

MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

Skate X Alsager

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Jai G / Elliot YC / Irdina Husna Binti K

Skills: sketch models, group work, concept design,
ideation and development, hand drawings,
workshop model making, client meeting,
presentation

FLIP OVER

ALSAGER

A Community Project -
Revitalizing Milton Park Skate Park

We're transforming Milton Park Skate
Park into a vibrant and engaging space.
We collaborate with the community to
spark new ideas, inspire change, and
make underused spaces come alive.

Join us in shaping the future of Alsager!

SKATE

Visit msa.ac.uk for more information

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PERIPHERAL PRACTICE

**MSA
LIVE 25**

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Partners

Peripheral Praxis is an emerging local interest group focused on arts, architecture, technology, and the alternative. Conceived as a collective, it currently comprises Home Coffee & Studio and Studio 100a in Alsager. Dedicated to provoking, inspiring, and revitalizing spaces through creativity and collaboration, Peripheral Praxis provides studio space while also engaging with people and places through projects and initiatives. Their aim is to educate, facilitate creativity, and drive real-world change by positioning their work within the “alternative” cultural sphere.

Introduction

Skate X Alsager

The project aims to inspire real-world change by activating and rejuvenating the underused public space at the Milton Park skate park through a bespoke physical intervention or series of interventions. Positioned within the “alternative” cultural sphere, the project will engage with local people, particularly young residents, to highlight new possibilities for the space, foster social connections, and promote Alsager as a destination. It will coincide with the “Alternate Alsager” event, combining music, food, and street art to create a fun, engaging, and safe environment for self-expression.

A site-specific installation that interacts with the place and its surroundings, designed and prototyped based on insights from community engagement. The process will include speaking with local people, particularly young residents, with discussions and sketches recorded and presented using other potential deliverables.

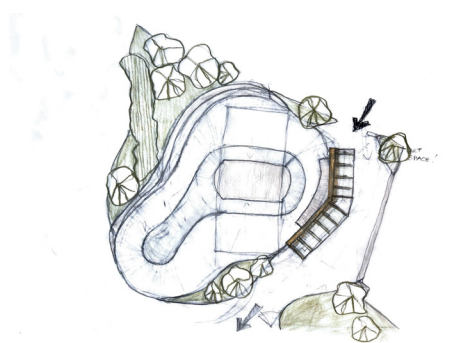
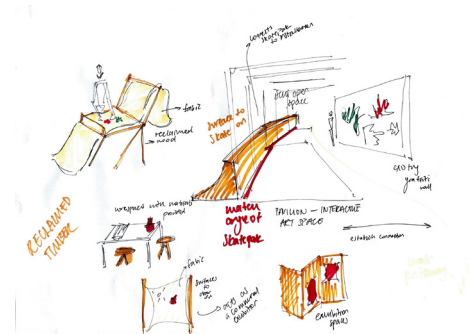
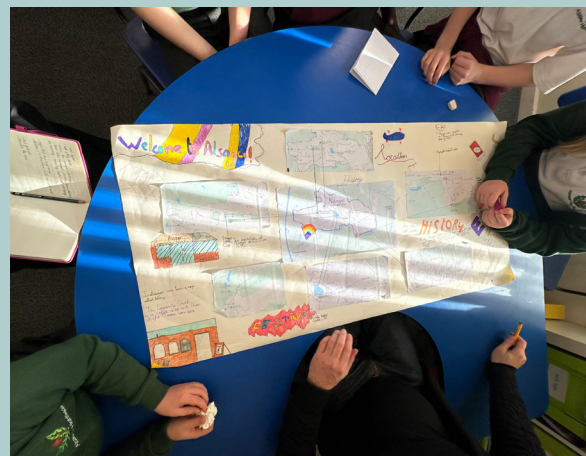


Site Visit

In early February, we conducted a field trip to Alsager to gather residents' views on the town's current state. In the morning, we spoke with an elderly woman at a local coffee shop who voiced concerns about the rising number of hairdressers and Turkish barbers, which she believes have replaced the variety of independent businesses that once defined Alsager. She recalled the arrival of wealthier residents in the 1980s, leading to large homes along Sandbach Road that altered the town's landscape. She also criticized new metal and glass buildings for clashing with Edwardian architecture. Like many locals, she believes the Town Council's planning decisions have contributed to Alsager losing its charm, particularly with the rise of vape shops.

