

MANCHESTER SCHOOL
OF ARCHITECTURE

Tea and TALES

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@the
grange

Blackpool Council

MSA
LIVE 25

Team

Cheuk Lam Cheung (MArch1)

Martina Trezzi (MArch1)

Xiang Li (MA AR)

Yuhe Wang (MA AR)

Boxuan Song (BA1)

Harriet Braithwaite (BA1)

Kelly Lau (BA1)

Lila Tea (BA1)

Yin Tsang (BA1)

Elahe Abolhassanzadeh Mahani (BA2)

Emily Leung (BA2)

Tze Kei Tan (BA2)

Wen Jing Koo (BA2)

Yuchen Tang (BA2)



Partners

'@TheGrange in Blackpool is a large community hub on the Grange Park estate. It has been highlighted as a centre of best practice for engaging local residents in wellbeing activity through the support provided by the team at Groundwork. The site includes a library, café, theatre, community farm, free to use laundrette and various meeting rooms.

Grange Park in Blackpool and is one of the most deprived areas in the country. It is a large housing estate on the periphery of the town and through @TheGrange we support approx. 300 individuals each week. The centre supports individuals of all backgrounds and ages providing support through a broad range of activities including crisis interventions.

'@TheGrange is a community hub set up to create social impact and benefit the local community.

Activities delivered through this hub include social groups, mental health support groups, physical activity programmes, access to fresh, affordable and healthy meals, 1:1 counselling, education programmes and family events. We aim to raise the aspirations of people living in one of the UK's most deprived communities and creating a high-quality space is essential to achieving this goal. Creating a space that people want to spend time in is essential to tackling entrenched problems including deprivation, worklessness and child poverty. Groundwork manage the building on behalf of the local community. As a Charity in operation for 40 years we have significant experience in taking practical action to create a fair and green future in which people, places, and nature thrive. @TheGrange is a flagship project for our Charity and is a nationally recognised model for excellence in driving change at the community level.

Introduction

Tea and Tales

@The Grange is a large community hub in Blackpool dedicated in enhancing the wellbeing of local residents through group social activities, as well as mental, physical, and educational support. As the busiest community centre in the region, it welcomes up to 400 visitors at peak times. To accommodate the various activities @TheGrange provides, like Crafts club, Poetry club, gardening, sports club, parenting, rehabilitation etc., the refurbishment of the café and library area is under consideration to optimize the use of space, strengthening its position as a place of gathering. Our goal is to create more usable community space by:

1. Reconfiguring and redesigning the storage and toilet facilities to improve quality to create new spaces for community use,
2. Design an integration of the café and library maximizing café covers and integrating library services,
3. Improve the outside and flow to the building.

The Tea & Tales team is dedicated to transforming the café reading culture within the existing space to enhance the overall visitor experience. Our goal is to create a welcoming, high-quality, and affordable environment that is accessible to all, regardless of age or background. We aim to narrate the stories of a love for tea and storytelling through the architectural design, to cultivate a vibrant space where individuals can gather, share stories, and inspire one another.

We explored the context of @The Grange by understanding the needs of both the centre and the community through site visits and conversations with our clients. Our goal was to grasp how the space is currently utilized and its future potential. Collaborating with Bachelor students during the action weeks, we developed the design concepts as a team. This collaboration, alongside brainstorming activities, has shaped the proposed design that reflects our collective insights. We value communication among team members and with the design team and clients. Our outcome will be a design proposal including visual outputs such as diagrams, drawings, and renderings, offering our clients a comprehensive perspective on the space's potential.

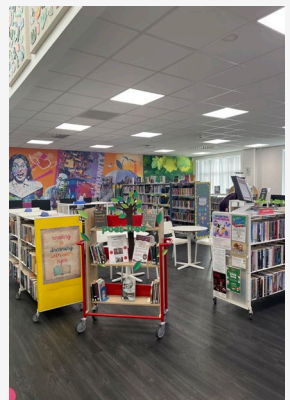
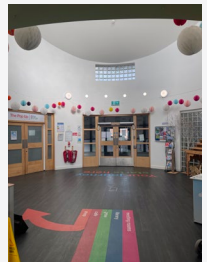


Meeting the collaborator

Just before the action weeks, we visited @The Grange in Blackpool to meet our client, Mike, a staff member at the centre, who guided us through the building. Conversations with Mike and his colleagues provided valuable insights into their concerns, needs, and interests regarding the use of the space. Additionally, we gained a better understanding of the Blackpool community and the individuals who will be using the space. This visit laid a strong foundation for our design, ensuring it meets the needs of its users effectively.

