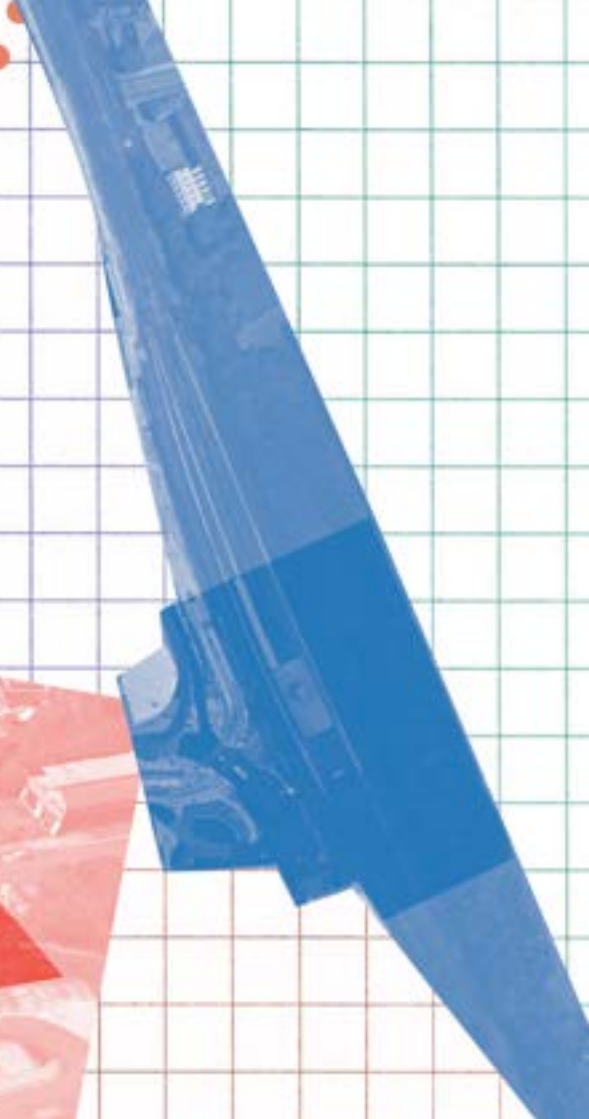


Rochdale Reimagined



By Schools



Rochdale Reimagined



Rochdale Reimagined by Schools encourages pupils to look at new ways to use historic buildings and spaces in Rochdale. The project is a collaboration between Heritage Schools, the Rochdale Heritage Action Zone Team and the Continuity in Architecture atelier at the Manchester School of Architecture.

Inspired by the earlier work of students from the School of Architecture, pupils became “honorary architects” for the day and were asked to design something amazing for the ‘Heritage Action Zone’, regenerating spaces to make their town centre a vibrant place for everyone to enjoy.

This booklet shows the process and outputs from the project in the first two schools where it was completed at the end of 2019, **St Patrick’s RC Primary School** and **St Andrew’s CE Primary School**.

Rochdale Reimagined by Schools saw pupils generate creative solutions for the edge of town centre quarter and looked at five key sites in the area (1) Rochdale Railway Station (2) The Retail Park (3) Champness Hall (4) Fashion Corner and Waterside and (5) Bell Street.

About Rochdale

Rochdale is a place that boomed during the industrial revolution, while the town was first mentioned almost 1000 years ago in the Domesday Book, it is a settlement shaped by the needs of manufacturing.

Rochdale is on the border of both Lancashire and Yorkshire and that is reflected in the building materials, while red brick embellished with hard gritstone is mainly used around the town centre, you can equally see many buildings built using Yorkshire stone. It is situated in the valley of the River Roch which proved to be a great asset to manufacturing, with the slowly climbing Rochdale Canal following in 1804 and the railway in 1839. The town is distinct; the structure of the landscape means that key buildings are clustered into the compact town centre, focussing upon the river. The magnificently Gothic Town Hall, the

mediaeval parish church St Chads, the Riverside Offices, bus station and shopping centre are situated within the valley, while the skyline is dominated by a line of great tower blocks called the Seven Sisters.

Rochdale town centre has been undergoing impressive regeneration in recent years with the opening of the new council offices, new transport infrastructure including the Metrolink trams arriving in the town centre, while investment into public spaces including re-opening the river and historic bridges has brought new life to the town.

A new market opened recently and more and more independent businesses choose Rochdale for their home base. The regeneration programme is continuing with the impressive Riverside Centre which opened in 2020.

What is a Heritage Action Zone?

Despite these significant changes there are parts of the town centre that have continued to decline or face challenges; these include Rochdale's historic High Street and one of the main gateways to the town centre, Drake Street which was awarded 'Heritage Action Zone' status in 2017 by an organisation called Historic England.

Heritage Action Zones are areas of historic interest which have been selected for a targeted regeneration project. Historic buildings which have deteriorated through decades of neglect will be restored and put back into use, and unsung places will be recognised and celebrated for their unique character and heritage, helping to instil a sense of local pride.



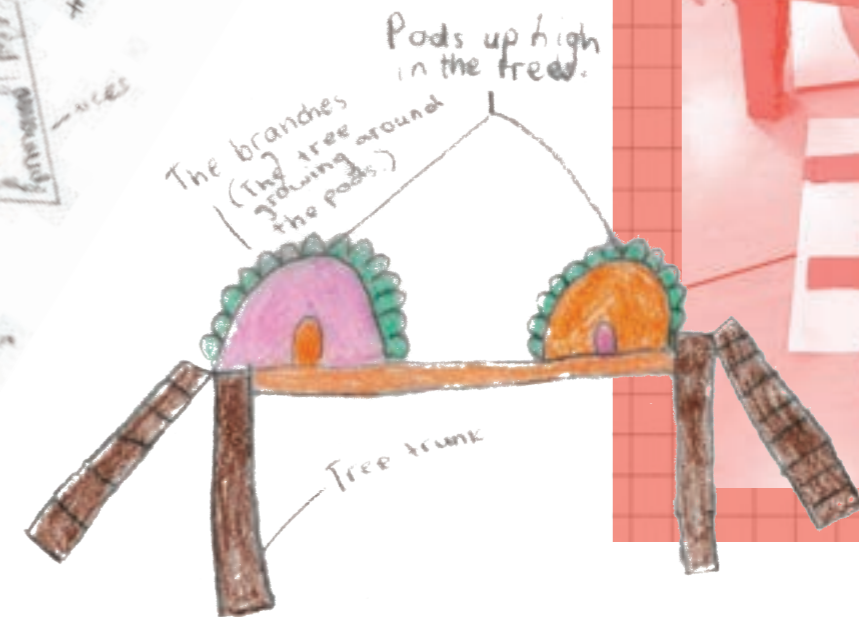
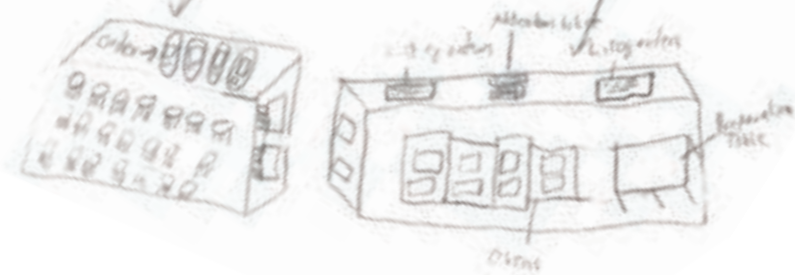
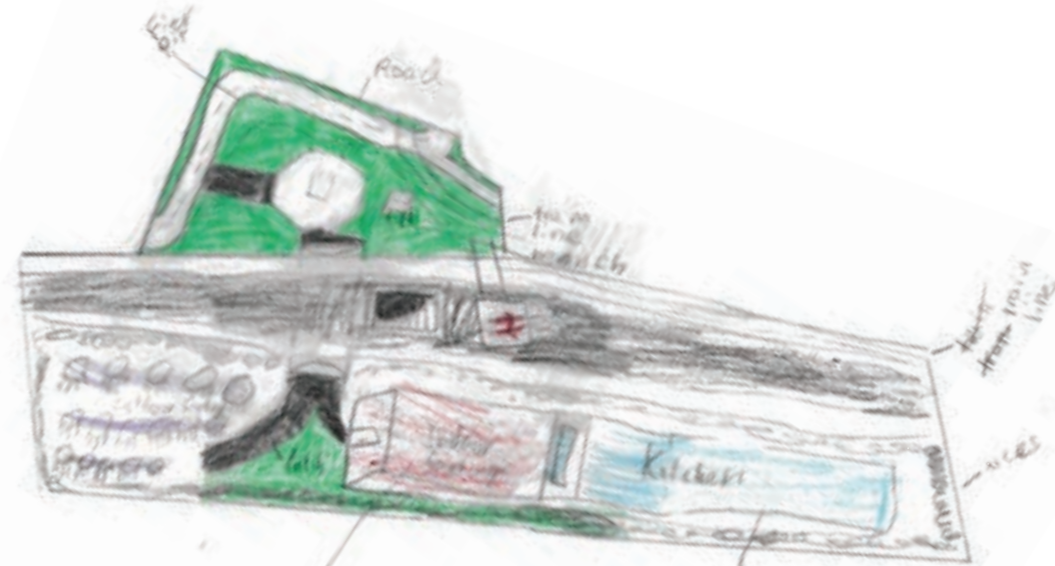
Site 01:

Rochdale Railway Station

Rochdale Railway Station is one of the key gateways to the town centre, but in recent years it has become distant and disconnected. The current station building is from the 1980s with a restored and reopened underpass. The station uses three tracks and connects Rochdale with Manchester, Leeds and Blackburn. The challenge of this site is to give the station a new design and improve the public areas around it.

