MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

We're teaming up to transform Hulme Park into a more exciting and community-friendly space! This is all about bringing together creative minds to brainsform, design, and bring ideas to life. To spice things up, we're throwing a fun design competition—you'll be split into teams and challenged to create the most impressive visuals for the park. The winning team gets bragging rights and a £10 voucher per person (because who doesn't love free stuff?).

No magic wands heeded, but a little tech wizardry wouldn't hurt! If you know Lumion, Enscape, Vray, or Illustration, great! If not, just fake it till you make it for bribe a teammate). Teamwork, creativity, and humor are the real MVPS—so bring your Agame and let's make some design magic happen!



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Team

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Partners

Friends of Hulme Park (FOHP) is a local community organisation dedicated to enhancing the social and environmental value of Hulme Park. Their work focuses on engaging a diverse range of residents, fostering inclusivity, and creating opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds. Through regular events such as Easter, Halloween, and Christmas celebrations—which attract over 400 attendees annually—FOHP builds strong community ties and promotes well-being.

FOHP also support active lifestyles through partnerships with local groups like HLE Ballers, Manchester Callisthenics, and SkateSafe. As collaborators for our project, FOHP have guided us, providing valuable insights into the park's social dynamics, community needs, and aspirations. Their mission aligns closely with our design goals: to redevelop spaces such as the sports zone, skate park, and create a new community hub that encourages participation, sustainability, and connection. Their involvement ensures the project remains grounded in real community benefit and long-term impact.

Introduction

The Hulme Blueprint

The Hulme Blueprint is a comprehensive design and visualisation project that explores the potential regeneration of Hulme Park through a series of community-led architectural interventions. Framed as a collaboration between academic researchers, students, and local stakeholders, this project combines speculative design with practical urban strategies to re-imagine the park as a more inclusive, accessible, and dynamic public space.

At its core, the project engages Bachelor students in the development of digital rendering skills as a means of visual storytelling and public engagement. Through this process, students created detailed visualisations of proposed interventions that include: a sunken amphitheatre surrounding a new basketball court, offering a space for sport and gathering; a multiuse, enclosed football pitch adaptable for various sports; enhancements to the existing skate park; and a new community hub with a café, kitchen, and flexible social spaces. Additional proposals range from allotments and raised flower beds to expanded callisthenics zones, market areas, recycling points, and public amenities.

These visual proposals were developed through workshops in industrystandard rendering tools – Enscape, Lumion, and V-Ray – with students divided into software-specific teams led by experienced mentors. Sessions in post-production and peer review further strengthened their ability to communicate design intent with clarity and nuance.

This report outlines the design processes, educational outcomes, and collaborative ethos that shaped the Hulme Blueprint. It celebrates Hulme Park not just as a site of intervention, but as a canvas for shared imagination – one that reflects the needs, aspirations, and creativity of its community and future designers alike.

As friends of Hulme Park, we intend on helping promote the already vibrant community by designing and visualising key developments, which one day may result in future investments and further planning.

We extend our sincere thanks to the students for their dedication and creativity, to our collaborators for their trust, and to tutors Jason Taylor and Emily Crompton for their continued support and guidance.

Hulme Park

Hulme Park is our site for this project, this is a well-known public green space in the heart of Hulme, Manchester, an area that is surrounded by urban and social transformations. The park was originally developed in 1999 following the demolition of Hulme Crescents, forming part of a broader regeneration initiative aimed at rebuilding a sense of community and liveability in the area. Today, the site functions as more than just a park, it is a shared, everyday landscape which is used by people of all ages and backgrounds.

Throughout our site visits, we observed a rich variety of activities taking place. We observed families with young children gathering at the playground, individuals and small groups eating, exercising and relaxing in the grass. The outdoor gym area attracts callisthenics enthusiasts and fitness groups, while dog walkers brought constant rhythm to the paths and open spaces. These moments of use reveal a park that is active, casual and inclusive, reflecting Hulme's evolving identity.

Despite its openness and popularity, there are still areas of Hulme Park that feel underused, poorly connected or lacking in spatial quality. Certain corners are isolated, with outdated features that prevent meaningful interaction. Our project aims to work within these spaces, responding to what already exists, while finding opportunities to improve and re-imagine the park's role. In our design process, we were particularly interested in how simple, communitydriven design interventions could enhance the park's social value, foster intergenerational interaction and create a stronger sense of belonging.

