanism to account for staff time that allows officers to work across teams and share expertise.
- Develop a mechanism so feedback can be disseminated to external design teams and developers.



- Set up working groups from diverse teams with a range of experience from across the council to feedback on applications (at pre-app stage?)
- Sharing resources and connections, teams across the council have extensive knowledge of places and communities. They can be a conduit to connect with communities, facilitate co-production and offer advice on approach.

Area wide guidance

Building a positive shared street culture.

The one clear, consistent, message that was shared in each of the engagement activities is that there needs to be a fundamental culture shift on streets and public spaces that addresses day to day experiences of women, girls and non-binary people in the borough. This is when gender imbalance is expressed through staring, commenting, approaching, intimidating, and photographing women in public spaces without invitation. It is widely acknowledged that this low-level misogyny creates a culture of acceptance and the 'rape culture' pyramid shows that a society that is accepting of low level abuse is also accepting of greater crimes against women and girls and gender diverse people and ultimately means that women are expected to tolerate carrying the daily burden of encountering constant low level threat. ('Rape Culture Pyramid' Reclamation Magazine, 2020, 11 Principle: Consent)

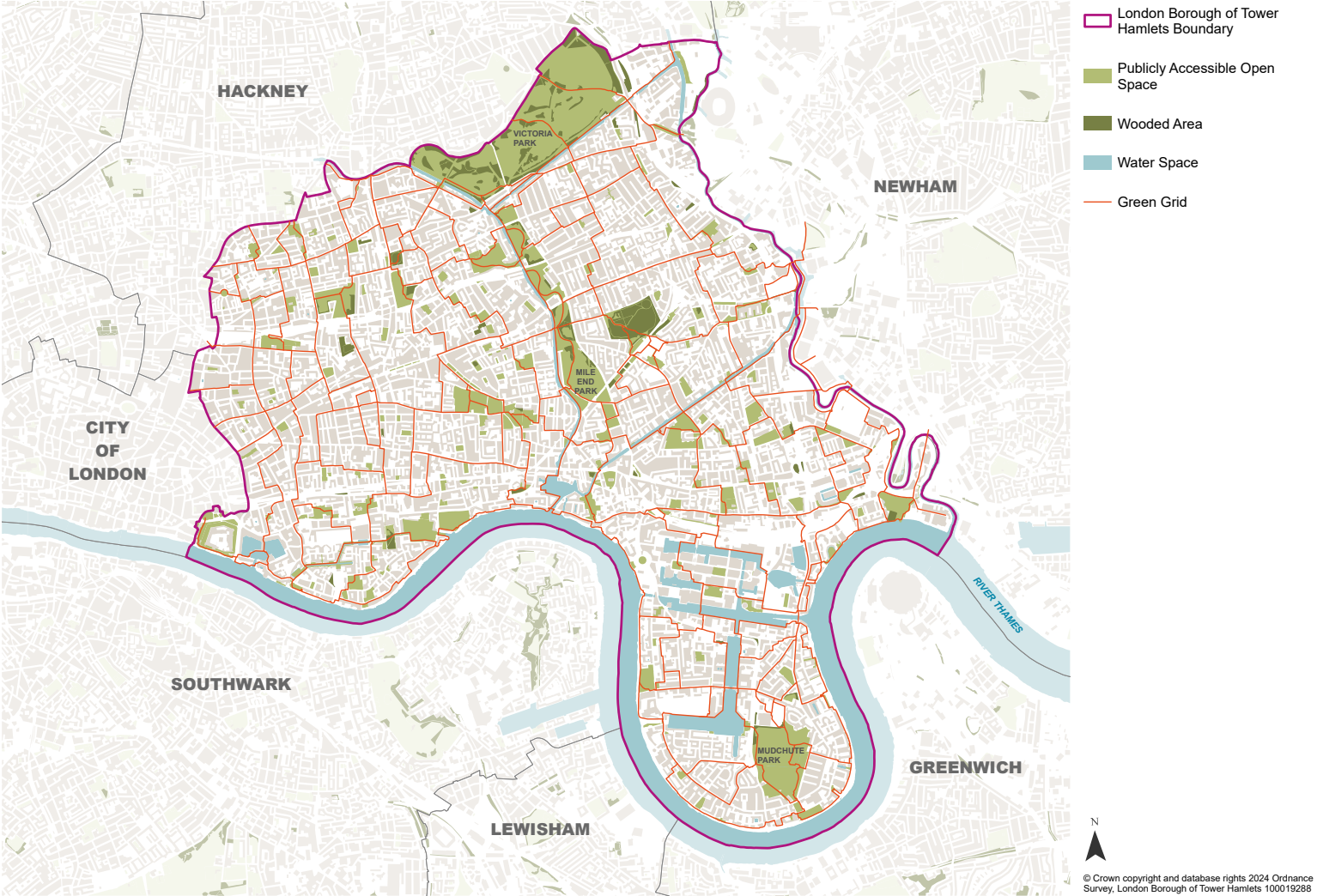
Changes to urban design and architecture cannot compensate for broader societal failings and it is wrong to assume that adding some street lighting is a way to keep women and gender diverse people safe- Leslie Kern is often quoted for saying "No amount of street lighting will abolish the patriarchy"(2020) and this is a truth that shall flow through this document and has informed and shaped the approach.