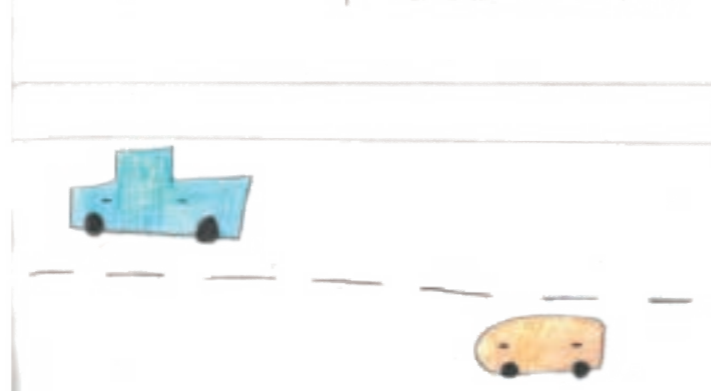
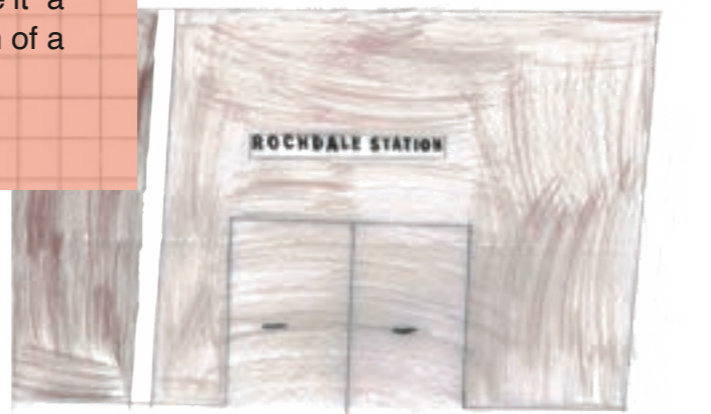


Students suggested improving the railway station with the addition of a playground for children, and a cafe. Other designs supported the natural environment by adding green spaces, or incorporating trees into the architecture. One student suggested adding a hotel “because if the improvements happen Rochdale will become more popular, and people will like to stay there more often”. Other designs suggested lighter stone, like marble or granite paired with glass to make the buildings brighter.

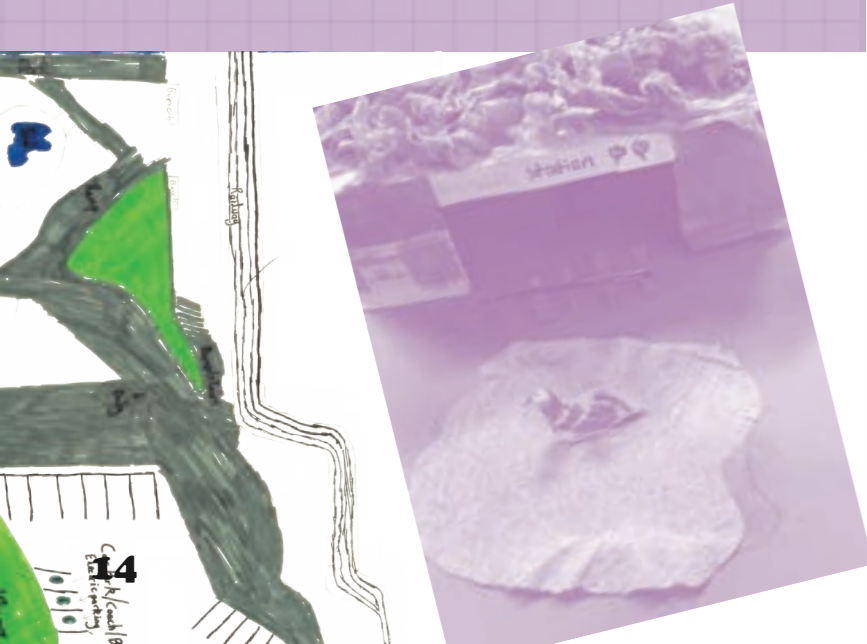


Students suggested new uses for outside space, like a football pitch and a skatepark. One student proposed, "I would like to see more parks and shelters", while others suggested "a mini play centre" or nursery to keep children occupied.

Designs included updating the building's interior to make it "a bit lighter", as well as the exterior, including the addition of a cafe or coffee shop, and planting trees outside.



Some of the students wanted to make the railway more appealing for the community by introducing more greenery, decorative tiles and larger windows. One student also suggested featuring an animal sanctuary or park in front of the station, allowing visitors to stop and enjoy their surrounding.



Site 02:

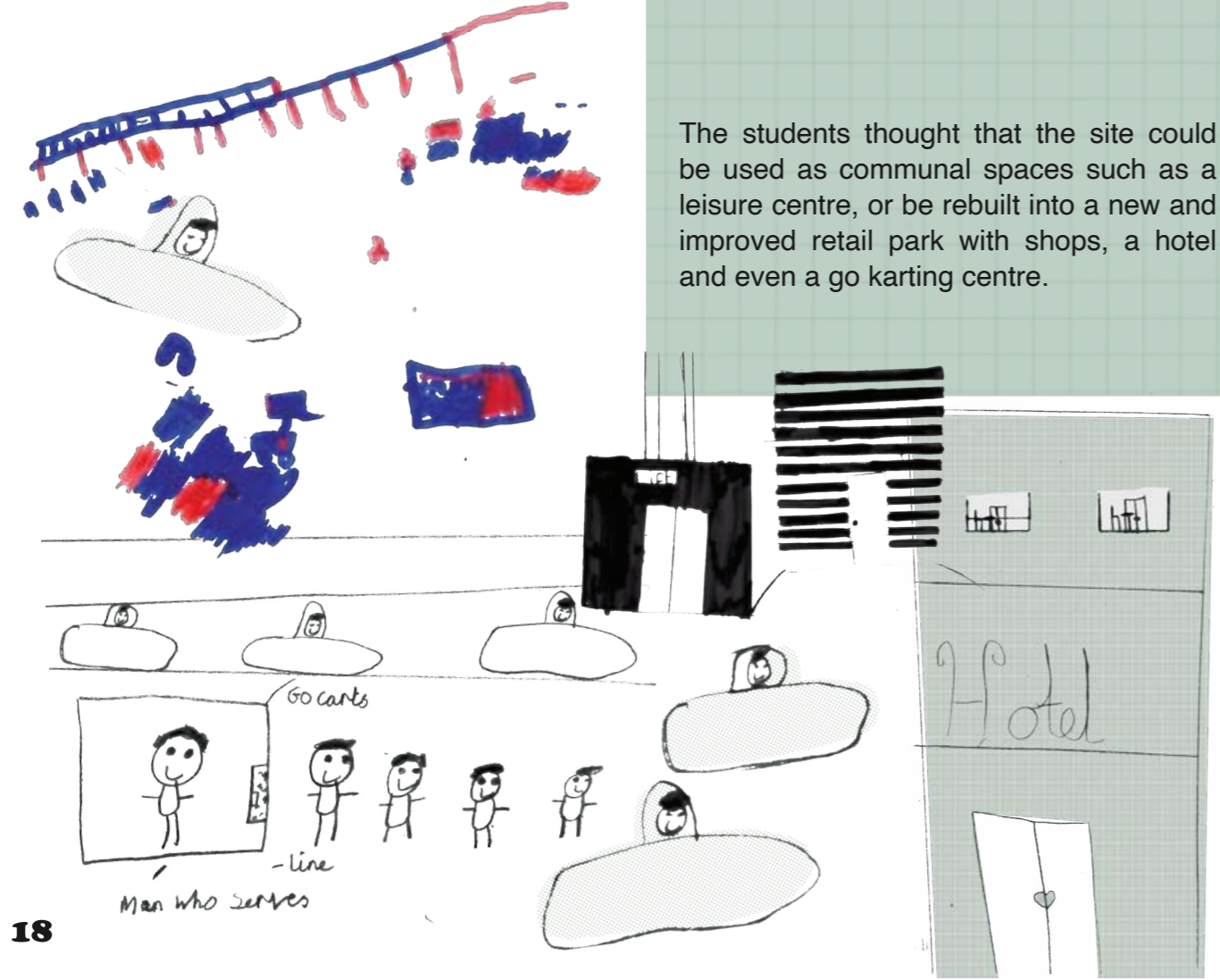
The Retail Park

Another site in the Heritage Action Zone which is selected for development in Rochdale is the Retail Park. Occupying a large site between the southern end of the Town Centre Conservation Area and Maclure Road Conservation Area, the Retail Park sits on the former Canal Basin where goods were brought in and out of Rochdale.

