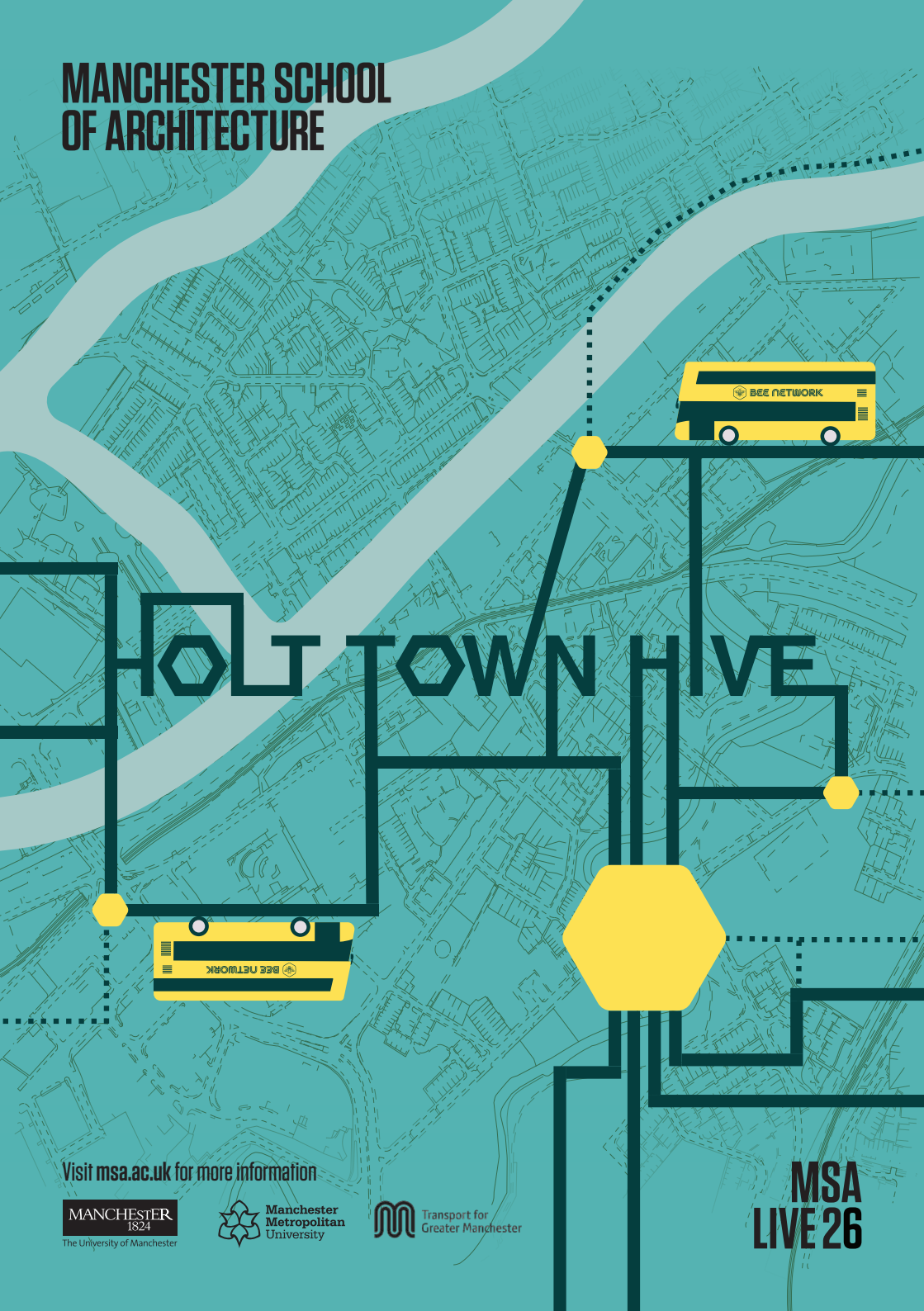
MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE



HOLT TOWN HIVE

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MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

Manchester Metropolitan University

Transport for Greater Manchester

MSA LIVE 26

Team

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Collaborators

Transport for Greater Manchester was formed in 2011, now the regional body for Greater Manchester; they manage buses, trams, Starling Bank cycle hire and active transport routes like cycle and foot paths. They work alongside other governing bodies like Highways England to coordinate day to day operations to deal with incidents as well as have smooth traffic integration throughout the city. They are also a part of the Green City region partnership, making them partly responsible for the Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan.

