

MANCHESTER SCHOOL
OF ARCHITECTURE

MAGIC MEADOW



Sensory Playground

Skills

This project will involve using various skills both by hand and using digital software for collages, sketching, and 3D modelling. In our workshops we are open to experimenting with new design skills and materials as well as providing mini-workshops on digital software such as Sketchup, Revit, Rhino, Adobe Suite and laser cutting.

Visit msa.ac.uk for more information

Agenda

Redesigning Victoria Park to provide an accessible and inclusive play space for children with a sensory playground, community garden and storytelling space. This new development will provide a safe area for children with disabilities to learn, play and explore in nature to allow for Victoria Park to become a place for people of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy the

Team

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Partners

Friends of Victoria Park Stretford started as Friends of Group, formed by passionate park enthusiasts who met regularly to plan community activities and enhancements. By March 2002, they transitioned into an officially recognized 'Constituted Community Group.' In 2018, they attained charitable status as a Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO), enabling their shift into a social enterprise, managing The Tea Room and Community Building. All profits generated are reinvested into the park community.

Through close collaboration with the local council, they advocate for and implement initiatives aligned with the park and community's interests. These efforts include organizing inclusive events, securing funding for park improvements, maintaining informational boards, undertaking joint projects with schools and community groups, and actively seeking community input.

They utilize various communication channels such as leaflets, posters, press releases, and an updated website, and they promote park events and initiatives. They welcome individuals of all backgrounds and ages to join their cause, appreciating any level of contribution offered.

Introduction

Magic Meadow Sensory Playground

A Playscape designed for sensory exploration and education.

This project is a collaboration with the Friends of Victoria Park community garden. Within the park, there is currently an empty area that we aim to redesign for users with special needs, primarily children with autism. The site has a existing features that are inclusive such as an accessible changing space. However, the park lacks the facilities to encourage users who would need this feature to make use of the park.

Our project involves redesigning Victoria Park to provide an accessible and inclusive play space, featuring a sensory playground, community garden, and storytelling area. This new development will offer a secure environment for children with disabilities to learn, play, and explore in nature. Ultimately, we aim to make Victoria Park a welcoming outdoor space for people of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy safely.

The two-week project commenced with a site visit to the park, providing our group with a comprehensive understanding of the space and its surroundings. Following this, we divided our MSA Live group into three teams: the sensory playground, community garden, and storytelling area, each tasked with exploring design possibilities for specific areas. We engaged in various workshops, including site analysis, diagramming, and brainstorming sessions, resulting in a diverse range of ideas and designs. In this project, we not only had the opportunity to design a real existing park but also gained a deeper understanding and knowledge of the requirements of special needs children. Several considerations must be considered during the design phase to ensure their safety and cater to their needs.

After several days of discussions within the groups, the final design outcomes were unveiled, complemented by physical models illustrating the key components of each area. These models, crafted by the group, serve to visually represent the designs of the different areas. Additionally, we conducted a model-making workshop, facilitated by and for our group members, to learn the techniques of laser cutting for creating these models.

SITE VISIT

This two-week project commenced with a visit to Victoria Park which is about 30 minutes away by bus, offering our group members the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the site and its conditions, preparing them for the subsequent design phase.

The site is located in the southwest corner of Victoria Park, surrounded by dense maple trees. At the top of the site, there is an existing playground managed by the local council. Our designated area is at the bottom half of the site, which is covered by overgrown grass and contains 13 maple trees. Additionally, there are some overgrown shrubs, as well as existing facilities such as a raised flower bed and a wooden chair.



SITE ANALYSIS

Following the site visit, we initiated a site analysis diagramming workshop with all group members to create a comprehensive analysis diagram of an A2 site plan by sketching and annotating on it. This workshop aimed not only to familiarize our members with the site but also to explore the potential of the site to become an engaging play scape.

The base of the site plan included rough areas of the new interventions for the project. This

helped to guide the group and spark ideas that could be rationalised.

The focus on our analysis included access therefore we mapped out how the existing paths could be incorporated into the movement of the new community spaces.

We also highlighted where existing vegetation was located such as existing trees and overgrown shrubs.