At Alsager Civic, residents echoed worries about the decline of independent shops. Long-standing businesses like bakeries and cafes have either closed or been replaced, such as by the new post office. The streets are now dominated by hairdressers and charity shops, overshadowing the unique character that once drew visitors. The closure of Caster's restaurant at a key Sandbach and Lawton Road junction was seen as a wasted opportunity. Rapid housing developments and the arrival of a large Sainsbury's have increased fears about the survival of remaining local businesses. The closure of all four banks has also forced residents to travel to Crewe for banking services. Many feel less secure due to rising crime, especially during cash withdrawals, and issues like cars parking on pavements near the train station remain unresolved.

In the afternoon, we visited Alsager Highfields Primary School, where Year 6 students shared what they valued and what they would improve. They appreciated their homes, education, cafes like Costa and Chatwins, and events such as the annual music and winter festivals. However, they also called for more social spaces, improved lighting in darker areas, and cleaner public toilets. Concerns included the lack of a hospital and the intimidating, poorly lit skate park. They suggested lighting improvements, skateboard rentals, and creating a safe space nearby for teenagers struggling with mental health issues.

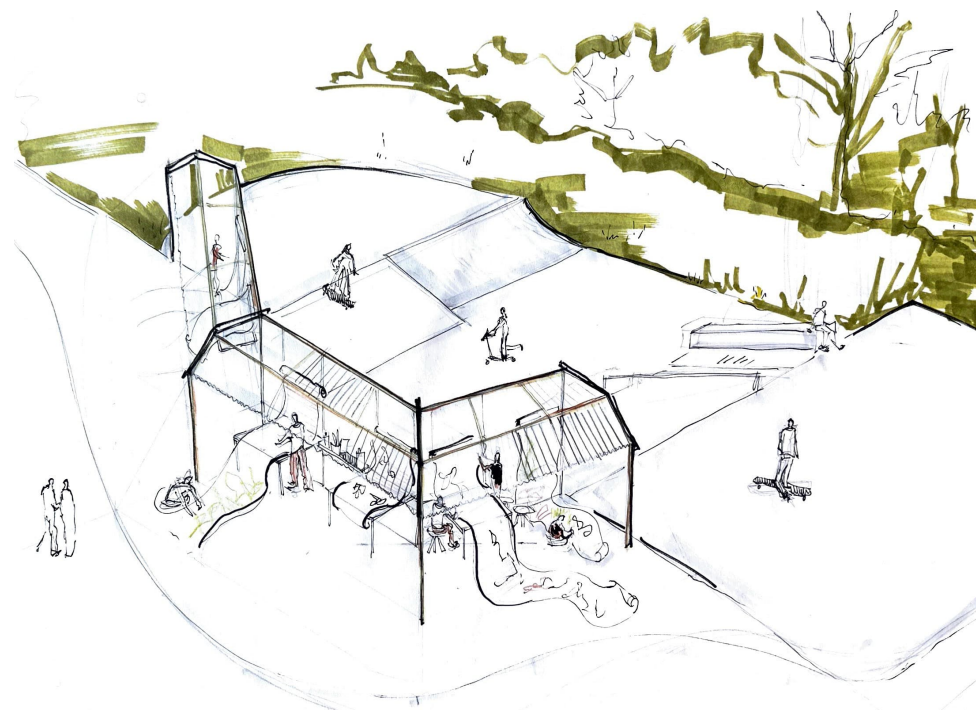


Concept 1

We began by analyzing the site and its surroundings, considering factors like circulation and identifying areas for improvement, such as adding social and green spaces and extending the existing skatepark. We then developed landscape iterations, exploring how to extend the skatepark with an engaging form and incorporating a dedicated learning area for children. Later versions included potential locations for a pavilion, which helped shape our final landscape design.

Focusing on interactivity and local culture, particularly skate culture, we designed an interactive art pavilion inspired by the area's graffiti wall and DIY spirit. The pavilion includes semi-open walls with stretched canvas and tables holding rolls of changeable paper, offering a space for self-expression. To keep our intervention minimal and feasible, we refined the skatepark extension to connect both slopes and positioned the pavilion to link with the ramp, making it skateable. In the final design, the pavilion opens toward the graffiti wall, connecting both art-oriented areas.

