



Young Researchers- in-Residence

A model for investigating and
designing urban spaces with young people

October 2023

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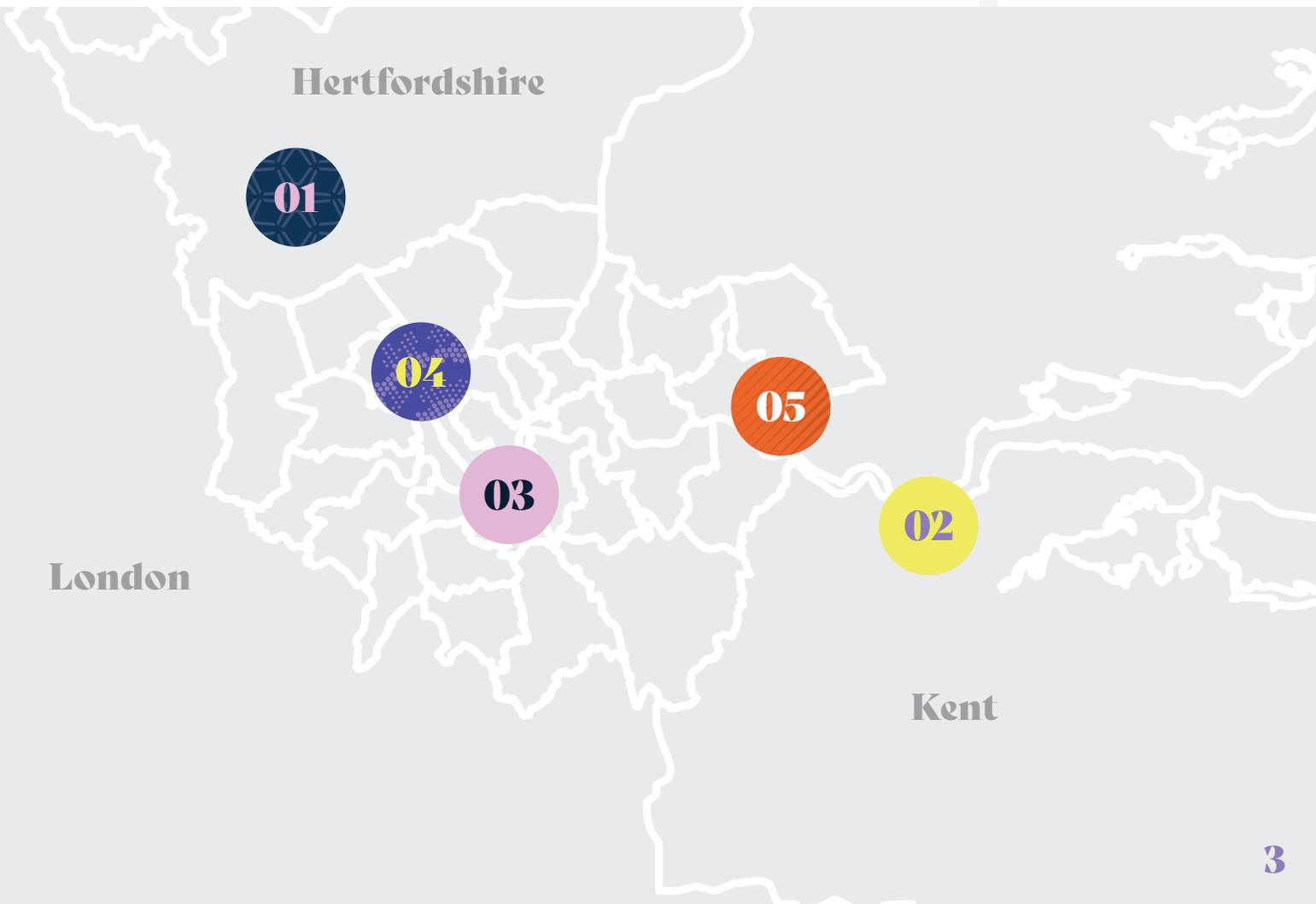
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Table of contents

Introduction	04
Context	06
Methods	07
Executive Summary	08
General Findings	09

Site Specific Findings	20
01 Hemel Hempstead	20
02 Gravesend and Ebbsfleet	24
03 Clapham	28
04 Brent	32
05 Barking and Dagenham	36

Conclusion	40
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Introduction

“I want public spaces to make each and every young person feel comfortable, like they fit in, not worrying about: Am I meant to be here? Is this a space for me? ... That they all fit in in some type of way.”

Young woman 18, Clapham

While young people are discussed as a group below it is important to remember that this is a heterogenous group with many differences, and that we are describing the findings of the 57 young people we worked with. Similarly, while this report speaks of young women and young men, these categories refer to gender identities and we recognise that gender is not binary. Finally, while we primarily discuss age and gender throughout the report, we take an intersectional approach to our research and to our findings acknowledging that other characteristics such as class, belief, race and disability also have an impact on experiences of public space.

This report is intended for developers and local authorities who create public spaces and those who advise and work with them. Firstly, it provides an evidence base on how gender impacts young people’s experience of the public realm, and what changes they would like to see in their local areas. Secondly, in light of this evidence, it proposes what could be done to better include young people within the public realm.

It summarises the findings from 57 young people aged 16-27 from five “Young Researchers-in-Residence” peer-research programmes based around redevelopment projects in London in Brent, Clapham, Barking and Dagenham (Barking); and outside London in Gravesend and Ebbsfleet (Gravesend), and Hemel Hempstead (Hemel). The programmes took place in Autumn 2022 and Spring/Summer 2023. The research has been led by Dr Julia King and Olivia Theocharides-Feldman from LSE Cities, with charity Make Space for Girls and primarily funded by Countryside Partnerships, alongside co-funders Sigma Capital Group, MTVH, L&Q and Latimer, part of the Clarion Housing Group. The report discusses overall findings as well as site specific findings for each of the five locations.

The research reveals a difficult relationship between young people and the public realm. While young people use public space and see this as essential to their wellbeing and autonomy, they also feel unsafe, uncomfortable, unwelcome, and under-provided for in these spaces. This report therefore considers: How can planning and design processes better include young people, especially young women? And what do ‘good’ public spaces look like for this demographic? It is our hope that this report stimulates change across the built environment in policy, planning, development and design processes.



Context

“I’ve become accustomed to being catcalled and feeling like there’s no designated place for us. We’re too old for playgrounds and considered too young and ‘noisy’ for restaurants.”

Young woman 16, Clapham

Existing research shows that public spaces are very important for young people. Public space impacts young people’s physical and mental development and wellness; increases their physical activity and its associated benefits; and fosters young people’s independence and socialisation.



In the UK spending on youth provision has declined by **69%** on average since 2010.

However, little work has focused on how young people – especially young women – actually experience public space. What we do know so far is that: public space often feels hostile for young people, and particularly young women; teen facilities in green spaces do not cater well for the different needs of young people (especially young women); and planning and design processes do not have mechanisms to recognise the impact of gender and age on public space.

In the UK spending on youth provision has declined by 69% on average since 2010¹. When money is spent on youth provision it is almost entirely invested in pitches, skateparks and BMX tracks which cater to a minority of boys and young men and very few young women². In terms of public space use: a 2012 Swedish study³ demonstrated that while in childhood parks and public spaces are used equally by boys and girls, above the age of 8, these spaces are dominated by 80% boys. Furthermore, a study in Scotland⁴ found that only 20% percent of girls and young women who used parks felt comfortable in their local public spaces. While young women feel unsafe in public space, young men (especially minority ethnic individuals) are most at risk from violent offences in public space.⁵

A lack of consideration for a diversity of young people in public space is unsurprising: 89% of young adults aged 16-18 have never been asked about their neighbourhood⁶, and only 14% of the UK’s built environment workforce are women⁷.

Without giving proper attention to young people’s voices and experiences it is unlikely for public spaces to be safe, comfortable, enjoyable and welcoming spaces for all.

¹ Plan International UK 2020

² MSFG 2020

³ Blomdahl et al 2012

⁴ Young Women Lead 2021

⁵ ONS 2021

⁶ Grosvenor 2020

⁷ Cosgrave and Henderson 2020

Methods

This report is based on peer-research methodologies. Peer research is a participatory research method where people with lived experience of the issues being studied direct and conduct the research themselves. Peer research is generally recognised as being able to

- 1 empower participants, enable growth and teach valuable skills while providing financial compensation;**
- 2 overcome extractive or tokenistic processes of knowledge production and address power asymmetries between researcher/researched; and**
- 3 give rise to better data through the investigation emanating from those whom it concerns⁸.**

This report presents peer research undertaken by twenty 16-27 year old peer researchers, the “Young-Researchers-in-Residence” (the Researchers). This includes 16 individuals identifying as women and 4 identifying as men. The Researchers were engaged in a multi-week paid learning and working experience where they followed a bespoke curriculum designed for each of the five sites and which fostered social scientific and architectural skills, with an intersectional gender sensitive lens. The curriculum included lectures, readings, discussion sessions, and site and mapping visits and investigated the themes of: “How do you experience public space? Does your gender, age and other identity markers play a role in this? And what would your ideal public space look like?”