Whilst urban design and architecture cannot be used as a foil to avoid the difficult conversations we need to have about street culture and the experiences of women and girls and gender diverse people, it can be used to support a culture shift. This can be done through the fine detail and the big picture.

- For the council to adopt a culture shift that acknowledges the need to address street sexism through the cultural equalities board
- To educate through school, youth, community and religious groups.
- To co-design signage and public information for streets and parks that indicate positive behaviour
- Replicate TFL type signage in public spaces especially youth, community and religious spaces.
- To commission public artworks that promote conversation and discussion about how to create respectful shared street cultures.
- To commission urban design that creates welcoming, shared spaces to encourage diverse and intergenerational activities.
- To consider the materiality of the city and architectural design, how does shape and form communicate gendered norms? How does the 'language' of the built environment replicate gender inequality?
- To ensure placemaking teams are trained in approaches to inclusive design and that applications are scrutinised for innovation and inclusivity.

The network of green and blue routes in Tower Hamlets.

Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy, 2017 (Also see Green Grid Strategy: Update 2017 in New Local Plan Evidence Base)



The green grid as a feminist architecture

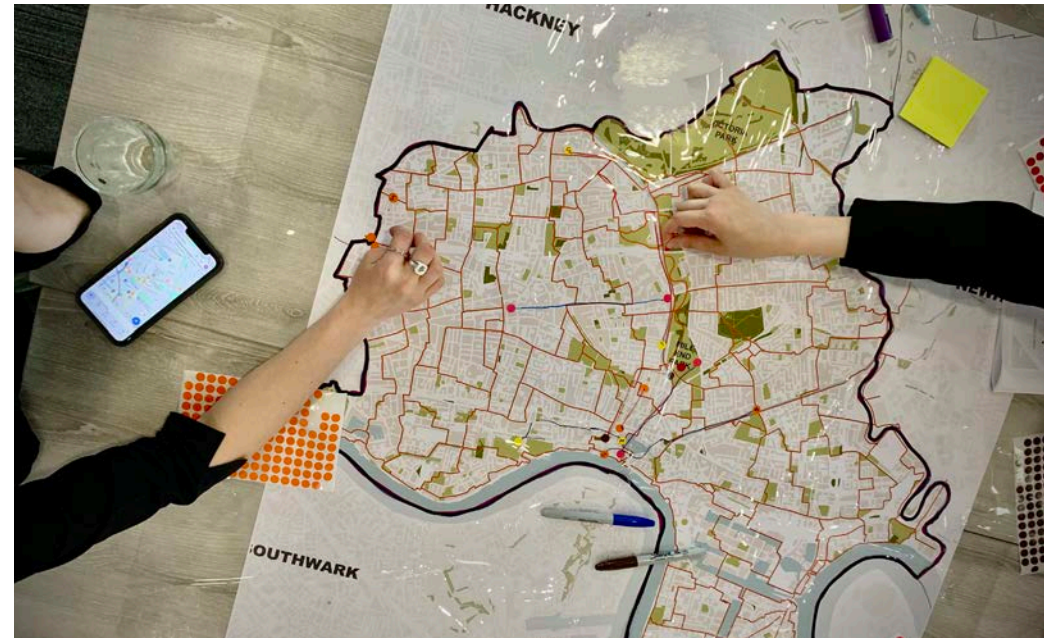
This document is written as a guide to ensure that the specific recommendations from the gender inclusive design research are applied and utilised in LBTH. The guidance works at scale demonstrating how to embed gender inclusive design from big picture holistic thinking through to the fine detail, considering how design shapes the way we move through and interact with the city.

There is a focus on implementing the green grid and making improvements to shared outdoor parks and public spaces. The code will look at how to develop and implement the green grid as an inclusive space that will become an asset to the borough and a salve to the planned rapid, high density development. Developing the green grid will reimagine Tower Hamlets as a green borough where paths, canals, green streets, parks and gardens remap the borough for pedestrians and provide pleasant and safe passage away from high levels of traffic.

Conceptually the green grid articulates the vision for gender inclusive design to be realised in the borough by privileging social prosperity and leading a culture shift towards green regenerative spaces, increased bio diversity, greater connection to ecological networks, more opportunity to play and connect outdoors.