Currently, TfGM is working towards a more integrated transport system through their Bee Network. They are planning to create tickets that would work over multiple systems like the cycle hire. Furthermore, being part of the Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan, they are pleading to be fully electric and integrated by 2030, the area being fully carbon neutral by 2038 and have half of all journeys in greater Manchester be made by active or public transport. Safety is also a large part of TfGM; creating a safe and welcoming environment for local residents is important as they want 95% of residents to feel safe on Bee Network transport by 2030.

We met with James McCutcheon and other representatives from TfGM's bus division, whose interpretation of the brief closely aligned with these priorities. The brief was a vision for a travel hub which emphasised integration between different public transport modes and active travel, alongside the creation of a safe, inclusive space for all residents. They also highlighted the importance of contributing positively to the local community, enhancing greenery, and supporting a shift away from car dependency to help reduce pressure on surrounding road networks.

Introduction

Holt Town Hive

The Holt Town development is a project led by Manchester City Council to transform 30 hectares of underutilised land into a residential-focused modern neighbourhood. The development promises to create a sustainable and inclusive neighbourhood with 4,500 new homes and 30,000 m² commercial space

In line with the development of Holt Town, this project demands the development of an adaptable concept for a Travel Hub that can be utilised in various locations across Manchester, the first one being in Holt Town. Functioning as an enhanced bus stop that houses multiple functions and connects different modes of travel, the Travel Hub project prioritises passenger experience, placemaking, and safety. The project combines frequently used facilities with bus stops, creating a time-efficient, multifunctional space.

The Travel Hub can leverage the strategic location of Holt Town between New Islington and Etihad Campus, acting as a bridge between the city centre and the sports/entertainment district. With the anticipated increase in the area's population density with the upcoming Holt Town development, a travel hub is required to manage the heavy traffic in this corridor.

To meet the Manchester City Council's net-zero targets and the sustainability aim of the Holt Town development, multi-modal Travel Hubs that connect different transportation types can be utilised to create a "low-car" neighbourhood that encourages pedestrian movement and public transportation.

With the Co-op Live and Etihad Campus located close by, the area experiences a significant amount of incoming and outgoing traffic. To relieve the pressure that this increased traffic puts on existing modes of transportation, the Travel Hub can function as another option that provides transportation services.

Bus stops are often perceived as undesirable places to spend time. By rethinking the travel hub as a multi-functional space that incorporates vendors, charging stations, parcel lockers, and cycle storage, it becomes a more welcoming and usable environment. With these diverse functions integrated into the Travel Hub, the space becomes more active and better overlooked, which in turn enhances natural surveillance and increases the perceived sense of safety.

Project Timeline

Meeting the Collaborator and Poster Design

Site Visit

Timeline, Ethics, Engagement Planning

Collaborator Feedback

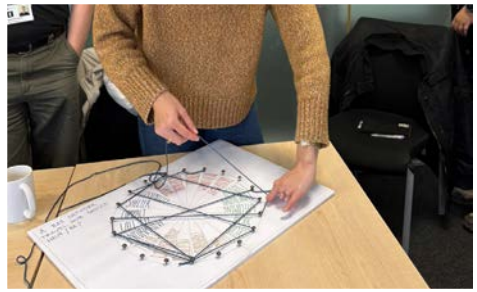
Design Workshop

Engagment Activity

Intensive Week

Presentation

Pizza Party!



Our engagement activity consisted of a series of three tasks:

1. **Visual Brainstorming:** We asked our collaborators to write or draw the first thing that came to their minds when they thought of a travel hub on a large roll of paper.
2. **Thread Mapping:** We created a wheel with different phrases under the categories “tangible”, “intangible”, “materiality”, and “location” that complete the sentence, “A Bee Network Travel Hub should have/ be…”, with our collaborators connecting the preferred phrases using thread.
3. **Cool - Not Cool:** We gathered a collection of travel hubs in various sizes, styles, and forms, for our collaborators to point out the “cool” and “not cool” aspects of each precedent.

Through this we gathered crucial information regarding our collaborators’ expectations and preferences, which played an important role in our design development process.

