

**MANCHESTER SCHOOL  
OF ARCHITECTURE**

# TOWN HALL



# UNWRAPPED

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**MANCHESTER**  
1824  
The University of Manchester

 **Manchester  
Metropolitan  
University**

**MSA  
LIVE 24**

## Team

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## Partners

For our MSA Live project, we have partnered with the Manchester City Council. The City Council is currently working towards renovating the Manchester Town Hall, aiming to enhance human engagement, attract disadvantaged communities to the city center, and ensure their inclusion as vital parts of the city's fabric. The overarching goal is to leverage the Town Hall as a catalyst for addressing the employability challenges in Manchester by providing opportunities for skills, employment and promoting health, and well-being.

Throughout this collaboration, we have worked closely with Anthony Humphreys, the Project Manager of the Manchester City Council. Anthony is currently overseeing the delivery of social value for the refurbishment of 'Our Town Hall' in Manchester city centre. His role involves collaborating with employers and various resident groups to ensure the project's positive social impact and optimise the return on social values for Manchester City's Council.

# Introduction

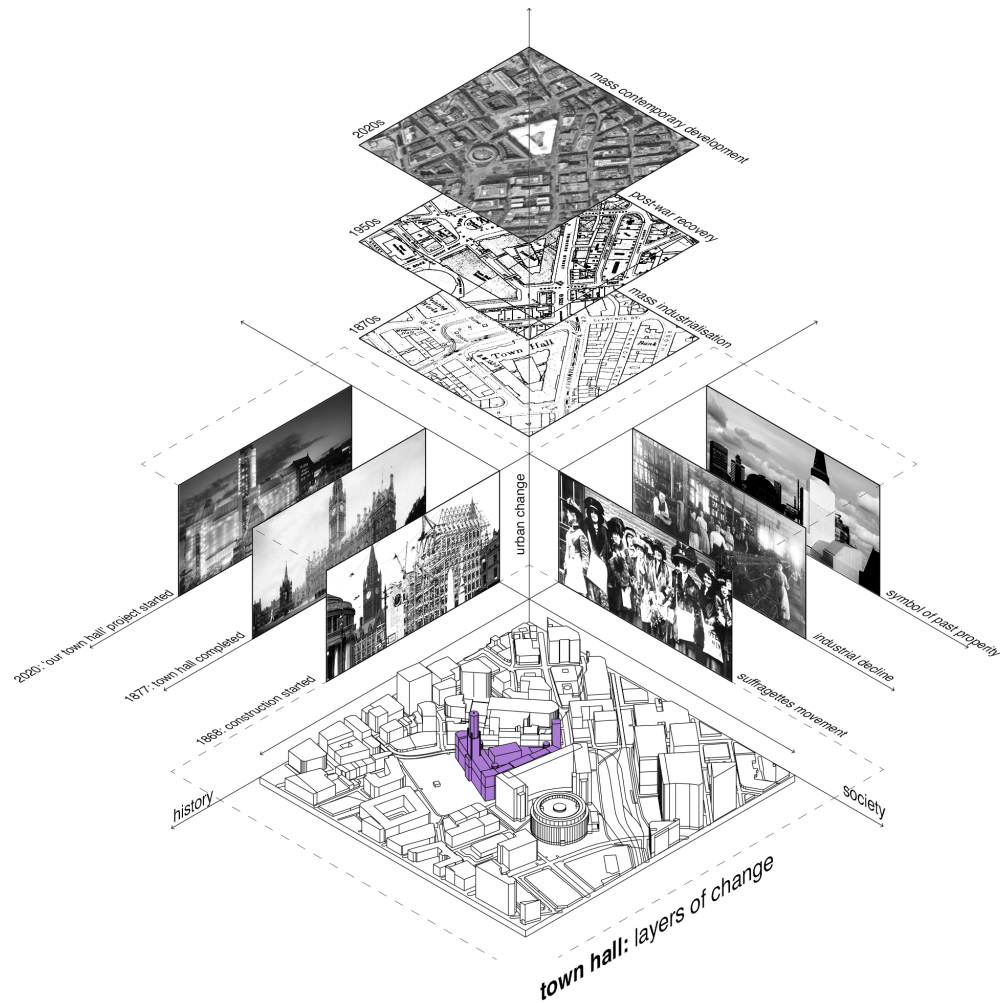
## Town Hall Unwrapped

Manchester remains among the most deprived local authorities in England today. This has a direct impact on the employability rates of its residents, despite the city's growth. Manchester City Council has prioritised addressing this issue by increasing community engagement with public resources and spaces. In October 2018, Manchester Town Hall temporarily closed its doors for renovations and innovations. The main aim was the revitalisation of the Town Hall as a place for increased human engagement and opportunities for Manchester residents in terms of skills, employment, health, and well-being. This initiative will mostly target the priority