

Article

“Ageing in Place” and Urban Regeneration: Analysing the Role of Social Infrastructure

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Abstract

This article explores the potential impact of future urban regeneration for older people “ageing in place” in an inner-city neighbourhood, Collyhurst, Manchester, UK. Collyhurst has been reshaped by de-industrialisation, demolition of housing, disinvestment in local services, and the closure of local amenities. The neighbourhood has been earmarked for significant urban regeneration including building extensive housing, as well as social infrastructure to cater for existing residents and attract a new population. The analysis focuses on data derived from interviews and focus groups with the neighbourhood’s existing residents as well as regeneration stakeholders. Drawing on Latham and Layton’s (2019) “infrastructural approach,” the analysis explores the changing dynamics of neighbourhoods and meanings of place for older people living in localities undergoing redevelopment with spatially differentiated socio-economic landscapes. The article argues that social infrastructure must be understood as a foundational component of urban regeneration planning, ensuring new spaces foster social connections for all generations and support older residents’ sense of local identity, belonging and inclusion amidst dramatic material transformation. Social infrastructure provides an important lens through which to analyse the impact of urban regeneration processes, shedding light both on the *functional* and *affective* dimensions of ageing in place. In neighbourhoods undergoing redevelopment, both dimensions are vital to consider, in order to understand how best to support older people’s ability to age in place.

Keywords

ageing in place; housing; older people; social infrastructure; urban regeneration

Issue

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1. Introduction

Housing-led regeneration has been a mainstay of urban policy in the UK for over 50 years, addressing widening inequalities in many post-industrial neighbourhoods (Lewis, 2017). However, the role of social infrastructure within these development programmes has only recently become a significant strategic focus (Greater Manchester Spatial Framework, 2019). This article draws on Klinenberg’s (2018, p. 5) understanding of *social*

infrastructure as “the physical places and organisations that shape the way people interact.” These sites matter as they are where strangers can meet and mix with others with whom they share their neighbourhoods (Klinenberg, 2018). The analysis also uses what Latham and Layton’s (2019) term an “infrastructural approach,” as a lens to examine the changing meaning of place for older people living in a neighbourhood awaiting redevelopment. Thinking “infrastructurally,” it is argued, helps us to “consider the kinds and qualities of facilities that

allow social life to happen, the kind of sociality that is afforded by them, and how this can be recognised as a public life” (Latham & Layton, 2019, p. 4).

This article explores the impact of urban regeneration on older people living in an inner-city neighbourhood called Collyhurst, in Manchester, UK. The neighbourhood has undergone successive waves of de-industrialisation, housing demolition, and population decline. Most recently it has become the subject of plans for large-scale redevelopment. In 2018 Manchester City Council announced its most ambitious residential-led development to date in Collyhurst and the surrounding neighbourhoods, delivering up to 15,000 homes over a 15–20 year period, equivalent to a new town being built in the city (Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 2019; Greater Manchester Spatial Framework, 2019). The City Council is working in partnership with a Hong Kong-based housing developer, the Far East Consortium, with a commitment to include what has been termed “age-friendly” principles in the new development. The discussion focuses on residents and regeneration stakeholder’s responses to the planned regeneration, focusing specifically on exploring the social consequences of changes to social infrastructure.

The analysis in this article also focuses on policies designed to promote “ageing in place,” defined as supporting older people to remain living in the community, with some level of independence, rather than in residential care (Wiles et al., 2012). Ageing in place policies have been supported by extensive academic literature on the preference of older people to stay in their homes and/or neighbourhoods as they age (Means, 2007). This has, in turn, been linked to the idea that people may have increased feelings of attachment to home and neighbourhood, leading to improved wellbeing and social connectedness (Wiles et al., 2012). However, to date, there has been limited research exploring the experiences of people ageing in places affected by the type of environmental pressures associated with urban regeneration (Lewis & Buffel, 2020). To fill this gap, this article adds to existing knowledge by exploring how the existence of social infrastructure might support older residents’ sense of local identity, belonging and community in a newly regenerated neighbourhood.

