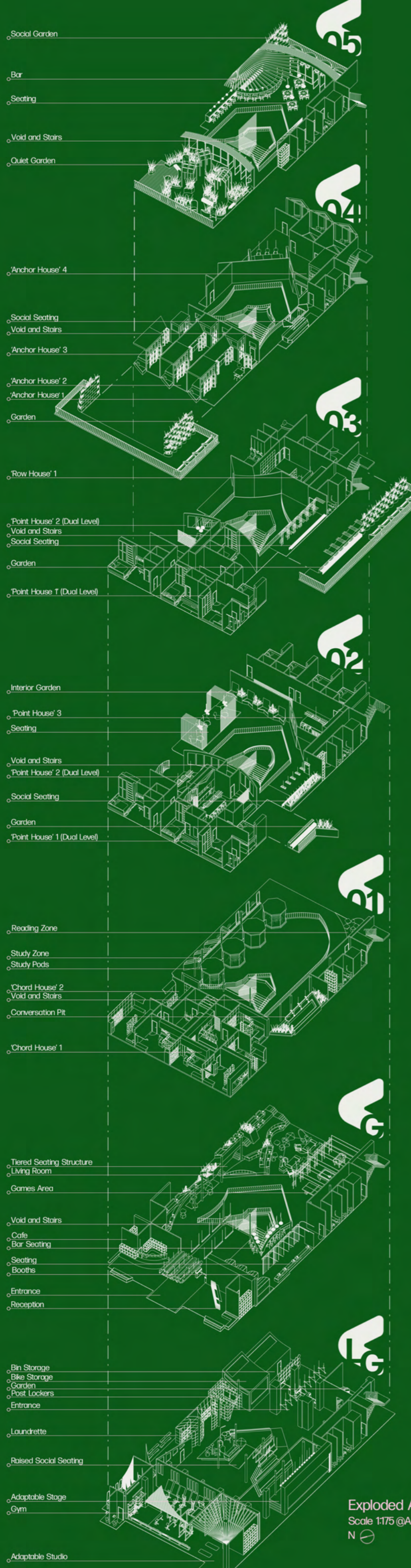


The Assembly

Student Living and Hostel Experience

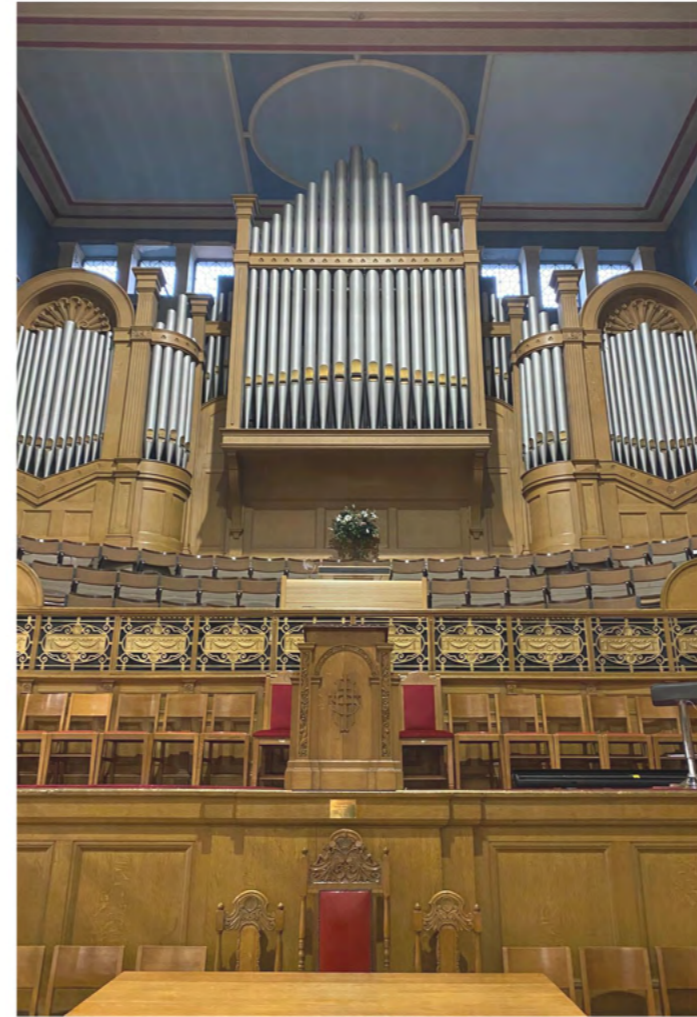


Exploded Axonometric
Scale 1:175 @A0
N

The Assembly is an adaptive reuse project, transforming an existing church building within Dundee city centre, into a student living environment, centred around congregation and shared experience.

