

MANCHESTER SCHOOL
OF ARCHITECTURE

CHADWICK

DAM

UNLOCKED

Anisha
ABRAHAM

Neila
CUVILLIERS

Jacob
HODGSON

Nehal
JINDHAL

Simon
LINFORD

Anson
ONG

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The University of Manchester

 **Manchester
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**MSA
LIVE 25**

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Partners

This project is primarily in collaboration with Tameside Council. Hayley McCaffer and Daniel Sampson asked us to design a very specific area of Chadwick Dam for which they had received funding. Although Hayley left the Council in between our first meeting on site and the Action Weeks, we continued working closely with Daniel, and Hayley remained very interested in the outcome, being heavily invested in the project. Daniel was then joined by Ayeesha Roberts who took over Hayley's role.

Both Ayeesha and Daniel work in the Public Health team at Tameside Council, which works for the people of Tameside to understand their health and wellbeing needs, and develop programmes to help people live healthier lives. Chadwick Dam is one of the public open spaces which can play a part in this goal.

During our consultation phase we benefited from the help of Phil Brooke and Margaret from Ridge Hill Together, which runs the Big Hub community centre. From there we were helped to engage with local residents to learn more about their needs, and help us meet some of those needs through our design. We also engaged with the park run community, many of whose volunteers are activity engaged with Chadwick Dam.

However our partners also comprise members of the local community, many of whom have informally collaborated with our team by taking the time to talk and be interested in our proposals. We hope that what we have designed can be implemented for their benefit.

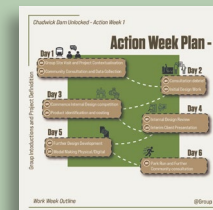
Introduction

Chadwick Dam Unlocked

This project aimed to **open a new route** from the Ridgehill housing estate to Chadwick Dam and **activate the immediate surrounding area** to support those using it, either to access the wider Chadwick Dam space or as a destination itself. Ridgehill, in Stalybridge, is an **area of high deprivation**. Home to about 6,000 people, mostly in social or former social housing, the **area has limited healthcare access** despite being close to Tameside General Hospital. A recent survey showed 73 percent of residents aged 50 and over reported being in poor health, with generally low healthy life expectancy. Adjacent to Ridgehill, Chadwick Dam is a natural green and blue space just north of Stamford Park. Despite its proximity, **many Ridgehill residents struggle to access it and miss out on its health benefits**. Infrastructure upgrades, including a Bee Network walking and cycling route funded by the Mayor's Challenge Fund, have improved access from the lower part of Ridgehill. However, residents in Mereside, the higher part of the estate, remain poorly connected.

Many residents report being unable to walk, cycle, or use wheelchairs to get to school, work, or even the hospital without taking a long detour. The only existing path from Mereside into Chadwick Dam was previously overgrown, muddy, and largely inaccessible, especially for those with mobility challenges. The **new path** is expected to provide significant benefits. It **allows residents to incorporate more movement into daily life**, whether commuting, heading to school, or enjoying the outdoors, **supporting improved mental health, reduced stress, and stronger community ties**. It opens up Chadwick Dam to people of all ages and abilities, **encouraging physical activity and social engagement**.

The route will also create opportunities for community initiatives like walking groups, local events, and fitness challenges, promoting a healthier, more connected neighbourhood. **It will help combat social isolation, especially among older adults and those living alone, and enable people with limited mobility to enjoy Chadwick Dam, possibly for the first time.** Tameside Council completed the basic path in April 2025. **Our project focused on enhancing the area around this new access route** and supporting Ayeesha, Daniel, and Hayley in achieving their vision for it.