This basin was a transport hub for about 150 years until the canal's closure in 1952. The branch canal and basin were filled in during the 1960s, and by the 1980s most of the site had been redeveloped with large retail sheds. Now, half the site is vacant and awaiting redevelopment.

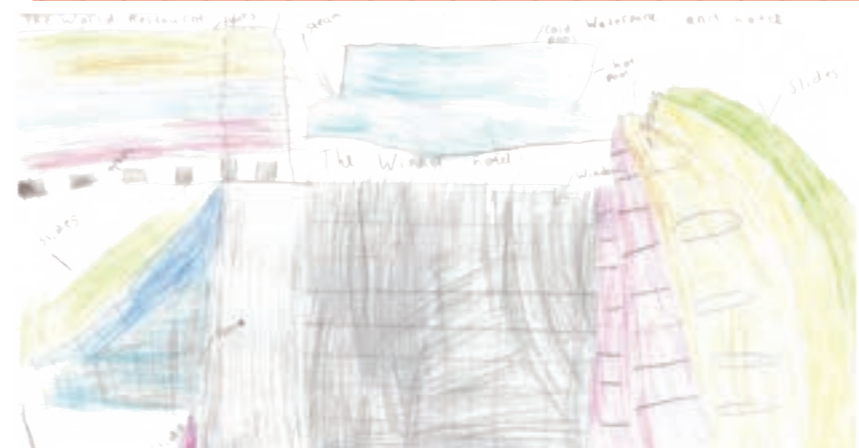


The students thought that the site could be used as communal spaces such as a leisure centre, or be rebuilt into a new and improved retail park with shops, a hotel and even a go karting centre.

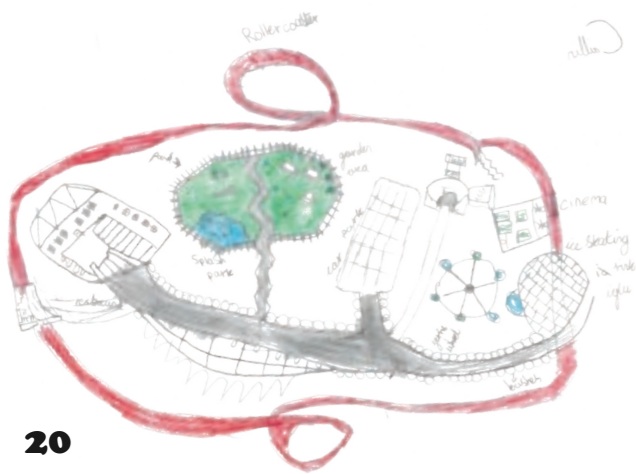


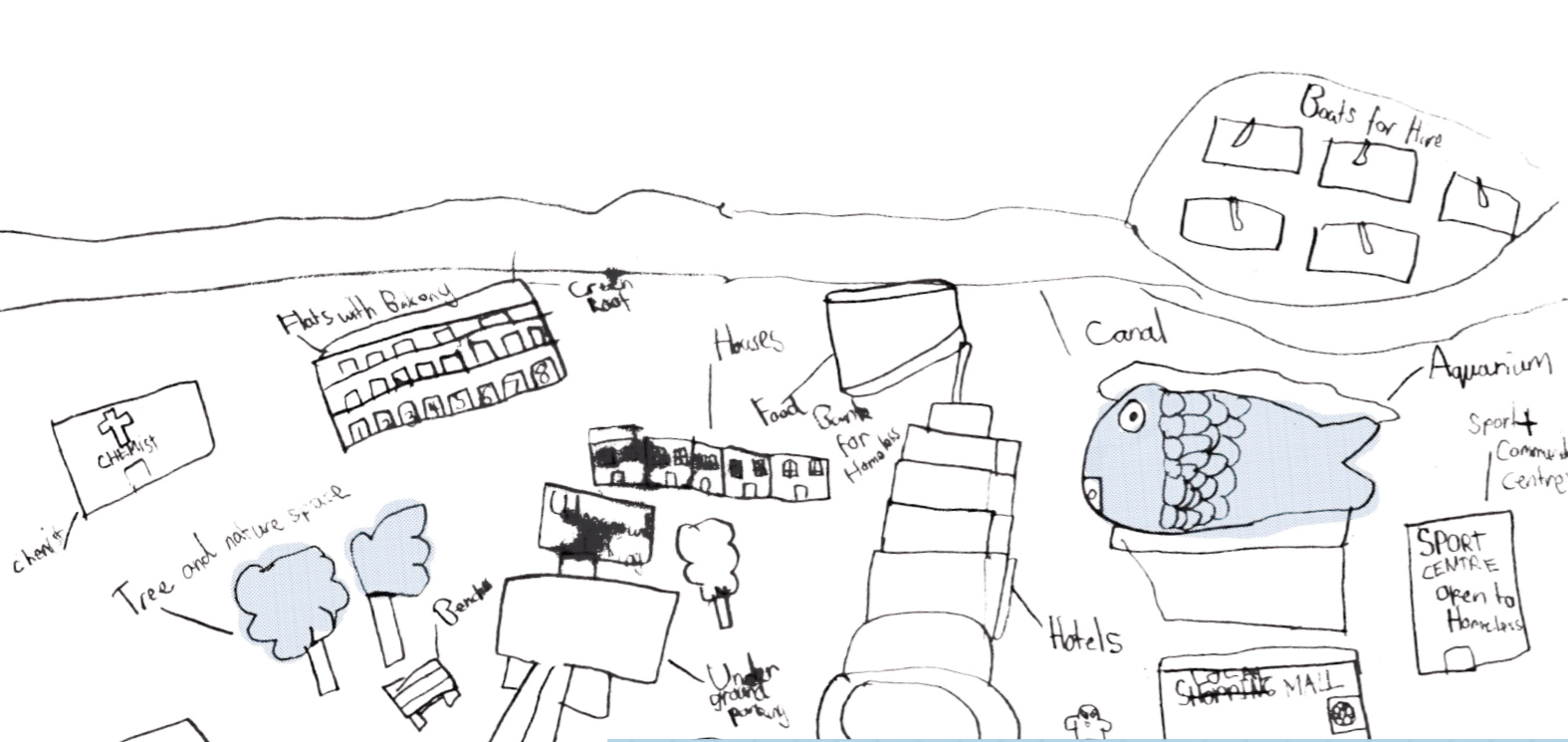
Students suggested adding entertainment like a fairground, hotels and restaurants, as well as public spaces like parks near housing.

Some students suggested houses and flats next to the canal: "They need to be durable, beautiful and perfect because people need to live in them and they need to be safe", also noting that they "don't want the small buildings to have their light blocked" by taller buildings. Other designs included a world restaurant with a playground on the top floor, a water park, and a hotel with jacuzzis.

