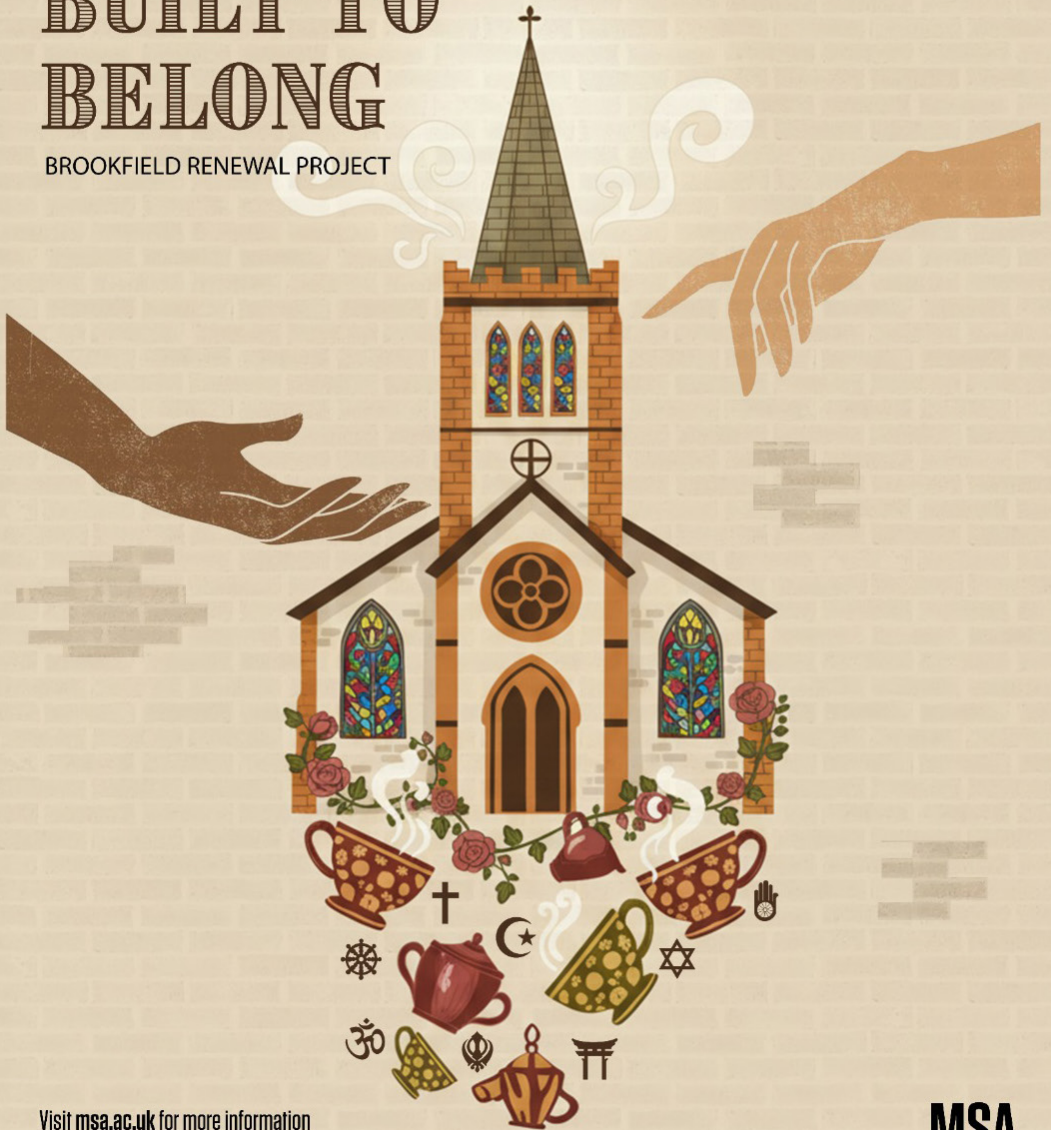


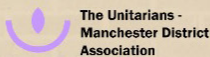
MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

BUILT TO BELONG

BROOKFIELD RENEWAL PROJECT



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MSA LIVE 26

Team



Javiera Del Carmen Shackley (M.Arch1)



Rayyan Khan (M.Arch1)



Niamh Hough (M.Arch1)



Wan Tin Yuet (M.Arch1)



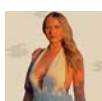
Zhao Yige (M.Arch1)



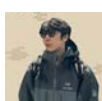
Gong Jiage (MAAR)



Yuan Chengshuai (MAAR)



Esta Maccready (BA1)



Haoyan Duan (BA1)



Mariz Mamdouh Raafat Labib (BA1)

Collaborators

Brookfield Unitarian Church, located in Gorton, East Manchester, is a religious hub, set in a Victorian, Grade II* listed building. The church holds strong values around openness, inclusivity, and community support, making it a vital place within the local area. However, the church's current state no longer has the capacity to support the local community and their changing needs and ambitions.

Currently, the number of users in the space is low, and with spatial constraints restricting users from being able to use the space freely and efficiently, the visitor numbers are further impacted.

Our collaborator has expressed that by refurbishing the building's facilities, a more welcoming and accessible environment will be created, one that will aid the community's social activities and events. The church has several issues regarding simple yet essential amenities, such as the absence of a proper kitchen to prepare tea and coffee and an entirely inaccessible existing toilet. These issues are therefore preventing the comfortable use of the church by visitors, volunteers, and religious groups.

Therefore, our collaborator seeks a refurbishment that will create new space for opportunities to occur in the local community, enhancing positive collaboration within the local area and adding to the local economy.

Reflection

The project challenged us to balance heritage, accessibility and inclusivity within a sensitive listed building context. Through continuous collaboration, engagement and critical reflection, we developed a proposal that responds directly to community needs whilst respecting the historic fabric of Brookfield Church.

