

..stbycity corporation/library of things/glera...

# Let's design out waste

(public report)

**Empowering community resilience through  
shared spaces and sustainable resources**

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# 1/introduction...



# intro/what we did

The City Corporation commissioned Stby, a research and design agency with roots in Golden Lane Estate (GLE), to lead this research after a successful CILNF bid set up with GLE residents. Stby conducted qualitative, **co-creative research** engagements to explore waste behaviour, repair culture, and the implementation of **a new Library of Things** space at the Barbican Library.

Stby's approach was rooted in co-design, ensuring the service evolves from a rental locker into a hub that serves the community. By meeting residents where they already gather, we **built trust** and explored barriers to accessibility that influence local behaviour.

Having a GLE resident, Bas Raijmakers, on the Stby research team, helped to ground the challenges in **lived experiences**, while his background in co-creative research ensured a balanced engagement approach.

We used a multi-layered engagement strategy to reach a diverse cross-section of the community: **Observational research** to understand real-world actions and behaviours, **Resident engagement** in conversations with **70+ residents** across all 4 City of London estates, and **Interactive sessions** including 2 formal workshops and 10+ informal drop-in sessions.



# intro/why this research was done

## A shared mission for change

This initiative is born from a vital realization: the future of sustainable, vibrant estates in the City of London cannot be built by the Corporation alone. It requires a **deeply collaborative** connection between the people who live here and the institution that serves them.

## Bridging the gap

While the City Corporation stays committed to resident engagement, certain initiatives, particularly around waste management and recycling, have faced persistent hurdles. Issues such as low participation rates and the contamination of waste streams highlight a disconnect that traditional, top-down approaches have been unable to solve.

## A community call to action

In parallel, the residents of the Golden Lane Estate, represented by resident association GLERA and resident group Imagine Golden Lane at Net Zero, have issued a proactive call for action. Their desire for more effective, **community-led** systems for managing unwanted items provided the perfect catalyst for this project. This was not a request for more services, but a request for more involvement. This community call to action is rooted in their earlier successes with consulting on, designing and installing bike storage on GLE (another CILNF funded project) and mapping biodiversity on the estate.

## The power of co-creation

This project acknowledges a fundamental truth: The City Corporation's resources are not infinite. Behind the scenes, the Corporation faces logistical and operational limitations that are often invisible to the public. By coming together on this **shared mission to reduce waste**, we are moving beyond those limitations. Both parties saw that more needs to be done and came together to find out what efforts would be most effective and feasible, while already implementing one new service: a Library of Things. Both bring essential knowledge and capabilities to the project: The City Corporation provides the framework and institutional support. Residents provide local insight, existing community networks, and many years of investment in the neighbourhood.

## The need for orchestration

We need to acknowledge however that the ways residents organise themselves and communicate are vastly different from how a local council, here the City Corporation, organises itself and communicates. Collaboration between such different entities can however be designed, and benefits from incidental support by **design-driven change makers** who orchestrate the co-creation. Design research agency Stby already successfully worked with GLE for the CILNF funded bike storage project, which positioned them well to support this project too.

## 2/results....



# results/opportunity mapping

The resident engagement research across four City of London estates revealed a complex landscape of local nuances. While each community faces unique contextual and social challenges, a set of universal priorities emerged. These core needs form **strategic pillars of any future action** any stakeholder involved may want to take:

- Clear Communication;
- Accessible Services;
- A Supported Community;

Based on these 3 themes of core resident needs, 6 opportunities have been developed that outline actions to meet these needs:

- Communication that drives positive action;
- Make more of what we've got;
- Targeted engagement and motivation-driven communication;
- Inclusive and accessible service for all residents;
- Cultivating resident-led stewardship;
- Strengthening community connections and empowerment.

For these to be implemented and have long-term impact, these opportunities need **collective responsibility** between the City Corporation, City of London Residents, and the Library of Things.