The article comprises: first, a literature review on urban change and the older population, describing the importance of social infrastructure for providing a sense of belonging, identity and community. Second, the background to the Collyhurst neighbourhood is provided, along with a summary of the methodology developed for the research. Third, guided by an “infrastructural approach,” findings from the research are analysed according to two main dimensions: *functional dimensions* of ageing in place, which underline the importance of ensuring that older people have somewhere to meet in areas undergoing urban regeneration and *affective dimensions* of ageing in place, which reveal how individuals feel about place, through their own subjective experi-

ence. Drawing on the concept of social infrastructure, the analysis discusses the potential of future redevelopment, but also the challenges there are in realising that potential, especially for groups such as older people (Latham & Layton, 2022). In the context of urban regeneration, taking an “infrastructural approach” is particularly useful as it provides a framework through which to discuss the future identity of place, as well as to explore how community has been experienced in the past and present. To conclude, the article argues that “thinking infrastructurally” deepens our understanding of the kinds of urban spaces and facilities which can promote social connections amongst older people, and which should be incorporated into future regeneration projects.

2. Urban Change and the Older Population

Two intersecting demographic trends define the 21st century: *urbanisation* and *ageing populations*. By 2030, two-thirds of the world’s population will be living in cities, with major urban areas in the Global North likely to have 25% or more of their population aged 65 or more (UN, 2019). Yet, older people remain among the most excluded groups living in urban communities. Many live in neighbourhoods undergoing redevelopment and gentrification, with pressures arising from changing social networks and increasing housing costs (Lewis, 2018). Urban changes associated with regeneration may result in older populations becoming “stuck in place,” due to rent increases (Simard, 2020), or forms of “indirect” displacement, where existing residents’ access to familiar services and political representation is disrupted by the influx of younger, more educated, and wealthier newcomers (Burns et al., 2012; Simard, 2020). However, there is limited academic research focusing on the lived experiences of people ageing in areas affected by environmental pressures linked to urban regeneration and deprivation (Lewis, 2016). In many areas, older people have been “erased” from urban renewal discourse, with neighbourhood change typically focusing on the needs and lifestyles of incoming groups, rather than long-term residents (Kelley et al., 2018). The impact of urban regeneration on older people has received limited attention to date. As a result, there is little agreement about, or understanding of, what makes an age-friendly or supportive environment in neighbourhoods undergoing rapid urban change.

One attempt to address the challenges facing older people is the World Health Organization’s *Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities* (GNAFCC). The GNAFCC was launched in 2010 and had 12 members (of which Manchester was one). By 2022, the network had grown to 1,400 cities and communities worldwide. The age-friendly approach acknowledges that older people’s quality of life is determined by multiple place-based factors and shaped by potential physical and social barriers within neighbourhoods. It calls for coordinated action from policy-makers, service

providers, businesses and communities to improve the lives of older people (Buffel et al., 2012). The initiative aims to support the development of places “where older people are actively involved, valued and supported with infrastructure and services that effectively accommodate their needs” (Alley et al., 2007, p. 4). The age-friendly cities movement has gained global support for its efforts to improve the quality of life of older people living in urban communities (Kelley et al., 2018). In taking a participative and place-based approach that considers older people’s experiences in urban environments, the AFCC approach recognises the importance of social and environmental factors within cities and neighbourhoods that promote ageing in place. A key aspect of this is social infrastructure—the libraries, cafés, and community centres that are vital to developing environments that support informal social networks amongst older people. The following section describes the impact of urban regeneration on social infrastructure, with particular reference to people ageing in place.

3. Social Infrastructure and Urban Regeneration

Social infrastructure in the form of libraries, community centres, and cafés is vital for older people, providing environments to meet and develop informal networks of support (Yarker, 2022). Changes to the social infrastructure of a place, brought about by urban regeneration, may reduce social support, belonging and inclusion. Familiarity, attachment and identity are the main psychological processes that confer a sense of belonging that contributes to well-being in later life (Fullilove, 1996). Such dimensions are often discussed with reference to Rowles’ (1983) work on the “insideness” of place. *Physical insideness* reflects an intimate familiarity with the physical configuration of the environment; *social insideness* arises from integration within the social fabric of the community; and *autobiographical insideness* refers to the way in which lifelong accumulation of experiences in a place can provide “a sense of identity” (Rowles, 1983). Older residents who have lived in the same neighbourhoods for many years often develop a strong sense of “insideness,” as their lives become integrated with place over time.

The concept of “social infrastructure” helps to analyse the “public dimension of urban life” and the ways in which social connections may be supported in certain places (Latham & Layton, 2019, p. 4). The discussion recognises that “infrastructure is not only interesting as a noun—as the pipes, cables, switches, and surfaces—but also interesting as a verb or adverb—as something that modifies, supports and exists in relation to other activities” (Latham & Layton, 2022, p. 758). This approach provides an important lens through which to analyse the impact of urban regeneration processes, shedding light both on the functional and affective dimensions of ageing in place. In neighbourhoods undergoing redevelopment, both dimensions are vital to consider, in order to

understand how best to support older residents’ sense of local identity, belonging and community amidst dramatic material transformation.

