

Of portals and gateways

In OTHER worlds: the woodhall spa project

architecture
community-projects
portals
gateways

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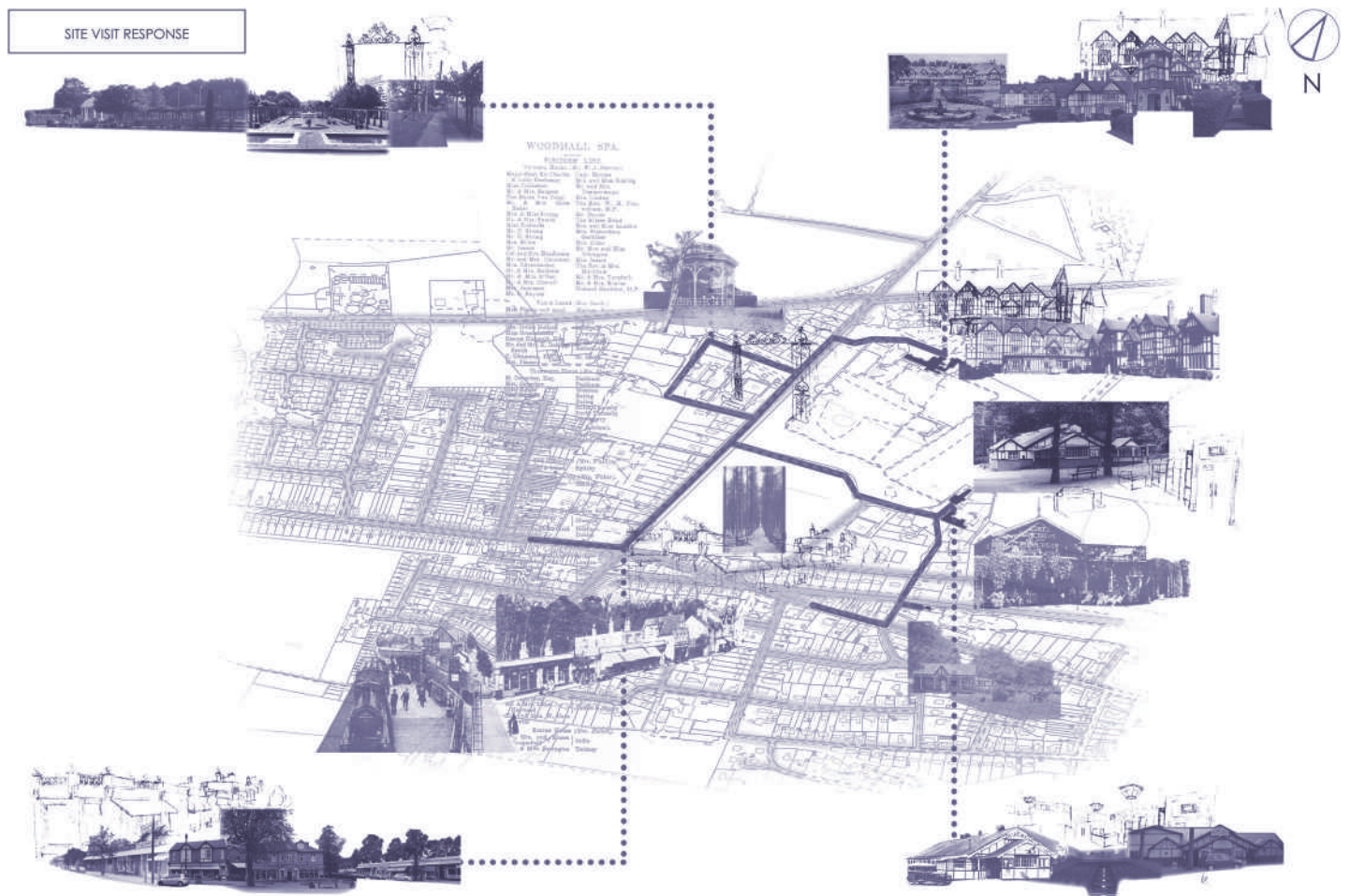
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This article describes a design project proposed to 3rd year BArch students following a request for ideas made to our school by a local charity - *Jubilee Park Ltd* - which runs a community park in Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire, UK. The charity trustees outlined several issues with their community park, ranging from micro-scale (the half-hidden, decaying main gate) to macro (a plan for a sustainable future). With any real-life projects in architectural education, there is always a need for a bridging exercise between the pragmatism of their requirements and didactic realities of academic assignments, learning outcomes and professional accreditation criteria. Most importantly, architecture students need to learn to construct a brief before proposing solutions, by starting to question the question, rather than attempt to answer it with arithmetic precision. It is vital for their development as architectural thinkers and designers, even when engaged in live projects, to be able to continue operating in the world of ideas. For this reason, the challenges faced by Jubilee Park were framed within the author's 3rd year studio brief: *in OTHER worlds: the woodhall spa project*. Micro-scale issues identified by the charity trustees were not suitable as stand-alone design challenges for a 3rd year project, they were discrete, isolated problems which lacked the necessary complexity for this level of study. Considerations at the macro-scale, however, offered students the opportunity to examine the wider context for aspects identified, or not, by the charity, from the immediate environment of Woodhall Spa, to that beyond - regional or even global. This macro-scale analysis did result, in some of the students' work, in interventions which addressed the micro-scale issues highlighted by the trustees, while other projects proposed triggers for long term strategic plans. In the context of the introductory project in 3rd year, the Jubilee Park was re-wired and activated through follies or more complex structures, meant to act as catalysts for a sustainable future. What follows is the story of our journey and the resulting student projects.



Visiting the village of Woodhall Spa was like taking a step back in time, to an enclosed world trapped within another era.

Exploration through these spaces that create this atmosphere of time travel and investigation into the historical significance of particular sites.

Fig. 1 – Historic Woodhall Spa with its main attractions (author RL).

Woodhall Spa is a small village in the English countryside, that owes its birth and fortune to the curative powers of the local springs. Its name still evokes crinolines, lace umbrellas and curious perambulators for incapacitated adults - all of which populated photographs from the turn of the 20th century, when, at the apogee of its fame, Woodhall Spa was known as the "English Kreuznach" - because their mineral waters had a similar chemical content.

The 19th century Woodhall Spa was a well-connected and prosperous Victorian village with hotels, train station, public attractions, romantic woods (Fig.1). Wandering through the village now, one encounters vestiges of the past everywhere - cherished by locals and famed in the region: the *Kinema in the woods*, the *Petwood Hotel* and grounds, *Jubilee Park* with its heated swimming pool, a *memorial* for the *Dam-busters*,

the *Tower-on-the-moor* and so on. Like a lot of well-to-do towns and villages strewn across Lincolnshire, Woodhall Spa has its own treasure troves: for us it was the *Cottage Museum*, which became one of our most important sources of information, for the students' projects and this article.

The Woodhall Spa of today though, surprises through absences too: *the water* - the defining, founding element - is long gone, the Spa's connection with its genesis severed (Fig.2); *the railway* line has also vanished, weakening the Spa's connection with the world. For a newcomer, the village presents a catalogue of *portals* and *gateways*. Woods envelop Woodhall Spa, protecting it from the indomitable Lincolnshire winds, and are, to this day, a realm with seemingly never-ending potential for magic. The spa's emergence in the mid-19th century was caused by

an incursion into the 'underworld', in search of coal. Although there was no coal to be found, the disturbed geology burst, flooding the abandoned pit with water which appeared to cure human and beast. The entrepreneur looking for coal went bankrupt, but the local lord of the manor, after noticing that the spring water ameliorated his ailments, started to invest in leisure amenities and a hotel. The village's metamorphosis continued with the arrival of the railway line in 1855, which provided the world with a gateway into the elegant Woodhall Spa - by then a fashionable destination for healing and recreation.

in OTHER worlds: the woodhall spa project - the brief proposed to students - was inspired by these moments of Woodhall Spa's other worldliness and asked them to consider points of transition, in time and space: *portals* and *gateways*. The brief talked of the

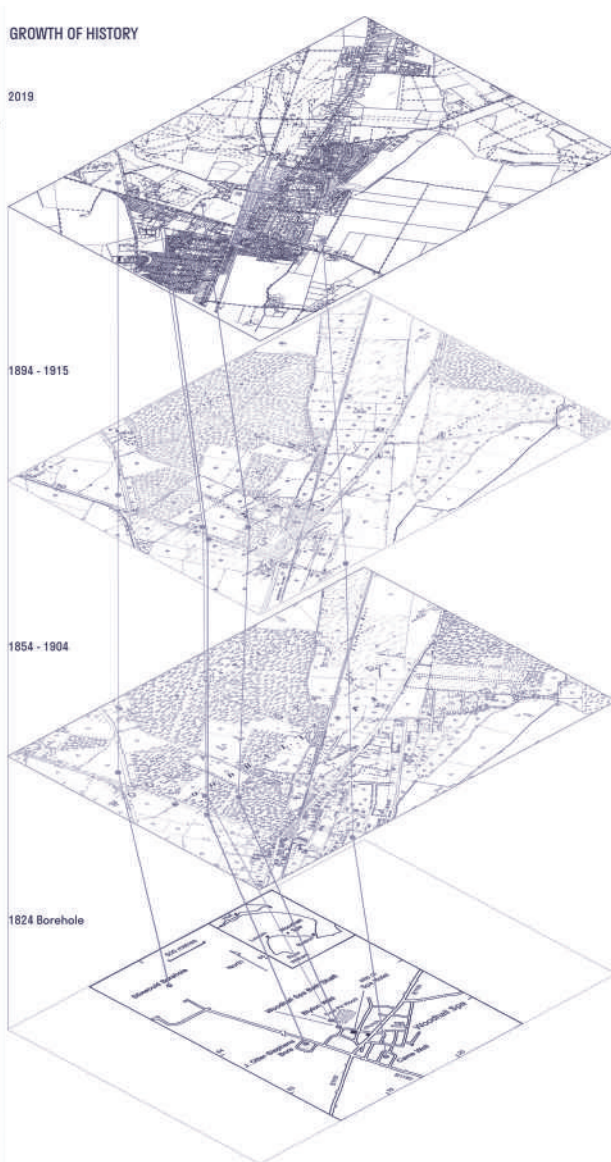


Fig.2 – The original wells of Woodhall Spa (author DH)

richness of the past and nostalgia of a bygone era, as immortalised in sepia postcards, which were our initial portals into the world of Woodhall Spa. However, it invited students to develop their own definitions and views of the challenges faced today by Jubilee Park, and by extension Woodhall Spa, on which basis to develop design proposals, strategies and interventions for a feasible, sustainable future. The resulting projects were to respond well to desiderata set out in 2015 by the UN in the *Sustainable Development Goals* document.

THE VISIT

The brief in *OTHER worlds: the woodhall spa project* became one of three studio choices given to 3rd year BArch students, class of 2019-20. Our group comprised thirteen students who, after initial desk-top research, went on the first site visit in September 2019 (Fig. 3, 4). The Jubilee Park charity trustees welcomed us, together with the swimming pool *Operations Director*, who talked to students and answered questions about the heated pool - the most renowned of the park's features.

