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# Growing Older in Collyhurst: *How can social infrastructure be used to support an Age-Friendly Victoria North*



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# Executive Summary

- 'Age-friendly social infrastructure' should be an integral part of urban regeneration projects, including inclusive spaces that support age-friendly principles, in order to provide opportunities for older people to build and maintain social connections.
- This report suggest that social infrastructure should be foregrounded in discussions about urban regeneration, in order to ensure that new spaces created in the city are inclusive and foster social connections for older residents.
- While many stakeholders and some residents see Victoria North as an opportunity, there is also concern about the impact regeneration might have on relationships and resources in the existing community.
- There is uncertainty and anxiety about what will be built in the spaces within the community that have already been cleared or are currently unused and are awaiting redevelopment. Residents are concerned about how future redevelopments may encroach on these spaces, with anxiety about losing access to green spaces.
- Mistrust is evident among some residents based on a history of regeneration plans which have not come to fruition, reinforced by a lack of transparency in the planning process.
- There is concern that new businesses and services will be geared towards incoming, middle-class young professionals rather than existing older residents, with neighbouring Ancoats cited as an example of this process.
- There are many existing connections between residents and groups in Collyhurst which could be strengthened further in the newly-regenerated neighbourhood. There is an opportunity to strengthen links between different organisations and stakeholders in Collyhurst as part of the regeneration plans.
- The methods used in this project have shown that there are a variety of ways of working with older people remotely which could be included in future consultation processes or if there are future waves of coronavirus restrictions.



- COVID-19 has increased uncertainty about the future regeneration of Collyhurst. This report urges the Far East Consortium and Manchester City Council remain committed to their aims of inclusive design following age-friendly principles, especially given the potential of widening inequalities associated with the economic impact of the pandemic.
- Lastly, age-friendly strategies have to meet specific local needs and aspirations. Drawing on the literature and the findings of this research project, we conclude that there should be a collective commitment to age-friendly principles to ensure:
  - diverse social infrastructure to accommodate different needs in communities
  - inclusiveness for people of all ages
  - intergenerational connections
  - age-friendly green spaces for mental and physical health
  - age-friendly principles in the regeneration plans
  - recognition and preservation of local histories and heritage

# Introduction

**In 2018, Manchester City Council announced its largest and most ambitious residential-led development, delivering up to 15,000 homes over a 15-20 year period, equivalent to the size of a new town.**

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The Northern Gateway (re-named Victoria North) redevelopment has a number of unique features, with the City Council committed to working in partnership with housing developers to include age-friendly principles in the design. A key objective for the programme is to deliver housing and amenities suitable for older as well as younger generations, and to work with different community groups on the development of the project.

This report presents the findings of a six-month pilot research project carried out by academics at the University of Manchester, Newcastle University and Manchester School of Architecture. The research explored ways in which the proposed urban regeneration project could engage with age-friendly principles in the neighbourhood of Collyhurst in North Manchester and builds on findings from a previous research report on the same redevelopment<sup>1</sup>.

## **Age friendly communities**

By 2030, two-thirds of the world's populations will be living in cities, with major urban areas in the developed world likely to have 25% or more of their population aged 60 and over. Urban environments create many advantages for older people,

for example, through providing access to cultural activities, leisure facilities, and specialist medical care. At the same time, they may also produce feelings of insecurity, arising from the impact of urban regeneration, population turnover, and environmental problems associated with climate change, together with high levels of pollution<sup>2</sup>.

The pressures associated with city living indicate challenges for policies seeking to reconcile population ageing with urban development. An emerging theme concerns the need to create what has been termed 'age-friendly cities and communities'. Alley et al.<sup>3</sup> define an age-friendly community as a '*... place where older people are actively involved, valued, and supported with infrastructure and services that effectively accommodate their needs*'.

The 'age-friendly' perspective was first developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) through a project examining the experiences of older people living in urban environments. The result of this work was a guide identifying the key characteristics of an age-friendly community in terms of *service provision* (e.g., health services, transportation), the *built environment* (e.g., housing, outdoor spaces, and buildings),

and *social aspects* (e.g., civic and social participation). To encourage dissemination of its work, the WHO launched in 2010 the Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC), with Manchester the first city in the UK to become a member of the Global Network<sup>4</sup>.

The growth in popularity of the age-friendly movement has led to the development of various age-friendly frameworks and initiatives. These can be found under headings such as: 'age-friendly' 'elder friendly', 'ageing-friendly', 'livable', and 'lifetime neighborhoods'. The difference in terminologies reflects the wide variety of approaches to, and organisations involved in, creating age-friendly environments.

Some age-friendly models focus on adapting the *physical infrastructure*, for example through providing access to green spaces, promoting home adaptations, and enabling mobility and walkability, while others pay more attention towards *social aspects* of the environment by emphasising inclusion, participation, and social support<sup>5</sup>.

Scharlach<sup>6</sup> emphasises the importance of combining both physical and social infrastructure in building age-friendly communities, highlighting the following elements:

1. Adequate general physical and social infrastructures that promote health and well-being for the entire community;
2. Minimal age-related barriers faced by older community members in trying to access that infrastructure;

3. Compensatory and enabling features that respond to the particular age-related needs and sensibilities of older community members;
4. mechanisms for engaging older adults as valued members of community life.

Our report considers the basis for Collyhurst developing along age-friendly lines. In what follows, we provide:

- A summary of the various pressures facing urban neighbourhoods
- A review of the design of our study
- Findings from the research; and
- Recommendations and conclusions.

# Part A

# Community and Social Infrastructure

## Pressures on urban neighbourhoods

Developing *age-friendly communities* has coincided with new pressures affecting community life associated with widening inequalities within and between cities<sup>7</sup>; polarisation between social groups<sup>8</sup>; the impact of urban change associated with gentrification; and cuts to social infrastructure such as libraries and community centres as a result of significant reduction in local government funding since 2010. This reduction in funding, the result of austerity measures set out by central government, have disproportionately impacted urban local authorities in the North of England<sup>9</sup>. As of 2020, pressures associated with the Coronavirus pandemic and subsequent social distancing measures can be added to this list.

Additional stresses facing urban neighbourhoods in the UK include: the housing crisis experienced by many social groups; and problems relating to the design and planning of neighbourhoods.

Demographic factors are changing the demand for housing, with an ageing population leading to new lifestyles and models of home ownership, but with a

limited range of options available to older people wishing to move from their existing accommodation<sup>10</sup>.

*For increasing numbers of older people, the home is neither safe nor comfortable, with over one million people over 55, and more than 1 in 5 people over 75, living in what is officially defined as 'non-decent housing'<sup>11</sup>.*

As social housing has become less available, many of those renting, including older people, have been forced to turn to the private rented sector. This sector now accounts for a greater proportion of Britain's housing stock than social rented housing, with 4.6 million (19% households living in the private-rented sector), and an increase in the proportion of people aged 55-64 living in the rented sector<sup>12</sup>.

Poor quality housing, a common problem in privately-rented housing, is estimated to cost the NHS £1.4 billion every year<sup>13</sup>. Innovative approaches are therefore required to ensure that additions to the housing stock are made accessible, adaptable, and within financial reach of those who wish to move,



and that programmes are in place to support residents who want to remain in their current homes and neighbourhoods<sup>14</sup>.

COVID-19 has shone a spotlight on existing inequalities around housing and community infrastructure. A report from the Centre for Ageing Better<sup>15</sup> (in association with the Kings Fund), *Homes, Health and COVID-19*, highlights the extent to which the pandemic has amplified housing-related health inequalities: first, through the acceleration of the virus in areas of poor housing; and second, through measures to control the virus which have deepened health inequalities for those restricted to their homes. Lockdown restrictions have meant that many older people are spending more time in their homes and those who are more likely to live in poor housing are often the same groups who are vulnerable to COVID-19. Research from the ONS during the first wave of the pandemic found that people (of all ages) living in the most deprived areas were dying at *twice the rate* from COVID-19 compared with those living in more affluent areas<sup>16</sup>.

Planning for *neighbourhoods and appropriate social infrastructure* is an equally important part of urban regeneration<sup>17</sup>. Well-designed places influence the quality of our experiences, health, well-being, feelings of safety, inclusion and belonging, and our sense of community cohesion<sup>18</sup>. These spaces have a significant impact on how people relate to where they live, particularly for older people, who typically spend at least *80% of the day* in their home and immediate neighbourhood<sup>19</sup>.

While shared amenities support inclusive communities and allow residents to take

collective ownership of the spaces between the buildings<sup>20</sup>, the focus of the current planning system is skewed in favour of *speed and quantity* of housing supply, at the expense of good design and creating sustainable, liveable places<sup>21</sup>. As a result, communities often feel '*locked out*' of decision-making processes, as the priority of redevelopment processes, focuses on the numbers of homes supplied<sup>22</sup>.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed spatial disparities which have meant that the poorest neighbourhoods in cities have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. These are neighbourhoods which were already struggling prior to the pandemic due to high levels of poverty and cuts to public spending.

'Over the last 10 years, these...communities and areas have seen vital physical and community assets lost, resources and funding reduced, community and voluntary sector services decimated and public services cut, all of which have damaged health and widened inequalities. These lost assets and services compound the multiple economic and social deprivations, including high rates of persistent poverty and low income, high levels of debt, poor health and poor housing that are already faced by many residents.'<sup>23</sup>.

There is longstanding evidence about the extent to which living in a structurally deprived neighbourhood is associated with increased risk for adverse health outcomes and behaviours<sup>24</sup>. One explanation for this finding is that living in a neighbourhood with high levels of air pollution, insufficient food outlets, limited access to services, and parks and recreational spaces, restricts

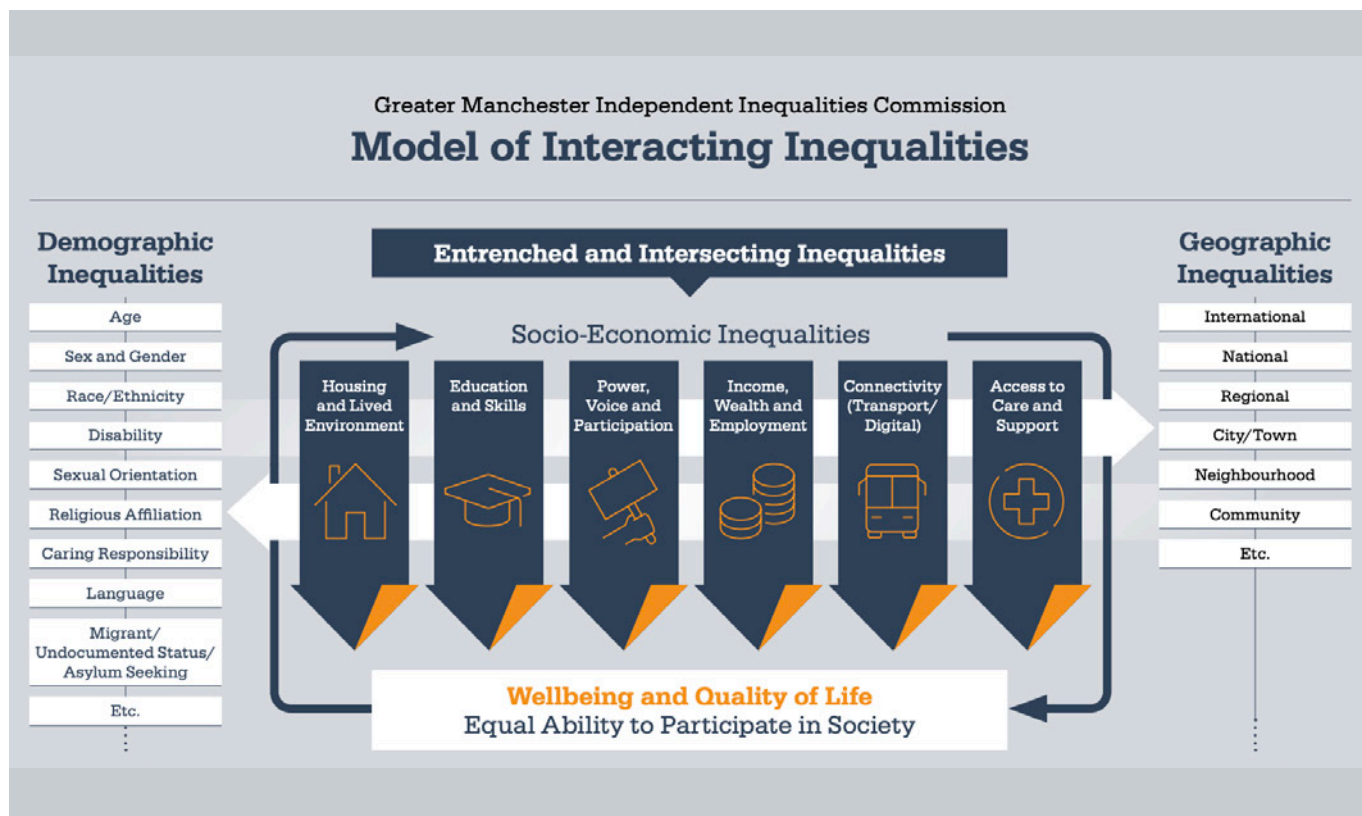
opportunities for physical activity and healthy food choices, which may, in turn, increase risks of adverse health outcomes.

