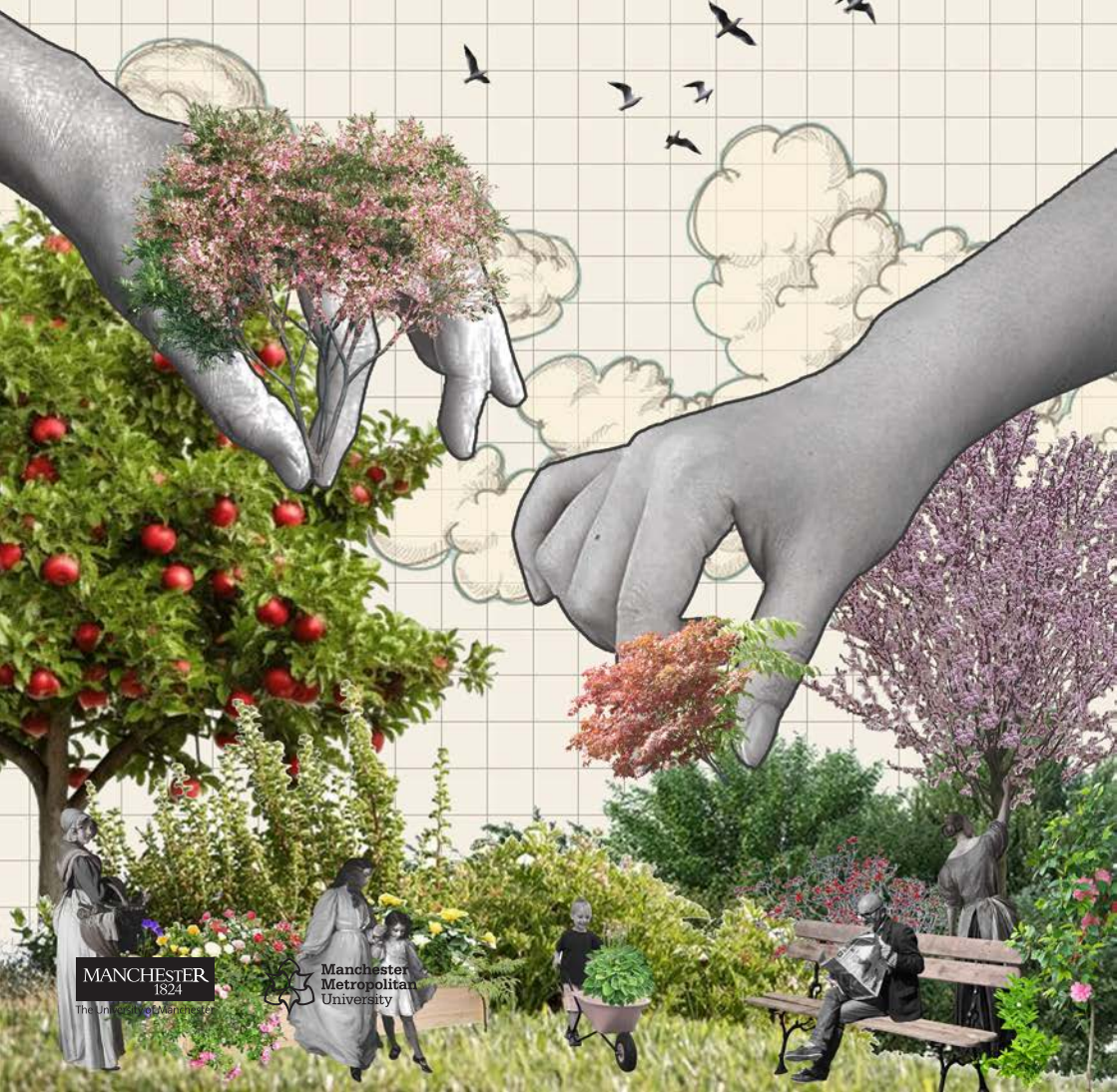


**MANCHESTER SCHOOL
OF ARCHITECTURE**

SEEDS TO SEATS



MANCHESTER
1824
The University of Manchester

 **Manchester
Metropolitan
University**

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Collaborators

Worthington Park is a Green Flag Award-winning public garden that is widely used and enjoyed by residents and their pets. We are teaming up with the Friends of Worthington Park to help bring new life to the orchard area. They are a group formed in partnership with Trafford Council, the local community, and other organizations, all working together to improve and maintain the park's facilities.