Urban regeneration may result in the provision of *more* social infrastructure, such as upgrading public transport networks, investment in green spaces and the opening of new shops, which can promote the *functional* dimensions of ageing in place. Smith et al.’s (2018) analysis suggests that “economically vulnerable” older adults may benefit from living in a gentrifying neighbourhood, due to improved access to services such redevelopment brings about. However, ethnographically informed studies have found that urban regeneration can also result in a sense of “cultural displacement” where existing residents feel that new amenities and services are not “for them” (Buffel & Phillipson, 2019; Davidson, 2009; Yarker, 2022). In this respect, living in a neighbourhood undergoing radical material change can be unsettling, with research in Hong Kong suggesting that the demolition and rebuilding of residential units may result in the destruction of personal, psycho-emotional, and social links for older people (Chui, 2001).

The impact of austerity on urban neighbourhoods can also result in the loss of social infrastructure: “Over the last 10 years...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” (Marmot et al., 2020, p. 94).

Concepts such as “urbicide” (Coward, 2007), “slow violence” (Pain, 2019), and “ruin” (Shaw, 2019) capture the impact of austerity over time and the visible effects on the built environment. Shaw (2019, p. 971) documents the negative impact of the loss of infrastructure on wellbeing, arguing that: “If these landscapes are ruined by government cutbacks—compounding the already violent production of neoliberal space—a deep world of alienation and insecurity can set in.” Austerity therefore not only means a loss of spaces for social interaction but also spaces of visibility. For neighbourhoods undergoing urban regeneration, which have suffered from long-term disinvestment as a result of austerity, additional removal of social infrastructure in the neighbourhood can result in a “shrinking” effect on the social worlds of groups such as older residents, unsettling their sense of belonging and identity.

4. Case Study: Collyhurst, Manchester

The case study for this article is based on research in Collyhurst in Manchester, UK, a neighbourhood which has been reshaped over several decades by the decline of local industries, demolition of housing, closure of local amenities and loss of population. These developments have resulted in entrenched economic and social deprivation for the remaining residents, exacerbated by austerity measures. Since 2010, a succession of regeneration

plans have been proposed and subsequently abandoned. As a result, there is a legacy of mistrust among some existing residents and a feeling that Collyhurst has become a “forgotten place” (Lewis et al., 2020). The neighbourhood consists of predominantly social rented properties, with 77% of older people living in this type of accommodation; 47% of over-50s lived alone; and 81% of older people were claiming pension credits in 2015, a “top-up” benefit designed to help people on low incomes (Office for National Statistics, 2017). Because of limited local facilities, residents have to travel out of their neighbourhood for services and amenities such as shops and leisure facilities.

In 2018, Collyhurst was identified as a future site of urban regeneration called the Northern Gateway (later renamed Victoria North) involving a Joint Venture between Manchester City Council and Hong Kong-based private developers, the Far East Consortium International Limited. The Northern Gateway Strategic Regeneration Framework (NGSRF, 2019, p. 9) proposed significant investment in social and community infrastructure, “with a balance of employment, retail, social, community, health and education uses will be provided to meet the needs of diverse, integrational communities.” Collyhurst lies 1.5 miles northeast of Manchester city centre, which has undergone dramatic developer-led regeneration leading to a steep rise in the population of the city centre, from a few hundred in the 1980s to 65,000 in 2019. The Northern Gateway plans promised to “revitalise existing communities” and provide a catalyst for the expansion of neighbourhoods to the north of the city. The “creation of place” was one of the central tenants of the plans, “profoundly influenced by the area’s existing assets; the post-industrial legacy of railway structures; the remaining buildings of significance and architectural quality; the topography and landscape of the study area with the river valley running through it; and the character of the existing fragmented neighbourhoods” (NGSRF, 2019, p. 61). As well as housing, the plans included a retail and service hubs, neighbourhood squares, new parks, and “green links” via the River Irk to facilitate connectivity to surrounding areas.

5. Methodology of the Study

In 2019, the research team developed a network of stakeholders and practitioners working on urban regeneration issues in Greater Manchester. The research came about due to long running connections between the project team and the Age-Friendly Manchester programme, who had links with the Far East Consortium (McGarry, 2018). Regular meetings were held with Manchester City Council, the Far East Consortium and Northwards, a social housing provider. These organisations acted as gatekeepers for the research, introducing the project team to various groups in Collyhurst.