# opportunities/city corporation take the lead

## Communication that drives positive action:

There is a significant opportunity to **reshape how information is shared**, the nature of the content itself, and the mechanisms for **collaborative decision-making**. To achieve this, the resident Green Champions Network the City Corporation has initiated should continue to evolve as a platform for **explorative, high-impact dialogue**. By focusing on the topics that matter most to residents, the Network can empower individuals to actively service and advocate for their own communities.

## Make more of what we've got:

A primary focus must be **enhancing current infrastructure** and services to better meet resident demand. There is a significant opportunity to **scale successful initiatives**, such as increasing the frequency of 'Give and Take' days and expanding the capacity for flexible plastic recycling. Furthermore, the Corporation should prioritise **collaborations with residents** to reintroduce uncontaminated green waste collection and set up a more structured approach to salvage. By formalising salvage operations, the Corporation can redirect fly-tipping behaviours into positive, organised resource recovery.

## Community connections and empowerment:

Prioritising **deep connections with resident communities**, and ensuring they feel supported in their local initiatives, is essential. The Library of Things represents a unique opportunity to act as a catalyst for these relationships, serving as a **welcoming hub** that strengthens the City's existing social fabric. To begin, the Corporation should **pilot tailored support** for high-engagement groups, providing the specific tools and materials needed by initiatives like the Golden Baggers, the City Memory Group, and Knit and Natter. By **empowering residents to champion** and introduce these services to their peers, the Corporation can foster organic growth and **long-term community trust** and establish the City of London Library of Things as a social hub for circularity and climate.

# opportunities/residents take the lead

## Communication that drives positive action:

There is a significant opportunity for residents to help **reshape how information is shared**, the nature of the content itself, and the mechanisms for collaborative decision-making. To achieve this, the resident Green Champions Network should continue to evolve as a platform for **explorative, high-impact dialogue**. By outlining the topics that matter most to residents, the Green Champions Network can empower the City Corporation to better serve residents with information that matters and is actionable. The Network can also help distribute this information if made suitable for its own **resident-led channels** like WhatsApp.

## Make more of what we've got:

A primary objective for residents should be the introduction and/or integration of **community-led initiatives** that operate alongside and enhance those facilitated by the City Corporation. There is a clear opportunity for residents to lead their own version of Give and Take days, focused on reusable DIY materials rather than items, by integrating salvage operations with **new community workshops**. By taking a **proactive role in the management** of salvage stores, workshop spaces, and also e.g, green garden waste recycling, residents can ensure these resources are treated with care and remain viable for the entire community. To ensure the long-term success of these services, it is essential to **establish a culture of collective accountability**.

## Resident-led stewardship:

As a way of working towards establishing workshop spaces at estates, **residents in collaboration with City Corporation should pilot a trial** by identifying a space on at least one of the estates and apply for a Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund (CILNF) grant. The ultimate goal is to transform unused spaces at the estates into a self-sustaining workshops with a **true sense of local ownership**. The CILNF application for a Library of Things can serve as a successful example. Tools from the Library of Things and tools residents would like to donate can help to build the workshop. The City Corporation should support this initiative by facilitating legal access and providing essential security, while eventually assisting with event coordination to **ensure long-term success**.



# opportunities/library of things take the lead

## Resident-led stewardship:

To ensure the Library of Things delivers a truly impactful service, City Corporation and Library of Things together must create ways for residents to **learn how to use the tools and equipment**. There is a significant opportunity to facilitate face-to-face, context-specific demonstrations within community spaces. By **empowering and supporting residents to lead** these sessions themselves, this will result in a more effective exchange of skills while positioning the Library of Things as a **trusted pillar of community support**. A strategic next step is to collaborate with the Green Champions Network to identify and recruit residents with the expertise and ambition to serve as local mentors. This **peer-led approach** will foster long-term resilience and strengthen the social fabric of each estate.

## Targeted and motivation-driven communication:

To ensure the Library of Things resonates across the City's diverse population, **communications must be inclusive** and tailored around the specific motivations of different resident groups, ensuring the service's benefits are clear and relevant to all. By designing future messaging that is both **aspirational and practical**, Library of Things can inspire higher participation and long-term adoption. A strategic first step is to integrate these outreach efforts into **local neighbourhood celebrations**, in collaboration with the City Corporation and community groups, using existing community joy and social gatherings as a platform for meaningful service introduction and awareness.