Through the work of local volunteers, the park has already been enhanced with carved wooden sculptures, engraved benches, and a variety of plants and trees to create a more welcoming space for its residents.

We will collaborate directly with volunteers to build new additions for the park, allowing us to form a stronger relationship with the local community.

Introduction

Seeds to Seats

This project aims to improve the newly developed orchard area within Worthington Park. Working alongside volunteers from Friends of Worthington Park, we designed compost bins, planters, and benches to create an additional seating space for visitors. The project focuses on making the park more accessible and welcoming to a wider range of users, encouraging social interaction in a quieter area of the park surrounded by trees and nature.

Working closely with the client, our goal was to create a welcoming environment while incorporating facilities that visitors felt were missing from the park. Our team visited the site multiple times and met with the lead volunteers to better understand the community's needs and how seating could be integrated into the orchard area.

One of the first challenges we encountered was the presence of a fox den on site. Originally, our design proposal was located where the existing steel posts are onsite. This space was currently a fox den and was subject to criticism during our public consultation whereupon, the local community preferred to keep the foxes where they are. As a result, we had to reconsider our design proposal to another location on the site which had caused some design setbacks towards our project timeline. However, it was insightful meeting the needs of the community.

The project also aimed to remain sustainable by reusing materials and resources already available on site. Through discussions and feedback between our team and the client, we developed a planter design that also incorporates seating, alongside proposals for how these elements could be positioned within the orchard.

For the final stage of the project, we will collaborate directly with volunteers to build and install the planters on-site, allowing us to realize the design in a physical form. This publication aims to document the design process and show how collaboration between our team, the client, volunteers, and the local community helped shape the final proposal into a welcoming social space.

Site Visit

Location : Worthington Park || Client : Friends of Worthington Park

Visiting and understanding the site's context were essential to developing the project. During our visit to Worthington Park, we met with volunteers from Friends of Worthington Park, who guided us through the park, particularly the orchard area we would be working on. They explained where they hoped the seating and compost bins could be placed and shared ideas about what they wanted the space to become. This visit was extremely valuable, as it gave us a clearer understanding of the clients' needs, expectations, and vision for the project.

Being on site also helped us identify practical and environmental challenges that could influence our design decisions. During the visit, we discovered that a fox den was located in the area where seating was proposed; something we had to keep in mind as we thought of possible designs.

Additionally, we analyzed the site's topography, as certain sloped areas could affect the placement and accessibility of seating. This was something we discussed directly with the client while considering possible locations. Following the visit, we continued developing ideas and communicating with the volunteer group through email, discussing challenges, feedback, and possible design solutions throughout the process.

Client's Vision

The clients wanted to improve the newly developed orchard area by adding seating, composting bins, and planters to create a more welcoming and social space within the park. They were open to a wide range of suggestions and ideas, which gave us the freedom to experiment and explore different design options. However, they also explained that funding would be limited, as the structures were going to be built by volunteers using donated or recycled materials from residents. Because of this, we understood that our designs needed to be simple, practical, and easy to replicate, while still being realistic with the resources available.

Site Analysis

The Park heavily involves itself with the local community and has various wooden/art sculptures across the site, crafted by locals. Since, the target demographic is of various ages between the young and old, a key considerations for these planters will be accessibility, seating and opportunities for educational use for children.

SITE KEY : PROPOSED SPACE FOR DEVELOPMENT

- (A)** Currently, there is a fox den present onsite between existing steel columns. The original plan is to relocate the fox den during Summer. Current terrain is sloped to the west portion of the site and will be levelled with the surrounding context..
- (B)** Existing composting space. Much of the proposed space is overgrown and under utilised.



OPPORTUNITIES + CONSTRAINTS OF SITE PROPOSAL

- (1)** Close proximity to Children's Play Area, safety and accessibility to be considered in proposal.
- (2)** Potential to create woodchip/grass pathway for distinct circulation access? Also, potential to have benching in front of the orchards.
- (3)** Excluding the trees and brick wall, the site is spacious, its location is beneficial for allowing optimal sunlight. There is a possibility to make this site a functional activity space for younger users. (With the proposed planters).