The Researchers’ work is supplemented by the voices of 37 additional local 16-27 year old young people (25 individuals identifying as women, and 12 as men), who contributed through short term engagement in workshops, peer interviews, and in-person and online surveys on their perceptions of their local public spaces.

While peer research was conducted in every site, the approach varied between sites. For example, our recruitment methods were tailored for each site; two of our sites had mixed gender groups (Barking and Gravesend) while three engaged only young women (Clapham, Brent, Hemel). Adopting a fluid approach to each site was essential to working with a diverse range of young people and their various commitments, as well as working within the contexts of our sites.

⁸ Young Foundation 2020



Executive summary

What have we found out?

- 1 Young people have serious safety concerns in their local areas, which particularly affects how young women move around and use public space
- 2 Young people have complex 'non-typical' transport patterns, they predominantly use buses and walk, and there are gendered differences in transport methods for young men and women
- 3 Young people are disappointed in existing public space amenities like toilets, benches, and bins, and in the maintenance of their local areas; this deters them from using many public spaces
- 4 Young people perceive existing typical youth facilities (pitches, skateparks and BMX tracks) as 'male spaces' and easily taken over by groups of young men; young women therefore overwhelmingly do not use these
- 5 Young people have a lot to contribute to the development of their local public realm and yet feel that they do not have a voice to do this

In light of this, what do we recommend?

- 1 Recognise, accept and prioritise young people's concerns and needs in development projects. This requires explicitly considering gender and gendered differences as well as other identity categories (eg. race, class)
- 2 Prioritise safety, and think of safe connectivity as well as safe destinations. This means designing for safety (eg. including better lighting) and working with other local stakeholders to safely stitch together the redevelopment within its wider context
- 3 Design public spaces with amenities that are well maintained and that make young people, especially young women, want to stay (eg. better public toilets, social seating, shelter)
- 4 Don't simply opt for default youth facilities (eg. pitches, skateparks, and BMX tracks). Instead, create playful spaces and innovative youth provisioning where a diversity of play, and social and physical activity can be hosted
- 5 Reject tokenism and engage young people in meaningful consultation which actively values their voices and places these into practice



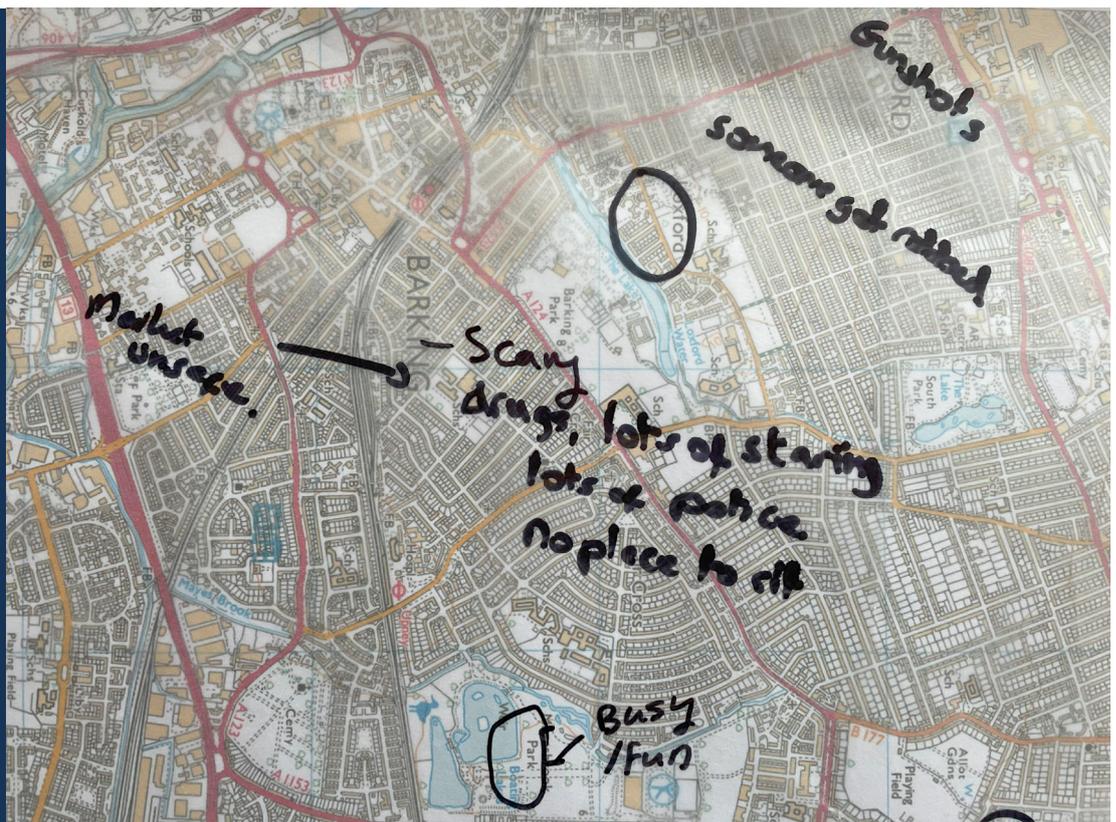
Safety

Young people had serious concerns about safety in all of our sites, but especially in Barking, Clapham, and Gravesend. Only 51% of young women and 44% of young men said they felt safe in their local areas. While young men were afraid of violent and gang-related crimes (eg. stabbings) young women were concerned with sexual offences, and in this context it is notable that 71% of young women felt sexualised in public space. Safety restricted young women’s mobility around their local areas and use of public space more than their male peers.

This is particularly concerning when we consider that the young women surveyed were overall older than the young men, and therefore that on average a 25 year old young woman has less mobility than a 16 year old boy due to safety concerns. Most young women (and some young men), avoided poorly lit areas, areas with a criminal ‘reputation’, as well as car parks, alleyways, underpasses, places with groups of men, and being out in the evening especially in green spaces. They ‘kept safe’ by not going out, ensuring their phones had battery, having strategies to get home before dark, removing or reducing the sound of earphones, holding keys between their knuckles, and asking to be dropped off or picked up when dark.

Improvements to the public realm are needed to ensure that young people, especially young women are not excluded due to safety concerns. Interventions may include: upward facing continuous lighting, prioritising overpasses over underpasses, better lighting in green spaces, public phone charging ports, open pathways and good site lines, wide pavements and crowd control mechanisms, no dead-ends, encouraging diverse users of public space, consistent public transport especially in the evening with safe exits and pickup/dropoff points.

Mapping activity in Barking which revealed that the Researchers’ restricted their movements due to fear of crime in their areas.



Don't use public space when dark



83% YOUNG WOMEN

62% YOUNG MEN

"I alter my behaviour because the areas aren't safe: change my route, I don't have my headphones in; I don't wear nice clothes; I have my jacket closed."

Young man 16, Gravesend

Avoid walking at night



80% YOUNG WOMEN

62% YOUNG MEN

"When I'm at the park [...] I sometimes get comments that make me and my friend feel extremely unsafe."

Young woman 17, Hemel Hempstead

Want better lighting



83% YOUNG WOMEN

69% YOUNG MEN

"I always think of the safe aspect of everything. Especially if I'm out without my parents or my siblings."

Young woman 18, Clapham



71%
of young women
felt sexualised in
public space

"Proper safety and security designs encourage young women to visit public spaces more often."

Young woman 16, Barking

Transport

The Researchers showed that young people tend to have complicated daily journeys. These vary depending on term times, fluctuating school hours or university hours, after school activities and clubs, jobs (and part time jobs), going to friends' homes and socialisation outdoors.

However, current public transport routes and schedules are based on the typical 9-5 outward to inward commute, and do not work well for the journeys young people make. In our central London sites (Brent, Clapham), public transport (mainly the bus but also the train) was heavily relied upon and seen as convenient; however in less central sites (Gravesend, Hemel, Barking) public transport (mainly the bus), while still relied upon, was often seen as unreliable, inconvenient and unaffordable.