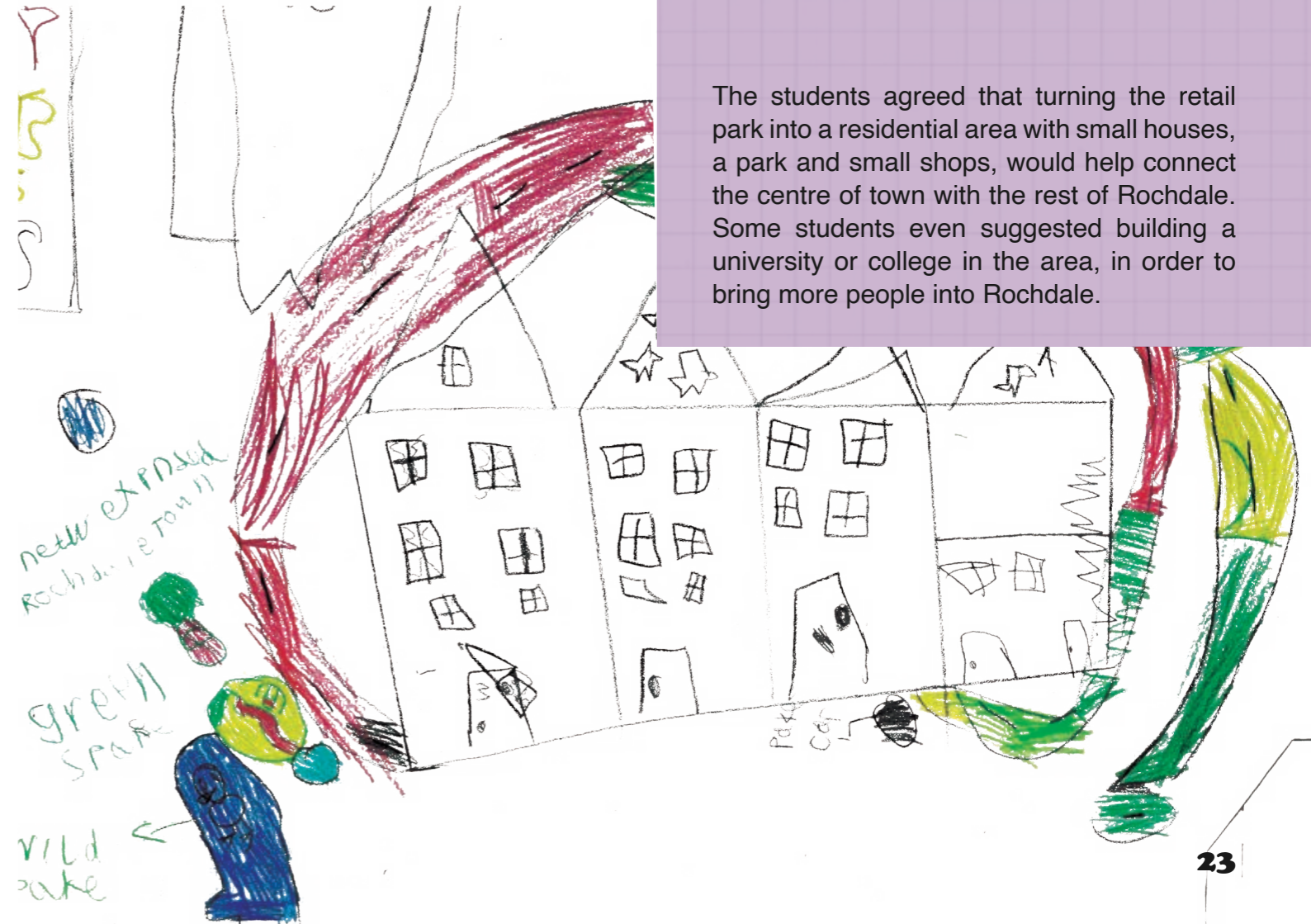


Students studying this site suggested innovative improvements including a playground and outdoor public spaces surrounding housing areas, and even “a cinema with comfortable beds instead of seats”. Students focused on creating an exciting new community hub for Rochdale here, featuring an art gallery, arcade, church and outdoor activities like a bike trail or swimming pool.





The students thought of multiple uses for the old retail park space, including a park for families, a hotel for visitors or new homes. Some suggested turning the space into a market place to provide more jobs and for families to shop, as well as a food bank and homeless shelter.



The students agreed that turning the retail park into a residential area with small houses, a park and small shops, would help connect the centre of town with the rest of Rochdale. Some students even suggested building a university or college in the area, in order to bring more people into Rochdale.

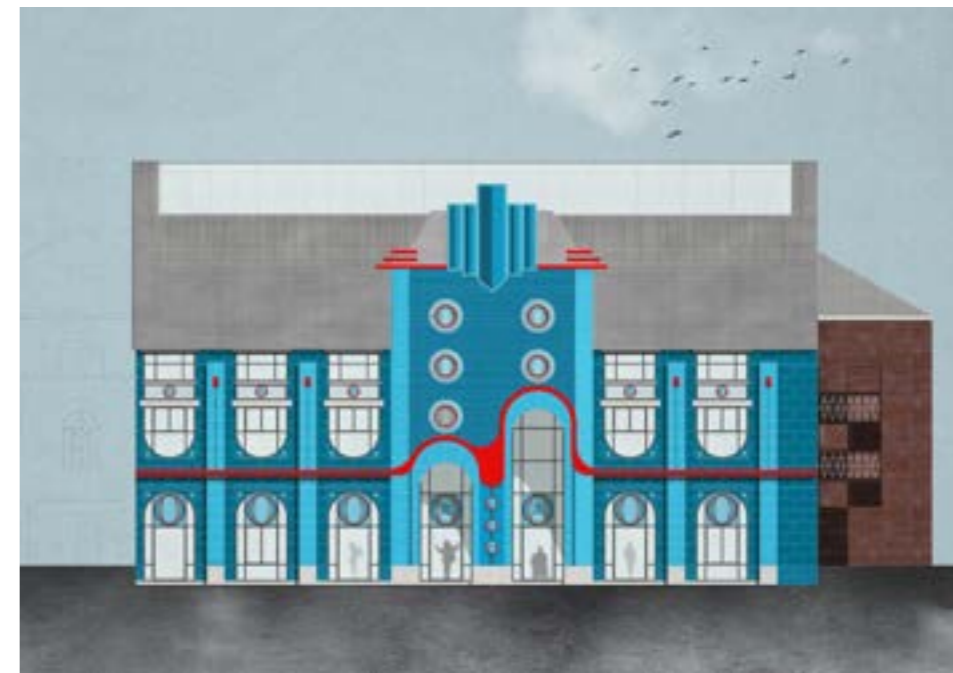
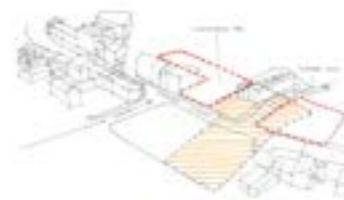


Site 03:

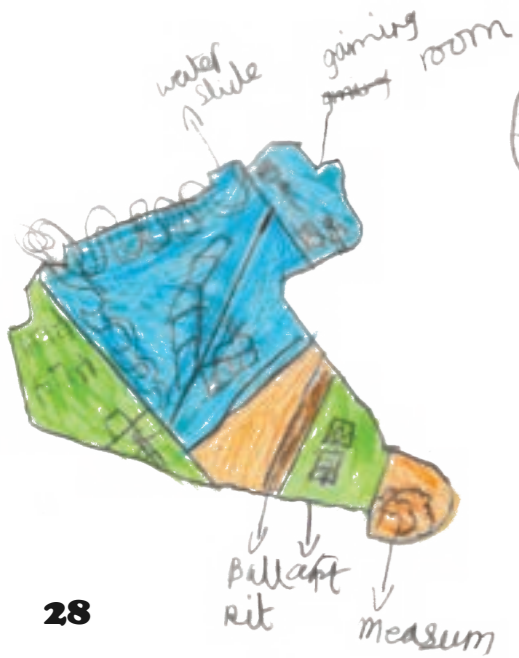
Champness Hall

Champness Hall, a significant listed building, is only partially used today and has lost many of its original architectural features. Its design combined religious function with community uses, with a 'cinema-like' character. It is situated on Drake Street — in the heart of the Heritage Action Zone.

The challenge for this site is coming up with new uses for the building that could regenerate Rochdale right from the entrance to the town.



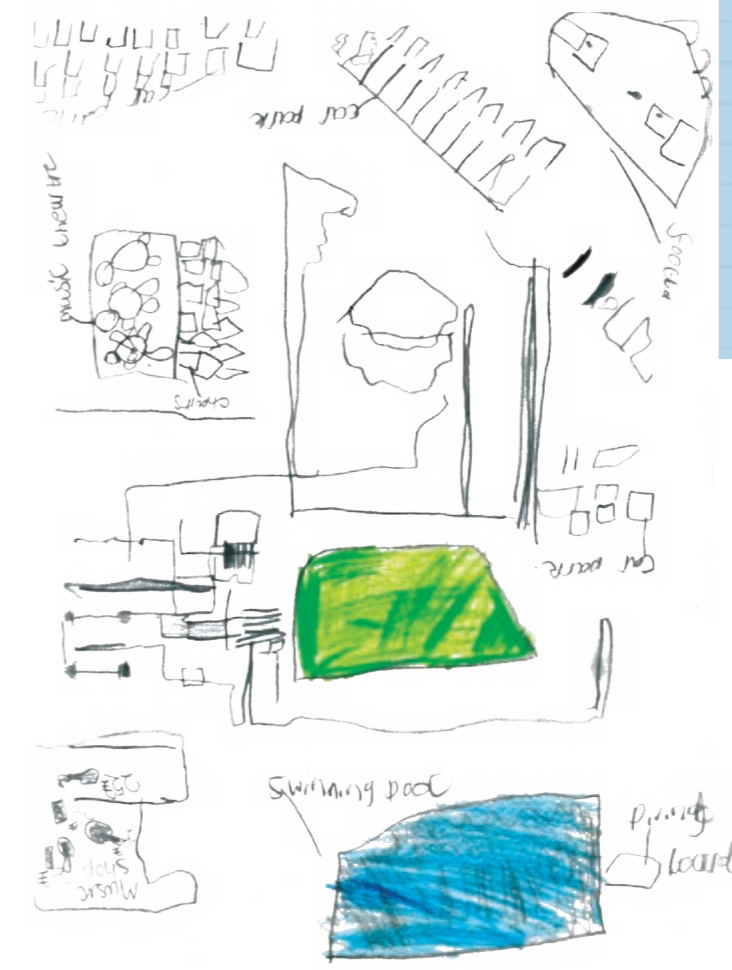
Students' ideas for Champness Hall involved redeveloping the building into a children's play area, a swimming centre or a gym suitable for both adults and children. Designs pictured display entertainment areas including a 'gaming room', coffee shop, water slide and museum, providing a wealth of attractions for the site.



