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SEED TO SOURCE

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MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

Manchester Metropolitan University

Growing Togetherness

MSA LIVE 26

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Hi! We are Seed to Source, a team of students from the Manchester School of Architecture, and we're excited to be collaborating with Mark Firth and Growing Togetherness CIC. Our team spans BA1 to MLA1 levels, bringing a diverse mix of skills, ideas, and perspectives to the project.

Collaborators

Growing Togetherness CIC, led by Mark Firth, is based at Seedley Pavilion in Salford. With the aim of helping "communities grow in more ways than one," the organisation has created a welcoming and creative space where wellbeing, learning, and community connection can thrive.

Collaborative projects include partnerships with the Working Class Movement Library to support and maintain community gardens, and with English Folk Expo to celebrate folk traditions and local musicians. The project also works with Salford City College Group, City Skills, Great Places Housing Group, and PLP Construction to connect students and professionals through practical activities such as bricklaying, landscaping, and site improvement projects. Additional collaborations with Friends of Buile Hill Park and Incredibe Edible support community gardening, food-growing, and environmental initiatives.

Further creative partnerships include work with the University of Salford, whose students produce short films for the site, and Manchester School of Architecture, where students develop projects that reflect the needs and aspirations of Growing Togetherness CIC.

In addition to its community projects, Growing Togetherness also offers a range of supportive services, including one-to-one horticultural therapy sessions, plant advice sessions, personal assistance, community consultations, and life coaching.

Overall, through its activities and partnerships, the organisation continues to foster inclusion, creativity, wellbeing, and stronger community connections across Salford and Greater Manchester, reflecting and strengthening the community's core ethos.

Introduction

SEED TO SOURCE

Seed to Source, a project by Manchester School of Architecture, aims to improve inclusivity, accessibility, and community safety at Buile Hill Park. The project focuses on enhancing the outdoor cafe area by creating a comfortable semi-sheltered seating space where visitors can gather, enjoy the outdoor pizza oven, and take part in community activities. The project also responds to concerns raised by Mark from Growing Togetherness CIC that the site lacks a visible entrance on the north-west side. Currently, surrounding trees and the sloping landscape make the area difficult to find, forcing visitors to walk around to the eastern entrance. In response, the proposal includes a welcoming new north-west entrance, supported by a video walkthrough to demonstrate the visitor experience.

A Solution to Rain Harvest

The allotment area has experienced significant irrigation problems caused by an overflowing natural water pipe. While temporary measures have been introduced, the project explores a more sustainable long-term solution through the introduction of a water feature and improved water management system.

A Place for the Community

The social impact of the project centres on strengthening community connection and creating a welcoming environment for residents. The cafe extension encourages outdoor collaboration and social interaction by providing an inclusive gathering space, while the proposed new entrance improves accessibility, visibility, and encourages greater engagement with the site. In addition, the sustainable water strategy supports environmentally responsible design and the long-term maintenance of the allotment area. Through site visits and community engagement, the project team developed a strong understanding of the importance of community empowerment, inclusivity, and environmental responsibility within the park.

Initial Site Visit

Seedley Pavilion is located within Buile Hill Park in Salford, Greater Manchester. The site contains several key community spaces, including the cafe, croquet pitch, greenhouse and allotments, with our three project agendas distributed across these areas.

1. Cafe Canopy: Located in the southern area of the site, accessed via an inclined route from the east.
2. Entrance Gate: Situated in the north-west corner, currently a closed boundary with surrounding cut-down trees. The collaborator aimed to create a new entrance connecting the northern car park and Buile Hill Mansion to improve visitor access.
3. Water Feature: Positioned on the eastern side of the site, north of the allotment area and surrounded by trees and vegetation.