Action plan

The first week of action weeks began with mini workshops aimed at helping the Bachelor students get to know each other and familiarize themselves with the project. We then held brainstorming sessions and visited some cafés in Manchester to develop our conceptual design, which was presented to our clients on Friday. In the second week, the team focused on finalizing the design based on feedback received, and work closely to produce a comprehensive design proposal that includes visual outputs such as diagrams, technical drawings, and renderings, effectively bringing our design narrative to life.



DAY 1



introduction



DAY 2

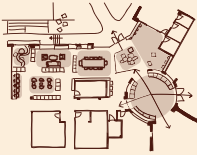


site analysis
& cafe visit

concept
sketches



DAY 4



concept drafts
for the client

DAY 3



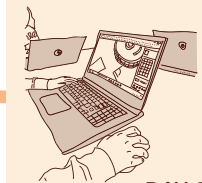
producing outputs
DAY 7



DAY 5



design refining



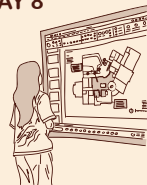
DAY 6



concept proposal



DAY 8



renders and
graphics

DAY 9



project drafts
for the client

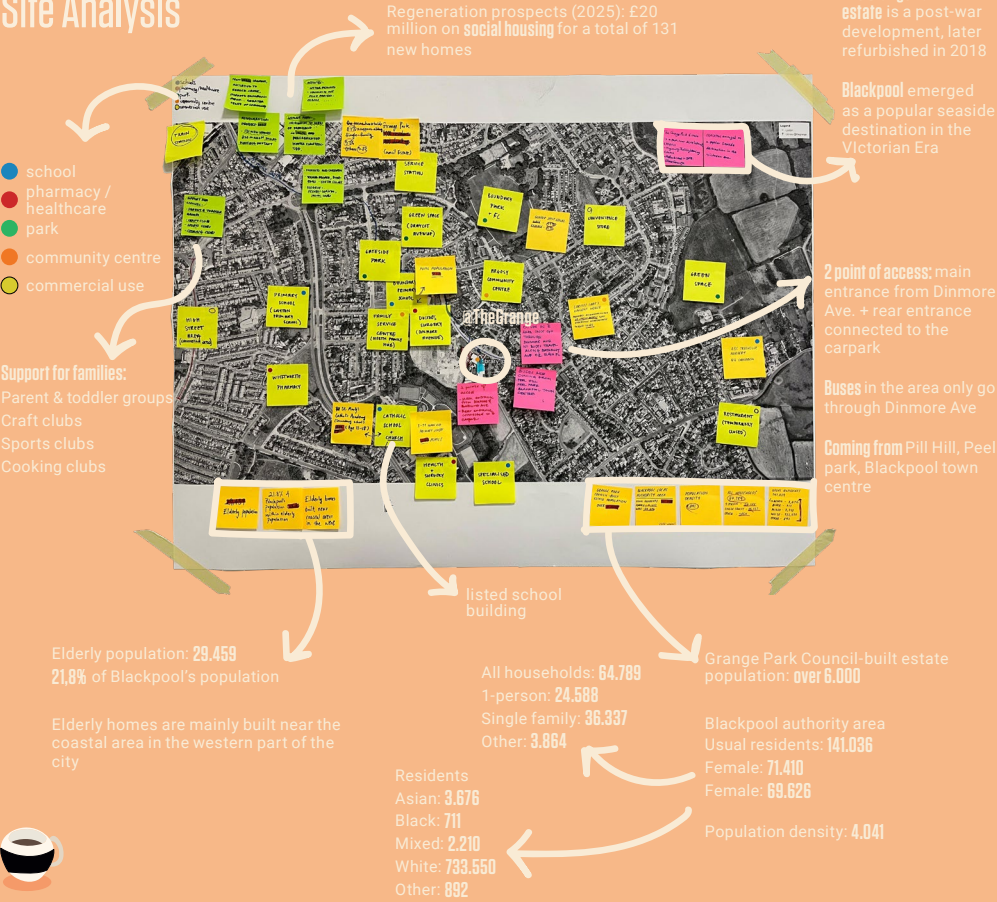


final proposal



DAY 10

Site Analysis



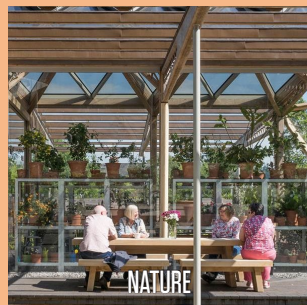
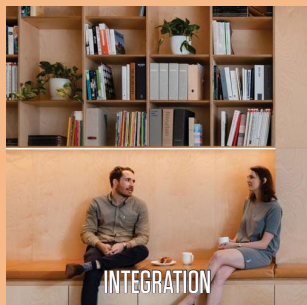
Existing Plans