In retrospect, our first visit was the trigger for a lot of the subsequent project proposals, a demonstration of how invaluable it is for architecture students to interact with the site, people associated with it and the wider context. On the day we visited, autumnal and bright, the pool was quiet, but being still heated, it was used by an aqua-class. The vivid description of the same place in the summer, when the water is full of swimmers and children playing, with sun bathers covering the surrounding lawn, suggested a different atmosphere. Thus sound, the quality or causes of it, became something students started to think about.



Fig. 3 – First visit to Jubilee Park for group A, 3rd year BArch students (photos DC).



Fig. 4 – Visit to Petwood House, Woodhall Spa.

In the still air of the day, all aural stimuli were crystal clear: the gravel crunching, the reverberation of tennis balls' impact, the birds' song amplified by the quietness. Speaking seemed like an imposition in this contented space. It was this walking, photographing and, most importantly, paying attention to details that helped students attune subsequent research and formulate their individual approach.

The first didactic exercise prescribed in the brief was the survey of the park. Students used the measurements data gathered on the day of our visit to plot on an OS map all buildings and structures, together with hard and soft landscaping elements, to set up base drawings for their subsequent design work.

OF JUBILEE PARK

Some projects responded purely to the sensorial context of Jubilee Park. JH's phenomenological analysis led him to propose a mechanism for modulating one's experience when entering the gardens, through what is the formal main gate. A semi-opaque tunnel controlled olfactory, aural, haptic, visual experiences by introducing or blocking, exaggerating and framing sensorial perception (Fig.5).

Other projects took their cue from the reasons behind the park's sounds during busier times. One of FS's installations responded directly to the manager's comment about children playing within the pool's enclosure. Imagining how children would frolic, on both sides of the fence between the pool and the playground, he wondered: was there a way in which the dividing structure could bring children together? With a literally electrifying effect? He envisaged an energy sustainable park, helped by people and nature.

Jubilee Park opened in 1935 and was originally known as the "*Royal Jubilee Park*", its name marking the Jubilee of King George V. The public garden was a gift to the people of Woodhall Spa made by Lady Grace Weigell, out of the 40 acres of woodland she purchased at the turn of the 20th century. The spirit of this gesture and the orangery of the old Royal Hotel inspired RL's project (Fig. 6). Her proposal was a 'cocoon', a community greenhouse-potting shed hybrid, intended as a year-round environment for promoting permaculture principles.

The 'cocoon' housed a cafeteria, informal library, teaching and hobby spaces and was surrounded by a community-run productive landscape, radiating from the hub - all meant to be administered by the locals.

During our visit, what became obvious from approaching the park for the first time were design issues, probably indiscernible to frequent users. Problematic were *the access*, vehicular and pedestrian, *the reading of entrances* and *their relationship* with the park layout. In his project, JM contended that confused access undermined the potential for an identifiable heart of Jubilee Park and he

proposed a generous esplanade-like entrance, with a network of crisscrossing paths which funnelled all approaches from the north and west towards a new cultural centre. The new centre not only gave the park a clear focal point, but also activated it for the community, in all seasons. Students' research revealed some of the reasons for this lack of clarity, as the current park layout is a result



Fig. 5 – Diversity of sensory stimulation in Jubilee Park (author JH).



Fig. 6 – Concept drawing for hub in the park (author RL)

of incremental, historic changes, each answering momentary needs, without longer term strategies.

A change in the access into the formal Victorian garden caused the confused reading of today's Jubilee Park. Originally the park was ordered by a north-south axis of symmetry which started at the main entrance on the southern edge, intersected the transversal (east-west) path at a junction marked by the bandstand and led to the median point of the northern edge (Fig. 7 left). By changing the main entrance from the middle to a corner, the park is traversed diagonally, the route zig-zagging along perpendicular paths rather than orthogonally, in a

symmetrical composition. This weakens the relationship between the entry points and the park's layout, which has lost the orienting intentionality of the original design. Today, some paths finish in dead-ends, such as the tennis courts fence. Students noticed that the old gate is the only formal entrance, on the south-west corner; for the rest, the park is accessed through porous edges (Fig. 7 right). In his project, TC considered the symbolism associated with entry points to design sculptural portals as signs to welcome habitual users, as well as strangers, into the world of Jubilee Park (Fig. 8).

JBF reimagined the park after removing visual and physical obstructions to create meandering paths and pockets for repose,

introspection, quiet play, in order to allow lingering and not only passing through. RL also reconfigured the layout after noticing that paths were used only as ways to access amenities. The park segregated its users depending on their interests - bowls, tennis, croquet - without much on offer for others, thus not facilitating interaction, serendipitous encounters, exchanges. He redesigned the central space not occupied by activities, the circulation, in-between space, as a playground for all ages, to be climbed and crawled on, skateboarded through, enjoyed during al fresco games of chess or just as a meeting place, to encourage permanent use for sporty or more lethargic types. CH's approach was also prompted by the fragmentation

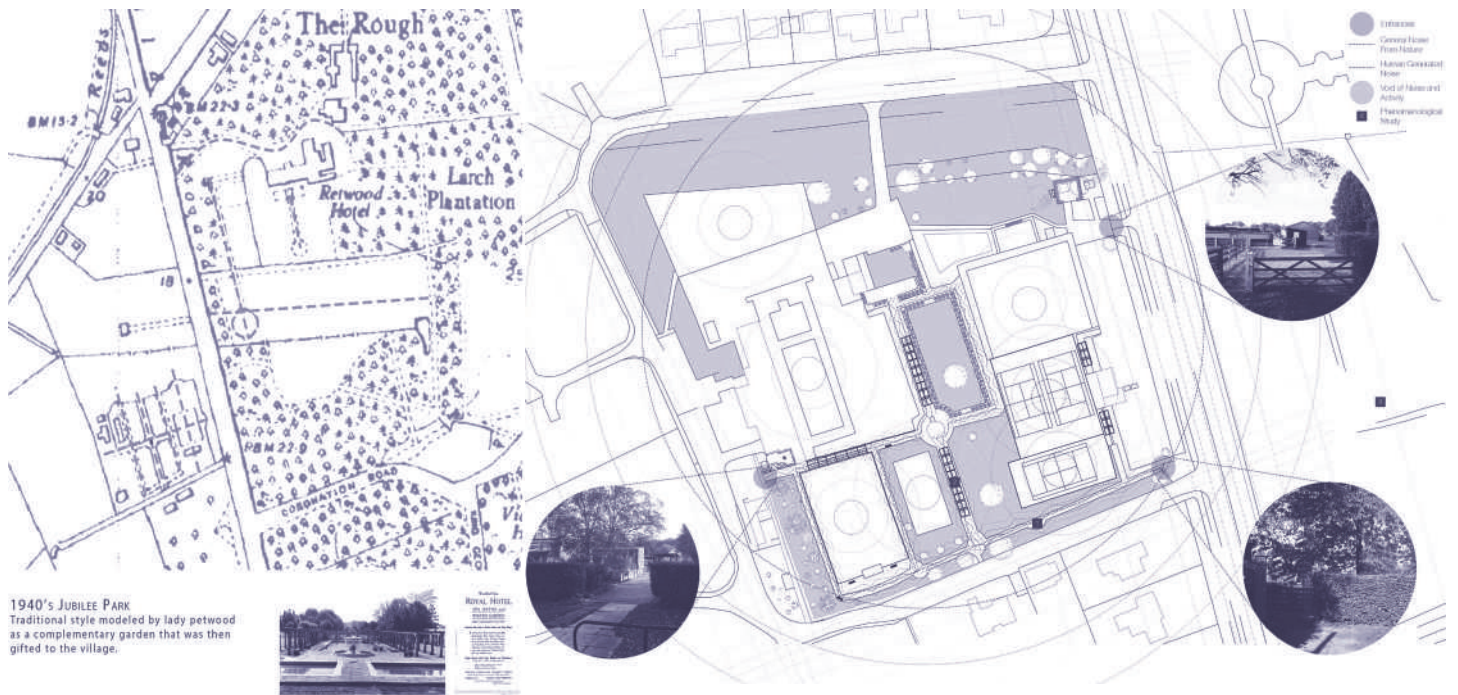


Fig. 7 – Jubilee Park: Victorian layout (left) and current formal entry points (right)

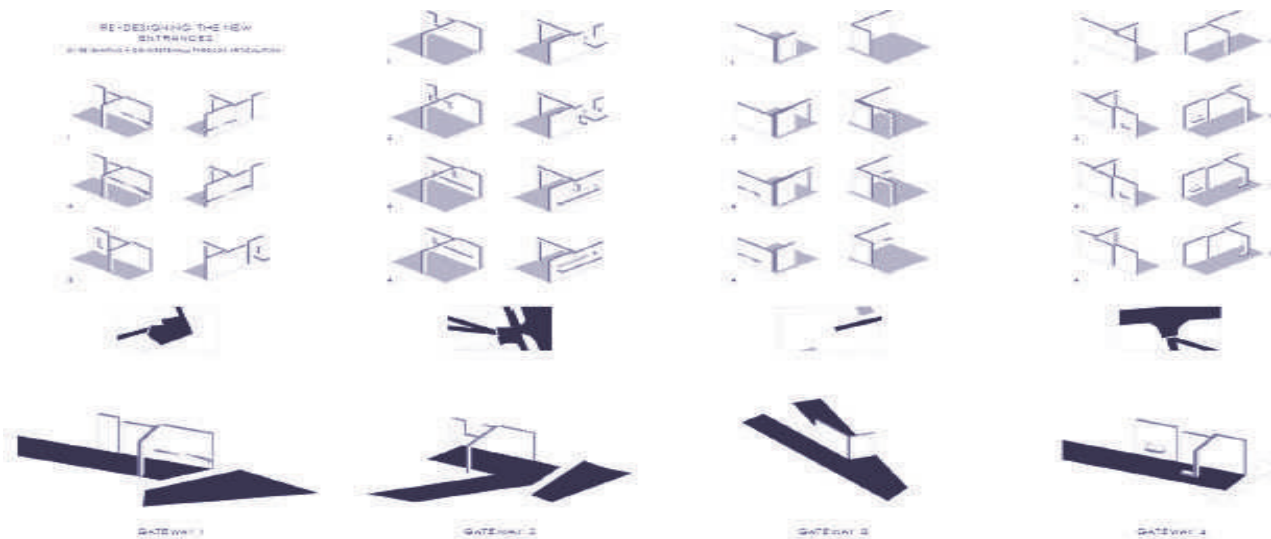


Fig. 8 – Entry signs (author TC)