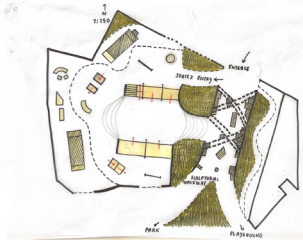
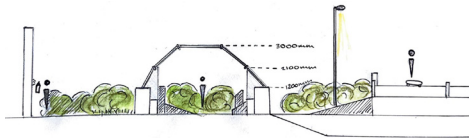
Considering cost and ease of construction, we explored reuse options and identified nearby timber yards in Alsager for sourcing materials. We also incorporated polycarbonate sheets on the roof to provide shelter, making the pavilion practical and sustainable.



Concept 2

The second concept began with a simple masterplan based on the original skatepark layout, aiming to build upon the existing structure. Inspired by Alsager's map, we organized the space using road-like divisions to create interconnected zones for different demographics, such as children and teenagers. Initial sketches helped us understand the layout, and we studied precedents like Miyashita Koen, Venice Beach Skatepark, and Lady in the Square in Sweden. Arches became a key multifunctional design feature. The client emphasized celebrating Alsager's history, as the local youth struggle to feel proud of their town. We addressed this by incorporating references to the area's industrial past, particularly railways, using repurposed materials such as railway sleepers and train tracks.

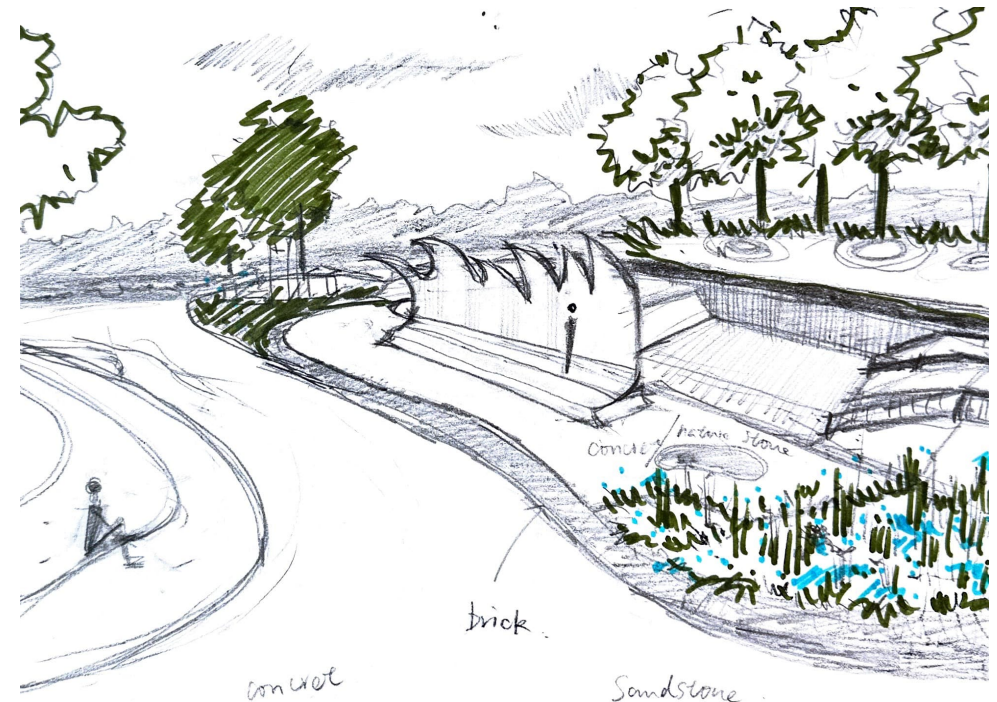
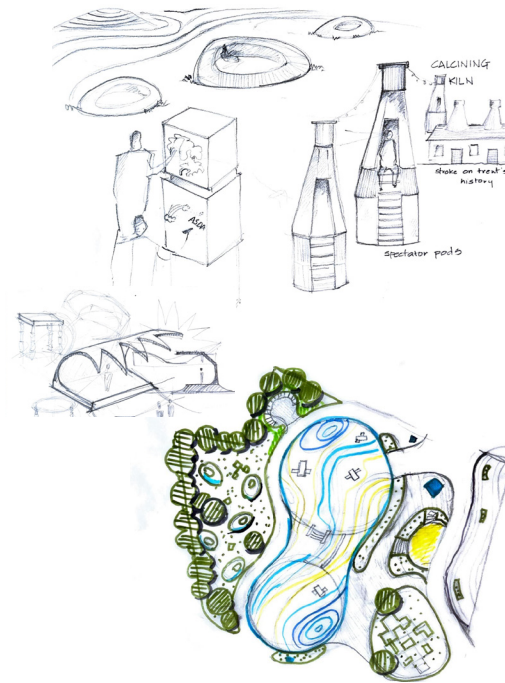
As the concept evolved, we refined our use of industrial components, again focusing on repurposing due to the limited budget. Drawing inspiration from Miyashita Koen, we designed a pavilion-like railway track element that sits between the skatepark and existing mural, acting as a visual and spatial buffer. Concrete blocks support overhead tracks, providing seating and integrating skateable elements. The tracks cast light projections on the ground, while minimal landscaping and new paths connect the mural and skatepark.