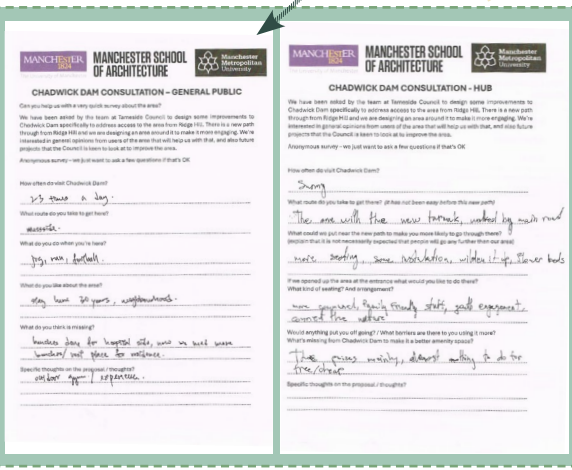
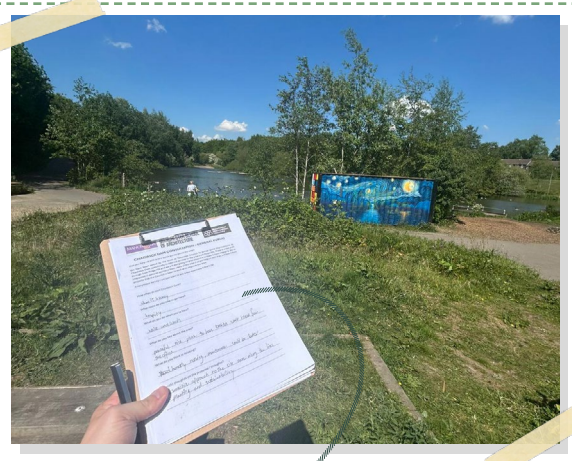


SITE INTRODUCTION

The site itself is a relatively small space, although we were not constrained by an absolute boundary. The principal constraint was the funding the Council had to complete the works, which we understood was around £5,000. The Council engineering team had already laid a concrete path in a straight line from the newly enlarged access point to the estate to connect with the park path – our project was to activate the area around that, with the only additional constraint being to be careful of recently planted saplings.

CONSULTATION

In accordance with our Action Plan, we had visited the site in advance and built a scaled 3D model to be used in consultations and to help with design. As the purpose of the project was to activate the area around the new path for the benefit of local residents and Chadwick Dam users, we worked with our collaborators to plan consultations for our first afternoon. Using pre-prepared interview forms to capture interviewee responses, we split up into two groups – one group went to the Ridgehill Big Hub community centre and used that as a base for finding Ridgehill residents to interview, while the other group interviewed people already using Chadwick Dam. The process was very successful, with members of the public willing to engage with us and share their opinions. Common themes emerged, as shown on the next page.



CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

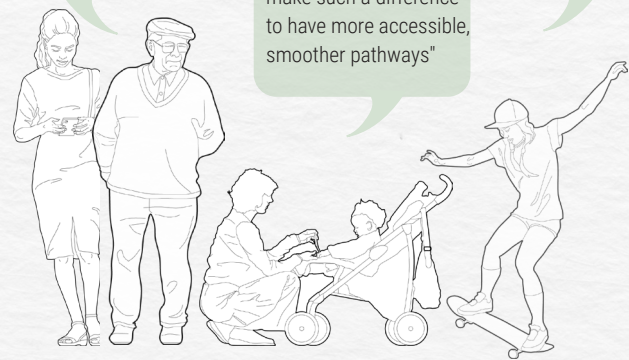
"I love coming to the park to relax and feel connected to nature. But I think it could be even better with more planting and colorful flower beds!"

"It would be lovely to have more benches to rest, a few bins to keep things tidy, and maybe even an outdoor gym to stay active"

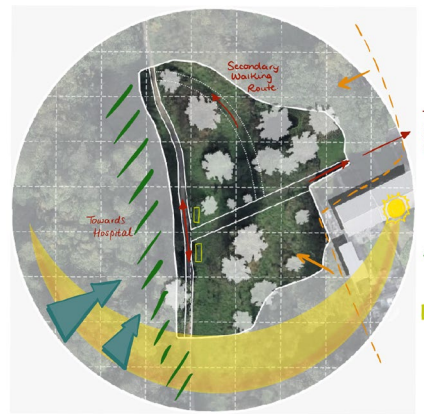
"I love bringing my little one here, but the dirt paths can be tough with a stroller – and I imagine it's even harder for wheelchairs. It would make such a difference to have more accessible, smoother pathways"

"I like the park, but I wish there was a bigger playground with more fun stuff to climb and play on!"

Most people asked for more bins, better accessibility, planting, and community-friendly features to make the park more welcoming and enjoyable for everyone.



