

**MANCHESTER SCHOOL
OF ARCHITECTURE**



THE GLADES

CREATING A PLACE FOR EXPLORATION AND EDUCATION IN A FORGOTTEN THRESHOLD

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**MSA
LIVE 23**

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Partners

Collaborator: Oldham Council, Moston Brook Project
Project's Community: Park and Moston Brook users, residents of Park Avenue and the Moston Brook Friends Group

Our site is part of the Moston Brook valley green corridor, this space links Failsworth to Moston. One of the four areas of green space within the green corridor is Broadway which is where our site is located within. This particular area was bought by public subscription after WW1 and is an open public space. Oldham Council have tasked us with creating a forest school space for the local primary school children and improving local education about the local wildlife in this area.

Oldham Council have promoted changes and improvements to Moston Brook through the Moston Brook Friends Group and through the council website and fund. Moston Brook is active in improving the accessibility to the green spaces and improving the flora and fauna of the area. As well as working with Oldham council, improving Moston Brook was already on the agenda as the Moston Brook Corridor Partnership was set up by Oldham Council and Manchester council which invested £40,000 between them. Spaces that were recently added into the Moston Brook nature reserve were a state of the art playground that the children around the area could use. They also provided the people of the area a couple of tennis courts and a pair of bowling greens to promote sports and interactions among the user groups. Moston is a rich community space with regular nature walks and fairs conducted by the various collaborators.

Agenda

The Glades

Our aim is to improve green spaces for the local community. We met with the members from the Oldham Council, the Canal and River Trust and Leaders from the Manchester Forrest School group. With the support of Oldham Council our project is to create a low carbon footprint forest school space which can be used by children, both from the nearby primary school and children who are playing outside of school time hours, and adults who want to spend time in a natural, outdoor setting. Our aim is to develop a master plan for the wider area and create on-site improvements, such as creating paths through the 'glade' space from the existing play area to the open field space on the other side. One of our aims was to create a space which has a low carbon impact and has low financial input. This is one of the reasons forest areas are stimulating, are due to nature being a changing system and having high sensory output, rather than including expensive and carbon intensive materials such as metal slides and swings in spaces. Encouraging self guided play such as providing the materials and space for den building and games for children to discover, creating a difference from the traditional play area which already exists. We will also be supporting local wildlife through the installation of bird-boxes, putting up bird feeders and creating boundaries within the glade to protect existing and developed plant species. We will also be creating sensory interest within the glade such as putting up wind chimes and information signs and doorways to encourage enthusiasm for outdoor learning and increase knowledge for local wildlife.