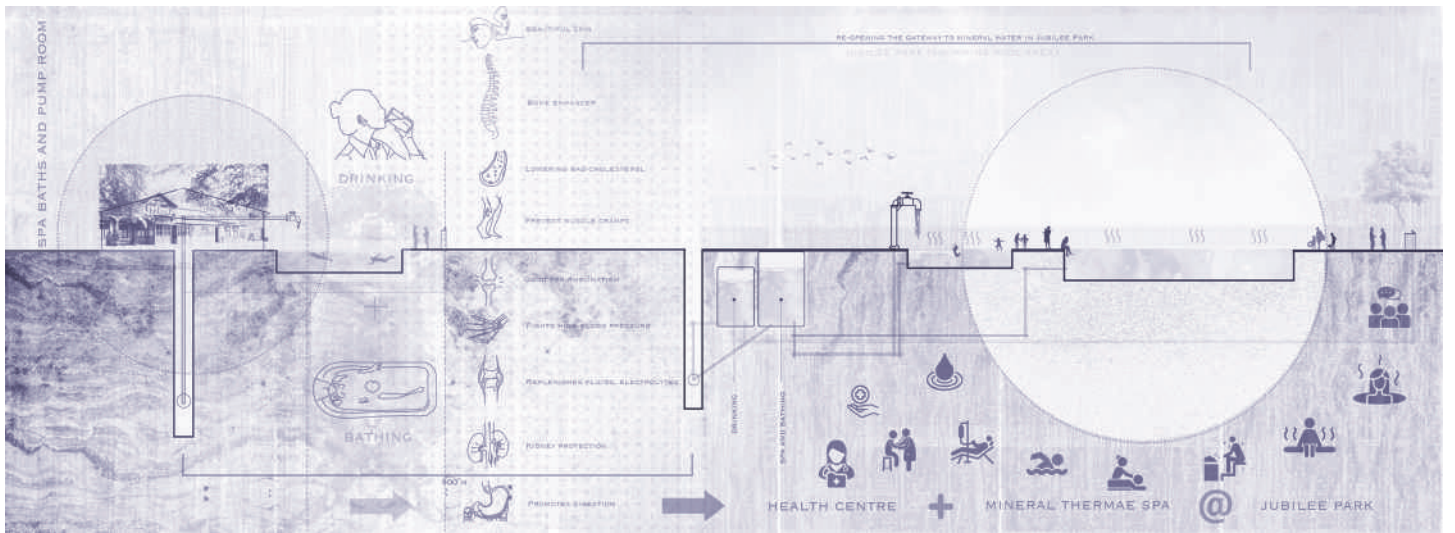


Fig. 9 – Make Woodhall a Spa again (author KN)

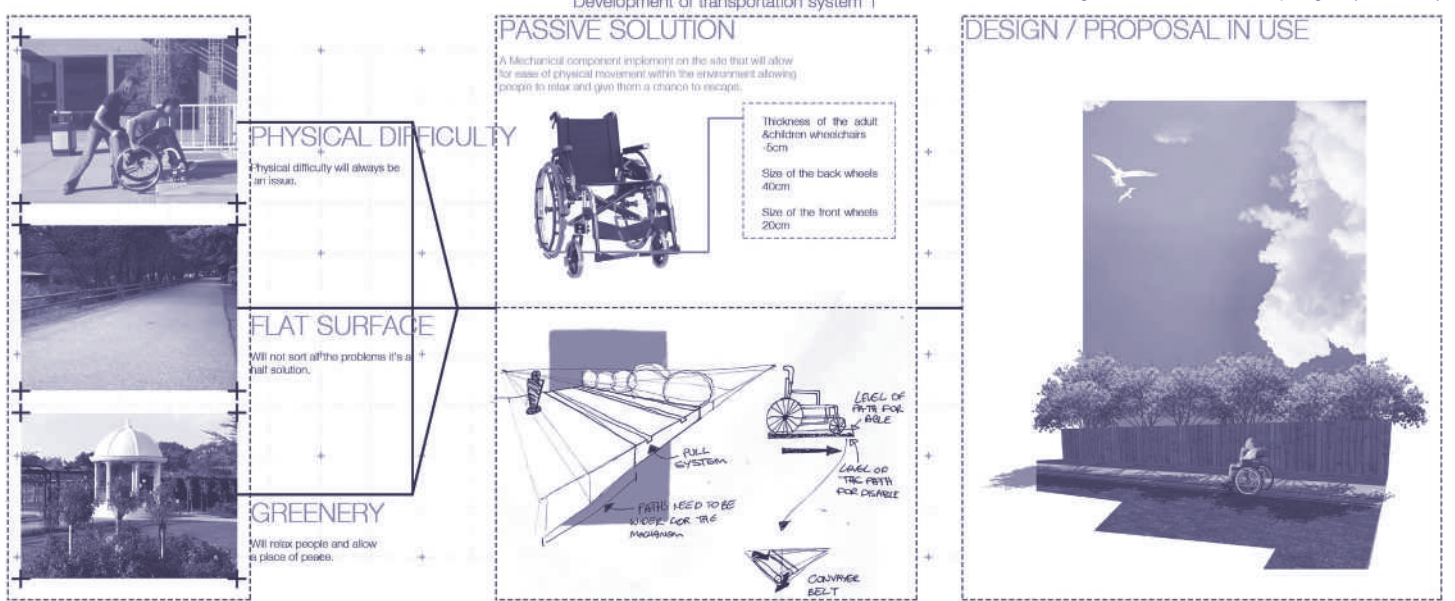


Fig. 10 - The enabling park (author DN)



Fig. 11 – Historic Woodhall Spa and its people (author JaH)

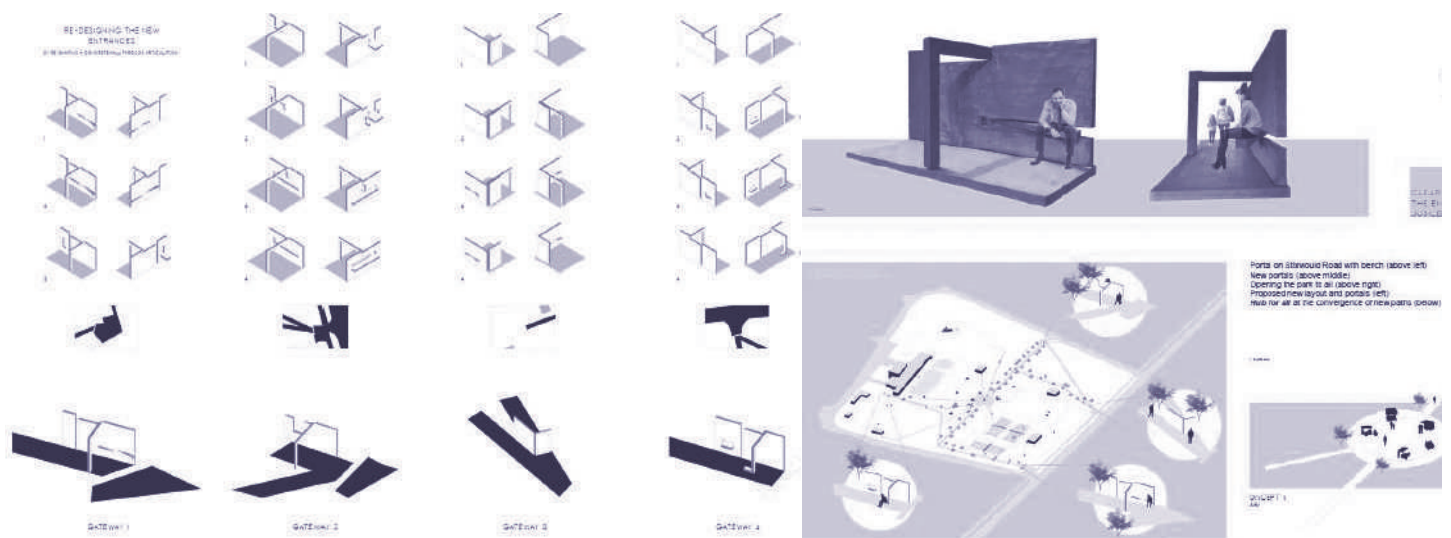


Fig. 12 – Multi-purpose gateways (left) and the bus-stop gate (right) (author TC)

caused by fences and hedges bordering each activity. In reaction to them, he proposed a tree-top-trail, an elevated network of paths and nodes which made all boundaries inconsequential.

Another aspect noticed by students, while walking around the park, was its façade on Stixwoud Road: the organisation and placement of various buildings respond to functional needs, such as storage, without consideration to their appearance when viewed from the main road. To anybody passing by, the park presents a panoply of fences and backs of structures. DH's project addressed this by widening the pedestrian route along Stixwoud Road, to create a sculpture-strewn boulevard. The Jubilee Park's presence and significance was marked in his project by a 'stepping-stone' installation, which drew attention to the phreatic water running under one's feet. Inspired by the fact that one of the original wells is in the park (Fig.2), DH viewed the mineral water as a historic artefact, which could be experienced: it was allowed to surface for people to come, once again, to Woodhall Spa to take the waters.

The hopelessness of the derelict original spa building was enough to determine KN that Woodhall Spa needed to revive its *raison d'être*, to make Woodhall a Spa again. In her view, by relying on existing facilities, Jubilee Park could take the lead. She proposed an extension to the swimming pool to house a new bijou-spa, inspired by Roman *thermae* (Fig.9). For KN, the attraction, local and regional, of such a resource, for the short and long

term, was indubitable.

Our visit continued with *the Kinema in the Woods*, converted in 1922, a Woodhall Spa icon. An orderly queue outside indicated that something was on and staff kindly allowed us in. The foyer, burgundy walls covered with old film posters, lit by old fashioned fittings, imbued with the irresistible smell of popcorn (well, students actually resisted it, but bought ice-cream...), was reminiscent of bygone eras – fitting well with its claim to fame as the only cinema in the UK still employing back projection. CI's proposal took its cue from the dual world suggested by a screen and the magic of stories to propose a kinema-café in Jubilee Park.

Another project concentrating on the value of the lido was DN's, who looked into the enhancement of existing structures to cater for those physically or mentally disabled, in a dynamic, enabling way, to make their experience of the pool as enjoyable and liberating as everybody else's (Fig.10).

Our walk looped back from the old spa to the high street. The atmosphere of the village, with its interminable woods which seem to unassumingly peel away to allow for houses and people, inspired JaH's project (Fig.11).

This, together with the reading of nostalgic reminiscences found in books about Woodhall Spa's past, informed the park she ultimately proposed for those who cannot remember - dementia sufferers - and, of course, their carers.

The *Cottage Museum* was the last stop, where we were welcomed, at the end of our day in Woodhall Spa, with most welcome sustenance, of the intellectual and biscuit kind...

