June
2025

FAIRER WESTMINSTER

MAKE

City of Westminster

SUPPORTED BY
MAYOR OF LONDON
This project is supported with funding from the Greater London Authority's Good Growth Fund

QUEEN'S PARK CANALSIDE

Engagement Report



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In spring 2025, Yes Make delivered a community collaborative design and build programme at Queen's Park Canalside in North Paddington, resulting in a new set of play and wildlife features co-created with local people to be installed in autumn 2025.

The project involved over 90 local participants across two phases: early-stage idea development and on-site collaborative construction. Sessions included families, school groups, young people, and adults with learning disabilities, all contributing to the design and fabrication of the features.

The work focused on creativity, access, and local relevance, with activities designed to build skills, spark imagination, and reflect community priorities.

Key Project Outcomes

- Broad participation from diverse age groups and community partners through workshops, drop-ins, and creative outreach tools
- Hands-on making opportunities that allowed participants to shape visible and lasting parts of the park
- Use of reclaimed and site-sourced materials, including timber from felled trees, to support low impact, circular design
- The process aimed not just to gather input, but to create a sense of ownership and excitement about the future of this public space.

INTRODUCTION

This report captures the community engagement work delivered as part of the design and build of new play and wildlife features at Queen's Park Canalside, a public green space in North Paddington.

The aim of this work was to involve local people in meaningful ways, from early-stage idea generation through to physical construction, ensuring the final outcome reflects community voices, needs, and imagination.

Engagement took place across two phases:

COLLABORATIVE DESIGN SESSIONS (March 2025)

CO-BUILD WORKSHOPS (May 2025)

Through creative activities, printed design booklets, and hands-on making, we invited a broad range of residents, families, and community partners to contribute. This process not only shaped the design, but also built a stronger connection between local people and the space itself. This report summarises the participatory methods used, the groups we engaged, key themes that emerged, and the impact this process had on both people and place.



WIDER CONTEXT

Queen's Park Canalside is one of several public spaces being redeveloped through Westminster City Council's North Paddington Programme.

The play and wildlife features commissioned for this site sit within a wider programme of works to enhance accessibility, biodiversity, and public use of the canal-side. Other improvements include new pathways, reedbeds, an 'open-air reading room', and upgraded connections between Queen's Park Library and the park itself.

This co-creation project was designed to:

- Increase community ownership through hands-on participation and making
- Enhance local biodiversity with wildlife habitats and planting
- Promote sustainability by reusing felled trees from site, and locally reclaimed materials

The brief called for an inclusive engagement strategy, a focus on upskilling local participants, and alignment with circular economy values, all of which shaped Yes Make's approach throughout the project.



COLLABORATIVE DESIGN SESSIONS

WHAT WE DID

In March 2025, we ran a series of collaborative design sessions to explore what the future features at Queen's Park Canalside could be, and how they could reflect local identity and values.

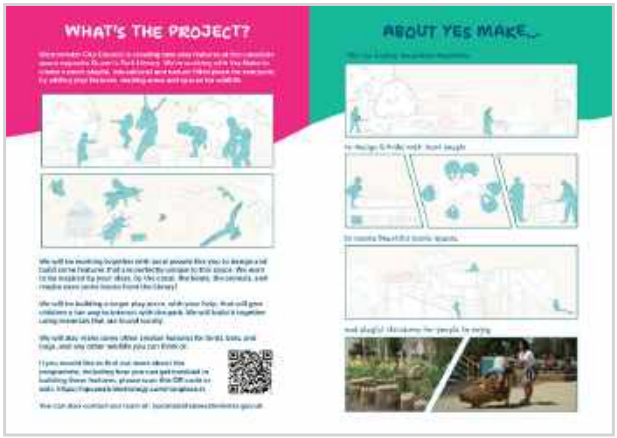
We held sessions over four days across two venues, The Happy Hub and Queen's Park Library, aiming to create relaxed, welcoming spaces where people could share ideas through conversation, drawing, and playful exploration.