The site analysis suggests constraints and opportunities in the existing layout, such as opening the façade to connect with the garden. The main space will be reconfigured as a café-library with improved circulation. Part of the toilets will be repurposed into activity rooms, while others will be upgraded. The entrance hall and outdoor area will be redesigned to enhance recreational opportunities.

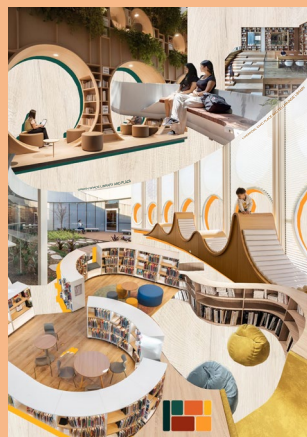
Concepts

Key Concepts



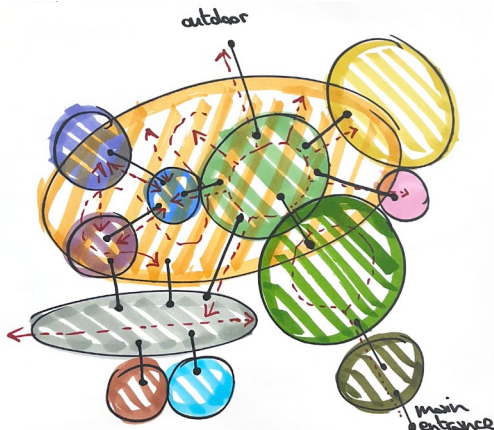
Concept collages

This project centers on integration, connection, and nature, creating a flexible and inviting space for reading, socializing, and community engagement. Warm, natural materials and integrated, movable furniture support a variety of activities. Window seating and a kids' reading corner enhance inclusivity and comfort, while natural light, greenery, and organic forms foster a calming atmosphere and deepen the connection between people and place.



Spatial Strategy

The main space consists in a fusion of the café and library spaces, within which other sub-areas are identified. Around this main space are then arranged the service spaces such as the corridor, the entrance hall and the kitchen



- library + café → mixed use
- kids area
- computers area
- chatty area
- centrepiece
- quiet zone
- kitchen
- corridor (gallery)
- toilets
- meeting room
- rotunda
- main entrance
- ←→ circulation

Approach 1: Versa Blocks

References



Marlboro Music Reich Rehearsal Building & Music Library; HGA Studio; 2021; Marlboro, United States



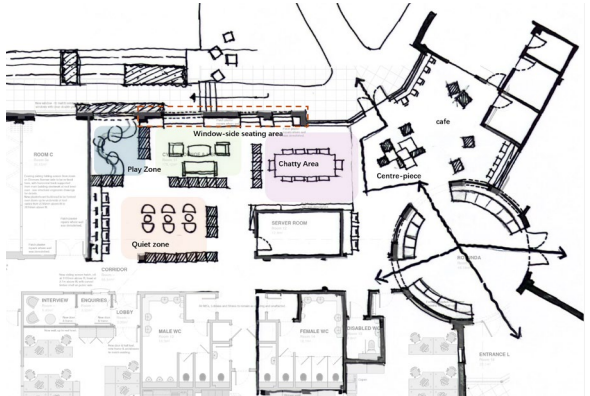
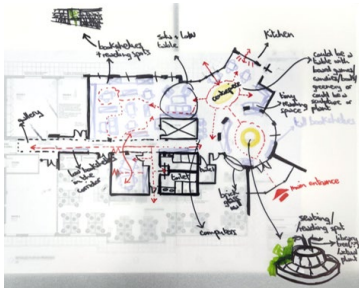
<https://dreamyhomestyle.com/book-shelf-ideas/>



bbi wood products: <https://www.bbi.net.nz/inspiration/>

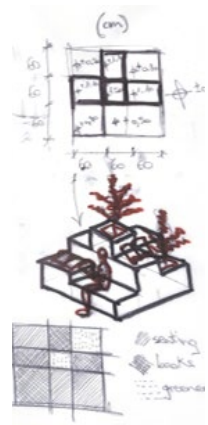
The "Versa Blocks" approach highlights modular and flexible design, featuring window seating for nature connection, colorful shelves to engage children, and a multifunctional centerpiece for display and seating.