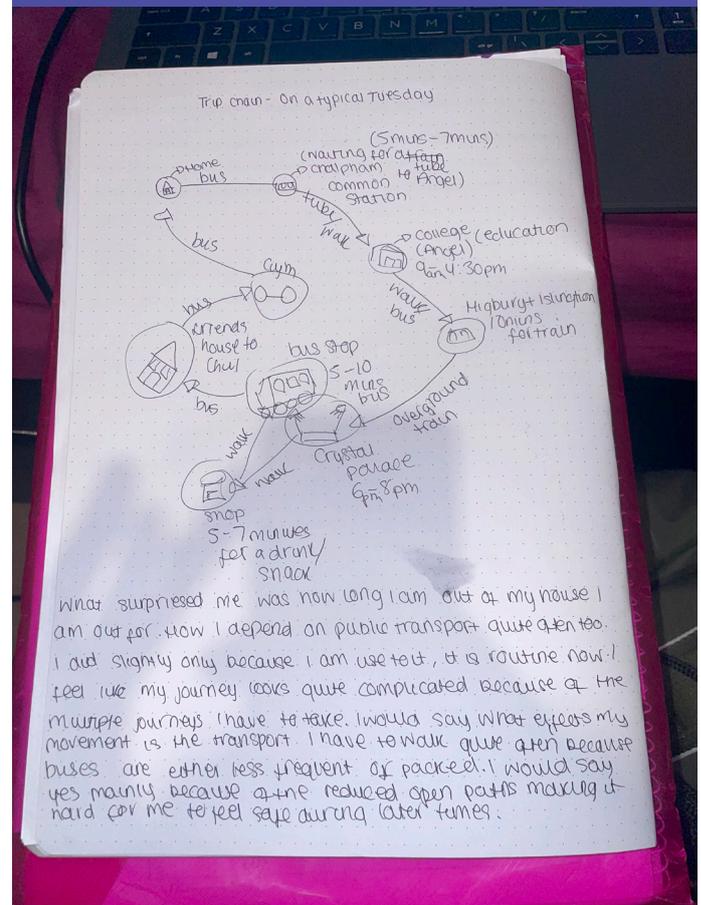
While both young women and young men used local public transport regularly, young women used public transport significantly less than young men (72% and 88% respectively) and were far more likely to travel in a car than young men. Many young women explained that while they would take public transport or walk in the daytime, in the evenings or when dark in winter due to safety concerns, they would instead ask for a lift or take a taxi/uber.

Almost all young people outside central London said that if their local public transport were cheaper, more reliable, more direct or more frequent they would use it much more.

The second significant transport mode for young people was walking: 63% of young women and 94% of young men regularly walked as a mode of transport. These large differences may highlight the different experiences of safety that young women and young men have, as well as the reality that many young women, feeling like their local areas did not have amenities for them, would travel further for leisure (eg. to a retail park) and thereby walking was not a viable transport option. Hardly any young people cycled but many wished they did.

Interventions in the public realm are needed for young people to better navigate their local areas. These may include: reduced fares for young people (particularly relevant outside of London), better lighting along transport routes and from stations to highstreets/residential areas, better cycling routes and safe places to lock up bikes, better seating at bus stops, bus stations that feel safe and open, prioritising of non-commuter routes, as well as express services in outer-London areas. Given that young women currently travel further for leisure and that current transport systems work less well for them, prioritising local public spaces over destination spaces (eg. local green space over large parks) will be beneficial.

Trip-chains are a survey tool to record the movement of people considering how long journeys take, the mode of transport, the purpose of the trip and other pertinent information. This trip chain made by a Researcher in Clapham reveals the complex and diverse ways they travel through the city.



Young women relied far more on being driven places than young men. This is interesting given that the young women were on average older than the young men we surveyed. In our discussions many young women explained asking for a lift when they felt unsafe.

“If at least one person in a group can drive then it opens up a lot more things. [Or else] you need to rely on someone else. Even to get the train to somewhere, you need to organise.”

Young woman 17, Hemel Hempstead



Use public transport regularly



72% YOUNG WOMEN

88% YOUNG MEN

“We’re limited and restricted, there’s one bus route and it takes you through all the town.”

Young woman 16, Gravesend

Use walking as a regular mode of transport



63% YOUNG WOMEN

94% YOUNG MEN

“I would prefer to take public transport over walking or uber-ing. It feels like a routine... and then you also adapt and get to know different routes to get somewhere. But then if it’s late my dad will come to pick me up at the bus.”

Young woman 18, Clapham

Public Amenities

Young people identified a series of issues and improvements to the public amenities of their local areas notably related to toilets and seating.

Toilets: Toilets were a key issue for most young people. Only 8% of young people felt there were enough public toilets while 78% felt they were seriously lacking. On many occasions young people discussed having to leave public spaces and go home, or find a nearby McDonalds to use a toilet. Lack of toilets impacted what public – especially green– spaces they used. In addition, almost everyone explained that the limited existing public toilets were either inconvenient (eg. closing times, location), unclean, or in the case of young women, unsafe. Young women also felt that they were at an added disadvantage as they did not pee publicly like men; that women’s facilities consistently had longer queues; and that the size of cubicles were often too small to accommodate a toilet and a bin for sanitary products (which was also often overflowing). While some young women felt safer in women only toilets, others suggested they wanted gender neutral toilets. They wanted: more public toilets and with regular cleaning and an equitable rather than equal allocation of toilet facilities for all genders (recognising queues and space for sanitary bins).

Seating/ Benches: While benches were important hangout spaces for groups of young women, especially during the day, they felt that there were not enough benches in residential, retail and green areas and that the typical bench (2-4 linear seats) were not designed for them but instead for older people. Current bench design made them feel out of place and they concluded that better social seating designed ‘for them’ would make them feel more invited to use and linger in public space. They wanted: more and aesthetic sheltered social seating, with space for eating on highstreets and in green spaces.

The Gym: Most young people used or wanted to use the gym but affordability was a key issue. Young women additionally often felt uncomfortable in gyms due to men hogging or mansplaining equipment, and staring at them. Outdoor gyms, were even more intimidating for young people, especially young women who felt excluded because of both their gender and age. They wanted: indoor gyms with some women only hours, women only equipment, or dedicated areas, and discounted memberships for young people. They also wanted colourful teenage friendly and women friendly outdoor gyms with shelter, better lighting, exercise matt areas or surfaces for dance and yoga, and equipment designed for average women’s bodies too.

Other: 84% of young people also felt that whether a space was well maintained determined whether they used it or not. This was especially the case for young women who perceived that poorly maintained places were more dangerous. In an age of Instagram and Tik Tok, young women felt that attractively designed green spaces were important and more inviting. 69% of young people also said that they would use green space more if there were more shelters. They wanted: more rubbish bins, better waste collection schedules, aesthetic green spaces (eg. planting, fountains, ‘instagramable’), shelters (eg. gazebos, covered bandstands).

Felt there were not enough public toilets



78% YOUNG PEOPLE

“In [fast food chain] as a boy they want to search you for drugs before you can use the toilets. And they are disgusting. But the only public toilets around.”

Young man 16, Gravesend



84% of young people would be put off using a space if it was badly maintained

“I really liked the park [...] especially because it’s new so it’s currently very clean.”

Young woman 25, Brent

“The Brent reservoir is beautiful but so dirty... I would like to like it.”

Young woman 19, Brent

Never used outdoor equipment



94% YOUNG WOMEN

56% YOUNG MEN

“Often, when my friends and I visit the gym, we encounter random men who try to mansplain or teach us how to work out, despite not asking for their assistance and clearly not being interested in the conversation.”

Young woman 16, Clapham

“Every time I have tried an outdoor gym I can’t even reach! [...] It seems designed for men who do pull ups...”

Young woman 19, Brent

Youth Facilities and Play

There were significant gendered differences between young women and young men's use of youth facilities and forms of leisure and play in public space.

Green space: Young men use green space much more than young women: 63% of young men used parks often, while only 31% of young women said the same. Young women had very clear concerns around safety in green spaces (especially larger ones) and generally were more likely to use their local green space over a destination park. Young women also often feel that green spaces do not cater to their needs. Only 26% of young women felt that their local green spaces had something for them, compared to 63% of young men. They wanted: aesthetic green spaces with hangout places and social seating (see "Public Amenities" above), quiet study areas in the park as well as different and improved youth facilities and play spaces.

Youth facilities: Young women overwhelmingly do not feel welcome in typical youth provisioning – MUGAS (multi-use games areas), pitches, skateparks, and basketball courts which make up the bulk of provisioning in all of our sites. 69% of young women and 56% of young men felt that MUGAS were male dominated spaces. In terms of use, only 6% of young women used football pitches and basketball courts regularly while 43% of young women never used these. Comparatively, 50% of young men used football pitches regularly and 19% never used these. Instead, young women used retail and restaurants/cafes far more than young men. But these spaces also had problems for young women: they were more expensive than green spaces; and young women often felt sexualised, and generally judged or stigmatised in these. Young women felt that people viewed them to have little purchasing power and therefore to be out of place; to be too loud, young, or rowdy for indoor places; and to be potential shoplifting threats. They described that many shops had limitations on whether school children could enter, as well as at what times, and in what size groups. They wanted: improvements to MUGAS that make them less intimidating such as less fencing, more entrances/exits, better signage that the space is also for young women, girl only hours in some cases (at desirable times!), and floor markings and equipment that invite other forms of play on these courts (eg. basketball and netball). They also wanted investment in other sports facilities that felt less gendered, such as badminton, netball, volleyball, or tennis; and in other forms of play such as swings, trampolines, performance stages and mature playgrounds. They wanted to feel more welcome in retail spaces and highstreets and felt that designs for teenagers or picnic areas for them, as well as discounts for local school kids in some shops could help.

Quiet spaces. Young people felt that public spaces were not designed well for quiet or solo use which was particularly disappointing for young women. Similarly, they felt that spaces like libraries had the potential to be and yet were not great public spaces for young women. They wanted: outdoor public spaces in which they could relax, (safely) be alone or in pairs, read a book, study, or reflect while listening to music. Suggestions included outdoor reading gazebos, social libraries with seating, grassy lounging areas with comfortable seating, or study/quiet lodges. For libraries, they suggested that the library host events for young women, offer quiet as well as group spaces and chill reading spaces, and have more dependable schedules.