Responding to student loneliness, The Assembly creates environments that encourage ownership, connection and belonging through considered spatial relationships, creating opportunities for casual interaction through both intimate encounter spaces and larger social areas. Primarily designed for students first arriving in Dundee, it creates a temporary home that adapts seasonally, transforming into a hostel outwith traditional academic semesters.

Pattern making drives the design language, informing interior elements to shape movement, atmosphere, interaction and collective experience.



The Auditorium



Key Site Architectural Features



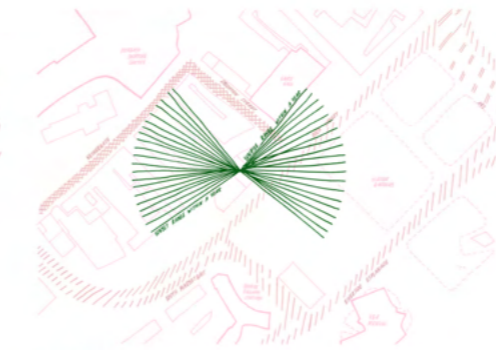
Historic Cupola



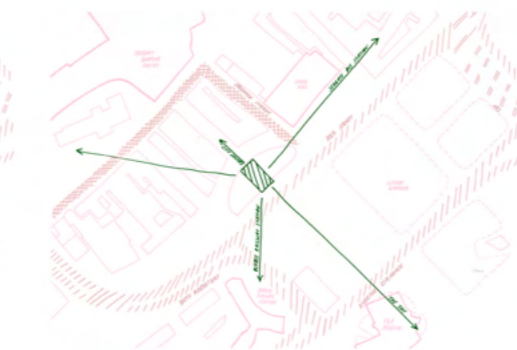
Baroque-style Facades



Orientation



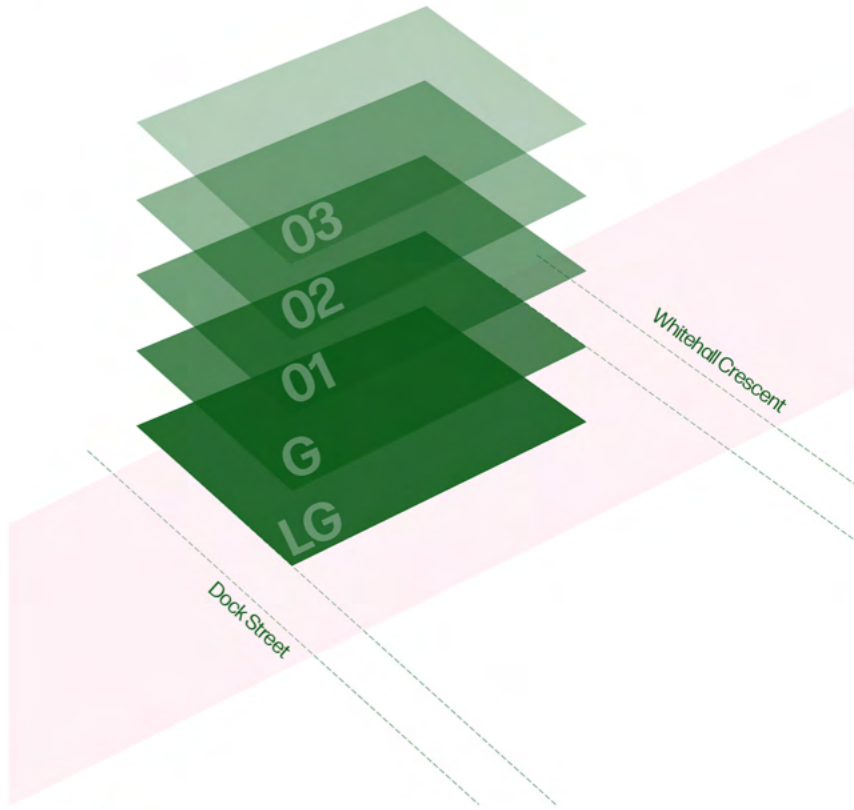
Sun Paths



Connections



Site Location



Existing Site Levels

Site

The site, Giffilan Memorial Church, is a category B listed building, located at 24 Whitehall Crescent, within the heart of Dundee city centre. With five floors, the large scale of the building lends itself well to accommodating the range of features and amenities required within the design of a student accommodation and hostel model. The heart of the site is a large auditorium space with a ceiling that rises over twenty metres, serving as the primary space for congregation. Located within the core of the city centre, the site is ideally positioned for both new students and tourists arriving in Dundee, with strong transport links and proximity to University campuses, key attractions and the Dundee waterfront.

