

MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE



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MSA LIVE 26

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Collaborators

Mossley Community Centre is a volunteer-led community space located on Roughtown Road in Mossley, Greater Manchester. The building was originally completed in 1865 as a Victorian school, giving it a strong historical identity within the local area. Over time, it has changed from a school into a youth centre, and later into the community centre that serves Mossley today.

Today, the centre is run by Mossley Community Association, a registered charity that provides educational, welfare, recreational, and leisure activities for local residents. It supports a wide range of community uses, including events, meetings, classes, social groups, and private bookings. The centre also plays an important role in bringing people together across different ages and backgrounds, offering a flexible and accessible space for everyday community life.

Introduction

UNDER ONE ROOF

Under One Roof is a MSA Live Project developed in collaboration with Mossley Community Centre. Serving a town of around 11,000 residents, the centre plays an important role as a shared civic space. The project explores how targeted refurbishment can create a wider positive impact for the local community by improving its existing facilities, enabling the center to better support current users and open up new possibilities for multi-generational use.

Through conversations with the Mossley Community Association, a clear community wishlist began to emerge. The centre hopes to upgrade its toilet facilities to make them suitable for everyday community use, reduce their environmental impact and heating costs, and attract more teenagers to the community centre to support the local secondary school.

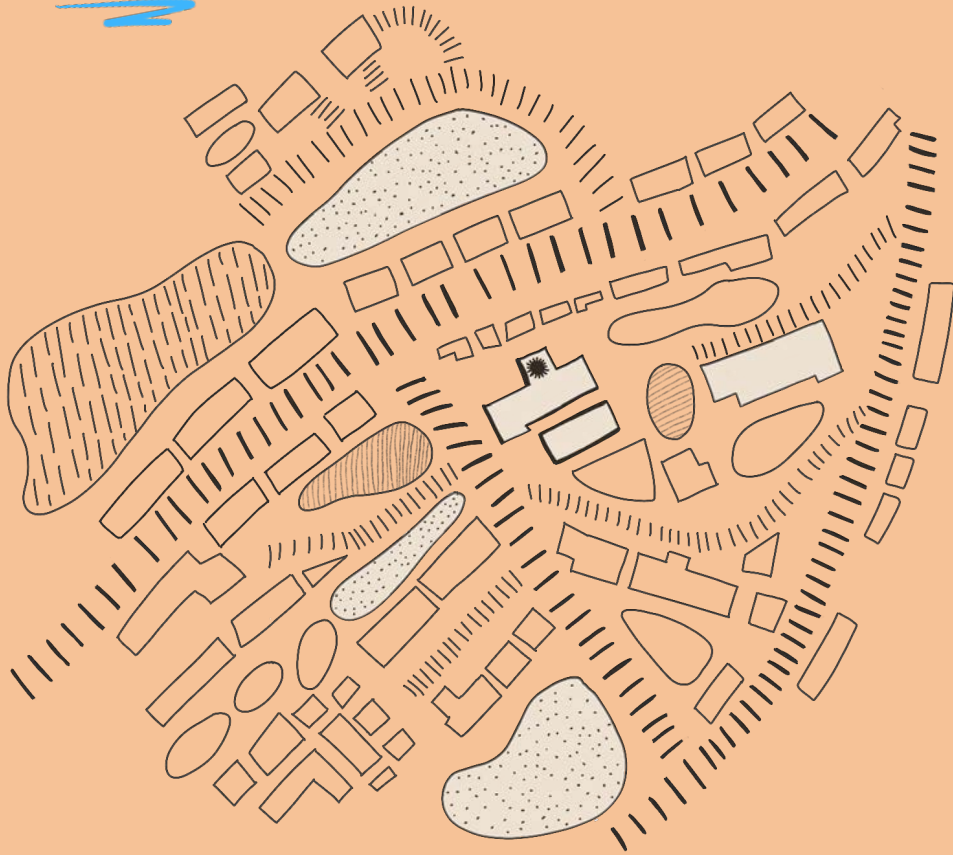
Our proposal is guided by 5 principles : maneuverability, multi-generational use, future-proofing, sustainability, and community-oriented design. These principles shape the refurbishment as more than just a physical upgrade. They help us consider how people move through the building, how different age groups use the space, and how the centre can remain adaptable for future community needs.