Programmed Spaces: 73% of young people wanted more free or cheap events that catered to them and their needs. They wanted: outdoor cinemas in the parks in summer, festivals and teen parties, and creative activities for young people/ women in libraries.

Unprogrammed Spaces: Young people overall felt that there were very few indoor cheap / free spaces that they could spend time in without having to engage in a particular activity. 71% of all young people wanted more spaces to just go and hang out, and 77% wanted more indoor free spaces to hang out. They valued these kinds of spaces to do nothing in, particularly for young women (74%) compared to young men (50%). They wanted: indoor, affordable, sheltered and overseen spaces to chat with friends, have a sandwich, play boardgames, draw etc.

Use parks regularly



31% YOUNG WOMEN

63% YOUNG MEN

“I don’t go to parks. I don’t think there’s anything to do in parks. I go to shops and do different activities.”

Young woman 16, Clapham

Use football pitches / ball courts regularly



6% YOUNG WOMEN

50% YOUNG MEN

“A big fat football pitch is a way of designing girls out of public spaces.”

Young woman 16, Barking

Felt their local green space had something for them



26% YOUNG WOMEN

63% YOUNG MEN

“Teenage girls have very few options.”

Young woman 16, Clapham

Wanted more places to hang out



73% YOUNG PEOPLE

“[I would want] somewhere to hang out- a dedicated place to go and be free and it not be assumed that you are up to antisocial behaviour.”

Young woman 16, Gravesend

Having a Voice and Being Heard

All the Researchers, and 67% of those surveyed said that they wanted to have more of a voice when it came to their local areas.

The Researchers concluded that to build more just, welcoming, inviting, and enjoyable public spaces, it was essential to listen to diverse experiences and perspectives, including those of young people. The Researchers observed that as a result good, attentive and considerate public space designs could give all users a sense of belonging in their local areas that many (especially young women) currently lack. They suggested many public realm improvements and designs that they felt would work better not only for themselves but also for their wider communities, which would take into account race, ethnicity, class, gender, disability and so

on. While they acknowledged that short-term physical changes (eg. sociable seating) may not transform more deeply entrenched and long standing structural issues (eg. sexism), such design changes they felt would contribute to better everyday experiences for users which could help in achieving long-term change. They wanted: young people, and their diverse interests, wants and needs to be heard, taken seriously, and put into action; and public realm planners, designers, and developers to be held accountable for creating better public spaces for a diverse public.





“Volunteering can feel tokenistic [...] And every form they want to know, background, free school meals etc – it feels like they are just collecting data to tick boxes.”

Young man 16, Gravesend

“Good design gives young women a sense of belonging rather than making us feel ‘out of place’.”

Young woman 16, Barking

“A lot of young people have ideas that could benefit the whole human race. We are the generation that will replace the other generation.”

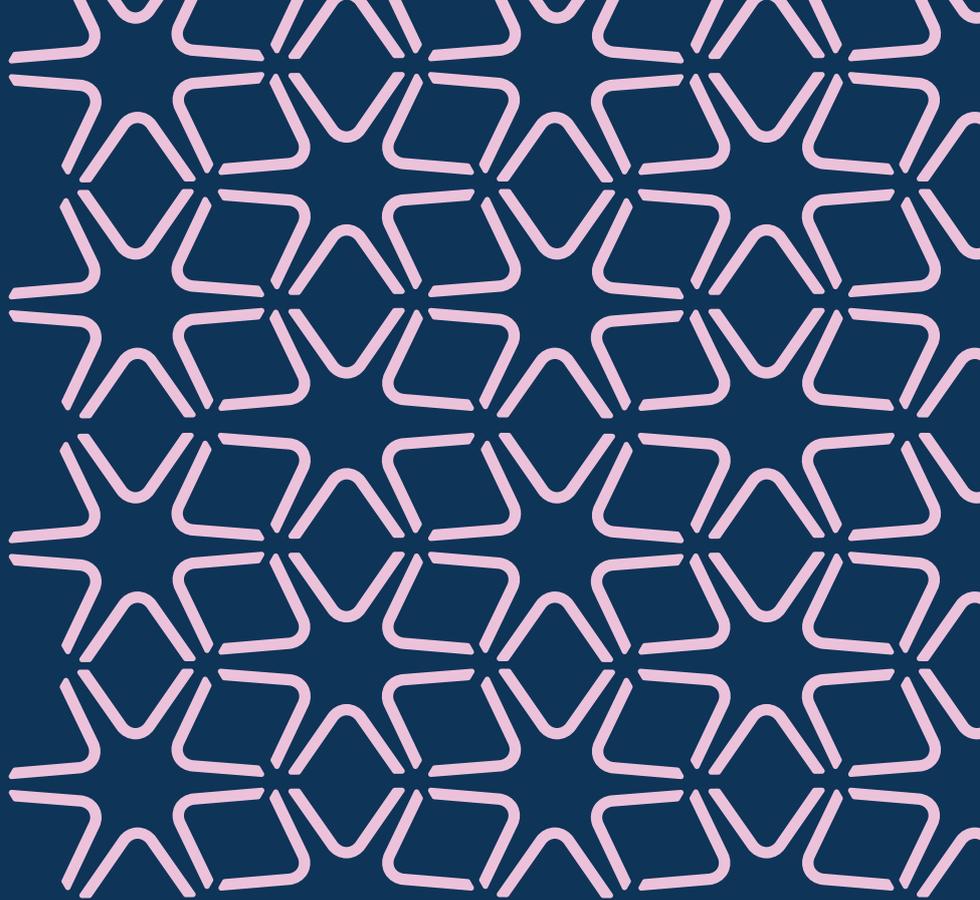
Young woman 18, Clapham



Wanted to have more of a voice

67%

YOUNG PEOPLE



01

Hemel Hempstead

RESEARCH FINDINGS: HOW DO YOUNG WOMEN EXPERIENCE PUBLIC SPACE IN HEMEL?

FINDINGS IN SHORT:

- 1.** Outdoor youth provisioning in Hemel Hempstead predominantly caters for boys and young men
- 2.** Young women use retail facilities in preference to green spaces for hanging out, but this is expensive
- 3.** Hemel Hempstead's limited public transport and reliance on cars means that young women struggle to travel to their multiple commitments and travel safely
- 4.** Young women want outdoor spaces that are open, inclusive and judgement free
- 5.** Young women want innovative play in the design of youth spaces

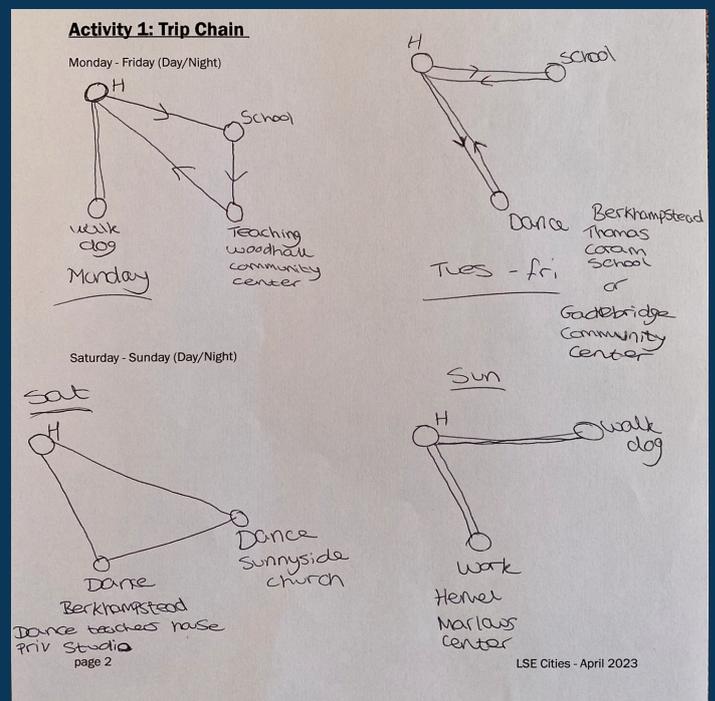
Young women value and want inclusive, judgement-free spaces.

The Researchers valued public spaces where everyone could “do their own thing and get on with whatever.” They defined public space as: somewhere to “just be”, without many rules or overt surveillance; that makes everyone feel welcomed; where there’s something for everyone, and individuals and behaviours are designed in rather than designed out. The Researchers concluded that the public spaces in Hemel did not embody these ideals. Their ambition for inclusion sat alongside the fact that the Researchers themselves felt excluded and judged for being young people, out in public:

“older people see teenagers in a group and think ‘oh they’re a bit dodge’ but the majority of teenagers aren’t like that... and families with kids keep their kids away from the teenagers. It makes you think: ‘what have I done wrong?’”

Young women have limited mobility in the Hemel area

The Researchers needed to travel for school, afterschool activities, part-time jobs, and socialising, changing their routes as demands on them changed. Most of their journeys were on foot or driven; few were by bus and cycling was not used for transport. The young women whose parents did not have a car had more limited mobility. The Researchers observed that how they travel (having to walk long distances or at night) is not a choice but a consequence of their limited options. Their dependence on others to get around (being driven) and the available public transport system frustrated them (too expensive, infrequent, unreliable, and not direct) and by consequence they all strongly wished they could drive. None of them wished to cycle as a form of transport.