Introduction

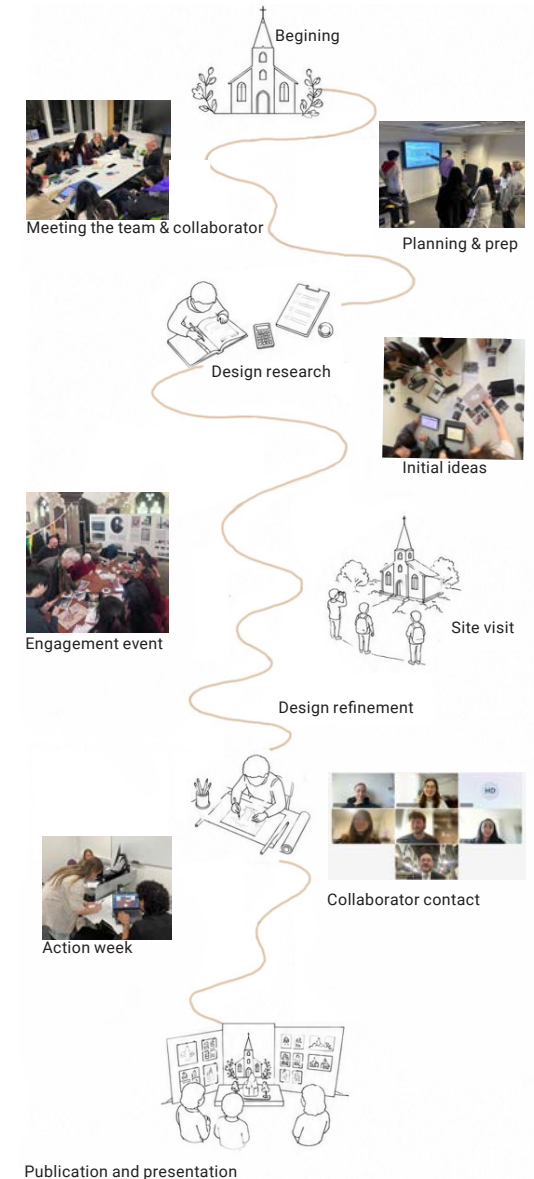
Built to belong

Built to Belong is a live collaborative project centred around the refurbishment of Brookfield Unitarian Church. The proposal focuses on an accessible and adaptable design that will aid long term community use for the local area of Gorton.

Throughout the project, the team worked collaboratively and efficiently, dividing into small groups to address detailed tasks and coming together to discuss everyone's work, allowing for a design process informed by a broad range of experiences, perspectives, and skills. Our tasks consisted of researching architectural precedents, heritage sensitive interventions, and community/religious focused design strategies, ensuring our proposal addressed our accessibility and inclusivity goals effectively. Additionally, we carried out a community engagement event, which allowed us to gain vital, first-hand feedback on the expectations and needs local residents, church members, and trustees had for the project.

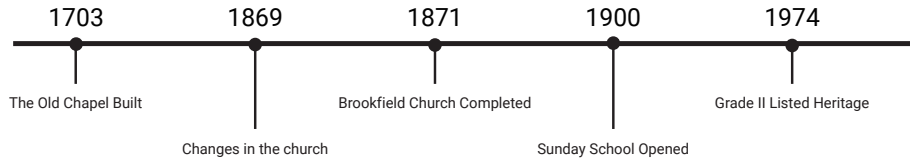
The design process was shaped by critical reflection and collaborative discussion, balancing practical constraints, listed building considerations, and future user needs. As a result, the final proposal prioritises realistic and achievable architectural interventions that improve the building while sensitively respecting its heritage status. Ultimately, Built to Belong demonstrates how intention-led design can encourage community participation and support an inclusive future for Brookfield Unitarian Church.