PROGRAMME MAPPING

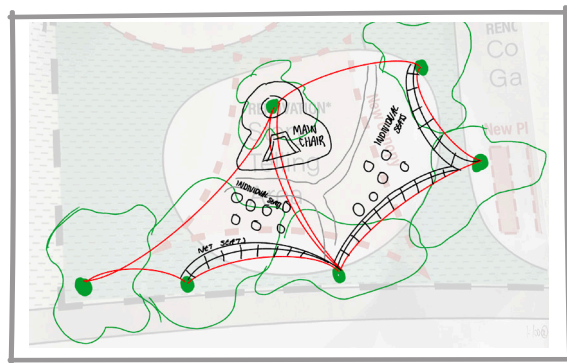
As the overall site was so vast, the three components of the project were split in order to come up with the arrangement of programmes within them.

Each mini site mapped out their uses on a small scale site plan.

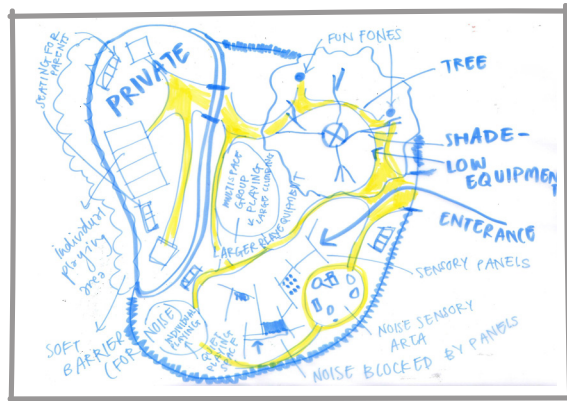
The outcomes from this consisted of sketches, ideas and sparked ideas for the design of the new equipment. In having rough ideas of the equipment and their placements, the preliminary designs for the areas were determined.



Garden Area



Storytelling Area



Playground Area

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The members were divided into three groups: sensory playground, community garden, and storytelling area. Each group, led by MA students, was tasked with exploring the design for their respective area. The process began with brainstorming sessions led by BA and MLA1 students, resulting in numerous sketches and collages that formed the basis of the designs.

Concept

Following the brainstorming session, each group embarked on creating several collages to visually depict their initial ideas and concepts for the spaces.

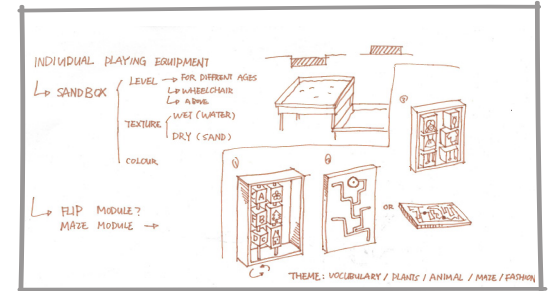
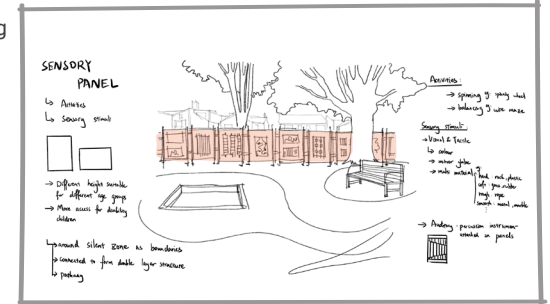
Playground Area

Designing a playscape with distinct areas serving various functions for special needs children, with a focus on sensory exploration using diverse materials and designs. The playground area is segmented into zones catering to different needs, such as privacy, noisy, and quiet zones.

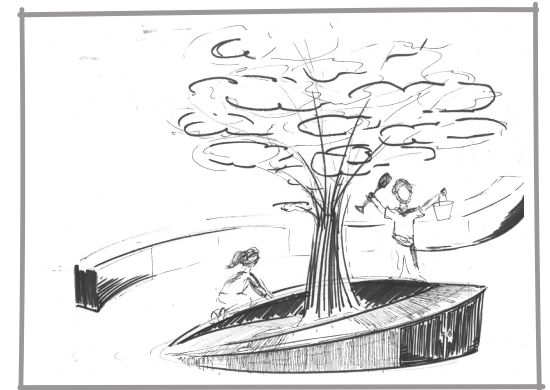
The playground needed to be accessible and stimulating for young children, therefore considerations had been made on making the sensory equipment usable for children with special accessibility requirements.

