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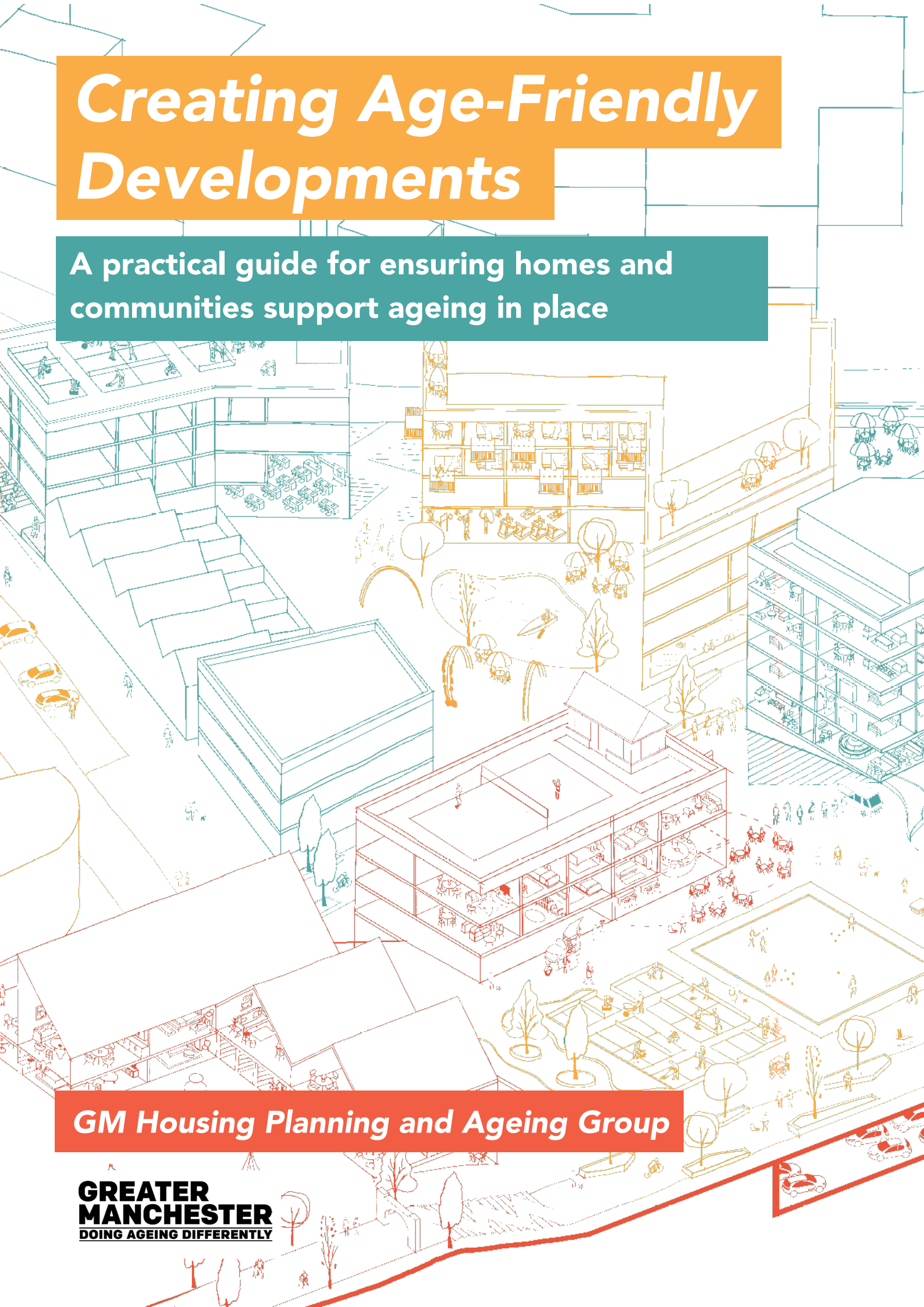
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# Creating Age-Friendly Developments