These changes are restorative and act on views expressed by women and girls from across all of our diverse communities with a focus on growing and strengthening positive community networks.

Ultimately expanding the green grid and considering the design interventions needed to embed inclusivity will articulate what gender inclusivity look like and means. Making the green grid a pro-actively feminist architecture.



- All new development must situate itself in relation to the green grid and where possible build onto the green grid, adopting green-grid wide wayfinding and branding.
- All new development must create outdoor space and public gardens which offers access to biodiversity, places to sit and places to play on the way.
- All new development must adopt suggested infrastructure and, where appropriate community features described in this design guide.
- Create An area wide SPD that spatially maps the green grid / green infrastructure/ social infrastructure and play elements.

A user driven green grid.

The current green grid map (page 15) provides GIS imaging of green paths and walkways along. It focuses on connecting current green routes with future site allocation but it does not take into account user experience or the intuitive connections users make. Our research with women, girls and non binary people shows that users map their own green grid to make daily journey's more pleasurable, connect with nature or avoid busy roads.

This research shows that it is as important to reflect on user experience as it is to look at GIS data. Looking at user experience provides a clearer understanding of how the green grid works, which connections can be strengthened and nuanced choices about how and where to walk. This might connect, for example, a park to a pleasant high street or residential area.

To develop the green grid LBTH must focus on co-designing with residents and listen to their experiences to improve connectivity and respond to user experience. This will create a network of routes and walkways that connects residents to nature, makes commuting on foot pleasant and creates better outdoor experiences for children and young people. It will build nature corridors, increase biodiversity, and provide for mental health and wellbeing.

- Set up a public research project with residents to map 'their green grid'.
- Focus on understanding where and how people walk. This may create new and unexpected connections to high streets, leisure, and other local amenities.
- Focus on understanding different 'flows' through the borough- where people walk to and the routes they take.
- Consider daytime and night-time routes and how the seasons effect their choices.
- Consider areas that should be opened and made more user friendly at night and places that should be closed and not accessible after dark.
- The user driven green grid map should form part of the process to co-design the green grid.
- Invite participants to take part in 'branding' and naming the green grid.
- Use this opportunity to identify landmarks, local stories, important histories, and local flora and fauna.
- Overlay this resident driven green grid with other forms of GIS mapping.

Green Typologies

The Green Grid is conceived as an overarching concept for delivering gender inclusion across the borough. This practical approach is informed by co-design and consultation undertaken with women, girls and gender diverse people and offers a synthesis of those conversations and a deliverable set of solutions to embed inclusion. It is not a 'fix all' solution however it models a variety of approaches and demonstrates the priorities women and girls have highlighted in the research to date. This can be adopted on other projects.

The typologies outlined below describe different types of green space in the borough and suggests how they might be maximised and utilised in different ways for both biodiversity net gain and as community infrastructure on the green grid.

Green space

| 01 Community infrastructure | 02 Flow and connection | 03 Layering existing provision | 04 Streets & Public spaces |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Hyper local parks and wide verges. | Green, tree lined roads | Small parks | The fifteen-minute neighbourhood. |
| Pocket parks and public gardens | Canals and pathways | Medium & large parks | Streets after dark |
| Public green space around housing | Link roads | Varied sports provision. | Non- green public spaces. |



01- Community infrastructure.

The types of green spaces that must be utilised as community infrastructure include hyper local parks, wide verges and green spaces adjacent to housing. These green areas must function in a number of ways

i) To look welcoming and pleasing. Flowers, plants and trees make a place feel looked after and they add colour and vibrancy to an area.

ii) Contribute to overall 'greening' and natural corridors to support ecology in the borough this can have positive impacts on all local species (including humans)

iii) Offer residents the opportunity to participate in stewardship and to enjoy outdoor green spaces at the heart of their community. This will strengthen community, build new social networks and create positive communities and local groups through community growing schemes, social prescription (for health) and hyper local governance through gardening clubs will facilitate this. A programming of activity facilitated by the council such as playgroups, afterschool activities and youth hubs to both occupy and maximise use of green space and educate young people, encourage stewardship and connection to nature.

Examples of these hyper local estate gardens, wide verges and pocket parks can be found across the Borough with good examples around the Chicksand Estate, off Brick Lane.

02-Flow and connection.

The green grid is ultimately about flow and being able to navigate the borough away from busy roads. Creating a user driven green grid along with information via GIS mapping will start to define routes and show where natural connections occur. These natural walking connections should adopt the green grid 'way finding'/ benches/ and design interventions in order to create natural flow and connectivity along quieter streets. Efforts should also be made to 'green' these routes and ensure diverse planting in line with the green grid overall scheme.