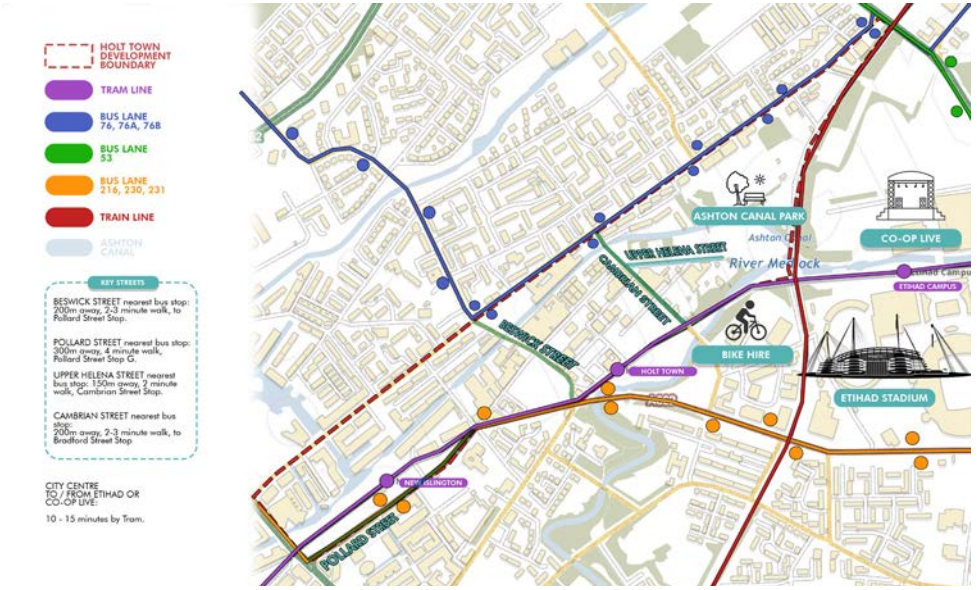
Site Visit

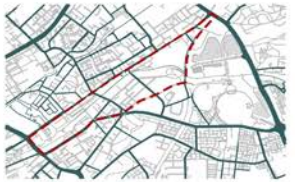
We visited the site alongside our collaborator, Transport for Greater Manchester, and a representative from Manchester City Council. During the visit, we walked from the Etihad Stadium through Holt Town towards New Islington, allowing us to experience the area at a pedestrian scale rather than only through maps and planning documents.

Throughout the walk, Shelagh explained the wider regeneration strategy and long-term vision for Holt Town, while conversations with the collaborators provided insight into the relationship between large-scale event infrastructure, multimodal transport systems and future urban growth. Discussions around the Etihad Stadium and Co-op Live highlighted the significant movement pressures experienced during event days, as well as the importance of creating a more connected and accessible public realm for future residents and visitors.

Experiencing the site in person helped us better understand the fragmented urban condition of Holt Town, including the contrast between active public spaces, vacant industrial land and disconnected movement routes. Observing the canal corridors, existing transport infrastructure and surrounding redevelopment areas also revealed opportunities for the Travel Hub proposal to function not only as a transport interchange, but as a civic mobility space capable of reconnecting different forms of public life across the area.

Site Analysis





ROAD NETWORK

GREEN SPACES

BUILDING DISTRIBUTION

VACANT LAND

PUBLIC GATHERING

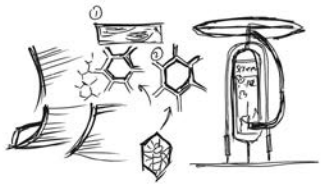
Vacant areas are widely distributed across Holt Town, reflecting its post-industrial and transitional urban condition. Meanwhile, public gathering activities are mainly concentrated around event destinations, canal-side public spaces and local civic corridors, revealing a fragmented pattern of public life and opportunities for future activation.