Concept 3

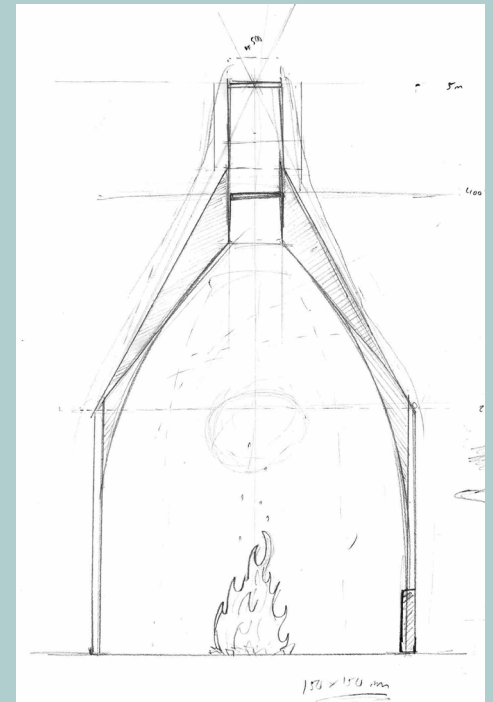
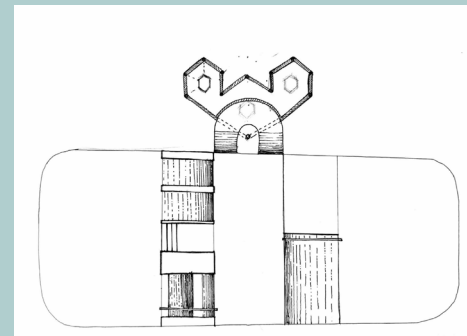
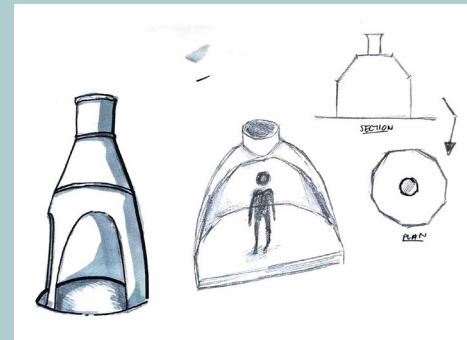
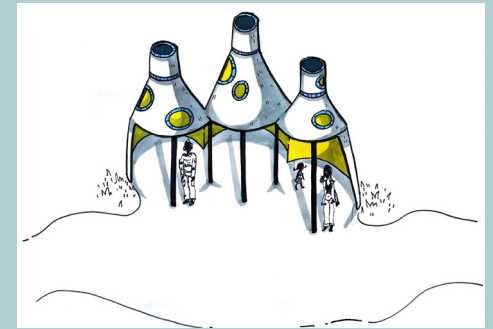
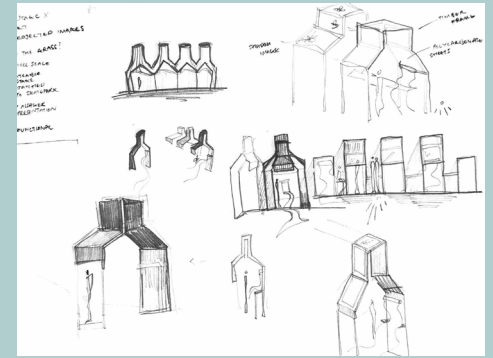
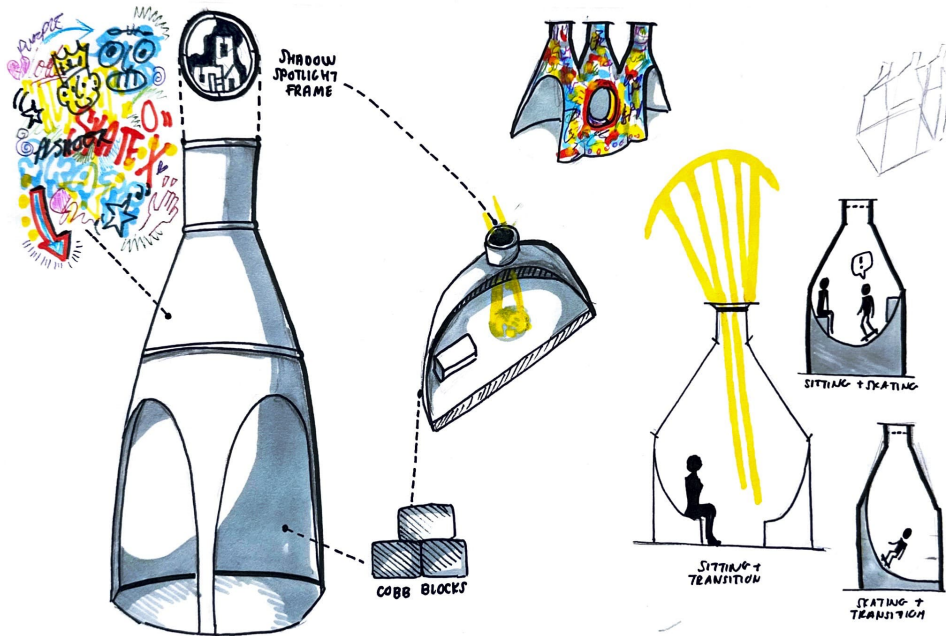
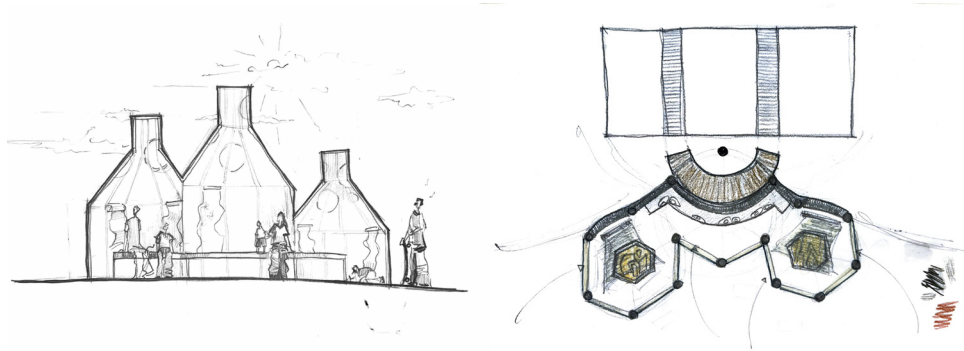
Our design for the Alsager site reimagines the space as a vibrant, interactive landscape that integrates various activities while paying homage to local history. A key feature is the introduction of skateable seating dispersed throughout the entire site, encouraging dynamic use and accessibility for skateboarders beyond a confined park area. An elevated, skateable platform serves as a central landmark stage with an arching canopy, fostering community gatherings and festivals. Coloured hardscaping of blue, yellow, and orange is inspired by the adjacent Milton Playground south of the site.