Some students also discussed the idea of growing food inside the site, and the changes needed, for example, "I would take away the stone and then I would put some soil in...you have to make sure that it has some sun."

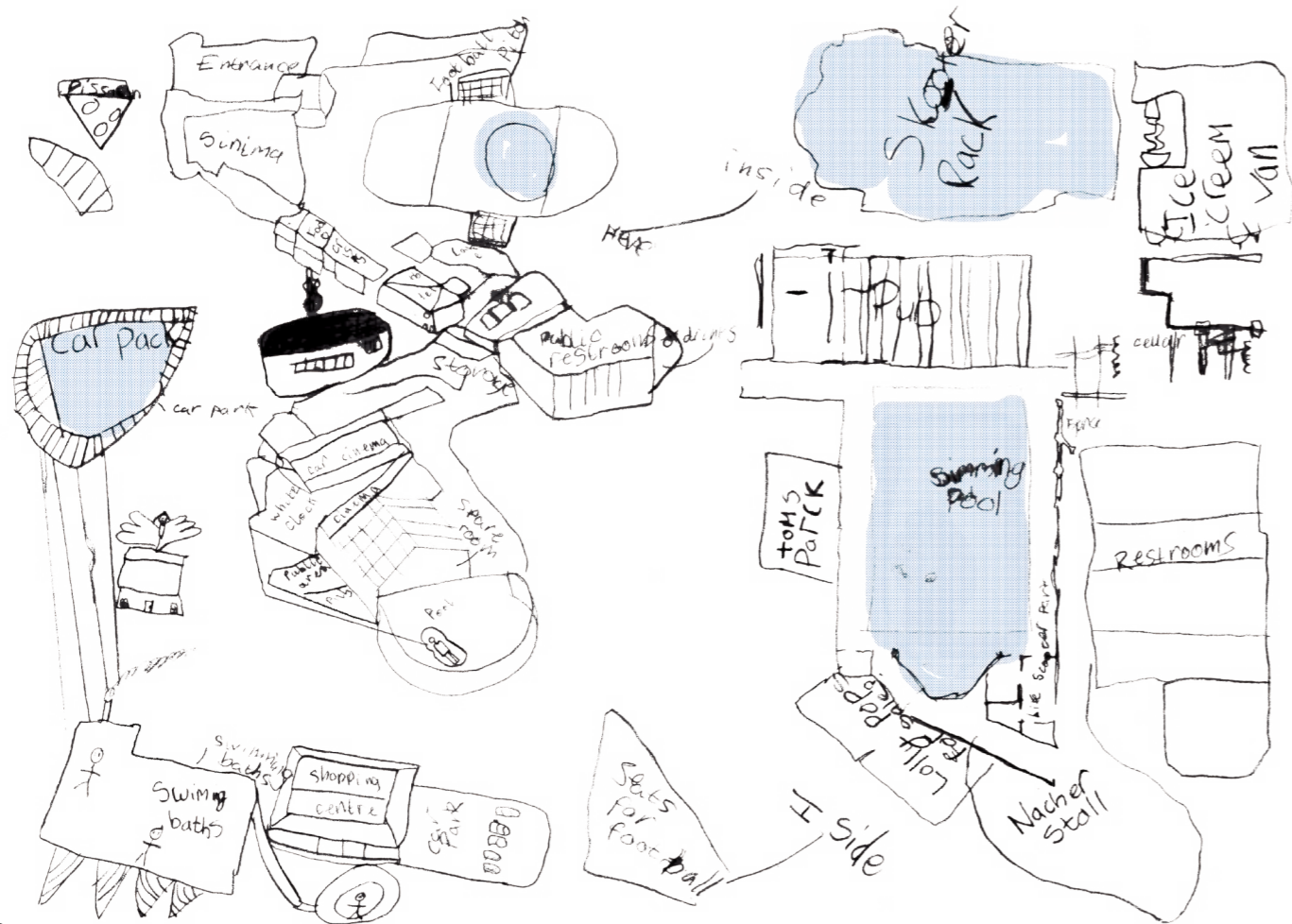
The students thought of interesting new ways to use the space. For example, some students suggest turning it into a school with a roof top garden to grow fruit and vegetables for the cafeteria, and a big playground at the back. They agreed to keep the interior the same to represent the building's history.



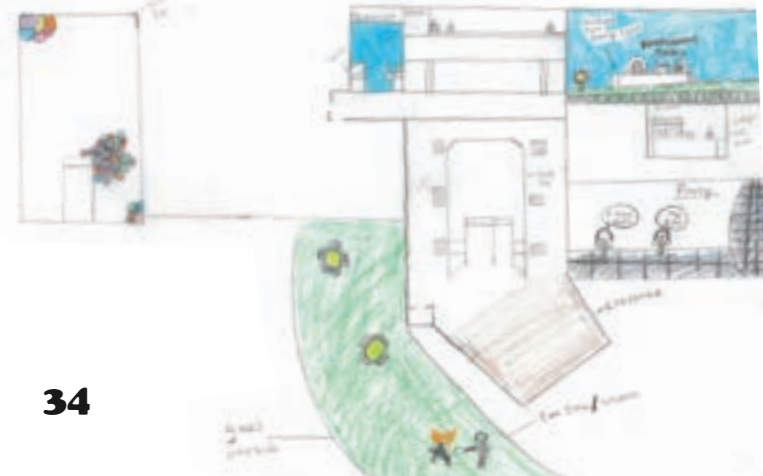


The students agreed that building a greenhouse would be a nice use for the space. They suggested the greenhouse could grow vegetables for a cafe or restaurant, and could feature a roof top garden where people can relax and browse the mini market or food stalls on sunny days.

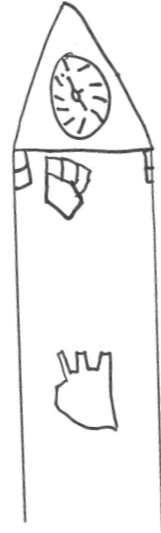




Transformation of this site included adding brightly coloured facades and gardens or growing spaces to the building, to preserve the site's history but create new uses – and “attract more visitors”. Students enjoyed the architecture students’ ideas of creating a new school for Rochdale, with new, colourful learning environments and outdoor activities like a pool and trampoline park.



Many of the students wanted to make the hall bigger to attract more visitors and make room for shops, restaurants, and communal areas. Some students wanted more greenery inside the hall itself, such as a greenhouse or a more open space with trees and flowers where visitors can sit and relax.

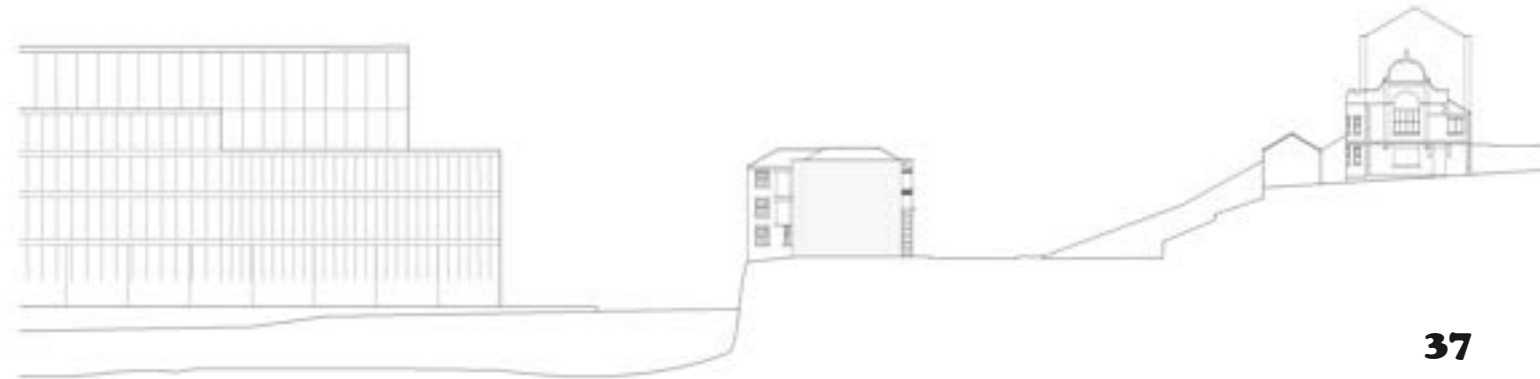


Site 04:

Fashion Corner & Waterside

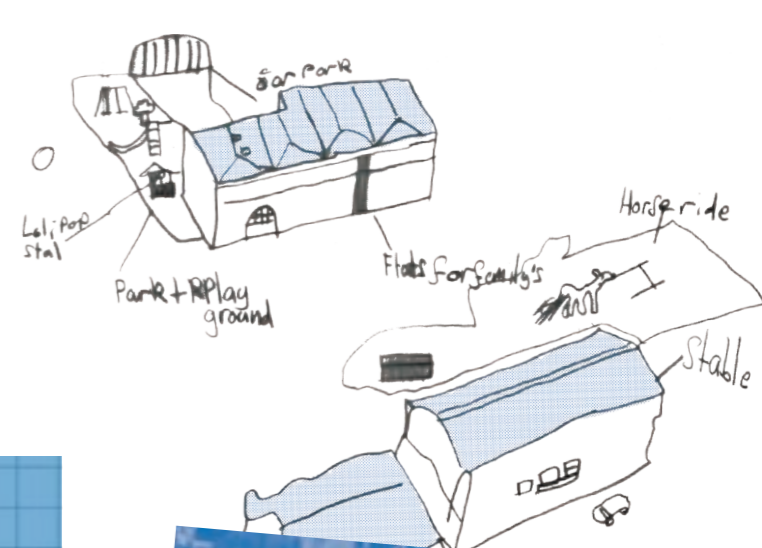
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This site is located just off Drake Street leading down to the River Roch – the site consists of several buildings, including the Fashion Corner Building, Waterside Mill and other small scale industrial buildings in various states of disrepair. The focus for redeveloping this area is to explore the textile history of Rochdale, and make the most of its setting on the waters edge.



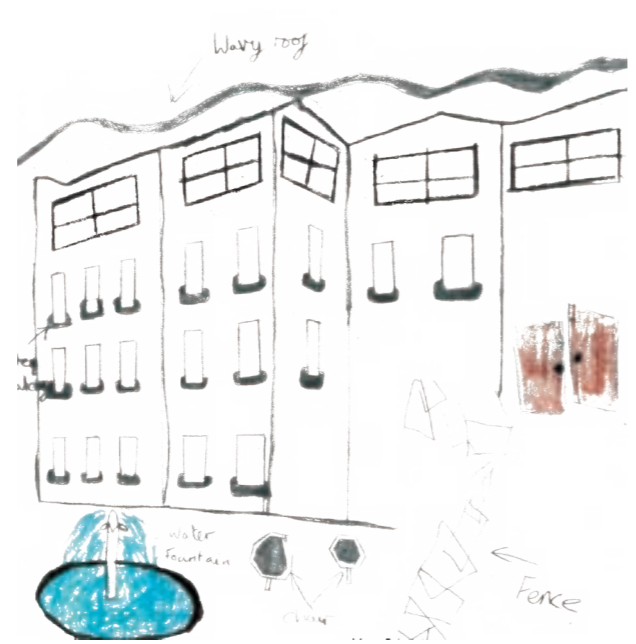


Students wanted to add leisure and activity facilities to the site including “a play area for kids”, “a running track, a park...and a football pitch”. Some students suggested different uses for the waterside area, like a canoeing park, an open air swimming pool or even generating electricity from the water movement (hydropower). Other design ideas involved updating the exterior of the buildings, and renovating outdoor spaces with trees and benches.

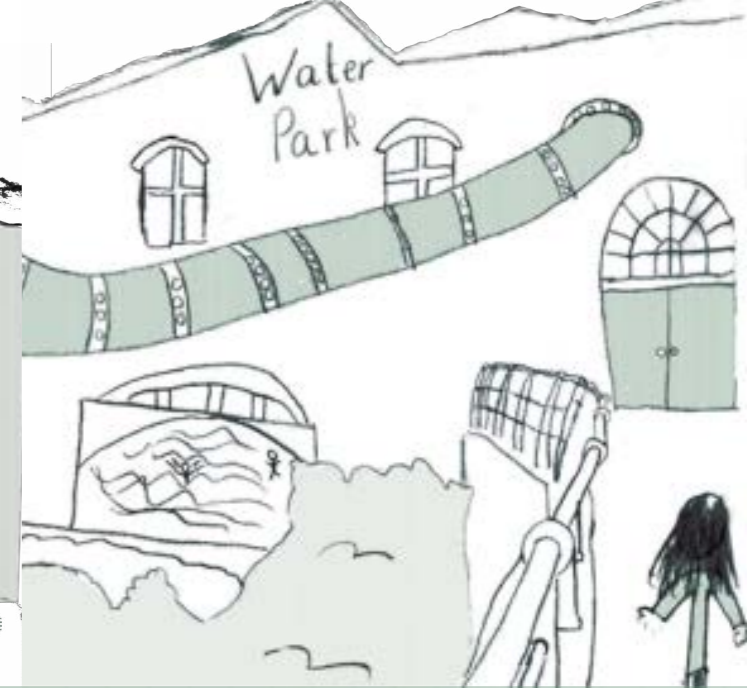
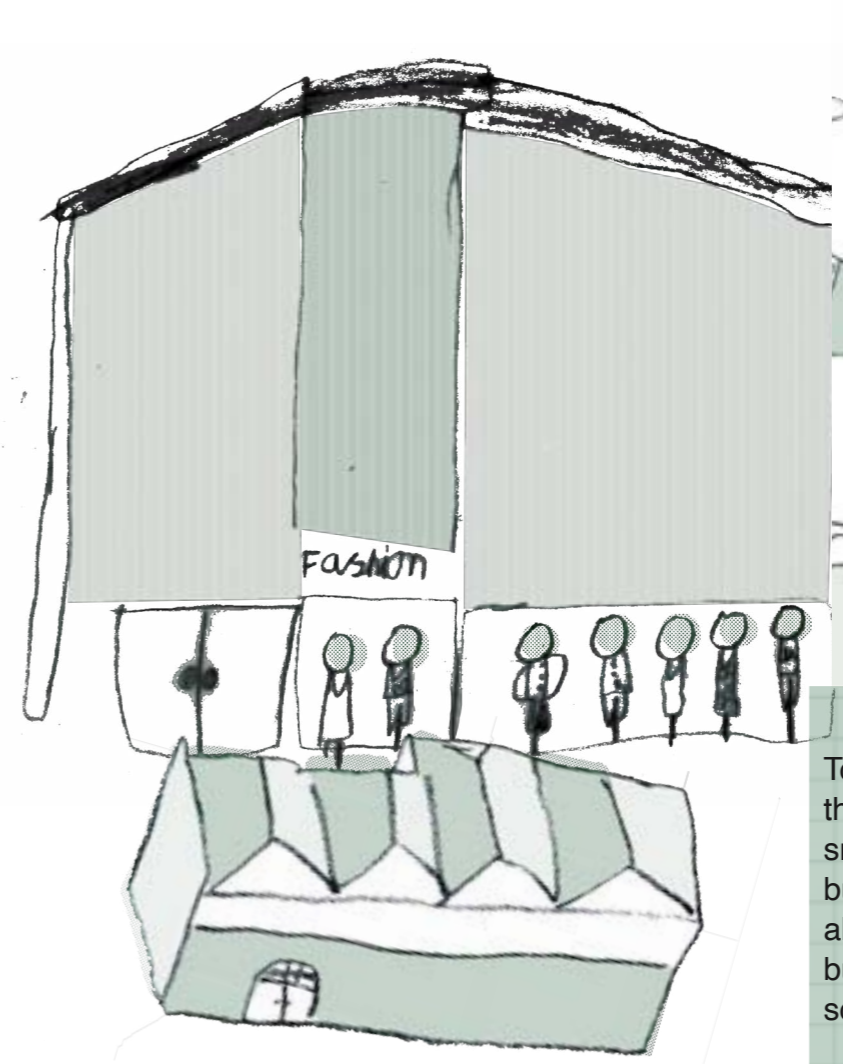


Designs for Fashion Corner involved regenerating the site into a community hub with outdoor space such as a park, playground, horses, or a prayer garden. Other facilities include a taxi office, a college and library, pharmacy, church and family restaurant. Proposals included “big binoculars so people can see over Rochdale”, waterside activities like a platform for fishing and a ladder for swimmers, and outdoor learning environments “so they have lots of fresh air”. One student suggested adding solar panels to the buildings.