Ethnographic observations were also gathered over a period of three months in the neighbourhood, within

community centres, food banks, sheltered housing and people’s homes (see Hammersley, 2006). During these ethnographic encounters, the researchers had informal discussions about the neighbourhood and invited residents to take part in one-to-one interviews. The research team met regularly throughout the period of fieldwork to discuss their ethnographic observations. Reflecting on the emerging findings from the informal discussions, we adapted our research questions accordingly. For example, specific questions about the importance of social infrastructure in the lives of our respondents were added to the topic guide.

In total, 22 interviews involving four regeneration stakeholders, 12 residents and six community organisations were carried out. These participants came from a range of backgrounds and held varied interests and connections to the area. Interviews were semi-structured and included a core set of questions about the history of the area, residents’ everyday life and future aspirations for urban regeneration. They included, for example: “How would you describe the sense of community in Collyhurst?” “How do you think the advantages and challenges of living in Collyhurst differ between different age groups?” “Do you anticipate growing older in Collyhurst and living here in the future?” “If you would like to stay in the area, what would best help support this?” The interviews lasted between 20 minutes and one hour and were recorded and transcribed.

Two focus groups with residents living in Collyhurst were held, including six people who lived in sheltered housing for people over 60 and five residents living in the same over—50s high-rise block. The focus group participants were recruited through tenant’s organisations supported by Northwards Housing. An interview topic guide was used, based on the questions asked in the interviews. Both focus groups lasted around 60 minutes and were recorded and transcribed. Ethical approval was provided by The University of Manchester. All findings have been anonymised and participants are referred to using pseudonyms.

The interview and focus group transcripts were coded and analysed using Nvivo, a computer software program designed to facilitate content and thematic analysis according to themes identified in the secondary literature. These included relationships to place, belonging, community, social networks and social infrastructure. Themes which emerged in the interviews were also incorporated into the coding framework. Parts of the transcripts which were relevant according to each theme were selected. Regular meetings among the project team were held to discuss ongoing coding and exchange insights as well as to rectify inconsistencies in how the coding framework was being interpreted. A cross-sectional analysis was conducted, to look at how themes emerged across the whole data set in order to identify emerging patterns (see Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016). The interviews were analysed according to themes which identified recurring patterns across the interviews (e.g.,

the identity or character of Collyhurst; views about future redevelopment), and previously unexpected findings (e.g., the importance of social infrastructure).

The following section is divided into two parts. The first explores the importance of social infrastructure for *functional dimensions* of ageing in place, underlining the importance of ensuring that older people have somewhere to meet in order to maintain informal social support networks. The second explores *affective dimensions* of ageing in place, which demonstrates how the changing identities of neighbourhoods can challenge older adult's sense of belonging and social relationships.

6. Functional Dimensions of Ageing in Place

6.1. The Loss of Local Amenities

While residents overwhelmingly held a strong sense of local belonging to Collyhurst, and a desire to age in place, they described one of the most pressing challenges as the loss of local amenities. Stephen, a resident and local church minister in his fifties, described how there was an urgent demand for more facilities. He emphasised how Collyhurst was in "desperate" need of public funding and redevelopment:

We need infrastructure, we need a bank, we need a supermarket, we need coffee shops, you know, and if that means increasing the population then good, and if it's a mixed economy then that's great too.

Whilst being supportive of future regeneration, Stephen was concerned about whether the proposals would benefit existing residents. Observing the rapid gentrification of the city centre close by, he was fearful about the impact of new developments proposed for Collyhurst. He explained how one of his main concerns was that the neighbourhood could become a place for people to "sleep after they'd done all their activity in the city." He commented:

They [new residents] get a nice two-bedroom flat, 20-minute walk from the city centre, and the car's safe because it's in a nice locked gated community. They don't have to engage at any level with the community. And that was the fear for the regeneration, that all we're going to do is set up bed and breakfast units for people to go into the city to spend all their money and there's no benefit to local people.

Stephen was anxious that without new amenities being built, Collyhurst would no longer feel like a "real place." He emphasised that future regeneration must include facilities to cater for both the existing and incoming community, enabling residents to mix and carry out everyday tasks in their neighbourhood.