Project Timeline

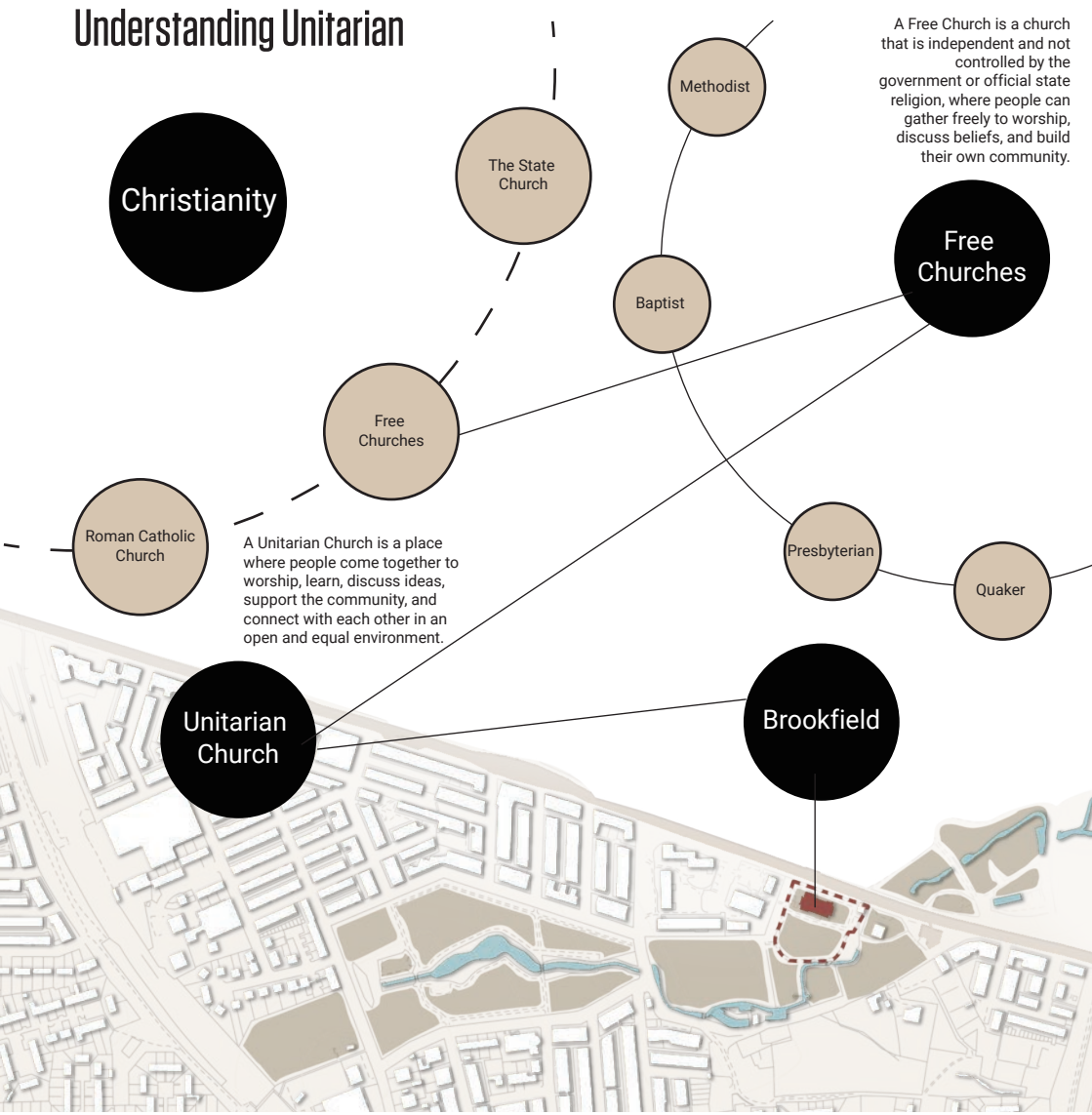


Church context & History

Brookefield Unitarian Church Timeline



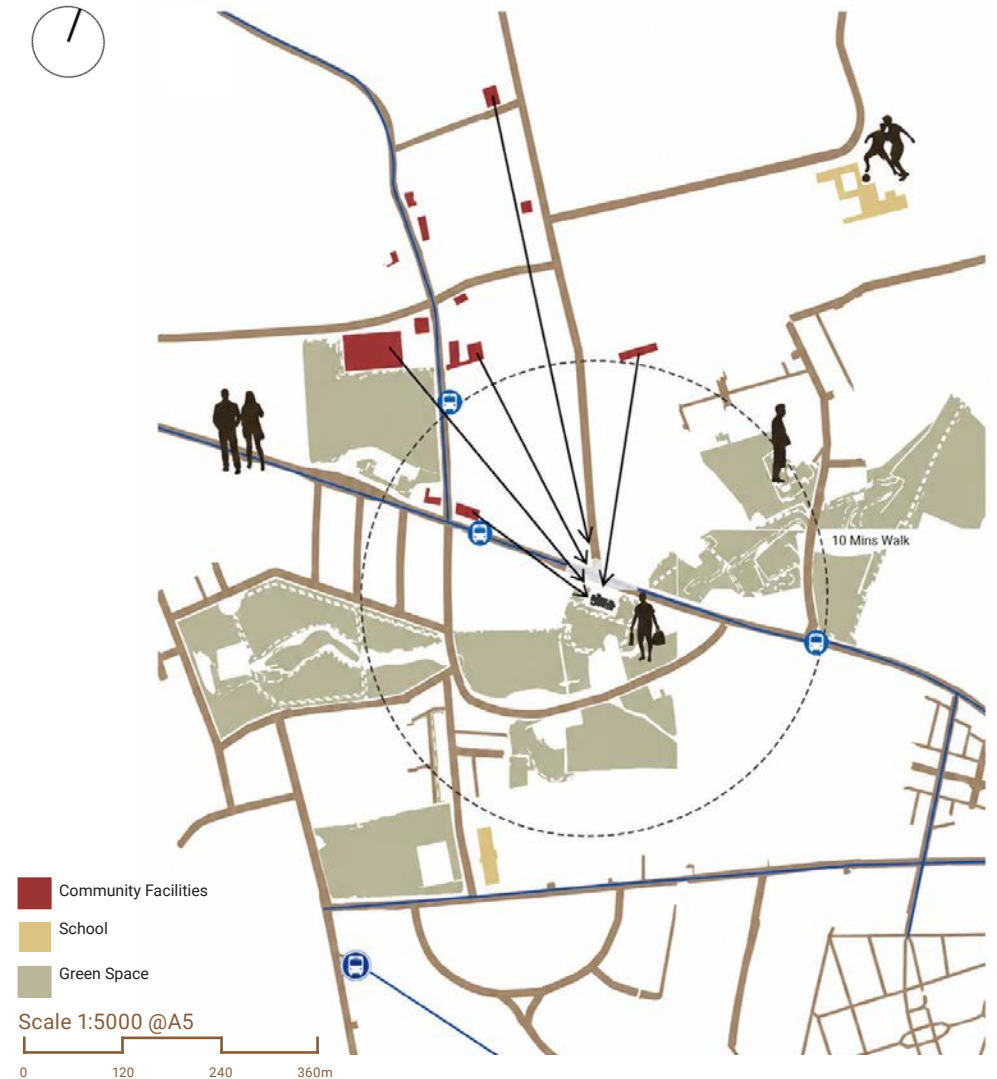
Understanding Unitarian



Site surroundings

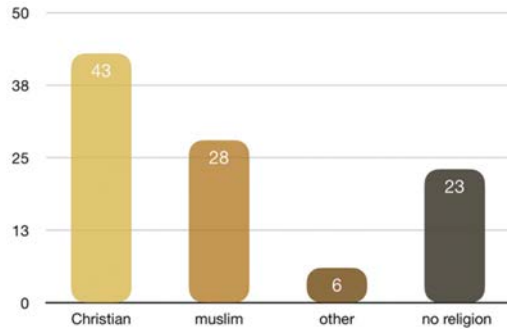
Gorton

The analysis reveals a lack of flexible communal facilities within the surrounding residential neighbourhood. While schools, transport links and local amenities are present, few spaces support inclusive gathering, intergenerational interaction or shared community activities. Positioned within walking distance of surrounding housing and schools, the church has the potential to become a local social and religious anchor embedded within everyday community life.