03-Layering existing provision at scale.

Current small, mid and large parks lack biodiversity and diversity of use. There is too much focus on large open flat areas of grass and not enough infrastructure to support a range of activity- even if this activity is implied or indeed simply an improved view, and seasonal changes through planting. Layering activity in parks means they attract and make a diversity of people feel welcome. This will ensure behaviour is more balanced and that everyone feels they can take part there.

04-Streets and non-green public spaces.

The green grid intersects a number of fifteen-minute neighbourhoods or small scale local centres such as Roman Road or Columbia Road as well as larger high streets such as Bethnal Green Road or Whitechapel High Street. These areas attract walkers because they are vibrant and useful places to be. Often walks along the green grid have one of these smaller centres as destinations, or they are incorporated into a green grid walk because people enjoy browsing, shopping, to get a coffee or connect to people. These streets can connect to the green grid through consistent wayfinding and adopting elements of the green grid kit, such as benches or infrastructure elements and adopting planting and green elements. Creating this consistency makes places feel inclusive and blends new developments, high streets and existing neighbourhoods.



Design Interventions

Social infrastructure- Green places provide social infrastructure; places to learn, develop and grow communities.

Parks and green spaces can be the heart and soul of local neighbourhoods. They belong to the community and should be valued by all as a vital part of local social infrastructure. Women and girls and gender diverse people told us that current outdoor sports provision is male orientated and stops women and girls from participating and access to outdoor green space is vital to mental and physical health and to children's health and development. Current inequality in access to green space across the borough is perpetuating economic inequality because lower income areas have poorer green space provision, and this impacts all members of the community, especially women, girls and children and gender diverse people. Mapping a green grid across the borough will create opportunities to improve green space provision and should be implemented using CIL and section 106 money from development.

- Level up parks and green spaces so that there is even provision of high-quality outdoor places across the borough that maximises all existing green spaces.
- Use the green grid infrastructure to even disparity and ensure all residents have access to high quality green spaces.
- Play is for all young people under 18. Provision of play must include all ages up to 18.
- Playgrounds are also places where women and carers socialise.
- Consider the needs of carers in the design of parks and play areas.
- Open green space should be rationalised and some green space replaced with trees, planting and more diverse and interesting landscaping.
- Sport is an important aspect of play, especially for older children. Provide opportunities to take part in diverse sporting activity and ensure budgets are allocated to encourage variety of sports and non competitive physical activity..
- Participating in sport outdoors is important for many women. Provision of outdoor sports equipment must consult women.
- Activate green spaces to encourage users and provide passive surveillance:
 - Programme activity throughout the day, especially in smaller local parks near housing. This could include outdoor playgroups, social prescription for those who have been medically advised to exercise/ socialise etc. Youth clubs to meet up outdoors.
 - Urban gardening apprenticeship schemes
 - Extending and facilitating the successful community growing schemes.
 - Encouraging and enabling people to set up local activity and events outdoors.

Wayfinding and branding

Tower Hamlets already has a green and blue infrastructure. The network of canal tow paths and the boroughs many parks and gardens are elements of the borough that residents are proud of, and which improve quality of life in Tower Hamlets. Many residents have explained that they walk their own green grid, connected green walking routes that they use day to day, and this access to ecology has many positive effects of health and well being and the health of children.

This guidance suggests that LBTH capitalise on current green infrastructure and make it explicit and visible through wayfinding and branding to give the green grid a visual identity and help to map routes across the borough. All new development will be required to situate itself in relation to the green grid and adopt the way finding, branding and furniture set out in this document and set out in the planned design code. This will create a coherent visual language for the green grid and mean that all new development is integrated an open, with public facing routes that make it accessible.

As the green grid becomes recognised, identifiable and celebrated it will become something developers actively want to be part of and identify with.

- New development will be mapped on to the green grid and adopt wayfinding, signage and furniture, to create a coherent visual language across the borough.
- Wayfinding infrastructure to be designed with safety in mind. This should include:
 - Clear and readable signage so that people do not need to use their phone.