Inclusive Engagement Strategies:

- Invitations shared through the North Paddington Canalside Commonplace platform, Queen's Park Library, the Happy Hub and other key local community venues
- Sessions co-located with existing community groups (e.g. parent & baby group at Happy Hub)
- Printed booklets used to reach people who couldn't attend workshops
- Venues selected for the collaborative design sessions were wheelchair accessible
- The activities and conversations were supported by local staff familiar with working with vulnerable groups

COLLABORATIVE DESIGN BOOKLETS







To help with reaching younger and wider audiences, we also shared printed booklets filled with prompts, images, and space for adults and children to draw or write. A few examples have been shared on the following page.


WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?


WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?


WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?
Jade 13/3/25
Played the to Parkes swing
climbing the ladder and slide
I see to the city
the berries have a
Picnic
look the leaves
See eat leaf the see cod better
butterfly


WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?


WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?


WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?


WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?


WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?

COLLABORATIVE DESIGN SESSIONS

WHO WE SPOKE TO

Outreach efforts were designed to reach a wide cross-section of the local community, including younger children, older adults, and people with additional needs. Yes Make and Westminster City Council worked in partnership with local institutions and used both digital and physical promotion channels to achieve this.



Across the sessions, we spoke with approximately 34 people, from toddlers to older adults, including:

At the Happy Hub:
- Parent & Baby Group
- Local Sewing Group

At Queen's Park Library:
- LEGO Club
- Under 5s Singing Group
- Library Staff & Community Drop-Ins

We also engaged with local staff from:
- Avenues Youth Project
- Pursuing Independent Paths (PiP)
- Happy Hub
- Queen's Park Library

These conversations helped us understand how the space could support ongoing use, care, and activation by different community groups and local residents.

COLLABORATIVE DESIGN SESSIONS

WHAT WE HEARD

From these sessions, a number of themes and values emerged:

- **Inclusive Play:** People wanted the features to be usable by different ages and abilities, with a focus on balance, climbing, sensory and social interaction.
- **Sensory Play & Smells:** an emphasis on sensory features, both for children and adults, ranging from tactile textures, smells and visual sensory elements.
- **Imagination & Discovery:** Structures that invite role play or storytelling.
- **Care & Belonging:** Groups expressed a strong desire for the space to feel looked after, calming and welcoming.

These themes were directly fed into the designs that were produced for both the play features and wildlife features.

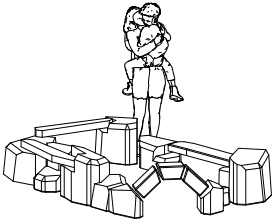


DESIGN DEVELOPMENT



Themes & values reflected:

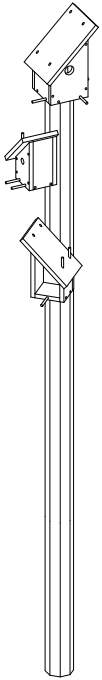
- **Inclusive Play:** Designed to be accessible to a range of ages and abilities, with low climbing elements and sensory textures
- **Imagination & Discovery:** Sculptural forms encourage open-ended play and creative storytelling
- **Care & Belonging:** Carved patterns and details created by participants during co-build sessions
- **Sensory Play & Smells:** The carved textures and elements that feature on the sides of these timber boulders are designed to incorporate a sensory element to the feature.



PLAY FEATURE

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT



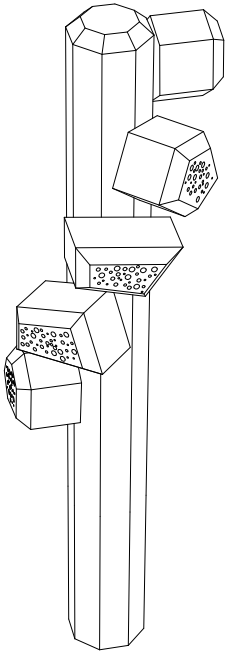


Themes & values reflected:

- **Care & Stewardship:** Encourages people to think about nurturing local wildlife
- **Skill-building:** Participants assembled houses using timber dowels, hammers and hand tools
- **Inclusive Activity:** Suitable for a wide range of participants, with clear steps and supportive facilitation
- **Sustainability:** Fabricated using reclaimed oak from Royal Docks

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT



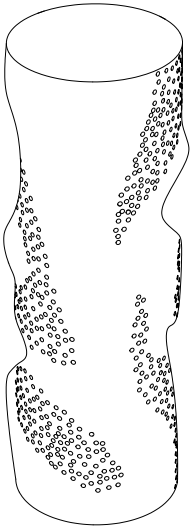


Themes & values reflected:

- **Environmental Education:** Supports pollinator species and highlights the role of wild bees in local ecosystems
- **Skill-building:** Participants learned sanding, staining and finishing techniques during co-build

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT





Themes & values reflected:

- **Ecology & Biodiversity:** Provides habitat for invertebrates and encourages habitat awareness
- **Inclusive Activity:** Suitable for a wide range of participants, with clear steps and supportive facilitation
- **Sustainability:** Fabricated using maple trees felled from the site
- **Sensory Play & Smells:** Carved to enhance the natural shapes of the maple trees, the bug hotels invite tactile play and exploration.