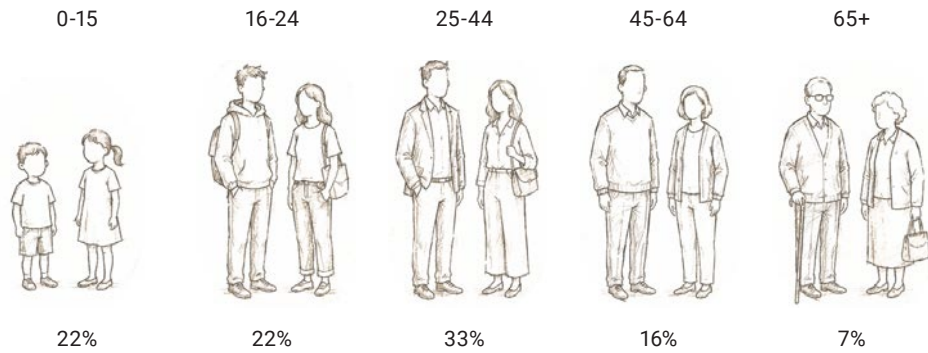
Demographics

Religion

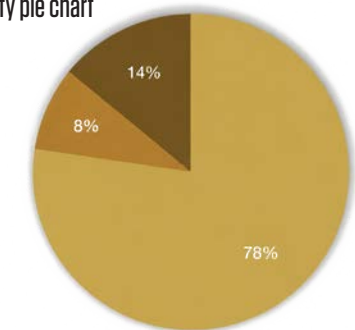


Understanding the demographic profile of the area helped us respond to the needs of the local community. The data shows a balanced gender distribution, with 51% female and 49% male residents. The population is relatively young, with the largest group aged 25–44. The area is also culturally diverse, mainly consisting of White, Asian and Black communities. Christianity is the largest religion, followed by Islam, while 23% of residents have no religion. Most residents report no disability or health limitation, highlighting the importance of creating inclusive and accessible community spaces.

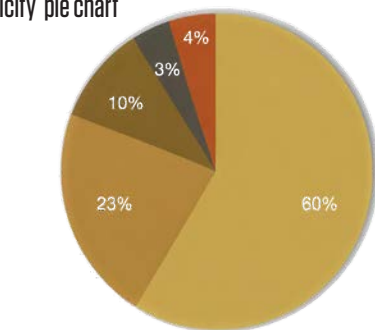
Age range



Disability pie chart



Ethnicity pie chart



● No limitations ● lots of limitations ● Some limitations ● White ● Asian ● Black ● Mixed ● Others

Religious Requirements

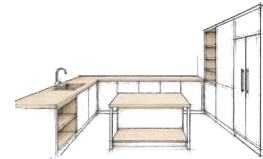
Based on the local religious demographic, and importance of designing for a unitarian church, we wanted to focus on designing inclusively for people of all religions

Christianity 48%



Kitchen

- Communal Meal Preparation
- Flexible Gathering Space
- Accessible Shared Use



Toilet

- Accessible WC Provision
- Baby Changing Facilities
- Durable community use

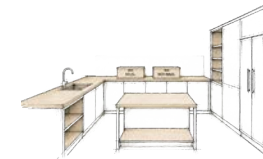


Muslim 28%



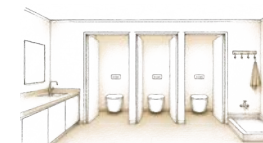
Kitchen

- Halal Food Preparation
- Hygienic Preparation Surfaces
- Separate Food Storage



Toilet

- Ablution / Foot Washing
- Bidet inclusion
- Garment hooks and privacy



Other 6%



Kitchen

- Multiple Sink Provision
- Flexible Preparation Zones
- Separate Food Storage



Toilet

- Ritual Hand Washing
- Private Enclosed Cubicles
- Inclusive Shared Facilities



Toilet Facility Principles

- Ablution & Washing**
Dedicated washing areas and hand basins
- Privacy and Dignity**
Fully enclosed cubicle with lockable doors
- Garment Storage**
Hooks and shelves for religious garments
- Accessibility and Inclusivity**
Accessibility for all abilities, ages and backgrounds
- Hygiene and Easy Clean**
Clean finishes, ventilation and wet/dry zoning