Giffilan Memorial Church previously featured a cupola, however the reason for its removal is unknown. Extending the building vertically and reintroducing the idea of a cupola connects the site's new purpose to its historical past, while also providing additional space, views and natural light. Additionally, it would create a focal point both internally and externally.

Relevance of Student Accommodation

- Large student demographic**
 - During term time 14% of residents in Dundee are students (Dundee City Council, n.d.)
- Impact on student wellbeing and performance**
 - Student accommodation is vital to fostering community which is a "key predictor of successful adjustment to University life" (Foulkes et al, 2021)
 - Addresses student loneliness as a 2023 Government survey found that 92% of students felt lonely at least once in the last academic year (You Gov, 2023)
 - Over two-thirds of students feel their accommodation plays a positive role in their wellbeing (Accommodation for Students, n.d.)
- Economic Benefits**
 - Income and contribution to the wider Dundee economy, re-energise the city centre, student attraction, increased foot traffic, spending and job creation

Relevance of a Hostel

- Year Round**
 - Utilise space when majority of students have left, ensuring function and income year round
- Similar Model**
 - Function similar to student accommodation
 - Ideally located for transport links, key landmarks and entertainment venues
 - Attract diverse groups and contribute to re-energising the city centre
- Tourism Economy**
 - Overnight tourism contributed £290 million to the Dundee economy in 2023 with a 27% rise in people staying overnight between 2019 and 2023 (Dundee City Council, 2024)
 - The Eden project is expected to attract 500,000 visitors yearly (The Courier, 2023), many of whom will need places to stay

Interviews



Dave Beach
Church Officer at Gilfillan Memorial Church

This interview presented the site as a valued yet underutilised community space, highlighting the need for sensitive yet imaginative adaptation.



Gregor Hamilton
Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regulatory Services for Dundee City Council

This interview explored regeneration within Dundee, identifying a student living and hostel model as a potential catalyst for increased activity and occupation within the city centre.



Michelle Gautier
Lead Accommodation Officer for Student Services Dundee

This interview emphasised student accommodation as a temporary yet formative living experience, highlighting the importance of wellbeing, social connection and belonging.

Sense of Home and Personalisation

Considering how a space that is inherently temporary by nature can still create the experience of a home. Ownership and identity within a living space can add to this sense of home. Informal and low cost personalisation allows for easy changes and adds to an interactive yet relaxed experience.