As a public space surrounded by homes, schools and student housing, Hulme Park offers a unique opportunity to test ideas around inclusivity, play, identity and co-creation. It is a space that feels familiar yet full of possibility, making it an ideal context for collaborative, site-specific exploration.

In accordance with feedback from our project collaborators, the key areas for development included: the skate park and sports zone. They also highlighted a strong need for a new community centre with toilet, café and multi-purpose facilities alongside amphitheatre style seating around the basketball court. The changes each aimed to enhance inclusivity, healthy lifestyles and strengthen community connections across all age groups.













Community Centre

The community centre is located in a quiet, neglected corner of Hulme Park, adjacent to the secondary entrance. On the site stands an existing robust concrete structure. Defined by its bold form and concave ceiling, the existing structure comprises a roof supported by three concrete walls, which over time has been repainted, accumulating graffiti and urban art as part of the façade.

Design Strategy

For our design we wanted to use an adaptive reuse strategy, repurposing the existing concrete structure, and providing functions like a cafe and sheltered seating area. We used pivoted timber louvres on one face to allow for proper shading and ventilation as well as full-height glazed walls on the other to visually connect the outdoor area. Skylights were added to the elliptical openings on the existing concave roof. The proposed multi-purpose areas allow for meetings, workshops, markets. and other events. We also introduced new toilet facilities, utilising a corrugated metal structure to make them practical, durable, easy to maintain, accessible for all users. and The landscape adjacent to the community centre was designed to complement the intervention, including a bonfire and sheltered seating area.



Area Location Plan



Concept Sketch







Amphitheatre

The amphitheatre, inspired by historical open air tiered seating configurations, is situated by the basketball area. The seating is arranged to fully engulf and surrounds the sports area, creating an intimate and focused area which can allow for celebration, collaboration, and socialisation. Our collaborator requested a seating arrangement created to accompany the recent addition of the updated sports area, with stateof-the-art equipment. The proposal of an amphitheatre, with stepped seating, allows opportunity to relax and watch the local teams play.

Design Strategy

The design approach was to ensure that no antisocial spaces were created as a result of raised tiered seating. Novo's Pavilion of the Future inspired the approach for the amphitheatre, where slatted timber panels create close intimate spaces without sacrificing the risk of creating closed-off and uncomfortable spaces, which is typical of bleacher-like seating. During the Action Weeks, students were encouraged to interact with materiality to develop their understanding of how an existing area's relates to a proposal which has both height and width in presence. Expected to seat 100, the new amphitheatre will allow the community a permanent structure to help celebrate their success.



Area Location Plan



Concept Sketch







Skate Park

The Hulme Park Skate Park is one of the only free skating locations in Manchester City Centre. The existing skate park is located in the centre of the site. With a small footprint, the area includes limited ramps and obstacles restricting use, especially for beginners and visitors with accessibility requirements. The collaborators wanted to improve engagement with the skate park encouraging use throughout the year.

Design Strategy

The proposal includes two tracks of varying difficulty allowing for users of different abilities. It also includes a range of new obstacles such as ledges, rails as well as larger infrastructure including, bowls and ramps. The concrete frames that form the obstacles, paired with the high-level fencing panels that encompass the area encourage urban art installations allowing locals to graffiti the area, helping create a sense of ownership. A new skate shop formed using a recycled shipping container provides an opportunity for Park employees to rent skateboards, bikes and roller-blades to residents. therefore making the park more accessible economically as well as physically. The proposal incorporates perimeter seating with views into the skate park and across the new football pitches.



Area Location Plan











Sports Zone

Hulme Park includes an existing 70×90m (or 11 v 11) football pitch located at the Northwest end of the site. During our site visit, the collaborators stated that the pitch is currently underutilised, largely as a result of its isolated location and lack of adequate lighting. The facility, at present, is not used by any local club teams, presenting an opportunity for growth and engagement within the community.

Design Strategy

In order to encourage broader engagement with community a particular focus on women children, we re-imagined and the football pitch to be more inclusive and accessible. Rather than retaining a full-sized 11 v 11 pitch, the field has been divided into two smaller 7 v 7 pitches. This will allow multiple games to happen simultaneously, allowing for increased use and flexibility for casual play. The reduced scale will also make the space less intimidating and more welcoming for younger users. The proposal includes enhanced floodlighting to improve visibility and safety during evenings and winters, allowing the area to feel more secure inviting. These proposed and interventions aim to revitalise the field as an active, inclusive hub that supports social interaction, physical activity, and a stronger sense of community ownership.