Inclusive Shared Facilities

A unitarian spaces that welcomes everyone



Kitchen Facility Principles

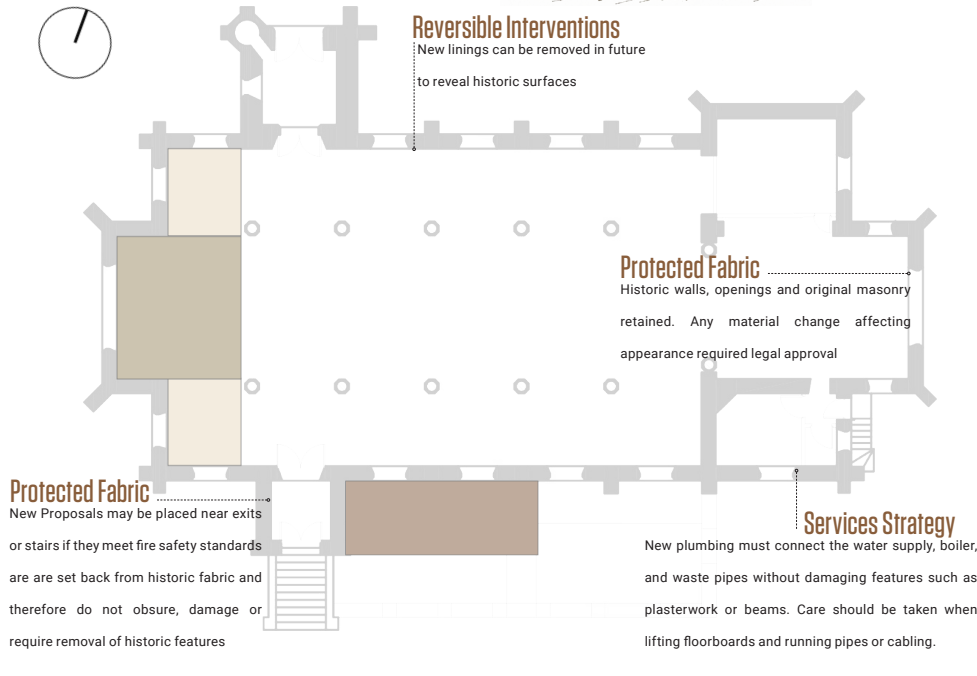
- Multiple Sinks & Prep Zones**
Separate prep and wash up areas for diverse needs
- Separate Storage**
for ingredients, utensils and equipment
- Flexible Preparation**
Adaptable spaces for varied cooking methods
- Hygiene & Durability**
Easy clean, durable finishes
- Community and Hospitality**
Designed for shared meals and welcoming all

Heritage

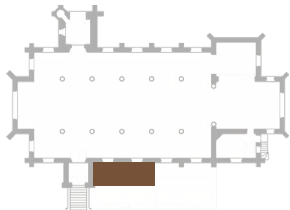
Brookefield Unitarian church is a Listed Victorian Gothic building. Heritage considerations inform all spatial interventions, ensuring historic fabric and key architectural features are protected.



Grade II* Listed Building Victorian
Gothic 3rd October 1974
Linked to Benefactor Richard Peacock

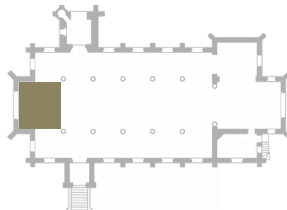


Option A



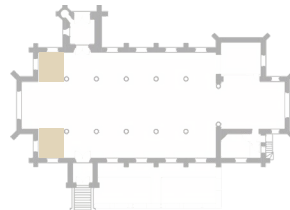
Proposal located outdoors in the courtyard. This approach was suggested by the collaborator as a way to potentially bypass the strict consent requirements associated with the interior fabric.

Option B



Proposal located in the rear centre of the habitable space. This occupies the main focal region of the church and uses the large stained-glass window as a feature backdrop.

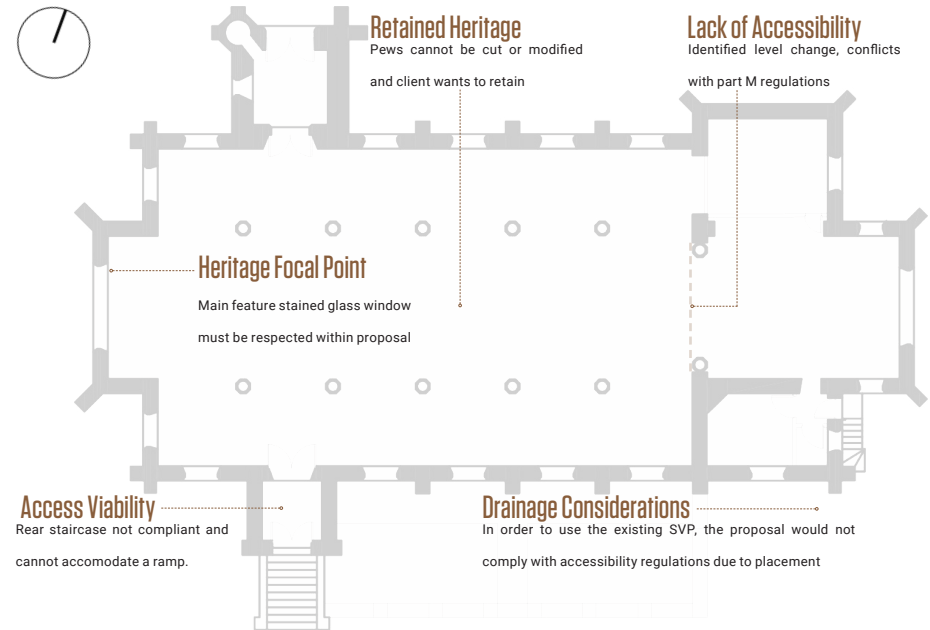
Option C



Proposal located along the two sides of the rear area. This layout utilises the less significant spaces to ensure that main circulation paths and key views remain clear.

Site Visit

Following the site survey and engagement feedback, several constraints became clear. The existing pews could not be altered, limiting interior placement options. Option C was discounted due to invasive drainage requirements and poor feedback from participants, whilst Option A was ruled out due to steep external levels and poor accessibility.



As a result, Option B was identified as the most appropriate solution. Positioning the facilities at the front of the church provides improved accessibility, efficient circulation and adequate storage whilst minimising intervention within the historic fabric. A compact kitchenette and single accessible toilet were considered sufficient to meet the needs of the community.

Precedent and Materiality

St Mary's Church

Walthamstow: Grade II*, refurbishment

The project transformed the church by introducing a new extension and interior works. The completed project, includes re-ordering and repairing the church whilst preserving the historic asset.