Trip Chains by a Researcher in Hemel Hempstead

Young women use retail spaces rather than youth facilities or green space.

The Researchers reported having positive childhood experiences of local parks but this changed as they got older: “I used to hang around the skatepark [near Gadebridge] when I was younger but not anymore... near the skatepark I usually feel awkward because it is normally surrounded by teenage boys.” Their unease when large groups of young men were present was echoed in some indoor places like the Jarman centre, where the activities were seen to mainly cater to – and so attract – young men.

The Researchers identified that young men and women used and experienced public spaces differently. They concluded that their local green spaces did not cater for teenage girls, and that skateparks and football pitches are male dominated spaces where they feel intimidated, judged, or ‘out of place’. The Researchers noted a dilemma: they needed a reason to be out (to avoid judgement); but typical youth facilities (MUGA, skatepark, BMX) did not provide that legitimacy to teenage girls: “activities attract boys to green open spaces like basketball et cetera but girls are only attracted to spaces because they are a place to sit and chat” and “my brother rides his bike around with his friends without plans. But we have to do things if we’re not going out to do things then you would stay inside”.

Instead they hung out in retail spaces and in each other’s homes. Using retail space as prime hangout space, was for them a combination of: wanting independence from home life; wanting to be safe, and overseen; and having shelter and activities. They concluded this was different for young women and young men: “pretty much every boy I know would prefer to go to an open field than go shopping.” While they relied on retail for socialisation, the Researchers struggled with the affordability of this type of leisure and this exacerbated socioeconomic differences.

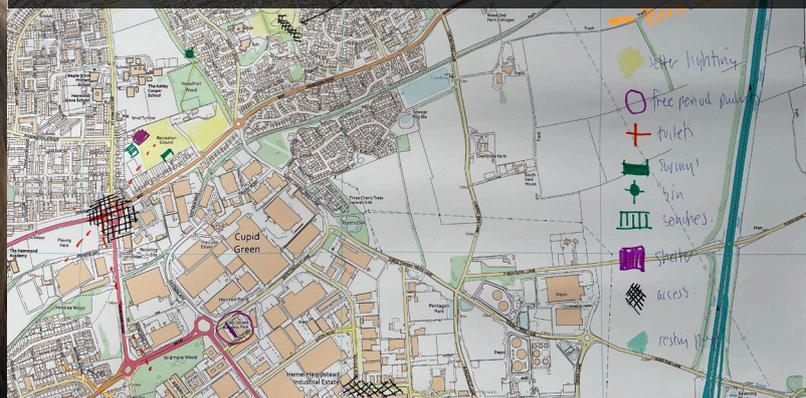
Young women want ‘spaces to be’ and innovative youth provisioning

The Researchers articulated a need for free to use spaces to hang out that were either unprogrammed (‘spaces to do nothing’) or offered something other than ball sports, cycling, or skateboarding. As one noted: “They need to keep in mind what’s already in the area. If there’s enough of those things [MUGAs] in the area then maybe do something else”. They wanted adventurous or risky play (eg. caving and escape rooms); play on teenage size swings and trampolines, and to have chill spaces with good seating, shelter, public toilets and cheap food nearby.

Group mapping highlighting interventions they would like to see across Hemel Hempstead



Interventions included new bus routes, better lighting, free period products, toilets, swings, bins, benches, shelter, improve access (such as improving dark or narrow paths), and places to rest (‘hang out’).



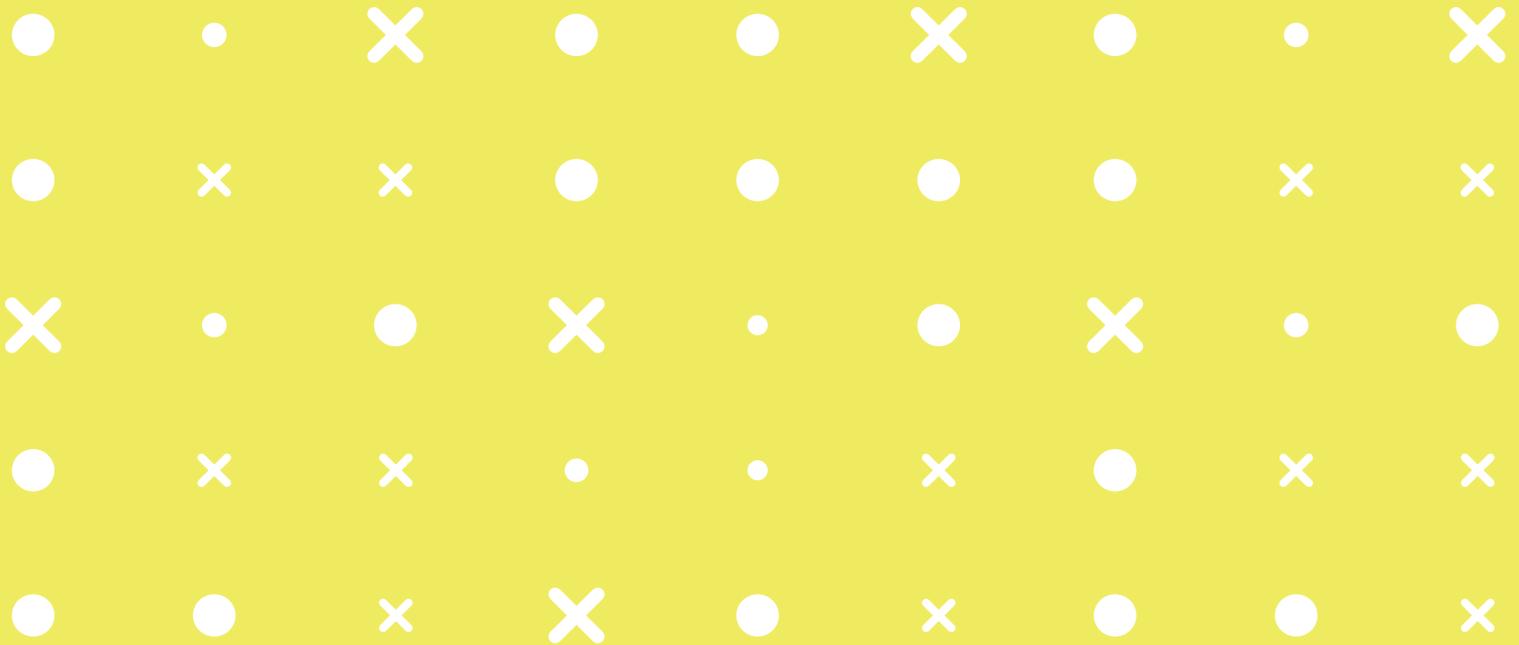
CONCLUSION AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

The research identified a number of shortcomings in Hemel’s public spaces, namely related to: poor mobility, youth facilities that mostly catered to boys; and inadequate inclusion of a diverse public. Their ambition is for Hemel to have spaces in which they feel welcome; that they can get to easily; where they can be active and be themselves. This is a reasonable ambition. In the context of Hemel Hempstead, where mobility will

remain a problem and where research demonstrates the preponderance of places that cater for the needs of boys and young men, realising this ambition means providing suitable spaces for young people local to residential developments which ensure that the needs articulated above, like large animated swings take precedence over for example another football pitch.

02

Gravesend and Ebbsfleet



RESEARCH FINDINGS: HOW DO YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCE PUBLIC SPACE IN GRAVESEND?

FINDINGS IN SHORT:

1. Young people leave Gravesend to hang out and have fun
2. Gravesend lacks green space and spaces for young people
3. The lack of youth facilities in the local area affects all young people, however it disproportionately affects young women
4. Young people feel left out of their local area, unsafe and want a series of small changes to their areas
5. Young people want a dedicated teen space that is open, free, with innovative activities and chill space

This section of the report has been commissioned by Countryside Partnerships and Latimer, part of Clarion Housing Group; jointly delivering the Ashmere development in Ebbsfleet. The research in this section involves young people living nearby in Gravesend. Gravesend, an ex-industrial town, is the most populous town in Gravesham and surrounded by areas with fast population growth (eg. Ebbsfleet). It has a largely White British population (with a small but significant Asian population), a fairly young population; with some areas that are amongst the most deprived in England (Census 2021). The nearby Ashmere development, part of Ebbsfleet Garden City, will deliver 15,000 new homes, open spaces, community centres and sports pitches. The findings from this research will be considered in the youth provisioning of the development. Thank you to Saint George's Church of England School for supporting this research.