Garden Area

A community garden that is designed with inclusivity in mind. The gardening beds needed to be accessible, so they vary



Playground Area



Garden Area

in height. This is needed to ensure that people in wheelchairs, people with reduced mobility and children can participate in the garden.

Given that one of our key clients is children struggling with social rules, it is crucial to cultivate a sense of responsibility in them. They might not fully understand how their behaviour affects others, so learning to take care of plants could be a beneficial starting point.

The concept involves a community garden designed to be nurturing, allowing children to make mistakes and learn within this supportive environment. The garden will be gently curved, avoiding sharp perpendicular corners, to create a stronger sense of freedom.

Storytelling Area

The Outdoor Story Telling Area consists of multiple elements to ensure that children of different needs can interact with the space comfortably and safely. Net seating surrounding the perimeter of the space allows for comfortable seating whilst providing a sensory input for those who benefit from movement as a form of self-stimulation. An overhead canopy creates a contained and secluded environment whilst protecting from natural elements.

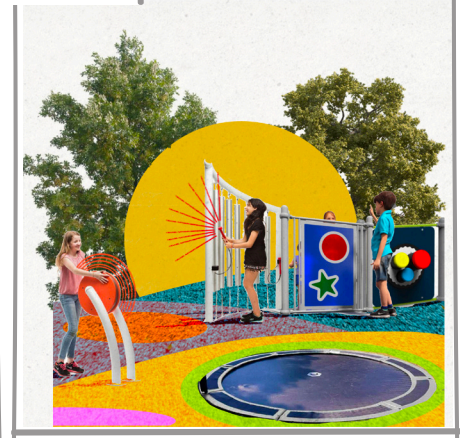
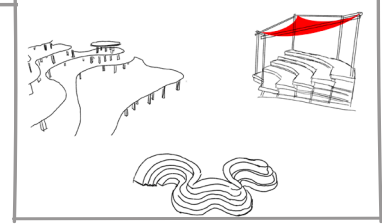
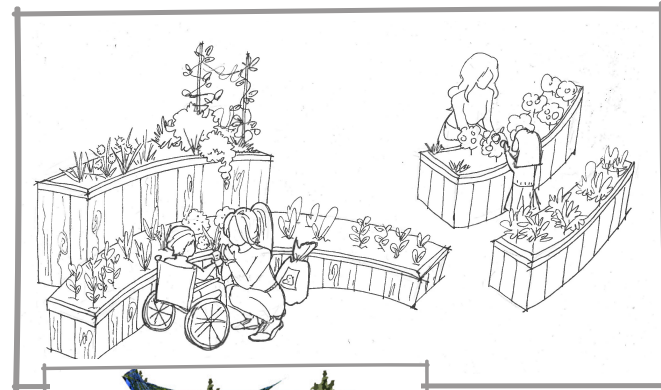
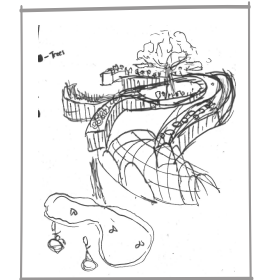
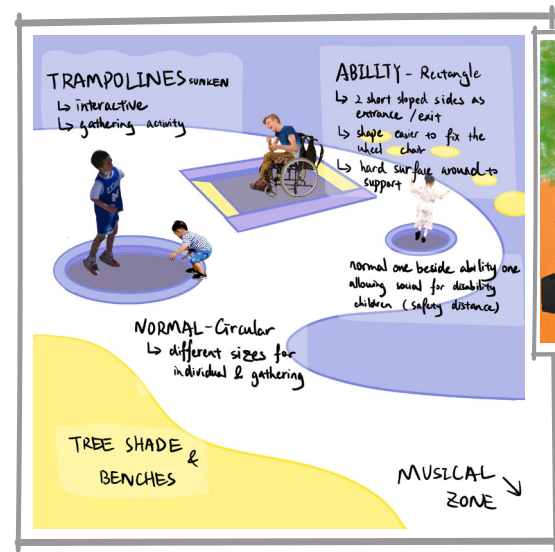
The reader in this space is situated upon a stage style platform, this increasing the visibility of the reader. Finally, the individual seating for the children is the main concept for this design and allows for children of all needs to feel comfortable and included by adding their own personal touch to their seat.