## Inclusive and accessible service for all residents:

A primary objective for the Library of Things is to ensure the service is **genuinely accessible to all residents**, regardless of their physical mobility or digital literacy. To address transportation barriers, there is a significant opportunity to collaborate with cargo bike organisations for deliveries and provide specialised trolleys for the transport of heavy items. To ensure **digital inclusivity**, the service could offer non-digital alternatives, including physical catalogues and cash payment options. To reach residents in more remote estates, Library of Things, in collaboration with the City Corporation, could establish pop-up information hubs that serve as **localised drop-off points and guidance centres**, ensuring the service is integrated into the heart of every community.

## results/next steps

This report will be used to ensure that the new Library of Things space serves the needs of City of London residents. This report also consists of recommendations that can be used to drive other initiatives and service developments. Collaboratively between the City of London Residents, the City Corporation, and Library of Things, this report can be used kick start these opportunities into action. By starting small and learning fast, pilot programs can offer continuous collaborative experimentation, which will lead to sustainable and impactful long-term initiatives.

For some more complex recommendations, there requires funding, or other stakeholders to be engaged. This report should be used to help secure funding by providing evidence for why these actions are necessary. Some points require further investigation, due to the fact that what we've learnt from residents does not align with what the City Corporation currently provides:

- We hear that residents do not receive local information or guidance on waste services in their estate, but this is in fact a resource that the City Corporation is able to offer. The challenge here may either reflect the information itself, or how this is being distributed.
- Repair events run by City Corporation typically have poor attendance from City of London residents, despite residents saying that is not enough capacity for these events.



# 3/opportunities...

Each of the six opportunity areas found harbour a range of ideas that emerged from the interactions with residents. This forms a repository of ideas that cannot be implemented all at the same time. Different stakeholders can use this repository to find ideas they may want to work on at any time.

1/communication that drives positive action /

2/make more of what we've got /

3/targeted & motivation-driven communication /

4/inclusive & accessible services /

5/resident-led stewardship /

6/community connections & empowerment /



# opportunity 1/communication that drives positive action...

Information on waste and recycling can be overwhelming, contradictory, and digital-first, leading to confusion, wishful recycling, and the hoarding of broken items.

This opportunity explores how the City Corporation, the Library of Things, and City of London Residents, can collaborate to provide **clear, localised, and physical communication**, reframing waste as a resource and using trusted community hubs to ensure residents understand how to handle unwanted items.

**opportunity 1/** how might we acknowledge and support multiple sources of knowledge to help residents understand how to handle unwanted items?

- ideas/**
- 1/What if information around what to do with unwanted items was localised?
  - 2/What if residents were consistently given physical up to date information?
  - 3/What if there was a more collaborative format for the City/Resident communication?
  - 4/What if the A-Z' was reframed more in line with circularity?
  - 5/What if the Library of Things became a hub for reliable information?

# opportunity 2/ make more of what we've got...

Residents are eager to co-manage waste and participate in circular systems, but they are frequently frustrated by aging, or restricted physical infrastructure.

This opportunity explores how the City Corporation, the Library of Things, and City of London Residents, can collaborate on fixing the basics, such as upgrading bin stores, reinstating garden waste skips, and formalising estate "Salvage Stores", to ensure existing services and take-back initiatives match current resident demand before implementing entirely new solutions.

# opportunity 2/how might we fix the basics, in collaborations between the City and residents where necessary or relevant?

- ideas/
- 1/What if there were no restrictions on who could use certain recycling bins?
  - 2/What if every estate was provided with a designated salvage store?
  - 3/What if the Garden Waste Skip was brought back?
  - 4/What if existing infrastructure matched the current demand?
  - 5/ What if residents were encouraged to remove plastic packaging in Waitrose?
  - 6/What if take-back services matched the current demand?