A practical guide for ensuring homes and communities support ageing in place

GM Housing Planning and Ageing Group

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DOING AGEING DIFFERENTLY



# Creating Age-Friendly Developments:

Key features to consider

## 1. Celebrating Older People

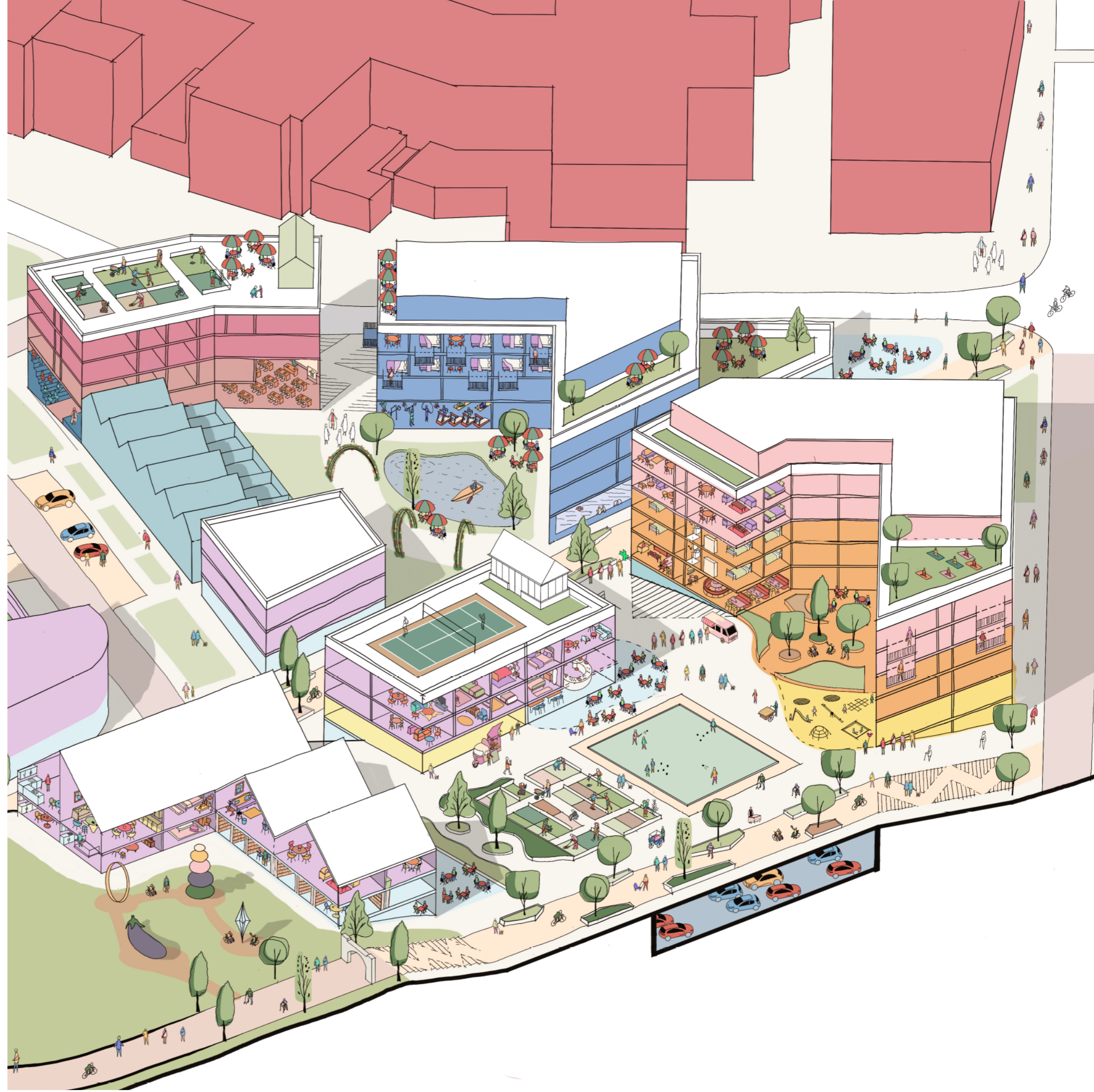
- Embracing different perspectives
- Valuing older people in society
- Including older people as active participants

## 2. Planning for Age-Friendly Neighbourhoods

- Diverse housing options for older people
- Supporting everyday activity
- Creating social infrastructure
- Integrating places
- Connections to nature

## 3. Designing Age-Friendly Homes

- Creating healthy environments
- Promoting active lives
- Supporting social life
- Providing appropriate storage spaces
- Accessible controls and access
- Maximising daylight and views



Over the next 20 years, there is projected to be a rapid acceleration in the older population of cities, both internationally and in the UK. As a result, it is vitally important that the diverse needs and aspirations of older people are fully considered in the planning, design and delivery of new residential developments.

This guide offers a list of 'age-friendly' considerations that architects, planners and developers should consider when creating new or retrofit urban developments, ensuring we are producing places where everyone can age in place for generations to come.