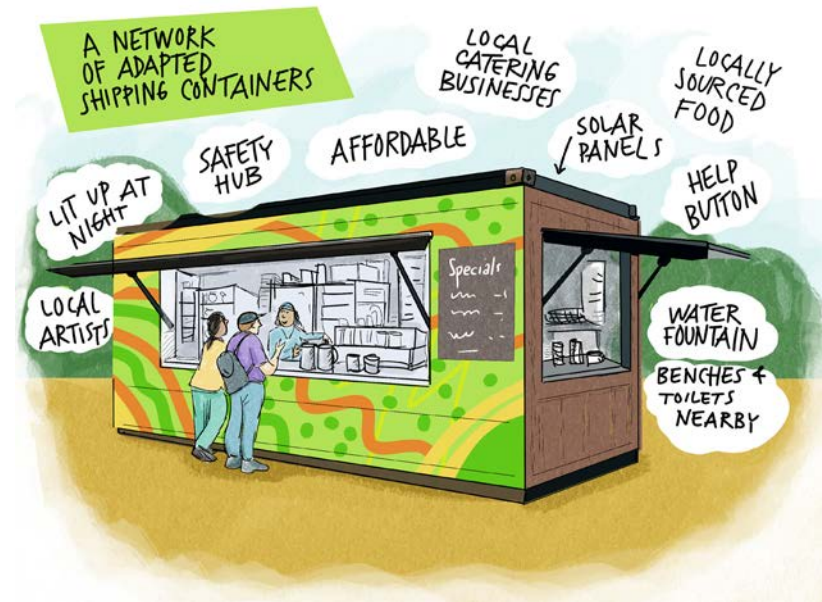
- Quick exit signage provides at a glance routes for those wishing to get to the nearest 'busy' place.
- Illuminated by night using solar power.
- Unique and celebrated design by leading design teams.
- Creative and innovative use of colour and design to connect across the green grid.
- Separate information signs provide information about the area, history, flora, and fauna with additional QR codes. (see section** digital green grid)
- Maximise and promote biodiversity corridors

Features

Features in the landscape give a place character, interest and purpose. Many of the community researchers noticed that design features such as murals, public art, sculpture and pavilions (such as the pergola in Victoria Park), elevated an area, created a focus. Landmarks and features were noted by the community researchers because they were places where personal stories merged with the local landscape giving a place history, value and meaning.

A network of new 'features' should be located across the green grid, with a new feature in each ward. The purpose of this feature will be to create new narratives and stories and to embed what we have learned about creating safer spaces.

- To create a network of functional design features to be located across the borough. They should add to the character of the green grid and each could be adapted and designed by an architecture practice to become a unique feature.
- Each 'feature' would be adapted for affordable catering and would be run as a local business, a community interest group or connected to a local catering college.
- Each would feature a unique design by an artist with a bi-annual competition to find the next design.
- The food could be sourced from community food gardens or nearby allotment, creating a circular economy.
- This allotment could be cultivated by local apprenticeship scheme passing on urban gardening skills.
- The cabin could have a water fountain on the side.



- They can have solar panels on the roof and become a light source by night.
- They can be a safety hub at night with a monitored 'help button' and live CCTV
- There can be toilets nearby. (also see infrastructure)
- There would be picnic benches and place to play.
- The cabins will be a facet of the green grid brand and also a way finding element.

This network will map across the green grid providing both local opportunity for play, business, art, culture and ecology. The design and colour scheme would align with benches, bins, way finding and infrastructure to create a holistic visual identity across the whole green grid network. This would extend to include all new development adjacent to the green grid.

Infrastructure- lighting, public toilets, water fountains, affordable refreshments

Basic infrastructure shows care for an area makes getting about easier for everyone. Access to clean, safe toilet facilities and drinking water are particularly important for people caring for children, the elderly, those with hidden medical issues such as incontinence and for active travellers who commute longer distances around the city. They are also an important resource for peripatetic workers such as delivery drivers or care workers. Our research found that installing and maintaining basic infrastructure would make places more usable and welcoming to people of all ages and abilities and therefore gender inclusive.

1. Public toilets

- A block with each stall opening outwards
- A standard block should be designed in consultation with residents which accommodates preferences for male/ female and gender neutral toilets, baby change facilitates and accessibility.
- Self-cleaning after each use.
- Toilets positioned slightly away from activity but not in an isolated position.

2. Naming places.

- Design green grid signage to regularly name places
- All new development to adopt name signage and make sure locations are clearly named/ searchable on maps.
- Clearly naming places enables people to connect to help.

3. Public Water fountains must be available across the green grid network. (also see 04)

4. Lighting

- Holistic lighting scheme across the green grid that is sensitive to specific area and responds with appropriate lighting, for example illuminated cat eyes to mark walking routes after dark, atmospheric lighting in social areas, consideration of lighting after dark super highways.
- Ideally there would be a specific design code for lighting the green grid that looked at lighting design and safety after dark.
- Walking through parks and gardens after dark can vary. Decisions about illuminating parks after dark should be done on a case-by-case basis and decisions should be made with residents.