During a focus group discussion with older residents who lived in sheltered housing, the participants

explained how Collyhurst had lots of local assets, such as "great local parks for the kids," but that there were not enough essential facilities, such as "shops, opticians, chemists." They also discussed how public transport links to other neighbourhoods were a problem, with many older residents having to rely on taxis, as the bus stop was some distance from their homes. The priorities of the residents for future regeneration were "more places like this," referring to the community room in the sheltered accommodation where the discussion was held. They wanted more informal settings to meet outside their sheltered housing, such as, "a place for entertainment" where older and younger people could gather, like a social club. These findings reveal how while there were strong ties *within* the sheltered housing scheme, supported by communal meeting spaces, there were limited opportunities to socialise with other people in the neighbourhood.

6.2. Feeling Excluded From New Spaces

Discussing the plans for the Northern Gateway, residents at the sheltered housing scheme were worried that the regeneration would mainly cater for "suits, people with money; it's for people with money, it ain't for the likes of us." These findings suggest that for residents who remain living in areas undergoing redevelopment, feelings of "cultural displacement" may develop (Davidson, 2009). Older residents are often faced with new neighbourhood dynamics which they find unwelcoming and are effectively "erased" from the vision of urban renewal, making clear the implicit cultural bias towards age-segregated residential landscapes (Kelley et al., 2018). The discussion demonstrated how existing residents in Collyhurst were keen to be included in discussions about future regeneration and wanted more functional spaces to facilitate opportunities for intergenerational mixing.

Similar themes emerged in an interview with Diane, a local resident and community development worker who was in her sixties. She explained how she was worried about the "unbelievable" number of high-rise flats being built in the nearby city centre. Diane elaborated: "It's actually really quite frightening, I think, and I'm a Mancunian and I've lived here all my life." Her comments reveal how even when residents remain living in the same neighbourhood, they may experience feelings of social exclusion arising from re-development elsewhere. While long-term residents often make considerable investments in their locality over time, some may also experience a sense of disillusionment about the changes affecting their neighbourhoods (Thomése et al., 2018).

Questions about whether new redevelopments would be inclusive for existing residents also emerged in an interview with Graham, who owns a local business but lived in another part of Manchester. He described how the opening of a new school in Collyhurst in 2010 had a big influence on the area, providing lots of new oppor-

tunities for the community to be involved, including a local history group. According to Graham, before the school was built, some areas of Collyhurst had “died,” but the new building had become “the most important centre of community gathering and togetherness.” As the interview progressed, however, he added that the new facilities were not universally welcomed. He explained: “it pulls people together in a community space [but]...not everybody. Because probably still the majority of people are frightened of it.” Some people were nervous about going there because “it’s big and new and shiny and people lack confidence. If you’ve not been successful at things through life, then you lose confidence over time.” Graham’s comments reveal how existing residents may sometimes feel excluded because neighbourhood changes lead to feelings of insecurity as familiar institutions disappear and the public spaces take on a new look and “feel” (Burns et al., 2012).

This section has considered the functional dimensions of ageing in place. The discussion has shown how residents lamented the *loss of local amenities* in Collyhurst, and were concerned that the future plans for the area were “not for them.” These findings reveal how the value of social infrastructure is often not immediately visible, but how: “Its absence is often only noticed when something goes wrong or when it has been taken away” (Latham & Layton, 2019, p. 9). The struggles encountered by many older people living in Collyhurst were expressed in relation to the loss of the kind of facilities associated with social infrastructure. In some cases, this referred to the closure or decline of certain spaces or amenities; in others, it referred to more of a symbolic loss of spaces that were perceived as welcoming and which also reflected the social and economic needs of the community. In both cases, the lack of social infrastructure was illustrative of how Collyhurst was unable to meet the functional needs of ageing in place for many older residents.

7. Affective Dimensions of Ageing in Place

7.1. Social Connections and Local Identity

A common theme which ran throughout the interviews and focus groups was that despite rapid urban change, residents of Collyhurst had retained a powerful sense of local identity. In a focus group held with six people who lived in a social housing tower block for the over-50s, a strong sense of neighbourliness prevailed. The residents likened the relationships between neighbours to an “extended family,” particularly for those without any relatives living nearby. For example, Jean, who was in her late-50s, described a sense of commonality with other residents: “Well we’re all the same type of person really, we’re all just down to earth, working people, we’ve all had educations but all come from more or less the same stock.” The opportunity to socialise regularly in the housing block was viewed as especially important. Residents

met informally in a Common Room where social activities and events took place, with weekly visits from a hairdresser. The focus group participants described how people looked out for each other, making comments such as: “Like if I don’t come down [to the community room] I know that one of them will probably knock on my door just to make sure I was ok.” In this example, the common room provided an important place for engaging with other residents in the tower block. Examined through the lens of social infrastructure, it is possible to shed light on the different forms of sociality that occur in these spaces (Latham & Layton, 2022). Social encounters in the common room were fleeting but regular, allowing residents to develop networks of support which could translate into a sense of belonging and wellbeing.