THE PROJECTS

gateways and other worlds [TC]

The first journey to Woodhall Spa inspired a few of the projects and this was one of them. Unlike the rest of the group, TC arrived in the village by car, from a different direction and became aware of the change in the atmosphere of the landscape, from the Lincolnshire open space, with uninterrupted views, to the arrival into Woodhall Spa, in the enveloping, dense presence of the woods, which take the role of the host of the village. The analysis of Jubilee Park reached the conclusion that it was an invaluable asset for the community, but its boundaries and entry points were ill-defined, ambiguous or obscured. He proposed new multipurpose, sculptural portals, which marked unequivocally the gateways into the park, also serving as points of rest or play: a bench for the bus-stop on Stixwoud Road, a chess table at the northern entry point and so on (Fig. 12). The gateways also symbolised an openness to all, while new alleyways converged in the centre, in a hub for cultural diversity.

connect and pause [JBF]

JBF applied Kevin Lynch's *Imaginability theory* to identify and analyse the paths, nodes, landmarks, edges and 'districts' (distinct areas) within

Jubilee Park. This process highlighted that journeys through the park lacked fluency and coherence relative to the protagonist-objects that populate it: bandstand, pergolas, hedges, mesh fences and so on. She addressed this by selectively removing some of them (Fig. 13 top) and proposing new nodes designed as moments of pause, which punctuated one's journey through a network of more readable alleyways. Jan Gehl's method of place making in response to an intimate understanding of public space use, helped JBF with the design and location of hyperbolic structures to provide moments of pause for resting, play, reflection, learning (Fig. 13 above).

tree-top-trail [CH]

CH's take on the project revolved around his interest in traditional methods of construction using timber, structurally or decoratively, inspired by the regional vernacular. Particularly significant for him was *Petwood House*, which is the eponym for a way of building known locally as the *Petwood style* (Fig.14). Now a hotel, the Tudor revival house was built in 1905 for Lady Grace von Eckhardstein (later Weigell) in her 'pet wood' (Fig. 4). CH analysed methods of construction using timber, by graphically deconstructing elements of the house as well as by comparing it to Walter Seagal's pioneering work on self-built projects, component standardisation and prefabrication. CH's analysis of Jubilee Park concluded that different activities are defined by boundaries, which fragmented it. His proposal envisaged the creation of a new tree-growing nursery on the park's north-west outer corner, to expand the Woodhall Spa woods and sustain a community-run workshop, for teaching skills such as tree-surgery, carpentry, roofing. The workshop was also the generator of, and point of origin for, a community-built tree-top-trail, which unravelled as a parallel world above the park, thus transgressing all boundaries. The trail gave the workshop a purpose, each component for the towers (platforms, pitstops) and bridges (circulation), a testament of learning and work done by members of the community (Fig.15). Placed within the UN Sustainable Development Goals paradigm, CH's

project offered a solution for the social, economic and environmental future of Jubilee Park, while literally giving it another dimension.

reviving lost plasticity [JH]

For JH, Jubilee Park posed a

phenomenological challenge and the process of understanding the extent of it was done in parallel with a careful reading of Juhani Pallasmaa's *The Eyes of the Skin*. The interpretation and synthesis of the text resulted in a series of analytical 'tools', based on the human

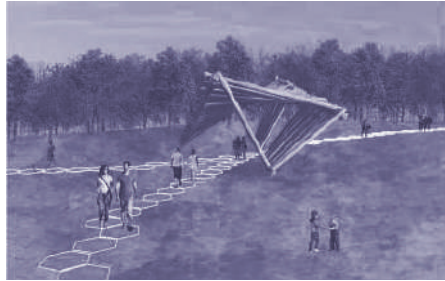


Fig. 13 – Removal of visual and physical obstructions (top) and proposed follies for pause (above) (author JBF)



Fig. 14 – Analysis of the Petwood Style (author CH)

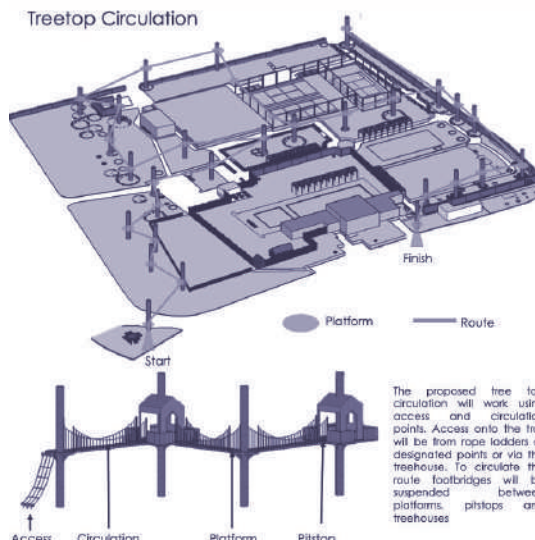


Fig. 15 - An extra dimension for a borderless park (author CH)

senses, used to frame the perception of the park. His personal experience of the journey through the park was a collage of sounds (the scrunching of the gravel - not wheel-chair friendly, the sonorous impact between tennis balls, rackets and clay, the birds' song), odours (crisp and fresh, autumnal and subdued), movements (being led by others or by the need to understand the space as organized, or not, by existing structures) and so on. The 'tools' extracted from Pallasmaa's text helped JH categorise his sensorial observations under *retinal, corporeal, tactile, acoustic and olfactory*. These

became the drivers for the design of a multi-sensorial quasi-enclosed new space, a receptacle for those accessing the park through what is the official main gate Fig. 17). The installation was meant to mark the importance of this entry point, while consciously stimulating all senses, not only vision, by the use of tactile materials and by modelling the space to force a change of pace and awareness of the body - in motion or repose. The olfactory and auditory senses were engaged by making the installation permeable to bursts of seasonally fragrant plants, by encouraging bio-diversity and allowing

water to collect, trickle, reflect (Fig. 16).

where is the water? [DH]

DH became interested in Woodhall Spa's history, which, although rich, left very few traces. He started mapping the origins of the town's fortune - the boreholes dug in 1824 (Fig. 2). The wells of curative waters had activated Woodhall Spa, ensuring its growth, yet today they exist only in the collective memory of its citizens or annals.

Another event that marked Woodhall Spa is the extraordinary story of the Dambusters, the RAF 617 squadron which had its quarters at Petwood House during the second world war. DH used the three categories of Hegel's logic - *Being, Essence, Notion* (Fig. 18) - to analyse the *Dambusters* memorial, concluding that the monolith is a poor portrayal of an audacious military operation, made possible by technical ingenuity and courage, which had a significant impact on the outcome of the conflagration. He suggested that the monument could do more to relay the essence of the events it memorialises. Applying this to Jubilee Park became DH's proposal, as the park has within its curtilage one of the original, defintory wells of Woodhall Spa. The examination of the park's workings revealed that the eastern edge, the public face of the park on Stixwoud Road, offers an untidy collection of structures with an obscured main entrance on a corner. DH's design addressed the park's weak facade and confused approach by widening the public footpath into a sculpture garden along Stixwoud Road, as an urban antechamber setting the scene for a sequence of spaces leading into a new core of the park (Fig 19). The sculpture garden, funnel entrance and the new core, all acknowledged the meaning behind Woodhall Spa's history - its *mineral water*: a stepping stone installation along the road revealed the existence of water underground, the original well was allowed to flood beside the access path and an installation for 'taking the waters' was placed in the new core/piazza. Thus, the park was set to become the new heart of Woodhall Spa for the reason of its genesis: the curative mineral-rich waters.

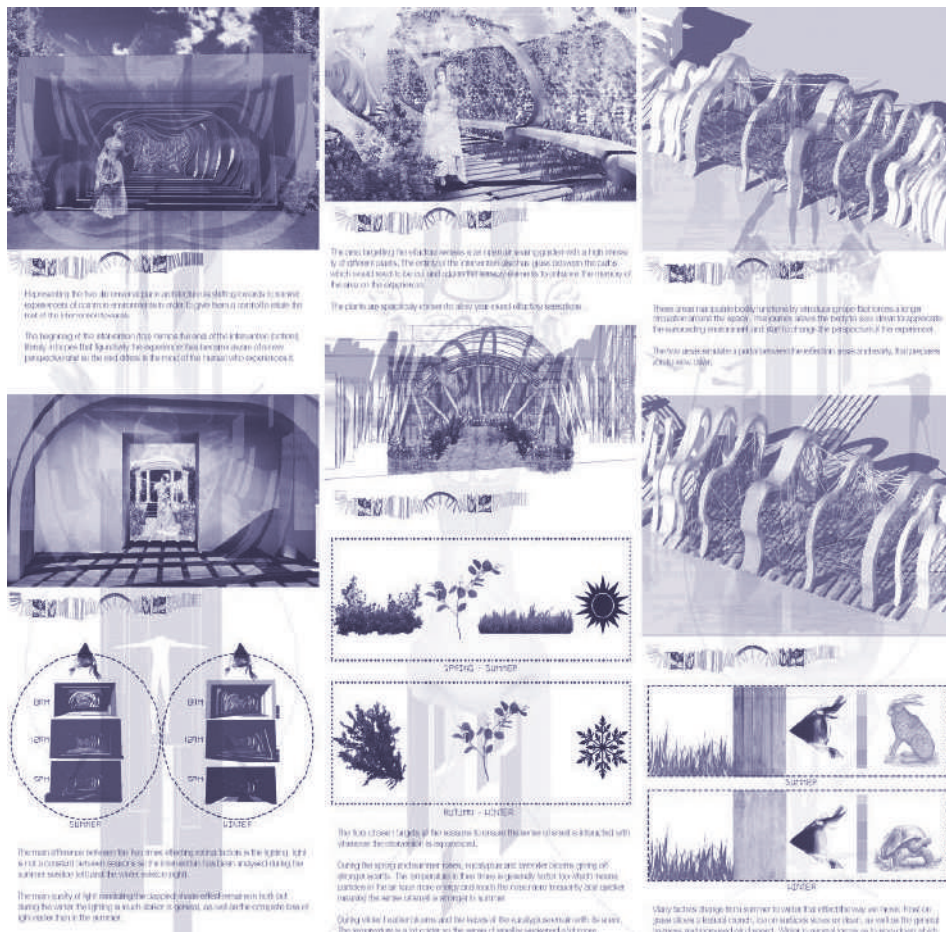


Fig. 16 - A phenomenological entrance (author JH)

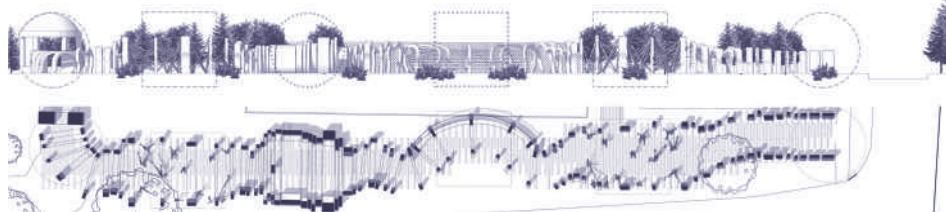


Fig. 17 - Elevation and plan of the multi-sensorial new space (author JH)



Fig. 18 - Hegel's logic (author DH)

the illusion of normality [JaH]

Nostalgia drove JaH's project from the start: she was inspired by the sepia postcards of Victorian Woodhall Spa and the melancholy reminiscences of bygone eras. Stories about blue-bell-carpeted woods and intrepid locals and their thriving businesses, found in books on local history, were the basis of her evocative hand-drawn amalgamations of the village's memories (Fig. 11). From there on, the project became about what happens when one loses the ability to reminisce, as is the case of people afflicted by dementia, and how creating familiar, recognisable environments for them can help ameliorate their frustration with the mental void (Fig. 20). Relying on specialist knowledge of the condition, JaH re-imagined her visit to Woodhall Spa as if experienced by somebody with dementia, whose inability to register the granularity of and differentiations within the environment would make the journey linear, articulated instead only by familiar features (Fig. 21).

Preliminary investigations showed that although Jubilee Park would be an attractive destination for people with dementia and their carers, its layout and finishes were not entirely suitable. JH's design proposal was a park conceived for dementia sufferers, with carefully choreographed sinuous paths without dead-ends - to avoid getting lost.

The composition was punctuated by moments of nostalgic pause; spaces were designed to evoke familiar experiences (the shadow of an ancient tree), making use of scents (fragrant seasonal plants), colours and shapes (traditional English garden plants and furniture). JaH imagined a palliative park of many safe journeys for her own grandparents.