groups identified by the Manchester City Council: young people not in education employment or training (NEET), individuals over the age of 50, minority ethnic groups, and long-term unemployed residents. The city center and other civic buildings like the Town Hall have been underutilised by residents from more deprived areas in the past. This initiative seeks to facilitate 'cultural leveling up' and forge new connections between the Town Hall and these segments of the population. Upon reopening to the public, Manchester Town Hall aims to generate positive social impacts and benefit the community. The renovated building will improve the lives of residents and their dependents, ultimately offering them opportunities for social mobility while reducing dependency on the state and associated services.

'Town Hall Unwrapped' contributes to this initiative by preserving the historical and architectural significance of the Town Hall while fostering increased human engagement within its premises. This will be achieved through tailored opportunities for volunteering, work placements, and entertainment, specifically designed for the disadvantaged communities of Manchester. The project's goal is to establish a welcoming and comfortable space within Manchester Town Hall where these groups feel included and an integral part of the city. During the Action Weeks, students analysed the social and historical context of the Town Hall to understand its enduring importance to the city. The focus was on ensuring accessibility and inclusivity while keeping in line with the rest of the Town Hall's architectural and historical heritage. As the project advanced, the team collaborated on developing several community-focused architectural design proposals aimed at improving future employment prospects and promoting the health and well-being of Manchester residents. These proposals were achieved using various media, including physical model-making, digital drawings, experimentation with AI, and technical drawings.