Existing research shows that quality of life is affected by how we *feel* about a place, which underlines the importance of places in neighbourhoods where people can build and maintain relationships (MacGregor, 2010). Stephen, who had moved to Collyhurst ten years previously, described how he had heard lots of “negative assumptions” before living in the neighbourhood, as it was often described as a place of deprivation and crime. However, Stephen had had a rather different experience of living there:

It’s got trouble certainly, it’s ravaged by the consequences of poverty and multiple layers of social deprivation, but [I have] met some really, really, lovely, fantastic people committed to the community.

Stephen described how social deprivation and poverty had been exacerbated by austerity policies, but explained how strong bonds between residents had endured due to the rich history of the area. He described how stone had been quarried in Collyhurst, the proud history of Irish immigration in the neighbourhood, and the strong links forged between the community and the churches. The interview with Stephen revealed how despite the damaging effects of disinvestment an affective sense of place remained, connected to the previous sites of social infrastructure.

7.2. The Loss of Community

Similar themes about the local identity of Collyhurst emerged in an interview with Simon and Mavis, a retired couple in their 70s. Their attachment to place continued, even though they had moved away from Collyhurst in the 1970s due to their home being demolished as part of a previous cycle of redevelopment. Simon and Mavis travelled from a suburb in north Manchester to attend a weekly local history group in Collyhurst and enjoyed sharing stories about their upbringing, memories of family and community life. They described how when they were children, there were plenty of spaces for residents to meet up. Simon explained:

Well, in Collyhurst, the main pubs were Billy Greens, The Swan, The Queens....We used to have the swimming baths and you used to have what they call a wash house where your mother threw all the washing in a handcart or whatever, took it down and washed it and brought it back. There was The Crescent, a little pub on Rochdale Road, there was the Three Tuns, so it was a big community, and everybody knew everybody.

Simon's comments reveal how, when people describe the *loss* of community, this is often done through describing the removal of social infrastructure. Rowles' (1983) concept "autobiographical insideness" describes how older people refer to landmarks and particular spaces over time to anchor their memories in place, thereby retaining a sense of attachment and belonging. Rowles (1983, p. 310) argues that "autobiographical insideness" takes longer to attain within redeveloped settings due to the need to "re-accumulate personal biography" arising from the loss of significant places. But, as Simon and Mavis's example shows, even places and social infrastructure which no longer exist may retain an enduring significance. During processes of urban regeneration, it is important to acknowledge the enduring nature of memories attached to shared spaces and social infrastructure. These play an important role in older people's sense of belonging and attachment (Yarker, 2018).

Plans for redevelopment often consider the physical needs of older people, including access to green spaces, high-quality paths, accessible benches, and toilets (Thompson, 2013). In addition to these functional dimensions of place, our findings also suggest that regeneration plans must pay attention to the *affective* dimensions of neighbourhoods, such as the identity of place, a sense of community, and feelings of belonging (García & Rúa, 2018). Analysing the changing nature and meaning of *functional* and *affective* relationships to place highlights the connection between social and material change in neighbourhoods undergoing significant urban change.

In order to create future social infrastructure, inclusive for all age groups, Damien, who worked for the local authority, described how forthcoming regeneration in Collyhurst should be designed in order to create:

Places for people to naturally and informally meet and connect, or places that are a backdrop for people to come together and then create and do what's important to them are lacking in abundance really in Collyhurst. There are sporadic spaces, but they're not best equipped for people to come together.

Similarly, Sarah, who worked for the private developers, shared a similar view, explaining how regeneration needed to focus on public spaces:

We want people to occupy and have those public spaces alive with activity. Again, a cross-section of

communities become socially inclusive because people meet in the park. You bump into people. Dog walkers, families, all the people, anybody. That's what makes a strong community, because there's an interaction which you so often don't get in, kind of, quite impersonal poorly planned spaces.