Activities Time Schedule

Design and Construction Stages

In our first meeting, we introduced ourselves, discussed our strengths and goals, and analyzed the brief to identify key outcomes. When we later met collaborators, we asked about their hopes for the project and exchanged contacts. Soon after, a site visit helped us assess where to place planters, seating, and compost bins, considering topography and visitor flow. There, we learned of a fox den near the seating area, requiring a design rethink. After developing initial ideas, we held a public consultation via Facebook, where residents gave valuable feedback on seating placement. During the intensive week, we finalized designs and confirmed seating placement. Some of us then built a planter with volunteers which is a rewarding experience that turned ideas into reality while guiding others in building more planters.

First meeting with the group and our client



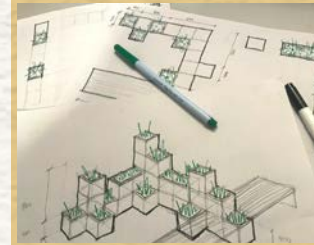
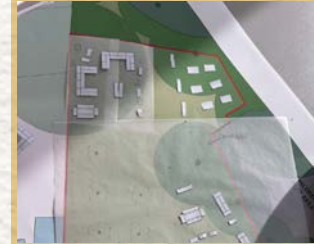
Site Visit!



Consultation at the park



Intensive Design Week



Actual Work

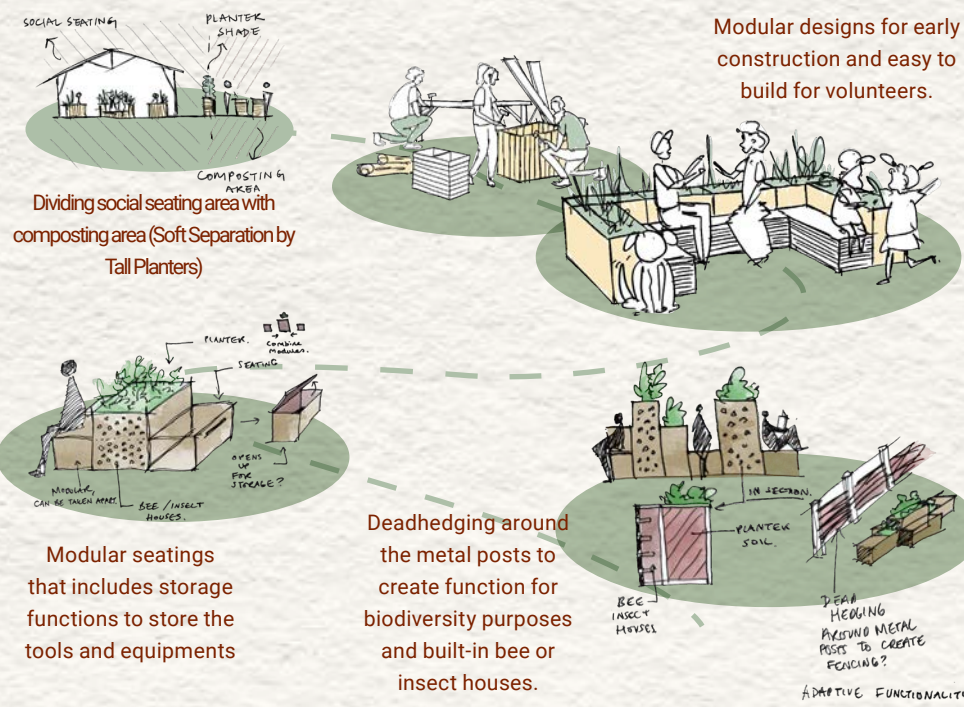


Design Ideation

After the site visit, we brainstormed concepts for planters within the orchard and decided to create adaptable furniture pieces, presented through a 1:1 prototype and a smaller model. This led us to explore sustainable and accessible material sourcing options, including recycled wood donated by residents of Sale, materials already available on site, and reclaimed timber from B15, nearby factories, or local stores.

As requested by the client, we also aim to provide an instructional guide or time-lapse showing the construction process, allowing volunteers to easily recreate the furniture using the materials available to them. Since the volunteers would be responsible for building most of the benches and planters on-site, we knew the design needed to be simple, practical, and easy to construct, while still being visually interesting and appropriate for the space.

We also explored ways to mask compost bin smells using pillars and planting. Responsibilities were divided based on individual skills, encouraging collaboration across bachelor's and master's students. Storage was excluded from the design due to safety concerns, as the clients worried that accessible storage near children could lead to accidents or misuse. Alongside this, we began planning our public consultation display.



Public Consultation

After speaking with the collaborators, we organized a public consultation to better understand what the people who would actually use the space wanted from it. To advertise the event, we designed a flyer and asked the client to share it on the park's Facebook page so residents and visitors would know about the consultation and to attend on the day.