The Client & The Timeline

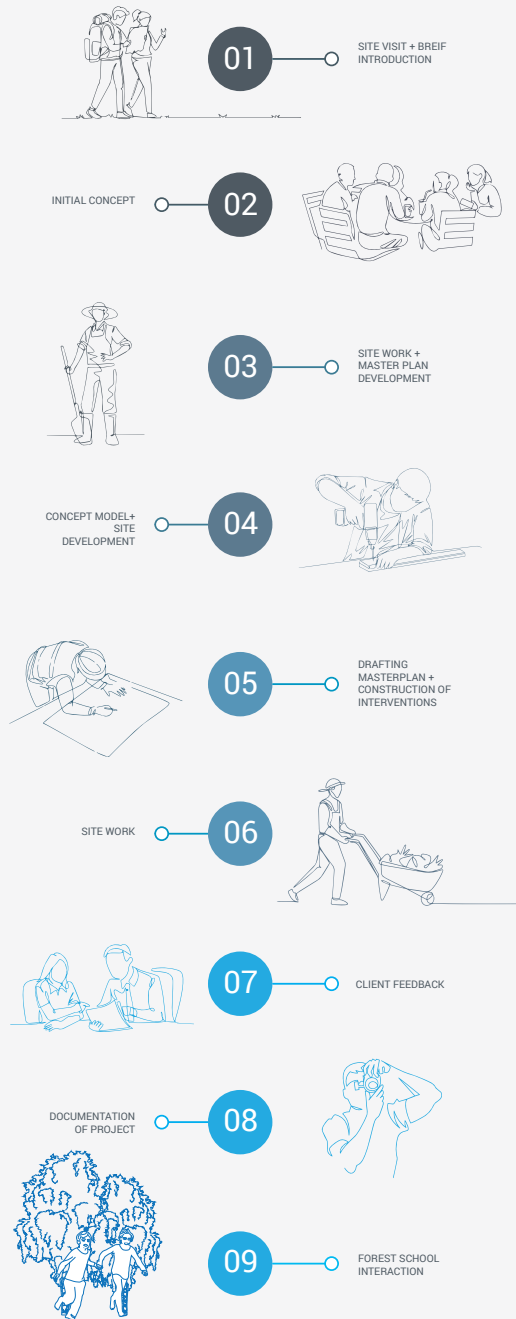
Moston Brook & The Oldham Council

The Moston Brook nature reserve is found in the junction between Manchester and Oldham and is currently being looked after by councils from both cities. Ann Bates was our collaborating partner from their side, and her main request for us to create a experimental play area for children to explore nature. This was to be in contrast to the state of the art playground facility that had been provided for the children by the council close to the site. The sit itself was adjoining this playground and a set of bowling green with the only division being a garden fence.

Species of Animals on Site:

Moston brooks is home to an abundance of species, mainly birds but also a few mammals. Some of the more common species that one can come across on site are Kestrels, Gold crests, Robins, Common Snipe, Magpies, Wood Pigeons and many more. You do get the occasional Tawny Owls. You get a variety of reptiles and amphibians, like newts, lizards and frogs. The insect life on site is quite dense with damselfly, grasshoppers, dragonflies and butterflies being commonly spotted. You do spot mammals like bats and mink but those are the more rare sightings in the area.

From our design intervention, we looked at creating spaces that were dedicated to the wild inhabitants of the site, while also creating a platform for children to be able to witness wildlife from a safe distance.