Kinematic café [CI]

CI's project took its cue from one of Woodhall Spa's celebrated venues, the *Kinema in the woods*. As the only fully functioning cinema in the UK to employ back projection, its atmospheric foyer covered in film posters, the Kinema evokes un-lived memories of the golden age of the cinemascope and Hollywood glamour. CI first looked at the mechanics

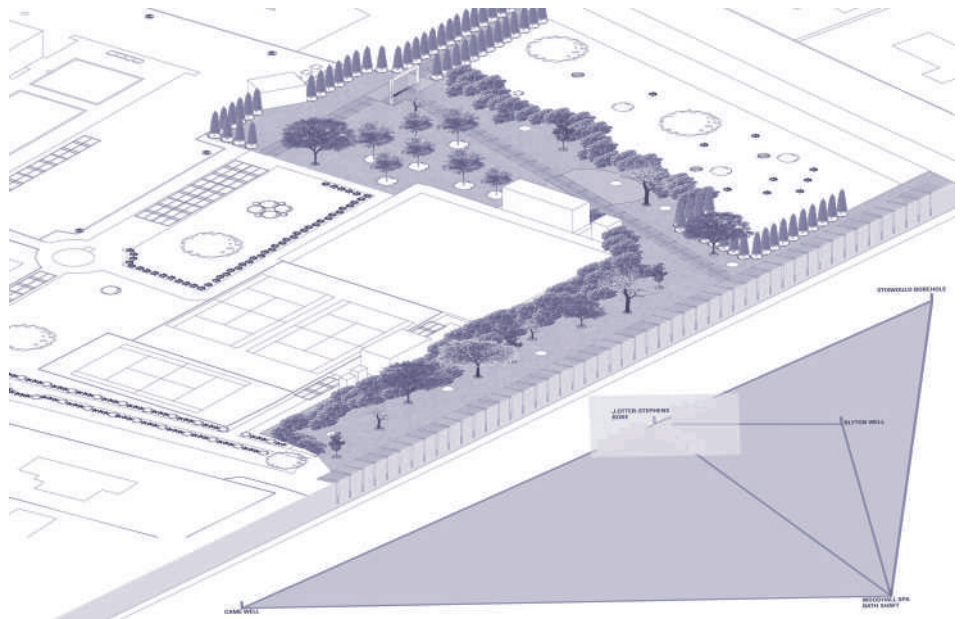


Fig. 19 – Removal of visual and physical obstructions (top) and proposed follies for pause (above)

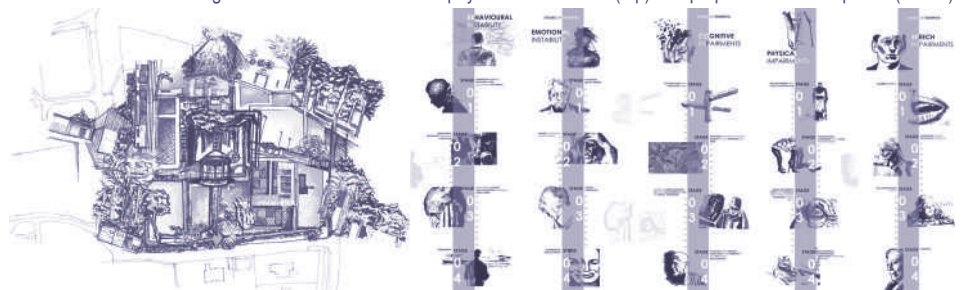


Fig. 20 – Nostalgia and dementia (author JaH)



Fig. 21 – Psuchoecography for palliative park (author JaH)

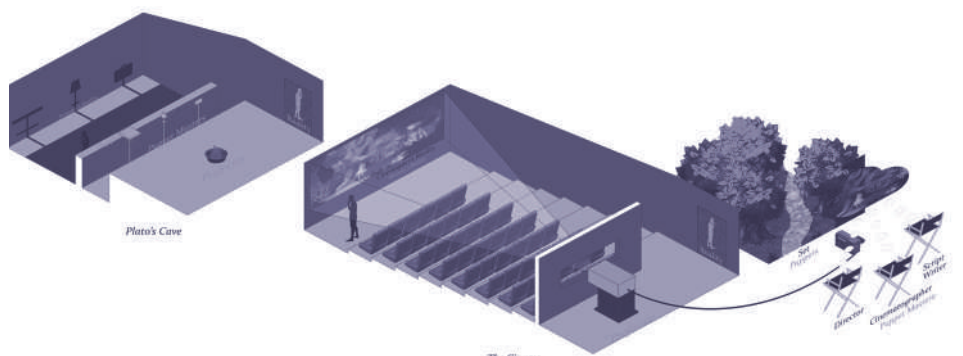


Fig. 22 – The Kinema, a Plato's cave (author CI)

of back projection and likened it to Plato's cave allegory (Fig. 22), relative to the two different worlds that exist either side of a mediating plane.

Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* offered further inspiration for his new café in the park, which preserved a direct relationship with the swimming pool. The intention was for the Kinema café to become also a summer theatre, spilling onto a 'magical' lawn - a playground populated with games and play structures inspired by fairy tales whose narratives rely on the surreptitious escape from reality into other worlds (Narnia, Alice in wonderland, Harry Potter and so on).

the growing hub [RL]

Understanding the community of Woodhall Spa was vital for RL's response to the challenge posed by Jubilee Park. She recorded her emotive reaction to visiting the village, augmenting it with historic details (Fig. 1). Statistical data and desk-top research revealed, surprisingly, that the demographic spread was more even than expected, which led to an analysis of what Jubilee Park offers to various age groups, throughout the year. The conclusion was that existing facilities – tennis, bowling, swimming, walking, playing – sustain enthusiasts, amateurs or sporadically active individuals, but because they

seasonal, the park becoming deserted after the autumn solstice, even during bright days, as was the case when we visited. For several months every year, Jubilee Park stops being a destination for the region or one of the places where the local community spends time. To address this, RL proposed a hub designed as a winter garden, reminiscent of the one in the old Victorian Royal Hotel. It included a permanent cafeteria, a library and spaces for crafts and events. Placed at the heart of a community designed and maintained garden based on the permaculture ethos, the hub was to be a centre for learning about environmental sustainability, with essential skills and knowledge passed between generations (Fig. 24).



Fig. 23 – Section through the new intergenerational hub (author RL)

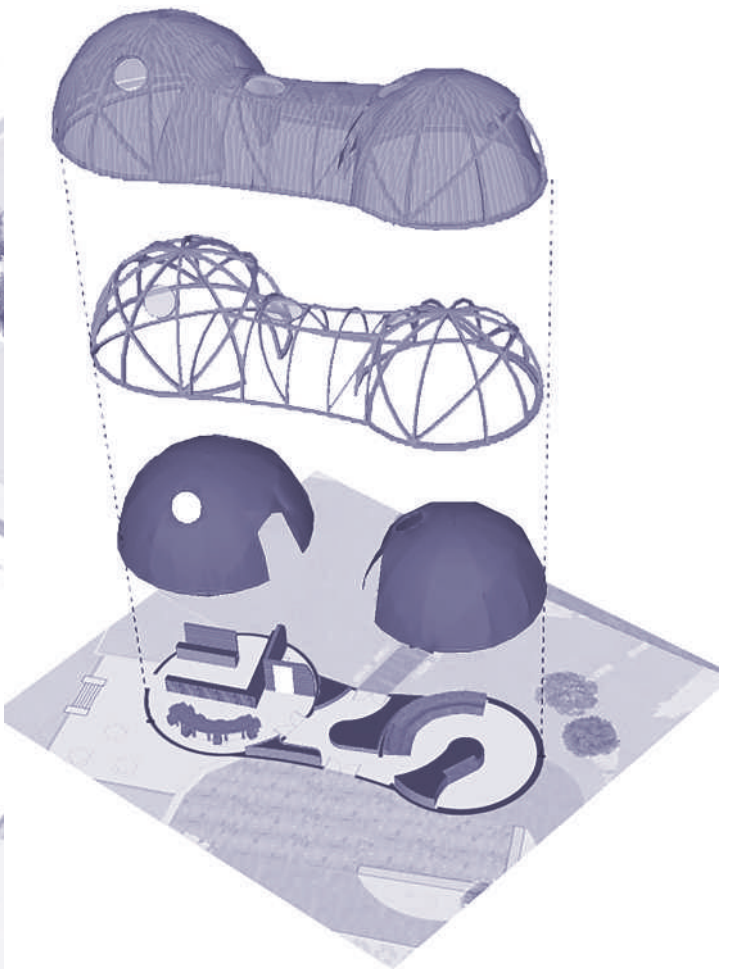
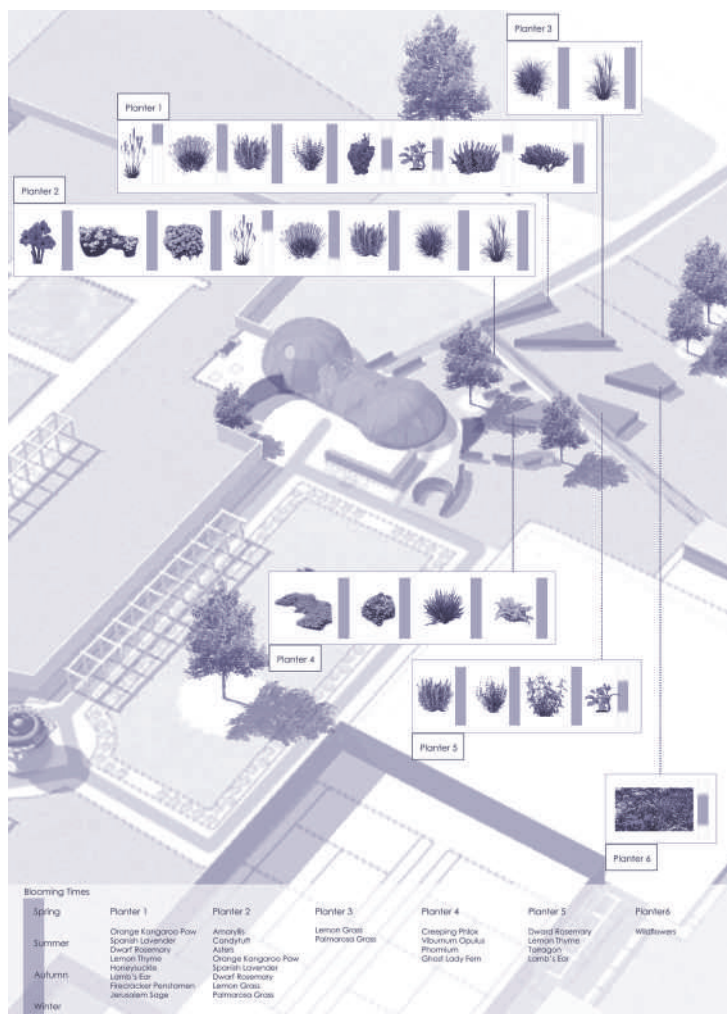


Fig. 24 – Permaculture principled hub (left) and structural diagram (author RL)

Jubilee Park rewired [RL]

The pursuit of order informed RL' radical re-arrangement of the in-between space at the heart of Jubilee Park. The problem he decided to address was revealed through an appraisal of all entry points into the park - gateways from the public realm into its curtilage - and paths linking them to the different functions within (Fig. 25). The conclusion was that what might be perceived as the focus of the park - the lawn traversed by alleys, locked in place by pergolas and the planting layout, with the bandstand as a pivotal point - was in effect a thoroughfare offering no opportunities for stopping, lingering, staring, doing. The network of

paths inherited from the original Victorian rational layout had the main entrance placed centrally, on the southern edge of the park, thus the access used to be onto a symmetrically organised garden. Today the same symmetrical garden is approached from corners, which explains why the design lines of the park lack coherence in terms of the journey through it - paths start and stop without destinations defining them. What originally was the grand, unified classical composition of a balanced landscape design is now an *in-between space*, providing access to the different, notionally or materially segregated, areas which define activities in Jubilee Park: tennis

courts, bowling green etc.