The students thought the Fashion Corner could look more unique by adding different shaped windows, and including more outdoor areas such as balconies to the top higher levels of the building. One student wanted the outside of the main factory to be turned into a leisure centre with a climbing wall on the exterior of the building, as well as a pool and little boats to paddle down the river.



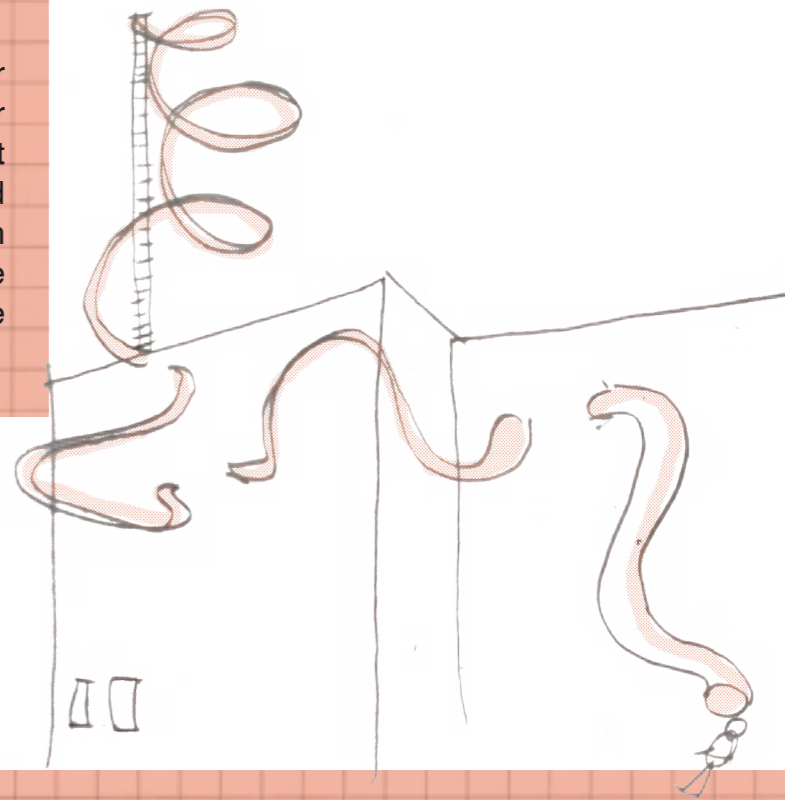
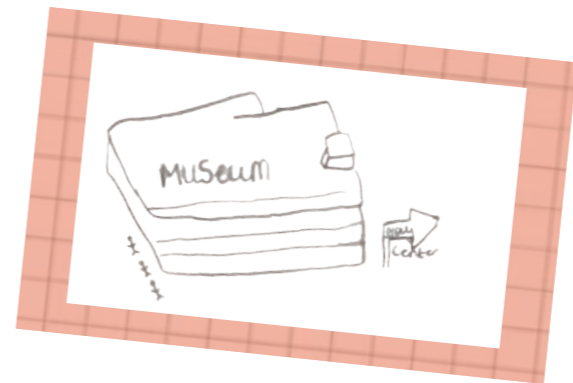
To represent the industrial past of the town, the students thought the building could feature small shops and workshops run by local businesses to raise money for charities. They also thought a section of the fashion corner building could be developed into a water park so there are more attractions for families.

Inside

outside



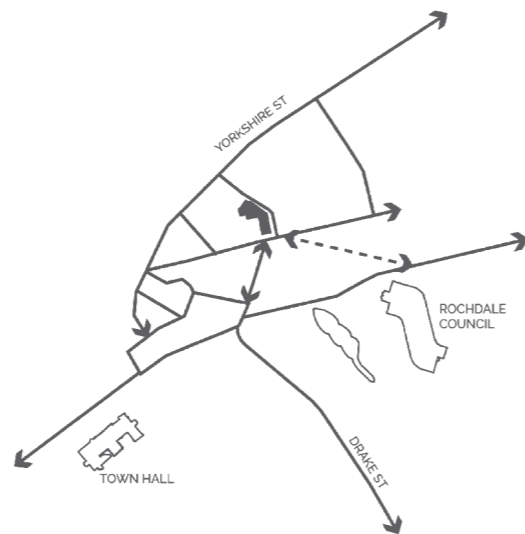
Students thought about various solutions for Fashion Corner, including a games centre or climbing centre to “encourage people to get active while having fun”. Another idea, pictured in these designs, involved a local museum archiving Rochdale’s past as a centre of textile production, with an educational activity centre on the floor above.

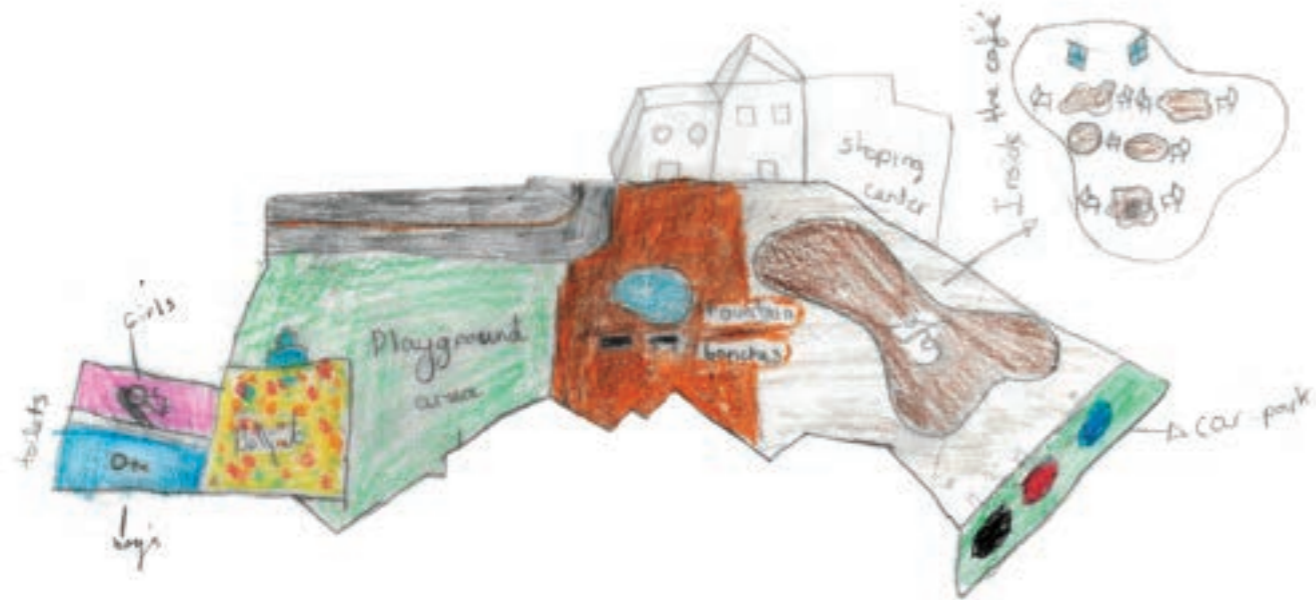


A roof terrace would house a play area for children and seating for adults. Focusing on the educational aspect, some students suggested “you could have a place where you show people how to make clothes.”

Site 05: Bell Street

The Bell Street site was laid out in the 1800s and was at the centre of Rochdale's industrial core. The area now has been vacant since the 1980s, and faces the Rochdale Riverside retail scheme, bordered by three historic buildings. The challenge for Bell Street is to re-design this space as an attractive new scheme for the public to enjoy – taking note of the views and outside space, providing activities for visitors and welcoming people to the town.





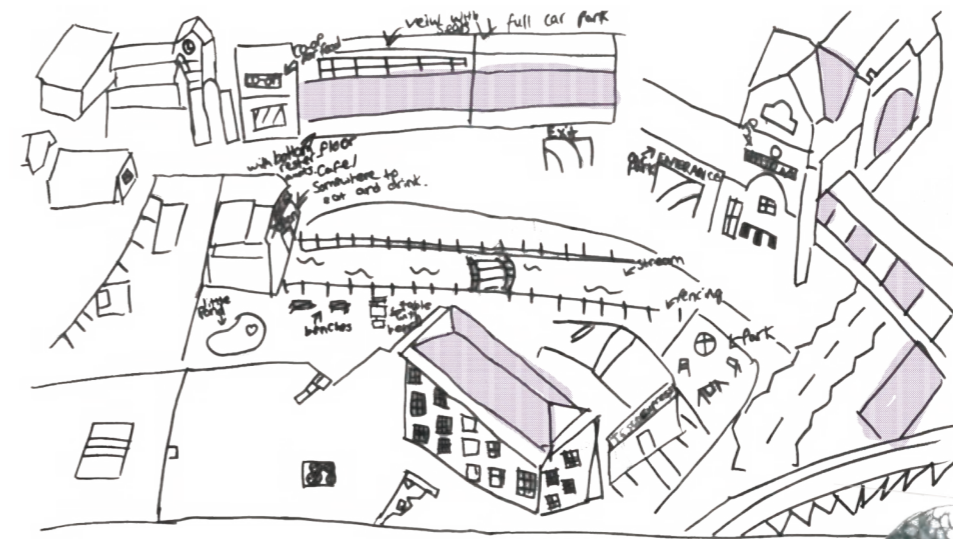
Students reimagined Bell Street with a new shopping centre – some designed the street featuring market stalls with fresh fruit and vegetables, charity donation bins and benches, while others opted for more popular brands. Students highlighted the importance of the outdoor space, adding a park and playground, water fountain and flower beds lining the street. Some designs featured a “green roof” on top of buildings which would add another green space, growing flowers and food for the community.