Room 3 has the potential to become a space that supports young people after school through informal gathering, workshops, creative activities, study sessions, and youth-led events. Additionally, the project aims to improve the performance of the existing building fabric and redesign the current toilet facilities so it is more accessible, inclusive and functional for all ages.

The following pages document the journey of the project, from early conversations and site understanding to design development and visual proposals. We hope this publication shares not only the outcomes of the project, but also the processes, care, and collaboration that shaped it.



SITE CONTEXT



- ≡ Secondary Road
- ≡ Main Road
- ☀ Mossley C.C
- Public Space
- ▨ Greens
- Residential area

Mossley Community Centre is located on Roughtown Road in Mossley, Greater Manchester. It sits within a residential neighbourhood, with surrounding houses, local streets, and community facilities forming part of its immediate context. The centre is positioned close to Mossley's local amenities and is within reach of nearby schools, shops, and public transport connections. Its setting reflects the character of Mossley as a town made up of residential areas, local services, and community-focused spaces. The building is embedded within the everyday fabric of the neighbourhood, surrounded by the routes and places used by local residents.

TIMELINE

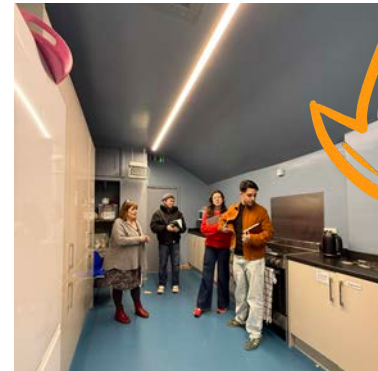


00 SITE VISIT

During our site visit to Mossley Community Centre, we were guided through the building by the collaborators to understand the existing condition, layout, and day-to-day use of the centre. This visit allowed us to observe the character of the building more closely, including how different rooms are currently used, where movement happens, and which areas feel underused or in need of improvement.

As we moved through the centre, the collaborators shared their thoughts, concerns, and wishlist for the future of the building. They highlighted key areas that would benefit from design support, including the toilet facilities, storage spaces, and Room 3. Through these conversations, we began to understand not only the physical condition of the spaces, but also the practical challenges faced by the people who manage and use the centre.

The site visit became an important starting point for the project, helping us identify where small but meaningful interventions could make a positive difference. By listening to the collaborators and analysing the existing spaces directly, we were able to develop a clearer direction for the refurbishment, focusing on improvements that respond to the real needs and ambitions of Mossley Community Centre.



ENGAGEMENT SESSION



During our third visit to Mossley Community Centre, we carried out an engagement session with the community to share our initial ideas and design inspirations.

The session allowed us to present a range of possibilities for the refurbishment, while inviting users to choose the options they felt most connected to. Rather than making decisions only from our perspective, we used this visit as an opportunity to listen, gather feedback, and understand what the community valued most. Their thoughts and preferences were then added into the design process, helping us shape a proposal that responds more closely to the people who use the centre.



The feedback collected during the session directly shaped the next stage of our proposal. Community preferences helped guide the colour palette, storage strategy, furniture arrangement, and the overall atmosphere of Room 3. Instead of treating the engagement as a separate activity, the outcomes became part of the design process, allowing the final proposal to reflect the voices and needs of the people who use the centre.

