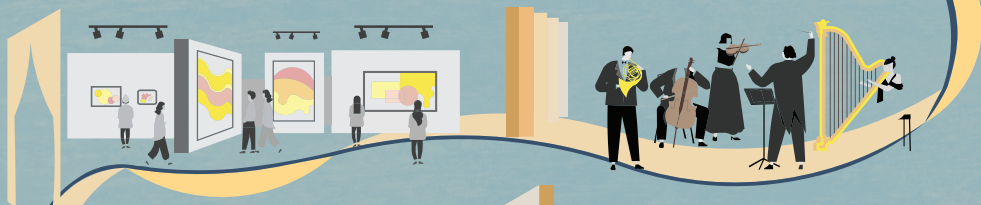


MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

Art Kinesis Victoria Hall

Reimagining Glossop's Victoria Hall as a flexible arts and community hub that supports local creatives and young people.



Visit msa.ac.uk for more information



MSA
LIVE 26

Team

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Sherman Wong (BA1)

Zhao Yinghui (MLA1)

MEET THE TEAM!



Keeleigh



Maria



Matt



Munir



Vishal



Shuyu



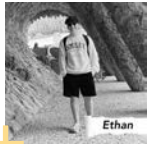
Yang Xiao



Gordon



Conrad



Ethan



Sherman



Yinghui

Collaborators

Friends of Victoria Hall (FOVH) is a community interest company established by local residents to protect, preserve, and promote the continued use of Victoria Hall for the benefit of the wider community. FOVH currently leases the building from High Peak Borough Council and is actively involved in supporting its restoration and future operation. At present, the building is undergoing essential roof and interior repairs to return it to a safe and functional condition, coinciding with the upcoming merger between High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council.



The intention for Victoria Hall is for it to become a community-run building that continues to serve the people of Glossop through cultural, social, educational, and public activities. Historically, the hall has played an important civic role within the town, reinforced by the original covenant stating it should remain a public hall and free public library.

Our collaboration with FOVH focuses on exploring the future potential of Victoria Hall as a sustainable and accessible community resource. Through archival research, site analysis, and engagement with local stakeholders, the project investigates how the internal spaces could function more flexibly through adaptable and movable partitions, alongside new programming strategies to support a wider range of community uses. The project aims to contribute ideas that support the ongoing regeneration of Victoria Hall while reinforcing its role as an important civic and cultural space within Glossop.

Introduction

Art Kenisis Victoria Hall

Our Approach

Meeting the Collaborators

Site Visit
Initial Site Analysis

Initial Design Concepts

Design Development

Engagement Activity

Our Proposal

Victoria Hall was constructed as part of Glossop's celebrations for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 and was intended as a civic gift for the people of the town. The project began in 1886 when local mill owner Herbert Rhodes donated £2,000 towards the creation of a public building for Glossop, shortly followed by a matching contribution from Captain Edward Partington. It was later agreed that their donation would fund a combined public hall and free library for the community. Designed by Frederick Bennett Smith of the Manchester architectural practice Darbyshire and Smith, the building officially opened in December 1888 and originally contained a public hall, reading room, library, lecture hall, and museum spaces.

Throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Victoria Hall became one of Glossop's principal civic and cultural venues, hosting concerts, dances, theatrical performances, lectures, meetings, and public events while also functioning as the town's public library. A covenant attached to the building established that it should remain a public hall and free public library, reinforcing its long-term civic purpose and importance to the community. However, changing social habits, the emergence of alternative venues, and long-term maintenance issues gradually contributed to the building's decline, eventually resulting in the closure of the upper hall in 2007 following structural concerns caused by water ingress.

Today, Victoria Hall remains an important historic and civic landmark within Glossop. Working in collaboration with Friends of Victoria Hall (FOVH), this project explores the future potential of the building as a sustainable, accessible, and community-led civic space. Responding to ongoing restoration works and the wider ambition to return the building to active public use, the project investigates how Victoria Hall can once again become a central social and cultural asset for the town.