In the case of Greater Manchester, *more than a quarter of deaths*, in the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, were among people living in the *most deprived areas of the region*. The Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission<sup>25</sup> confirms that even before the pandemic, the region was ‘fractured by inequalities’ across a range of indicators. Significant concentrations of income deprivation can be found across GM. Amongst older people, 50,000 people experience pensioner poverty in GM, reflecting cumulative inequality arising from low-incomes, long-term unemployment, and poor health. These conditions are particularly concentrated within areas on the fringe of Manchester

Centre City, such as Collyhurst. The two electoral wards that Collyhurst is located within, ‘Harpurhey’ and ‘Miles Platting and Newton Heath’ have the worst healthy life expectancy in Manchester at 50.3 years and 49.6 years respectively. This places them in the worst 0.1% nationally, and means that residents can expect 29 fewer years of good health compared to wealthy areas such as Knightsbridge and Belgravia in London.

While it is generally accepted that homes, communities and landscapes have a profound effect on our quality of life<sup>26</sup>, there is little consensus about how development processes might improve outcomes for older populations. The research described in this report begins to address this issue, focusing on residents’ views about planned urban regeneration in the Manchester neighbourhood of Collyhurst.

Diagram showing the interaction between demographic, geographic and socio-economic inequalities that lead to poor quality of life (Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission, 2021)



# Design of the study

**Following a pilot research project carried out by the project team in 2019, a set of recommendations were produced about how the Victoria North scheme could be designed to be inclusive for different age and social groups.**

Thanks to generous support by a partnership between Age-Friendly Manchester (Manchester City Council), Centre for Ageing Better and MICRA (University of Manchester), a follow-up research project started in January 2020 to explore the findings from the previous project in more detail.

A key finding from the 2019 research revealed that successive waves of demolition and population decline had resulted in the *loss of social infrastructure of various kinds*. As a result, Collyhurst has no significant retail outlets and limited public services, with residents having to travel to neighbouring Harpurhey, Miles Platting or Cheetham Hill, to access key amenities such as libraries, leisure centres, or to buy groceries.

The 2019 report listed various types of amenities in and around Collyhurst. To understand more about the importance of these and other places in the community, the project researcher (Luciana Lang) spent time with people in Collyhurst exploring their relationship to the neighbourhood, their understanding of the regeneration plans, and their views about the assets and resources within the locality. The original

plan for the research included collaborative methods developed through face-to-face interviews and direct co-production work with residents. However, Covid-19 lockdown meant that the research had to move to using largely online platforms. These included:

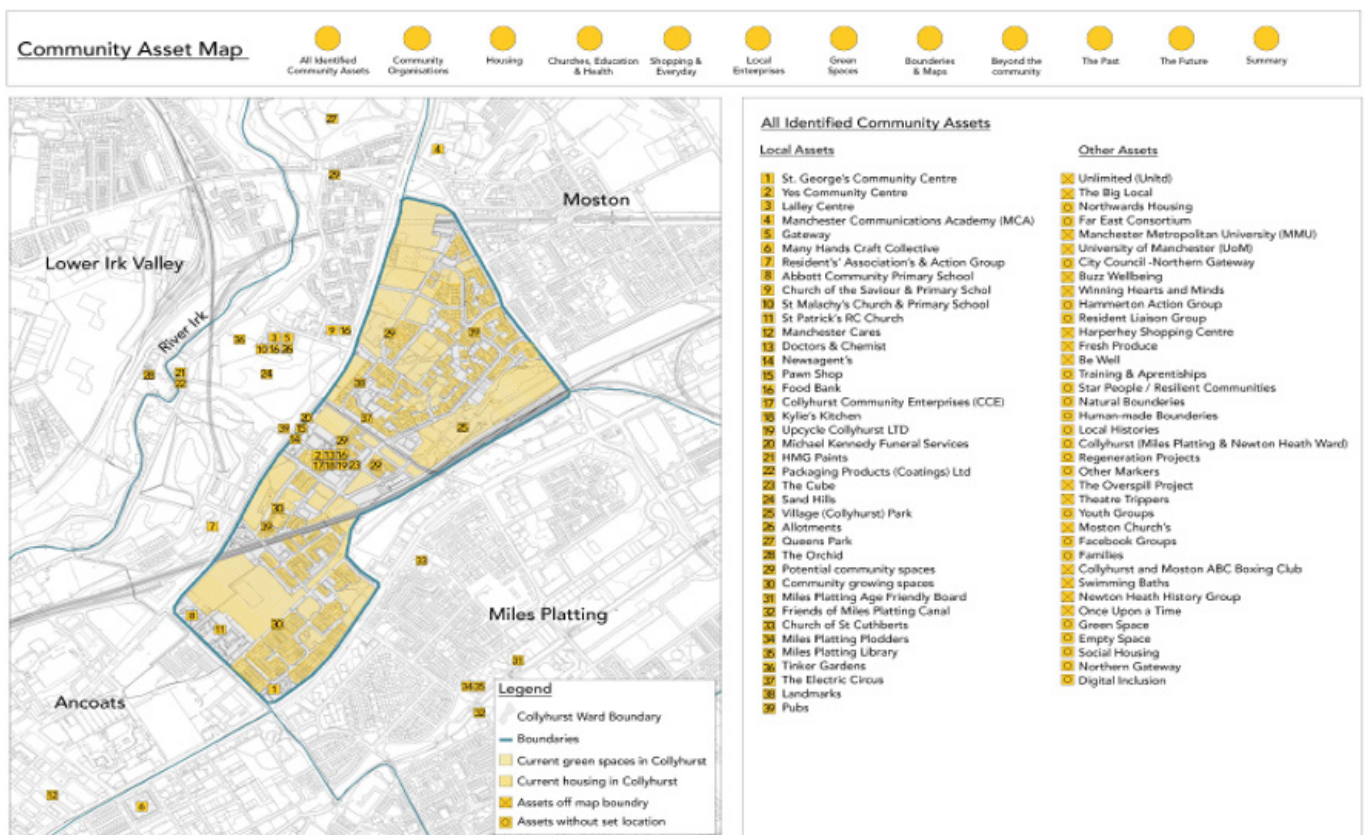
- **The development of a Community Asset Map (CAM)**
- **Remote craft sessions conducted via Zoom**
- **34 interviews with community workers, regeneration stakeholders, and community members.**
- **Focus groups with residents**

## The Community Asset Map

A Community Asset Map (CAM) is commonly understood as a map produced collaboratively with residents to identify physical structures, spaces, social networks, and skills in the community. The main purpose of mapping these resources is to foster connectivity between people and organisations, and to provide a valuable tool to inform stakeholders about local networks and activities. The first four weeks of the research included visits to the area and engagement with local residents which provided valuable insights into community life.

Researchers have used community mapping in a variety of ways, but especially to understand different ideas about 'community' and 'place', and to emphasise different views held about the meaning of neighbourhood to different groups.

## Screenshot of the interactive Community Asset Map





## Why do places matter?

Places matter to people because they are important backdrops to individual and community life. Community mapping enables researchers to engage with the meanings attributed to places, based on the perspective of local communities. During one of the focus groups, participants were asked about the boundaries of Collyhurst. Some of them mentioned Collyhurst Road, and then started singing a song they all knew by heart, *Collyhurst Road*:

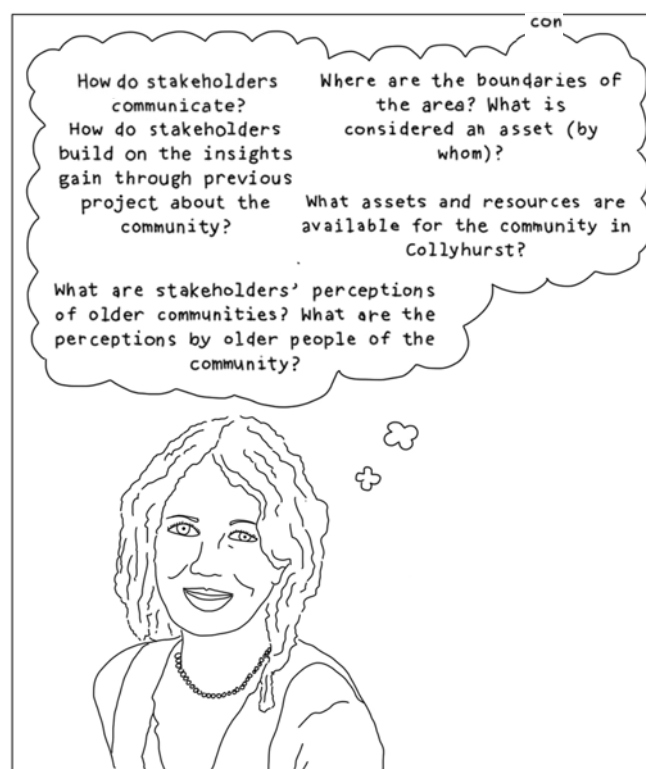
*'I said goodbye to the mother-in-law, and off I went to sea. I sailed with Captain Skipper aboard the Mary-Anne. And we all set sail down Collyhurst Road, in a Black Maria van. Oh, Collyhurst Road, I am forsaken, it's not that my whole heart is aching. It's the whiskey and the rum that I'll be taking, for the charming little girl down Collyhurst Road'*

The *ad hoc* performance illustrates how life and events are intertwined with places where people identify particular memories, and the familiar territory surrounding their homes.

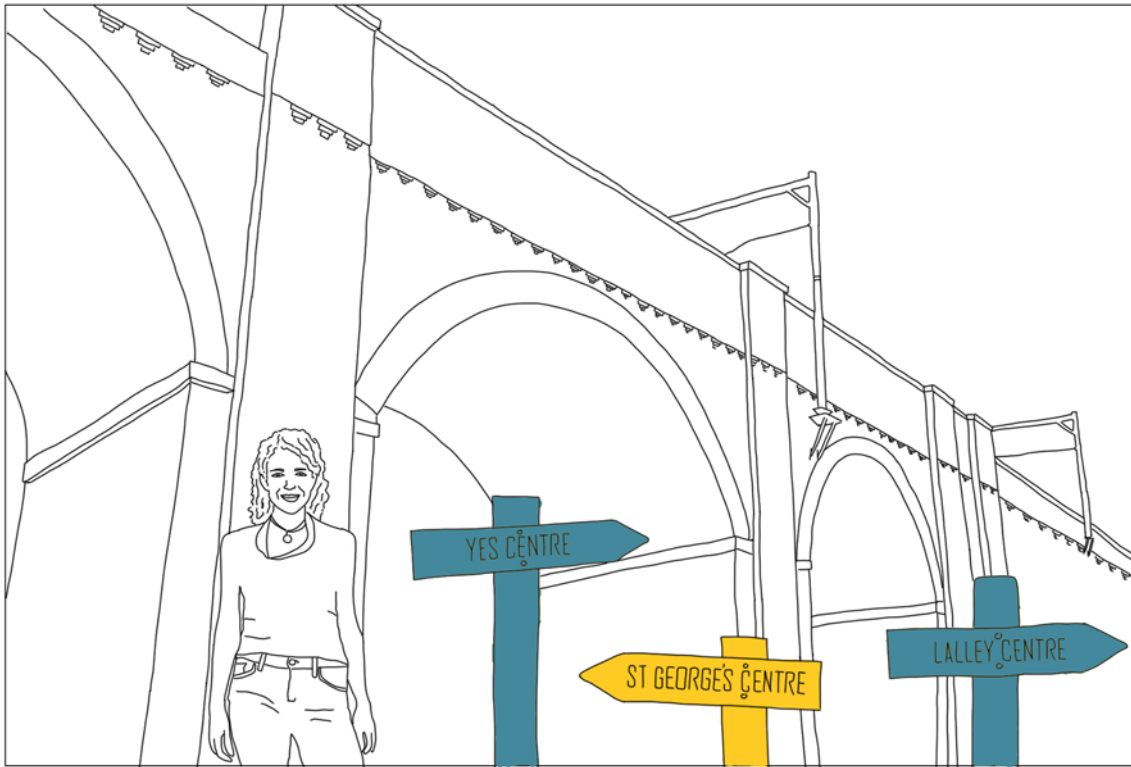
The CAM produced in this research draws on ethnographic insights and presents varied views about Collyhurst, and draws on the perspective of residents and stakeholders working in the community. The resulting map illustrates the social infrastructure of Collyhurst, including the memories associated with places, such as pubs and swimming pools, which no longer have a physical presence in the area.