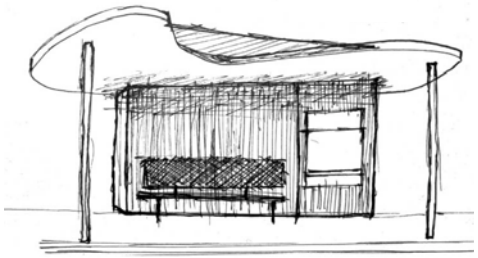
ACTIVE EDGES

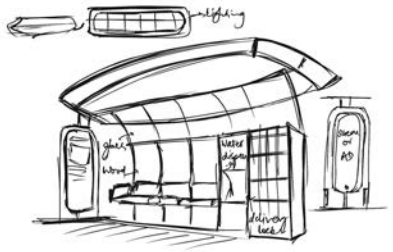
DEAD EDGES

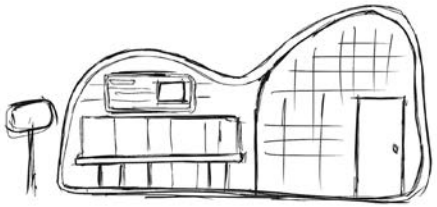
The contrast between active and dead edges reveals the fragmented nature of Holt Town's public realm. While areas along Bradford Road and the canal support everyday civic activity, large sections of the site remain inactive, isolated and dominated by infrastructure or vacant land. This creates an opportunity for the Travel Hub to act as a civic connector, activating neglected edges and improving the pedestrian experience across the area.