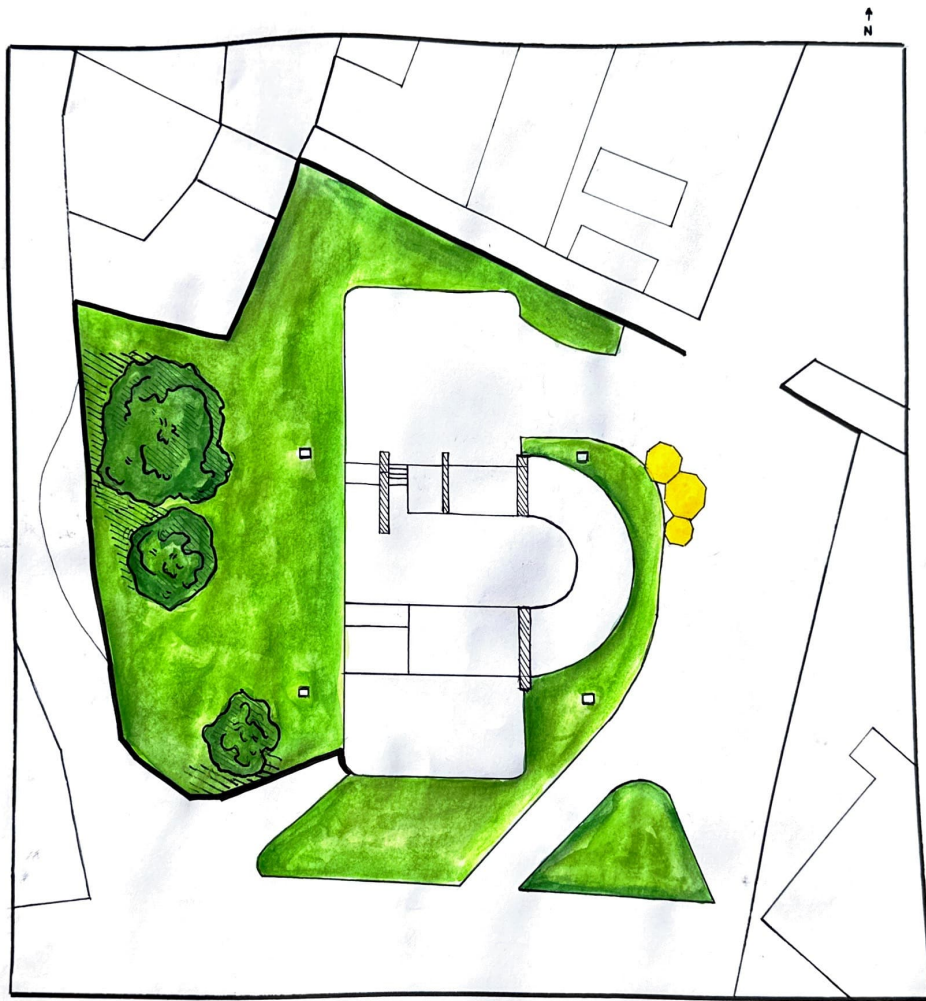
To weave Alsager's rich history into the design, motion-sensored lighting integrated into the hardscape will narrate a timeline of the town's past, with each light illuminating as a person approaches a significant historical point. The iconic form of Alsager's pottery kilns inspires unique, climbable spectator pods, providing both a nod to pottery heritage and an engaging play element for children. Complementing the active zones, grassy mounds echo the curvature of a skate park, offering relaxed viewing areas for spectators. Furthermore, a street gym with integrated bouldering elements provides active recreation for all ages, while a site-spanning circular bench with varied raised platforms, puzzle pieces, and play elements encourages communal interaction and imaginative play.