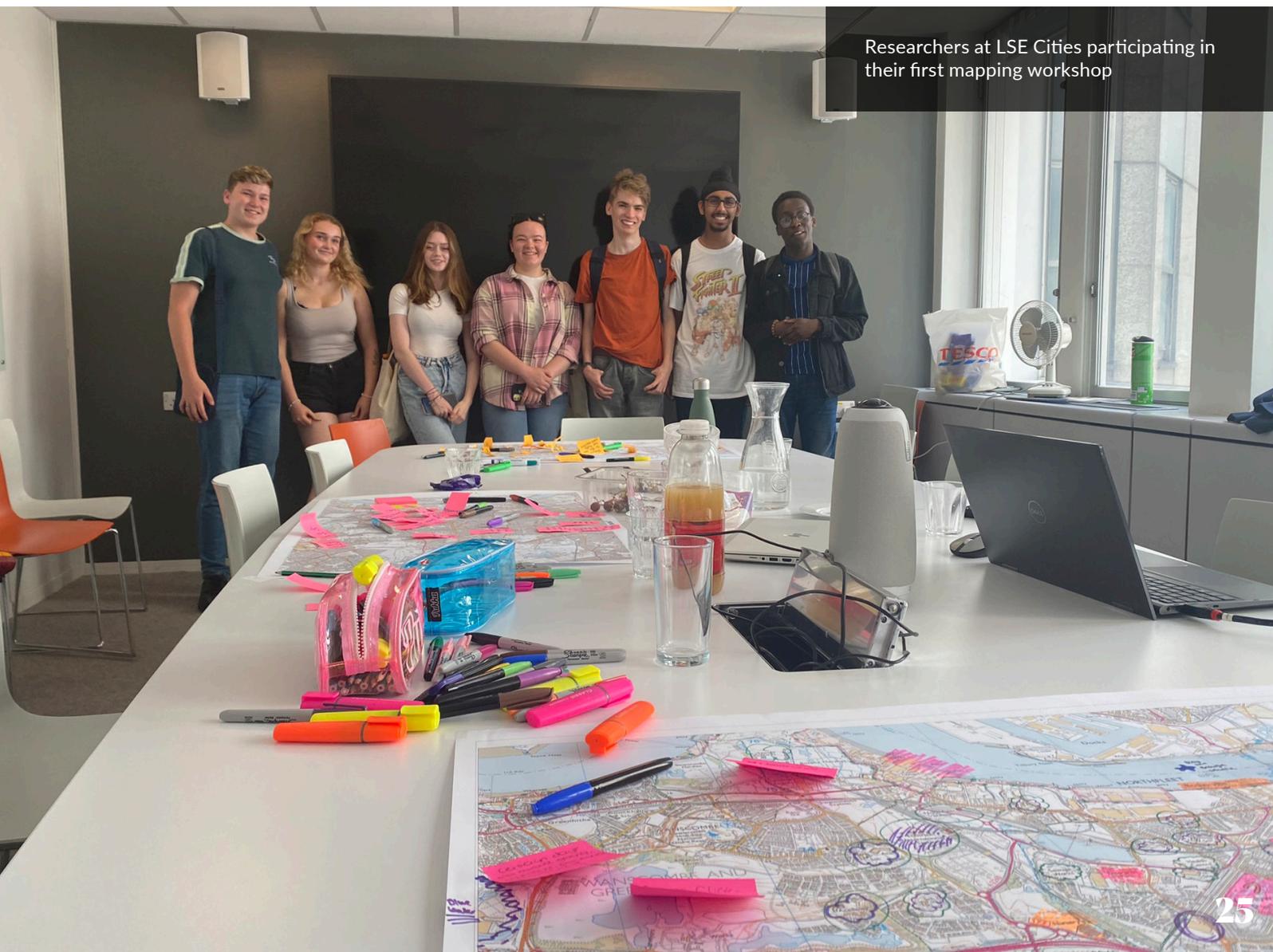
INTRODUCTION

Two sixteen year olds were enjoying their sandwiches on swings one day in Gravesend when a child's parent shouted at them:

“Why are you here? This isn't for you.”

They even sent a complaint to the school. But all the young people were doing was having a sandwich on a swing. Teenagers are often excluded from public space: too old to use the playground and too young to enter adult spaces. In Gravesend, while there are many schools and young people there is a deficit of youth facilities in green open space. So where are the teenagers of Gravesend meant to go?

This section of the report provides evidence of how young people use, feel about, and articulate changes for their local public realm in Gravesend. It summarises the research of seven 16-17 year old local young people.



Researchers at LSE Cities participating in their first mapping workshop

Young people feel left out of their local public realm, which is particularly detrimental to young women

The Researchers felt they had to leave Gravesend to enjoy fun spaces that were 'for them', notably the Bluewater shopping centre. As they predominantly travelled locally by bus and on foot, they perceived Bluewater as difficult to access. As one young woman put it: "We're limited and restricted, there's one bus route and it takes you through all the town." They wanted quicker bus routes from Gravesend and reduced tariffs for under 18s.

A lack of local youth provisioning was an issue for all the Researchers but more so for young women because 1) they did not have interest in the existing sports pitches and skateparks which is the bulk of local provisioning; 2) they avoided going places if they perceived journeys there to be unsafe; and 3) they were intimidated by groups of young men occupying spaces. One young woman noted of her local gym:

"There's a group of young men congregating in the entrance of the gym... I know they have nowhere to go but a load of boys my age with bikes is intimidating."

Young people want a dedicated local youth space "to just be"

The Researchers strongly felt that Gravesend therefore needed a new local youth space. They collaboratively imagined this ideal place. It should be close to the city centre (accessible), in a green space, with both indoor and outdoor facilities. They wanted a safe "dedicated place to go and be free and it not be assumed that you are up to antisocial behaviour"; "more activity for older children/teenagers with safe lighting, without feeling judged or prejudice towards teenagers as in 'children's parks'." It should be affordable and encourage users to return regularly through small changes. This space should include cheap food, active play and social spaces as well as solitary and reflective areas. Being affordable, open and local they felt that this space would help soften some of the class disparities that they observed in Gravesend and amongst their peers.

They both wanted this space to be theirs, protected from the possibility of domination by other users, and to quote one of the Researchers, "I really want to make this space fun and inclusive for all". Another noted: "If the little kids use it, then suddenly it becomes all about the little kids- and the little kids have enough spaces for them." They therefore suggested a place that was primarily for teenagers, with the design conveying this message, however it could also transform into a place for the general community during school hours.

Problematically, it was near impossible to find a location for this youth space in Gravesend. There is very limited green space, and a lot of this is privately owned (eg. the golf course, the rugby/sports club fields). There is potential space further out but this does not solve the issue of a lack of local provisioning.

03

Clapham

RESEARCH FINDINGS: HOW DO YOUNG WOMEN EXPERIENCE PUBLIC SPACE IN CLAPHAM?

FINDINGS IN SHORT:

1. Young women have mixed feelings about local development in their areas
2. Young women want small local spaces, with low cost facilities like interesting benches
3. Young women make use of all of London, hang out outside of their local area, and are highly reliant on buses
4. Young women feel judged in public spaces which is more acute in retail spaces and exacerbated by social media
5. Young women feel that spaces are not designed for a diversity of young people and feel that their gender is essential to their experience of public space

This section of the report has been commissioned by Countryside Partnerships, Sigma Capital Group and MTVH; jointly delivering the Clapham Park regeneration in the London borough of Lambeth. Lambeth is a dense and highly diverse borough, with a large Black / Black British as well as Asian population (Census 2021); a very young population, and areas with high levels of deprivation. Clapham Park will deliver around 4,000 new homes, shops, a community centre and public spaces over 15 years. The findings from this research will be considered in the youth provisioning for the regeneration project.

INTRODUCTION

When one young woman was asked whether she thought that gender impacted her experience of her local area of Clapham she responded:

“Gender does have an impact on how and where I move around my area. For example, I try to avoid alleyways, and less busy streets and [...] walking to places by myself as it’s not as safe and it can be tiring constantly having to speed walk and look behind me every five minutes.”

Young women should have a right to feel safe within their local areas.

This section of the report shines a light on how young women experience and articulate changes for the public realm in Clapham. It summarises the work of twelve local 16-25 year old young women.



Final mapping workshop opposite the Clapham Cube

Young women recognise the changes to their local areas and have mixed feelings

While the Researchers highly valued regenerated sites like Battersea and Nine Elms they were upset over Elephant and Castle and had mixed feelings about their local area: “Some people say gentrification is good– Brixton is now considered trendy and before people thought it was affiliated with gangs. People used to say Brixton is dangerous, now there are tourists [...] Everybody is impacted differently... For people who have lived here for thirty years it’s taking away the meaning of that area and the memories.” Being residents of Clapham Park they had been very directly impacted by regeneration, the Researchers explained: “there’s nothing really to do anymore” and that there had been the “loss of the community I grew up with as a child. Everything looks nice but it’s now quiet.” They were disappointed that key local spaces for them (eg. the Londis, a basketball court) had been shut due to the development.

Because of ongoing works, the Researchers felt that small local spaces which were valuable to them had disappeared, restricting their options to be outside. One Researcher noted of a local bench: “it has become a place for me to be myself [...] to publicly exercise without the fear of being watched or judged, [and] to have relaxing moments with my friends and family because of the sense of comfort and safety with it being in open space, street lights when it gets late and it being less than a minute away from home.” They recognised the positive impact that small local spaces with low cost facilities like benches could have on people’s public lives including their own. As one Researcher noted: “benches determine whether a person is willing to come outside. A bench can determine if an elderly [for example] is part of a society”

They wanted more small scale local spaces near their homes notably interesting large benches, with lovely colour schemes and good lighting, that clearly welcomed young people. One Researcher noted that the

“size of benches are important because it decides who sits on it [...] If it’s a small bench children will sit on it; if it’s a long bench which is normal size, groups of people can use it.”