Design Development



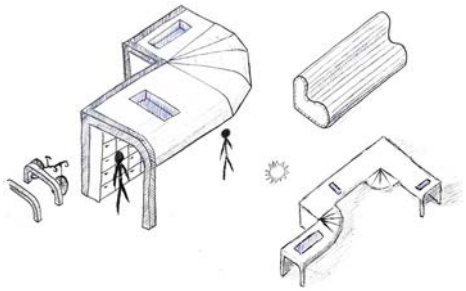




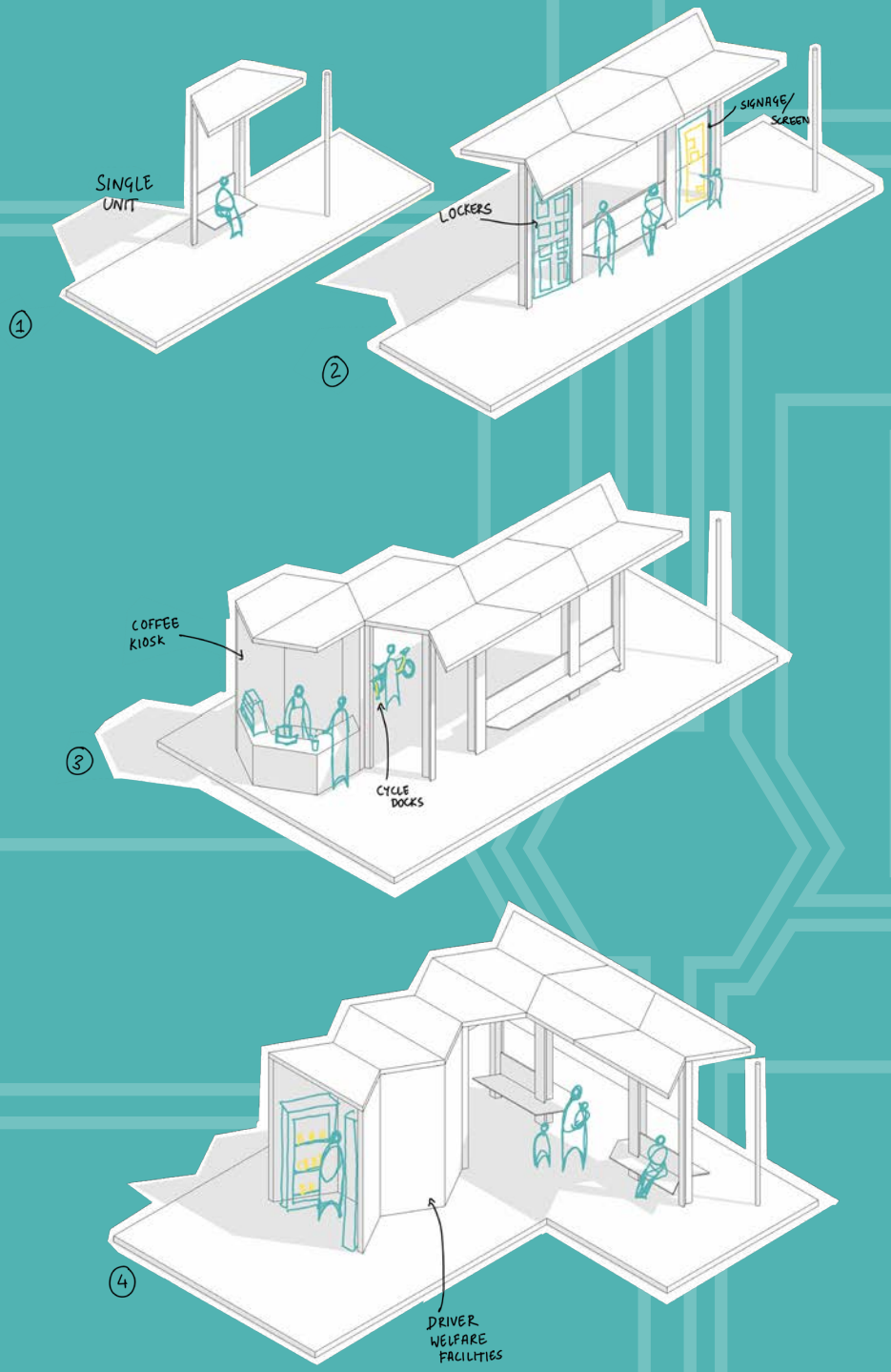


Following our engagement activity, site visits and meetings with the collaborators, a few key words such as accessible, safe, resilient and adaptable kept coming up, which we used to brainstorm our initial ideas for the travel hub as a group. We all understood that the travel hub had to most importantly act as a shelter, and the canopy would play a key role within it.

We tested a range of ideas, from curved roofs to hexagonal geometries, before landing on a design which combined our group concepts into one strong idea. We came up with a modular unit based on a half-split hexagonal geometry, which could then be easily stacked and reconfigured while remaining structurally sound, but also programme wise adaptable depending on its site context.



The modular nature of the design allowed us to explore and test a range of configurations of the hexagonal module, incorporating sheltered units with varying programmes.



Site Strategy

Exploring the opportunities and constraints of different sites within the Holt Town neighbourhood to identify suitable locations for the proposed travel hub.

Site 1: Beswick Street

Benefits
- Active street
- Near existing bus lines

Issues
- Limited space
- Can cause Traffic
- Safety issues due to being close to a junction

Site 2: Pollard Street

Benefits
- Central to Holt Town
- Enough length for 3+ buses
- Low potential impact on traffic

Issues
- Limited Space
- Not close to existing major public transportation lines

Site 3: Upper Helena St.

Benefits
- Central to Holt town
- Can be used to access Etihad Campus and Co-op Live
- Enough length for 3+ buses

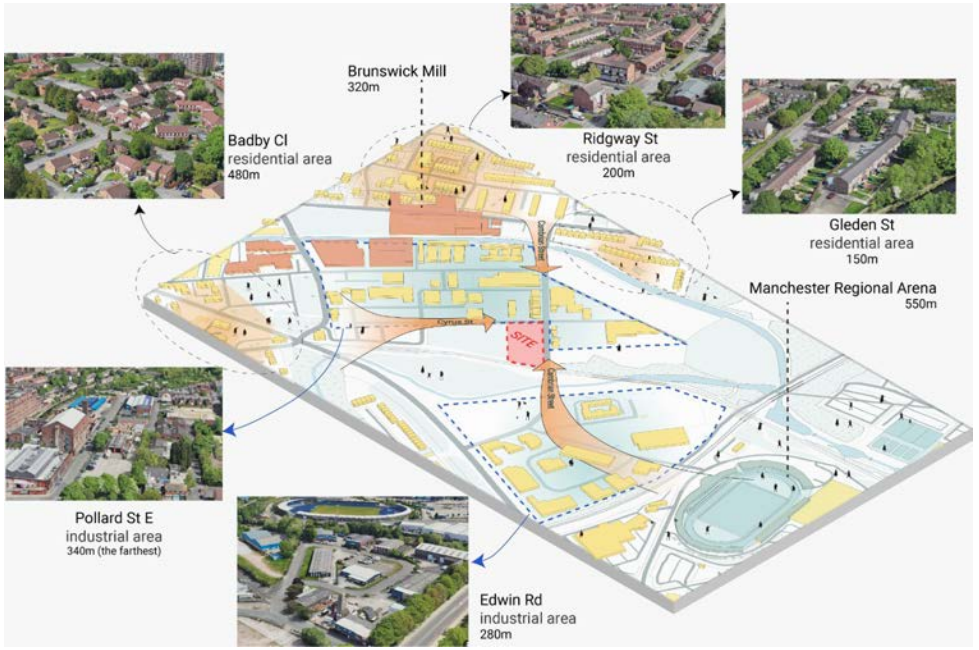
Issues
- Currently a dead end
- Narrow Street
- Junction can cause traffic