SITE ANALYSIS



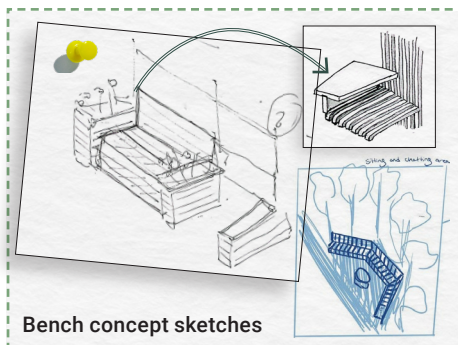
- ➡ Wind blowing onto site from the Southwest
- ➡ Wind blowing onto site from the Southwest
- ➡ Noise from nearby houses
- ➡ Trees act as both shelter and shade on the site.
- ➡ Existing concrete to place benches



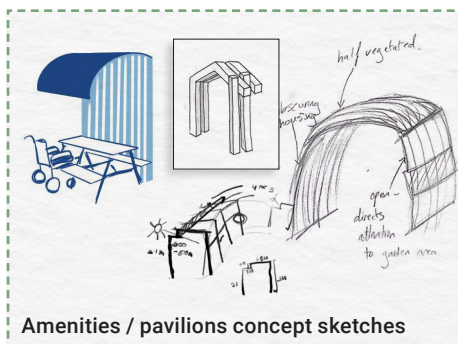
- ⊕ Nature
Lake / Ducks
Calm
- ⊖ Dirt Path
Lock gates
Pollution
Limited Planting

Visiting the site was a key opportunity to experience firsthand its strengths and challenges, from greenspace potential to access issues and existing amenities. Site analysis sketches were later conducted to reflect these observations.

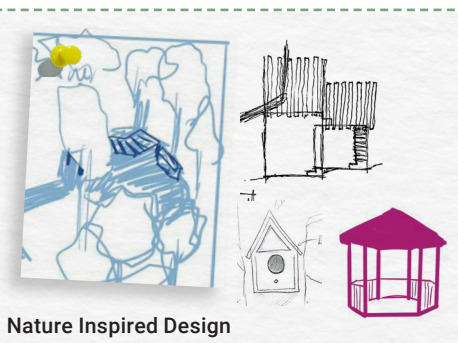




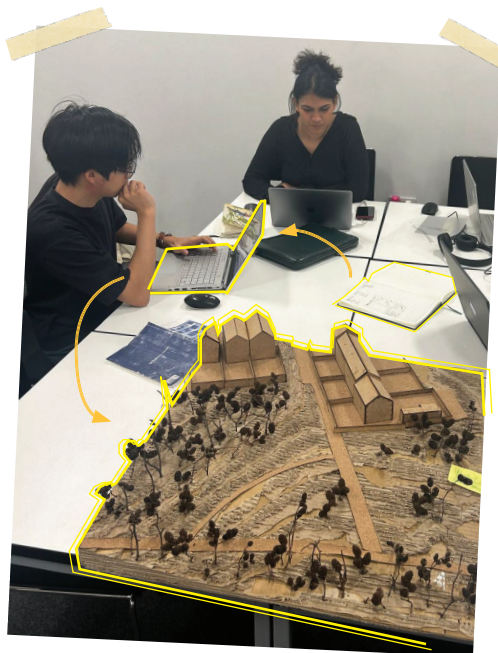
Bench concept sketches



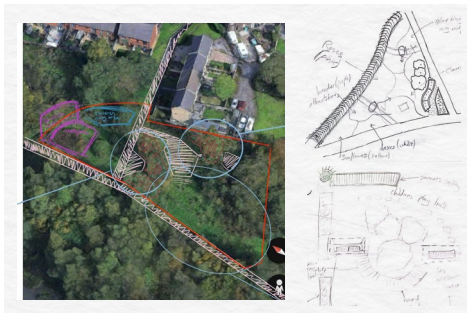
Amenities / pavilions concept sketches



Nature Inspired Design



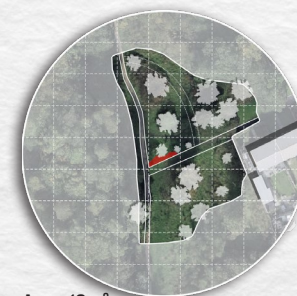
From sketches to 3D models, we brought ideas to life in every medium!



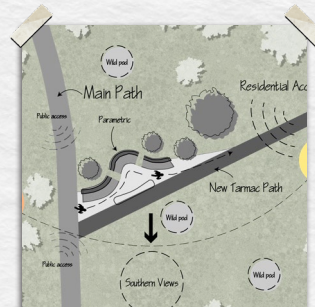
DESIGN PROCESS

Working in three separate groups, we developed initial concepts based on the brief, aided by a 3D model of the site created before the Action Weeks, and using a range of design techniques and software. The groups' designs considered product selection as well as preliminary budget analysis. The aim of this first phase was to deliver an initial presentation to our collaborators for feedback halfway through the first week, based on the specified brief outputs from the client that we later expanded upon.