# Site Analysis

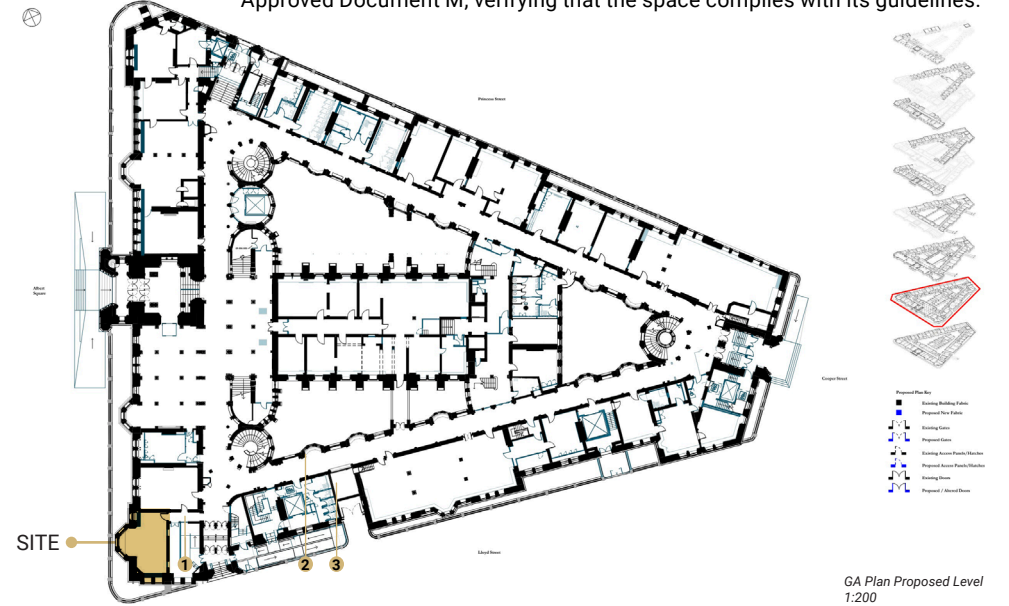
## Manchester Town Hall History



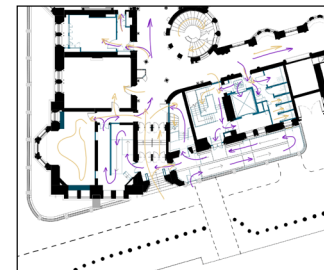
The Town Hall is one of the finest examples of Neo-Gothic architecture in the United Kingdom, and is one of the most important Grade One listed buildings in England.

## Accessibility Studies

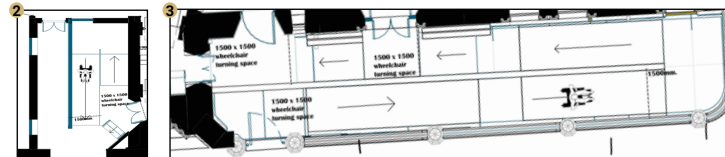
Accessibility studies were conducted to ensure the site meets the needs of disadvantaged communities in Manchester. Bachelor students analysed Approved Document M, verifying that the space complies with its guidelines.



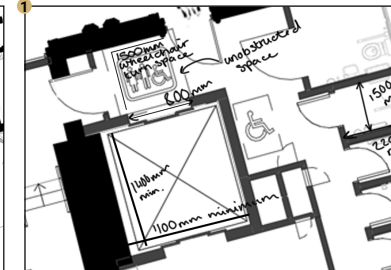
Disabled Routes



External & Internal ramped access



Lifts & wheelchair-accessible toilets



The journey is equipped with ramps, effectively removing barriers presented by stairs. The lift meets the minimum 1400 X 1100 mm, allowing enough space for wheelchair users to move comfortably. The space features a refuge point and wheelchair-accessible toilets that meet minimum requirements of the 2200 X 1500 mm.

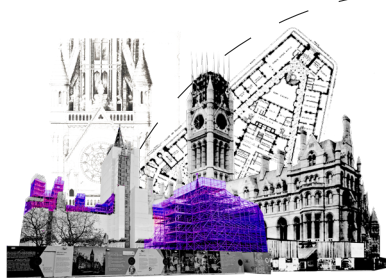
Ramps must have a maximum gradient of 1:12 and a minimum width of 1200 mm. Both internal and external ramps leading to the room follow these guidelines, ensuring the space is accessible to everyone.

# Audience

## historical evolution

The town hall has historically stood as a symbol for the city.

The town hall is in the process of refurbishment since 2018



The community of Manchester is massively diverse

The town hall has a rich history of housing civic events and social movements.

## community

## architectural symbolism

Neo-gothic showcases the Victorian era's fascination with material pallet with medieval

Clock tower acts as a symbol of civic pride for Mancunians.



Albert Square and St. Peters Square arose as a result of the town hall's construction in 1877.

Tram infrastructure surrounds the town hall, connecting it to the wider city.

## urban context

# Community User Profile Exercise

Early on in our design process, students were encouraged to delve deep into the Audience Development Plan published by the Manchester City Council. Students were encouraged to create a series of 'user profile' Top Trump cards, which attempt to quantify their spatial and infrastructural needs. The two groups identified as being key targets for the proposal were people living in the local neighbourhood and people with invisible disabilities.