Area Location Plan



Concept Sketch







Reflection

Pre-Action Weeks

From the outset, the group approached the project with enthusiasm and a willingness to take on responsibilities. While most of us were unfamiliar with one another initially, this fostered an environment of discovery and learning in terms of working with new personalities and communication styles. Roles were delegated early on, and although some tasks required additional support or collaboration to bring them to completion, this fostered a strong sense of adaptability and teamwork among those involved.

Regular meetings were held to ensure transparency and collective input. While contributions varied, space was consistently provided for all voices, and progress was maintained through the initiative of those taking a more active role. Key documents such as the budget, ethics statements, and action plan were revised multiple times to ensure clarity and alignment with the brief. These refinements, though time-consuming, ultimately strengthened the final proposal and reflected the team's commitment to getting things right.

During the Action Weeks

Student engagement improved significantly as Action Weeks progressed. Many students became more comfortable interacting with the team, which created a positive and supportive learning atmosphere. Although a few postgraduate students naturally took the lead in guiding undergraduates, this division allowed others to observe and learn, contributing in different ways as their confidence developed.

Attendance was inconsistent across the weeks, following clarification on its importance. This helped solidify a working rhythm and enabled responsive, day-to-day updates to the Action Plan. Daily debriefs ensured we could recalibrate our approach in real time, responding to evolving attendance and feedback.

While some logistical challenges persisted, particularly in securing timely communication with our external collaborator, the group adapted well, working with the information available and demonstrating flexibility in their teaching and design strategies.

Conclusion

The success of this project lies in the quality of the student outcomes and the experience facilitated throughout Action Week. Many students demonstrated clear growth in confidence and capability, a reflection of the thought and care invested in the teaching strategy. High-quality visuals and engaging delivery were underpinned by a well-structured and pedagogically driven approach taken by members of the group.

Though there were inevitable learning curves in managing roles and coordination, these were approached constructively, and the project ultimately benefited from the leadership and consistency shown by key individuals. The experience has been a valuable lesson in collaboration, communication, and the importance of proactive engagement within a team dynamic.

Team Reflections

Enscape

The Enscape team focused initially on teaching the students how to effectively use the software, delving into Revit and SketchUp. The students were encouraged to explore the 3D models adding materials and assets with hands-on guidance from the team leaders. 2/3 of the students demonstrated an eagerness to learn and develop their skills with 1 remaining more reserved and quiet. Providing the third student with 1 to 1 support, Kenneth was able to better engage her and help her create high-quality visuals across the two weeks. The other two students worked collaboratively to problem-solve and perfect their renders. Following the first action week, the numbers started to dwindle with only 1 student attending consistently. As a result, she was able to get 2 to 1 help and therefore produce, and post-produce high quality renders across a number of areas using a variety of software.

Lumion

The Lumion team was the most highly subscribed of the three options following the initial presentations on day 1. The team of 4: including 2 No. BA1 and 2 No. BA2 students collaborated with one another effectively to learn new software including Sketch Up and Lumion. During the learning process, the group explored plug-ins, assets, spatial setup and material editing. In the first week, they focused on developing an understanding of the software, effectively utilising hands-on exploration. Based on the number of students they were able to divide the areas up to each focus on one allowing for greater autonomy in design. The group attendance in the first week was impressive, slightly dwindling the second action week due to deadlines, however, the team often had large enough numbers to work collaboratively and collectively to help one another develop skills and create effective renders.

V-Ray

Understandably, V-Ray is a very daunting software at first glance however with dedication can be learnt to a high standard quickly. 1/3 students took quickly to learning V-Ray, understanding the process, but progress was very slow for the other 2 students. Students were taught SketchUp, familiarising themselves with materiality and camera angles. Post "collaborator feedback", Alliah conducted feedback sessions where students were prompted to improve their renders. Remembering how to scatter objects and lighting was difficult due to poor attendance and not working outside of teaching hours to catch up. Student computers were another key issue due to personal software issues, Jason Taylor was often visited to help troubleshoot. V-Ray was somewhat successful, with high quality images and important skills learnt, however poor attendance massively restricted progress and limited outputs.

ABOUT

Each year the MSA LIVE programme unites Masters Architecture year 1 and Masters of Architecture & Adaptive Resuse 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

SOCIAL

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WEBSITE

www.msa.ac.uk