PHASE 1 - OUTPUTS GROUP 1

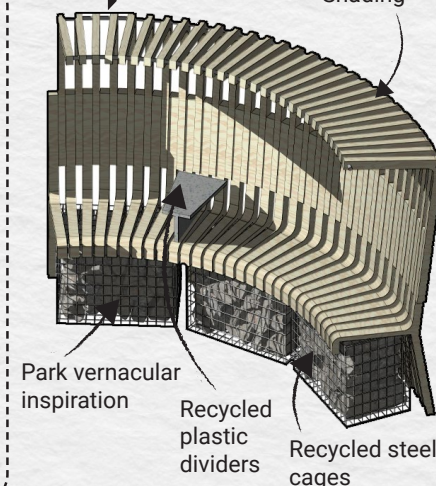


Area: 12m²



Standardised Components

Integrated Shading



Park vernacular inspiration

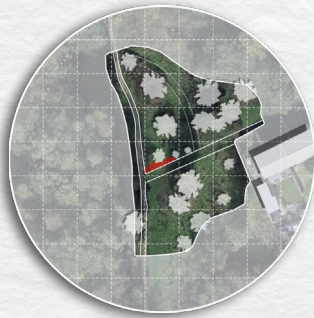
Recycled plastic dividers

Recycled steel cages

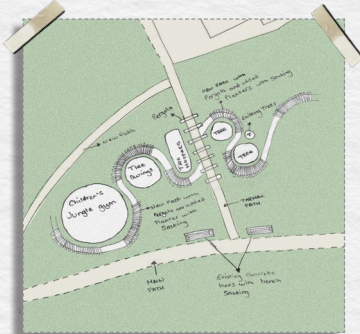
Option Summary

Our proposal for phase 1 of the redevelopment of the area surrounding the path is situated at the point of interaction between the new and the existing. The planting provides a barrier between the public path and the seating area to ensure a peaceful space for respite. The Design of the bench builds on the park vernacular, which utilises a standardisation of components and recycled materials to reduce manufacturing and labour costs. With the remainder of the budget to begin to enhance the site's biodiversity - we have designed a simple nature pod that could be made by local schools, establishing a sense of civic pride on site to deter anti-social behaviour.

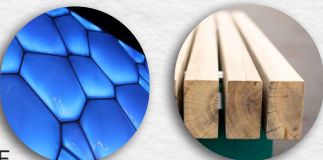
PHASE 1 - OUTPUTS GROUP 2



Area: 145m²



Reclaimed Wood



EFTE

This material diffuses light for vibrant, insulated spaces, cleans itself, resists grime, and self-extinguishes for added fire safety

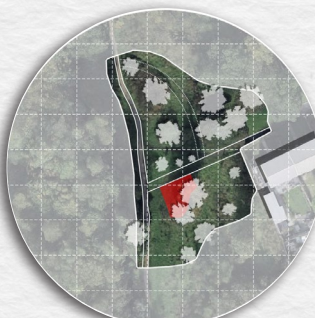


Bench and Table Unit

Option Summary

The proposal improves the new pathway to Chadwick Dam by adding thoughtful landscape elements and inviting rest stops. The custom bench design, with wheelchair-friendly access, creates a space that feels both welcoming and inclusive. It encourages people to pause, connect with nature, and enjoy the journey, making the route not just accessible, but enjoyable for everyone. As part of the development, we've created a shaded walkway and pods for elderly users, incorporating benches and planters for added support and engagement. A children's area with a jungle gym and nearby community zones is placed at a safe distance to minimize noise while allowing visibility

PHASE 1 - OUTPUTS GROUP 3



Area: 145m²



Reclaimed Wood

Mulch

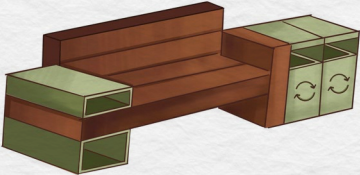


Perforated Corten Steel

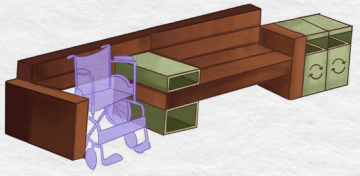
Seasonal Flowers

Option Summary

Our proposal for the new pathway to Chadwick Dam responds to community feedback by improving both accessibility and cleanliness along the route. Thoughtful landscape elements and regular rest points create a more welcoming and inclusive journey, with space designed to accommodate wheelchairs and buggies. The custom bench reflects the park's design language and uses durable, cost-effective materials. Integrated bins help maintain a cleaner environment, while the overall design encourages people to pause, connect with nature, and enjoy the route at their own pace.