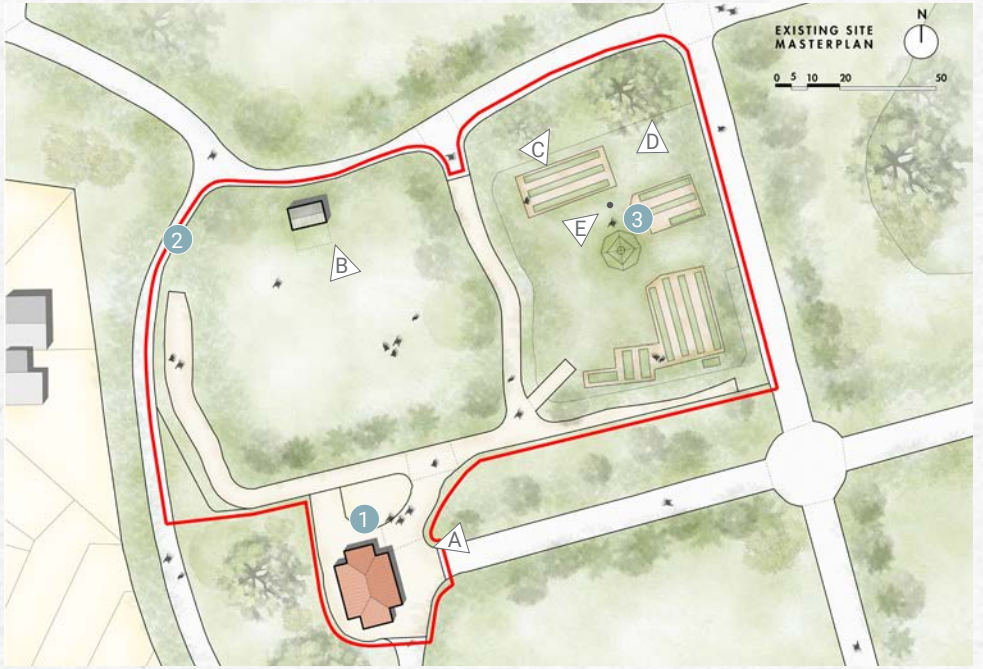
Key Objectives

Encourage social interaction within the local community

Provide a safe shelter and storage for the garden cafe

Provide an irrigation strategy for the allotments

Propose a new main entrance for increased visibility



Legend

1 The Cafe

2 The Entrance Gate

3 The Water Feature

Site Pictures

Site Analysis

Constraint and Opportunities

Mark Frith
Director of Growing Togetherness CIC

> The drainage has always been a problem here- getting that right is fundamental to everything else we want to do!

The site is home to Growing Togetherness CIC, a community-led organisation with a strong local identity centred on inclusion, wellbeing, and social participation. Its "pay as you feel" cafe and gardening activities make the space accessible to a wide range of users, supporting mental health, social connection, and skill development across the community.

Constraints

-The site is physically vulnerable to poor weather conditions- prolonged rainfall, drainage issues, and extreme weather events can damage planted areas, deter visitors, and drive up maintenance demands.
-The surrounding area's historical reputation as a deprived neighbourhood may limit footfall and discourage external investment and partnerships.
-The organisation relies on charitable donations instead of commercial income which makes it susceptible to financial pressure as operational costs continue to rise.

Opportunities

-Growing public interest in urban greening, biodiversity, and community resilience creates a strong case for new funding and external partnerships.
-The project is well-placed to respond to current environmental and social agendas at both a local and national level.
-There is genuine potential to reduce isolation, strengthen neighbourhood identity, and establish the site as a significant long-term community asset for the Salford area.

1: A collage response to the croquet pitch

2: A collage response to the existing water tank

3: A collage response to the existing cafe

4: A site and weather analysis map sketched during our first site visit

5: A initial conditions collage to depict the main interventions on site

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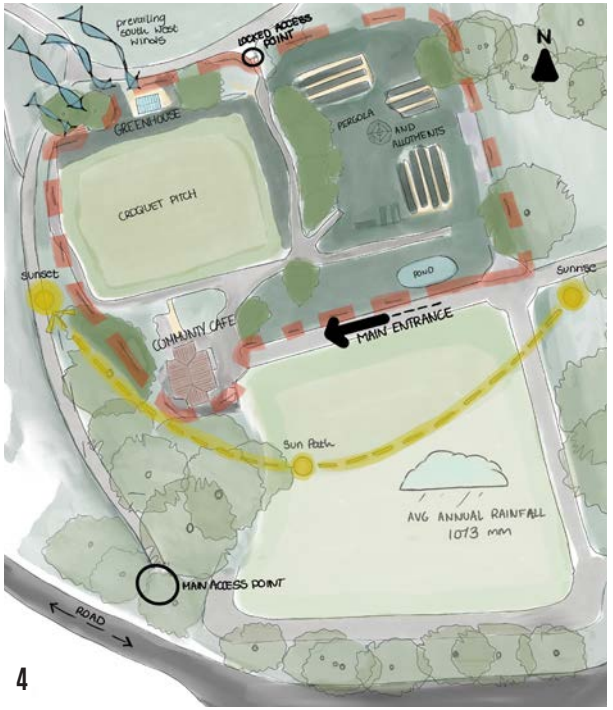