Once re-opened in 2023, St. Mary's Walthamstow described itself as "a church for the whole community." This enhancement has creatively erased the boundaries between the faith and the vibrant community, bringing diverse types of users together.



Irregular floor plans are used to avoid blocking historic windows and maintain sightlines.

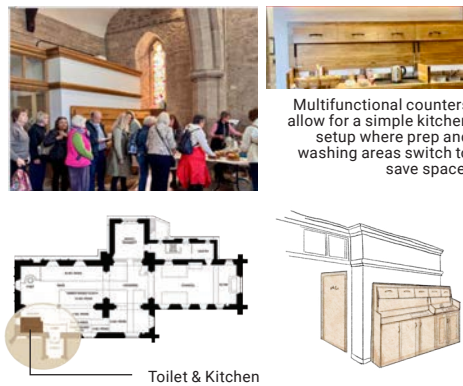
St Peter's Church

Stanton Lacy: Grade I* refurbishment

Focusing on creating a space more diverse, the project improved its building by inserting a fully accesible toilet (with a lobby), and a kitchenette.

Some key points of the design is the thoughtful thinking in avoiding blocking the windows and the nature of its lightweight structure.

Shared-wall layouts integrate toilet and kitchen facilities against a single boundary to streamline plumbing and footprint.



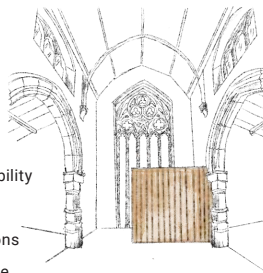
Materiality & Atmosphere



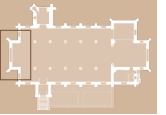
Timber: Lightweight properties and the natural warmth and softness brings to the environment, emphasizing the historic character. Low carbon footprint ensures both environment sustainability and long-term protection of the building's heritage.

Key Theme

- Reversibility
- Community & Accessibility
- Minimal Intervention
- Contemporary Insertions
- Preserving Significance



Design Development



Following the engagement event, onsite discussions with the client and post-engagement correspondence with regular users of the church, Option B was consistently identified as the preferred location for the proposal. The following pages explore a series of design iterations responding to this placement, gradually refining the proposal in relation to accessibility, inclusivity, programme requirements and spatial viability.

Iteration 1

This proposal responded to the client's immediate practical requirements, but lacked consideration for multi-faith use, inclusivity and future adaptability. Earlier demographic and religious research identified the need for a more flexible programme capable of supporting a wider range of users, activities and future community growth.



REFLECTION

Whilst this proposal responded directly to the client's immediate practical requirements, it did not fully align with the wider aims of the brief. The scheme lacked consideration for inclusivity, multi-faith use and wider community accessibility, resulting in a proposal that did not fully reflect the Unitarian principles established through our earlier research.

Iteration 2

TOILET

1. Bidet and baby changing provision
2. Garment hooks for religious clothing
3. Low-level tap and foot washing area
4. Removal of urinal to create a more inclusive shared facility

KITCHEN

1. Additional undercounter storage for dietary separation
2. Secondary sink for improved hygiene



DEVELOPMENT

This iteration developed a more inclusive and Unitarian-focused proposal, balancing multi-faith requirements with key client requests.

REFLECTION

This proposal responded more effectively to religious and cultural requirements, creating a stronger multi-faith design approach. However, the layout lacked sufficient turning space and did not fully meet Part M accessibility requirements for non-ambulant users.

Iteration 3

TOILET

1. 1500mm turning circles for wheelchair access
2. Full Part M compliant layout and anthropometric clearances

KITCHEN

1. Lowered counter for wheelchair users
2. Increased under and overcounter storage



DEVELOPMENT

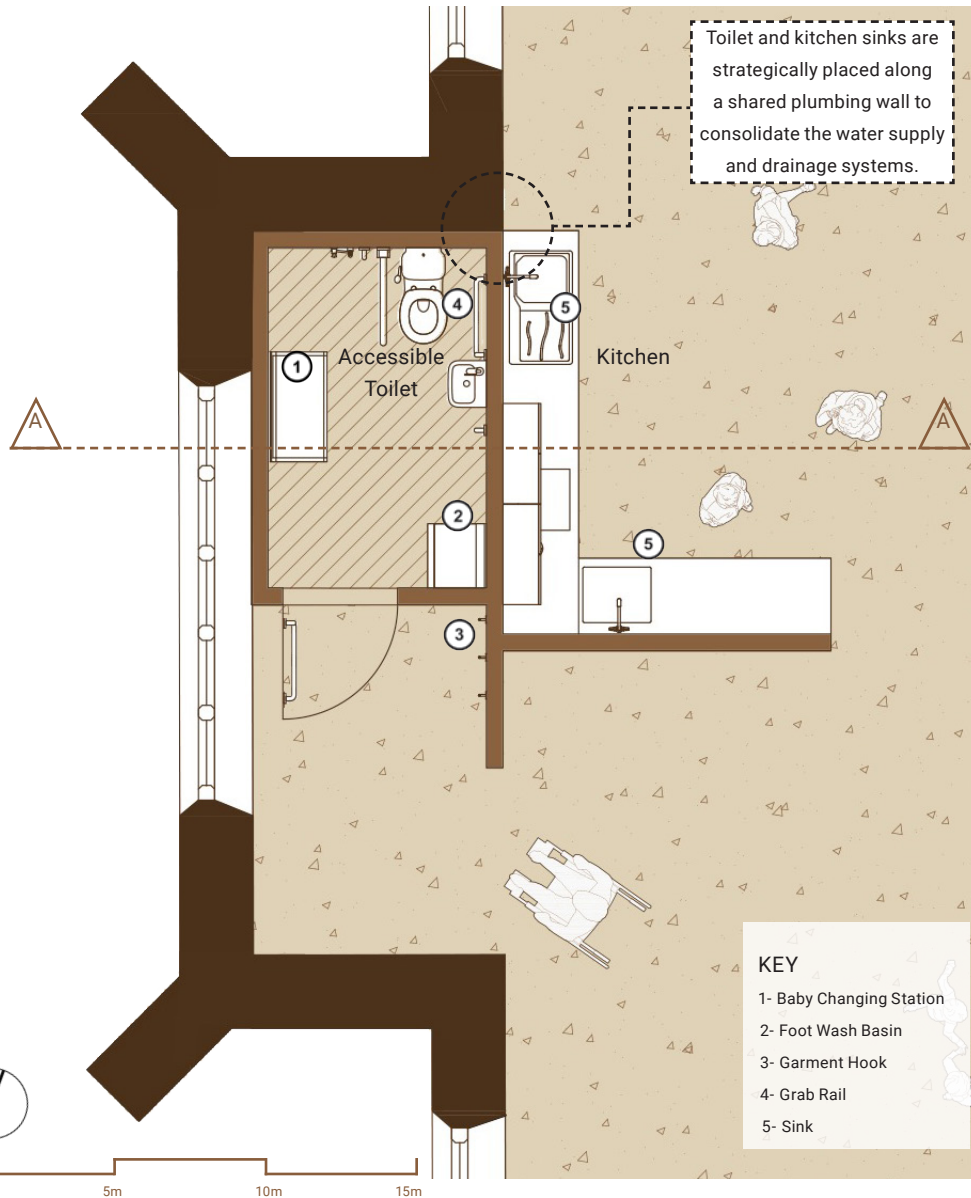
This iteration refined the proposal further through improved accessibility, circulation and regulatory compliance, whilst maintaining the multi-faith principles.