## Working with residents

Face-to-face meetings were prohibited from March 2020 due to the national lockdown arising from COVID-19. Therefore the research team continued to keep in touch with residents through telephone and text exchanges. The final layout of the CAM was the result of regular conversations between members of the research team. An architect, Tay Gould, translated the insights from interviews into illustrations in order to represent some of the key findings from the research, and depict how the ethnography adapted to the lockdown in a comic strip format.



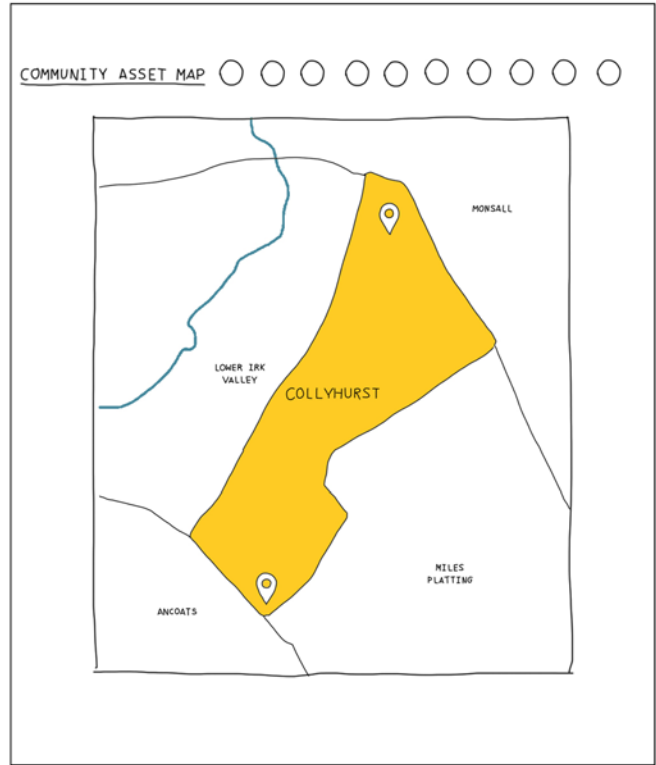
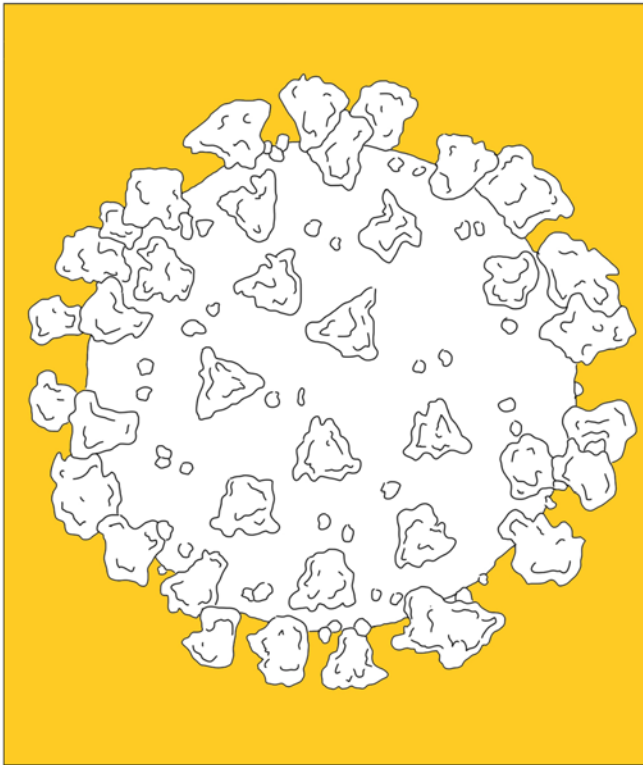
Following from the findings in the 2019 study, we had the following research questions:



The first four weeks of visits to the area and engagement with local residents proved fruitful and led to a set of initial findings.



We soon found out that Collyhurst community goes beyond its physical boundaries: Many Hands is an over-60s craft collective based in Ancoats.



The unexpected...

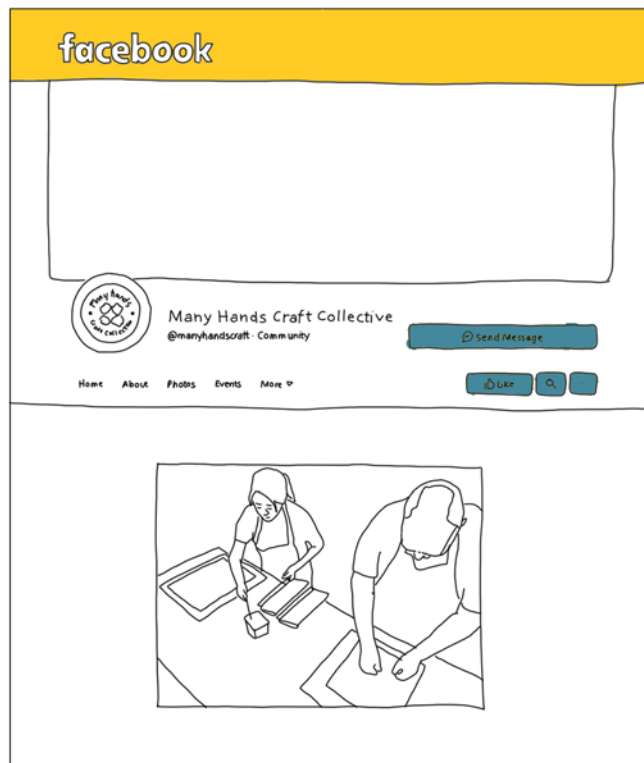
...meant that the research now focused on the Community Asset Map and ...



... Reformulation of the research questions.



The elaboration of the Community Asset Map was an interdisciplinary effort that involved social scientists and architects working together based on the knowledge shared by residents and stakeholders



Researchers soon discovered that Collyhurst had a prominent presence online through a number of Facebook groups.





Working remotely during CV19 translated into doing digital ethnography, chatting on the phone and trying out new methodologies.



Limitations of our methods included not being able to spend time with, and in the community, not being able to explore age-friendly design of housing and community spaces with the community, digital exclusion.

## Remote Craft Sessions

Researchers were able to engage with some residents through a craft-based group that moved its activity online during the national lockdown starting in March 2020. The *Many Hands Craft Collective* communicated regularly via Facebook, led by their resident artist, Liz Wewiora. The researcher joined the virtual sessions and suggested a theme for the group to work on: the idea of '**community**'. Two different craft packs were distributed to 13 participants of the Craft Collective. Some packs included 5 square pieces of plain coloured cotton, thread and needles for the making of a *mola*, a textile technique that was talked through via sessions over Zoom. Other packs had a sketch book, oil pastels and water-colour pencils. Participants also contributed with photos from a window or a garden during lockdown [A].

The craft packs proved to be an effective way of maintaining relationships with residents during the lockdown. Two remote craft sessions were conducted via Zoom, accompanied by power point slides including instructions that were sent to participants via email. Using technology during the lockdown, presented both challenges and opportunities. Giving instructions on textile techniques over Zoom proved challenging, however, the discussions on the theme '**community**' generated interesting ideas [B].

As participants discussed how perceptions of community had changed during lockdown, a conversation evolved around the idea or the virtual community that was now bringing people together, and how the thumbnails with people's faces on people's screens during Zoom craft sessions could signify connectivity and belonging [C].



## **Interviews and Focus Groups**

A total of 34 interviews were conducted over the two phases of the research with a range of collaborators, including: community workers, regeneration stakeholders, and community members. Residents' views were also sought through three focus groups. The interviews were semi-structured, and included questions about Collyhurst neighbourhood and future regeneration. When talking to stakeholders, questions focused on their organisation's initiatives related to age-friendly environments, approaches to community work, relationships with residents and community networks, and the possibilities of future regeneration. When talking to community members, questions explored views about growing older in Collyhurst, the character and identity of Collyhurst, and their relationship with organisations and informal groups in the community.

## **Opportunities and limitations**

As a result of the national lockdown which began in March 2020, the research methods were adapted to include various digital technologies, for example Zoom and other online platforms. These were used in order to develop various conversations and connections.

The development of relationships through online craft activity groups provided a fertile ground for some residents to keep connected through a desire for shared learning. Phone conversations were also used as a way to communicate with participants, with discussions shifting from the research to more personal exchanges

such as struggles during lockdown, feelings of loneliness, and solidarity between neighbours.

Due to the restrictions imposed by social distancing, the researchers utilised street view on Google Maps to get a sense of amenities within the community and social infrastructure in and around Collyhurst.

# Findings

The neighbourhood of Collyhurst has seen a great deal of change, much of which reflects previous regeneration projects which have been proposed for the area. The SRF published in 2019 - which was consulted on extensively with residents and stakeholders - includes land use plans for the whole area which show how land is intended to be used and the locations of parks and open spaces. However, some of the residents we spoke to expressed a sense of 'weariness' about new redevelopment plans. In particular, Collyhurst residents in our study were concerned about:

- the potential of loss of social infrastructure
- consultation processes
- spaces awaiting redevelopment.

The mapping exercise revealed that there were many connections between different groups and organisations (see 'asset snapshots' below). *The research also found opportunities to strengthen connections between different organisations and stakeholders in Collyhurst as part of future regeneration plans.* In order to support these networks to develop, greater transparency from Manchester City Council and Far East Consortium will be required, for example around ensuring the availability of spaces suitable for general community use. Also, greater dialogue should be encouraged so that residents are supported to be involved in future decision-making processes about the use of shared spaces.

We have listed our key findings below, which are illustrated using the asset map.

## **Community Centres & Organisations:**

This research found strong community networks in Collyhurst, which often extend beyond the neighbourhood itself. The mapping illustrates some connectivity between organisations but there is a lack of communication in some cases.

Conversations with local organisations revealed:

- That some residents were unaware of local community centres and services, indicating a need for greater support to draw attention to groups and services which are run locally.
- A few stakeholders described Collyhurst as lacking assets and engagement. In contrast, some groups are well-connected: the craft club, for example, which transferred to working remotely (using online group meetings) almost immediately after the lockdown, revealed how networks are not static but constantly being remade according to circumstances.
- Despite widespread willingness to engage with community activities, the issue of digital exclusion for many is still one that needs to be addressed.
- There is an enduring feeling of pride in the area, a strong sense of local identity, and a desire amongst older people to



age in place from both residents and community organisers.

- At the same time, there is also a common view that Collyhurst is a difficult place to work: first, because of a lack of resources due to the failure of past development schemes; second, because of entrenched economic deprivation.

## Housing

For our research participants living in Collyhurst, housing is not just about the building where people live. Home, in other words, does not end at the front door. It is connected to a wider sense of neighbourhood, including empty areas between the houses where there has been previous demolition, and to the places that are part of people's everyday life, such as gardens, pavements, and roads, which have the potential of being used by the community as shared spaces. Mapping these findings about housing revealed the following:

- There are hopes by stakeholders and residents that the Victoria North development will invest in age-friendly homes. Participants expressed a strong desire for houses with gardens for outdoor recreation and also to enable grandchildren to visit and play safely.
- A few participants were concerned about the possibility of future regeneration resulting in 'social cleansing', and felt that redevelopments in nearby areas have pushed existing community members away due to

increased house prices, making it impossible for local residents to stay in the area.

- Some residents referred to the limitations of consultation processes, feeling that decisions had already been made about what types of houses to build.
- Some residents also felt that consultation did not bring any tangible benefits to the community:

*'What's in it for us?'*

(Resident in her 60s)

*'We've got a nice community thing going, but it's like with councils and that, they're always on about community spirit and all this, they're doing all this and they just come in and, in my mind, just smash it all to pieces. Because they'd leave us with no place to go, we've no social spaces'*

(Resident in her 60s).