Front Door



Threshold



Primary Research of existing post-it note signs, messages and window displays



Sequence

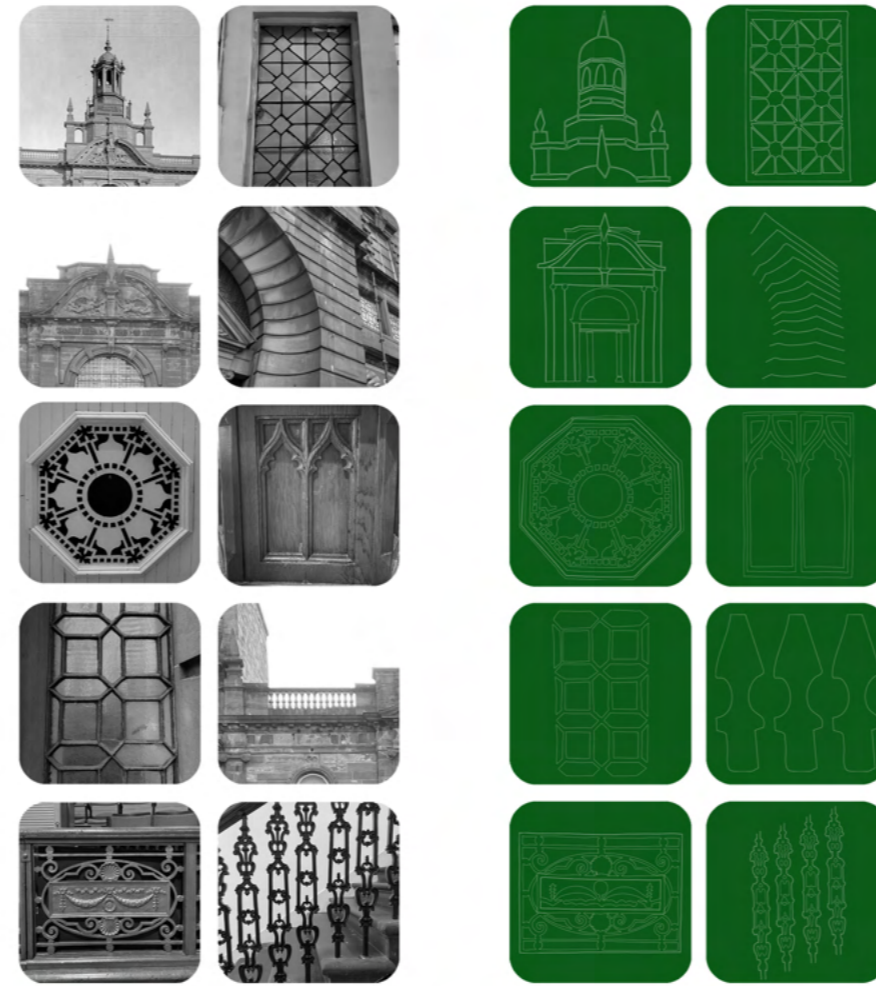


Central Space

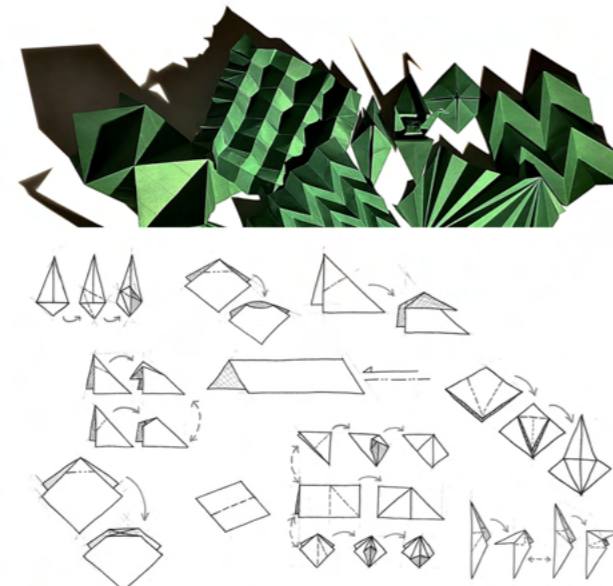
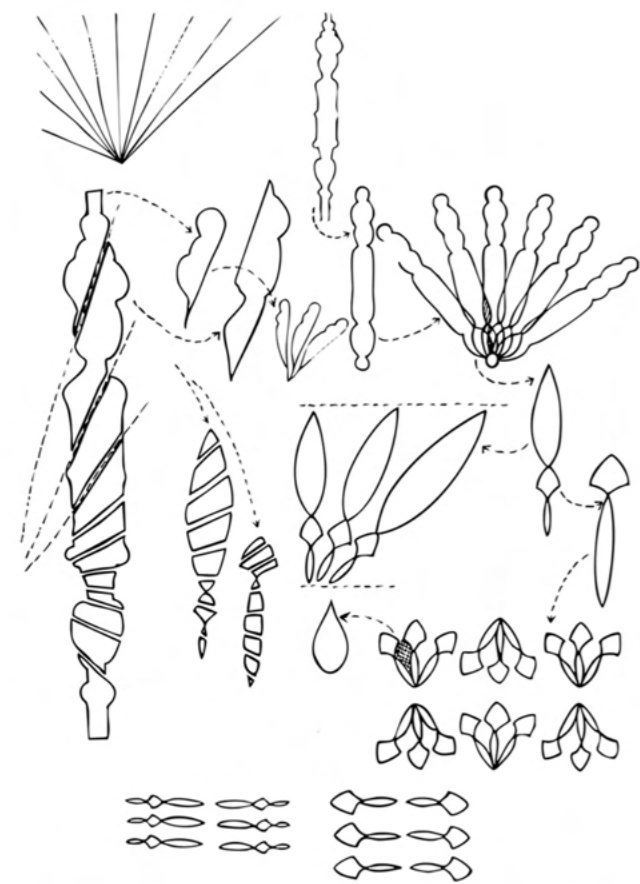
Pattern Making

The design for The Assembly is driven by pattern making as a spatial device, with patterns derived from forms found in both origami and the site. As a therapeutic craft associated with resilience, harmony and interaction, origami is particularly relevant to students navigating new social and spatial environments. As a site-responsive project, shapes, forms and details from the existing building also influence the design.