Discussing the plans for the new area, Sarah explained how there would be more retail facilities in the neighbourhood in the future, which may include "a convenience store, a chippy [chip shop] and a bookies [betting shop] or whatever it was, the community want and is sustainable." Her comments indicate how the needs of incoming and existing residents will need to be balanced. Spencer, who worked for the local authority as part of the regeneration team, explained how planning new facilities for Collyhurst is a challenging task. It was difficult to entice business owners to invest in the neighbourhood until significant rebuilding had begun and more residents had moved to the area. He described this as a "chicken and egg situation," recognising the need to provide new facilities, such as schools "upfront," in order to attract families and create a new housing market for people wanting to buy.

This section has considered the affective dimensions of ageing in place. Thinking infrastructurally, the discussion has shown how during processes of urban regeneration, it is important to acknowledge the enduring nature of memories attached to shared spaces and social infrastructure, these playing an important role in older people's sense of community, belonging and attachment. As Yarker (2022, p. 5) suggests: "The story of social infrastructure is also the story of community," meaning that both the state of social infrastructure and how we engage with it can be used to tell us something about the places in which we live our everyday lives. In Collyhurst, residents' narratives of the "loss" of community were connected to the loss of social spaces, illustrating the benefits of an infrastructural approach to older people's relationship to place, and of viewing community through its infrastructure, past, present, planned and imagined.

8. Discussion

Critically analysing past regeneration in Manchester, Froud et al. (2018, p. 12) argue that future planning cannot put "blind faith in a benign and competent state or an efficient market" but future approaches should consider the diversity of opinions across society. Extending this further, analysing the changing dynamics of place through the lens of social infrastructure provides insights into how regenerated spaces should be planned in a way which is inclusive for all generations. Existing research shows that the social support generated in spaces such as libraries and community centres has been found to be protective of health and well-being across the life course (Cotterell et al., 2018). This discussion has shown that social infrastructure provides an important lens through

which to understand how older people experience processes of urban change. In particular, it highlights how developments associated with urban regeneration can alter the physical environment and also the facilities through which relationships and networks are formed, and the capacity of an area to support people ageing in place.

This article argues that in addition to improving the range of physical infrastructure in an area, regeneration plans must also include adequate social infrastructure, in order to support *affective* dimensions of ageing in place. Rather than focusing solely on the bricks and mortar of the new neighbourhood, this may involve investing in community development and support, skills training, and social enterprises. Discussions about urban regeneration policies must be holistic, considering the needs of different groups such as incoming families with young children, people in mid-life, and long-term residents, including older people (Phillipson, 2007). Therefore, social infrastructure should be considered at the forefront of urban regeneration plans. The analysis highlights the need to maintain spaces that are important to older people throughout the redevelopment process, to ensure they have places to be seen and heard (Burns et al., 2012).

Existing research demonstrates that urban regeneration is often only advantageous to certain groups, such as younger, more affluent residents (Phillipson, 2007). However, as yet, the impact of regeneration on the older populations has been under-theorised. Ageing in neighbourhoods that are undergoing rapid physical redevelopment may result in exclusion (Lewis & Buffel, 2020), detachment, or a sense of “being out of place” (Phillipson, 2007). At the same time, it is also important to note that when older people experience physical changes to their locality, adaptation can also take place (Gilroy, 2012). Ageist stereotypes commonly depict older residents as resistant to change, stuck in the past, and overly nostalgic (Lewis, 2016). However, our findings show that older residents have a range of expertise and knowledge about their communities, which has the potential to contribute to discussions about the future of their neighbourhoods (Lewis et al., 2020).

Our research suggests that older residents are keen to age in place but that any redevelopment should provide more local amenities and places to socialise. In future urban regeneration, social infrastructure will be vital to nurture public life and address some of the most pressing concerns of contemporary urban life, such as social isolation and limited social networks (Latham & Layton, 2019). Finlay et al. (2019, p. 2) make the point that such community spaces “represent essential sites to address society’s pressing challenges, including isolation, crime, education, addiction, physical inactivity, malnutrition, and socio-political polarization.” Social infrastructure is essential in communities undergoing rapid transformation, providing the basis for maintaining social connections and community cohesion. In relation to promoting ageing in place, installing designated

age-friendly benches in parks, ensuring seating to allow people to queue comfortably in shops and promoting accessible, green, safe and inviting public spaces, are just a few examples of how “age-friendly” interventions may address the needs of different age groups (Yarker, 2022).