To prepare for the event, we created several informative boards showing the site plan and the different design options we had developed. Visitors were encouraged to share their opinions and discuss which design proposals they preferred. We also asked for feedback regarding the fox den on site, specifically whether people believed it should be relocated or whether they were comfortable sharing the space with the wildlife.

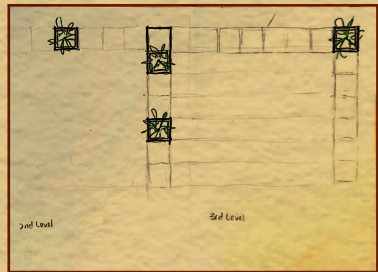
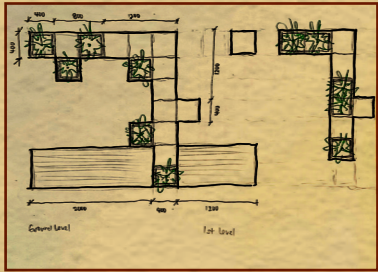
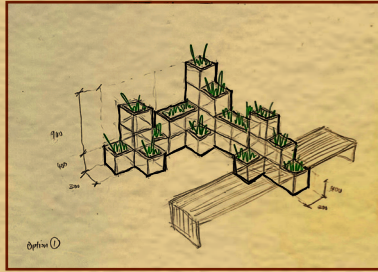
Though quiet at first, the event grew busier, with strong opinions on issues like whether dogs should be allowed within the orchard area. There were also conversations about the possibility of adding pathways and sheltered seating by using the existing pillars already located on site. Originally, the collaborators wanted the seating where the fox den was, planning to move it later. But since most visitors preferred to coexist with the foxes, we relocated the seating area instead to protect the den.



Alongside the display boards, we included an interactive physical model where visitors could experiment with placing benches and planters within the site, helping us understand what the community actually wanted.