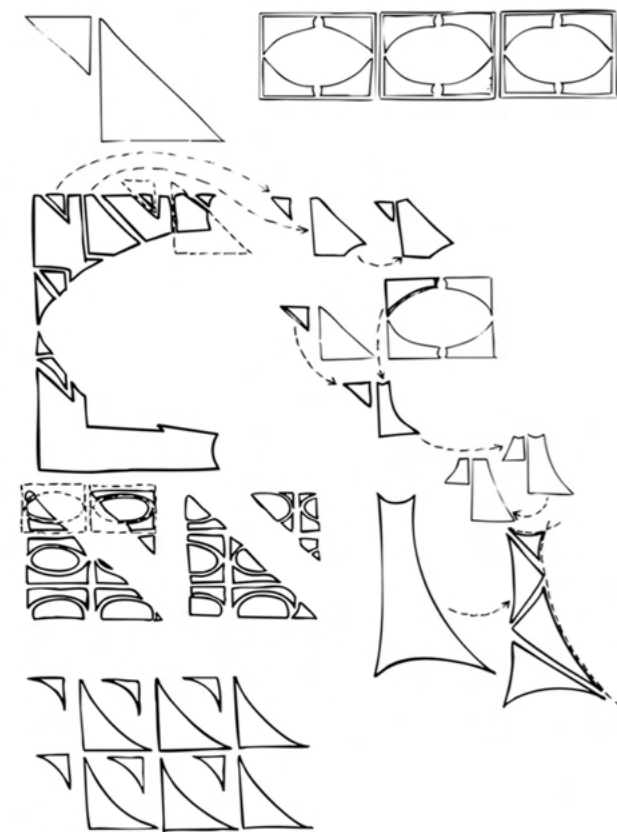
Forms derived from both origami and site elements are combined, abstracted and simplified to create unique patterns, shaping spatial zones, structures, movement and moments of interaction throughout the design.



Site Forms



Origami Forms



Pattern Creation



Final Patterns

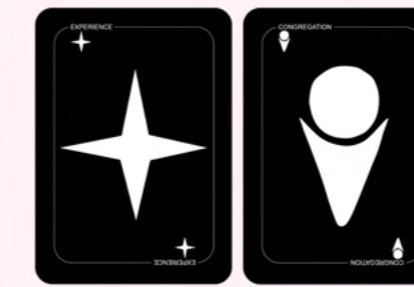
User Engagement Tool

To obtain insights into lived experiences from potential users, an engagement tool was developed in the form of playing cards, extending the project's pattern language into the engagement process. These were used as discussion prompts to reveal personal experiences of student living and social interaction. Three potential user groups were engaged: past, present and future residents of student accommodation. This enabled a range of perspectives to be gathered, exploring how students experience and occupy living environments, alongside positive and negative experiences of congregation.

Analysis of responses informed the design outcome, ensuring user experience remained central throughout the design process.



The Engagement Cards



Example Response



What features would create an ideal living experience for you?

What is a positive and negative living experience to you?

How do you congregate with others?



Research

Inspiration



Development

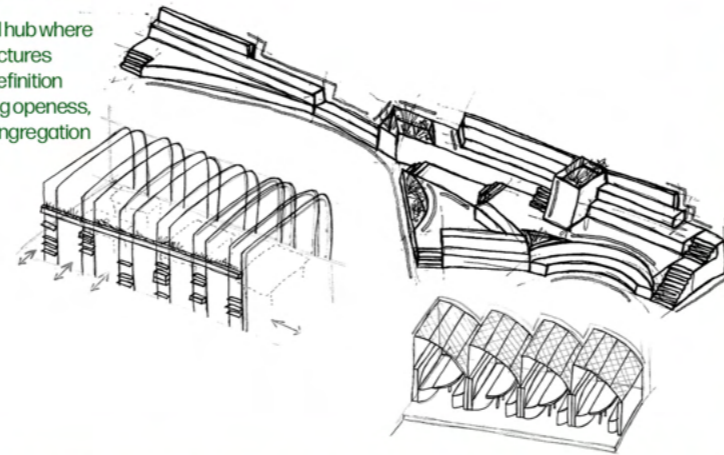
Concept development involved a range of 2D and 3D experiments to explore the inspirational patterns and visualise spatial experience within a student living and hostel environment.

Along with the concept of congregation, patterns acted as a core design driver, influencing experimental models, sketches, zoning, space planning and user experience. From quick iterations to more refined spatial proposals, these processes were essential in defining key spatial relationships and experiential qualities, considering the relationship between open and enclosed spaces, privacy and congregation, and how users move through and occupy spaces.

Each pattern is linked to a specific zone within the space, creating distinct yet cohesive areas with dynamic layouts, spatial experiences and opportunities for interaction.

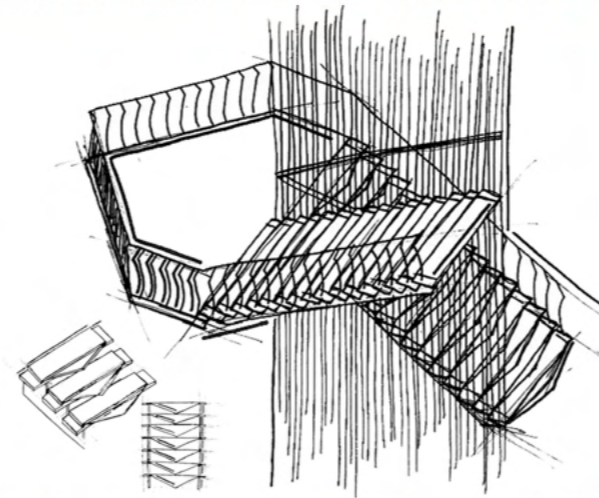
The Living Room

Main communal hub where framework structures create spatial definition while maintaining openness, encouraging congregation and interaction