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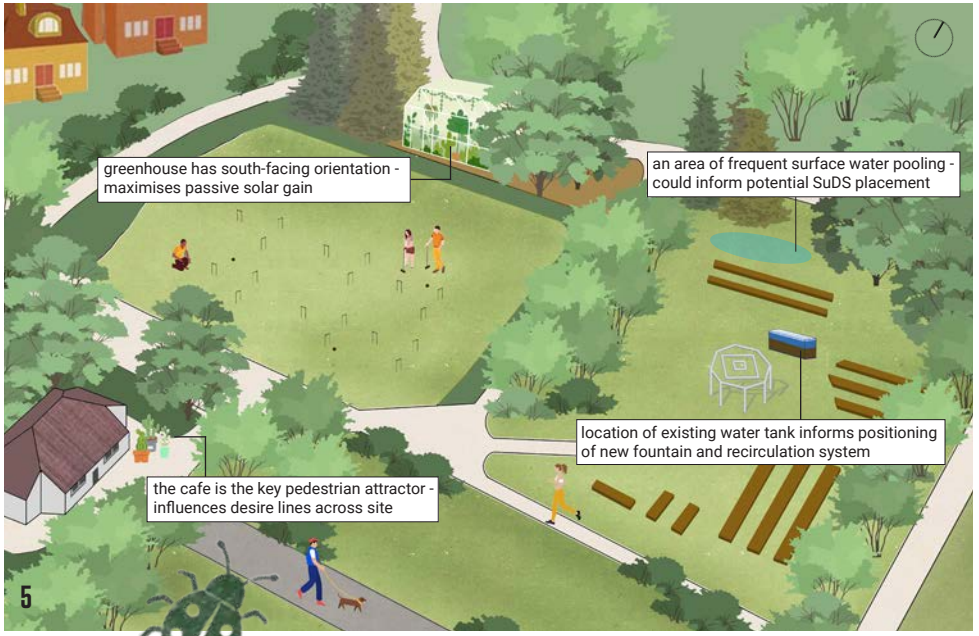