Bench Option 1

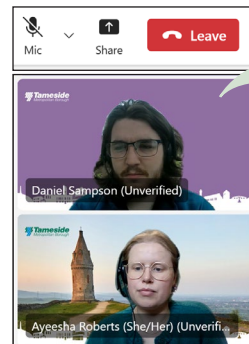


Bench Option 2



CLIENT FEEDBACK

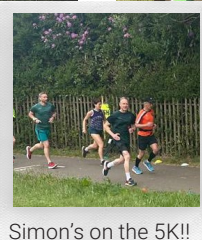
As envisaged in the Action Plan, we had arranged a Teams meeting with our collaborators mid-way through the first week to get their feedback on our initial ideas and to guide the future development of each scheme. The feedback was very positive, with suggestions made such as adding cover over accessible seating and to improve accessibility under the pergola structure



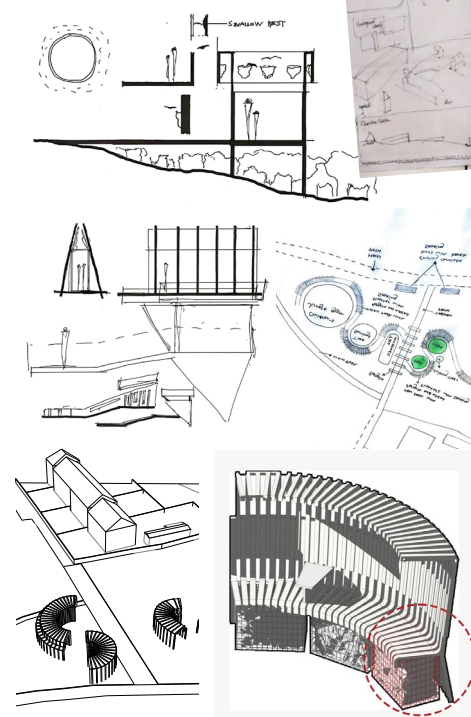
"We love all these ideas and it is fantastic to see how you've embraced the brief so quickly. Well done so far!"
- Daniel Sampson and Ayesha Roberts, our collaborators from Tameside Council.

PARKRUN FEEDBACK

On the middle Saturday, Simon and Jacob took the 3D model and three mounted posters to parkrun, which goes past the site, and showed the ideas to around 150 parkrunners and volunteers. There was complete support for the project – local people were very pleased to see that something was happening with the space. More bins!!



Simon's on the 5K!!



PHASE 2 - DEVELOPMENT

Our Action Plan anticipated us providing not only our proposals for the immediate area proposed by our collaborators (Phase 1), but also developing a wider vision should more budget be found or to provide inspiration for future funding bids (Phase 2). In doing so, we deliberately went beyond the initial brief, taking initiative to exceed client expectations and add greater long-term value to the project. Following the feedback in week 1, the groups then spent three further days working on refining their Phase 1 and Phase 2 designs in parallel, holding design workshops, and progressing toward post-production output.

Meanwhile Simon drew on his industry experience and contracting contacts to check the pricing of the Phase 1 proposals and suggest value engineering opportunities. A deadline had been set in the Action Plan for final presentation to the collaborators on the Wednesday of the second week so pressure was maintained.



COSTING EXERCISE

A key part of this project was to deliver designs to the collaborators' limited budget of £5,000. Two groups attempted to work closely to this, while we gave the third group license to design without that constraint. A variety of sources were used to find very cost effective options, enabling the designs to be achievable for the budget.

Group 1: Phase 1 budget costing

Component	Cost Range	Source(s) with Explicit Pricing
Gabion Bench	£ 1,180.00	https://www.gabion1.co.uk/gabion-component-price/
Gabion Stone	£ 350.00	https://www.wireframe.co.uk/gabion/stone/
Resin Surfacing	£ 1,030.00	https://www.checkatrade.com/hlog/cost-guides/resin-bound-driveway-cost/
Raised Planter	£ 304.00	https://www.wayfair.co.uk/keyword.php?keyword=gabion+planter
Litter Bins	£ 525.00	https://www.woodberry.co.uk/product-category/commercial-garden-furniture/litterbins/
Bug Hotels	£ 160.00	https://www.wayfair.co.uk/keyword.php?keyword=bug+hotel
Site Preparation	£ 100.00	https://www.checkatrade.com/hlog/cost-guides/garden-clearance-cost/
Contingency (10%)	£ 364.00	https://www.smartsheet.com/content/construction-budget-templates
Total	£ 4,013.90	Covers price fluctuations and unforeseen costs.



