How can the design of housing &
neighbourhoods improve the wellbeing and
mobility of older people?

A participatory approach to design research

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• Funded by UK Research Councils (EPSRC, ESRC, AHRC)
• 3 year multi-disciplinary research project running from 2014 - 2016
• A partnership between University of Sheffield researchers, Sheffield City Council, and other local & national participants: housing associations, private developers, and local residents
• Using participatory and design methodologies to investigate and improve the production of age-friendly housing and built environments.
Joint project between DWELL and SCC

Sheffield City Council-led project

HOUSING WITH CARE / SUPPORT (DESIGN + DELIVERY)

PLANNING FOR AN AGEING CITY (SHEFFIELD LOCAL PLAN)

AGE-FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOODS

DESIGN FOR DOWNSIZING

DWELL-led projects
Review of evidence + existing design guidance - housing

- Provide ‘good’ internal space standards and storage provision
- Be level-access with their own front door
- Be ‘telecare-ready’ (eg. by providing telephone and data points)
- Avoid single aspect (in order to provide good daylighting + ventilation)
- Include age-friendly fixtures + fittings (eg. high-level ovens)
- Meet the 16 Lifetime Homes accessibility standards (eg. by providing an accessible shower room)
- Be orientated to provide views and ‘good’ levels of daylight
- Provide manageable private outdoor space (eg. terrace / balcony)
- Meet high standards of energy efficiency and sound insulation
Review of evidence + existing design guidance - neighbourhoods

- Provide accessible and well-maintained local green spaces
- Provide well-lit and walkable streets with pavements free of uneven surfaces / trip hazards.
- Offer a range of local shops / facilities (including convenience store, fresh food, pharmacist, cash machine, etc.)
- Provide public seating and WCs to support people to help out and about
- Provide good access via public transport to other services, neighbourhood centres, and leisure activities
- Offer opportunities for social activity and volunteering through community venues and organisations
- Offer a range of affordable housing choices options (including housing with care / support)
- Offer opportunities for residents to be involved in local decision-making
Housing pathways in later life
Current Units of Specialist Older Person’s Housing

Chapeltown & Ecclesfield  City Centre  City Centre West  East  North East  North West  Peak District National Park  Rural Upper Don Valley  South  South East  South West  Stockbridge & Deepcar

SOCIAL
SHELTERED

ECH

PRIVATE
SHELTERED
Assumes: 2.5% 65-75 households move to specialist accommodation; 15% 75+ households move to specialist accommodation
“Downsizing” pressures

- **Interim Director of Planning**
  - **R:** [Housing shortages]- I think it’s less of an issue in [this city] than some areas, the housing need is not quite as acute as it is in other parts of the country, but it is still an issue. We think we have about 4 or 5 thousand family homes that are occupied by older people. ...
  - **FZ:** But would ... you have appropriate accommodation for that older person to move to?
  - **R:** Well no, we don’t.

- **Deputy Director of Supported Housing**
  - **R:** We had a bonanza when [] Gardens [retirement village] opened because that provided 200 units of accommodation. Most of the people that moved in there, moved out of council or housing association accommodation and mostly out of family sized homes, 3 bedroomed houses, and we were suddenly able to re-house a lot of people who needed those homes. So if we were able to build more of that sort of scheme then, we’d be meeting the needs of the whole community, not just the older people.
DESIGN FOR
“DOWNSIZING”

Design process + propositions
Courtyard bungalow (Cat. 3 / Wheelchair Homes) – 79 sq. m

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Courtyard bungalow

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Urban village
Age-friendly Urban Living

A group of Sheffield residents has been developing ideas for housing in later life with architects and researchers from the University of Sheffield Dwell project.

This exhibition imagines how different types of homes - from townhouses to supported living - could be developed near to the facilities and amenities of Sheffield City Centre.

Today we would like to hear YOUR VIEWS on these ideas - could you imagine downsizing to the city centre?
Visits to potential housing sites in Sheffield

Would this site be suitable for age-friendly housing?

Could this building be converted to residential apartments?
Sylvester Gardens

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Urban retirement living

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City Centre exhibition feedback

Q 1. I have recently considered moving house or downsizing

Q 2. I would be interested in living in the city centre

Number of responses: 85

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Socio-economic groups and downsizing in the city centre

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**Winter Gardens responses** (table 1)

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**Moor Market responses** (table 2)
Written comments

• The overall scheme

Very exciting stuff… impressive… well-presented and clear… DWELL seems to have thought of everything.