The project focuses on the social value of shared public spaces and the role historic buildings can play in strengthening community identity, participation, and inclusion. Through archival research, site analysis, community engagement, and spatial investigation, the work explores opportunities for adaptable and flexible uses within the building, including the introduction of movable partitions and revised programming strategies to support a broader range of community activities. By considering accessibility, long-term stewardship, and community ownership, the project aims to contribute ideas that support the ongoing regeneration of Victoria Hall and reinforce its role as an active civic resource for future generations.

Meeting the Collaborators

Our first meeting, the group met to review the project brief, and begin developing ideas for the introductory poster. We explored layouts and graphic strategies that could communicate the historical and social significance of Victoria Hall.

That evening, we met the Friends of Victoria Hall (FOVH), who expanded on the brief by explaining the building's history, its role in Glossop, and the challenges it currently faces. They outlined the ongoing restoration efforts and their ambition for the hall to become a sustainable, community-run space supporting a wide range of public activities.



Fig 1. Group Seminar developing initial project poster

This meeting shifted our focus from simply preserving the building to considering how its spaces could better support community engagement, accessibility, and long-term use. Using the insights from FOVH, we refined the direction of the poster, shaping its visual identity and narrative around both the site's heritage and its future community potential.



Fig 2. Meeting Sonja from FOVH and Steven from Fold

Fig 3. Development for the group poster



Site Visit

A small group of students carried out an initial site visit to gain a clearer understanding of the scale, condition, and spatial qualities of Victoria Hall. This allowed us to gather photographs, measurements, and first-hand observations that helped ground our analysis in the physical reality of the building rather than relying solely on drawings or written descriptions.

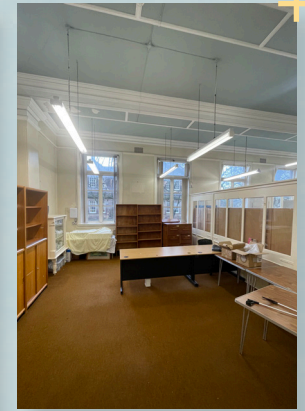


Fig 4. Existing back rooms currently used for storage & 'tea' room



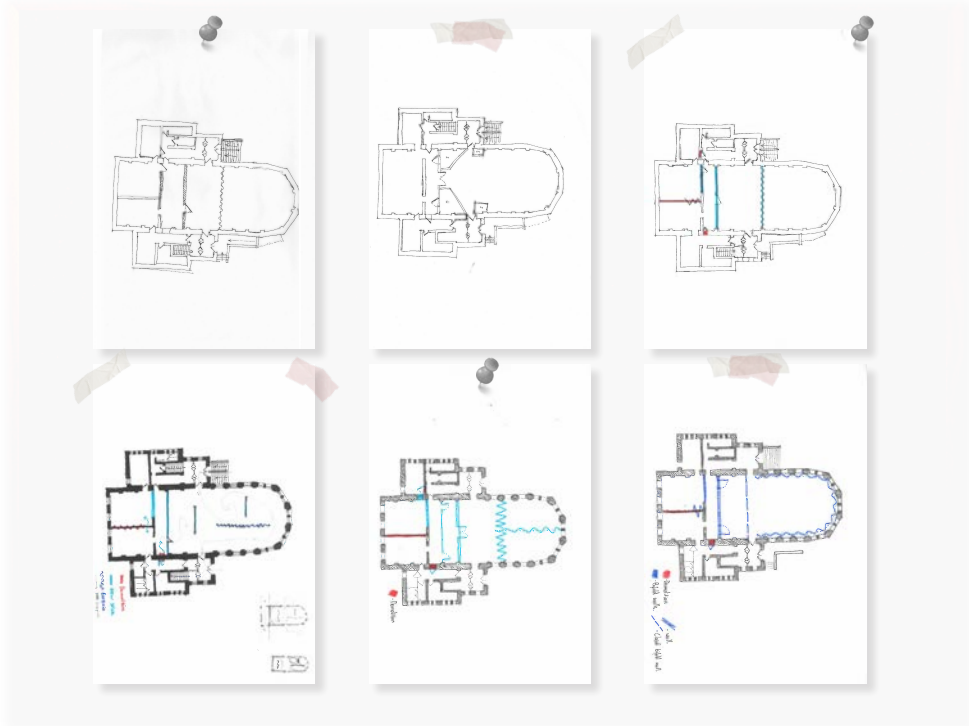
Fig 5. Site Visit with the team! [Left to right: Matthew, Vishal, Maria, Keeleigh]