Floor Plans



Perspective Drawings & Sketches

These drawings were collaboratively developed and illustrated by undergraduate students during group discussions, exploring the transformation of spatial concepts into functional layouts. The hand-drawn floor plans and zoning diagrams highlight the integration of reading, café, and activity areas, organized around a central atrium to enhance circulation and connectivity. Perspective views and detail sketches further investigate spatial atmosphere and user experience, focusing on human scale and the relationship between seating, bookshelves, and greenery. Together, these studies outline the vision of a multi-functional and welcoming shared reading environment.



Approach 2: Organic Poet-tree

References

The "Poet-tree" approach takes cues from nature, featuring fluid layouts and curved furniture. Elements like wall bookshelves, modular curves, and green ceilings create a soft, calming space that fosters natural connection.



Lishin Elementary School Library; Tali design; 2018; Taichung City, China

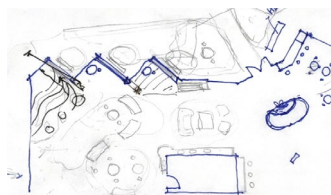
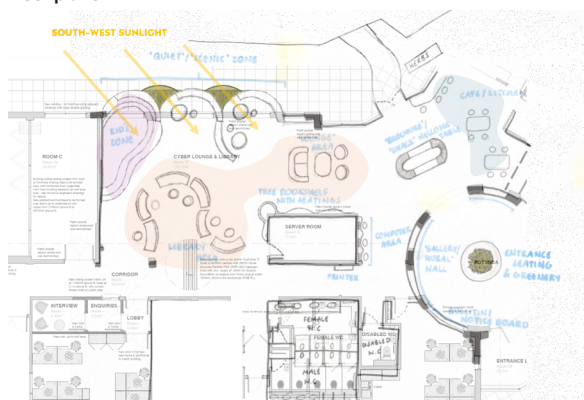


<https://pinterest/17aVTLOJ9>



<https://revistaestilopropio.com/obra/sharjah-entrepreneurship-center-sheraa/>

Floor plans



Perspective Drawings & Sketches



These drawings were collaboratively created by undergraduate students through group discussions to further explore spatial narratives and human-centered design. The floor plans investigate zoning strategies shaped by natural sunlight, placing emphasis on communal reading areas, café functions, and flexible gathering spaces. Particular attention is paid to the southwest sunlight, influencing the arrangement of seating and greenery. Hand sketches and perspective views express the spatial quality and atmosphere from the user's point of view, experimenting with curvilinear bookcases, layered transparency, and visual connections to outdoor nature. These studies aim to evoke a sense of openness, comfort, and inclusivity in a dynamic library setting.

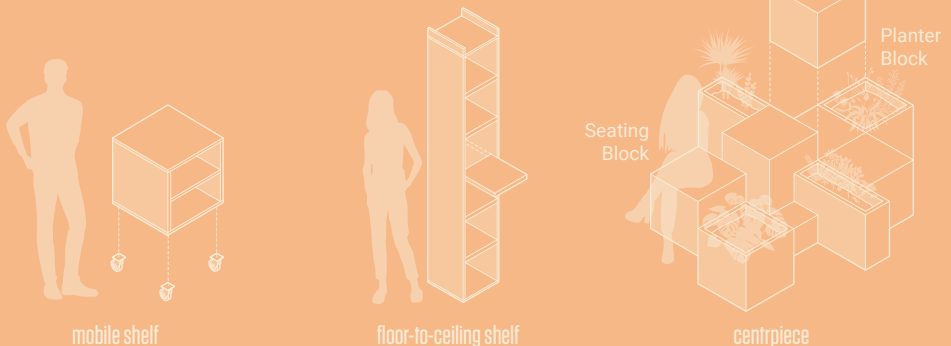
Final Design

The café area is integrated with the library, featuring movable furniture that serves as partitions, fostering a cozy atmosphere for gathering and reading, complemented by a dedicated window seating area that enhances the experience with natural light. To strengthen the connection between indoor and outdoor spaces, the transition to the picturesque community garden is improved by adding outdoor seating to encourage more visitors to enjoy this beautiful area. The overall aesthetic incorporates earthy, warm tones, blending timber furniture with lush greenery, while the children's corner introduces vibrant colours to evoke energy and playfulness. Additionally, the furniture is designed for easy assembly and mobility, allowing quick reconfiguration for various activities. The gender-neutral toilets is proposed to offer private and accessible facilities for all individuals, enhancing comfort and safety while creating an inclusive environment.