## ► What does 'Age-Friendly' mean?

The [Age-Friendly approach](#), developed by the World Health Organisation, calls for stakeholders and practitioners to refocus their thinking around the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population. It doesn't provide a one-size-fits-all solution, and instead calls for collaboration between industry, government and communities focused on improving older people's quality of life. Our older population is socially and culturally diverse, and as a society the impacts of health inequalities are significant. As a result, the age-friendly concept doesn't put a specific age-limit on what constitutes an older person and instead invites stakeholders to think about the different experiences those in mid and later life can have, and how these can be addressed through our actions. The Age-Friendly approach has been adopted by over 1000 cities internationally (covering 300 million people), and by over 50 local authorities in the UK.

Age-Friendly Homes refers to environments where current and future generations of older people can live independent and fulfilling lives. While it can refer to specialist housing across the care spectrum (ranging from 'independent living' retirement villages to nursing homes), it is important to note that the vast majority (90%) of older people choose to live in general needs housing in mixed, intergenerational communities. Critically, age-friendly housing requires the different needs and aspirations of older people to be at the front and centre of the design process, recognising the diversity of people in later life and our shared desire to create inclusive urban environments for all ages. **It is our aspiration that all new homes should be age-friendly homes, and that all development plans need to ensure we are creating great places to grow older.**



## ► What is the UK policy context for age-friendly housing?

At time of writing, there is no current national strategy on housing for older people, nor a government standard for Age-Friendly Homes. In 2023, the UK government established the [Older People's Housing Taskforce](#), whose remit is to boost the supply of retirement housing, and is due to report in 2024. The [National Planning Guidance](#) offer a general note that, "For plan-making purposes, strategic policy-making authorities will need to determine the needs of people who will be approaching or reaching retirement over the plan period, as well as the existing population of older people." [Part M of the Building Regulations](#) establishes a minimum legal specification for accessible design, with the Part M4(2) setting out an 'Accessible and Adaptable' standard, and Part M4(3) establishing a wheelchair accessible standard. These are designed to be inclusive of a wider range of people including older people, and people with disabilities. These higher standards are optional in many areas, although initiatives like the [HoME Coalition](#) are seeking to make these the new national minimum standard.

Physical accessibility is a core component of age-friendly homes, but it should be seen as the start of a wider process of inclusive planning and design. This needs to consider how homes and neighbourhoods can support a good quality of life as people grow older, offering inclusive social, economic and cultural opportunities regardless of age. Initiatives that help older people have similar benefits to all age groups, with models such as [HAPPI design principles](#), [Building for a Healthy Life](#), [20 Minute Neighbourhoods](#), [Just Cities Programmes](#) and [Low Traffic Neighbourhood](#) helping to create multigenerational communities where older people can play an active role.

## ► Who is this guide for?

This guide aims to support developers, planners, policy-makers and architects to deliver 'Age-Friendly' homes and neighbourhoods, throughout the planning, design and development process.

## ► How should this guide be used?

This guide provides a series of prompts to be explored in the context of your development, with links to additional information and research that can support further exploration of these issues. It is important to recognise, however, that the best way to explore many of these issues is to engage directly with people in mid to later life through research, market testing or collaborative design. The guide establishes the existing policy context for housing and ageing, followed by a series of factors that those who create age-friendly homes and neighbourhoods will need to consider. These are categorised in three interconnected parts: **Celebrating Older People; Creating Age-Friendly Neighbourhoods; and Designing Age-Friendly Homes**

# Celebrating Older People

## A. Embracing different perspectives

Embrace the varied experiences, circumstances and value of older people throughout the design process and beyond. With consideration of:

- The presence of varied older people's perspectives and needs throughout the design process
- The design of engagement processes to ensure that older people's voices are heard with appropriate measures to monitor this
- Positive imagery and language that appeals to, and is representative of older people
- Inclusion of older people within marketing information, imagery and strategies

## B. Valued stakeholders

Older people are recognised as important members of our society with unique insights and knowledge. With consideration of:

- The importance of the local knowledge and experience of older people. Acknowledging the value that this understanding of the physical and social infrastructure of a neighbourhood can bring to proposals
- The varied identities of older people, not limited to their age alone
- Older people's knowledge of local history and culture and its use to curate identities of proposals

## C. Active participants

Older people are key participants in the social landscape of our places. With consideration of:

- The role that older people can play in the success of the formal and informal social infrastructure of our places such as the programming of amenity spaces
- The active roles of older people in the social infrastructure of our families and communities, e.g. childcare for grandchildren, active community volunteers, active neighbours, care givers or those in work