- Participants expressed concern that communities will be "torn apart" if families are driven away through lack of appropriate and affordable housing. These positions were expressed despite the councils public commitments to a 'single move' strategy and considerable range of affordable/ social tenured properties, suggesting that communication or trust issues still remain.
- When discussing the future of the area, local residents were anxious about regeneration because of similar

redevelopments they had witnessed in neighbouring Ancoats and Miles Platting. In particular, there were concerns that changes to cost-of-living within the neighbourhood would impact their children and grandchildren's ability to remain in the local area:

*'We've always lived either Collyhurst, Ancoats, Miles Platting, for hundreds of years I can trace my family back. So, Ancoats now has gone for us. We couldn't live in Ancoats if we wanted to.'*

(Resident in her 60s).

### **Churches, schools and health**

Churches, schools and health organisations provide crucial support to some of the most vulnerable residents in Collyhurst. Their role is particularly important given the austerity cutbacks in services affecting the neighbourhood and the long term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. These organisations also provide opportunities for residents to meet up through collective activities and help people access services within the area. Conversations with stakeholders revealed how informal networks had filled gaps in service provision. There is concern about the impact of future regeneration on these networks, and the negative impact this might have on people's daily lives.

The mapping of social and health-related assets revealed the following:

- **Many of the schools, churches and third sector organisations are well connected in Collyhurst.** They often work together offering community facilities such as allotments, food banks, arts and crafts, and advice services, signposting residents to other groups or sharing facilities. For example, Winning Hearts and Minds works in partnership with grassroots community groups and schools to promote healthy diets; St Malachy's Church and Church of the Saviour have allotments and food distribution centres; and Manchester Cares connects people to fight loneliness and isolation.
- **Existing community services play a crucial role supporting vulnerable residents.** For example, the Lalley Centre (associated with St Malachy's Church) provides a number of services, including welfare advice and food support. In February 2020 the average number of people reached was 306. Following the lockdown in March 2020, many community services took time to adapt to the new environment. During the pandemic, the Lalley Centre provided support over the phone and food for local families in need. By August 2020, the number of people being supported had increased to 728.
- **Some community workers highlighted the important work being done with youth groups in the broader local area such as YPAC and 0161.** Some commented how crime had decreased in the area, pointing to the relevance of supporting initiatives that engage young people with short and long-term benefits. Centres like St.

George's are used by young as well as older people. These findings suggest that investment will be required for grass-roots initiatives to continue their outstanding work in the community.

- **Health workers commented on a strong sense of community among residents.** Winning Hearts have been involved with initiatives at local schools with accounts of solidarity between neighbours and a sense of collective identity related to place. There is an opportunity for future regeneration to draw on this sense of identity in the design of the new Collyhurst.

### **Food, Shops and Amenities**

On numerous occasions, both stakeholders and residents mentioned the lack of retail outlets in Collyhurst. Shops are not only important amenities but are also examples of social infrastructure: places that offer opportunities for social interactions and connectivity. Fleeting engagements are important in people's everyday lives, especially for older people who no longer work and who may live alone. A brief encounter at the local shop may be an important part of everyday life and provide vital opportunity for connection to the local community.

Food poverty was also identified as a problem experienced by some residents in Collyhurst who rely on support from local food banks and food distribution centers. These services were used on a regular basis. Mapping of food-related assets, shops and amenities highlighted the following findings:

- Stakeholders and residents referred to Collyhurst as a place that lacks assets

and services, particularly in comparison with neighbouring areas.

- Health workers were concerned about the **absence of retailers** which sell fresh food.
- There are three main food banks (Yes Manchester, Lalley Centre, and Gateway) supporting Collyhurst residents. Yes Manchester supported around 40 people each week with food parcels. This service that ran for 18 months up until the second lockdown. The Lalley Centre stayed open throughout and provided food for over 200 people in August 2020, while Gateway placed gazebos in the car park of the Church of the Savior, and provided food throughout the lockdown.
- Services were affected as a result of COVID-19. Yes Manchester met with people by appointment only with a reduced number of staff working in the office. The food pantry finished and the Wellspring Church found it difficult to work with all the changes required to run during the pandemic.
- Respondents also talked about the impact of the closure (pre-pandemic) on other everyday spaces (e.g. the swimming pool and pubs) and the impact on their lives. Respondents associated these closures with regeneration projects that were abandoned and were angry that they had not been replaced. For example, the nearest library for Collyhurst residents is in Miles Platting (1 mile away), which has limited opening hours (2 days a week).

## **Local enterprises**

A highly praised initiative by both stakeholders and local residents was Collyhurst Community Enterprises (CCE), which has the potential of greatly enhancing social infrastructure in Collyhurst. Some of the other established local enterprises played a key role in terms of galvanizing what was already there by, for example, supporting and engaging with urban farming and training projects. Mapping of local enterprise assets revealed the following:

- The majority of stakeholders and some residents see Victoria North as an opportunity that will bring further investment and new amenities.
- Existing residents stressed that businesses and services will need to cater for the existing community's needs, such as everyday amenities and places to socialise which are affordable and accessible to residents of different generations. Although respondents did recognise that increased levels of housing would make new cafes and businesses financially viable, there were concerns about whether these would focus on affluent clientele, rather the long-standing residents. It should be noted that, like any developer or local authority, FEC and Manchester City Council would have no control over the ways that local businesses choose to serve their local populations. This highlights the importance of social enterprises in serving the existing community, and the role they could play as Victoria North develops.
- Unlimited, a foundation for social entrepreneurs, and The Local Trust have

sponsored seven local residents to start their own businesses. The programme, called Star People, included a boxing club, a furniture up-cycling shop, and a café. Both residents and stakeholders, praised these initiatives as valuable new assets in the local area. There was support for more initiatives which should be managed by and for local people.

- Local residents are keen on seeing existing start-ups continue but are concerned that they will close once housing construction work starts, either because funding will be cut or because the buildings where they are based will no longer be available. This finding raises two important points: that there are small grassroots initiatives emerging but they need to be protected and supported financially; and that residents feel anxious about the long-term future of these initiatives, emphasising the considerable uncertainty about future regeneration.

## **Green and Empty Spaces**

Both stakeholders and local residents showed considerable enthusiasm about the creation of new green spaces in Collyhurst as part of future regeneration plans. However, there was skepticism regarding whether these spaces would remain inclusive for different groups of residents. Mapping of green and empty spaces revealed the following:

- Discussions with residents about their everyday life during the lockdown point to the importance of gardens and access to green and blue space such as parks and river/canal banks.

- The allotment connected to the Lalley Centre reopened on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020. During the period of lockdown when the main gardener was furloughed, two brothers of St. Malachy's Church and Sow the City, an organisation which supports green projects across Greater Manchester, helped to maintain this space. When it reopened in mid-June, produce from the gardens supplemented the food parcels that the Lalley Centre provided to families in need. It produced 130 kg of fresh food from February to August, enough to prepare 1,621 meals. From July, the management of the allotment had to sanitise tools and provide outside toilets because a great number of people started to volunteer. 'It's been a life saver', the Lalley Centre manager said, as the allotment helped residents facing social isolation. In addition, volunteers could take home a bag of fresh produce from the gardens.
- There is uncertainty about the future of publicly-owned land and how future redevelopments may encroach on these spaces. Residents are anxious about losing access to green space:

*[Referring to Village Park]: 'It used to have a skateboard activity place on there, where I used to take my children, years and years ago when they were smaller, but it's gone'.  
(Resident in her 50s)*

*[Referring to the Canada Geese]:  
'they're losing their space as well...  
They might be going to the Lrk, you see, that might be where they nest'.  
(Resident in her 50s)*

*'I'm on that side, I'm on Miles Platting, I go to the canal, but a lot of that's been built on now. On this side, there's still a little bit where there's a little kids' play area and then there's a little bit of green space, so, you can go and sit there'  
(Resident in her 50s)*

- Some of the residents spoken to as part of this research were unsure about which spaces will be available for community use and who will manage shared areas in the future.

The creation of communal gardens has encountered difficulties. For example, a space earmarked for a community allotment (<https://goo.gl/maps/DfrmcDLoGgZrkKWY9>) faced legal constraints because its sponsor, the Big Local, is not a legal entity, so it could not lease land or working units. Interviewees hope it will not be built on so it can remain as a community space.

Collyhurst Big Local & the Community Enterprises Ltd conducted a survey with community organisations and residents, and listed 13 empty and/or green spaces in Collyhurst that could be used by the community as growing spaces or units for local enterprises.



## **Boundaries and Maps**

The boundaries of the neighbourhood which are included on the map referred to above, came from conversations with residents and relate to personal experiences of Collyhurst. Participants were asked about the perceived boundaries of Collyhurst and the identity of the area, compared to neighbouring communities. The mapping of assets and how they related to boundaries reveal the following findings:

- Roads and rivers are seen as natural boundaries between places. One participant explained: *'if you live on one side of Oldham road you are in Ancoats, on the other is Collyhurst'*.
- For an interviewee who was 'born and bred' in the area, the river is the western boundary, Queen's road is the northern boundary, and Oldham road is the eastern boundary. These markers demonstrate the importance of natural features, such as rivers, and structural features, such as roads.
- Stories about local histories reflect how connections with family members extend beyond the neighbourhood, again highlighting how boundaries are blurred and communities connected.

## **The Past**

Discussions in the interviews and focus groups revealed concerns that regeneration will mean that family members are unable to stay in the area, as a consequence of increasing rents and house prices. To ensure that older people feel included in the new neighbourhood, spaces for everyday

socialising such as community centres and pubs must be included in the plans. Older people also want spaces to meet people from other generations and to support their families. Residents' memories of a place are connected to their sense of belonging and identity. They also point to the importance of the history of the area for community and group identity. Staff at MCA ran workshops on genealogy with residents, who then shared some of their findings which have been included in this report. Mapping of assets related to residents talking about the past revealed the following:

- A sense of pride was evident in older people's stories about their parents and grandparents who worked in Manchester's industries, such as the cotton mills and local factories. A couple of residents mentioned with pride that the stones that built Chetham Library in Manchester (the oldest public library in the English speaking world) came from the quarry in Collyhurst. Others discussed how Manchester Cathedral was built with stone from Collyhurst quarry.
- Respondents emphasised the need for social housing so that younger families will be able to stay living in the area. Talking about her sense of identity, one participant said: *'We are born and bred in the area'*. She described how she was anxious about the changing identity of the area. Her ancestors had worked in the local mills and lived in the back to back houses which were now *'hundred thousands of pounds flats'*.

- There are three Facebook groups that enable people to share stories about the past: Collyhurst Forever; Growing up in Miles Platting; Ancoats and Collyhurst Facebook Group. These online groups reflect the interest in the area by those still living in the neighbourhood as well as for people who have moved away.

## The Future

Our research has identified community centres and shared spaces as significant for the future of the neighbourhood. Older residents emphasised the need for places where they could meet one another; they also wanted existing spaces which encourage social interaction to remain open and affordable. Therefore, our findings reinforce the need to maintain the existing social infrastructure in Collyhurst, and encourage investment in new physical spaces that can bring people of all ages together. Mapping of assets related to discussions of the future reveal the following findings:

- Our participants expressed a diverse range of views about the priorities for the area which means that attention must be paid to different experiences of living and working in Collyhurst.
- There is concern that the new neighbourhood is being designed primarily for incoming residents and does not include key amenities which have been demolished in the past. For example, the Victoria North sketches of Collyhurst include families sitting by a river. Some residents expressed a sense of skepticism: *'how are the kids going in the river if they can't learn to swim*

*without the public swimming baths?'*. In other words, they were pointing out that the idyllic scenery in the images did not make up for the lack of facilities.