CO-BUILD SESSIONS

WHAT WE DID

In May 2025, we delivered 4 days of co-build sessions on-site at Queens Park Canalside, inviting schools, youth organisations, adults with learning disabilities and local residents to take part.

The aim was to make the building process open, creative, and hands-on, allowing participants to shape physical elements of the park, learn practical skills, and develop a sense of ownership over the space.

All sessions used reclaimed or local materials from the London area, including felled field maple from the site, a recently felled robinia in South London, and oak from the Royal Docks.

Participants helped with:

- sanding and assembling bird houses
- sanding and staining bee hotels
- drilling insect holes in bug hotels
- carving timber boulders for the larger play feature

Yes Make provided all materials, tools, PPE, and adult supervision, as well as completing the required RAMS for the sessions.



CO-BUILD SESSIONS

WHO TOOK PART

Across four days of delivery, we ran seven co-build sessions between Monday 20th May and Wednesday 29th May 2025, engaging with 63 participants.

Monday 20 May: St Marylebone CE Bridge School
- Year 7 group (ages 11-12)
- 11 participants

Wednesday 22 May: Community Classroom
- AM session (ages 5-8) - 8 participants
- PM session (ages 9-13) - 9 participants

Thursday 23 May: Pursuing Independent Paths (PiP)
- 2 sessions with adults with learning disabilities
- 20 participants total

Wednesday 29 May: Open Public Workshops
- AM session - participants (mixed ages, included returning particpants)
- PM session - 9 participants (mixed ages)











CO-BUILD SESSIONS

WHAT EMERGED

Growing confidence with tools, especially from young people and those with no previous experience in woodwork.

Tactile and sensory engagement, especially among neurodivergent and younger participants

A strong sense of connection and ownership: people carved patterns, shapes and marks into elements that will eventually be installed on-site.

Younger participants particularly enjoyed hammering the bird boxes together with the timber dowels.

Participants not only built parts of the final installation, but also contributed to the character and identity of the space.



IMPACT & OUTCOMES

Community Ownership & Social Capital
Participants had the chance to co-create permanent features and leave their mark through carving and shaping, fostering a sense of pride and stewardship.

Environmental Education
Sessions embedded ideas of reuse and sustainability through use of felled timber from site and elsewhere in London.

Upskilling Local People
Participants, including school children and adults with learning disabilities, gained confidence using hand tools and working with natural materials. Many were using woodworking tools for the first time.

Cultural Heritage & Place Identity
Design ideas incorporated references to the canal and local landscape. Stories shared during design sessions shaped motifs carved into play elements.

Enhanced Community Connections
The project created relationships between local institutions, artists, and facilitators.



NEXT STEPS

The final form of the play and wildlife features aim to reflect weeks of public input and direct involvement - from the early design ideas to physical making.

Yes Make will continue with some further finishing of each element at their London-based workshop, before permanently installing the features on site at Queen's Park Canalside in Autumn 2025.

If you would like to find out more about the North Paddington Canalside programme, and hear further project updates for Queen's Park Canalside, please scan this QR code or visit:

https://npcanalsidestrategy.commonplace.is

You can also contact our team at:
npcanalside@westminster.gov.uk



THANK YOU

This project would not have been possible without the generous time, creativity, and energy of everyone who participated.

We are deeply grateful to all the local residents, families, children, community partners, and collaborators who took part in the design and co-build sessions. Everyone's ideas, stories, and hands-on contributions shaped every aspect of this project and helped build a stronger connection between people and place.

A special thank you to the welcoming workshop hosts, The Happy Hub, Queen's Park Library, and others, for providing the spaces, support, and spirit that brought people together throughout the process.