Group 1: Phase 1
budget costing
Estimated Costs:
≈ £4000

Group 2: Phase 1 budget costing

Component	Cost Range	Source(s) with Explicit Pricing
Timber Bench	£ 1,000.00	https://www.bouthwood.org.uk/
Litter Bins	£ 800.00	https://www.woodberry.co.uk/product-category/commercial-garden-furniture/litterbins/
Wildflower path border	£ 480.00	https://www.wayfair.co.uk/keyword.php?keyword=gabion+planter
Site Preparation	£ 100.00	https://www.checkatrade.com/hlog/cost-guides/garden-clearance-cost/
Transportation	£ 400.00	https://quickhelptask.com/about/
Contingency (10%)	£ 278.00	Flexible for community or charity projects—they may offer discounts if you ask.
Total	£ 3,058.00	Covers price fluctuations and unforeseen costs.



Group 2: Phase 2
budget costing
Estimated Costs:
≈ £3000

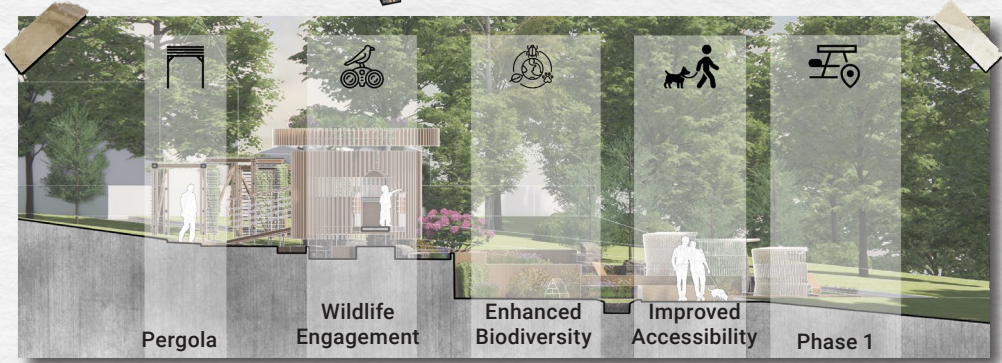
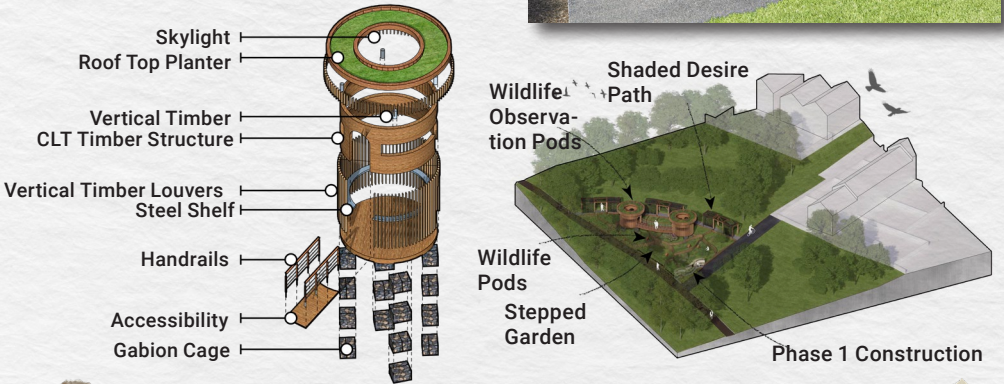


PRACTICE PRESENTATIONS

Each group took the opportunity to do a practice presentation of their design proposals before the presentation to our collaborators. Simon and Jacob acted the role of collaborator, and this enabled the presentations to be fine tuned and focused.

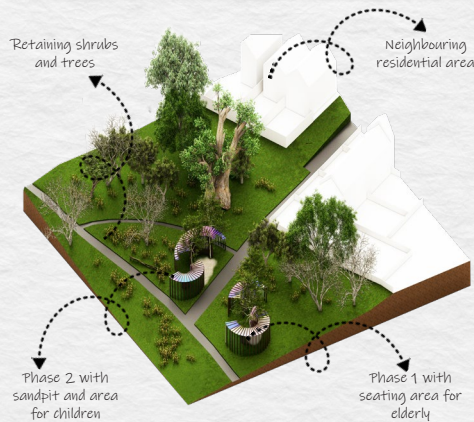
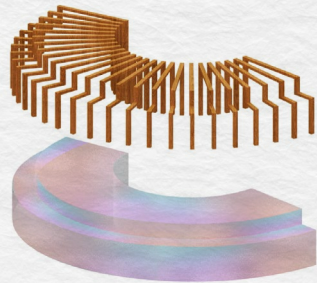
PHASE 2 - OUTPUTS GROUP 1