Fig 6. Main open space currently in use

FOVH advised us to focus on the ground floor spaces, as repair works were underway in both the basement and first floor levels. Concentrating on the accessible areas gave us insight into how the building is currently used and highlighted key opportunities and constraints, including circulation challenges, underused rooms, and the potential for improved accessibility and community focused layouts.

Initial Concepts



One of the key issues identified during our early analysis was the lack of adequate storage and the inefficient arrangement of existing spaces within the building. Many rooms were being used in ways that didn't align with their potential, leading to cluttered circulation and limited flexibility. By rethinking the layout and relocating certain functions, we recognised that significant space could be freed up for much-needed storage without compromising the building's heritage character.

It also became clear that improvements were required to meet fire and life-safety standards. Introducing a new fire-protected corridor emerged as a crucial intervention, helping to create safer and more coherent circulation routes. Alongside this, we explored the use of flexible, movable partitions to allow spaces to be divided or opened up as needed. This combination of improved safety, clearer organisation, and adaptable layouts formed the foundation of our initial concept for enhancing the building's usability.

Fig 7. Development Sketches

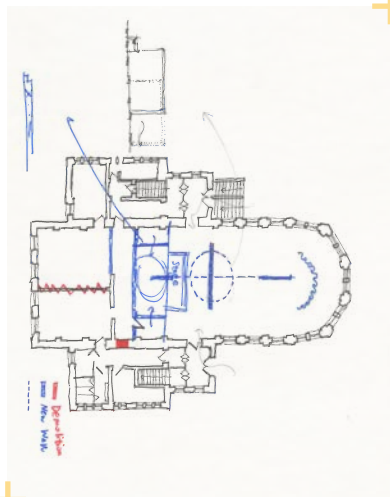


Fig 8. Development Sketches

Precedents



Waveform Acoustics WorkWell Curtains

Acoustic curtains offer a flexible, modern solution for reducing exterior noise by absorbing sound and muffling high frequencies, while also helping partition spaces according to their intended use. They are especially suitable for office and learning spaces to enhance interior acoustics, and transform the spaces inside. This is suitable for sectioning off areas within Victoria Hall to create quiet zones for more focused areas (e.g. art workshops), away from noisier engagement activities (e.g. dance).



Yanko Designs Flexible Cardboard Partitions

These flexible cardboard partitions provide lightweight, expandable solutions for dividing spaces. Made from sustainable paper or corrugated cardboard, they offer visual privacy, light diffusion, and acoustic absorption while remaining fully recyclable. This is ideal for Victoria Hall for the dynamic use of space for activities like co-working spaces, yoga classes, art workshops, exhibitions, etc.



The Apple House - OKRA Bifolding Panels

These bifold doors are hinged, paneled doors that slide and fold back to connect the outdoor and indoor. Taken for its form, and the way they neatly slide and collapse to form intimate zones, this folding mechanism informs our partition design, offering adaptable privacy and zoning while upholding visual flow and seamlessness.

Model Making Pt 1

The first model was a quick 1:100 sketch study made from cardboard to help the group understand the overall scale and spatial organisation of Victoria Hall. This model was particularly useful for members who were unable to attend the site visit, as it provided a clear sense of the building's volume, proportions, and internal relationships. Its simplicity allowed us to rapidly test ideas, discuss circulation routes, and identify areas that felt constrained or underused. Although the initial intention was to use this model during the engagement activity, its small size limited how effectively participants could interact with the spaces or visualise potential changes.



