

BIRMINGHAM

Women's Community Planning in Birmingham

From 1989 to the mid 1990s **Birmingham for People's Women's Group (BfP Women's Group)** challenged the planning system to address women's needs.

Birmingham's extensive modernist redevelopment as a business city from the 1970s reflected social ideals based on the able-bodied, professional, car-driving male. This resulted in a city centre environment that forced pedestrians into a disorienting and dangerous subway system under the ring roads. Women came together in different ways to fight for feminist alternatives and BfP Women's Group tackled a range of planning problems, addressing physical accessibility and safety for women.

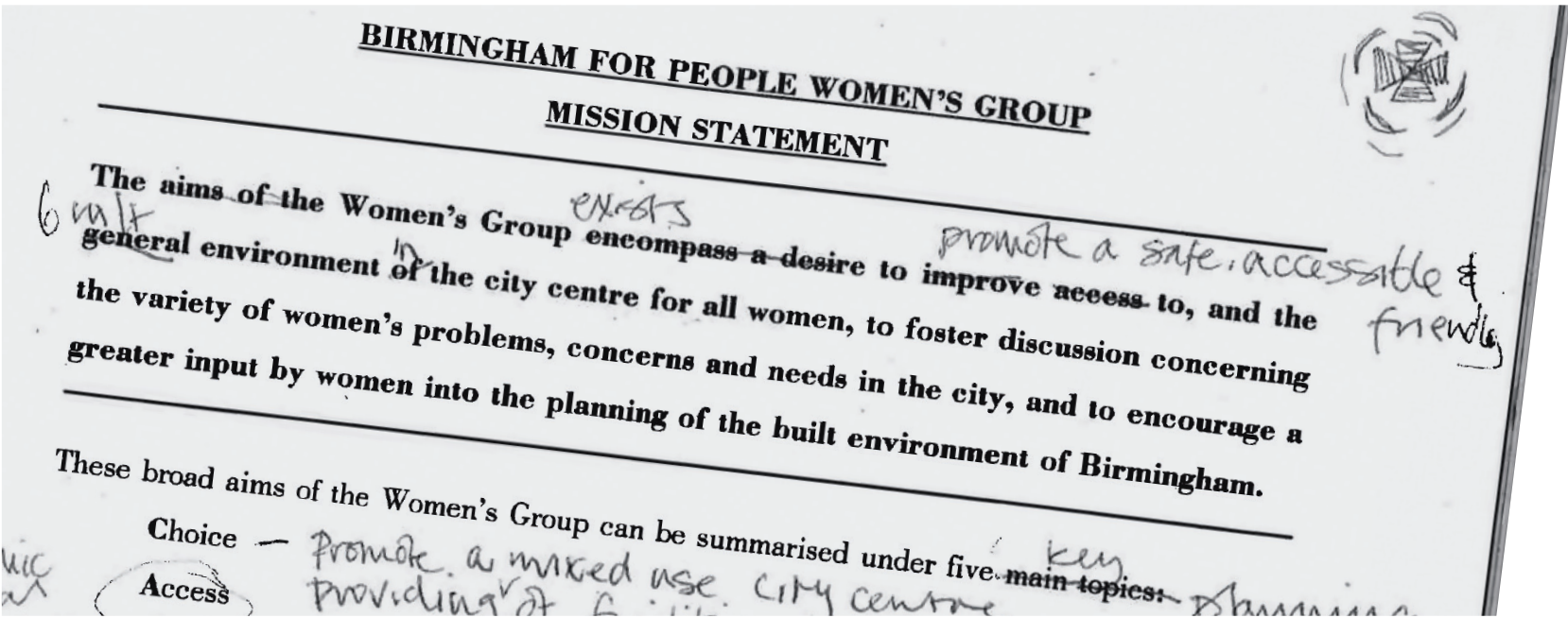


Spaces of Hope participatory workshop 2022



Compilation of various newspapers by BfP Women's Group 1989

Courtesy of BfP Women's Group



BfP Women's Group Mission Statement, 1989.

“I had no idea about community led planning before I went to Birmingham for People. Not a clue. So it never even occurred to me that people could have a voice in shaping this thing at all.” BFP WOMEN'S GROUP MEMBER.

Photo: BfP Women's Group



Women's Planning Day, Bloomsbury Estate, Nechells, with BfP Women's Group, residents and a City Council community architect (1990s).

Greater community control

Drawing on the energy of the second wave feminist movement of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, the BfP Women's Group came out of, and worked alongside, Birmingham for People, which was campaigning for greater community control over the redevelopment of the public space in the city centre. But some of the women in this group felt that even in these alternative campaigns women's voices were not being heard.



Women in the Centre report 1989, BfP Women's Group, no more subway p.11

Improving pedestrian access to the city

Women's organizing in Birmingham was challenging due to the fractured spatial organisation of the city. Nevertheless, the sustained efforts of the BfP Women's Group drove change as they challenged the City Council to provide

baby changing spaces, public toilets, creches and improved safety and lighting. Ultimately their influence contributed to making it easier for pedestrians to cross the roads, so the city centre was more accessible and safe.