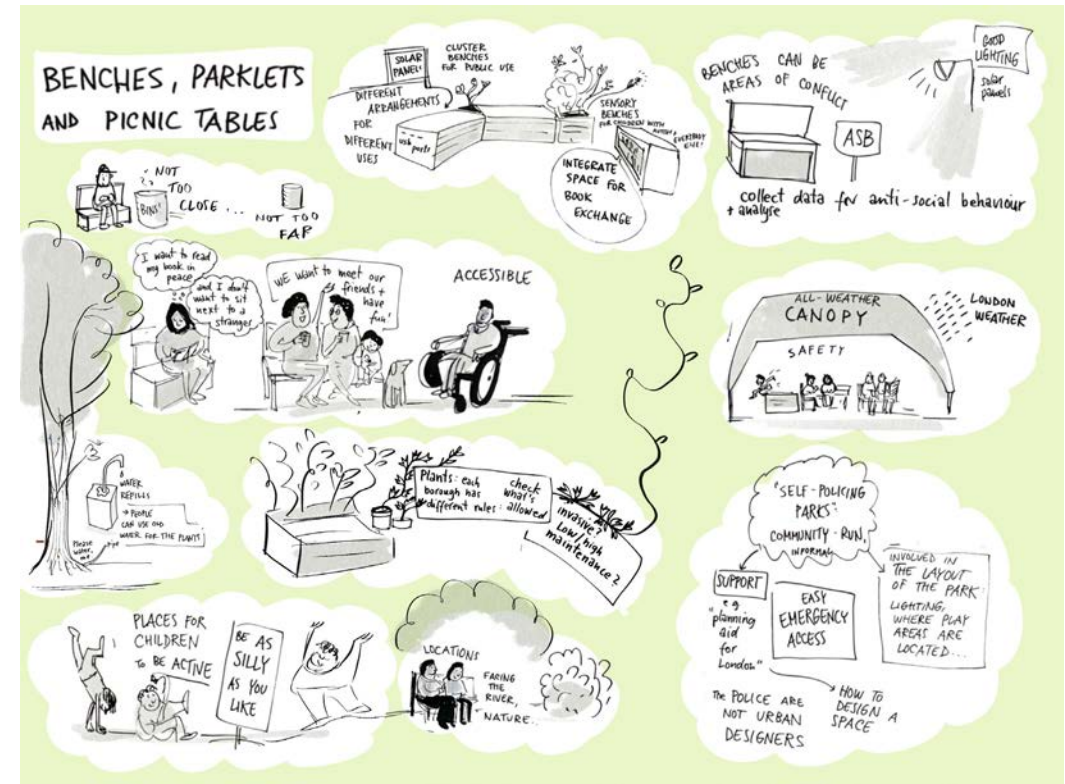
5. Bins and rubbish.

- Bins and rubbish collection should adopt the same green grid branding as wayfinding/ benches/ cabins etc
- Litter and 'bad' graffiti have been identified as contributing to a place feeling unsafe or uncared for.
- Good graffiti and murals make a place feel vibrant and authentic.

Benches and picnic tables

Benches and picnic tables are important places for women and girls and gender diverse people. They are places to sit with a small child, to eat, to rest, to meet a friend and they make walking a more inclusive activity because less able people can plan stopping points. Benches are stopping points, they can also be places to play. Teenage girls see benches as places for them and research by the charity, 'Make Space For Girls' shows that for many teenage girls are an important social focus and place to meet friends outside their home.

- A scheme or kit of benches should be designed and used across the green grid.
- These benches should be adopted and used in all new development adjacent to the green grid.
- Because they will be a recognisable feature of the green grid, they will also be a form of way finding.
- They should adopt uniform materials and colour scheme and a there should be a number of variable configurations to choose from for sociability, shelter, planting, a picnic, play or solitude.
- Each bench type should be appropriately placed, so the bench considers activity and is sensitive to surroundings.
- Consideration should be given to the placement of benches which must avoid becoming sites of anti social behaviour or places that are intimidating to walk past.
- Placement of benches should consider surroundings and be sensitive to the possibility of ASB (and mitigating that) by ensuring passive surveillance and encouraging diverse and mixed user groups.



- Consideration could also be given to placing benches away from the path and in spaces where small groups of people are able to meet without disrupting others.
- Placement of benches should also refer to place typologies, for example placement of benches in small parks and gardens, next to a play park will require a different set of considerations to placement of benches in larger open spaces.

Play, Sport and the great outdoors, enjoying the green grid.

Play is important. It is important to young children and a key part of their development; it is important to children over ten as they start to take risks and learn boundaries and it is still important when girls are teenagers to stay fit and healthy, socialise and spend unstructured time with their friends outdoors.

Creating opportunities for children to play outdoors is important for carers too and it is vital that any planned high density has great outdoor resources for the health and well being of children, their parents and carers.

Adults like to play too and at the design charette many participants talked about wanting to join gardening clubs and get involved in the stewardship of their local area through community gardens, by setting up events such as street parties and carnivals and taking part in outdoor sports.