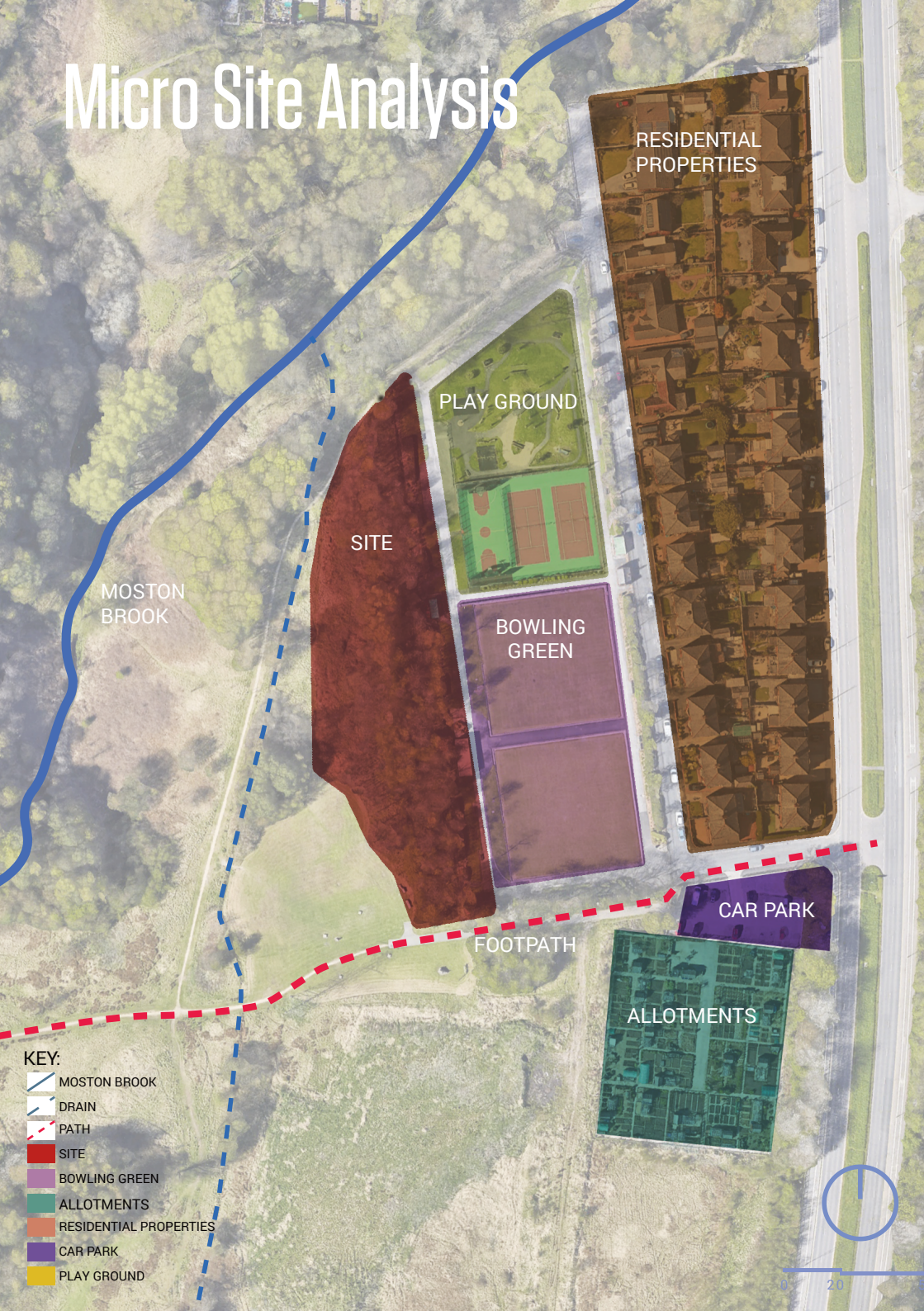


A Site Visit

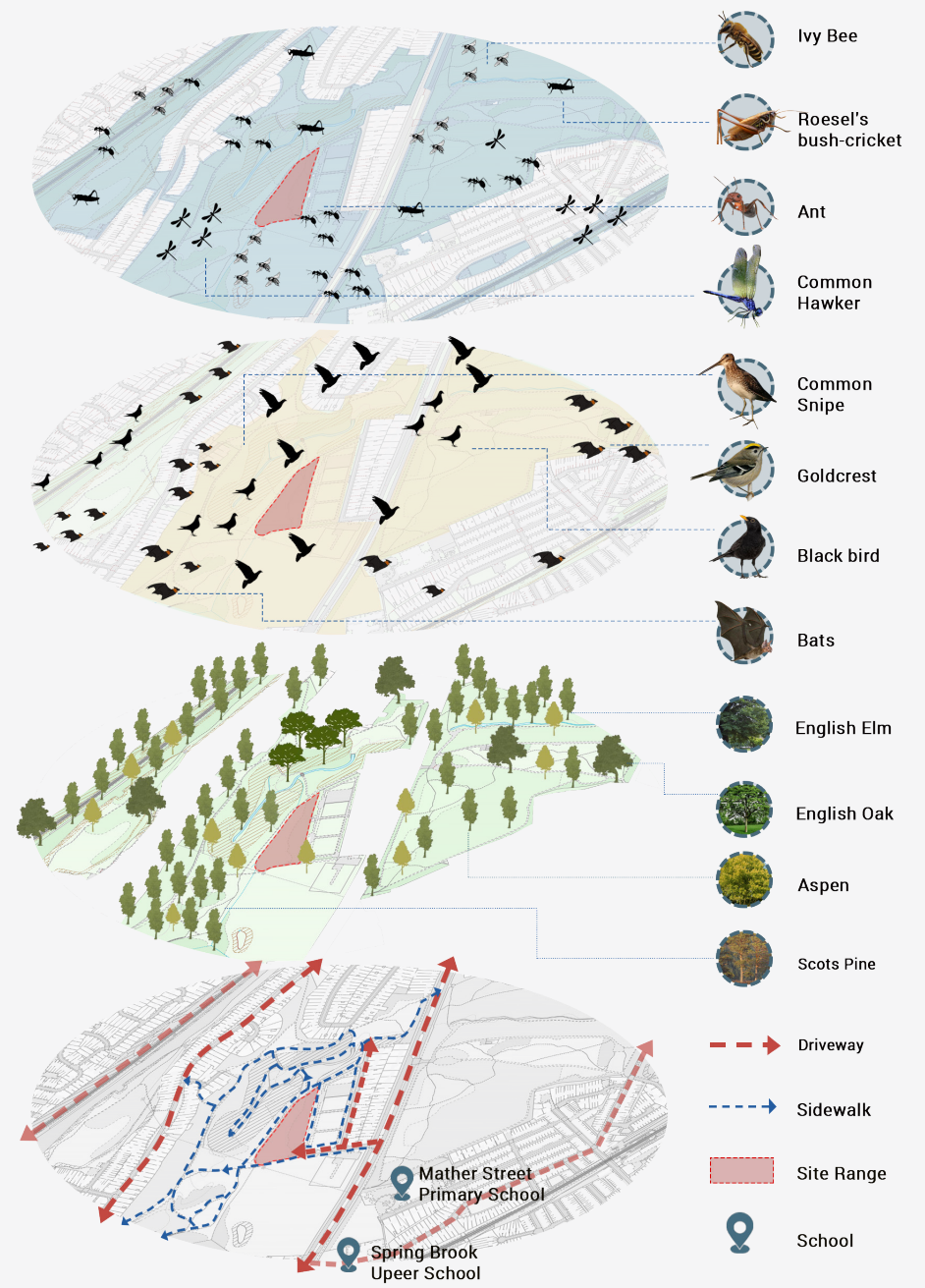
After visiting the site, we used the community hall at Failsworth council to talk about design ideas and concepts on how we could better improve the site and achieve our goal of making a space for exploration and creativity for children.