Fig 9. Making of the Model



Fig 10. Making of the Model

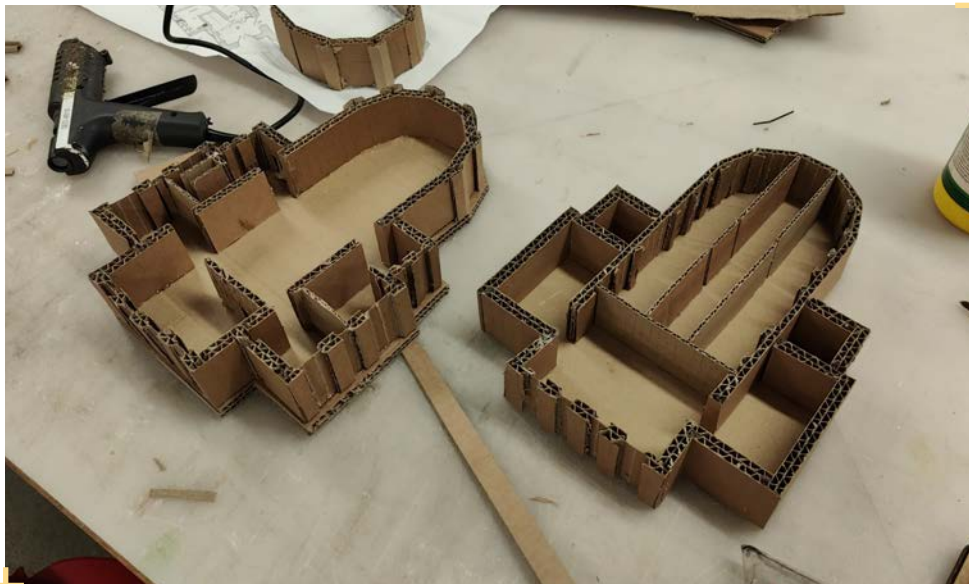


Fig 11. 1:200 model of ground floor and basement floor

Model Making Pt 2



Fig 12

To better support the engagement workshop, we produced a second, larger model that offered a more practical and interactive platform for exploring design ideas. This model was built at a scale that allowed participants to physically move elements and test different spatial arrangements. A series of pre-assembled components, including curtains, bifold walls, and flexible partitions, were created to represent potential interventions. These movable pieces enabled participants to experiment with dividing, opening, or adapting spaces, helping us gather feedback on how the building could support a wider range of community uses. The larger model became a key tool in understanding flexibility, user needs, and the practical implications of our early concepts.



Fig 13

Fig 12,13,14,15 Making of the Model



Fig 14



Fig 15

Engagement Activity

During the engagement activity, we worked with FOVH to gather public feedback through three interactive tasks: a Q&A comment table, annotated floor plans, and a 3D model with movable partitions. The model proved the most revealing, as participants could physically test different layouts. Many responded positively to curtains for their acoustic, lighting, and thermal benefits, while the flexible partitions showed how adaptable layouts could support multiple activities at once. These insights reinforced the wider survey themes around flexibility, accessibility, and the need for more welcoming, multipurpose spaces.



Fig 16 During the engagement event

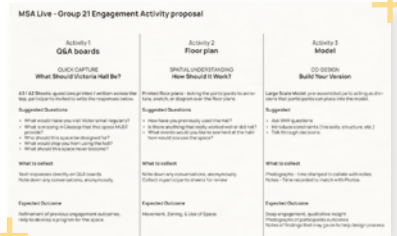
Although the original brief emphasised youth focused areas, community responses pointed toward a broader set of priorities. Many felt that Glossop already had youth facilities and instead expressed a desire for more arts, culture, coworking, and indoor activity spaces. This aligned with survey findings that highlighted demand for creative workshops, performance spaces, and inclusive community hubs. As a result, our design direction shifted toward multifunctional, adaptable spaces rather than single-use rooms, ensuring the proposals reflected the community's aspirations for a vibrant and flexible Victoria Hall.