- There were concerns about whether existing community facilities (such as the St George Community Centre) would remain open, due to the likely increase in competition for space: *'It's on Oldham Road; people will be after that spot'*.
- There is some anxiety regarding 'green gentrification', which is when a neighbourhood becomes more desirable due to the provision of green spaces. Referring to the sketches in the Victoria North plans, existing residents suggested that green lawns would probably be built around the more expensive houses in the new neighbourhood, and as a result, would prohibit their families being able to afford houses in the area.
- Residents feel a sense of uncertainty due to a feeling of lack of transparency in terms of plans by Victoria North:

*'All of those things that were in that plan, and other questions around this Far Easter consortium in terms of who it is, and how much profit they are going to make and how much investment they are going to put back into this community? Those are questions that need to be asked and need to be answered by the council and the FEC'*

(Resident in her 60s)

# Discussion and Recommendations

**Based on the research presented in this report we are recommending FEC and MCC to fund an *Age-Friendly Neighbourhood Programme* in Collyhurst.**

**Such a programme would assist Victoria North in building long-term, collaborative relationships between residents, developers, local stakeholders and the research community which goes beyond existing consultation exercises as recommended by our previous research in Collyhurst, as well as allowing for a focus on the important issues surrounding community and housing identified by this more recent piece of research.**

Drawing on existing research evidence around the importance of including older people in the co-production of age-friendly design, we recommend such a programme should include an **Age-Friendly Neighbourhood Forum** consisting of older and mid-life residents of Collyhurst as well as community and age-friendly stakeholders. This could include some of the community organisers and community stakeholders involved in this research, as well as other professionals with an interest in ageing and housing design such as occupational therapists and health and social care staff working in the area.

The Forum would provide opportunities to contribute as advisors to each development project at the earliest possible stage (ideally before a project brief and any design work has taken place), as well as ongoing consultation throughout the design process. A focus on community spaces and social infrastructure will extend discussions beyond housing and would provide an opportunity to build positive relationships with the community around assets.

There are many connections between existing groups in Collyhurst which could be strengthened further in the newly regenerated neighbourhood. There is an opportunity to deepen existing links between different organisations and stakeholders in Collyhurst as part of the regeneration plans.

In developing an Age-Friendly Neighbourhood Forum, we recommend a focus on the following;

- Working with the GM Community Led Housing Hub to investigate opportunities to develop a broader range of affordable housing which matches the diverse needs of the (current and future) older population of Victoria North. This is in line with the recommendations of the GM Independent Inequalities Commission<sup>25</sup>, which highlights the importance of innovative social investment in tackling inequality.
- Developing a medium and long-term housing market assessment for older people in Victoria North, which takes into account the different needs of an increasing diversity of the older population, trends such as divorce in later life and multi-generational homes, and future challenges such as higher levels of older people living in the private rental sector.
- Involving the Forum in discussions about what existing community assets and spaces can be protected and how they can be supported as well as the use and management of spaces that are currently empty.

- The Coronavirus pandemic and subsequent social distancing measures of 2020 and 2021 have brought into sharp relief the importance of access to outdoor space, whether this be private gardens or green community infrastructure. It has also highlighted stark inequalities in housing and social infrastructure provision facing some of the most economically deprived neighbourhoods. Therefore all the recommendations around developing high quality age-friendly housing and public space have been given greater urgency.

# Part B

# Age-Friendly Housing

## Housing and Social Infrastructure

Designing housing which addresses the diverse needs and aspirations of older people requires more than physically accessible homes. In this section, we will explore the opportunities derived from adopting a fuller understanding of older people as citizens in the design of housing and social infrastructure.

This section explores different ways that older people have been considered in the design of housing, and describes how the development of diverse residential developments in Victoria North should not only meet the changing needs of older people but also address the calls for greater investment in social infrastructure in Collyhurst.

The types of housing which are built have a significant impact on the form of our cities, and in recent years market-led approaches to development have accelerated age segregation of our towns and cities. Alongside the macro-scale segregation caused by the migration of young people into larger cities, there is also a series of micro-scale segregations occurring as younger people flock to the city centre and neighbourhoods adjacent

to universities. As a result, the level of segregation between those aged 18-34 and over 65s in major UK cities has doubled in the last 25 years<sup>27</sup>. Spatial segregation in which intergenerational bonds are weakened generate significant economic, social and political costs for society, but to-date there has been little appetite to address this through urban policy. Even seemingly benign terms like 'family homes' or marketing to 'young professionals' generates an exclusionary influence on older people that would be unthinkable for any other protected characteristic, supporting the notion that:



*“Certain built environments are not hospitable to old people and may reflect a societal view that segregation of the generations is acceptable.”<sup>28</sup>*

Designing homes with older people in mind is often misinterpreted as providing only specialist housing (usually extra-care or age-restricted), with a focus on compliance with accessibility regulations. The Lifetime Homes standard, first proposed in the 1990s, was adopted by the UK Government in 2008 with an aspiration for all new properties to comply by 2013. The standard explores 16 elements of residential design, providing technical specifications for the design of parking, entrances, hallways, stairs and WCs<sup>29</sup>. Changes to planning rules after 2010 led to this pledge being dropped, but many of the features were integrated into UK Building Regulation Part M Category 2: Accessible Housing. Although achieving category 2 status is optional, several local authorities are now mandating it as a minimum for all new developments.

While these improvements to accessibility standards are long overdue, we must not confuse physical access with genuine inclusion. Built homes that address the bodily needs of older people should be the start of the process, not the end. By focusing just on physical needs, the older person's desires, emotions and habits remain unexplored, perpetuating an understanding of ageing as a process of decline.

Similar arguments have been made in critical disability studies, which argues that designs that only consider medical needs help to

establish disability as a less version of ability, and that engaging with the full, complex identities of disabled individuals presents an opportunity for creative practice<sup>30, 31</sup>.

In response, a citizenship approach to ageing needs to inform the development of homes and neighbourhoods. By viewing older people through a citizenship lens, ideas such as identity, belonging and taste are introduced into our understanding of older people's needs and aspirations. Moving towards a citizenship model does not seek to diminish the importance of accessibility, but instead includes health as part of a broader understanding of what older people are looking for within their homes and communities.

While a diverse range of high quality housing that matches the aspirations of a local community is essential, it is important to acknowledge that the home itself can only do so much. As this report has highlighted, community assets and social infrastructure are central to creating opportunities for older people to find fulfilment and support that improve their quality of life.

The benefit of housing-led development, such as Victoria North, is the potential to embed this social infrastructure into a wider construction programme, providing security and expansion for existing amenities while generating opportunities for new ones to emerge. The increase in population density doesn't just make some forms of social infrastructure more economically viable, but demands that further investments be made in programmes that serve deprived older populations.

To explore the potential of social infrastructure as part of a housing-led development, Masters students at Manchester School of Architecture have been creating design-led investigations into how the Victoria North development might be more age-friendly. All the projects complied with necessary accessibility regulations, but critically also sought to respond to older people as citizens, considering issues like family, friendship, intergenerational connections, work and wellbeing.

Students worked in small groups to explore a series of concepts in response to the Northern Gateway Strategic Regeneration Framework, our previous research report 'Developing Age-Friendly Communities in the Northern Gateway'<sup>32</sup>, and in some cases

their interactions with older residents of Collyhurst. The students were set assigned sites in South Collyhurst, with a stipulation that any existing housing in the area must be retained, and developed their own research questions to drive their designs forwards.

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*Aerial image of South Collyhurst, the site used by MSA students to explore the potential of using housing-led development to address wider age-friendly concerns*



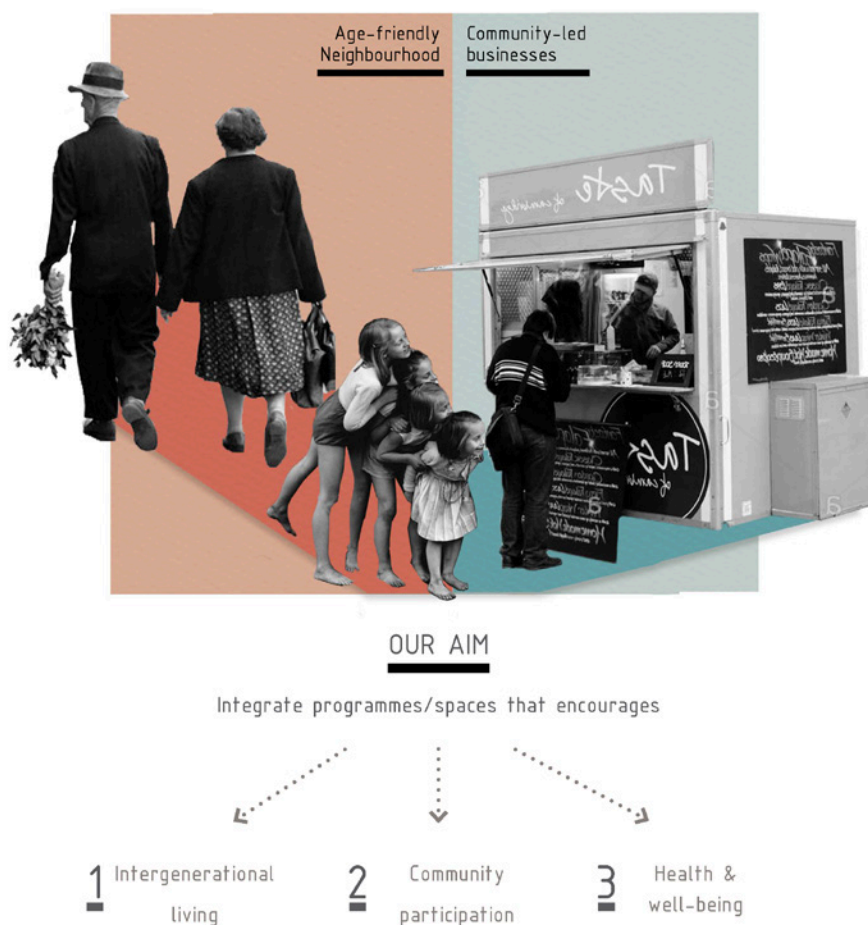
## How can community-led businesses sustain an age-friendly neighbourhood?

*Yoon Nam Chan, Amanda Chua, Khe Lyn Lim, Dalia Nasaruddin and Syahirah Shukri*

Based on discussions with the Big Local, group of students wanted to explore how community-led business could be used as a catalyst for an age-friendly development. The group acknowledged that many older people in Collyhurst were not in employment, and argued that the design of homes and social infrastructure had a role to play in addressing this. Based on the south-east Asian model of 'Tong Lau' (Shophouse) in which homes have small integrated business spaces, they propose a series of apartments with flexible, public facing retail unit to support micro-businesses. This could either be used to

provide a workspace for themselves, or a small rental income from a tenant business. The housing developments would be created alongside a support programme for local workers, including a 'skills library' which adjoins to a local primary school.

The group highlight how local small businesses drive the creation of cultural capital and a sense of identity, and argue that cost-sharing between FEC, MCC, Northwards Housing and a community enterprise partnership would mean that all partners would reap social and economic benefits which far outweigh the initial investment, particularly if external support funding could be leveraged in recognition of the transformative impact this could have on older people's lives.





**What does Collyhurst need?**

*"There is nothing in Collyhurst at the moment. We need enterprises to attract people into the area to generate income"*

**1. Economical renewal within Collyhurst**

*"There is a local florist and hairdresser who are using their homes to accomodate customers"*

**2. Lack of space for local businesses!**

**3. Barrier and isolation of the elderly population**

**What are they proposing?**

**1. Rochdale Road as a High Street**

*"Skill workshops to improve employability to the area"*

*"Reuse of shipping containers to provide space for community businesses"*

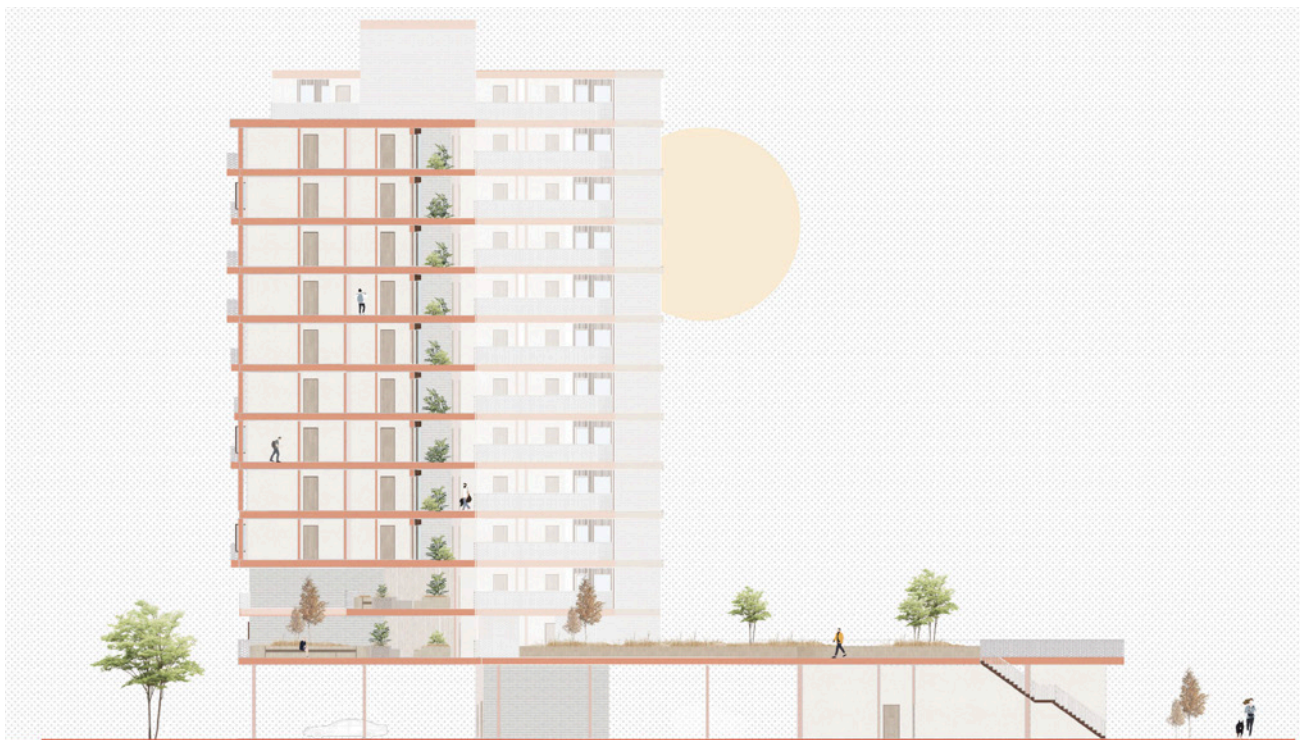
**2. Increase community-led businesses!**