Further research is required in order to make specific recommendations about how older people can influence and contribute to processes associated with urban regeneration. This will require new working relationships between stakeholders (policy, industry, community, and academia) to produce creative solutions for equitable development. Sustained engagement with existing residents will be vital in order to understand their expectations for the new area and to ensure they feel involved. Traditional styles of consultation are often rather limited and more open styles of collaboration should be supported. Observing urban public spaces, such as those awaiting redevelopment, it may not be self-evident what is going on in these places (Latham & Layton, 2022) or the meanings which are attached to them. Therefore, a greater understanding of the importance of social infrastructure from the perspective of residents is essential.

One approach to encourage meaningful dialogue between residents and regeneration stakeholders could be the adoption of collaborative methods of co-research, as developed, for example, by Blair and Minkler (2009), Buffel (2019), and others. Older people, trained in research skills, are best placed to play a vital role in deepening our understanding of ageing in neighbourhoods undergoing rapid change—especially among groups experiencing various forms of social exclusion. This could involve, for example, bringing together older people, architects and regeneration planners to make suggestions for how future urban regeneration could integrate age-friendly homes and social infrastructure (such as parks, shopping, and leisure facilities). Including residents as co-researchers/co-designers would help to ensure that people can age in place and retain vital social links, such as those evident in Collyhurst.

This research had several limitations. First, *the sample*: this analysis focuses on a relatively small number of older residents and stakeholders. Further research should examine the views of different age groups including residents who had recently moved to the area. Second, *the methodology*: interviews and focus groups were carried out as well as some ethnographic research in key settings in the neighbourhood. Future research would emphasise the importance of also using collaborative or co-research approaches to ensure that older people have a closer involvement with the research process (Buffel, 2019), as discussed above. Notwithstanding these limitations, a key contribution of this research comes from analysing qualitative data to produce local insights into the experiences of proposed urban redevelopment in Collyhurst, from both existing residents and regeneration stakeholders.

9. Conclusion

This article has examined the importance of social spaces in neighbourhoods, which enable people to encounter others and support inclusivity (Latham & Layton, 2019). Social infrastructure provides an important lens through which to analyse the impact of urban regeneration processes and sheds light on the *functional* and *affective* dimensions of ageing in place. In neighbourhoods undergoing redevelopment, both dimensions are vital to consider. The article suggests that social infrastructure should be foregrounded in discussions about urban change, in order to ensure that new spaces of the city foster social connections for all generations and support older residents' sense of local identity, belonging and inclusion amidst dramatic material transformation.

Developers, policy-makers and service providers must take into consideration the changing needs of older people both now and in the future, together with their families and the communities in which they live. The WHO Age-Friendly Cities programme recognises the complex relationships between people, policy and the places they reside influence people's quality of life. By acknowledging the specific histories and relationships people have within their communities, the age-friendly model demonstrates the need to take a "whole system" approach to planning in which issues of housing and public facilities are taken alongside those of civic participation and social inclusion. Central to this is a participatory ethic that challenges urban professionals to develop genuinely participatory processes, in which groups such as older people are genuine stakeholders rather than mere consultees (Handler, 2014).

In order to remain a leading city in age-friendly issues, it is recommended that the council should work closely with private developers to develop a new style of urban regeneration, which places older people's interest at the heart of the agenda. The example of Collyhurst, earmarked for significant urban regeneration as discussed in this article, highlights some of the challenges in embedding these ideas within the competing priorities that drive local decision-making. While there is increasing recognition about the need for architects, planners, and developers to address issues of ageism and social justice through collaboration with older people (see Hammond & Saunders, 2021), the levers of power through which these can be realised (both nationally and locally) remain limited. The origins of this study suggest a potential route to addressing this, building on the age-friendly cities and community approach. The Age-Friendly Manchester initiative, developed collaboratively between older people and Manchester City Council, is long-established with strong political support. This, in turn, positioned them uniquely to impress upon the joint venture partners how important it was to consider older people at an early stage of the project's development. In response to this, Age-Friendly Manchester and the Victoria North joint venture were able to approach the research team to help

them understand how local older people perceived the proposed redevelopment programme, and how it could better respond to the concerns, needs and aspirations of local older people.

"Thinking with social infrastructure" broadens and deepens our understanding of the kinds and qualities of social life in cities that should be promoted, and the implications for supporting people ageing in place. The analysis suggests that having detailed knowledge of the needs of older people in relation to promoting social infrastructure is of utmost importance in developing successful urban policies. In neighbourhoods undergoing urban regeneration, efforts should be made to continue to invest in the social infrastructure which supports functional and emotional dimensions of ageing in place. This would ensure that existing older residents are best supported in the place in which they may have lived for much of their adult life.

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Conflict of Interests

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