For phase two of our proposal, we have focused on the northern area of the site by removing the bramble to clear the area and enhancing the path to improve accessibility and aesthetics. Building on the design language of phase one, we have reinterpreted the timber and gabion cage structures in a wildlife watching platform, which blurs the boundary between public and nature spaces. We have incorporated louvers to provide shading and enhance views onto the stepped wildlife meadow, aligning with our goal of creating a harmonious interaction between visitors and the natural environment.



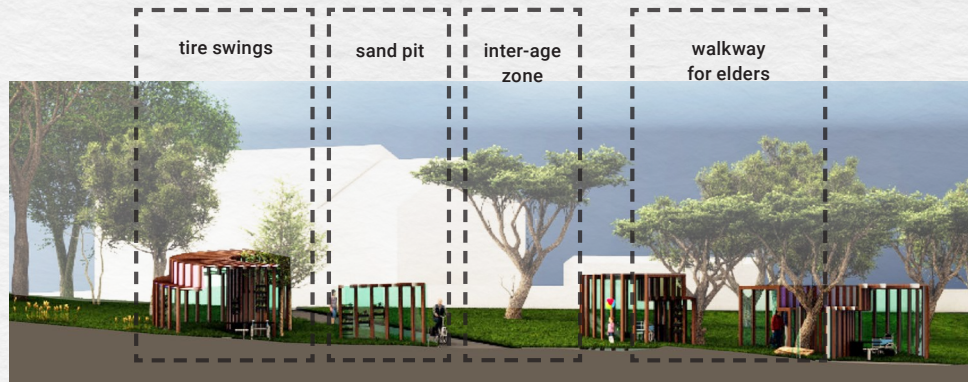
PHASE 2 - OUTPUTS GROUP 2

The main goal of Phase 2 Development is to create a vibrant common area that brings together children and the elderly. Designed as an intergenerational space, it features swings, a jungle gym, and playful elements that encourage both physical activity and meaningful interaction. Thoughtful collaboration has guided these choices to ensure inclusivity and joy for all age groups. Additionally, hanging planters at various heights not only enhance the visual appeal but also invite light gardening and social engagement, especially among the elderly. This space is envisioned as a hub of shared experiences, fostering community, connection, and play.



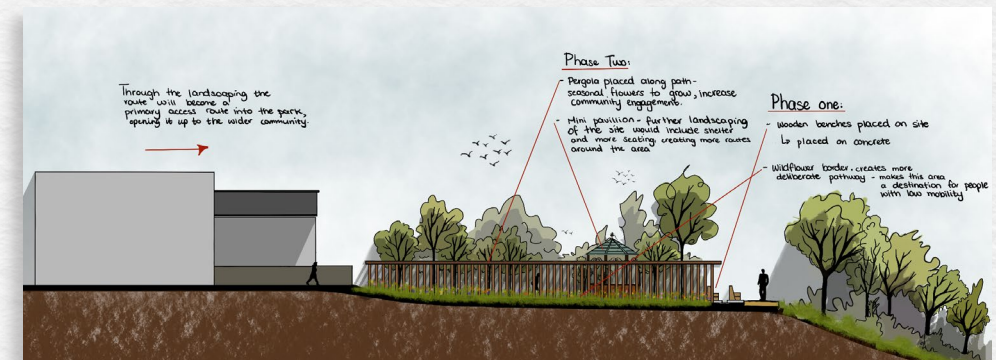
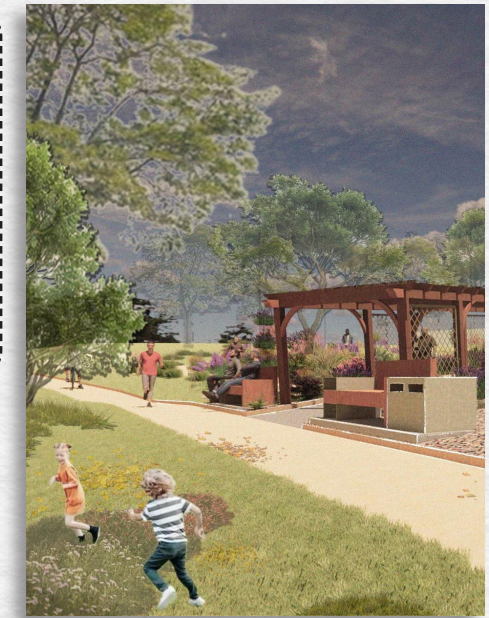
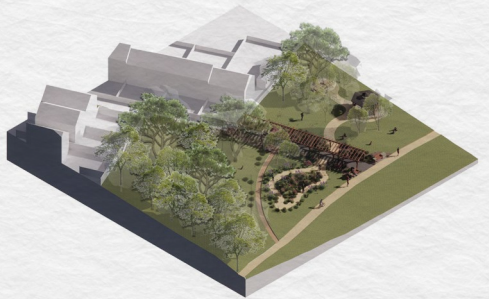
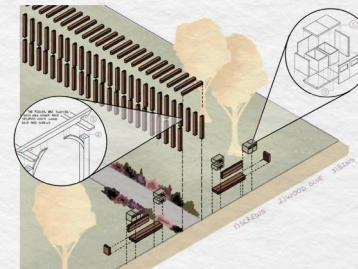
Phase 2 with sandpit and area for children