Fig 17 Setting up for the engagement event



Fig 18 Setting up for the engagement event



User Group & Programme

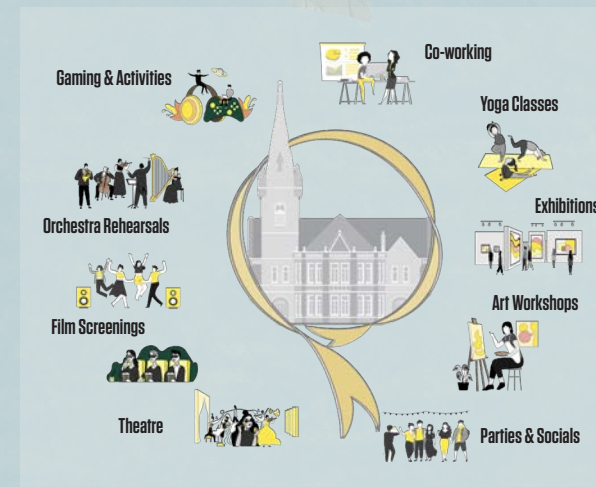


Fig 19 User group diagram

From the engagement activity, we identified a broad mix of potential user groups, ranging from arts and culture organisations to coworking communities, youth groups, fitness classes, and casual drop-in users. Mapping these groups helped us understand how different activities overlap and which spaces would benefit from being permanent, flexible, or shared. The potential for Victoria Hall is vast if we consider an efficient use and organised programme to accommodate these user groups.

Using this information, we drafted a weekly programme showing how the building could operate throughout the day. It became clear that Victoria Hall can support a balance of permanent users, adaptable daytime activities, and evening or weekend private hires. This reinforced the need for multifunctional spaces that can shift between uses rather than being tied to a single purpose.

Activity	Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday			
	morning	afternoon	evening	morning	afternoon	evening	morning	afternoon	evening	morning	afternoon	evening	morning	afternoon	evening	morning	afternoon	evening	morning	afternoon	evening	
Orchestra Rehearsal	Main Hall						Main Hall															
Performance / Film / Theatre / Private Hire			Main Hall	Main Hall	Main Hall	Main Hall			Main Hall					Main Hall				Main Hall				Main Hall
Retreatments			Back Room			Back Room			Back Room					Back Room				Back Room	Back Room	Back Room	Back Room	Back Room
Tea Party								Back Room	Back Room									Back Room				Back Room
Art Workshops		Back Room			Back Room								Back Room					Back Room				Back Room
Exhibitions										Main Hall	Main Hall		Main Hall	Main Hall								
Yoga / Sports		Main Hall			Main Hall			Main Hall														
Co-working	Back Room				Back Room					Back Room			Back Room				Back Room					
Gaming and Team space														Back Room				Back Room				Back Room
Dance														Back Room				Main Hall				Main Hall