Young women are highly dependent on public transport, and it facilitates their movements across the city

The Researchers travelled – predominantly by bus (and sometimes tube) – all over the city for school, activities, and to socialise from Angel, Highbury, Oxford Street to Croydon, Oval, Crystal Palace and Battersea. They were very satisfied with their local public transport: “I rely on public transport a lot... especially with a lot of the places [I go to] being on different sides of London.” But the freedom public transport gave them was curtailed by safety concerns and they described often choosing longer bus journeys home to avoid getting off in areas they found unsafe. For example, they took a longer bus to be dropped off in Clapham Common as opposed to Brixton after dark.

Young women feel judged in public space, especially retail spaces, which is exacerbated by social media

The Researchers felt judged in most retail spaces: “In Boots and Sainsburys in Clapham we get followed... and in Lidl with my boyfriend around closing hours the security guard there follows us and the security guard is black as well! We don’t cause any trouble but all eyes are on you, you’re constantly being watched... I think also the younger you look the more likely you are to get followed.” On Clapham Common highstreet they described that “in the McDonalds and corner shop it’s one student per time. School children can’t go in uniform and corner shops can be used only if you can go before 3 o’clock or after 4:30pm.” The young women were additionally unsure whether they were being villainised because of their age or whether this was also racialised, because they were Black.

The Researchers also felt that social media compounded their experiences of being judged in public space by other young people. They noted: “On Tik-Tok some people film random strangers and there are comments that they’re being weird. [...] I feel like I have to look my best and have my phone with me [...] With my mum I’m comfortable in joggers but I won’t go places where young people will see me.” Another added, “Before I would play around, laugh, giggle, you didn’t have young adults my age mocking me or laughing at me [...] back then social media wasn’t a thing.” Not only did they feel mocked but they also felt objectified and sexualised online and in their public lives: “The way they [male peers] speak about women. It’s objectifying and disgusting. It’s like they speak about girls in songs...I think it’s way worse than Andrew Tate.”

Young women wanted the diversity of young people to be recognised

The Researchers felt that in their local public realm: “young people are generalised and seen as the same with the same interests, when designing they don’t consider the fact that every young person is different.” For example, they felt that different gendered experiences to their male peers in terms of leisure and safety were overlooked: “My female friends and I constantly struggle to find places where we can relax and have peace... Boys have skateparks – although they are technically open to everyone, they are predominantly used by boys, and when girls use them, they often face unwanted attention [...] When they put in skateparks and fence pitches they think all young adults are the same” As well as: “I feel like boys can have a more carefree walk than girls as we have to consider a lot more. For example having only one earbud in ... wearing clothes that won’t cause attention...”. They also felt that their racial and ethnic identities, being Black British young women (with different histories), were overlooked, even though these also played a role in their use of public space. For example they described going to hair shops in Brixton for ‘Caribbean styles’, versus Peckham being for ‘African styles’.

They suggested a series of ideal public spaces for a diversity of young people and notably young women: a visually appealing affordable bakery/cafe; parks with dedicated cool youth picnic areas; well and aesthetically lit streets, parks and roads; ice skating places; hang out places for drinking bubble tea and shopping; a place to eat pizza and watch the sunset; an open air cinema; and large teenage size swings.



CONCLUSION AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

The research identified a number of shortcomings in Clapham’s public spaces, related to: gentrification, judgement, and a lack of consideration for the diversity of young people that live in the local area. Their ambition is for Clapham to be a place that is safe, welcoming and fun for all young people. This is a reasonable ambition. In the context of Clapham, where regeneration will

remain a core facet, realising this ambition means providing small local spaces (with affordable low key facilities like benches) in residential developments; safe and well lit journeys through developments; and affordable and overseen spaces that bring young women into the public realm – like affordable cafes, outdoor cinemas, tennis courts, and large swings.



04

Brent

RESEARCH FINDINGS/ HOW DO YOUNG WOMEN EXPERIENCE PUBLIC SPACE IN BRENT

FINDINGS IN SHORT:

- 1.** Young women do not use sporting facilities, most of green open spaces and instead use indoor retail and community spaces
- 2.** Young women feel judged and out of place in public spaces
- 3.** Young women feel the need to have a clear purpose to use public spaces
- 4.** Young women highly value Brent's diversity and want community and communal spaces that are inviting to them
- 5.** Young women want more free teen play and hang out spaces that consider their needs

This section of the report has been commissioned by Countryside Partnerships, working in partnership with Brent Council to deliver the regeneration of South Kilburn Estate. Brent is a highly diverse north-west London borough, with large Asian, and Black/Black British residents; a relatively 'young' population; and areas with some of the highest levels of deprivation in London (Census 2021). The borough has undergone significant redevelopment in the last twenty years. Brent Council's South Kilburn Estate masterplan seeks to deliver over 2,400 new, high quality homes; enhanced public realm; new educational, retail and health facilities. The findings from this research will be considered in the youth provisioning for the regeneration. Thank you to The Granville and South Kilburn Trust for supporting this research.

INTRODUCTION

One young woman in Brent explained of her local highstreet:

"If you're on the highroad and you're not buying anything, just go home. It's so busy, not safe, and not fun."

As Brent continues to undergo major urban changes which have the potential of dramatically altering its public realm, it is presented with both a challenge and an opportunity: to create spaces where young women feel safe, have fun, and don't want to 'just go home'.

This section of the report shines a light on how young women experience and articulate changes for the public realm in Brent. It summarises the work of nine local 19-27 year old young women.



Mapping workshop at the Granville with Researchers and additional participants

Young women feel judged in public spaces, which impacts whether and how they use public space

The Researchers felt judged, awkward and out of place in public space because they felt they were using facilities and spaces that 'aren't for them' (eg. MUGAs) or that they 'shouldn't be there' (eg. playgrounds). One Researcher described of a park: "Some of the play equipment could be used by older teenage girls but since there are more kid things, without signage you feel like you're taking over." Another Researcher described of Kingsbury highroad (located near multiple schools): "there is security people walking around [...] Our school 'had a reputation' so they think 'oh no Kingsbury students.' People keep telling you 'don't loiter', 'don't stand'." The Researchers felt particularly stigmatised by adults, when in large or mixed gender groups, and where there were more rules and surveillance (eg. private public spaces). They responded by avoiding playgrounds when children were around and ventured to the highstreet in groups no greater than two. The perception of them being a danger to public space was confusing to them given that, as young women, they felt that public space was a danger to them.

To overcome this stigma they suggested that highstreets offer discounts to students of neighbouring schools, and have inviting social benches to eat lunch with friends and hang out in groups after school. In parks, a signposted teen area with larger play equipment should be normalised (eg. trampolines, climbing frames, swings).

Young women venture to and use public spaces only if they have a clear reason to, and don't often just linger

The Researchers often felt unsafe, uncomfortable, unwelcome, or inadequately provided for in public space, notably green space and highstreets. For example, they felt that parks didn't have facilities for young women, and while highstreets were perceived as convenient, they were judgemental spaces, which offered little appealing retail, and more importantly, where large groups of men intimidatingly lingered. One Researcher described: "on Kilburn Highroad you get all sorts of characters... older single men with nothing to do... people you wouldn't necessarily feel safe around. When someone goes in to grab something from Argos you lock the car door."

Feeling out of place in public space meant that the Researchers felt that they needed a valid reason to use public spaces such as going to a shopping centre for the cinema. This was particularly the case for spaces where young women felt less welcome, or that were dominated by other groups, notably men: "I wouldn't go there [the highstreet] and sit on the benches. The only time my friends go there is if they have to pick something up at Argos."

They preferred socialising at home, in retail centres (Brent Cross, Westfield, or Harrow), libraries, the Boxpark Wembley, and community spaces. These spaces offered them destinations and active, sheltered, safe, and often free spaces to socialise with activities that (crucially) parents of young women also approved of. They wouldn't travel to parts of the borough where there weren't activities: "In Willesden and Neasden there's not a lot for us to do there so there's no reason to go."

In order to feel that they had a right to linger in public space they wanted social and sheltered seating, retail and outdoor fitness equipment (eg. yoga space) for young women throughout the borough, better lighting and events that target young women.

Young women highly value Brent's diversity and want community and communal spaces that are inviting to young women

The Researchers all highly valued Brent's diversity, especially as all the Researchers came from mixed backgrounds with different cultural histories. One young woman noted: "Brent is diverse and you're able to find shops, restaurants, and places to eat that cater to you... Like halal butchers [...] and you find other people you recognise especially if you're from immigrant communities." They feared that local development was at risk of taking away this diversity, while recognising that the current Brent had flaws. For example, they felt that there were two Kilburn highroads the 'gentrified' side which didn't represent their Brent, and the local side which they valued the familiarity and mixed community of but also felt unsafe and not for young women. They wanted these spaces to become more welcoming and safe but did not want to lose their Brent.