Site 4: Cambrian St.

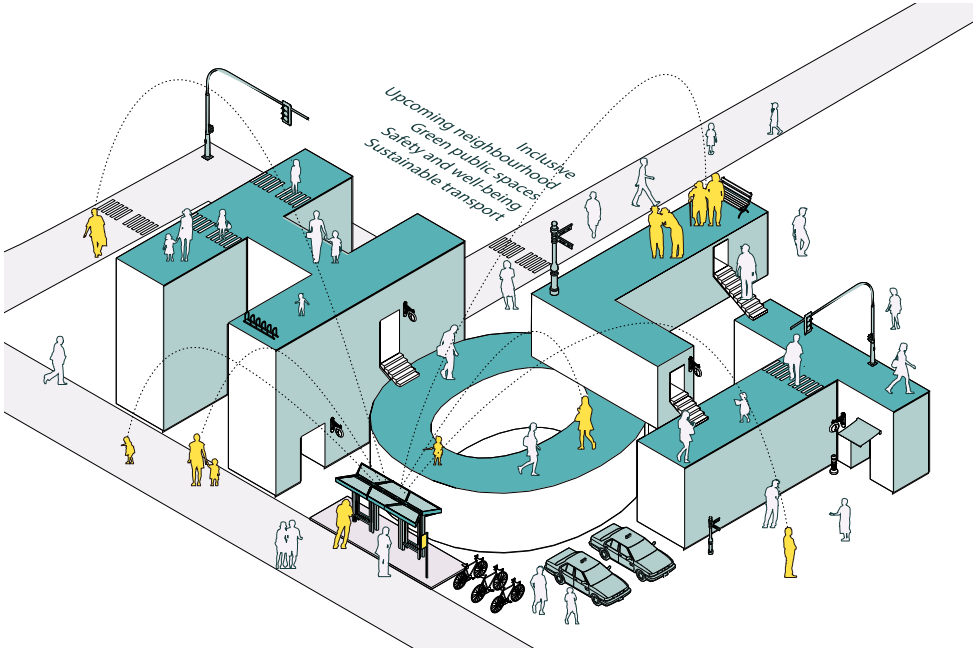
Benefits
- Leads to the sports/ entertainment area
- Enough length for multiple buses
- Close to both of the highly-used tram stops in the area

Issues
- Located on top of a bridge
- Narrow road

Identifying Cambrian Street as the optimal site for the placement of a travel hub.