Final Design Concept

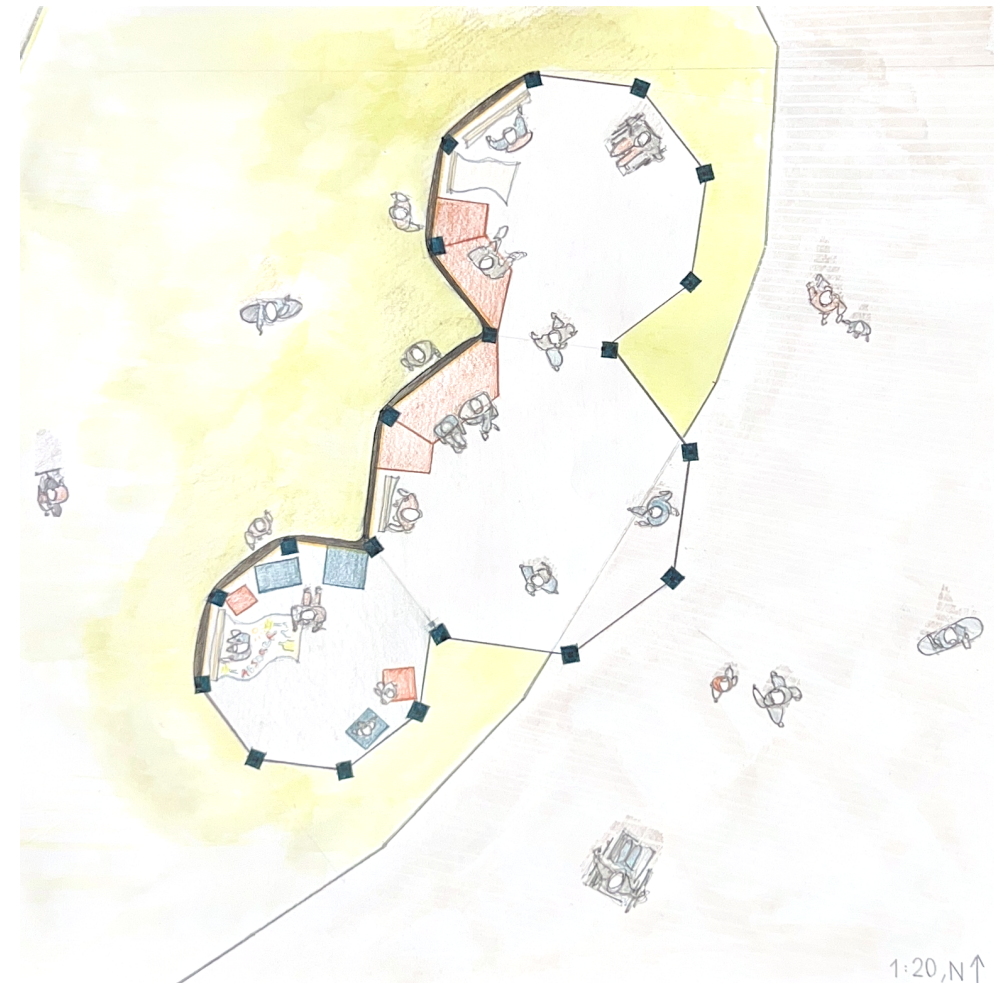
After presenting the three concepts to the client, we reflected on their feedback and collaboratively developed a design that aligned with their vision for Alsager. From the first concept, we retained the idea of fostering art and social interaction. Given Alsager's history as an industrial hub with a lesser-known pottery scene, we adopted the form of a kiln, highlighted by the client as a recognizable and meaningful symbol for residents. From the second concept, we incorporated the idea of casting intricate shadows using structural motifs that reflect Alsager's heritage. The third concept contributed the programmatic element of an interactive, skateable pavilion. By merging these features, we created a unified design that captures the client's aspirations, an engaging, dynamic structure that is both community-focused and deeply rooted in Alsager's identity.





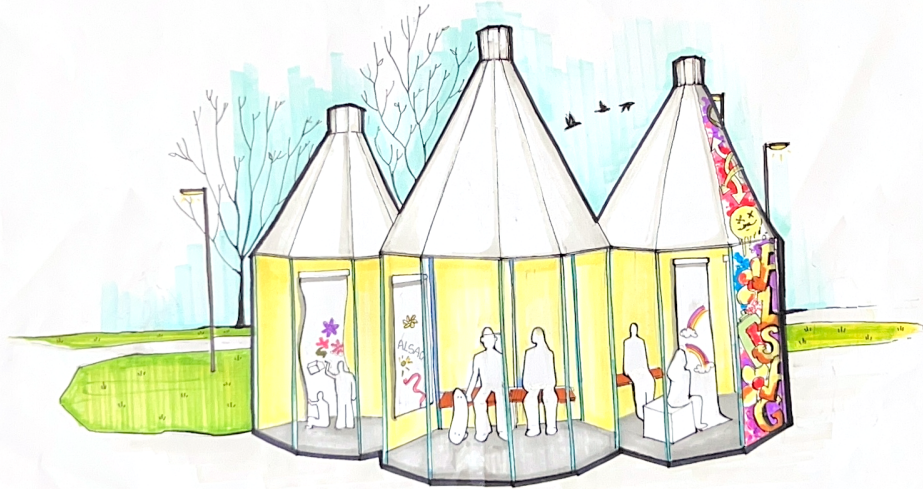
Site plan

Positioned to face the graffiti wall and with its back turned to the skate park, the structure is strategically oriented toward the adjacent car park to attract passersby and draw them in. Inside, visitors are invited to engage creatively by drawing on canvases that can be pulled down from the walls, transforming the space into an interactive artistic environment.