*"Petting zoo as an attraction but also for the locals wellbeing?"*

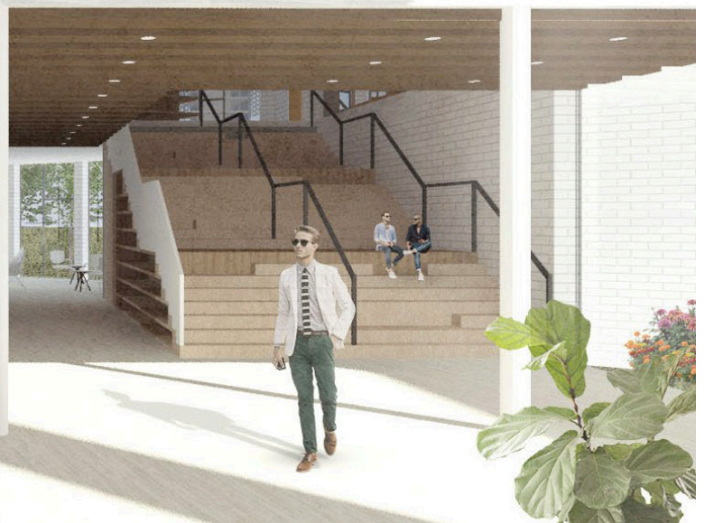
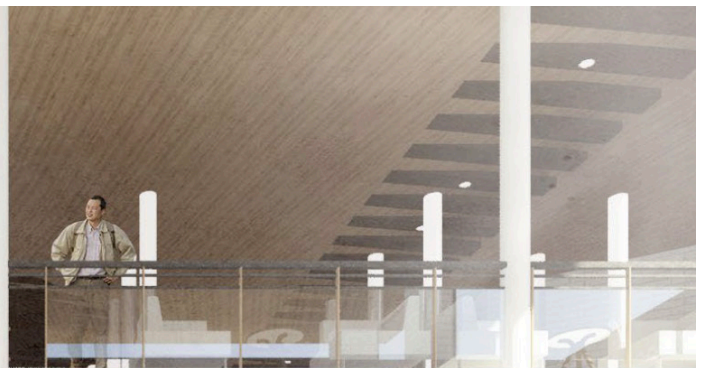
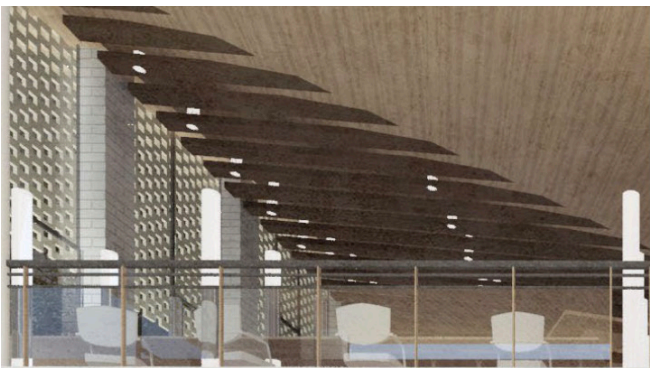
*"Urban farm to allow improve local sustainability"*

**Connecting Collyhurst**

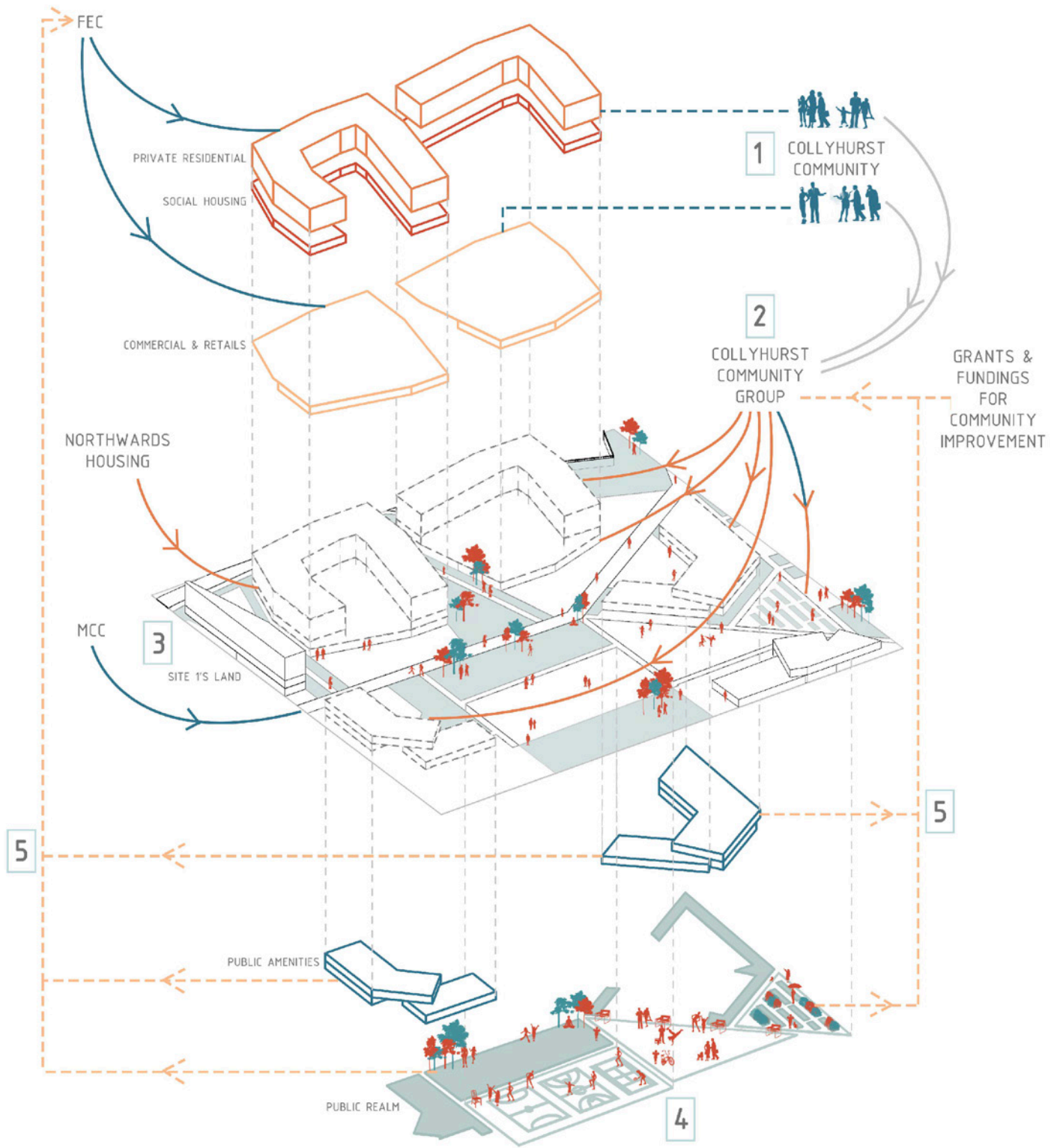
**3. Leisure activities to support resident's health and wellbeing**











**How can modern methods of construction enable older communities to participate in decision-making processes that shape the local housing and wellbeing offer?**

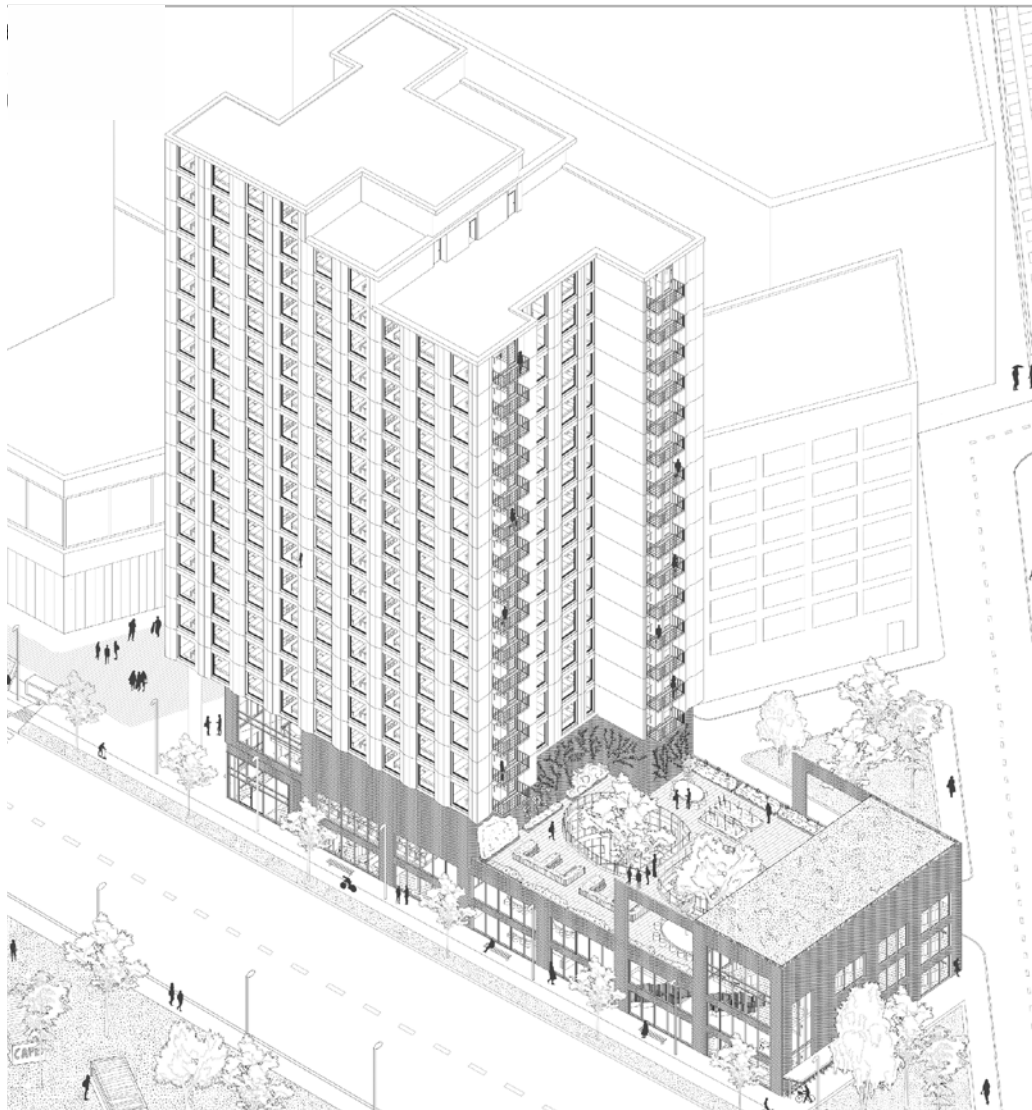
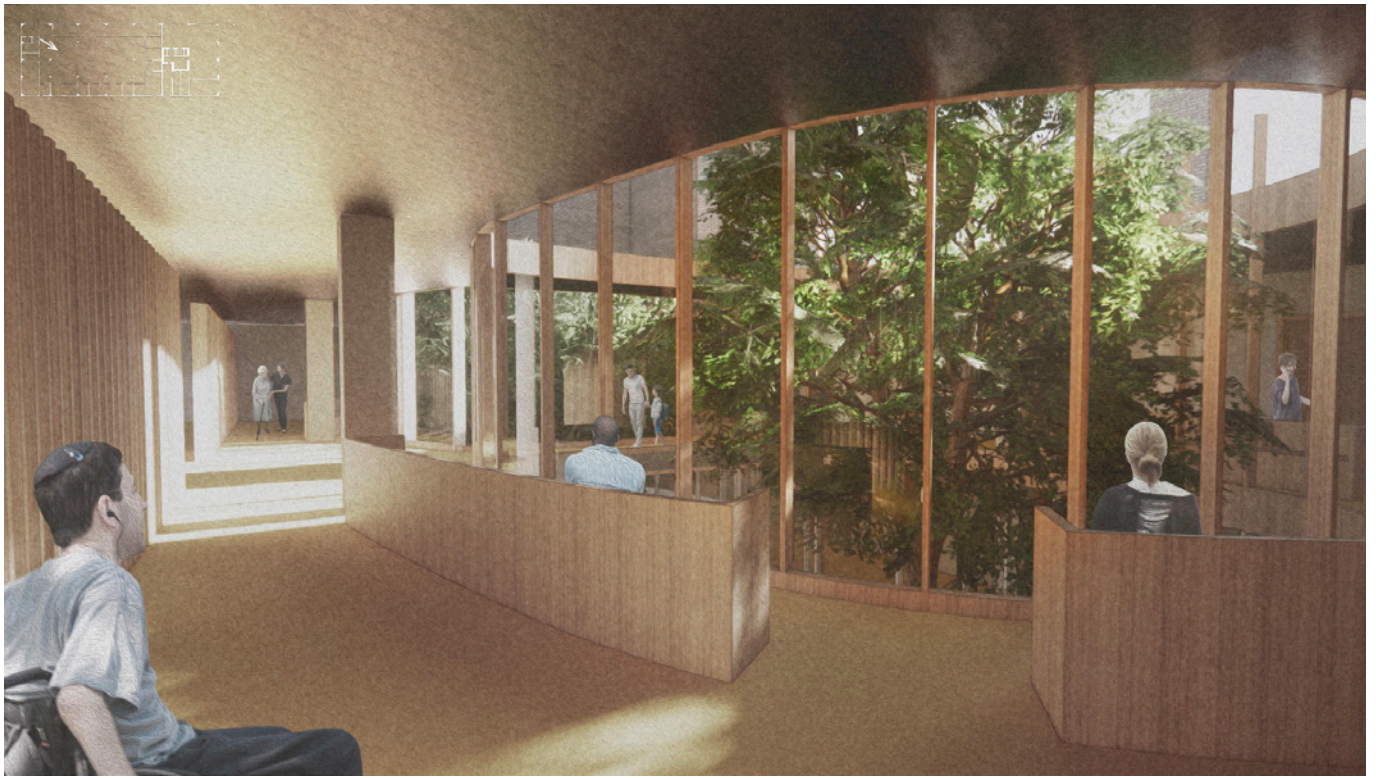
*Abigail Colder, Geoffrey Chor Yu Ma, Szymon Milczarek and Kiran Milton*