# opportunity 3/targeted & motivation-driven communication...

While sustainability is important, it is often a secondary motivator compared to practical concerns like saving money, clearing space in small flats, or completing specific householder chores.

This opportunity highlights how to successfully engage residents by tailoring the Library of Things inventory and communication to solve genuine City living problems, such as maintaining carpets or storing large suitcases, rather than relying solely on sustainability messaging.



**opportunity 3/** how might we acknowledge the different motivations to use the Library of Things, so residents resonate and connect with the service in their own way?

**ideas/** 1/What if there was ongoing engagement that resonated with all residents?  
2/What if the item list were framed as activities and tasks to demonstrate tool use?

# opportunity 4/inclusive & accessible services...

The physical distance to the Barbican Library and a reliance on digital-first systems risk excluding elderly, vulnerable, or digitally disconnected residents from the sharing economy.

This opportunity outlines strategies to make the Library of Things genuinely accessible for everyone, including offering cargo bike deliveries, free trolleys for heavy items, physical catalogues, cash payments, pop-ups in further-away estates, and a pay what you can afford scheme.

# opportunity 4/how might we bridge physical and digital divides through adapting and adding services to the Library of Things?

- ideas/
- 1/What if trolleys and cargo bikes were made easily available to transport bulky items?
  - 2/What if Library of Things items could be delivered by the Barbican Library?
  - 3/What if we communicated accessible transport links to help residents navigate transport?
  - 4/What if residents could order items without digital means?
  - 5/What if the Library of Things featured pop-ups in further away estates?
  - 6/What if the Library of Things offered a pay what you can scheme?

# opportunity 5/resident-led stewardship...

Having access to tools is only half the battle; many residents live in small flats without the space for "messy" tasks and lack the confidence or skills to use heavy-duty equipment safely.

This opportunity looks at expanding the Library of Things beyond a rental service, through collaboration between the City Corporation, Library of Things, and City of London Residents, unlocking underused estate spaces to create **community workshops**, and **fostering a skill-sharing economy** where residents can trade expertise and learn through **face-to-face demonstrations**.

# opportunity 5/how might we build on the Library of Things core rental service with 'learning and doing' facilities?

- ideas/
- 1/What if we unlocked the hidden spaces in the City and converted them into workshop spaces?
  - 2/What if we established a robust booking system for these reclaimed community workshops?
  - 3/What if there training sessions were hosted locally across each estate?
  - 4/What if we empowered a community skill-sharing economy?
  - 5/What if we formalised a skill-sharing economy, and residents could trade expertise?

# opportunity 6 / community connections & empowerment /...

Traditional community spaces are feeling less welcoming and more like strict room-renting services, which limits the opportunities for residents to gather and engage with new initiatives.

This opportunity explores how the Library of Things can act as a catalyst to **grow these connections**, and in collaboration with the City Corporation and City of London Residents, serve as a **welcoming social hub**, supporting existing vibrant community groups with tools and materials, and **empowering residents** to introduce the service to their peers.

# opportunity 6/ how might we use future circularity initiatives as leverage to create spaces where residents feel connected and supported?

- ideas/
- 1/What if the Library of Things was a community hub where residents could go to feel connected?
  - 2/What if residents could donate underused tools in exchange for credits?
  - 3/What if the Library of Things supported existing community groups by providing tools?
  - 4/What if we empowered residents to introduce the Library of Things service to their peers?

## 4/process...





# process/co-design

For this research project we have taken a **co-creative** approach, so that there is a deep understanding of residents' specific needs, barriers, and behaviours. We also collected ideas and opportunities directly from residents and even created new ones with them during conversation.

To achieve this, we used a multi-layered engagement strategy to reach a diverse cross-section of the community:

- **Observational research:** Ethnographic photography and a walking tour across local estates to understand real-world actions and behaviours.
- **Resident engagement:** Conversations with 70+ residents across the Middlesex Street, Mansell Street, Golden Lane, and Barbican estates.
- **Interactive sessions:** 2 formal workshops (90-minute deep-dives) and 10+ informal drop-in sessions that moved from discussing general waste challenges to specific future resident-led opportunities.

