

CURVE GYM



STUDENT CASE STUDY

OVERVIEW

Due to it becoming mostly out of use, Edwardian bathhouse Manningham Baths was closed by Bradford Council in 2011. This led to the site being on the verge of dereliction after over 100 years of operation, and prompted outcry from The Victorian Society, Manningham residents and JUST West Yorkshire.

In 2012, the baths were sold to a progressive local businessman, who saw potential for a more flexible use. In 2016, the listed building was successfully converted into a women-only Gym 'The Curve' to serve the needs of the local demographic.

MANNINGHAM
BATHS WERE
DESIGNED BY
BRADFORD CITY
ARCHITECT
FREDERICK
EDWARDS (1863-
1945), AND
OPENED IN 1904.



ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES



The exterior of the building, featuring well-detailed stonework, has undergone minimal alteration since its erection. The Listed building consent was granted £750,000 for development, with conditions to minimise impact on the pool's listed fabric.

The original changing cubicles and unusual details such as ceramic spittoons along the sides of the pool, still exist. The pool is split onto two levels. The upper floor, which used to be the shallow end of the pool, is known as the 'Floating Gym'. The Lower floor has steps that lead down to the sunken pool floor. These are used for studio classes.

USE

HOW HAS THE COMMUNITY USED THE SPACE IN THE PAST, TODAY AND HOW WILL IT BE USED IN THE FUTURE?

PAST

This former Edwardian bathhouse, built in 1904, was one of hundreds of swimming pools built around the country from 1890-1910. Manningham Baths was one of the few that has survived, and functioned as a bathhouse for the local community until 2011. Until its closure from Bradford City Council, it was one of

PRESENT

Alongside the main function of a gym, there is a hairdressers and cafe. These function somewhat as a community hub, where a diverse group of women meet, work and socialise in a safe space.

FUTURE

Curve Gym has been so successful in bringing people together through the hairdressers and café, that other supplementary functions will be the owners' primary focus for the future. There will be a continued and necessary focus on women's health, potentially through setting up a health clinic on the site. This would provide a more holistic experience to women's health, by combining exercise, healthy eating, socialising and medicine.



REFLECTIONS

HOW HAVE COMMUNITIES OF DIVERSE ETHNIC HERITAGE HAD A VOICE IN THE PLANNING AND DESIGN OF SITES THAT ARE SIGNIFICANT TO THEM?

When Bradford Council shut down the baths in 2011, there was potential for the building to never reopen due to its outdated function and the costly nature of a listed building conversion. However, a local greengrocer took matters into his own hands.

The local architect behind this renovation is Amir Hussein, who runs YEME architects in Bradford. He is passionate about serving the local population at both a grassroots and a policy level, sitting on major city boards. He demonstrated how his unconventional route into architecture was anchored in his love for his city and its heritage. Through re-thinking the function of the building, he managed to preserve the character of the former Manningham Baths by continuing their original function as a health centre. Amir fought to preserve the character of the structure by focusing on a few key architectural moves, such as infilling the pool with the gym, that were less invasive. This has brought a new lease of life to the structure for its local residents.



QUOTES

"I think the fact that we came in to do something that, from a perspective of the buildings heritage, was close to where we wanted it to be was a key thing. The issue that you've got to balance the commercial viability of it. They don't know it's going to work, and that has a big impact. We did a lot of sketches and visuals to suggest we were doing something sympathetic. We also tried to do a lot with the community and involve women's groups, involve the GPs surgeries and other organisations. In reality, the building has almost become a victim of its own success, in that it works so well as just a gym, it actually doesn't need to do anything else. It was meant to be a destination for events - fashion shows, poetry recitals - but because it does so incredibly well commercially as a gym, those other things are yet to be done."