RL' proposal replaced the Victorian layout with a fluid network of sinuous paths, linking all entry points, thus reactivating the lost centre of the park (Fig. 26). The landscaped public space, with seating and sheltered areas, was envisaged to become *the place to be*, for everybody, throughout the year, the skate-park designed to become an ice-rink in the winter.

new ways [JM]

For JM, Jubilee Park was an exercise in *boundaries* and *thresholds*. Following Christopher Alexander's *Pattern*

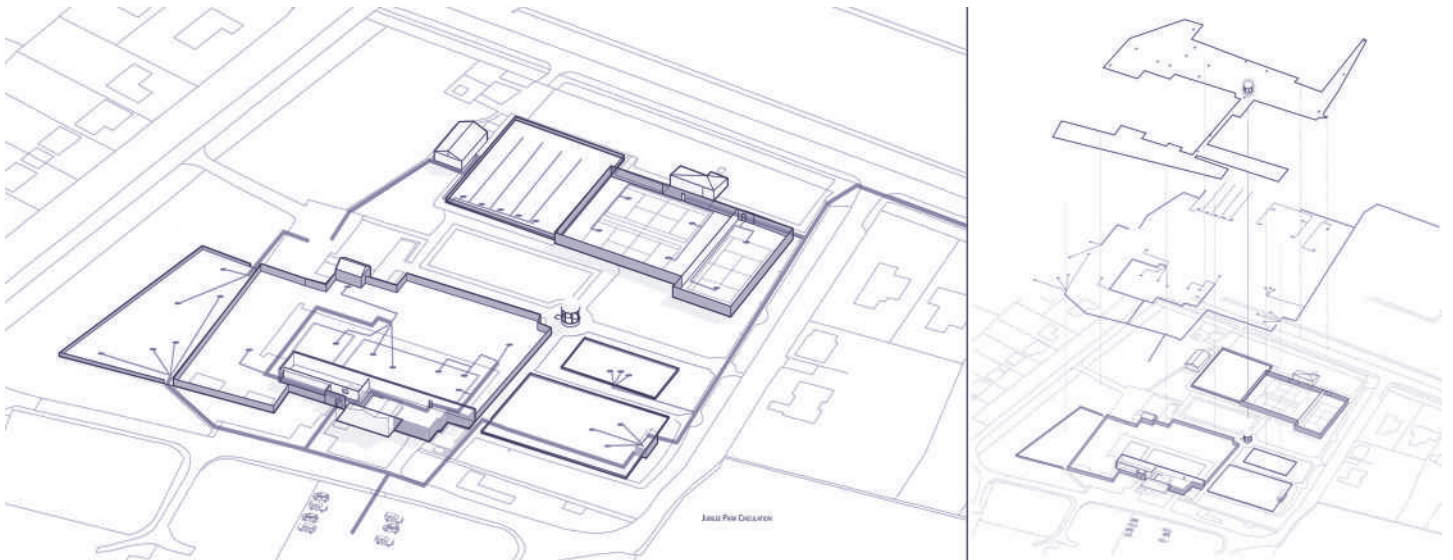


Fig. 25 - Functional analysis of Jubilee Park (author RL)

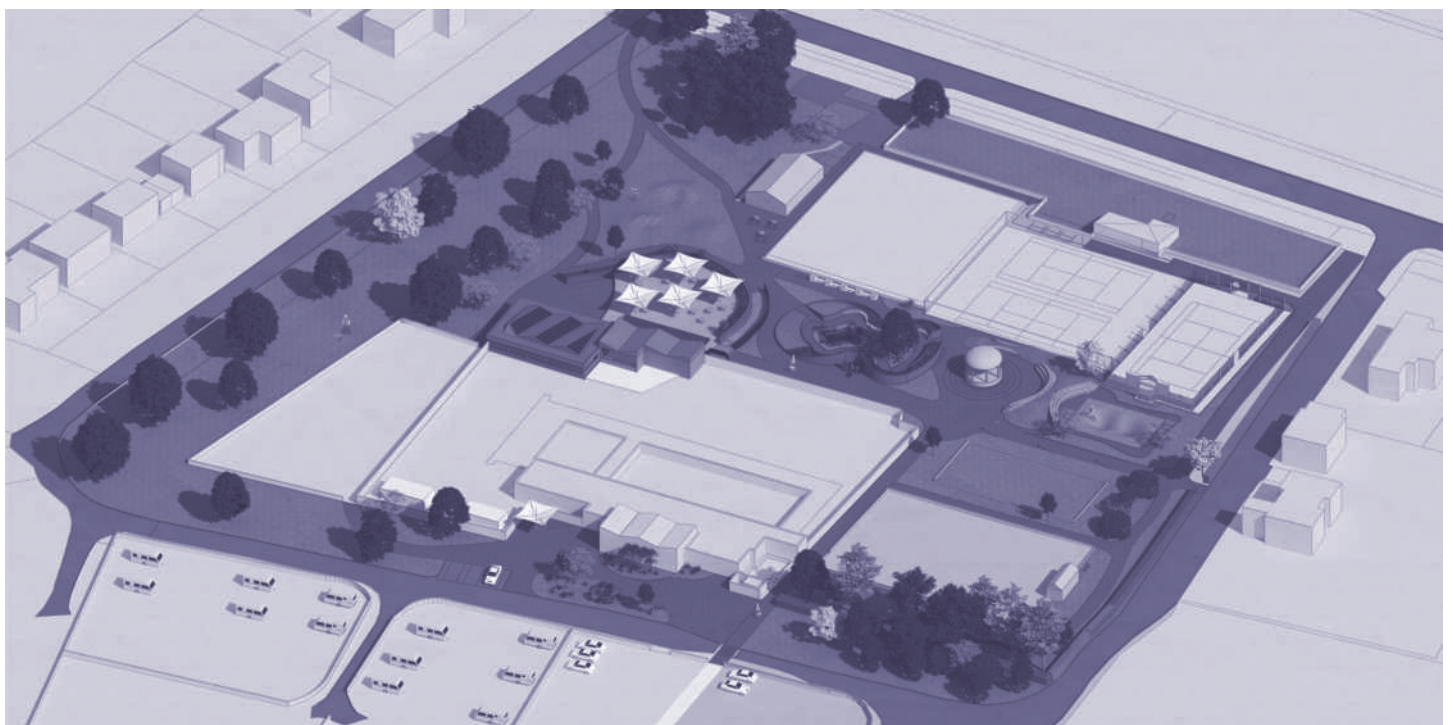


Fig. 26 - Proposed new core with skate park/ice rink, cafeteria, sheltered sitting areas (author RL)

language methodology, he started by studying the permeability of the park's edges (Fig. 27). The park's envelope is sometimes defined materially by fences or shrubs and in other cases only notionally (property lines, not manifested physically). The entry points are deliberate perforations of the boundary and it was their lack of definition and amorphous nature that became JM's object of study. The formal 'main' iron gate on the south-eastern corner is hidden by vegetation and it gives a disorienting peripheral access to the park: it is on an edge, flanked by the tennis courts on the right and the park's southern boundary on the left, the path not indicating what the

desirable direction or focus of the place might be. The entrance on the north-east corner is marked by a country gate, but beyond it, the northern edge is a vague area that can be criss-crossed from all directions, a mixture of lawn and various hard ground finishes, more or less level and intact, with full view of the bins for the cafeteria and swimming pool. The western boundary is just as porous, between the swimming pool changing rooms, the toilets block and beyond.

JM proposed a new entrance, purposefully designed to capture the footfall from Stixwoud Road and the northern edge, funnelling all activity into

the centre of the park (Fig. 28). The plan also included a gateway building, which completed the composition. This was a new, multi-purpose focal point for Jubilee Park, containing an art gallery, restaurant, library, community centre and a gym.

the thermae [KN]

For KN there was a clear and singular problem about Woodhall Spa in general and Jubilee Park in particular: the thermal water - the reason for its emergence, prosperity and notoriety and thought by association to be the water in the heated pool of Jubilee Park - was nowhere. The immediate and unequivocal question was, why? And the answer to Jubilee Park's

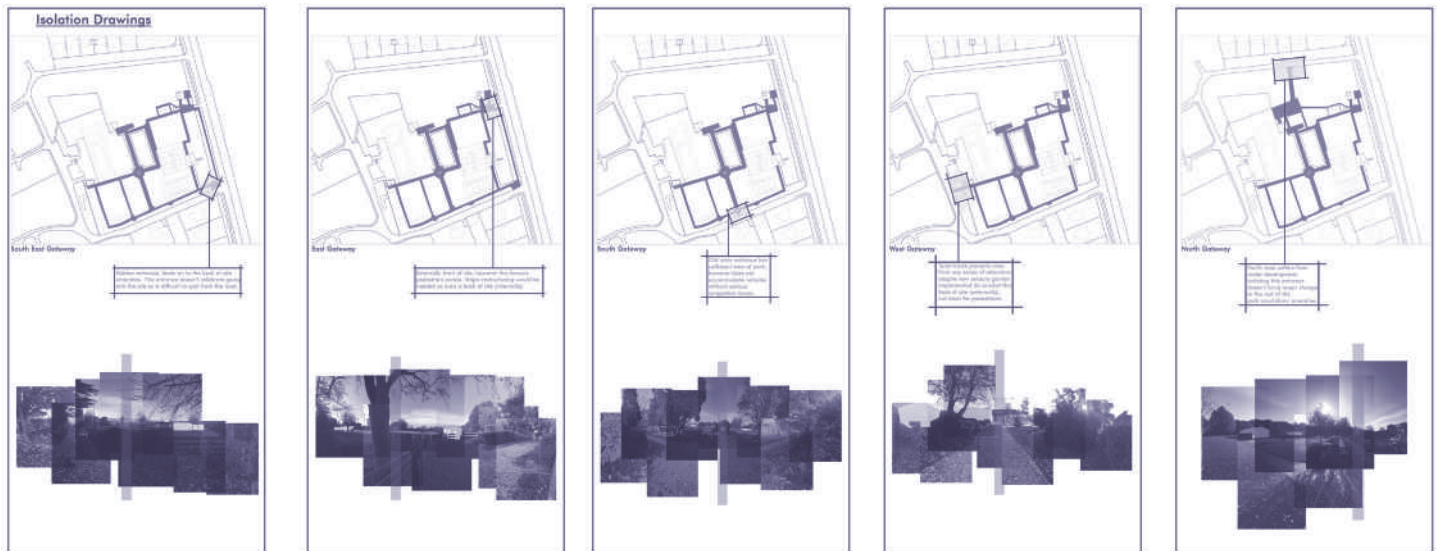


Fig. 27 – Boundaries and thresholds (author RL)

Internal Circulation Analysis

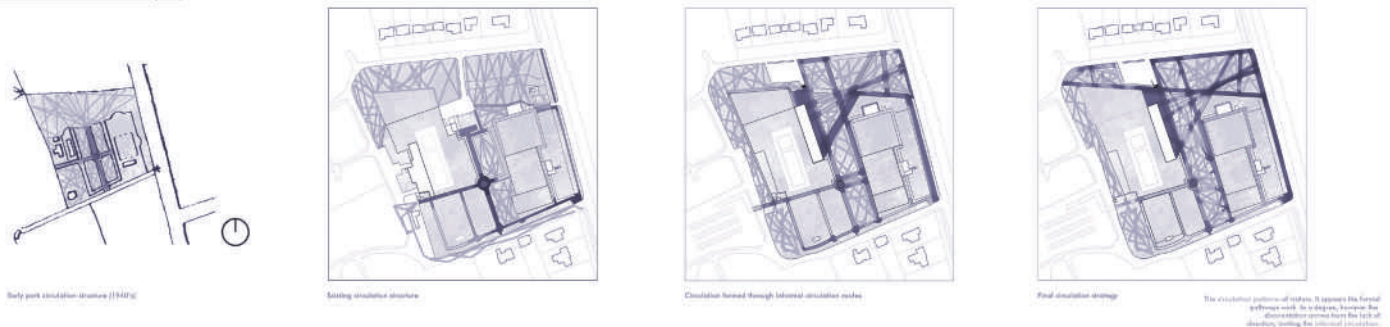


Fig. 28 – From formal Victorian garden to welcoming open esplanade (author RL)

conundrum about a sustainable future was just as immediate: revive the spa.