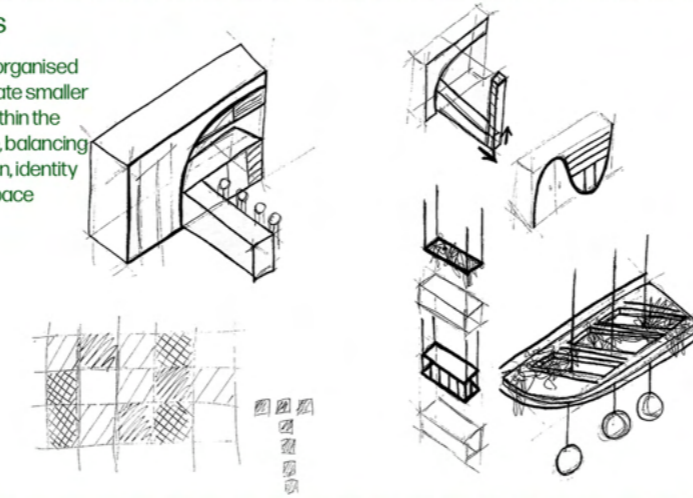
Void and Stairs

Vertical circulation between the floors and the cupola, encouraging movement, visual connection and spontaneous interactions



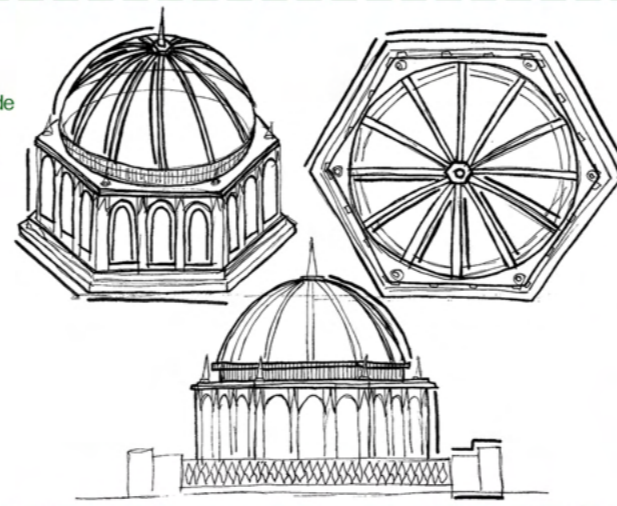
The Houses

Flat typologies organised into houses create smaller communities within the larger collective, balancing social interaction, identity and personal space