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Cafe Extension

Weather

Canopy

Storage

Seating

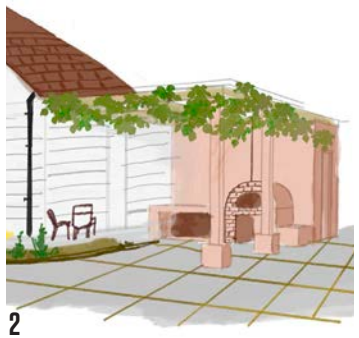
1: Existing Cafe Analysis

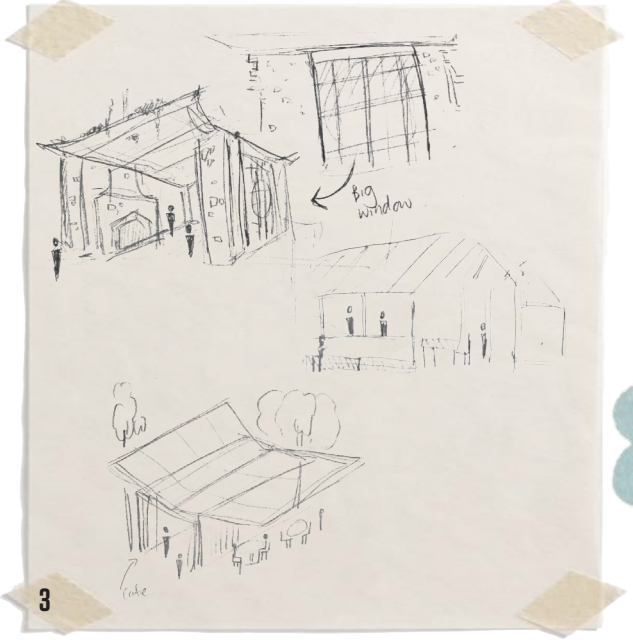
2: Final Extension Proposal Sketch

3: Cafe Extension Proposal Sketches

4: Existing Site Plan, Highlighting Access to Park

5: Gate Proposal Sketches





Our aim for the cafe extension was to provide additional storage, a covered outdoor seating area, and an outdoor kitchen with a pizza oven to improve the café's functionality and year-round use.

We wanted to include brick in our design due to its connection to the site's educational use, where students from Salford City College have previously built simple brick structures as part of practical studies. The design therefore creates opportunities for community involvement and hands-on learning.

An earlier proposal by an architecture practice was considered too complex and disconnected from the existing building to secure funding, so this scheme adopts a simpler and more sensitive approach.

Gate

How to improve visibility to site:

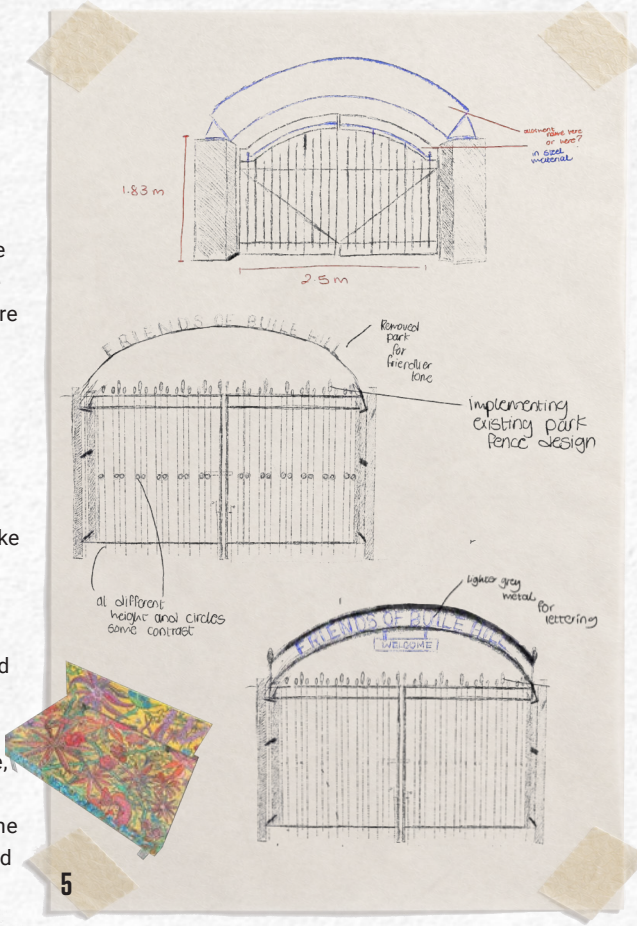
Short distance to entrance

Colourful engaging signage

Strategic positioning

A new entrance was proposed to improve accessibility from Buile Hill Park, as the current entrance is poorly positioned and requires visitors to take a long route around the site. This makes the cafe and wider community space less visible and less inviting to people approaching from the park. The proposed design relocates the gate to a more desirable and accessible position, creating a clearer and more direct connection to the main site.

The new entrance aims to create a stronger sense of arrival and improve the visibility of the site within the local area. Colourful signage will be incorporated to make the entrance more welcoming and easily identifiable. A local artist previously designed and painted a bench made from recycled plywood for the site. It is hoped that the same artist can be commissioned to create the new entrance signage, helping to support local creative employment while strengthening the connection between the project and the surrounding community.



Collaboration

On our first site visit, 08.02.26, we gained a detailed understanding of the site in winter conditions. Led by Mark, we explored the proposed project areas: the outdoor cafe, gate, and water feature. Despite the rainy weather, we experienced a strong sense of community, with residents offering hot drinks and sharing Buile Hill Park's heritage through old postcards. We also met students from University of Salford filming a short documentary.