 user: school children age range: 8-16 purpose: educational space, Manchester's history, Manchester's heritage, interactive exhibits, breakout spaces spatial needs: booth seating, engaging layout, seating zones, interactivity, sensory	 user: university students age range: 18-25 purpose: collaborative work, research resources, breakout spaces, quiet tables, dark boards spatial needs: booth seating, interactive ambient space, quiet zones, interactivity, flexible layouts	 user: creatives age range: 25-50 purpose: co-working spaces, maker spaces, workshops, exhibition spaces, networking spatial needs: flexible seating, public spaces, collaborative zones, interactivity, inspirational	 user: older age range: 60+ purpose: opportunity to contribute skills and crafts, intergenerational interaction spatial needs: accessible, interactive, quiet spaces, sensory
 user: 9-5 hours age range: n/a purpose: educational space, Manchester's history, Manchester's heritage, interactive exhibits, breakout spaces spatial needs: booth seating, engaging layout, seating zones, interactivity, sensory	 user: corporate/professional age range: n/a purpose: collaborative work, research resources, breakout spaces, quiet tables, dark boards spatial needs: booth seating, interactive ambient space, quiet zones, interactivity, flexible layouts	 user: creatives age range: 25-50 purpose: co-working spaces, maker spaces, workshops, exhibition spaces, networking spatial needs: flexible seating, public spaces, collaborative zones, interactivity, inspirational	 user: unemployed age range: 60+ purpose: opportunity to contribute skills and crafts, intergenerational interaction spatial needs: accessible, interactive, quiet spaces, sensory
 user: local area age range: 8-16 purpose: educational space, Manchester's history, Manchester's heritage, interactive exhibits, breakout spaces spatial needs: booth seating, engaging layout, seating zones, interactivity, sensory	 user: wide area-NCR age range: 18-25 purpose: collaborative work, research resources, breakout spaces, quiet tables, dark boards spatial needs: booth seating, interactive ambient space, quiet zones, interactivity, flexible layouts	 user: national age range: 25-50 purpose: co-working spaces, maker spaces, workshops, exhibition spaces, networking spatial needs: flexible seating, public spaces, collaborative zones, interactivity, inspirational	 user: global age range: 60+ purpose: opportunity to contribute skills and crafts, intergenerational interaction spatial needs: accessible, interactive, quiet spaces, sensory
 user: physical mobility impaired age range: 8-16 purpose: educational space, Manchester's history, Manchester's heritage, interactive exhibits, breakout spaces spatial needs: booth seating, engaging layout, seating zones, interactivity, sensory	 user: invisible disabilities age range: 18-25 purpose: collaborative work, research resources, breakout spaces, quiet tables, dark boards spatial needs: booth seating, interactive ambient space, quiet zones, interactivity, flexible layouts	 user: hearing impaired age range: 25-50 purpose: co-working spaces, maker spaces, workshops, exhibition spaces, networking spatial needs: flexible seating, public spaces, collaborative zones, interactivity, inspirational	 user: no disabilities age range: 60+ purpose: opportunity to contribute skills and crafts, intergenerational interaction spatial needs: accessible, interactive, quiet spaces, sensory
 user: walking age range: 8-16 purpose: educational space, Manchester's history, Manchester's heritage, interactive exhibits, breakout spaces spatial needs: booth seating, engaging layout, seating zones, interactivity, sensory	 user: cycling age range: 18-25 purpose: collaborative work, research resources, breakout spaces, quiet tables, dark boards spatial needs: booth seating, interactive ambient space, quiet zones, interactivity, flexible layouts	 user: car/automobile age range: 25-50 purpose: co-working spaces, maker spaces, workshops, exhibition spaces, networking spatial needs: flexible seating, public spaces, collaborative zones, interactivity, inspirational	 user: train age range: 60+ purpose: opportunity to contribute skills and crafts, intergenerational interaction spatial needs: accessible, interactive, quiet spaces, sensory

user: **local area**

age range: **8-16**

purpose:

- educational space
- manchester's history
- workshops
- interactive exhibits
- breakout spaces

spatial needs:

- flexible seating
- engaging layout
- activity zones
- interactivity
- sensory

user: **Invisible disabilities**

age range: **18-25**

purpose:

- collaborative work spaces
- research resources
- breakout spaces
- social spaces
- pool tables
- darts board

spatial needs:

- booth seating
- historical ambience
- quiet zones
- interactivity
- flexible layouts

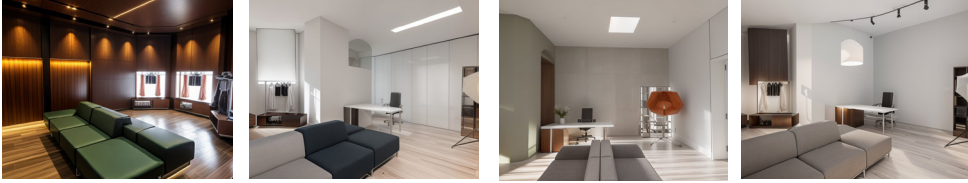
# AI Workshop

## Prompt 1: Heritage



Ornamental Victorian      Warm Timber      Warmer Red

## Prompt 2: Studio



Photography Bright      Lobby Reception      Spotlight Modern

## Prompt 3: Finishes



Carpet Ornamental      Open Timber      Water Tile

## Prompt 4: Playspace



Colour Play      Children Parent      Soft Safe

## AI - Assisted Concept Development

On Day 4, Kyriaki Piera gave the Bachelors a tutorial on how to use LookX AI image generating tool. The students used AI to create initial spatial and functional concepts. AI can help inspire architects to persue different avenues of investigation during the early concept developments, however, all work produced by an AI, must be verified, elaborated and adjusted by a human designer later on. By mixing AI and photoshop students were able to break of into sub groups and develop their proposals in more depth.

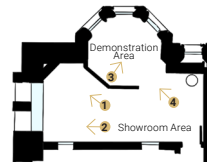


# Proposal 1: Art gallery for upcoming artists

The new art gallery provides a space for rising Mancunian artists to showcase their work. This space is specifically designed to provide new opportunities for upcoming artists who are seeking recognition and support. With a keen eye on those facing obstacles, this gallery is a beacon of hope, offering a platform designed to uplift struggling artists. The gallery consists of two main spaces: the showroom and the demonstration area. The proposal was explored mainly with the use of physical model making techniques.



Key Plan



Showroom Area

This space exhibits finished artworks of emerging artists, unveiling the hidden talents of upcoming Mancunian artists.



Demonstration Area

This space is used for artists to showcase their creative process, allowing visitors to witness their work firsthand and actively participate in interactive workshops.

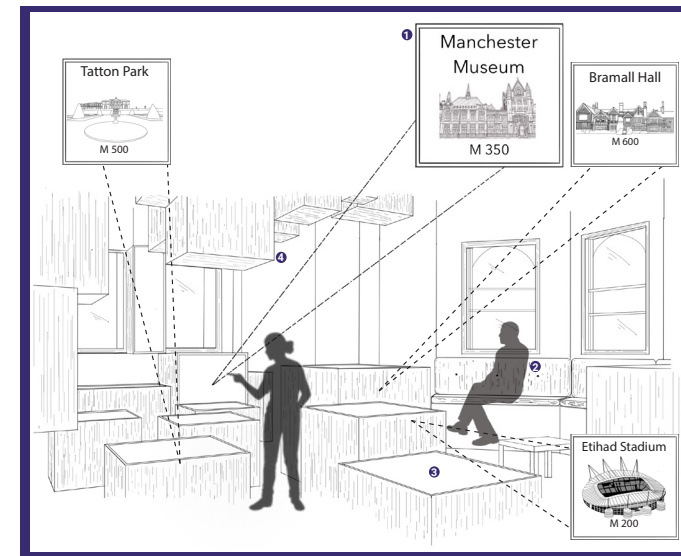
# Proposal 2: Manchester Monopoly

Inspired by the board game monopoly this concept adopts the game's philosophy and localises it to Manchester. by incorporating the properties users purchase as cubes into the architecture it develops and immersive experience where the community can come together through a family fun game while connecting to their city and interacting between the diverse communities of Manchester. The design of this interactive Manchester monopoly aims to educate visitors with the history of Manchester's landmarks. Through this experience visitors can gain greater local knowledge about their environment and interact with their local community.