• Setting and location

It’s handy for town… Freedom and independence! … Convenient for getting to other places using trams and trains… Car free living…. There is a real opportunity to create an attractive place in this part of town, for downsizers and families… Give people the chance of ownership of their city. …Contribute to greening of the city centre… Nice to be near the river… Good views…. The area needs to be re-developed.

• Design of the scheme

Good to see a mix of house types… good cross section of housing… Offering more choice for older people… Mix of ages and people would be attractive… Bringing together all sections of society.

Integration of assisted living into the wider scheme is very good. I like fishing and lots of trees and greenery… I enjoy gardening… Green space to sit outside. …The idea of creating a small community in the city is good for Sheffield. … I particularly like the balconies… I would only consider apartment living if there was a balcony or terrace.
Summary

1. There is a great demand for a range of age-friendly and downsizing housing; including city centre living
2. Design guidance exists
3. Older people are willing to engage with the design process
4. Cities are recognising the need for more diverse options for older people’s housing
5. Planners and policy makers are also recognising the value of appropriate housing in minimising health and social care costs

Why are we not building more older people’s housing in places like Sheffield?
What are the obstacles and challenges local authorities face in promoting the development of older people’s housing?

Evidence from our stakeholder interviews with senior managers and officers in the city council provides some insights.
Context

1. Health and Social Care Act 2012: Interim Director of Adult Social Care: yeah, I mean what we’re trying to do in terms of err, you know developing this more community based vision for adult social care and also what we do at in terms of information and advice at the very front door so that we’re not just bringing people in to a system, we’re actually helping them to look at what they can do to help themselves, are you familiar with some of the sort of thinking around the care act which came in? …but I mean a lot of that is based around err this promotion, the promotion of the duty of wellbeing that local authorities now have but it’s about actually looking at how we actually enable people to support themselves and live within their communities and families longer before coming in to statutory services.

2. Social Housing development and management
Housing benefit cap
Right to buy

3. Planning context: Interim director of planning: We do want to try and get 100% Lifetime homes but everything at a national level is working against us, so there’s some stuff out quite recently where Government was saying: we might start reducing space standards and things like this. So the trouble is that planning at the local level, which is where the application takes place, has got its own policies. It will be producing a plan to do that, but it’s got to be in line with national policy and if they bring in something that says, you no longer need planning permission for this or we want to make this all a lot simpler … or less costly, you don’t need to build to code level 4, you can do it with code level 3, then what it’s doing is, it’s dumbing down all of those quality standards.
OLDER PEOPLE’S HOUSING DEVELOPMENT: CHALLENGES WITHIN LOCAL AUTHORITIES

• Policy context: National policies; local leadership, vision, policies & strategies
• Funding: Diminishing resources; re-structuring processes
• Collaboration and integration: Lack of continuity in projects and teams; Lack of joint working, political will and leadership around the issue
• Holistic planning: from development, procurement & building, to allocation and management
• Understanding and knowledge: Lack of knowledge/ data on needs and wants; markets; Diversity of the ageing population
• Culture of denial of the ageing process
• limited influence on housing developers
Challenges for developers

- Planning processes
- Suitable sites/ site allocation/ land values
- Local housing wealth/ property prices
- Lack of planning guidance (e.g. C2, C3)
- Lack of engagement with decision-makers (SCC)
- Previous negative experiences (and rumours)
- Operational costings (care provision)
- Balancing rent/ sale/ high/ low needs
- Lack of local knowledge/ markets/ products
- Risk averse
- Concentration of wealth in the South
- Older people lack a voice in the city to demand suitable development
- Stereotyping of the older person’s ‘market’
OPPORTUNITIES

- Collaboration of planners with housing, public health & social care to increase well-being
- Development of an older person’s/ health promoting housing strategy
- Address inequalities in the city
- Consider how Sheffield see its future as a ‘city for all ages’
- Use of media to attract developers
- Engage in a dialogue with older residents about planning for downsizing, retirement or later life
- Think more broadly about older people’s housing (e.g. city centre development; lifetime neighbourhoods; downsizing)
- Mainstream quality standards and accommodation
- Further collaboration with TUoS to understand local population needs and wants