Moodboard

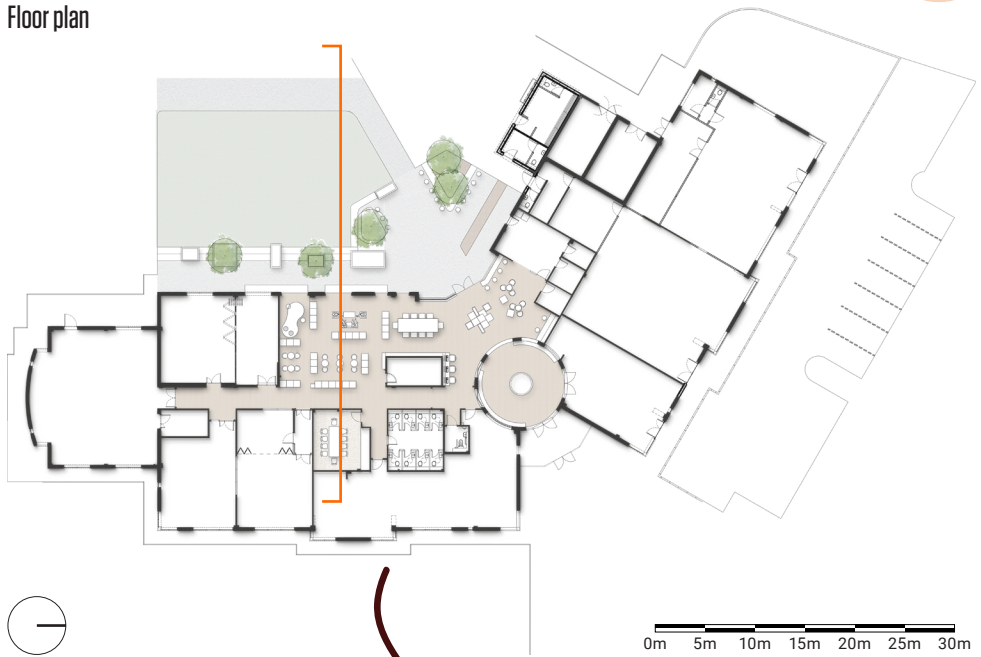


Modular furniture



Final Design

Floor plan



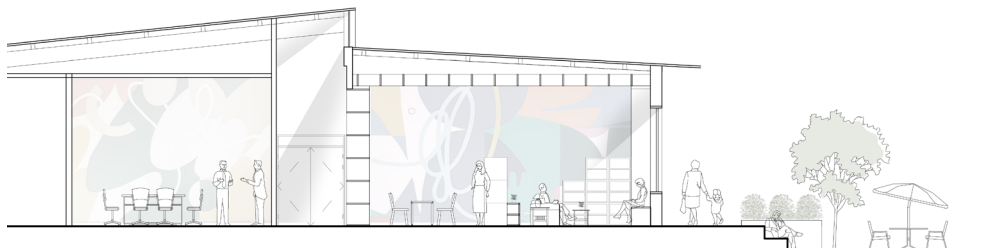
0m 5m 10m 15m 20m 25m 30m

Versatility in spatial arrangement

The café area is integrated with the library, featuring movable furniture that partitions the spaces, creating a cozy atmosphere for people to gather and enjoy reading. It allows the space to be quickly reconfigured for a variety of activities and uses.