Subsequent sessions focused on consultation preparation, particularly the water feature. We researched precedents, refined ideas, and developed three design options for community feedback.

On 21.03.26, we presented these options on a voting board using colour- coded post-its: blue (traditional), yellow (modern), and pink (intermediate). Engagement was strong, with residents actively voting and commenting.

"I love this traditional design, I think it would look really good in the area!"

We left the voting open for another week to include wider community input. On 28.03.26, we counted 77 votes in total: blue led with 37, yellow 30, and pink 10. The outcome aligned with expectations, as early consultation primarily involved an older demographic (50+), who showed a strong preference for the traditional design. In addition, Mark had expressed a clear interest in referencing the site's historic water feature that once stood there, reinforcing the appeal of a more heritage-led approach.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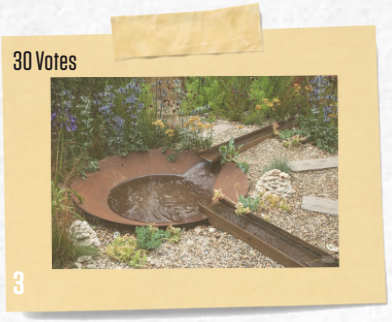

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1: Setting Up Engagement Activity

2: Engagement Activity Collage

3: Water Feature Option 1 - Modern (Yellow)

4: Water Feature Option 2 - Intermediate (Pink)

5: Water Feature Option 3 - Traditional (Blue)

Water Strategy

Existing Water Tank

Issues with current water strategy

OVERFLOWING

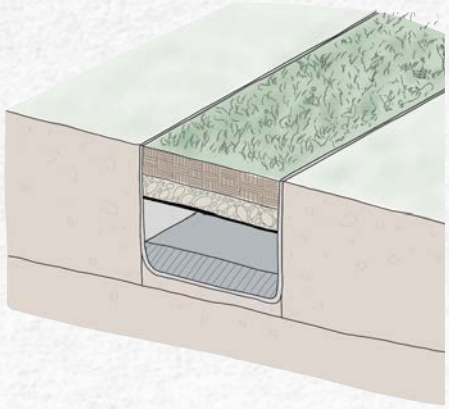
TEMPORARY

UNATTRACTIVE

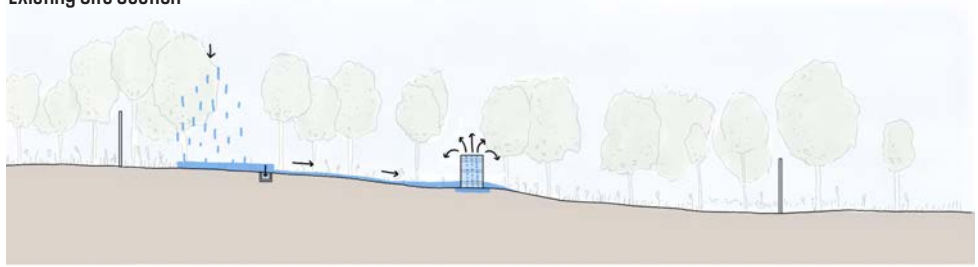
Persistent rainfall has caused frequent flooding and waterlogging across the site, highlighting the limitations of the existing temporary water tank currently used to manage excess surface water. In response, the proposal introduces a SuDS-based drainage strategy incorporating concealed subsurface drainage channels, underground water storage, overflow systems, and a seasonal pond to manage rainfall more effectively. Rainwater collected beneath the fountain is filtered and recirculated through a semi-closed loop system, helping to reduce water waste while maintaining water quality. During heavy rainfall, excess water is redirected through concealed drainage gratings and channels toward the lower end of the site using the natural slope of the landscape. This approach improves drainage performance while enhancing biodiversity and supporting long-term sustainable water management across the site.