Programme

- 1 Incorporated into the flooring a path indicating movement around the space to visitors.
- 2 Different sizes of cubes represent the heritage significance of each historic landmark in the game.
- 3 Seating area created so the community can observe the game and become a space of discussion.
- 4 Elements of the traditional game are incorporated into the space such as 'jail'.



Interior Perspective

- 1 Each box represents a historic landmark within Manchester, here for example is the Manchester museum.
- 2 Seating Area built into the window bay with game table for board games.
- 3 Each landmark is a wooden box with white finishing on one side to display the location.
- 4 Roof consists of geometric wooden boxes as a sculptural installation transforming the space.

## Proposal 3: The Heritage Lightscape

Considering the multitude of activities within the Town Hall, it is essential to create a space that encapsulates its rich history. To achieve this, a Neo-Gothic lamp installation is proposed. This installation is designed to captivate and attract both locals and tourists, offering them a visually stunning homage to the Town Hall's rich past, and providing a quiet space in the crowded city center.



On the wall across the windows facing Albert Square, I want to add a mirroring installation, so that it could encourage visitors to take pictures reflecting the room as a whole and therefore encourage other people to visit once this picture is shared. The placement of the room has a great advantage since it directly viewing the Albert square, specifically the Statue of William Ewart Gladstone, and the Albert Memorial. In addition, the placement of the mirrors can reflect the installations in the room which could be seen from the outside of the building by pedestrians outside, therefore attracting visitors.

## Proposal 4: Learning Center for Children

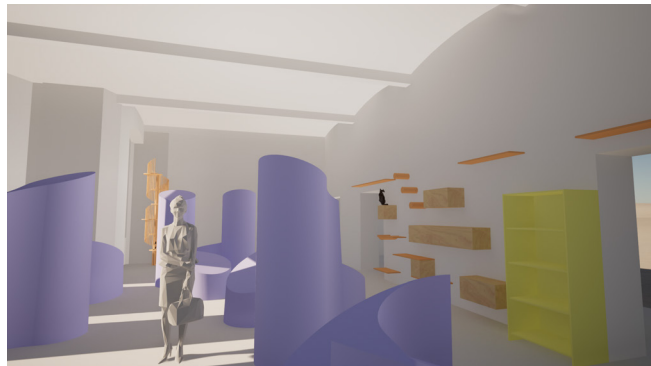
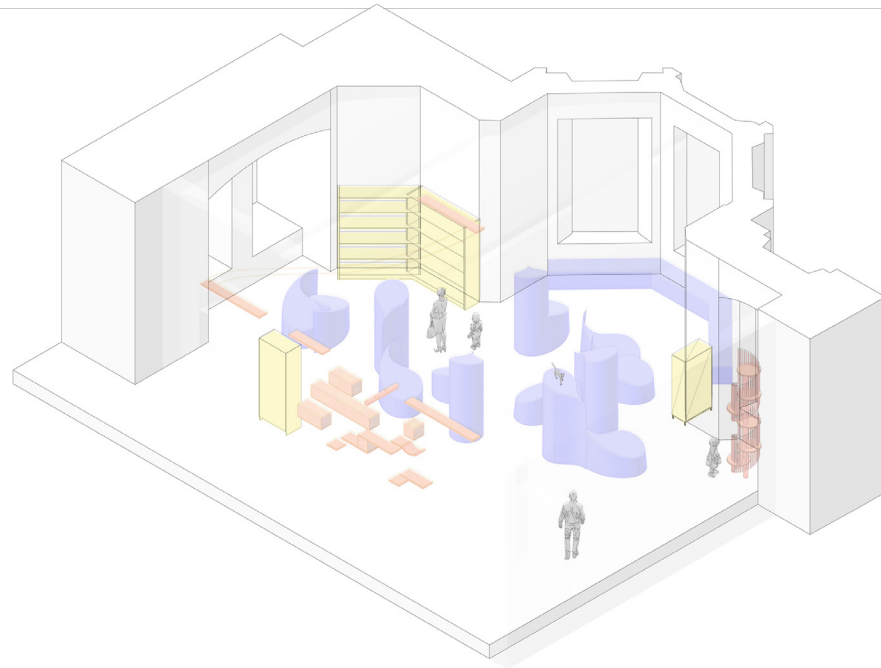
The "Learning Center for Children" envisions a vibrant and engaging play space within Manchester Town Hall, catering to the needs of working parents in the community. This proposal will serve as a convenient drop-off point, providing a safe and nurturing environment where children can learn and play. Teachers will be appointed to guide and support the children, ensuring a balance of educational and recreational activities. This initiative creates employment opportunities for educators, helping them in getting the experience they need, but also offering a practical solution and a safe-space for hard-working parents.