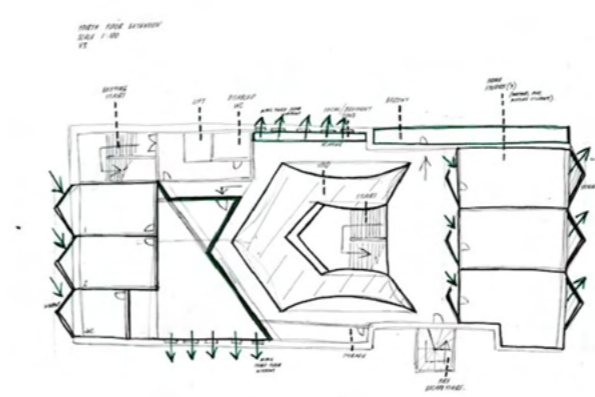
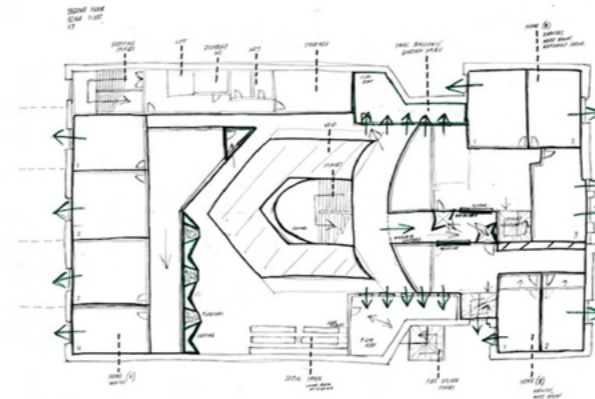
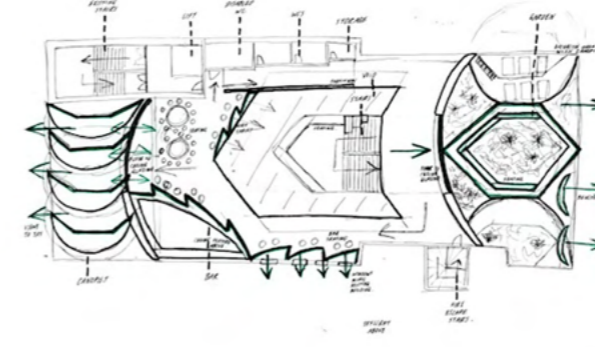
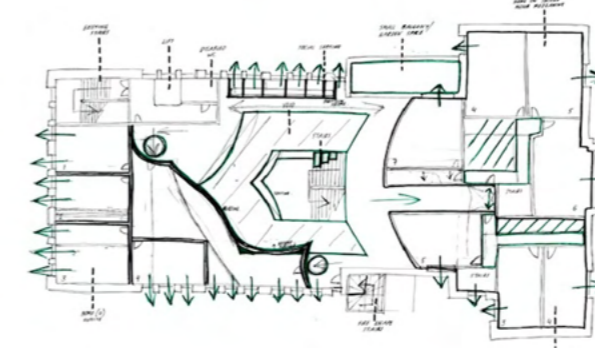
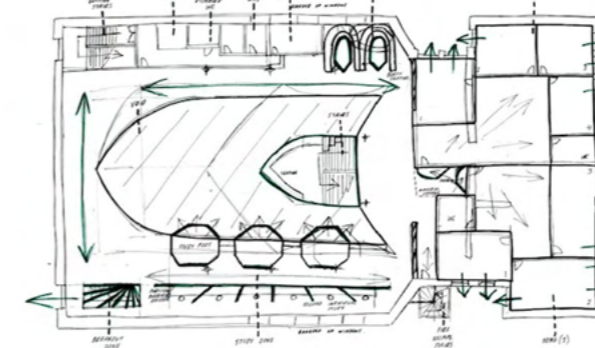
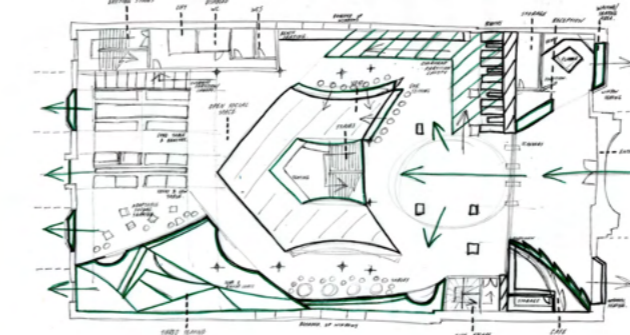
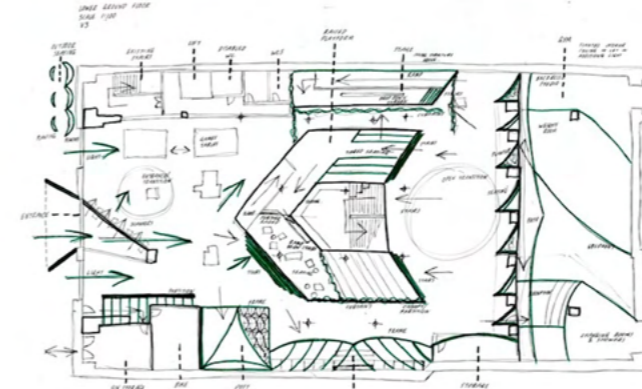


Cupola

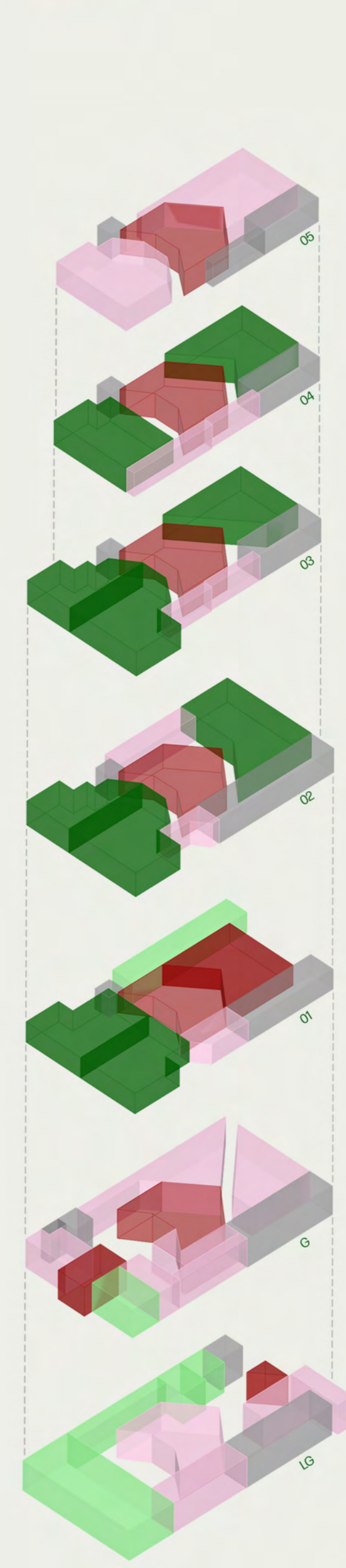
Reinterpreting the historical cupola to provide views and light, acting as both a destination and a focal point