Micro Site Analysis



Wider Site Analysis

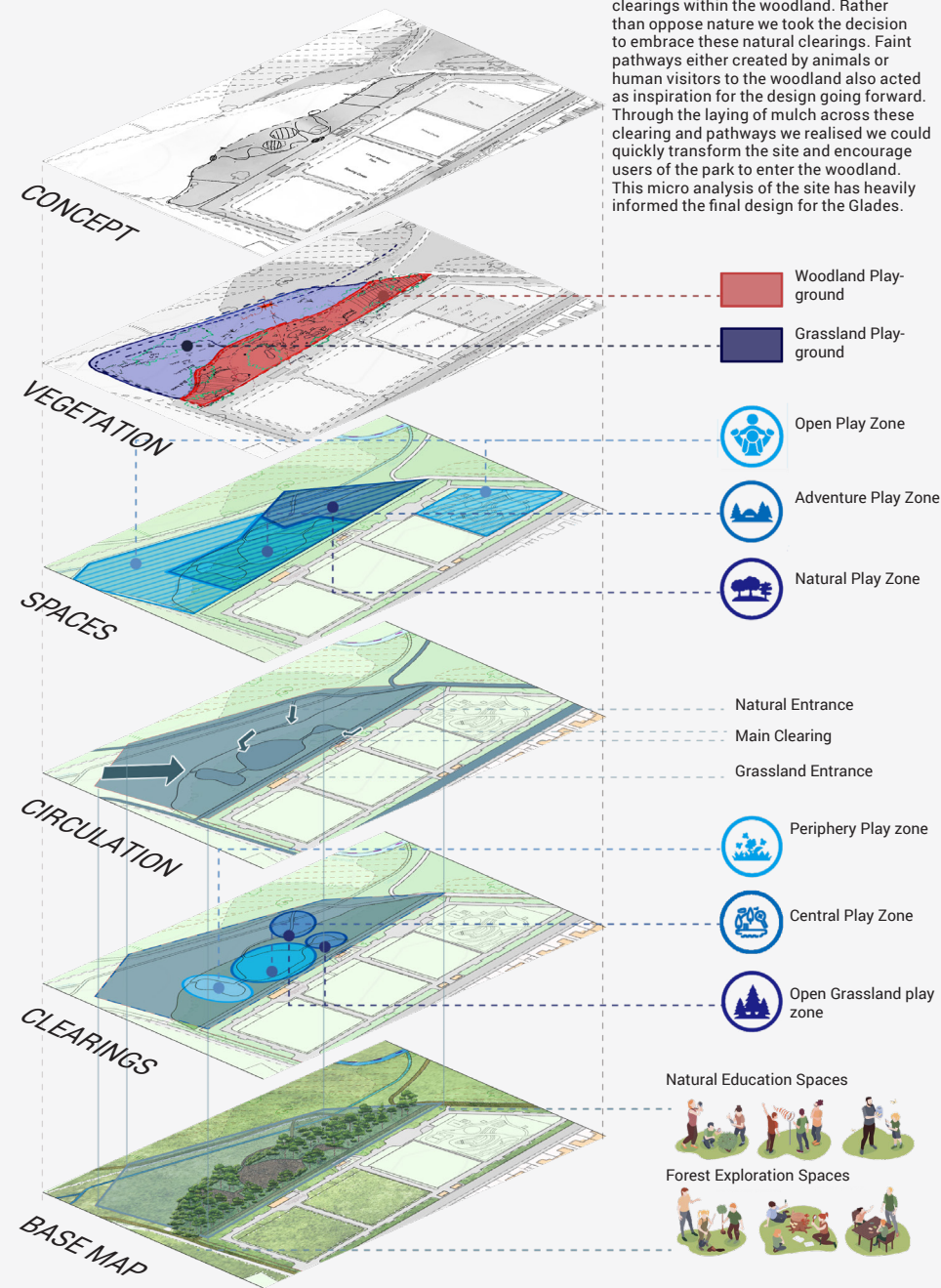


Concept Collage



Master Plan Concept

While visiting the site, we noticed natural clearings within the woodland. Rather than oppose nature we took the decision to embrace these natural clearings. Faint pathways either created by animals or human visitors to the woodland also acted as inspiration for the design going forward. Through the laying of mulch across these clearing and pathways we realised we could quickly transform the site and encourage users of the park to enter the woodland. This micro analysis of the site has heavily informed the final design for the Glades.