Phase 1 with seating area for elderly



PHASE 2 - OUTPUTS GROUP 3

Our proposal for the new pathway to Chadwick Dam responds to community feedback by improving both accessibility and cleanliness along the route. Thoughtful landscape elements and regular rest points create a more welcoming and inclusive journey, with space designed to accommodate wheelchairs and buggies. The custom bench reflects the park's design language and uses durable, cost-effective materials. Integrated bins help maintain a cleaner environment, while the overall design encourages people to pause, connect with nature, and enjoy the route at their own pace.

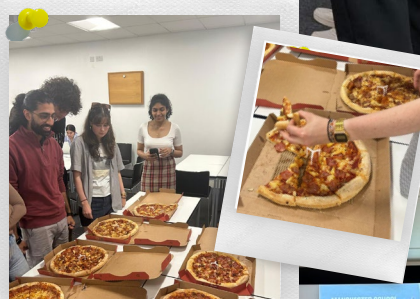




Fantastic work – you've taken the brief and pushed it further with clear, creative, and thoughtful ideas. Really well done!

FINAL REVIEW

Daniel and Ayesha returned to Group 12 HQ for a final presentation of the designs exactly when envisaged in the Action Plan. The whole team had spent the morning refining the outputs and rehearsing the presentations, fuelled by pizza and leftover parkrun snacks. Each of the three groups took their turn to present their designs to the 'client', sharing the presenting between team members. Daniel and Ayesha were delighted! They were confident they could take away the inspiration presented and deliver the original vision of using this space to 'Unlock Chadwick Dam'.



Pizza Party as a Reward !!



FINAL PROPOSAL

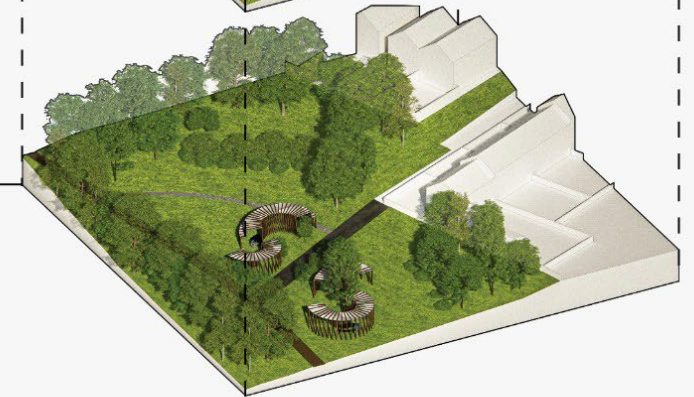
GROUP 1



GROUP 2



GROUP 3



"Thank you so much for inviting us to see the MSA Live presentation today. It was fantastic to see all the hard work you and the team had put into it and the ideas were creative, interesting, and appealing to the many different audiences who currently use and will use the path all year round. You all took on board the feedback we provided last week and have been mindful of the boundaries we are operating in while thinking big in a small space! You've listened to what is important to the local community with a view to the future possibilities of the space and I think you've done an amazing job pulling it all together."

- Ayesha Roberts, Tameside Council.

ABOUT

Each year the MSA LIVE programme unites Masters Architecture year 1 and Masters of Architecture & Adaptive Reuse 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 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 650 students from 5 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

BLOG

live.msa.ac.uk/2025

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