- 1 Creative designated area where children can engage in quieter activities such as reading, puzzles
- 2 Seating area where parents can comfortably wait or interact with staff and access resources on child development and parenting.
- 3 Incorporated child-centric space with educational stations within the Town Hall.



## Proposal 5: Inspired Furniture for Cats & Human Dual Use

This proposal aims to introduce "Inspired Furniture for Cats and Human Dual Use" within Manchester Town Hall. Its primary objective is to promote cultural heritage while creating a neurodiversity-friendly environment for visitors. Drawing inspiration from the Gothic architecture of Manchester Town Hall, the furniture will seamlessly blend historical elements with modern functionality. The dual-use pieces will be ergonomically designed to cater to both humans and cats, ensuring accessibility and comfort for all. Through this innovative approach, the proposal seeks to enrich the visitor experience and highlight the town hall's rich cultural legacy.



# Conclusion

## Designing for Access and Inclusion

Group 6 treated MSA Live 24 as a short 'inclusive design' course, where Bachelor students were given the opportunity to consider how they, as designers, can use our given site to engage the community and create jobs for local disadvantaged groups. Students used the Audience Development Plan to understand the measures and methods the Manchester City Council uses to encourage a wider group of users to enter the historic landmark.

We encouraged students to narrow down their proposals to ensure they are directly benefitting the outlined target audiences. Students were asked to consider the spatial requirements of their proposals as well as the functional benefit provided to the community. The students demonstrated a good understanding of what it means to design inclusively. As 'tutors' the MArch and MA AR student's goal was to ensure students pushed their proposals past the mere concept stage into something which is spatially and programatically appropriate.

Students were engaged through a mixture of teaching workshops and independent work. Some students were confident in working on their own and produced high quality visuals without much group input, however, the ideas portrayed in the visuals were lacking sufficient justification as relating to our brief. Students that were engaged with the literature and had high attendance, provided the best resolutions as they were most critically reflective and conceptually reasoned. As leaders we were most impressed by the ability for students to ask questions, and those who attended offered to do more work than we anticipated. It is understandable that not all students were able to fully attend due to the extremely close proximity of the MSA Live and studio deadlines.

By the end of MSA Live 24, our group produced many proposals, and communicated their ideas through photography, rendering, AI and model making. Students were taught about the importance of Approved Document M - access and use of buildings; methods of adapting AI work with integrity and thought; SketchUp and rendering processes and given CPD-styled talks on adaptive reuse projects.



## ABOUT

Each year the MSA LIVE programme unites Masters Architecture year 1 and Masters of Architecture & Adaptive Resuse students with those in BA foundation, 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 are for community benefit or 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 600 students from 6 cohorts in MSA have worked on 40 projects with partners.

## QUESTIONS

For questions about MSA LIVE please contact the MSA LIVE team:  
[msalive@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:msalive@mmu.ac.uk)

## BLOG

[live.msa.ac.uk/2024](http://live.msa.ac.uk/2024)

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