Used all the time

Flexible / Seasonal / booked

Fig 20 Activity table

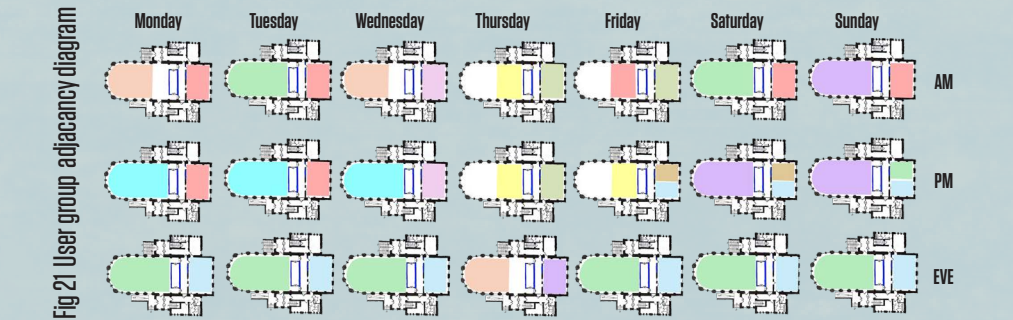


Fig 21 User group adjacency diagram

Proposal

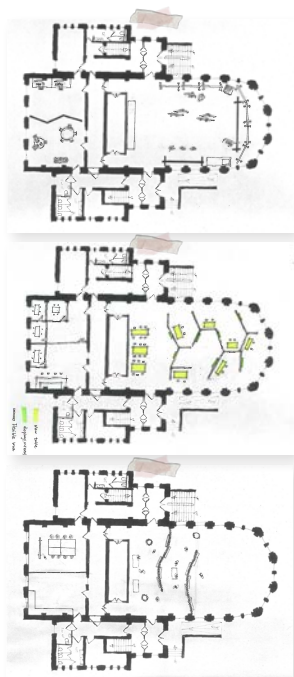


Fig 22 Design Development Plans

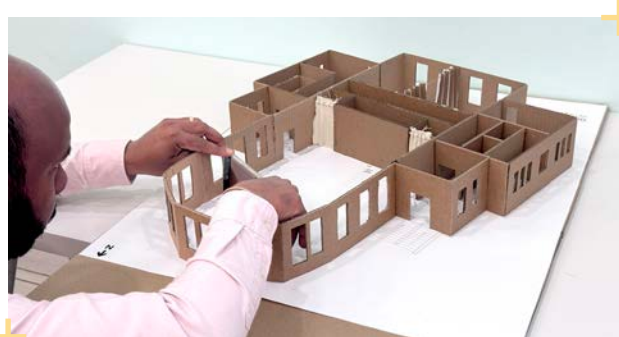


Fig 23 Proposed Partition 1:50 Model

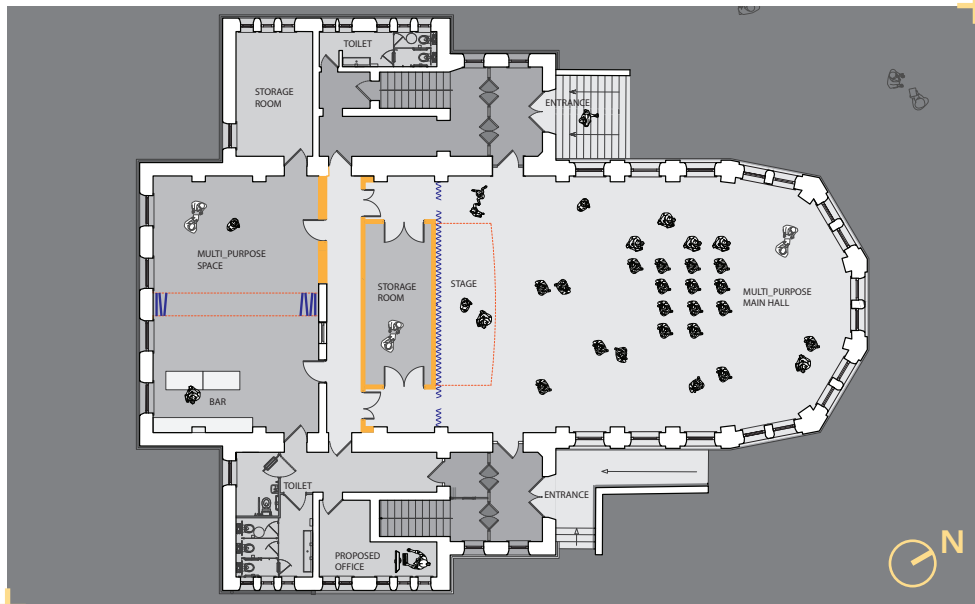


Fig 24 Proposed Ground Floor Plan

Proposal



Fig 25 Performance Space



Fig 26 Yoga Classes



Fig 27 Potential Exhibition Space utilising flexible partitions

Advisory Notes

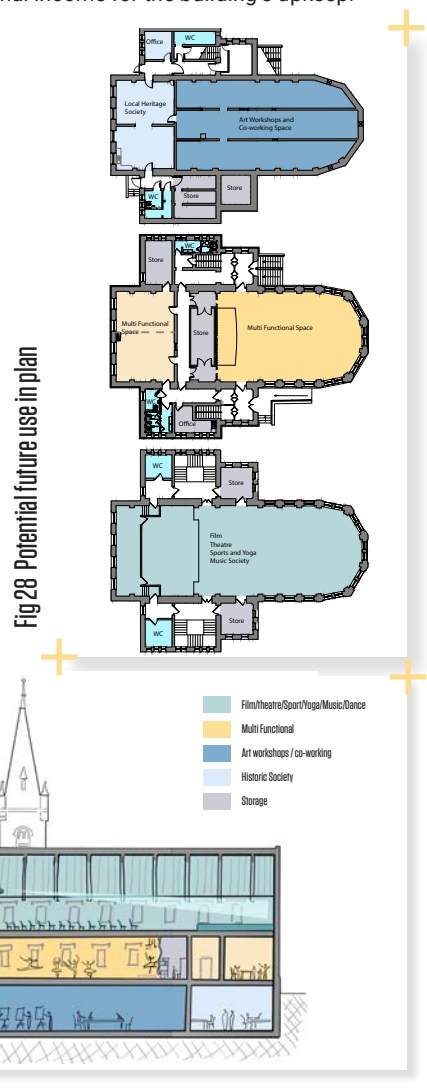
The proposals developed through this project focus primarily on the ground floor of Victoria Hall in response to the areas currently accessible during restoration works. However, discussions with Friends of Victoria Hall (FOVH) identified significant future opportunities within the wider building that could further strengthen its long-term sustainability and community value.

The basement level, originally included within the brief, is proposed to initially support the local heritage society through archive and storage uses. In the future, the void spaces beneath the main hall could potentially be cleaned, lined, and adapted into art workshops, maker spaces, co-working environments, or small offices, helping to generate additional income for the building's upkeep.

Once restoration works to the upper hall are complete, the second floor could again accommodate theatre, film screenings, music groups, yoga classes, and indoor sports activities. Relocating these functions upstairs would allow the ground floor to operate more flexibly for private hire, exhibitions, community events, and seasonal activities. This approach would allow Victoria Hall to operate more effectively as a multifunctional civic venue capable of supporting overlapping uses throughout the week.

Moving forward, it is recommended that FOVH continue exploring funding opportunities through organisations such as The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England, alongside other heritage and community funding bodies. As the project develops, a wider professional team including architects, surveyors, heritage consultants, acousticians, interior designers, and engineers would help further explore the building's long-term potential.

The feasibility work produced through this project should therefore be understood as an initial step towards bringing Victoria Hall back into active and serviceable use. While the current proposals focus on improving the functionality and flexibility of the ground floor, the wider building could generate income, expand community use, and support the continued care, maintenance, and long-term sustainability of Victoria Hall.