This **grassroots**, co-design approach is highly valuable for the project's success for many reasons:

- It transforms the service from a rental locker for individual use into a true community hub.
- It uncovers the real, pragmatic motivations driving behaviour.
- It highlights hidden accessibility and inclusion barriers.
- It grows trust and leverages existing networks.



# process/resident engagement

We conducted 2 workshops and 10+ informal drop-in sessions across Middlesex Street, Mansell Street, Golden Lane, and Barbican estates. Over the project we engaged with 70+ people.

The workshops were structured as 90 minute conversations hosting up to 20 people, split into smaller groups of 3-5. Each session began exploring wider challenges around managing unwanted items/waste, then introducing the Library of Things service into the conversation, before discussing future resident-led opportunities that could support communities in living more sustainable and circular lives, as the City Corporation strives for in its Circular Strategy Framework 2024-2040.



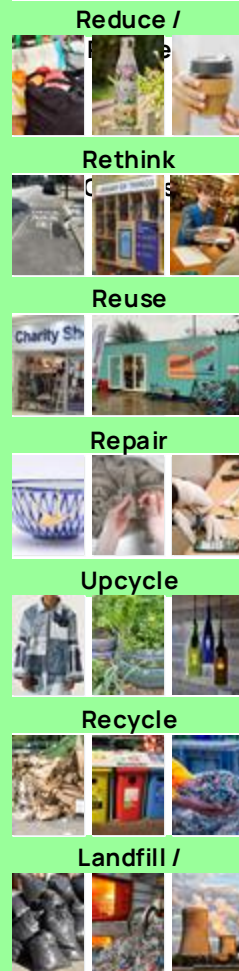
# process/action ladder

The 'Action Ladder' was used to frame these conversations, taken from the 'Ladder of Waste' framework: the higher up the ladder, the better for the planet your action is.

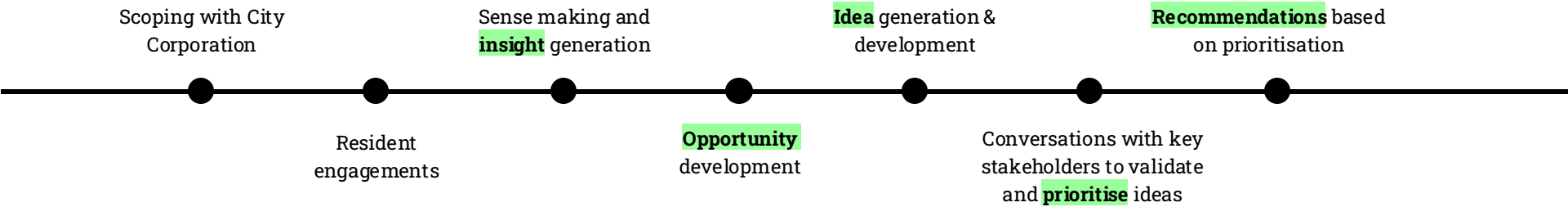
Many residents typically only think about recycling when discussing 'waste', which is one small part of a much larger picture. Outlining this as actions on a ladder, this introduces a hierarchy of actions that can be used to manage unwanted items.

As we had more conversations with residents, we developed a stronger understanding of how they associated these different actions, so we evolved these accordingly. The 'Action Ladder' was co-created between the research team and residents until the final workshop.

The visual on the right illustrates this final version of the 'Action Ladder'. The ladder visualisation was much appreciated by residents and easy to understand. One resident even wanted one to put on his fridge!



# process/timeline



## appendix/stby research team

Stby is a strategic design, research and innovation consultancy. We are leading pioneers in an ever-evolving field of complex societal challenges. Helping different stakeholders to engage with citizens and organisations that together need to address these challenges. Stby's team consists of experienced researchers and designers with multi-disciplinary backgrounds who listen first, and help different stakeholders to listen too in order to build a joint understanding that everyone can act on.

The team for this project consisted of:



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