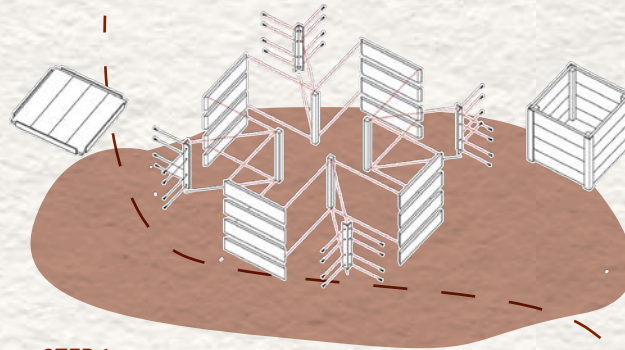
Construction Design

Design Sketches

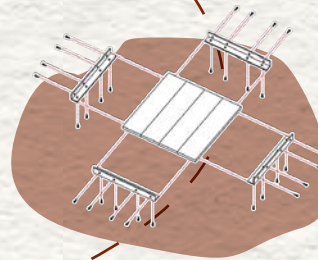


Construction Design

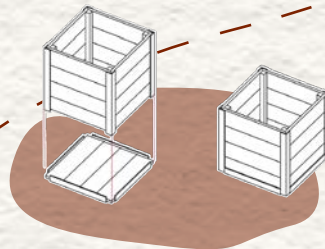
Toolkit



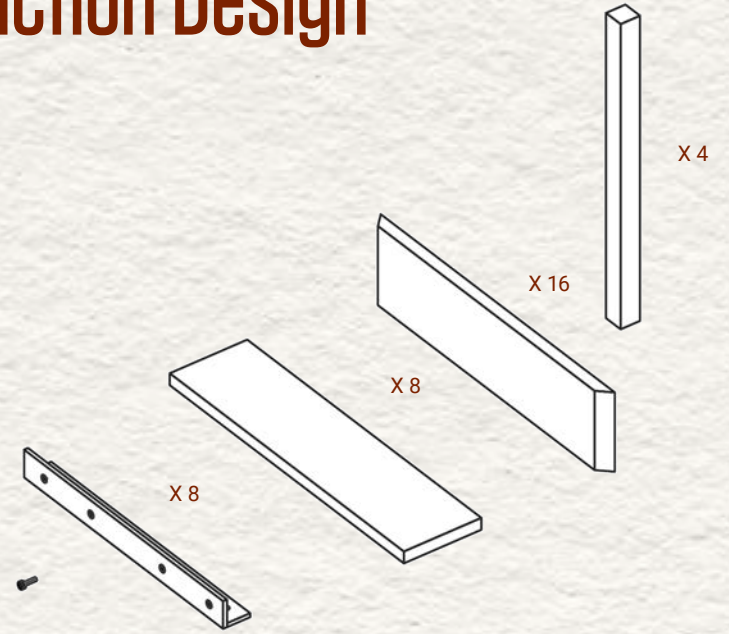
STEP 1



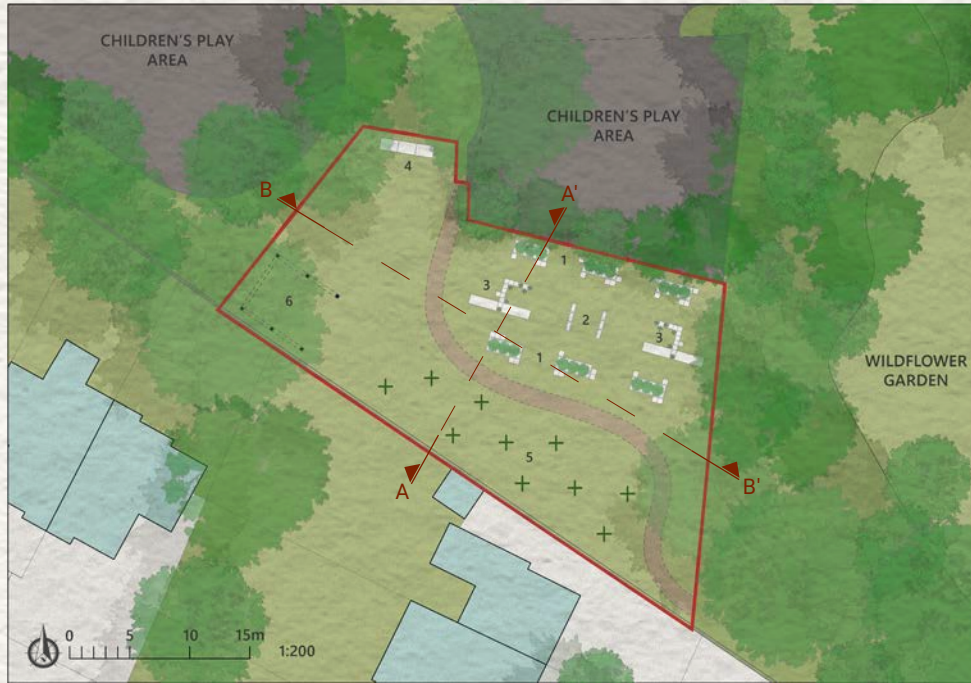
STEP 2



STEP 3



Final Proposal



Site Plan



Physical Model

Final Proposal



Southwest Elevation



Northwest Elevation



Southeast Elevation



Section AA'



Section BB'

Final Proposal

Visualizations



Real Output



Reflection

This experience was extremely rewarding for all of us, as it allowed us not only to design a social and seating space within a community park, but also to collaborate closely with the collaborators, volunteers, and residents who would eventually use the space. Being able to physically build the 1:1 planter on site alongside volunteers from Friends of Worthington Park created a much stronger relationship with the client and made the project feel far more real and meaningful.

Working within a natural environment also introduced challenges that made the project particularly interesting. The design had to respond carefully to existing site conditions, including sloped ground, existing vegetation, and circulation through the orchard. Additionally, the presence of the fox den constantly challenged us to think ethically and responsibly about how architecture and nature can coexist. Rather than designing against the site, we learned to adapt the project around the existing ecosystem and wildlife.

Communication played a major role throughout the entire process. We were constantly exchanging feedback and ideas with the collaborators through meetings and emails to ensure the design reflected the needs of the community. The public consultation was especially valuable, as it allowed us to directly engage with the people who would use the space and understand what they wanted from it.

As a group, we managed our time effectively and worked collaboratively to complete different tasks and outputs. Many of us also developed new skills throughout the project, including model making, CAD drawing, physical construction, and presenting ideas to clients and the public. These experiences allowed us to grow both creatively and professionally, developing skills that will be valuable in future projects and careers.

The project will conclude with a final presentation to other MSA Live groups and the collaborators, where we will share our designs, models, and overall design process.

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

live.msa.ac.uk/2026

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