KN's initial work concentrated on unveiling the historical background (Fig. 29), as well as developing a brief for a spa inspired by the sequence of spaces and hydrotherapy treatments found in Roman baths. Her proposal was to extend

the existing pool facilities with a bijou therapeutic pavilion, so that Jubilee Park could perpetuate the original *raison-d'être* of the village, restoring it as a destination known for its curative waters (Fig. 30).

the enabler [DN]

The story of DN's project started on the

first journey to Woodhall Spa from Lincoln. He had missed the coach his colleagues caught earlier that morning and now found that his presence on the bus lowered the average age considerably. His further studies revealed that Woodhall Spa is affably known as 'God's waiting room'.

DN's interest in the post-humanist

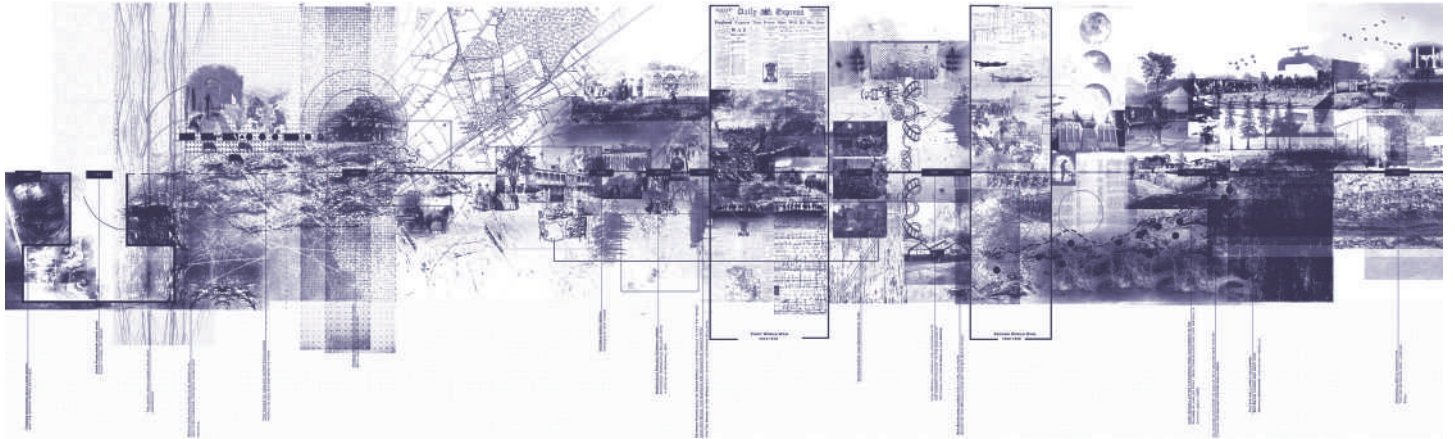


Fig. 29 – The history of a spa (author KN)

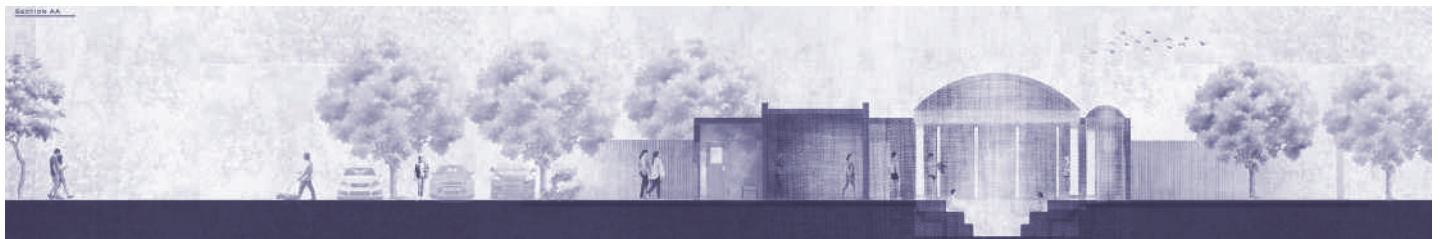


Fig. 30 – Section through the thermae of Jubilee Park (author KN)

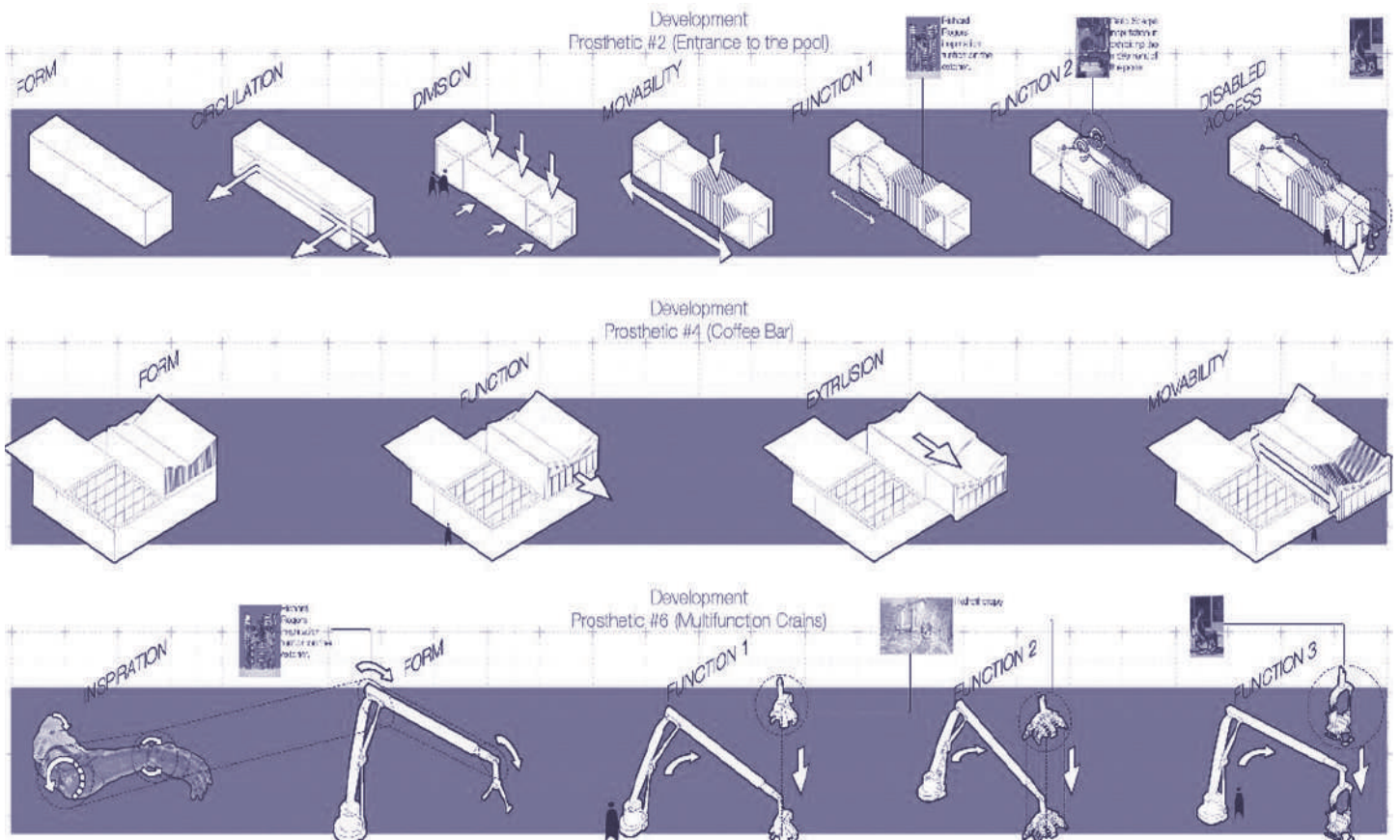


Fig. 31 – Enabling architecture (author KN)

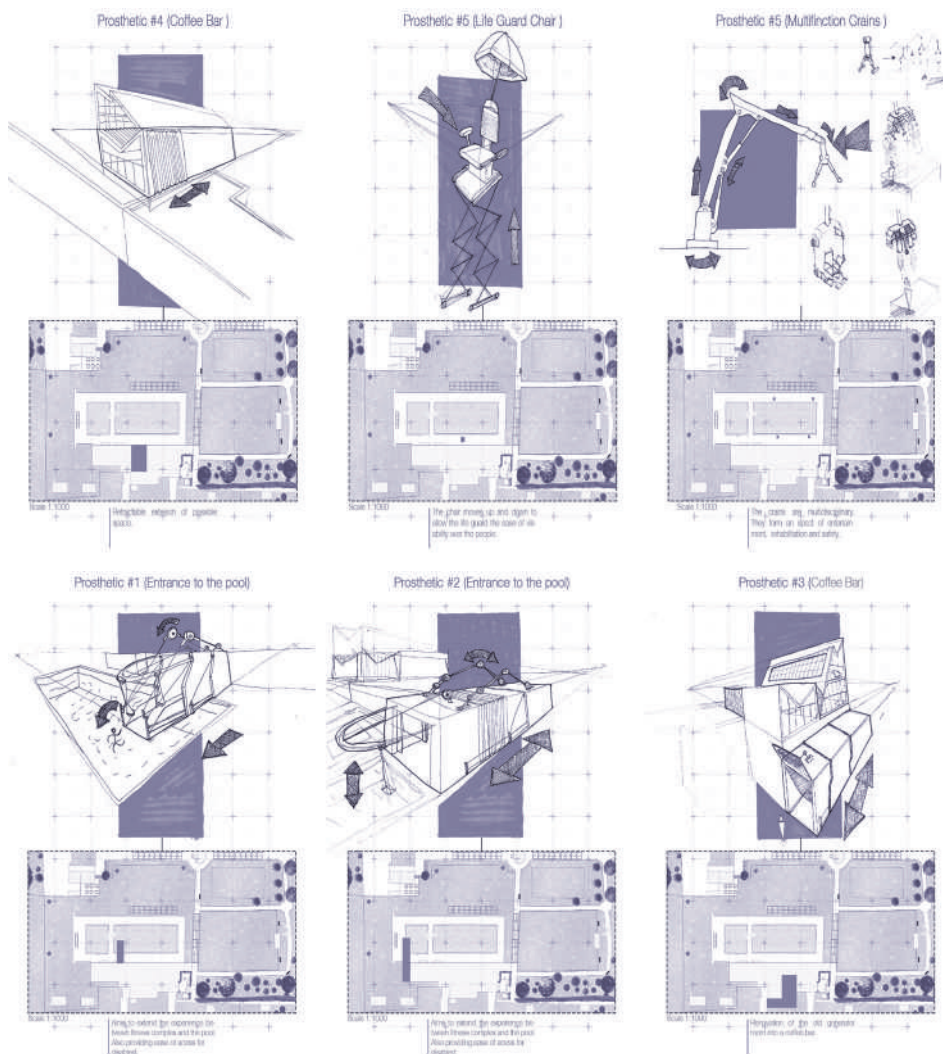


Fig. 32 (above) and 33 (below) – 'Never too late' for all (author KN)

theory, according to which traditional boundaries between the human, the animal and technology are blurred, led the project to question how accessible Jubilee Park is to those with impaired abilities, physical or mental.