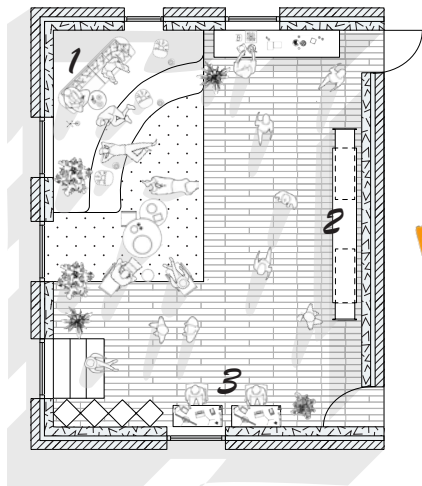
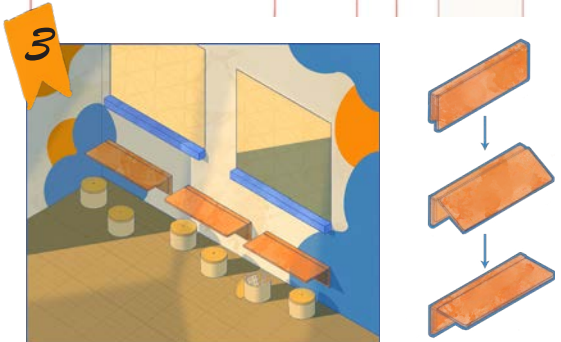
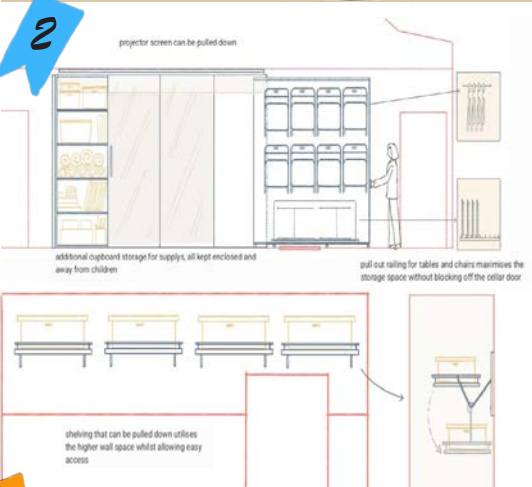
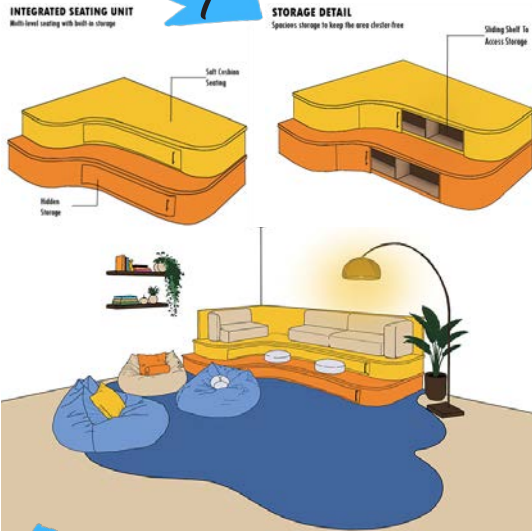


DESIGN PROPOSAL / ROOM 3



The design proposal focuses on creating a more organised and flexible storage system for the community centre. Instead of keeping storage as a separate function, it is integrated into a built-in seating unit with storage below, helping the room stay tidy while providing extra seating for different activities.

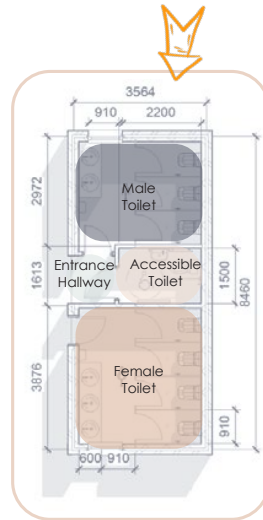
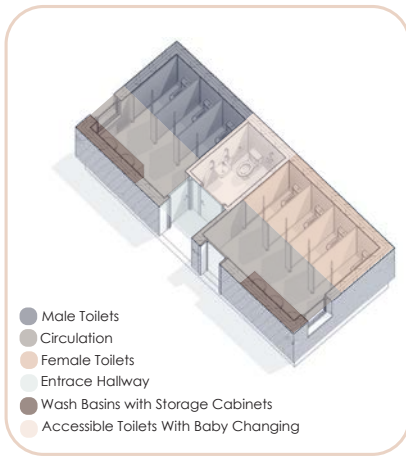
The seating is designed to be foldable and multifunctional, allowing the space to open up when needed for workshops, meetings, youth activities, or community events. Together with lighting enhancements, the proposal aims to make the room brighter, more comfortable, and more welcoming. Overall, the integrated storage, flexible seating, and improved lighting create a more practical and adaptable space for Mossley Community Centre.



