

MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

REIMAGINING

ALSAGER



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MANCHESTER
1824
The University of Manchester

 Manchester
Metropolitan
University

StudioLab

MSA
LIVE 24

Team

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Partners

The collaborator for this project is the local interest group called StudioLab. They currently consist of Alex Melhuish owner of Home Coffee & Studio in Alsager and Home Studio Architects, and Alex Hough owner of Studio 100a in Alsager. Combining to form StudioLab their aim is to educate, collaborate and facilitate creativity, but to also inspire real-world change by engaging with the people and places around them through projects and initiatives. Using their backgrounds in the arts, architecture alongside their knowledge and connections to the local community, they seek to enact positive change in the town, and have been pivotal in helping organise events and engagements with the people of Alsager.

Throughout the project Alex Melhuish has connected with the community and assisted in advertising our events through posters in his coffeeshop and the local civic centre. While Alex Hough has created an online media presence, documenting the events that transpired over the two week period..

Introduction

REIMAGINING ALSAGER

Reimagining Alsager is an ideas project aiming to generate positive change in the Milton Park area of Alsager. With the focus on a small skatepark and car park, the project seeks to create an engaging, safe, and fun space, accessible by all members of the community, but with a primary focus on the youth of the town. Using mapping, sketching, and model making exercises the team produced a number of design proposals, showing the possibilities of the site. The team hope the proposals will drive momentum for our collaborators to take this further and hopefully enact real positive change in the area.

This is a project deeply rooted in the wants and needs of the community. Over the course of the two-week project the team conducted two public events, seeking feedback and real engagement from members of the local community. The people involved ranged from primary school children to the elderly community of Alsager, giving a much broader spectrum of ideas and local knowledge for the team to consider in their proposals.

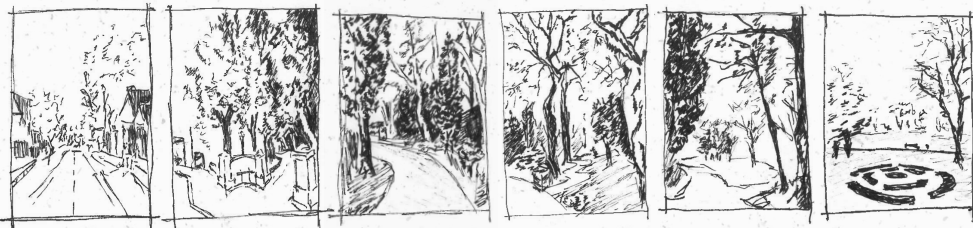
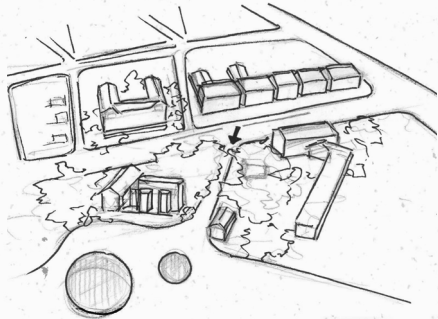
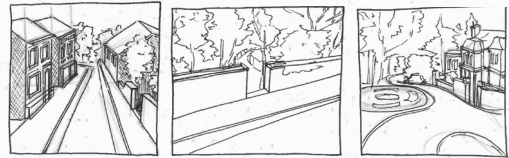
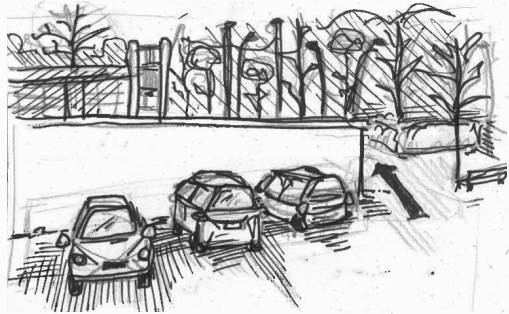
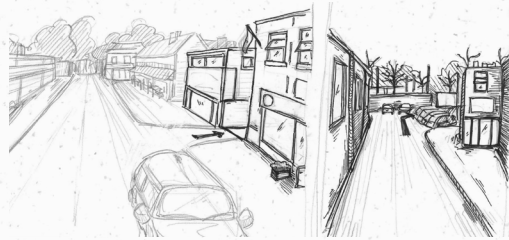
As the title suggests, this is an ideas project aiming to generate momentum for positive change in the area, reimagining the space. The primary goal is to show the possibilities of the site, encouraging the town council and local organisations to fund development in the area. To assist this, the team developed proposals ranging from small affordable interventions to larger scale more expensive concepts. Engagement with the local press, and community events helped create a conversation around the topic of positive development, and hopefully gives our collaborators StudioLab a platform to carry this project forwards in the future.