This group argued that the condensed design and construction timeframes offered by prefabricated modern methods of construction (MMC) could be used to create opportunities for deeper engagement with local communities. To explore this, the group responded to the NHS Foundation Trust’s action plan for 2018-2023, which establishes the need for a new integrated health and wellbeing centre in Collyhurst. The group considered how this scheme might look if there was opportunity for the community to play a significant and fundamental role in shaping what a local health and wellbeing offer could look like.

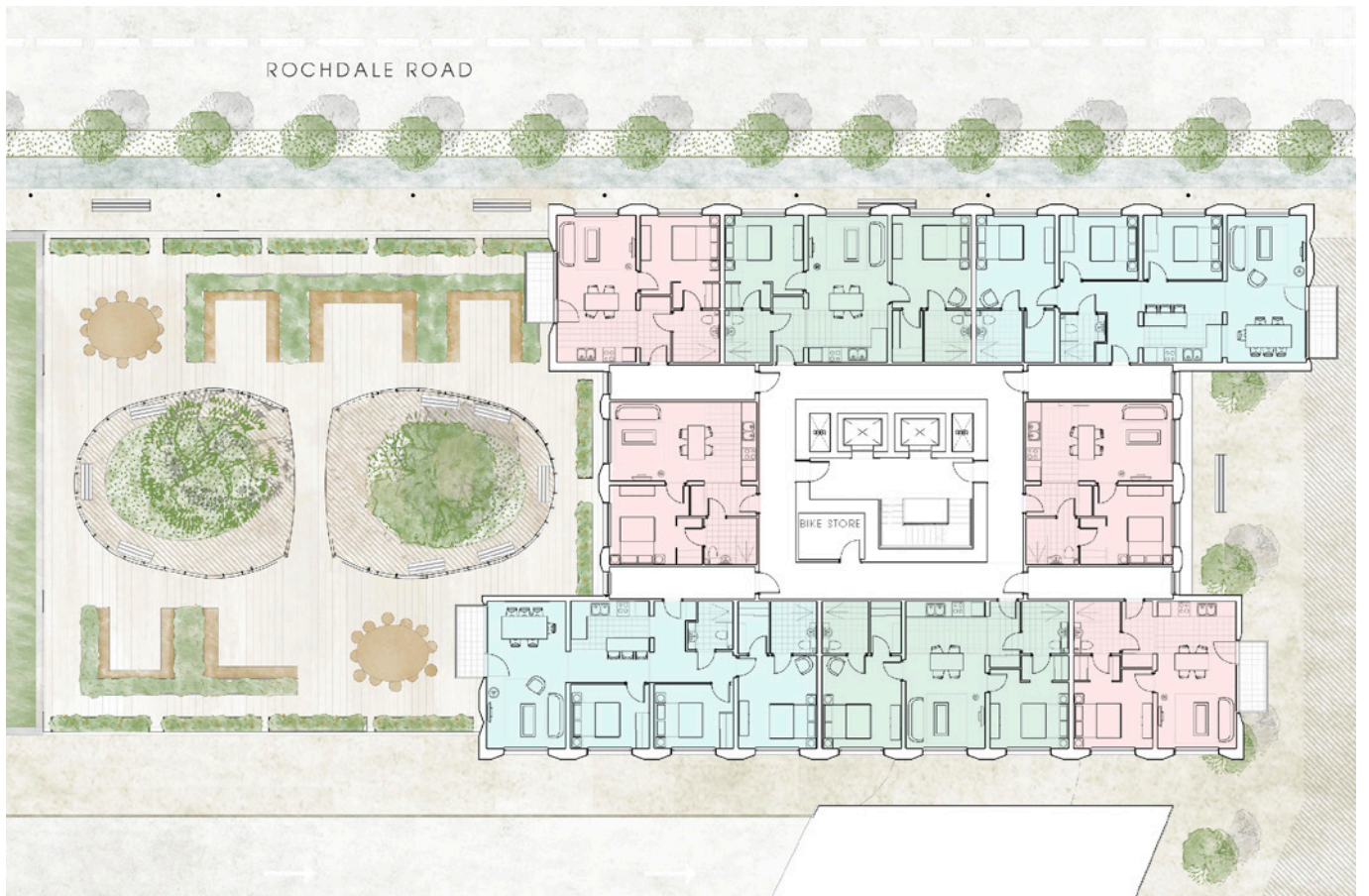
The group explored how combining this facility with a modular housing development could provide mutual benefits to both health professionals and local residents. The proposed scheme features a series of community spaces built around a winter garden courtyard, serving residents at the upper levels and health centre visitors on lower levels. A series of community and exercise spaces, jointly owned and maintained by the NHS and housing provider, would provide opportunity for a mutually developed programme of activities, contributing to improved mental and physical health in the community. The apartments themselves are fairly traditional, recognising that ‘age-friendly housing’ does not have to refer to the internal qualities of a home, but the opportunities that housing developments generate to improve older people’s quality of life. The scheme is proposed as a social anchor for the wider developments proposed across Collyhurst, with older people purposefully placed at the centre of community building rather than a group forced to the periphery.