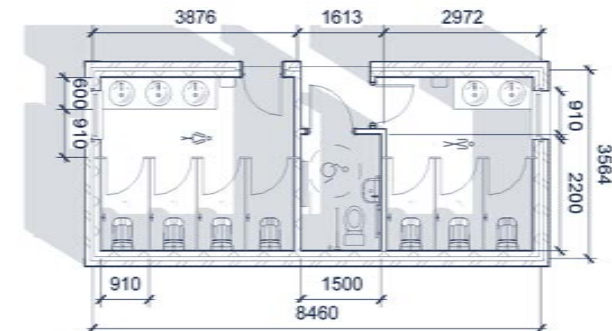
Proposed Floor Plan



DESIGN PROPOSAL / TOILET

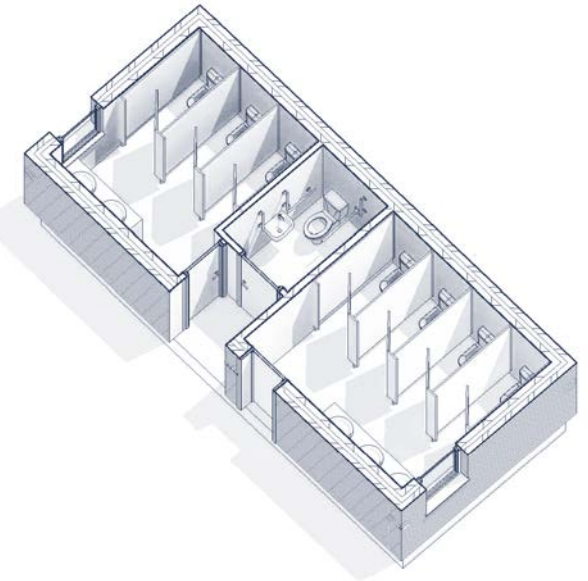


The toilets at Mossley Community Centre have been redesigned to create a more inclusive, functional, and welcoming environment for all users. The proposal improves accessibility, increases efficiency, and introduces a more vibrant and playful atmosphere suited to both adults and children.



Proposed Floor Plan

One of the key changes was the reconfiguration of the existing male and female toilet layouts. The former men's toilets were converted into the women's toilets, responding to the higher number of female users within the community centre and providing a more balanced allocation of space. The female, male, and accessible toilets were fully redesigned to ensure compliance with current Building Regulations, improving accessibility, circulation, and overall usability.

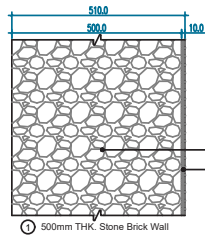


Additional integrated storage was also introduced beneath the washbasins to support the day-to-day needs of the centre while maintaining a clean and uncluttered appearance. The interior palette combines soft colours, terrazzo finishes, and warm textures to create a playful yet calm environment. The redesigned spaces aim to feel welcoming, durable, and engaging, enhancing the experience of the community centre for visitors of all ages.

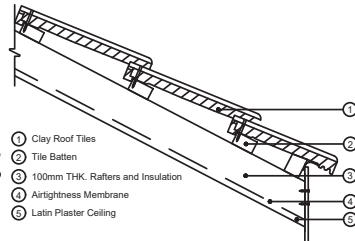
DESIGN PROPOSAL / THERMAL ENVELOPE

The existing building envelope does not meet modern building standards with regards to its environmental and thermal performance. The current building suffers from mould, excessive time to heat the building, and the rooms are often cold- all characteristics stemming from a poorly insulated building. Therefore, our proposal seeks to insulate the walls, floors and roof using a natural insulation to allow the building to continue its normal breathing patterns. Insulating will improve the thermal performance of the building, reducing the environmental and cost impacts associated with heating the building.