Site Exploration

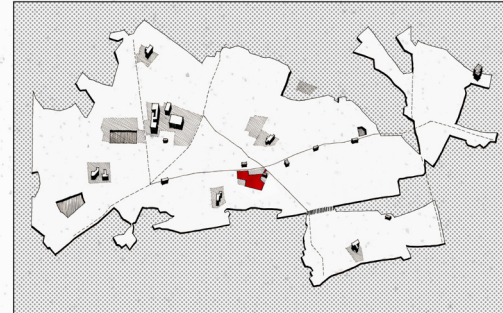
SERIAL VISION

To start the project, the students were tasked with analysing and engaging with the site. To do this they completed sketching, and mapping exercises aiming to show the public perception of the area and the approach to the site, along with its connection to other areas in Alsager.

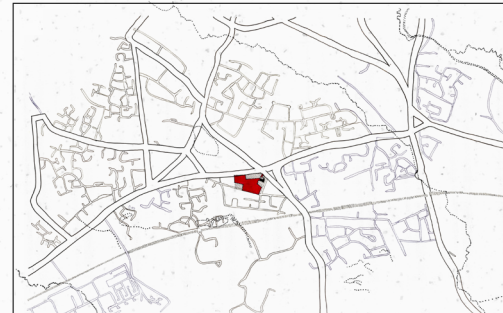


LARGE AND SMALL SCALE MAPPING

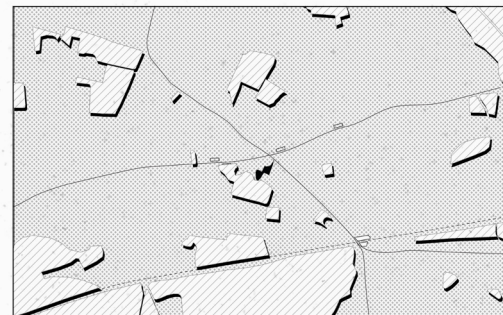
ALSAGER TOWN AREA AND SCHOOLS 1:5000@A1



MAIN ROADS 1:5000@A1

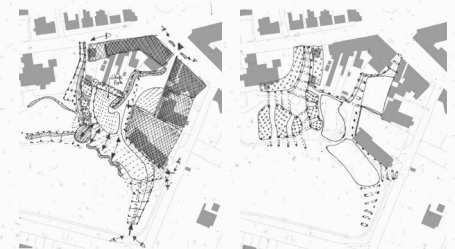


GREEN SPACES AND TRANSPORT 1:2500@A1



IMMEDIATE SITE ANALYSIS

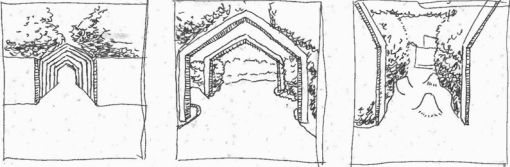
The direction of the main influx of people and the main approaches to site were identified, visibility and possible segmentation of the space were considered.



