

## MICRA Seedcorn Funding Application, 2019-2020

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**Funding stream:** Centre for Ageing Better/MICRA: Themes: Connected communities and Safe and accessible housing.

**Research title:** *Growing older in Collyhurst, a site of urban regeneration: A co-research project designing age-friendly social housing.*

**Outline of proposed research: The foci of the study is the proposed Northern Gateway urban regeneration project in the neighbourhood of Collyhurst in Manchester.** The aim of this project is to organise a series of resident-led co-design workshops focusing on the design of social housing and green spaces in the new Northern Gateway area. This research builds on an existing interdisciplinary and collaborative network, including; regeneration stakeholders (Manchester City Council Strategic Development and Far East Consortium), existing residents, social housing providers (Northwards Housing) and age-friendly advocates (the Older People's Board), which was developed through a previous Seedcorn award (led by Camilla Lewis, 2018-2019). The intended outcome is to develop and test new co-research methodologies, publish a policy toolkit outlining how to engage older people in designing age-friendly housing, write an academic paper, and develop an ESRC/AHRC funding application, to carry out a three-year study on the Northern Gateway project.

**Background: The housing crisis in the UK (and other European countries), reflected in the limited housing options for younger and older age groups (National Housing Federation, 2019), has increased pressures associated with population ageing.** The current housing offer in the UK is viewed as out of step with the needs and aspirations of different groups of older people. In response to the urgent demand for housing for different generations, local authorities in urban areas are engaged in major redevelopment projects. One such example, that will form the focus for the proposed study, is the Northern Gateway in Manchester, UK. 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. This 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 Northern Gateway 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.

**From a policy perspective, the development of age-friendly communities coincides with new strains affecting community life, notably those associated with widening inequalities within and between cities (Thomese et al. 2018), and polarisation between social groups (Minton, 2006).** To date, there has been limited academic research into the experiences of people ageing in areas affected by environmental pressures linked to urban change and deprivation (Bailey et al. 2012). Further, there is limited agreement of, or understanding about, what makes an age-friendly or supportive environment for the growing number of people 'ageing in place' (Van Dijk et al. 2015; Buffel, et al. 2018). *This project will engage with residents as co-researchers, and make recommendations on how the Northern Gateway should cater for the needs of all generations in relation to housing design and urban regeneration.*

**This project responds to two of the recommendations from the previous Seedcorn-funded research (to be published in December 2019).**

i. *'The Northern Gateway must build a long-term, collaborative relationship between residents, developers, local stakeholders and the research community which goes beyond existing 'consultation' exercises'*. In redevelopment processes, there is often only limited interaction between housing providers, localities and local authorities, thus hindering the potential for community participation and innovation (Gilroy 2018). In order to develop links between residents and developers, this project will use a co-research approach, with the aim of supporting older residents to take a leading role in initiating, developing, and disseminating ideas on the redevelopment plans (Buffel, 2015). Co-research may provide a valuable tool for involving 'seldom heard' or 'hidden populations' (Buffel, 2018), groups who are often excluded from plans for urban re-development.

ii. *'The Northern Gateway should offer mixed affordable and age-appropriate housing to cater for the needs of existing and incoming communities'*. This project will engage in participatory design-led research in conjunction with 24 students on the Masters of Architecture (M.Arch) course at Manchester School of Architecture. The M.Arch students will work with local older people in an iterative and engaged design process to understand the housing aspirations of local residents (in mid-life and later-life), propose a series of potential housing developments that respond to these needs, and assess the feasibility of delivering these options within the Northern Gateway programme.

#### **Research questions:**

- **What types of co-research methods facilitate older people's participation in urban regeneration projects?**
- **What kinds of housing design would support forms of urban regeneration inclusive of all generations?**
- **What are the priorities of existing residents living in Collyhurst regarding the design of new homes?**

#### **Methods and Outcomes**

**A systematic review** of co-research methodologies for involving ageing populations in urban regeneration projects (Month 1-3).

**A series of resident-led design workshops** in Collyhurst. The workshops would be led by MA students from the Manchester School of Architecture Students (Month 1-6).

1. An **age-friendly toolkit** including guidance for involving older residents in projects of urban regeneration. (Month 6).
2. **A short briefing associated with the toolkit** would be produced, making specific recommendations on how the Northern Gateway can include age-friendly principles in the design of homes and public spaces. (Month 6).
3. **Host a workshop / symposium** based around the age-friendly toolkit (Month 6).
4. Develop and test co-research design methods to include in **a grant application** for the ESRC or AHRC study on the Northern Gateway project. (Month 3-6).

**Summary of budget costs:** The resources requested relate to the employment of a PhD researcher for six months, part-time (£3000) and the costs of running three workshops including room hire, travel costs (£1500) and refreshments (£1000) for the Age-friendly toolkit workshop and printing costs for the associated briefing (£500) **Total: £6000.**