Garden Area



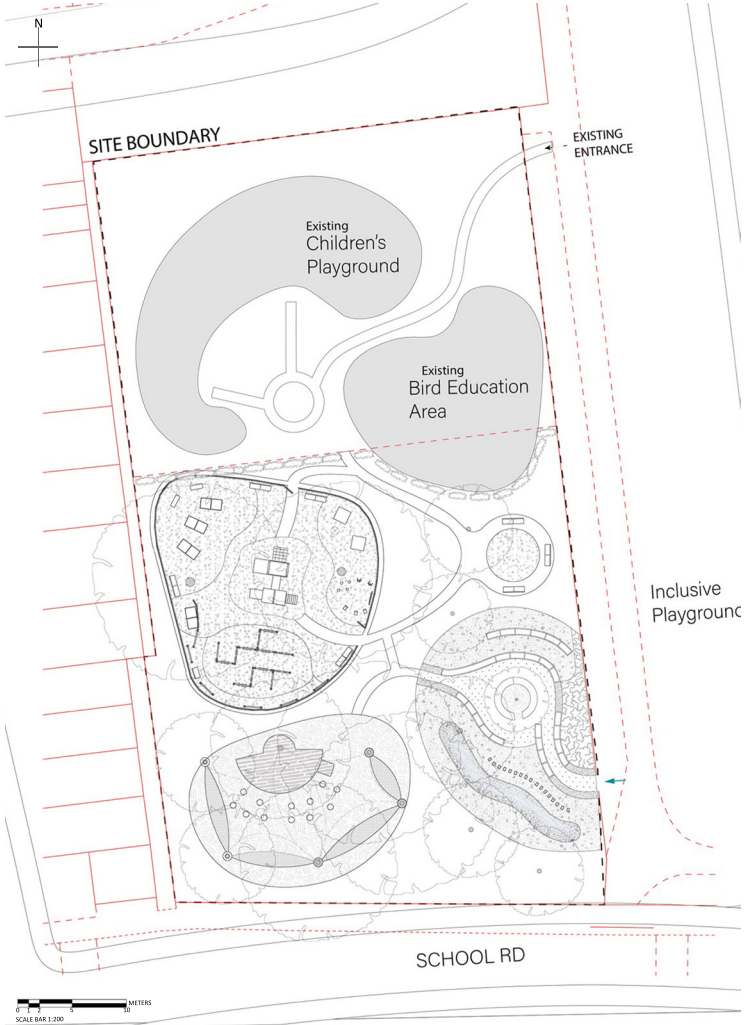
Storytelling Area



FINAL OUTCOME

The ultimate design of the park encompasses three distinct areas: storytelling, community garden and an inclusive playground. The master plan of the site illustrates the spatial arrangement, showcasing the connections between the areas and new access points. A designated

pathway to the new development provides easy access to link the entire space. To support the safety of the children who would primarily use this site, soft and hard boundaries denote the zones on the site.



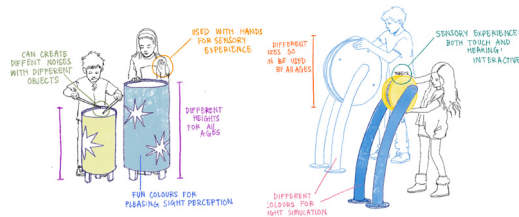
Community Garden

Our final design includes a flowered archway that will serve as an inviting entrance for the children. The area will also have spaces for parents to participate with their children, as well as small planting pods for the children to care for independently.



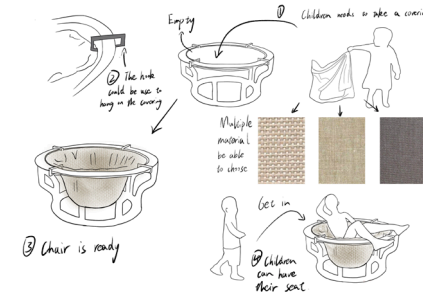
Sensory Playground

The final playground design includes colourful rubber paving and designated play zones. This allows for group playing and individual spaces for when children may feel overwhelmed or overstimulated.