REFLECTION

This is a fully inclusive design, balancing accessibility requirements with religious considerations and community use. The scheme became more adaptable, functional and suitable for a wider range of users and future activities.

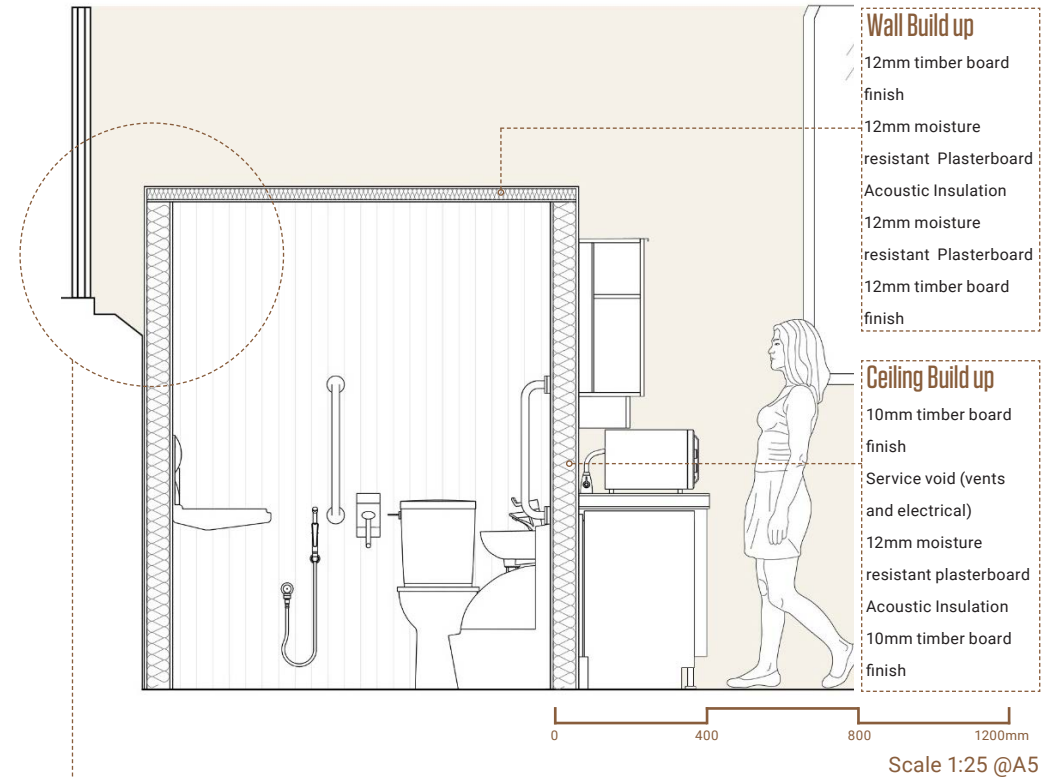
Final Plan

Following discussions with the client, we have developed a set of drawings for this Full Planning Application. This selection illustrates our key spatial and architectural strategies, focusing on how the proposed interventions integrate with the building's historic fabric for potential realisation in the built environment.

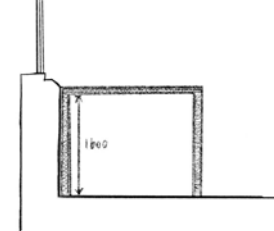


Final Section

The proposal uses a lightweight timber stud construction to minimise impact on the historic church fabric and avoid invasive alterations to the existing masonry. Designed as a reversible insertion, the intervention can function independently from the original structure, respecting the building's heritage significance whilst aligning with conservation principles and Listed Building Consent requirements.

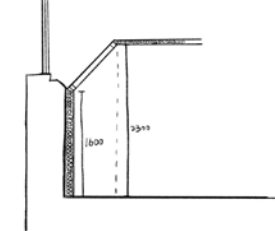


Solution 1



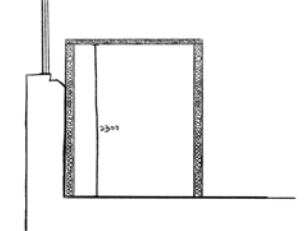
The 1600mm ceiling height was too low for comfortable use and did not accommodate average user requirements.