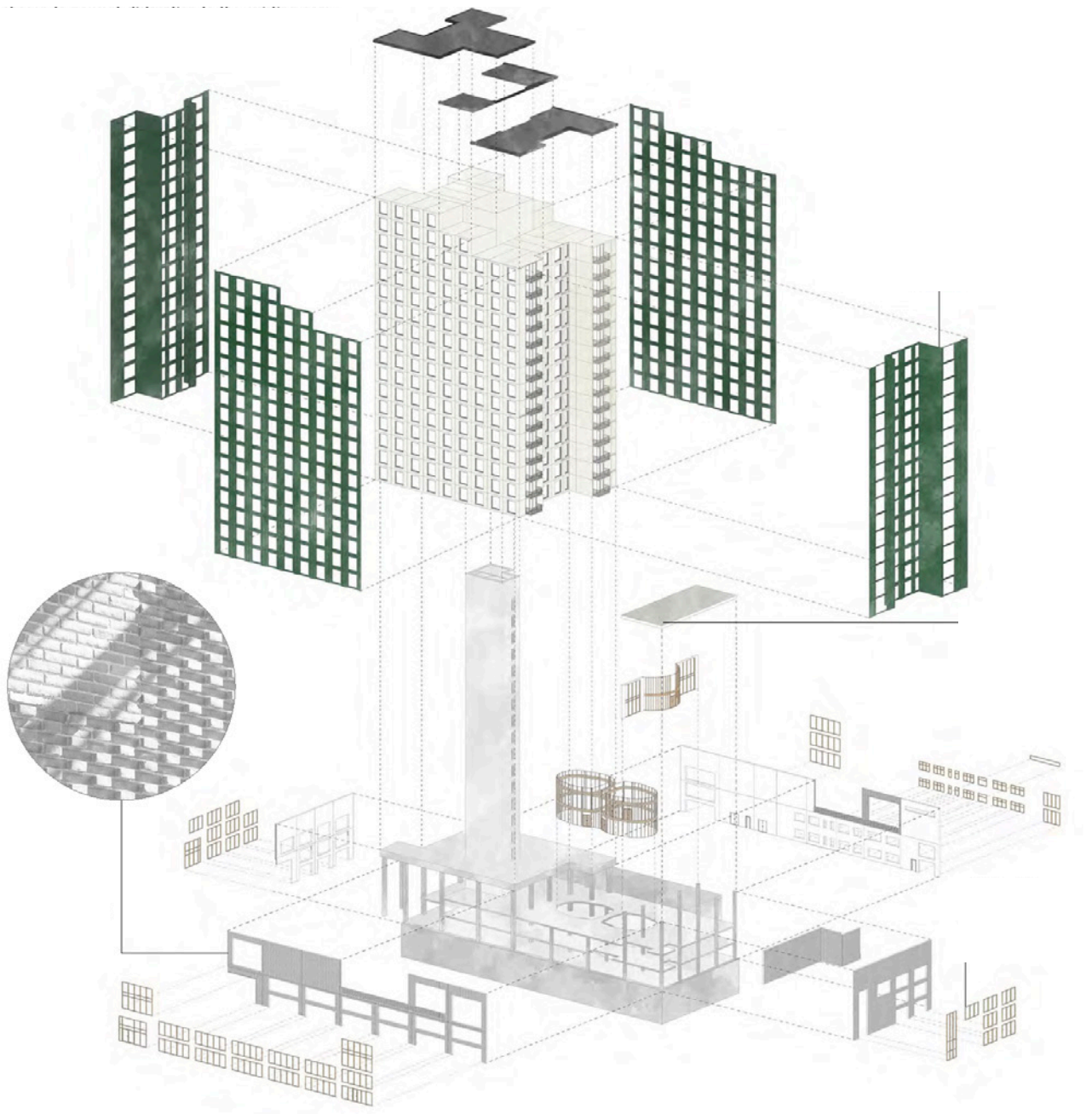




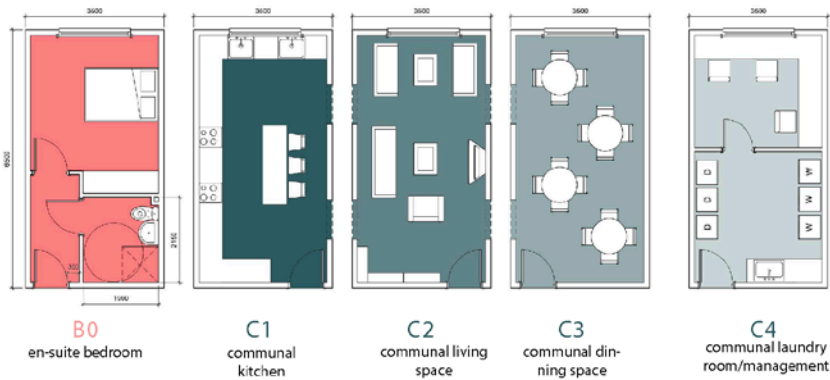




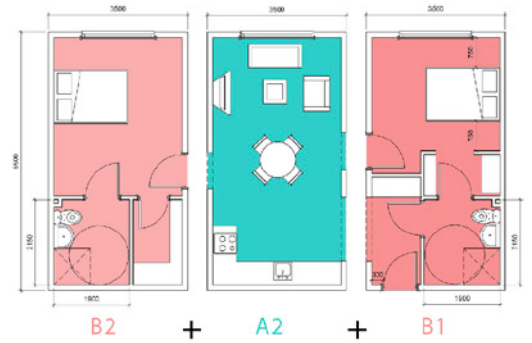




Co-living/Assisted living units



2 bedroom dwelling  
approx. 55.5 sqm - 3 modules



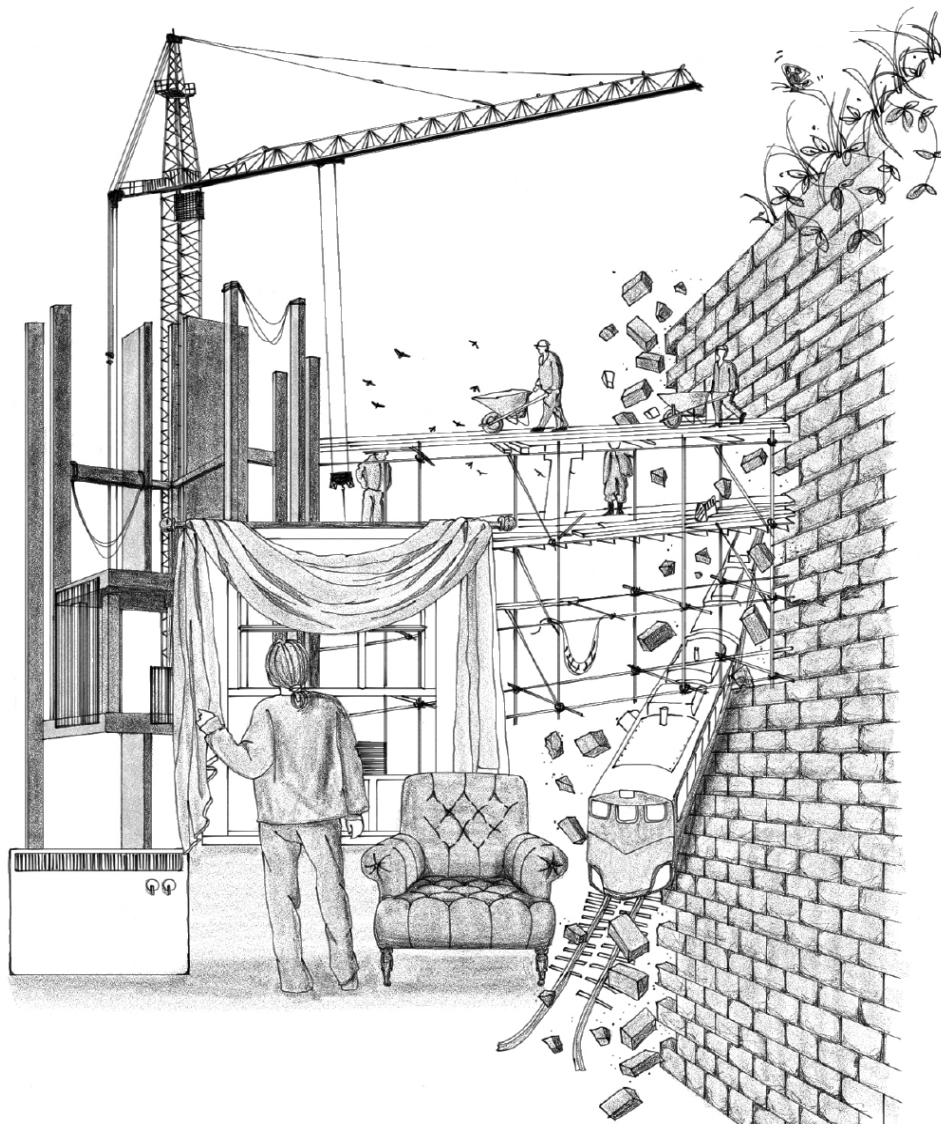


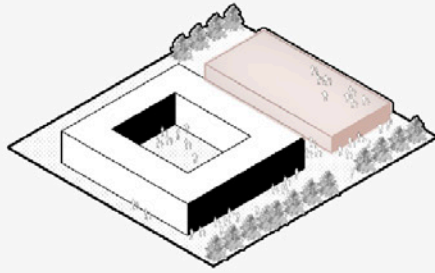
## How do we integrate existing and new community members through the design of social infrastructure?

*Samuel Okoh, Nestor Ruiz, Kaja Sandura, Xinbo Wang and Tianyi Wen*

The final group selected an area of South Collyhurst with significant amounts of existing housing, exploring how older people's quality of life in the area could be improved through home adaptations and new social infrastructure. Identifying a disused railway line as an opportunity, the group proposed a mixed-use community, retail and cultural space. The project responds explicitly to issues to place attachment, in which long-

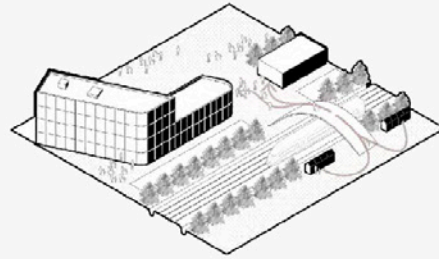
term residents build associations with the people and built environment as they age. Rather than the continual grief when meaningful places are lost, the proposal for the railway lines is for a slow, continual and ever evolving construction approach, building off an enduring structural exoskeleton frame. The flexible design, which actively encourages spaces to be added and removed as local need dictates, offers the opportunity not just for residents to define for themselves the social infrastructure that would improve their quality of life, but to watch a facility they contribute to evolve over time, generating a strong social and place identity to support them as they age.





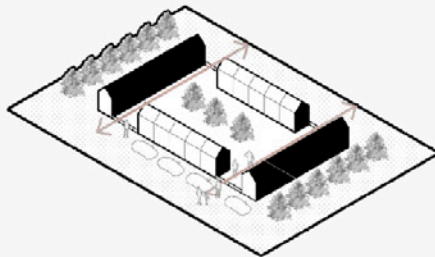
**1. Improved Education Facilities**

Abbott Community Primary School relocated and extended to accommodate existing and new community



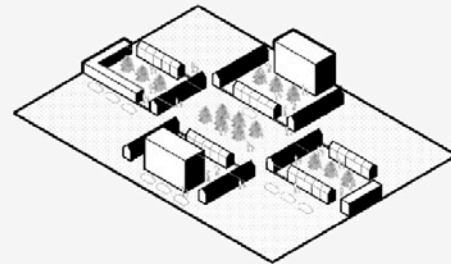
**2. Permeable Barriers**

Introduction of connectivity routes over barriers connecting the community with the new proposed commercial centre and transport hub



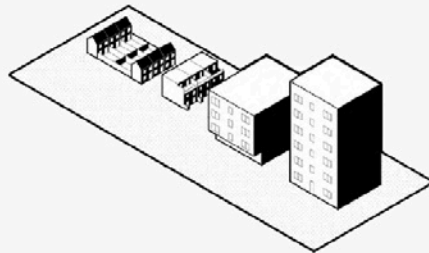
**3. Micro-Communities**

Closing blocks by extending gardens to strengthen existing community, but reducing physical impact



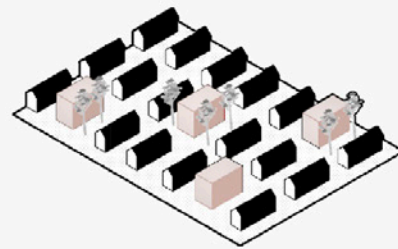
**4. Improved Density**

Increase in density by maximising urban grain designing a residential led masterplan



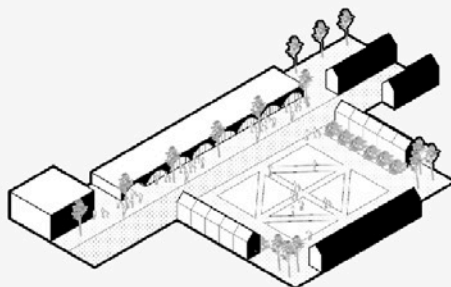
**5. Progressive Massing**

Progressive massing increase to improve density but minimise physical impact on the existing dwellings.



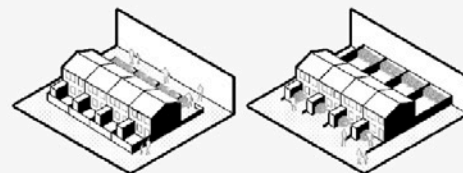
**6. Community Pockets**

Community uses spread around the neighbourhood to create cohesion with new communities and reduce segregation



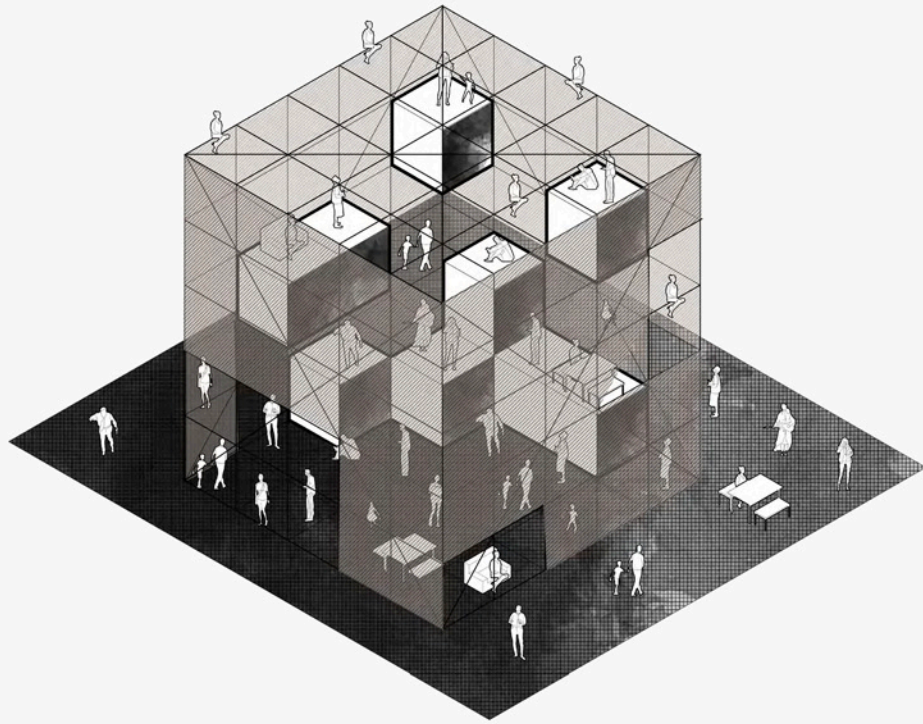
**7. Engaging Public Realm**

Redevelopment of landscape into new plaza to engage the existing community with the adjacent neighbourhoods



**8. Defined Frontages**

Defining frontages to rationalise circulation around site and engage the existing community with the public realm



### 'Soft' construction

Building structure inspired by the all-present scaffolding. To deal with anxiety associated with construction works nearby, this 'soft scaffolding' will remain in place, embraced by the society as the character of place, acting as the exoskeleton of the building.

### INFLUENCE OF BUILDING GROWING UP ALONG & WITH COMMUNITY

La Sagrada Família - Antoni Gaudi









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