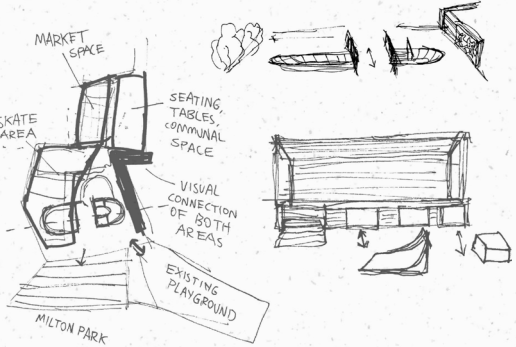
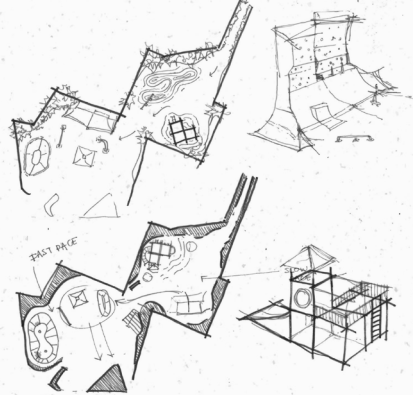
Initial Concepts

The students researched existing skate parks and public spaces, looking for engaging elements that could be applied to our site in Alsager. They then proceeded to sketch and map their initial concept ideas, having group discussions and creating their own proposals for the site.