Client Proposal



With 'The Glades' proposal, the team looked at creating a place of fantasy where children could explore the many facets of nature through exploration and play. We did this by using the natural clearing within the space as the main focal point. We proposed activities and spaces that would nurture a positive relationship between the child and nature. Spaces like twig huts, mud pits will help the child explore their creative side while also helping them create a unique connection with nature. We used elements like bee boxes and bird houses to create a positive association between the wildlife on site and the children that will be using it.



As a group we looked into how we could create such spaces that would fit in naturally into the environment of Moston Brook. We used natural material, reused old wood pallets and also tried to reduce our impact on the site.



Proposed Master Plan



The Master plan centres around the largest of the Glades. In this opening a fixed log climbing frame will act as the core of the woodland play area. Within this space, secure frames will be constructed which can be used by children to build dens and shelters. Across the glades a mulch will be laid down as a landscaping material. The smaller glades to the north and south will contain various interventions which give the Glades a mystical character. Log circles and smaller play equipment will also be installed in these zones. Signs will be placed on the South and North East of the Glades in order to entice people onto the site. The two entrances into the Glade on the Western edge will be covered by living willow arches, signalling the entry points and adding to the mystical nature of the scheme. To the north west a mulch path runs until it reaches the drainage ditch which will be crossed via a log bridge leading to the main path through the Brook. Interventions along the Path running to the East of the Brook will draw families playing in the formal park into the Eastern entrance of the Glades.



EXISTING SITE SECTION



MSA LIVE BUILT INTERVENTION



PROPOSED SITE SECTION

The Glades



The Forest School Experience



We worked alongside Ann from Oldham City council to organise the final day of the project. Students from Broadhurst Academy, located adjacent to Moston Brook, were invited to the Glade to take part in a forest school. In the morning, the Glade was adorned with the various interventions we had built in the previous weeks.

The mulch pathways, along with the interventions, created a perfect environment for the forest school students to engage with, and learn about nature. The day became a celebration of what we had achieved over the two weeks and most importantly, proved the success of the design.

The children instinctively explored the pathways and glade, and the interventions scattered across the site were both informative, as was the case for the species identification signs, and fostered the imagination of the students. Going forward a local forest school group has requested to use the Glade as their permanent base of operations.



Additionally, an application for a £60,000 fund towards the Moston Brooke Master plan and The Glade has been put forward. At the end of the day, the students from Broadhurst thanked all of the members of our group resulting in a rewarding and momentous end to the project.

ABOUT

Each year the MSA LIVE programme unites Masters Architecture year 1 students with those in BA year 1 and year 2 and Masters Landscape Architecture 1 in mixed-year teams to undertake live projects with external partners to create social impact.

LIVE PROJECTS

All MSA LIVE projects are live. A live project is where an educational organisation and an external partner develop a brief, timescale, and outcome for their mutual benefit.

SOCIAL IMPACT

All MSA LIVE projects have social impact. Social impact is the effect an organization's actions have on the well-being of a community. Our agendas are set by our external collaborators.

EXTERNAL PARTNERS

MSA LIVE projects work with many organisations: charities, community groups, social enterprises, community interest companies, researchers, practitioners and educators.

STUDENT-LED

Our MSA masters students take the lead in the project conception, brief development, delivery and co-ordination of a small project. Other cohorts joined for an eventful 2 weeks of activities at the end of the academic year.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Working in teams within and across year groups and courses; MSA students participate in peer to peer learning. In addition, collaborators, participants and students engage in the transfer of tangible and intellectual property, expertise, learning and skills.

LARGE SCALE

This year approximately 650 students from 4 cohorts in MSA have worked on 42 projects with partners.

QUESTIONS

For questions about MSA LIVE please contact the MSA LIVE team:

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BLOG

live.msa.ac.uk/2023

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