Storytelling Area

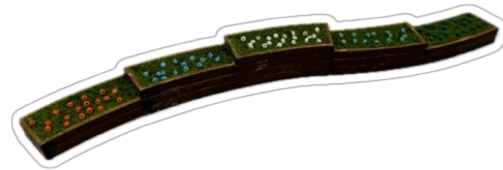
We designed the seating to have interchangeable fabrics so that children with different sensory needs can pick a material for their seat based on what would help them relax and concentrate in this environment.



PHYSICAL MODELS

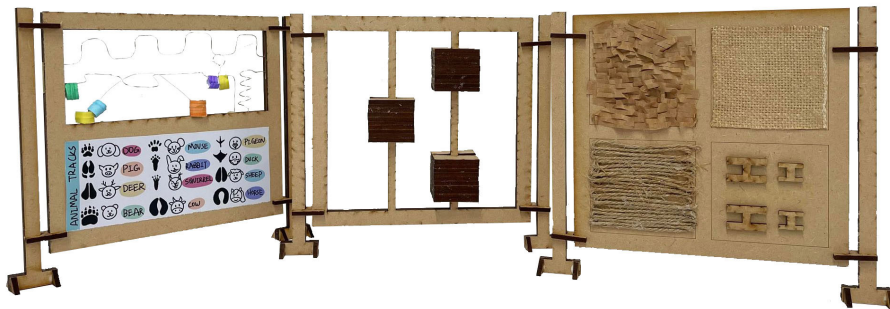
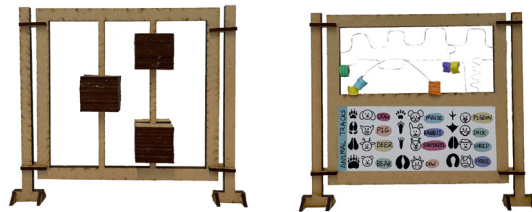
Community Garden

The flower beds model, designed in three heights, caters to various age groups for family gardening. Precision laser cut, each bed uses grass powder and colourful beads to represent different flowers or vegetables. The tiers accommodate young children, older children, and adults, making gardening accessible and enjoyable for all ages.



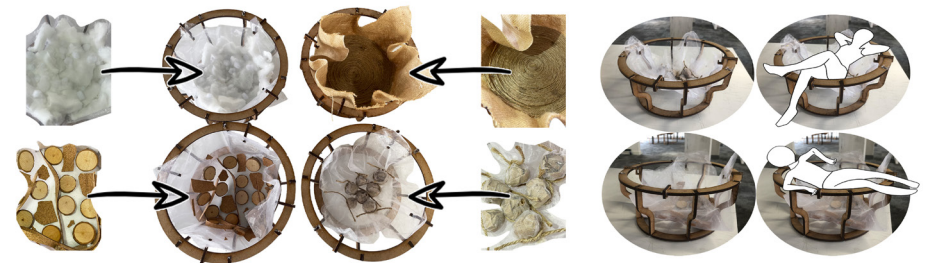
Sensory Playground

The sensory panels were the key element for the playground as they could be configured to create paths within the playground as well as a boundary. The activities on the panels vary with different methods of stimulating the senses such as touch, sight and sound. Some of the panels are also educational as well as interactive.



Storytelling Area

We designed the seating to have interchangeable fabrics so that children with different sensory needs can pick a material for their seat based on what would help them relax and concentrate in this environment. We picked materials with varying textures, thickness and elasticity in order to cover a wide basis of preferences. A simple hoop and hook design allows for children to easily remove and replace their seat fabric themselves.



ABOUT

Each year the MSA LIVE programme unites Masters Architecture year 1 and Masters of Architecture & Adaptive Resuse students with those in BA foundation, year 1 and year 2 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 masters students take the lead in the project conception, brief development, delivery and co-ordination of a small project. Other cohorts joined for an eventful 2 weeks of activities 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 600 students from 6 cohorts in MSA have worked on 40 projects with partners.

QUESTIONS

For questions about MSA LIVE please contact the MSA LIVE team:

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BLOG

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