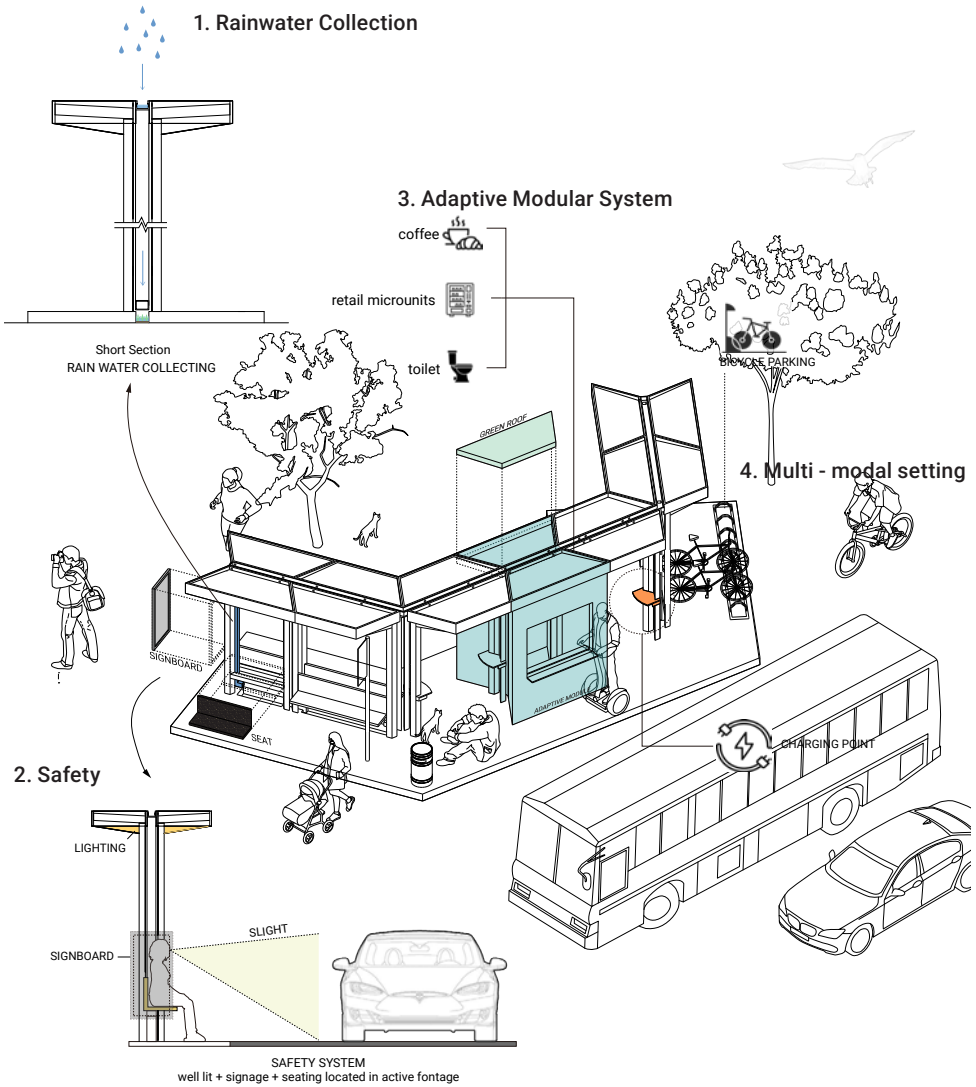


Towards a Future Transport Vision for Holt Town

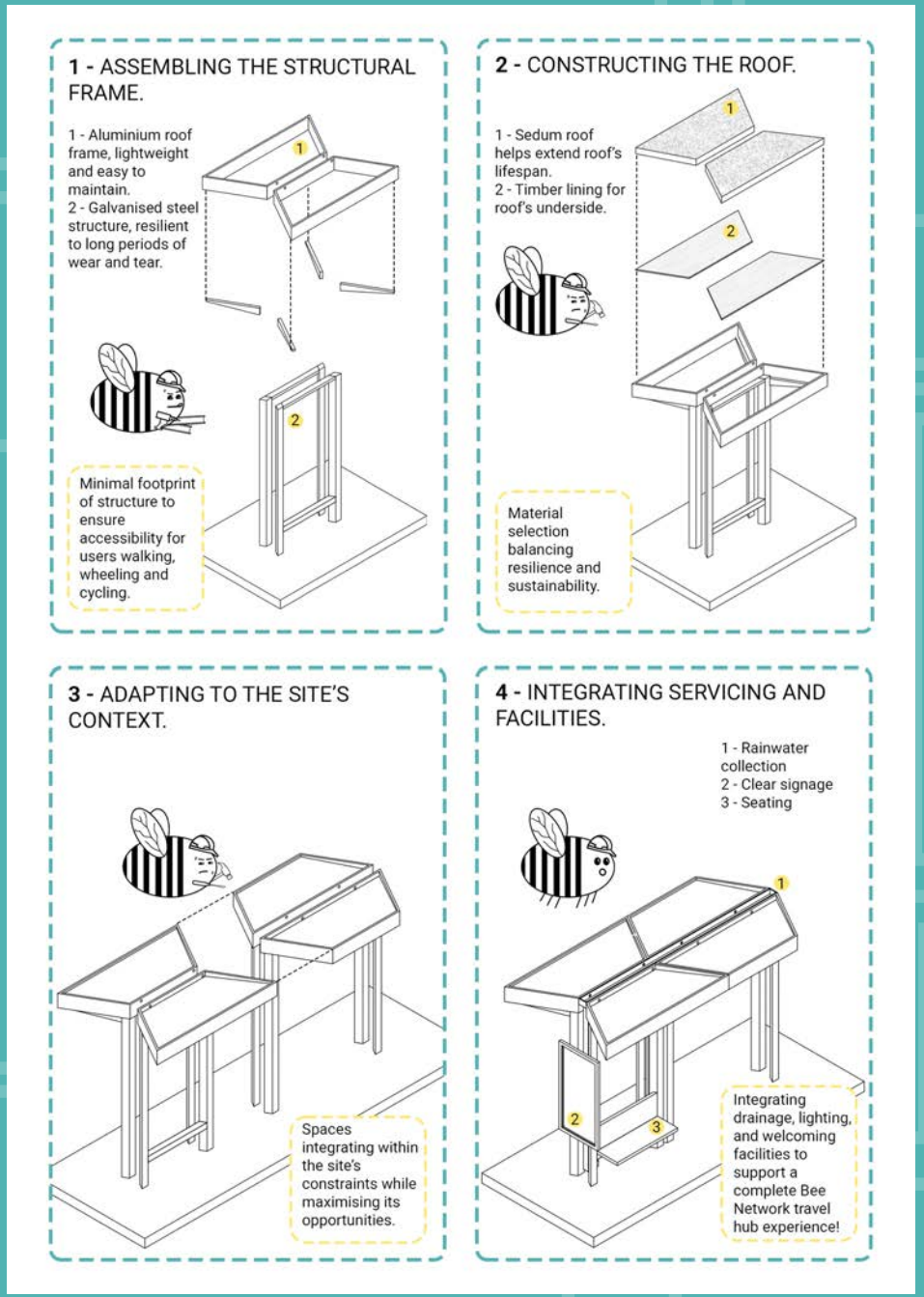


Design Features

Through a thorough feedback loop established with TfGM via monthly meetings, we were able to ensure that the design of the travel hub closely reflected TfGM's values and priorities. The final design is simple yet functional, centred around four key aspects: rainwater collection strategy, safety, an adaptable modular system, and a multimodal transport setting.



Tool Kit



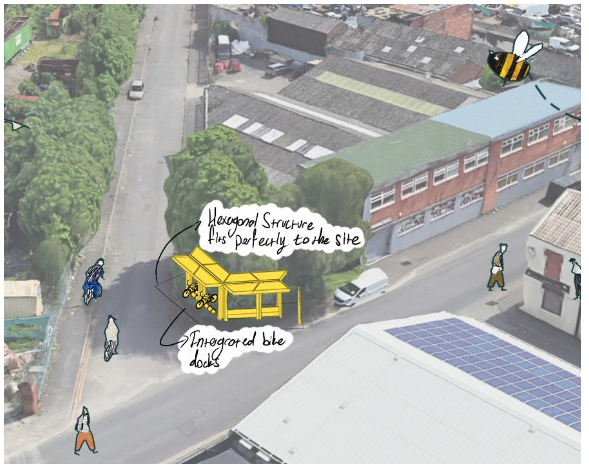
Visuals

Reflection

Throughout the project and the action week, we formed a very cohesive working group, which allowed us to successfully explore and research the idea of designing a multi-modal travel hub. The project pushed us to design not just a public transportation stop, but a space where people can transfer between different modes of transportation and fulfil some of their daily needs and accessibility became a key driver.

We really enjoyed working with our collaborator, Transport for Greater Manchester. The monthly meetings at their office allowed us to understand what transport related design would entail and how to respond to users' and stakeholders' needs effectively. Working together with non-architects, we focused on explaining our ideas simply and effectively, ensuring our proposals were feasible, easy to understand and captivating while also making sure the collaborators insights were heard.

Key lessons learned included the importance of maintaining design flexibility and fostering open, continuous dialogue within the team. We divided tasks according to individual strengths and held regular discussions to ensure constructive feedback was consistently integrated into the evolving design. The action week allowed us to fully immerse ourselves in the project and develop a coherent design proposal with a clear focus on the future of community-focused public transport.



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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