Intervention plan

The open side of the structure faces the car park and the graffiti wall, making it accessible and inviting for the public. Inside, there are designated seating areas and open zones where people can gather. The floor space is kept clear so that visitors can unroll large blank canvases on the ground for drawing. The layout supports both individual and group use in a semi-sheltered environment.



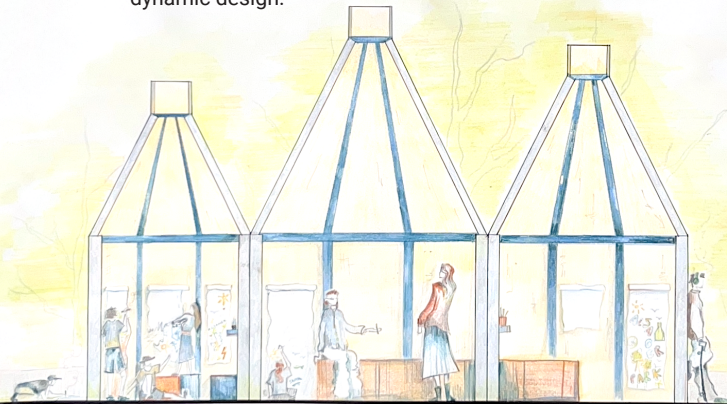
Elevation

The facade, made out of fabric, that is weatherproof, can be spray-painted, in order to create a space for interaction and for fostering creativity.



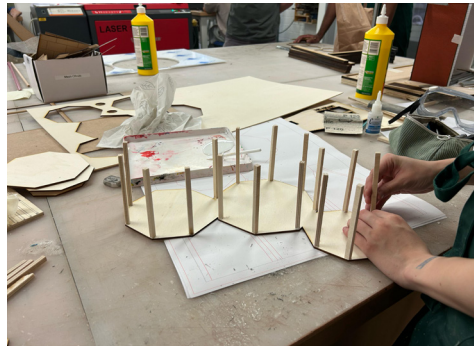
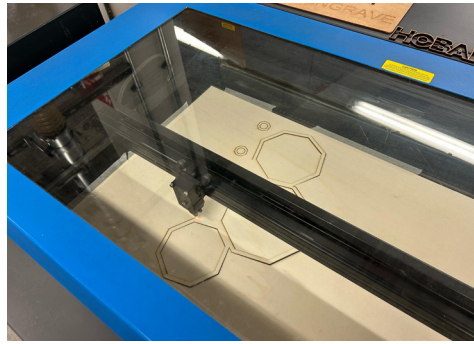
Section

The section of the intervention shows the structure, that will be made out of recycled timber, sourced locally, from Lancashire. the different height are meant to accommodate the different age groups, while also creating a dynamic design.



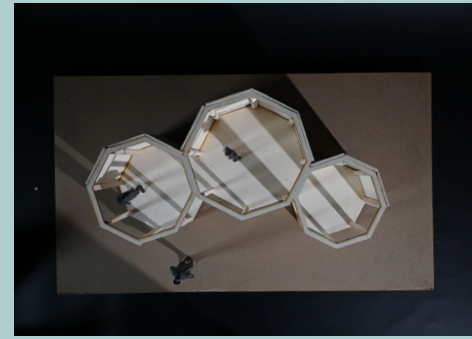
Perspective

The perspective illustrates how the interior space is used, featuring canvases that can be pulled from the walls and laid on the floor to form a continuous surface, encouraging interaction across all generations.



Final model

The aim of this project is to enhance the existing skatepark in Alsager by introducing playful and meaningful architectural elements that foster interaction and community engagement, particularly among children. The intervention includes three kiln-shaped structures placed beside the skate area. These forms, inspired by Alsager's industrial and ceramic heritage, serve as multifunctional spaces, designed both for sitting and skating. On top of each structure there are engraved motifs illustrating key moments from Alsager's local history. When sunlight hits these motifs, their shadows are projected onto the ground, visually narrating the town's heritage.



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:

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BLOG

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