Existing Water Strategy

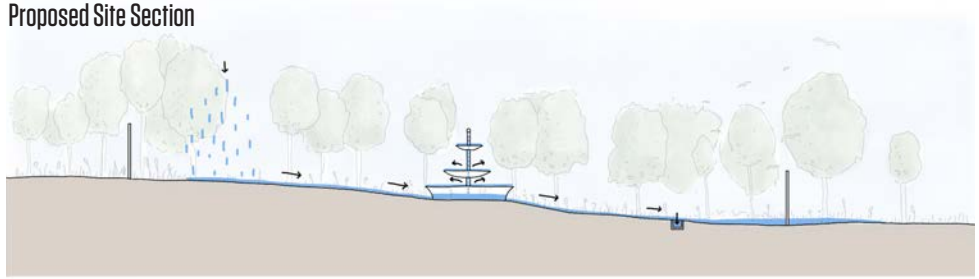
Proposed Concealed Subsurface Drainage Channels



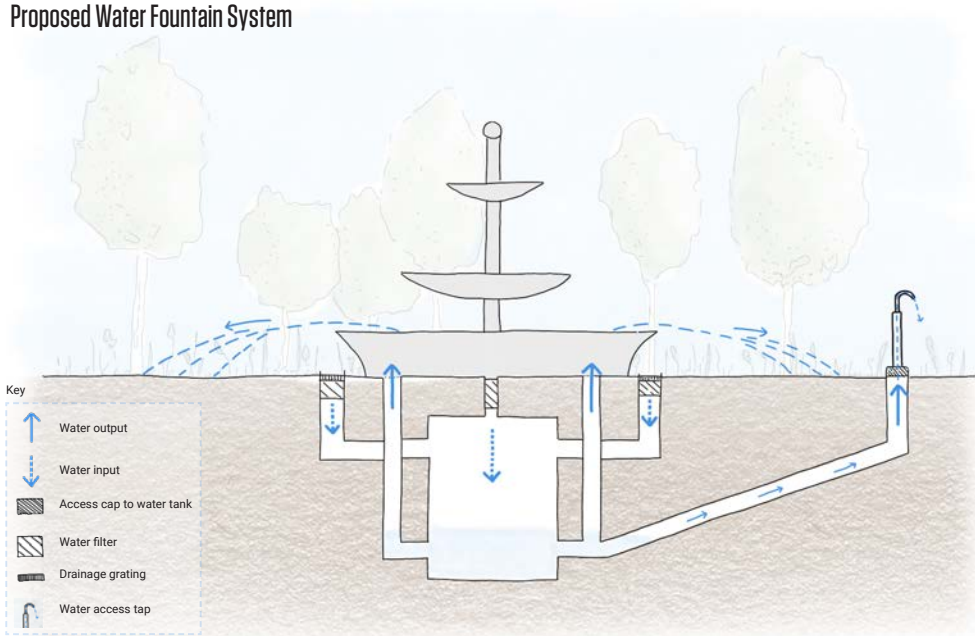
Existing Site Section



Proposed Site Section

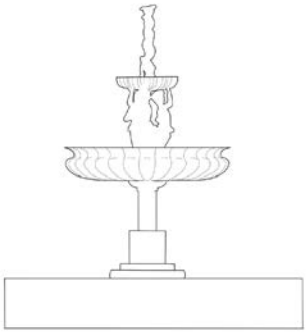


Proposed Water Fountain System



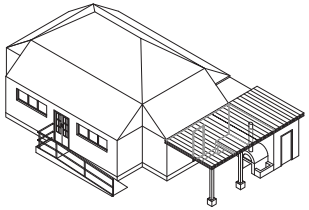
Final Drawings

Fountain Elevation



Gate Elevation

Cafe Extension Axonometric



Reflection

This project has been a highly positive and rewarding experience. Engaging with an enthusiastic community has been a pleasure, and our collaborator Mark Frith has been consistently supportive, generous, and open throughout. Collaborating with students, staff, clients, and members of the public added energy and a wide range of perspectives within a shared studio environment across year groups. We hope our work has successfully improved comfort, aesthetics, and sustainability, resulting in designs that deliver meaningful social value for the Salford community. The project has also strengthened our understanding of how design is shaped by real-world constraints, dialogue, and ongoing participant feedback. Overall, this live project has been a valuable opportunity to work with a real client, developing both our design thinking and our ability to respond to genuine community needs in practice.

Site Walkthrough Video

Entrance

Cafe

Allotment

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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