Reflection

Group Collaboration

Collaboration across the group was positive overall, but student engagement was not always consistent. At several points, the workload fell to a smaller core group who took responsibility for keeping the project moving. Despite this, the team maintained a supportive working environment and ensured that key tasks were completed to a high standard.

Communication with the Collaborator

As the FOVH is predominantly volunteer-led, much of our communication took place via email. This ensured that everyone received the same information and allowed updates to be shared clearly and efficiently around the group. Despite their limited availability, the collaborators remained supportive and responsive, and their input helped guide our decisions throughout the project.

Engagement Activity

The engagement activity required coordinated effort, and the group worked well together on the day to encourage participation and gather meaningful feedback. The smaller core team took the lead in preparing materials, setting up the model, and analysing the responses afterwards, ensuring the findings were clearly integrated into the design process.

Group Structure

The group structure was led predominantly by the Master of Architecture student, who guided the rest of the team through each stage of the project. This leadership helped maintain clarity, distribute tasks, and support undergraduate students who were less familiar with the workflow.

Tools Used

We used a combination of physical and digital tools to support our work. In model making, we aimed to use recyclable and economical materials, relying on cardboard, reused components, and free resources available within the studio. Digital platforms helped us coordinate tasks, share files, and compile portfolio content efficiently.

Strengths & Weaknesses

The group's strengths lay in adaptability, communication, and the willingness of the core members to take initiative when needed. Our ability to respond to feedback, refine ideas, and use both physical and digital tools effectively contributed to a coherent and community-focused design outcome.

Problems we faced and how we dealt with them

The main challenges were inconsistent participation and the uneven distribution of workload. We addressed this by redistributing tasks, setting clearer deadlines, and relying on the leadership of the M.Arch student to keep the project on track. Practical issues also arose, such as needing to remake the engagement model at a larger scale, but these were resolved quickly through collective problem-solving and resourceful use of materials.

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:

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