# Planning for Age-Friendly Neighbourhoods

## D. Creating diverse housing options for older people

Whether mainstream or purpose-built housing for older people, providing choice and quality for a new home to act as a way of improving quality of life. With consideration of:

- Including a variety of tenures, home types and sizes within a scheme to offer adequate choice
- Part M4(2) compliance across all homes with Part M4(3) as per local policy for future adaptation
- Inclusion of private amenity of useable size and quality
- Multigenerational living offers within neighbourhoods

## E. Everyday moving

Creating the conditions for active lives in all ages. With consideration of:

- A range of universally accessible and well signed-posted walking, wheeling and cycling routes to cater to all needs in line with TfGM's Refresh the Mission and local walking, wheeling and cycling strategies.
- Opportunities throughout neighbourhoods for everyday moving including invitations to play, for indoor and outdoor leisure, or to be active
- Tree cover or shading provided along walking, wheeling and cycling routes and outdoor spaces to allow for all weather use.
- Places to sit and rest regularly within private and public spaces, especially playgrounds, that are designed to meet the needs of those with mobility issues, for example with arm rests and backs.
- Integration into wider public transport routes identifying key local facilities

## F. Integrated places

Diverse and mixed-use neighbourhoods. With consideration of:

- 20 minute neighbourhood principles, recognising the differing walking, wheeling and cycling paces, routes and desire lines of a diverse older population
- Enhancements/connections required to the surrounding local facilities, including public WCs, green spaces, community, social and cultural venues and services to support people to live well in their neighbourhood.
- Developments should be care-ready, to enable future planned social care such as domiciliary, home help and self-care to support independent living
- Health and wellness cues and facilities integrated into communities and buildings
- Perception of safety throughout the seasons and day and how this may affect access to facilities

## G. Creating social infrastructure

Providing the social infrastructure for thriving neighbourhoods. With consideration of:

- Working with local people and the existing social infrastructure of the wider area to understand and respond to the unique needs of the place and people
- Consider [meanwhile uses](#) within the development to build community identity
- Increasing the perception of safety throughout a neighbourhood including: increased presence of people, creative lighting, natural surveillance and sightlines. Ensuring that a range of perspectives are considered acknowledging that this perception varies widely
- Intergenerational spaces that work to break down generational divides, such as intergenerational playgrounds
- A range of scales within public spaces to spend time privately or socialise with friends and family, for example social seating, pedestrian play streets, friendly benches and larger picnic benches
- Neighbourhood art and cultural opportunities acknowledging the wellbeing benefits for older people, and wayfinding support that public realm interventions can have on those with living with dementia

## H. Connection to nature

The health benefits of access to green and blue spaces and natural environments for people and planet.

With consideration of:

- 15-minute access from homes as per the [Green Infrastructure Framework](#) with thought to differing walking, wheeling and cycling paces
- Easily accessible and signposted routes to natural spaces that are supported by appropriate infrastructure such as water fountains and public WCs
- Landscape-led approaches to master planning offering visual connections to nature from homes
- Opportunities for food growing and gardening within neighbourhoods
- Restorative spaces that prioritise biodiversity and offer wellbeing benefits for older people



# Designing Age-Friendly Homes

## I. Healthy Homes

Homes that are built to meet the needs of older people. With consideration of:

- Best practice guidance for overheating and cooling considering future climatic conditions and the effect on older people's health
- Lowering energy consumption of the home; reducing fuel poverty through building fabric optimisation and on-site renewables
- The surrounding acoustic environment with measures to reduce negative acoustic impacts in the home, which is particularly important for people with sensory issues and those living with dementia
- Natural ventilation and internal air quality including VOCs, mould and external air pollutants

## J. Active homes

Providing active uses that cater to all. With consideration of:

- Opportunity for gardening / food growing uses including raised bed provision
- Easily accessible and secure cycle storage
- Hard standing areas or outdoor equipment that could be used for exercise
- Opportunities for active uses with visitors and family such as intergenerational play-spaces
- Outdoor spaces (gardens and balconies) should be designed to provide ample space for social interaction, such as outdoor dining

## K. Supporting social life

Providing the social infrastructure to allow communities to thrive. With consideration of:

- The use of space within the home, with spaces for hosting and entertaining visitors
- Any communal spaces in apartment buildings (mailboxes, bike storage, lift lobbies) should be located on [shared paths](#) within a building or site to maximise opportunities for social interaction
- Design of shared amenity areas within apartment buildings that can be used with visitors or encourage enriching creative activities such as painting or lifelong learning.
- Communal areas in apartment buildings designed to encourage neighbourly interaction, with features such as paired doorways and social spaces in lift lobbies. Creating front door identities to foster a sense of identity with the neighbourhood
- Semi-private outdoor spaces from front doors providing the opportunity for neighbourly interaction
- Providing opportunities for residents to self-organise, through residents noticeboards in prominent locations

## L. Storage

*Providing the infrastructure for living. With consideration of:*

- Standard cycle, larger non-standard cycle, cargo bike and mobility scooter communal storage provision in line with best practice, including charging infrastructure
- Storage provision in line with Nationally Space Standards
- Storage located near front doors that are adequately sized to allow for mobility aids in all homes
- Design of in-built storage to consider reach ergonomics and useable storage for older people
- Opportunities for exhibition storage acknowledging the importance of treasured belongings

## M. Controls and access

*Ensuring access and control in the home. With consideration of:*

- Access to controls and equipment including electrical switchboards positioned to reduce the need for reaching or bending
- Technology-powered devices to facilitate ageing in place in-line with [TAPPI principles](#), for example mechanisms such as front door locks, lighting, personal alarm or smart thermostats. Plans for technology integration should be explored recognising technology exclusion that some people experience, and the need for education and support if such systems are to be integrated
- Controls that are easy to operate when mobility is impaired including switches and cupboard handles throughout the home
- Locations of light switches that allow for multiple points of control, for example master switches
- Future adaptations in the home that may be required, such as additional patting around baths to support hand rails to enable hospital discharge. Information about adaptable infrastructure should be included in the owners manual

## N. Daylight and views

*With consideration of:*

- Natural and/or engaging views throughout the home and in locations that offer greatest use, for example kitchen sink windows
- Adequate provision of natural daylight and sunlight throughout the home in-line with current best practice such as the BRE 'Site layout planning for daylight and sunlight: a guide to good practice'
- Opportunities to create dual aspect homes

## ► Further Reading:

This guide sits within a well-established policy context within Greater Manchester, including:

- [Places for Everyone](#) - long-term development plan, produced by GMCA, covering 9 of the 10 Local Authorities in Greater Manchester
- [GM Age Friendly Strategy](#) - A strategy vision for how ageing is integrated into policy and practice across Greater Manchester, produced by GM Ageing Hub
- [Framework for Creating Age Friendly Homes in GM](#) - a framework seeks to achieve a permanent cultural shift in thinking around housing in later life, recognising that older people want a choice of different, affordable mainstream and specialist housing options.
- [Better Homes, Better Neighbourhoods, Better Health](#) - a tripartite agreement between GMCA, GM Health and Social Care Partnerships and GM Housing Providers
- [Housing for People Living with Dementia](#) - which proposed a series of recommendation for ensuring people living with dementia, and their carers, about the role of high quality housing in improving their quality of life
- Local design guidance, such as the [Manchester Residential Quality Guide](#), [Oldham and Rochdale Urban Design Guide](#), [Tameside Residential Design SPD](#), [Salford Housing SPD](#), [Bolton Design Principles SPD](#), [Stockport Design of Residential Development SPD](#), [Bury Design and Layout of New Development SPD](#), [Wigan Planning for Health SDP](#), or the forthcoming [Trafford Design Code](#)

The guide also complements existing guidance and reports on age-friendly homes, such as:

- [Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation](#) (HAPPI), and its 5 subsequent follow-up reports covering topics such as care, rental housing, rural housing, shared ownership models.
- [Technology for our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation](#) (TAPPI) - a report exploring the role of technology and digital infrastructure in creating homes to support independent living
- [Housing, Ageing and Care](#) - a report from the LGBT Foundation about the housing needs and aspirations of older LGBT people.
- [A Design for Life: Urban Practices for an Age-Friendly City](#) - a guide for architects and developers about different approaches to thinking about older people in urban development, supported by a series of case studies
- [Alternative Age-Friendly Handbook](#) - a pocketbook for architects exploring the creative opportunities of engaging with ageing within their professional practice.
- Numerous excellent online resources from the [Housing LIN](#) and [Centre for Ageing Better](#)
- [Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods](#) - Lifetime Homes is still the most recent national strategy for housing and older people, and although no longer used by government, many of the core messages are as pertinent today as they were on publication in 2008.

## ► About this guide:

This guide was produced by the GM Housing Planning and Ageing Group; a multi-agency partnership aiming to improve the quality and quantity of good homes for older people in Greater Manchester. The group is convened by the GM Ageing Hub, Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

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