Solution 2



The chamfered ceiling achieved the required height but increased the proposal width, occupying too much floor space.

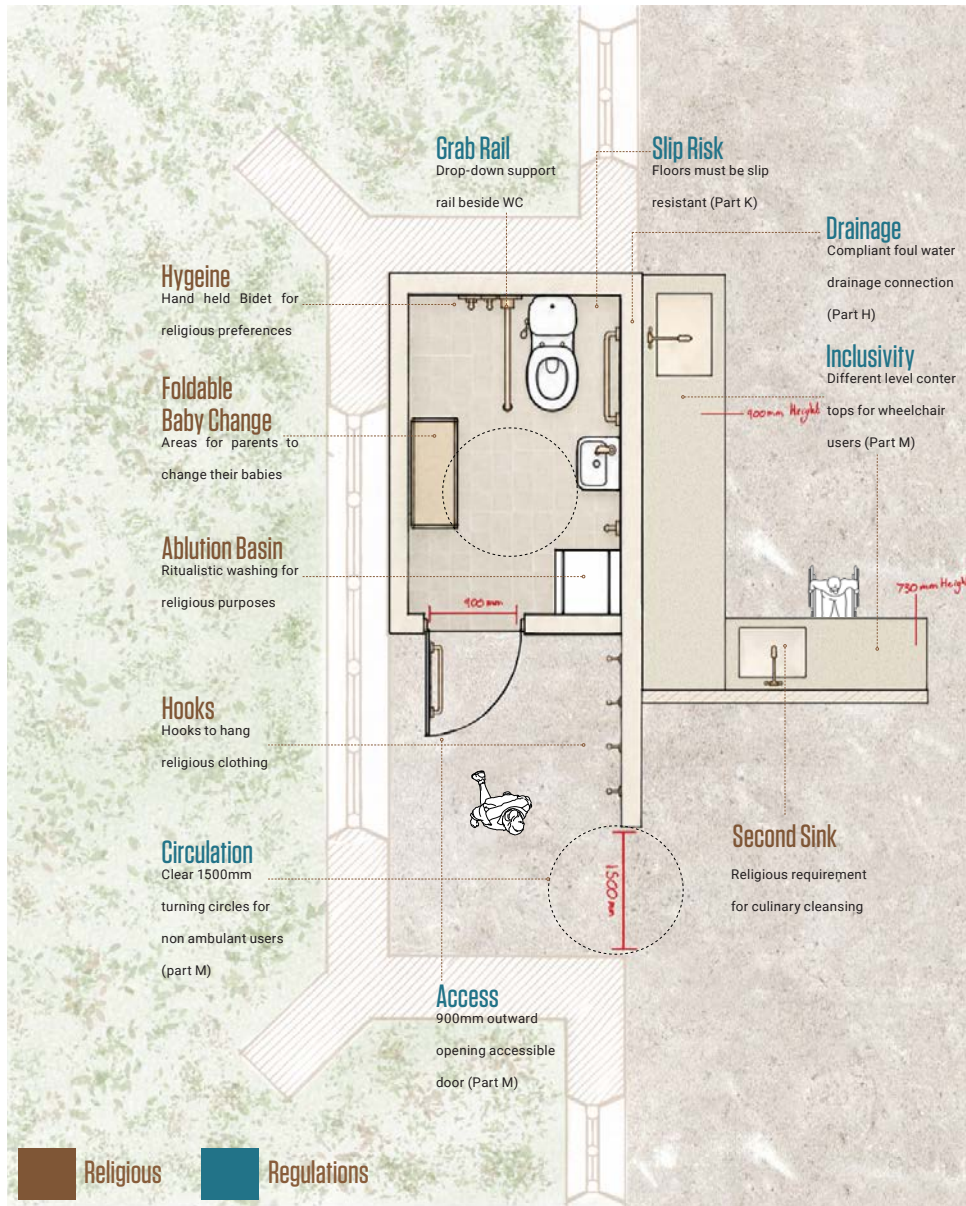
Solution 3



Achieving suitable ceiling height whilst minimising spatial impact. The timber stud lightly intersects the stained-glass window in a sensitive and reversible way.

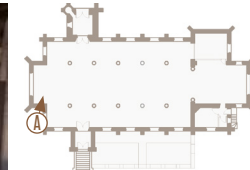
Regulatory and Religious Design

This project has been developed with the highest regard for religious considerations, cultural sensitivity, and regulatory compliance. Every aspect of the design and content has been carefully reviewed to ensure it reflects respectful, responsible, and professionally aligned standards throughout.

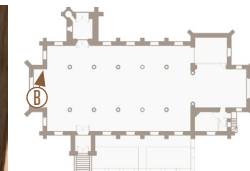


Visualisations

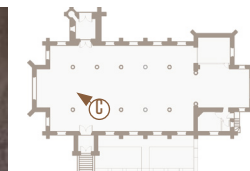
These visualisations demonstrate the integration of the proposed toilet and kitchen facilities within the existing church fabric while maintaining its historic character and spatial quality.



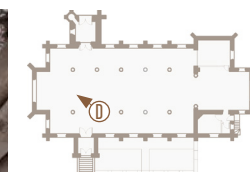
Accessible toilet and changing space integrated within the historic church setting, illuminated by soft stained-glass light and enclosed with timber partitions.



Inclusive ablution and washroom space featuring accessible fixtures, a wudu basin, and integrated hygiene facilities for diverse users.



Community cafe and social gathering space inserted within the existing church fabric, creating an accessible and welcoming environment beneath stained-glass light.



Overhead view of an adaptive reuse intervention combining a compact kitchen setting, service spaces, and accessible facilities within the historic church interior.

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

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