The Researchers valued indoor community spaces and public libraries which they felt better catered to young women than green spaces or the highstreet, because they were social, hosted varied activities, felt welcoming and safe, and crucially were free: "The [Wembley] library feels like the most inviting space for a young person. [...] There's always activities there and you can pretend you're studying and then you can go to the outlet or get food. It's a nice day out." However, they felt these spaces still catered more to older persons, were increasingly disappearing (eg. Rumi's), or being changed for the worse (eg. Willesden library). They wanted more free indoor spaces, with scheduled events and activities for young women, but mainly where young people could come to 'do nothing' (eg. hang out, read, play board games).



CONCLUSION AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

The researchers identified a number of issues in Brent, namely related to feeling out of place whether this was because they did not see their needs represented in public space, because of intimidation from groups of men or because they felt judged. Their hope is for Brent to be a space in which they feel that they have the right to use, linger and occupy public space.

As Brent continues to undergo intensive development, this hope is timely and has the potential to either be

addressed or its problems further entrenched. Realising the ambitions of the Researchers means providing suitable and overseen spaces for young people and especially young women to hang out for free; it means explicitly welcoming teenagers through language and design; providing young people with activities, spaces, and events that young women want to engage in like large swings in the park, and sociable aesthetic seating on the highstreet.

05

Barking and Dagenham

RESEARCH FINDINGS: HOW DO YOUNG WOMEN EXPERIENCE PUBLIC SPACE IN BARKING?

FINDINGS IN SHORT:

1.

Young people, notably young women, feel that maintenance is an issue in Barking's indoor and outdoor public spaces which deters them from using such spaces

2.

Young people want a cared for borough, with clean facilities and outdoor spaces, more stewardship, and maintenance of existing infrastructure and equipment

3.

Young people, particularly young women, are dissatisfied with and/or do not use current youth provisioning and facilities in the borough

4.

Young people have ample suggestions on new and improved youth facilities that cater to a greater diversity of young people in Barking

5.

Young people have real concerns about safety and violent crime in Barking

This section of the report has been commissioned by Countryside Partnerships, Sigma Capital Group and L&Q; jointly delivering the Beam Park regeneration in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham. Barking and Dagenham, an ex-industrial area in the east of Greater London has a predominantly White British population; a relatively young and very fast growing population, and has overall higher levels of deprivation than the average London borough (Census 2021). Beam Park is a development which will deliver 3,900 new homes, primary schools, green open space, youth facilities and a new station (pending approvals) on the previous Ford factory site. The findings from this research will be considered in the youth provisioning of the development. Thank you to Future Youth Zone, part of Onside network of Youth Zones, for supporting this research.

INTRODUCTION

In one of our sessions, a sixteen year old young woman living in Barking shared:

“My brother can go to London on his own but my mum doesn’t let me because I’m a girl [...] He can even go to Birmingham for a concert and not let me. I understand but I’m not a child [...] They worry less [about him] but they should actually worry more because anything can happen to anyone.”

Her account illustrates multiple frictions, notably: the ways in which teenagers often crave to be independent users of public space, how young women often experience additional constraints on their public lives, and that public spaces while considered unsafe for young women are also often not the safest places for young men either.

This section of the report shines a light on how young people experience and articulate changes for the public realm in Barking. It summarises the work of nineteen local 16-25 year old young people.

Introductory workshop at Future Youth Zone, Barking



Young people take issue with the maintenance of local spaces in Barking and want improvements

84% of young people in Barking, including 100% of young women, felt that how clean or well maintained a public space was impacted if they used it. For example, one Researcher noted that the park that she often visited was unclean and poorly maintained which deterred her from using certain areas of this park. Things like litter, broken facilities, and dog poo were all deterrents. She further explained that well maintained and aesthetic spaces not only feel safer and more enjoyable but are additionally important because young women like to take photos and videos when out in public.

Maintenance was equally of concern in indoor public spaces. For example, one Researcher described that the library's unclean public toilets impacted how long she stayed there as she would rather go home to use her own toilet than use the library's. She also noted of a youth centre in her local area: "I was looking around like where are the girls? I only saw like two to three girls and boys everywhere, everywhere, everywhere. There's more activities for guys. The spaces where I see girls go: the beauty, haircare, cooking, and dancing section, the person often isn't working there but every time the sports section is open for the boys."

For these reasons, all the suggestions that were made to improve public spaces were accompanied by the request for proper maintenance of these spaces. As one Researcher noted: "if you don't take care of something then it won't last long." Suggestions included: aesthetic and well maintained planting and water fountains, proper schedules to clean the few remaining public toilets of the area, and better stewardship and maintenance of materials and spaces that might be more inviting to young women.

Young people want different and/or new facilities and events for young people

Most young people, notably young women, overall felt that the public realm could be improved, because it did not address their needs. Football pitches and basketball courts make up the majority of the youth provisioning in Barking. However, while half of the young men often or very often used them, none of the young women used football pitches and basketball courts regularly. This is particularly problematic for the young women in the group who overall did not feel that their local green spaces catered to their needs either: only 1 young woman felt that her local green space had something for her there while 75% of the boys thought their local green had amenities for them. They all mostly felt however that the retail and restaurants/cafes in their local area was affordable and appealing to them. This was important to the young women particularly because they used these spaces a lot more than young men did.

There were many suggestions as to new facilities that could better account for a diversity of young people and their needs: such as a volleyball court instead of basketball courts; a playground for wider age ranges; dedicated pet friendly areas; shade gazebos; conversation pits and social seating and hangout areas; water features; an outdoor cinema with cosy seating; more public events for young people; and swings, trampolines and picnic areas.

One researcher suggested that the local area should have a Tik-Tok friendly performance stage for young people, especially young women to practise and perform routines with the possibility of recording these. This space should have a stage with an attractive backdrop wall, cool lighting, some moveable seating blocks, a conversation hang out pit, and an adjustable phone stand.

One researcher also felt that there were not enough quiet, study or reading spaces in the local area that were public. She therefore suggested a wooden outdoor but sheltered cosy reading space. It should be designed with the intention of encouraging young adults rather than children to use the space and to have a few shelves to operate as a library.

Young people feel particularly unsafe in Barking, and are highly affected by violent crime in the area

While all sites had a real concern about safety, in Barking this concern was particularly pronounced. When mapping what spaces they used in their borough, many young people's maps ended up being maps of safe and unsafe areas. They expressed that safe pockets were few and far between. Their maps included many labels about areas that were avoided due to stabbings, drugs, 'dodgy' people and so on. Their knowledge of these areas was not only informed by personal experience but by stories, rumours, opinions and news they had read, heard about, or seen about certain areas. Around 75% of young people described that these external accounts of places (eg. hearing about a crime) influenced whether they used that space or not, and this was especially the case for young women (85%).

Furthermore, while many empty and wide open spaces like parks were seen as unsafe, simultaneously the high density of people in some areas felt unsafe to some young women. For example, one Researcher commented of Dagenham Heathway: "I don't think girls feel that comfortable here. It's not safe to just stop there. You [have to] keep walking and talking or meeting your friends [...] People sneak around, grabbing and touching or catcalling."



CONCLUSION AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

The research identified a number of shortcomings in Barking's public spaces, namely related to maintenance and existing facilities. Their vision is for Barking to be a place that is cared for, welcoming and fun for all young people, inclusive of young women.

In Barking and Dagenham, where young people do not have access to the types of provisioning that they enjoy, this vision might take the shape of youth spaces like quiet reading gazebos, performance spaces, outdoor cinemas, swings, and social benches and ensuring that these spaces as well as others are properly watched over, fixed when broken, cleaned, and cared for.

CONCLUSION AND KEY TAKEAWAYS

This report has provided recommendations and evidenced how young people, notably young women experience and articulate changes for their local areas in Clapham, Brent, Gravesend and Ebbsfleet, Barking and Dagenham and Hemel Hempstead and proposed ways in which to engage flexibly, creatively, and collaboratively with young people in the built environment.

While this report captures only some of the highlights of the public realm experiences, concerns, and propositions of local young people, the Researchers' findings clearly paint an image of a public realm that often fails their demographic. While public spaces are essential to these young people who value their local areas, and who have a desire to be a part of public life, in most spaces in their local areas young people often report feeling unsafe, not provided for, and unwelcome. They articulate conflictual experiences within the urban realm that have been exacerbated by gender-blind planning and design such as poor lighting or unvaried youth facilities. For young women, this reality is even more pronounced and certainly makes the case that it is necessary to meaningfully consider gender alongside age when planning for youth. Further engagement with young people would also do well to focus more explicitly on other identity categories such as class, disability and race.

It is our ambition that by providing such evidence and recommendations young people's and certainly young women's experiences may be meaningfully addressed in future and ongoing developments. The Researchers' proposed changes, improvements and innovations for the public realm are, as a whole, certainly reasonable and can be made achievable. The most effective way to get public spaces right for young people will be to engage in a meaningful way with local young people as part of the design and planning process.

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