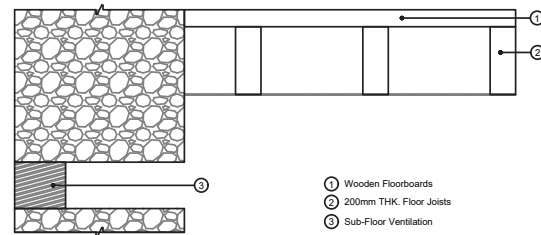
Existing Wall



Existing Roof

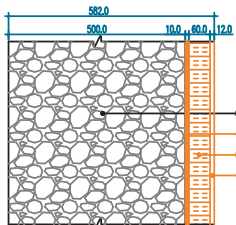


Existing Floor



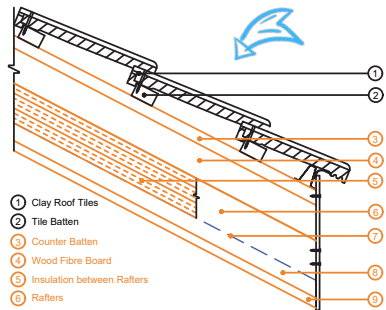
UPGRADE PROPOSAL

Proposed Wall



- ① 500mm THK. Stone Brick Wall
- ② 10mm THK. Render Bonding Coat
- ③ 80mm THK. Rigid Wood Fibre Insulation

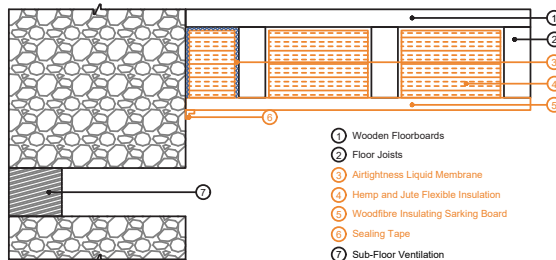
Proposed Roof



- ① Clay Roof Tiles
- ② Tile Batten
- ③ Counter Batten
- ④ Wood Fibre Board
- ⑤ Insulation between Rafters
- ⑥ Rafters
- ⑦ Vapour Membrane
- ⑧ Service Void
- ⑨ Ceiling Gypsum Board

Wood fiber insulation is the recommended insulation material for retrofitting existing buildings by historic england. Though it is generally more expensive than mineral wool, it has a better thermal performance, supports the breathability of the existing building and is safe to handle by hand, solidifying it as a winning contender for overall environmental performance and worker safety. Insulating internally, though it decreases internal floor area, preserves the aesthetics of the historic building fabric whilst upgrading it to modern standards.

Proposed Floor



- ① Wooden Floorboards
- ② Floor Joists
- ③ Airtightness Liquid Membrane
- ④ Hemp and Jute Flexible Insulation
- ⑤ Woodfibre Insulating Sarking Board
- ⑥ Sealing Tape
- ⑦ Sub-Floor Ventilation

REFLECTION

As a whole, we have been successful at working collaboratively, both with ourselves and with our external collaborators.

We felt it was important that decisions were made democratically to ensure an even power dynamic, and to speed up the decision making process. So, the majority of our decisions were voted on and the majority vote won. We found this method very successful as it minimised feelings of unfairness, and ensured each opinion could be heard, valued, and respected. Whenever we encountered issues, we made sure to have an open discussion to understand where the problem was coming from, and how we can move through it with compassion and positivity.

When working with the collaborators we felt it was integral that their voice guided our decisions, so we made every effort to include them. We made sure to ask clarifying questions especially when understand their definitions to ensure we were on the same page, asked them to lead us through their thought process and directly involved them in curating a design of the space. In doing so, we could create meaningful designs that responded to what our clients actually want, than what we think they want.

Our group really benefited from collaborative working, especially when it came to peer to peer learning. Each group member has learned a new way to approach architecture, both within the design stage and in how to navigate a real life project.



ABOUT

Each year the MSA LIVE programme unites Masters Architecture year 1, Masters of Architecture & Adaptive Resuse students, BA foundation and year 1 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 students take the lead in the project conception, brief development, delivery and co-ordination of a small project. The projects are celebrated in presentations 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 400 students from 5 cohorts in MSA have worked on 34 projects with partners.

QUESTIONS

For questions about MSA LIVE please contact the MSA LIVE team, Emily & Julie:

e.crompton@mmu.ac.uk and j.fitzpatrick@mmu.ac.uk

BLOG

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