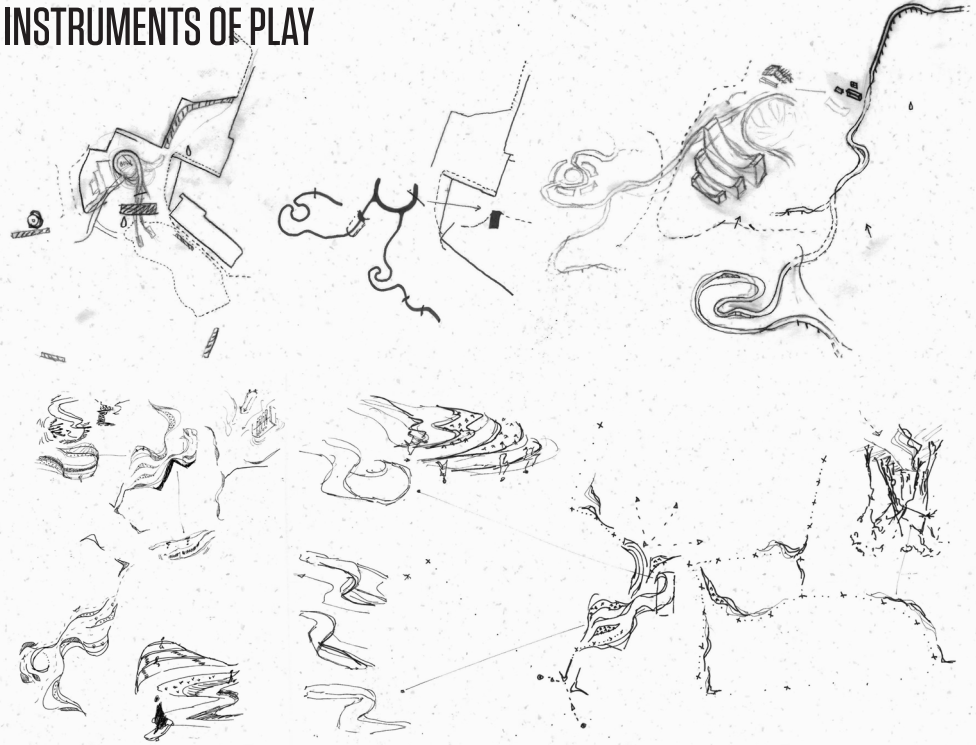
DEFINING THE ENTRANCE



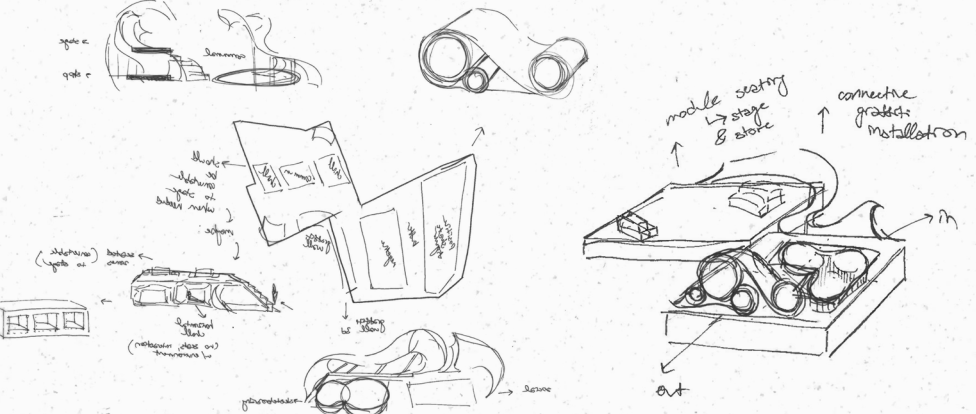
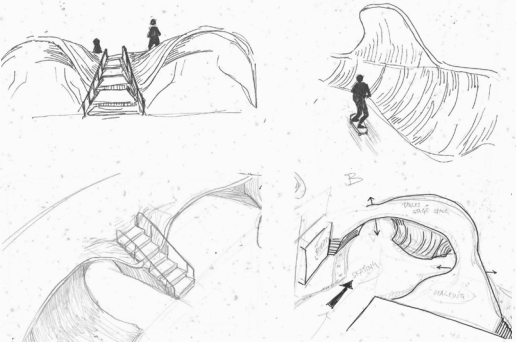
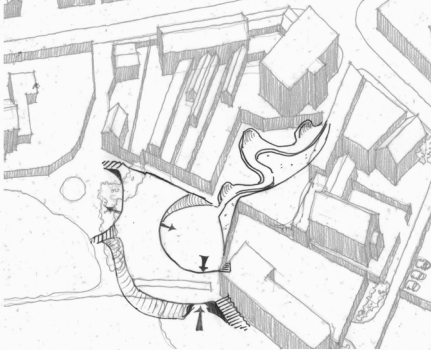
MODULAR APPROACH



INSTRUMENTS OF PLAY



MULTILEVEL SPACE



Initial Concepts

MEETING THE CLIENT AND THE PUBLIC!

In preparation for the first public event, the team created conceptual visualisations of their ideas to help the public understand their concepts. Each visualisation seeks to communicate the variety of possibilities for the site, so the public can clearly identify features they prefer and can suggest improvements for our concepts.

The few concepts developed previously were further explored and finally represented through collages and digital drawings.

IMPROVING THE ENTRANCE



MODULAR APPROACH



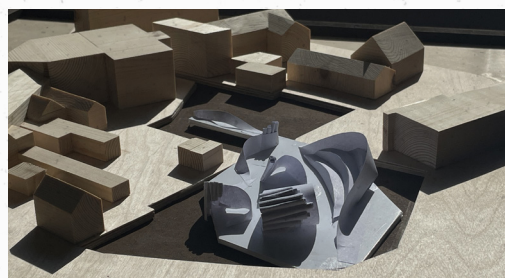
INSTRUMENTS OF PLAY



Model Making

DEVELOPING INITIAL CONCEPTS

The team further developed their design concepts using sketch models. These would be used to help communicate the initial ideas to the local community.



Community Event

PRESENTING INITIAL CONCEPTS

On Monday 13th May, Sam and Oleh visited Alsager with the students design concepts. They set up a small stall outside the Alsager Civic Centre so members of the local community could come and look at the students work. Sam gave a short introduction to the Alsager residents, inviting them to come and chat about the work so far and offer their comments. Members of the local press and town council attended the event and were interested in the design proposals produced so far.

The event was very successful, as many members approached the stall with a positive mindset, focussed on improving their community spaces and helping provide a high-quality safe space for the youth of the town.

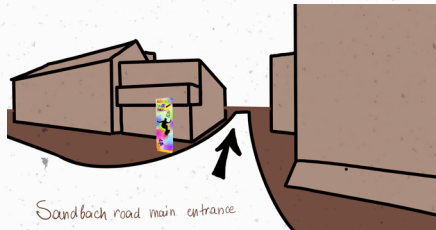
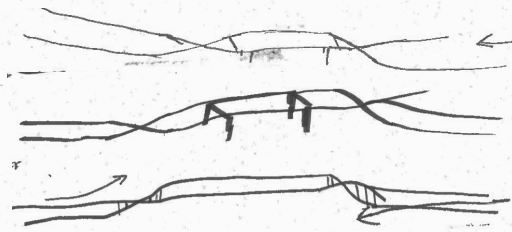
Children from a local primary school attended in the afternoon, offering the group a plethora of exciting and imaginative ideas for the team to work from.