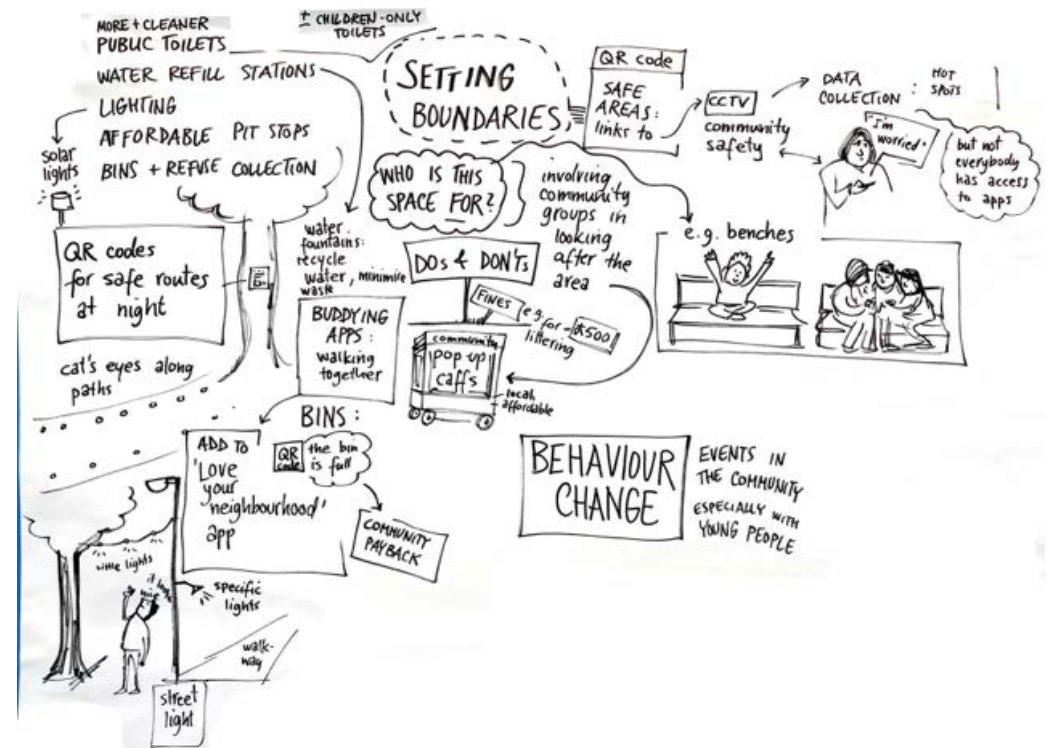
The green grid network offers opportunity to introduce a variety of play along the walking routes in the form of 'play on the way type activities' for small children with more risky play for older children and teens set back from the path offering independence with passive surveillance from walkers. Simple interventions such as rope swings would become social spaces that facilitated more independent outdoor play for teen girls and the charity, Make Space For Girls, has an online resource documenting examples of inter-generational playful spaces from across the globe.



Creativity, sport and noncompetitive physical activity are forms of play that older teens and adults engage with: roller skating, cycling for fun, climbing, volley ball, trampolining, kayaking and outdoor swimming were just a few named in the broader evidence base. Street parties, carnivals, fates and Mela's are forms of creative play that could use the green grid.

The green grid should make play a priority:

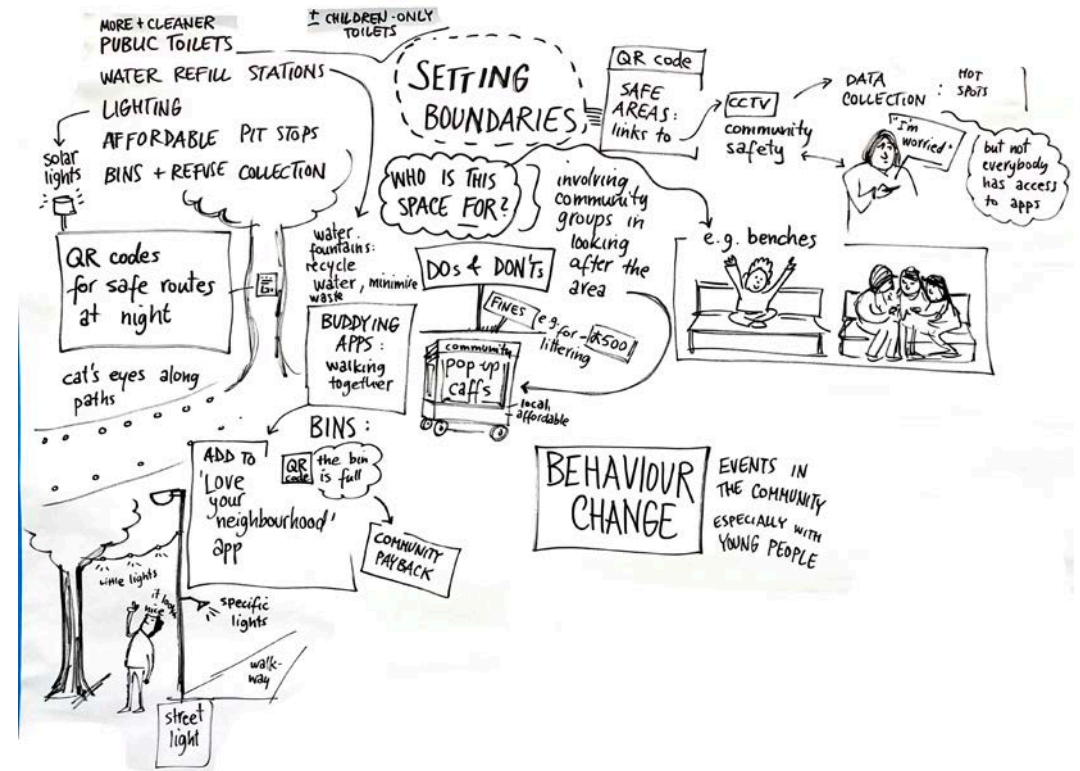
- 'Play on the way', make walks more interesting for younger children and should be installed across the Green Grid.
- Older children and teens should have more risky or independent play that utilises the passive surveillance of the green grid.
- Playful benches and seating/ playful wayfinding/ playful features. Play can be a feature of all the design interventions listed in this document. For example, Introduce a playful element to way finding which could involve storytelling, child height way finding and creatively connecting to nature.
- Consider different types of play outdoors, from running groups, community gardening to forest school and youth clubs- activities that embrace the outdoors. Supervised activity could include elements such as tree nets or 'go ape' type adventure play.
- Utilising our blue and green spaces with adventurous play such as Kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding and outdoor swimming.
- Culture play- using the outdoors for local parties, carnivals, events, meet ups, outdoor theatre, music and pop-up cinema. Design interventions can support these activities, and the Pavilion at Arnold Circus is a good example.
- Landscape design and planting also needs to be playful! Many participants feel alienated from large areas of open green space which they associate with sports. More playful landscape design and planting would bring colour to the borough and enhance people's experience creating curious playful spaces through planting, landscape design and public art.



The Digital Green Grid

The green grid network presents the opportunity to be expansive both in terms of the services people can access via QR codes and free wi-fi hubs, and the chance to tell stories, connect to culture, learn about local flora and fauna and find out about what is available in the broader area. The digital green grid can also be a way to ask for help and to connect to live wardens in the area.

- Ensure that the wayfinding network and cabins have QR codes.
- Create a broad online archive, that could be developed and added to by local people.
- Create a directory mapping local services that can be accessed nearby (eg playgroups or tennis courts or healthcare)
- Connect QR codes to Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers.
- Collaborate with Queen Mary on a research project gathering local stories and sharing them online.
- Commission artist and writers to develop interactive projects for the green grid, for example walking guides, local history projects, audio works etc.
- Reinforcing ideas of positive shared street culture.



Five-year strategy: Implementing inclusive design and the green grid

1. Create an area wide design code to map the green grid and articulate the following elements:
 - i. Wayfinding and branding
 - ii. Benches
 - iii. A network of connected features/ catering spots.
 - iv. Lighting, public toilets, water fountains.
 - v. Benches and picnic tables
 - vi. Digital Green Grid.
 - vii. Planting
 - viii. Diversity of play and sports equipment.
 - ix. The social infrastructures needed to maximise and utilise green space as social space.
2. Define and brand the green grid. Create a concept and branding for the green grid, that is instantly recognisable.
 - i. This should be co-designed with residents and can be a story telling project about the borough that brings residents together, tells the story of the borough's history and imagines this future green grid and a pathway to a greener, more inclusive future.
 - ii. Develop PR and comms about the green grid and how it is part of the boroughs history and its future.
3. Create a way-finding project that maps the current green grid.
 - i. Create a user driven version of the green grid as a co-design project with residents. Which also encompasses new developments (eg Brick Lane)
4. Produce way-finding kit described in this document.
5. Mandate that all new development either joins the green grid or situates itself in relation to the green grid.
6. Allocate Community Infrastructure Levy or section 106 money to improve green grid elements and embed infrastructure and invest in planting, bio diversity and landscape architectures.
7. Provide each ward with a community hub/ food cabin. These will have a uniform appearance with local variation see (*) of this document and add

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TOWER HAMLETS