The site in Salford was selected for its close proximity to main transport routes, the neighbouring Salford university which has one of the only comedy courses in the country, and the local communities interest in seeing the existing pub reopened.
THE ARCHITECTURE OF LAUGHTER

The thesis project takes the form of an inclusive comedy club in Salford posing the question, how can architects use comedy within the design process to improve the lives of disabled and non-disabled building users?
The project is constructed as a series of distinct spaces, all of which aim to satirize current inclusive design practices whilst providing excellent spaces for disabled users. For example, one half of the accommodation is 2/3rds the height, fitting the ergonomics of a wheelchair user.
The design of the project mimics the various typologies of the city. To effectively satire a city, the building is designed as a comic exaggeration of existing buildings that members of the public could recognise.
Toilets are a vital part of our buildings yet often ignored or avoided in university projects as they are seen as dull and unimportant. To improve the wider community a new public “changing places” toilet was created, the first of its kind in Salford.
There are two distinct wings to the project. The performance spaces are clustered together in the east wing, whilst ancillary spaces such as a comedy library, community pub and accessible guest accommodation are grouped in the west.
EXPERIENTIAL THEATRES

Theatre for a Wheelchair User

Those who use wheelchairs are often forced to use long winding ramps to reach secondary entrances in buildings, treating them as lesser individuals. Here the dynamic is flipped with a winding staircase provided for able bodied audience members.

The Awkward Stair

Theatre for an Autistic Person

In this theatre the space is divided up into individual boxes, so everyone can view the performance whilst still maintaining a private space. This allows people with autism a less stressful experience, whilst allowing others to empathise with their situation.

Not-so-Royal Boxes

Theatre for a Deaf Person

This space was designed to enhance sightlines as much as possible whilst at the same time having truly terrible acoustics providing a challenge for abled bodied users.

A Brilliant View, Isn’t It?

Theatre for a Blind Person

The theatre for Blind users is in pitch black, but has handrails to guide audience members through. As a final twist in the performance it is revealed that the performer is actually standing behind the audience rather than in front of them. Here those with sight will struggle, whilst people who are blind should be able to navigate the space.

They’re Behind You

Theatre for a Person with Depression

Mental health desperately needs to be discussed in public, and hence the theatre for people with depression, physically opens out directly by the main entrance, bringing comedy to passers by and discussing mental health in a very open forum.

An Open Forum

One of the key drivers for the project was the experiential theatres, which were each based around a different disability. This allowed me to really focus in on the design guidance for each space and gave me a basis to design the rest of the project.
You can’t do that to such a majestic building the entrance completely interrupts the main window.

But buildings are only useful if people can access them, and the stepped entrance was completely impossible for me to use.

But what about the building’s historical significance? Surely that’s important?

More important than me accessing a building and using it day to day. History’s more important than my life?

Well... um...

A history that more often than not involved the abuse and mistreatment of disabled people.

Besides, it’s a new build anyway.

Heritage buildings sometimes manage to avoid meeting accessible design standards due to their historical significance. This is particularly unethical approach as it values the buildings, and the sometimes problematic ideals they represent, above people.
Finding inclusive hotel space can be really difficult for users with certain dis/abilities. As well as providing rooms for those wishing to travel to the comedy club, they are designed specifically for someone with disabilities rather than retrofitting an able bodied user's space.
Comedians have to deceive an audience in order to tell a joke, as the audience are led to believe one thing before the punchline is revealed to be different. In the same way the building lies about its materiality, with all the external finishes clad to a concrete frame.