Minor Intervention

PHASE 1

Ilham (BA1), Nazdani (BA1), and Mair (BA1) worked on the Phase 1 design. Focussing on affordable minor interventions with maximum impact, including sculptural street furniture, themed wayfinding devices and an improved graffiti wall area.

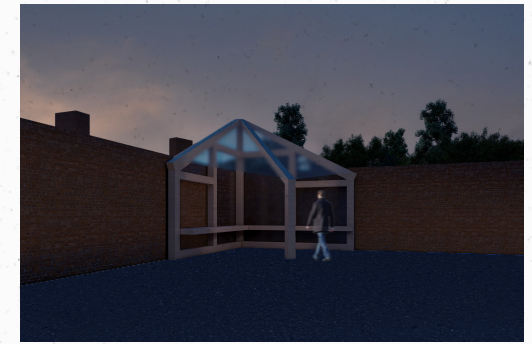
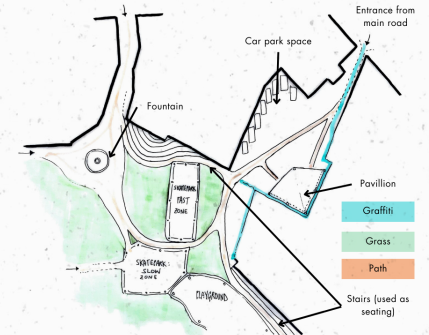


- Curb
- Entrances
- Sign 1
- Sign 2
- Bollards
- Bike Stands
- First Aid Kit
- Parking
- Graffiti Space
- Benches
- Picnic Area
- Painted Paths

Sunset Skatepark

PHASE 2

Isobel (BA2), Aurelie (BA2), and Ece (BA1) produced our Phase 2 design, Sunset Skatepark. Aiming to create an inviting and inclusive public space, with a medium scale intervention. Combining simple elements such as coloured paths with more permanent seating areas and canopies.

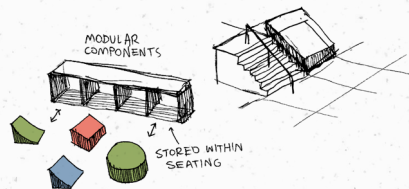
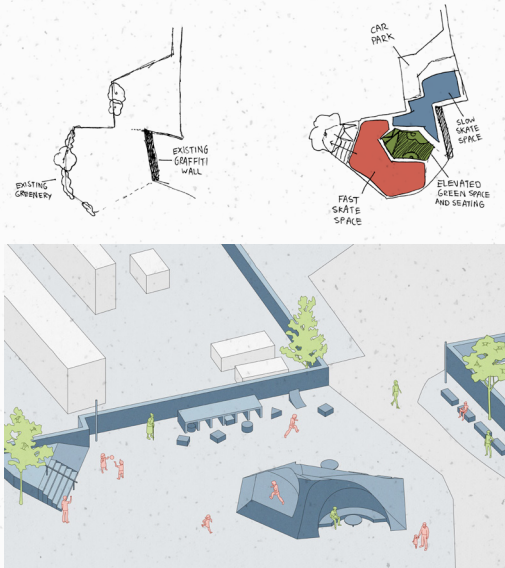


Isleskate Alsager

PHASE 3

Tianle (BA2) and Max (BA1) produced the Phase 3 concept, the largest scale and most extensive intervention of the three. Likely requiring the most funding if it were to go ahead.

Using a central island this proposal separates the scheme into different areas to accommodate the different skill levels of skaters.



Community Event

PRESENTING FINAL CONCEPTS

On Thursday 16th May, the full team went to Alsager to set up a stall at the civic centre. This time they brought their new updated design concepts, with the aim of showing the community how their comments have been used to produce three new proposals.

This was another successful event with multiple members of the community taking the time out of their day to discuss the designs with the students and give further feedback about the work. The local press returned to discuss the project with members of the team for an online article.

Importantly, the events started a conversation around the development of the area, with a range of local demographics involved, it is a project reflecting community input and engagement.



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:
msalive@mmu.ac.uk

BLOG

live.msa.ac.uk/2024

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