Students’ plans for Bell Street aimed to transform the site into a space that could be enjoyed by the community for activity and leisure time. Designs included building a secure playground with seating and tennis courts, as well as brightening up the terrain with rainbow tiles on the floor. There would be an outdoor area with soft grass, as well as an indoor space (“because it rains a lot in Rochdale”) with a glass roof that could be used for parties and socialising. Students prioritised grass and green space to encourage nature.





The students wanted the site to be rebuilt into a play area featuring a jungle gym, slides, and trampolines. They also suggested a pizza restaurant with an outdoor seating area in bright colours so locals could sit outside and eat in summer.



Many of the students wanted a playground to replace the old building. They suggested making the playground safer with wood chip flooring, and tall hedges to separate the area from the passing traffic. Some students wanted a modern art gallery that featured local artists, with bright colours and a park surrounding the building.



Heritage Schools

Historic England's Heritage Schools programme supports teachers in embedding local heritage across the curriculum, so pupils gain a sense of place and a connection to where they live and go to school. It helps teachers develop learning opportunities to ensure their pupils can engage with and enjoy the heritage on their doorstep and understand its significance locally, nationally and in the wider world. The programme also supports schools in working with and using local heritage services and resources, so pupils can engage with local heritage and cultural opportunities to enrich their learning.



Continuity in Architecture

Continuity in Architecture at the Manchester School of Architecture is an atelier for research, teaching and practice that has for the last decade been working with small towns and cities in the North of England to develop new urban architecture. These are designs to grow and improve the places, but importantly, without losing the intrinsic character of the area. The group of academics and practitioners have been promoting a particularly sympathetic and contextual approach to the design of buildings and places for over 25 years and have a motto which distils their methodology; “**Remember, Reveal, Construct**”.

Remember the characteristics of the site, look closely at the attributes, explore the nature of what is there, examine the place and find out what it is saying.

Reveal the situation, analyse the findings of the investigation and discover what it means. Use these to exploit the very qualities of the situation.

Construct new elements that are appropriate to the situation, that heighten the experience of what is there, that become part of the continual evolution of the place.

St Patrick's RC Primary School

“At St Patrick's we believe that our children should develop a lasting love and understanding of the world around them and the opportunity to take part in the Rochdale Reimagined project was an amazing way to show this. It helped our children to delve deeper into the history of their town and build a deeper understanding of what made Rochdale a significant place locally and in the wider world.

The children loved investigating the five historic sites and learning about how they would have been used in the past, talking about the way the town has changed over the years and discovering details they have never noticed before in buildings they have walked past hundreds of times. Having the chance to work with the adults from Manchester School of Architecture and Historic

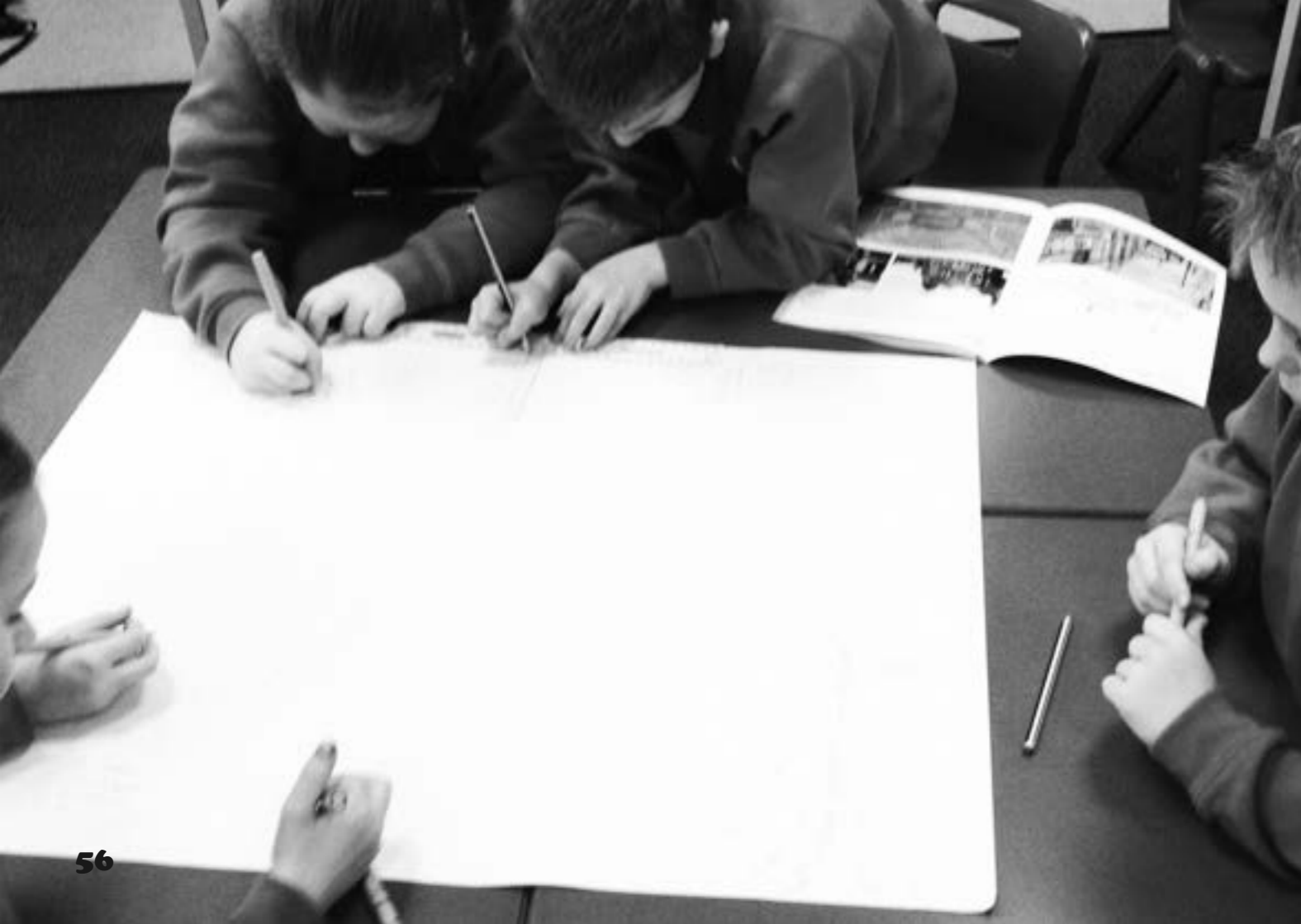
England to think about the way these sites could be developed in the future was fantastic and the children were so excited to think that some of their suggestions were actually going to be seen by the Council staff too.

As their teacher, I was blown away with their creativity and the enthusiasm they put into their plans, the passionate discussions that they held to defend their ideas and the brilliant junk models they made to showcase their designs.

The children couldn't stop talking about the day for weeks afterwards and I am sure we will see some of them with future careers in architecture and town planning! Thank you so much for the opportunity to take part in this project — we can't wait to get involved in the next one!”

— Rachel Greenhalgh





St Andrew's CE Primary School

“At St Andrews, the value of the community is at the heart of our school. We care about our surroundings and want to make the most of our local area. That is why when the opportunity for the Rochdale Reimagined project came up, we knew we couldn't miss out!

Through the project, we were able to look at local maps of our town, and identify buildings which needed redevelopment. We generated a list of ideas about what purpose the buildings could have now, and the impact they could have for the future generations of Rochdale.

With the help of the Manchester School of Architecture, we were able to make professional designs of each building, deciding on its physical features (such as water areas, balconies etc.) to make it attractive and useful for the public.

Later on, we physically made the buildings by junk modelling, which was really creative and effective. Boards were then created to showcase our brilliant work for everybody to see.

This project was very special to us because it allowed us to consider the future of our local area, and with blue sky thinking, what we can achieve. It gave us an insight into the aspirational world of architecture, and the opportunity to work with professionals. Thank you for working with us on the Rochdale Reimagined project!”

— *Jennifer Smith*

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**MANCHESTER SCHOOL
OF ARCHITECTURE**



ROCHDALE
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Historic England

Rochdale
Development
Agency