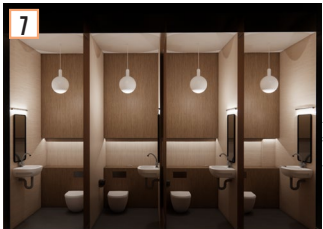
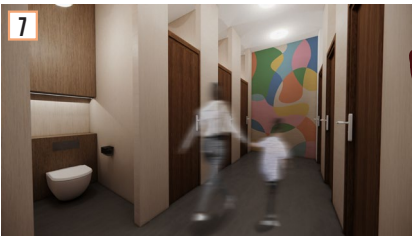
Section

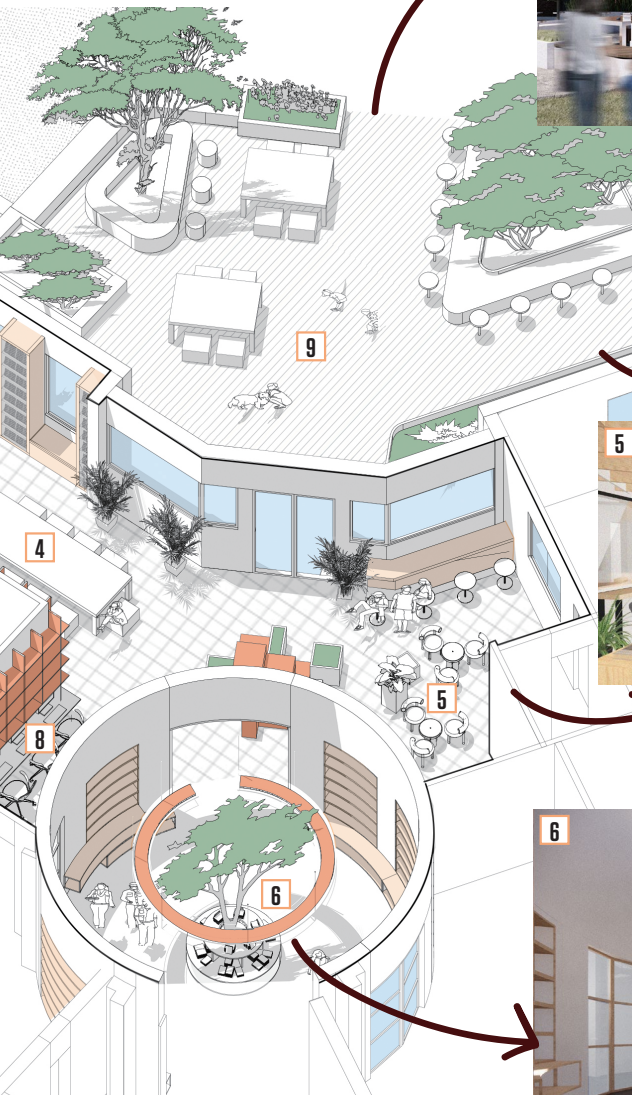


Axometric view & renders



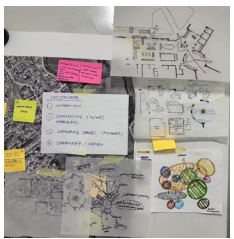
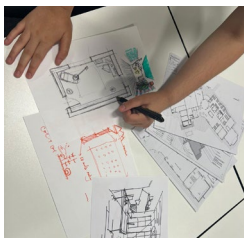
- 1 Kids Area
- 2 Window Seating
- 3 Event Area
- 4 Chatty Area
- 5 Cafe Seating
- 6 Rotunda
- 7 Gender Neutral Toilets
- 8 PC Corner
- 9 Outdoor Garden





The furniture is designed to be easily movable, allowing the space to be quickly reconfigured for a variety of activities and uses





Epilogue

Final Reflection

Overall, the action weeks were a great success with team members of both Master and Bachelor students participated actively in the process. This project challenged us to collaborate as a team, bringing together individuals with diverse strengths to contribute collectively. We found the brainstorming sessions essential, as they encouraged everyone to share their thoughts and ideas, where some impressive sketches were made. The continuous engagement among team members and active participation in the design process highlighted our collective thinking, which was both inspiring and beneficial to our design development.

As Master students, we aimed to guide undergraduates develop their proposals beyond conceptual stages into schemes with appropriate scale and mature spatial organisation. Throughout the process, they are encouraged to imagine potential activities, consider real user groups and corresponding anthropometric dimensions to ensure the design compliance with relevant regulations and usability standards.

Working with real clients outside the architectural field presented a unique challenge that required us to rethink how we present our ideas and ensure they align with their needs. Clear communication and the necessity of tailoring our presentations to be understandable and engaging for non-specialists is very crucial.

Lastly, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our client, @The Grange, for providing us with this wonderful opportunity, and to our tutor, Matt, for his guidance. Most importantly, we want to thank all our team members for their incredible efforts which truly shone through in MSA LIVE.



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

BLOG

live.msa.ac.uk/2024

SOCIAL

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@msa.live.24

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WEBSITE

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