His investigations into current bioelectric prosthetics research justified his conviction that one day bionic humans will be viable. Thus, designing for the future involved artificial implements that could complete what was damaged, missing or had limited functionality.

The obvious leap was asking if architecture could do the same, by mimicking the behaviour of prosthetics, to include parts that adapted to the users' needs (Fig. 31).

His forensic analysis of the park's facilities, starting with the swimming pool, resulted in a proposed catalogue of enhancements to make them reactive to people's necessities.

The slogan for the pool's swimming programme, 'It's never too late', became the aim of the project: telescopic corridors, articulated arms, a hydraulic pool-floor and concertina chairs were the means by

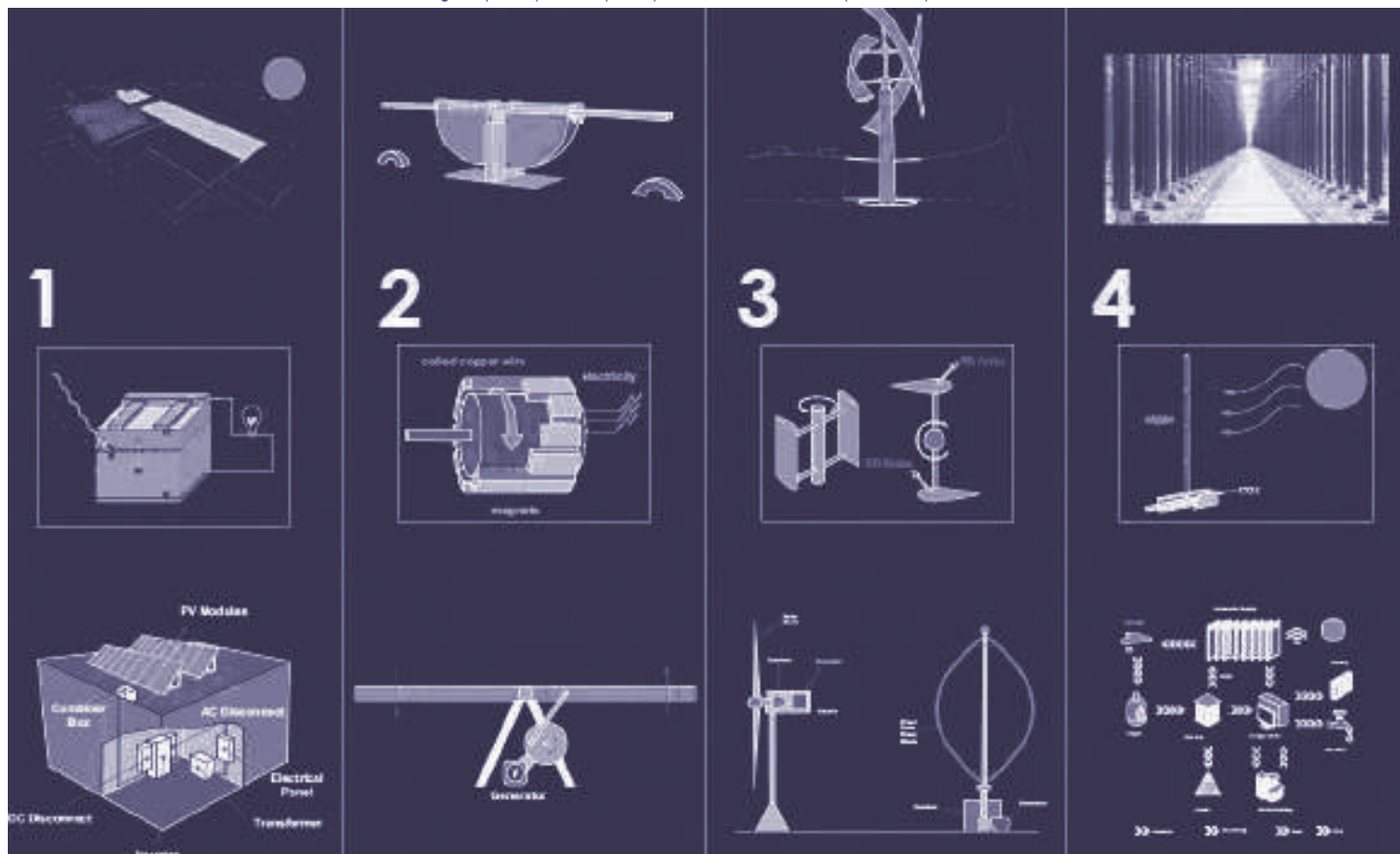


Fig. 34 – Sustainable park (author FS)

which the building became the enabler for those who might have thought it too late to attempt aquatic exercise (Fig. 32, 33).

Further enabling devices were proposed for a redesigned park, which took into account physical and mental afflictions (Fig. 10).

the Freiburg effect [FS]

FS joined our group for the first term in 3rd year as an Erasmus exchange student from Freiburg, Germany. Since the 1970s, Freiburg has developed a reputation as Germany's ecological capital, by following a clear vision: through regulation, incentives, design, long-term commitment and policy reform, the CO2 emissions have been drastically reduced. In 2012, Freiburg was named the most sustainable city in Germany, with a 100% increase in the use of public transport and 35% of residents choosing not to own a car. The energy comes from renewable sources, and in 2017 the Town Hall became the world's first public building producing surplus energy.

FS took the brief from the Jubilee Park's trustees, combined with his site analysis, to develop proposals which demonstrated his keen awareness of environmental

issues. The project addressed several aspects (Fig. 34):

1_the existing pool changing rooms look like an industrial building, not a leisure facility - FS's proposal re-clad the zig-zagged building with an ever-changing material and covered it with photovoltaic panels to generate its own electricity (1 on Fig.33).

2_there is a physical barrier between children using the playground and those in the swimming pool enclosure - an ingenious new *games-wall* mediated the interaction between the two sides, with a dynamo enhanced see-saw generating energy (2).

3_the café in Jubilee Park is modest, flanked by refuse bins, closed during the cold months – the answer was a new café signalling the entrance into the park, a year-round meeting place, with its own energy generating windmills (3 on Fig 33 and 34).

4_the entrance into the park is ambiguous - FS suggested to mark the access from Stixwoud Road with an installation of vertical glass tubes containing CO2 consuming algae, which could be harvested for eating (in the new

café) or used as biofuel.

This way Jubilee Park could become an exemplar for the use of renewable energy.

PRESENTATIONS, PRIZES, PONDERINGS

At the end of January 2020, four trustees joined us in the architecture studios in Lincoln, three months after our group's visit to Woodhall Spa (Fig 36). Students took it in turns to talk about what they discovered, investigated, were intrigued by, needed a vision. Immersing for a few hours in the worlds constructed by our students' imaginations, all based on the park our guests thought they knew so well, was, by all accounts, a whirl of an experience.

The extent of what architects do, is often surprising to clients. As is the effect of architectural designs when they achieve what they are meant to: elate, inspire, unsettle but give hope, enthuse, go beyond expectations, talk to the future - even if rooted in the past and societal context. The trustees had wanted answers for a few issues with the park. Instead, the students' projects dissected the subject, changed the scale of enquiry and offered them new ways of



Fig. 35 – Energy self-sufficient cafeteria (author FS)



Fig. 36 – Jubilee Park charity trustees in our studio (photos DC)

seeing the legacy for which they cared. In the wake of the presentations, trying to award prizes proved a conundrum: the trustees found having to choose difficult, even unfair, because every project was telling them something new about Jubilee Park or Woodhall Spa, at times wondrous at times worrisome, but always with a plan. What made it more difficult was, in a way, what makes architecture complex and powerful: the choice was tugging at both the *emotive* and the *rational*. In the end, the winner was KN's proposal, the light-bulb project for the trustees, because it categorically said 'forget about anything else, it is about the spa'.

Runner-up was DH's similar statement, that Woodhall Spa would not be, if it were not for the waters. While, as the second runner-up, JH's phenomenological project mesmerised with recorded bird song, incense wafting across the studio, effusive graphics and verbal presentation. Students had presented their work before, for academic assessments, but the trustees' reactions revealed to them, probably for the first time, the value, potency and impact of their craft.

Our collaboration with Jubilee Park Woodhall Spa Ltd. worked well throughout, maintained through regular dialogue between the students, author and trustees. The support offered by the charity to our students was unwavering, from the organisation of our visit, to the lending of books and documentary material, to the opening of the Cottage Museum when needed. The prizes awarded by the trustees were generous and we have anecdotal evidence that the money was well-spent on books!

For our students, in *OTHER worlds: the woodhall spa project* created the opportunity to engage with a community cause and work with a real client and site, in the spirit of the *student as producer ethos* developed at the University of Lincoln. The students experienced the thrill of seeing how our group's designs transformed the trustees' views of their very well-known world of Jubilee Park, helping to re-format the map for its future.

The 31st of March 2020 was to mark

the grand finale of the project and was in the latest stages of planning: rooms were booked, exhibition panels organised, local stakeholders and newspapers invited. That day, our students were to return to Woodhall Spa to set up an exhibition and present their designs to the local community. However, during the spring of 2020, the whole world, and with it the trajectory of our own *OTHER* worlds, changed, in reaction to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

In praise of all the work on the project, this article is the exhibition we never had.

Emma Breale, the chair of *Jubilee Park Ltd.* trustees, reflects on the impact our work had on their vision:

"Jubilee Park has a rich historic legacy and, as Trustees, it is important that we plan for an exciting future legacy too. Engaging with the University of Lincoln School of Architecture students has been immensely rewarding and helped us begin to plot what this future legacy could look like. [...] We were extremely impressed by the students' research into the park's history, the setting of Woodhall Spa and how this legacy could influence the park's future for a multitude of users: from hard and soft landscaping designs to buildings and ideas about nurturing better transitions throughout the park's spaces.

It was particularly pleasing to see how the students embraced the existing values of the park, its role as a community asset and its mission around health and wellbeing, leading to creative ideas ensuring the park is accessible to all in the community. Seeing the park portrayed through their creative and inspirational visions has been truly eye-opening and has galvanised a new approach to the Trustees' planning for the park's future. We are delighted to have fostered this relationship with the next generation of creative minds and thank all involved for their time, energy and dedication to this project."

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