Space Planning



Zoning Diagram



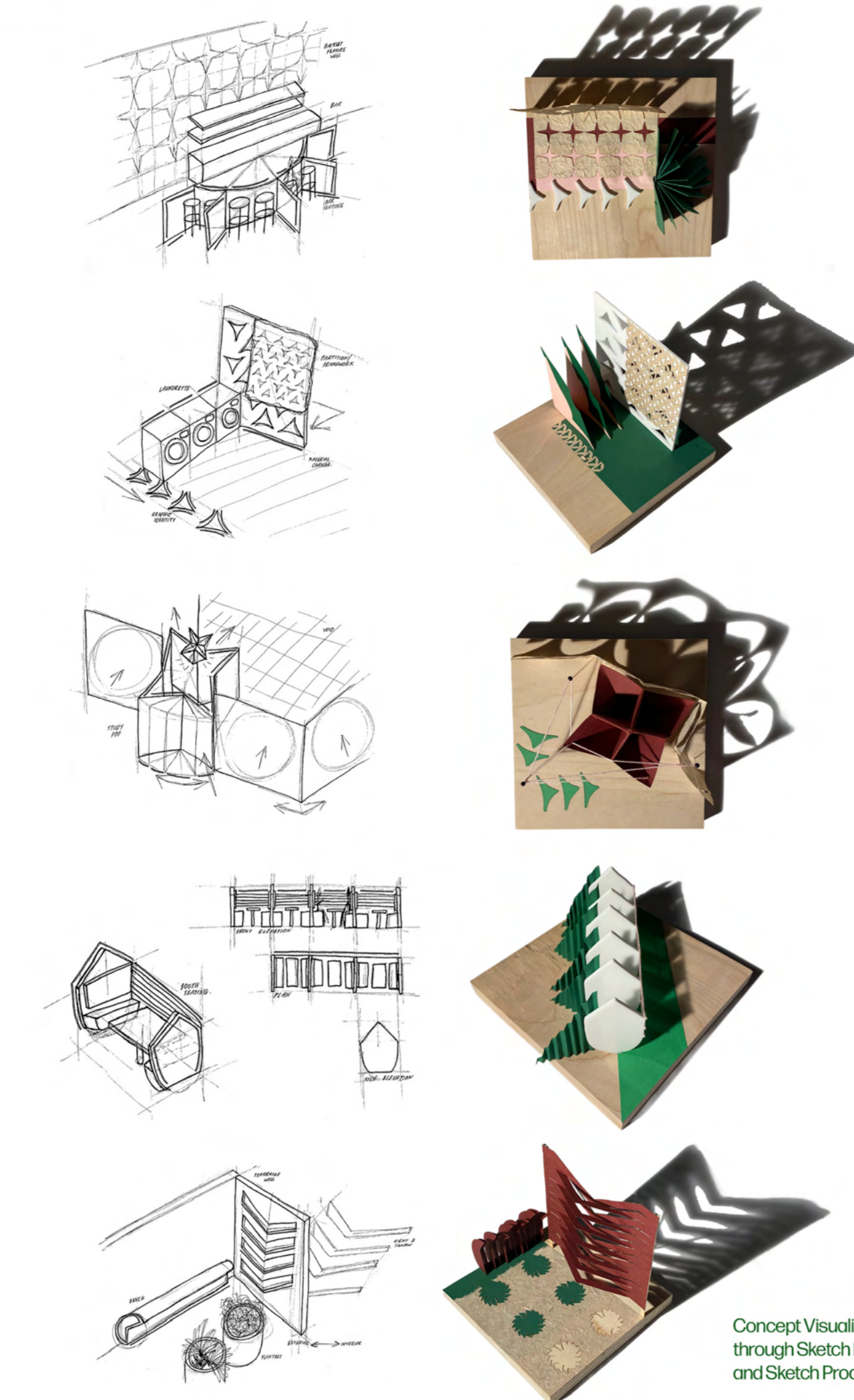
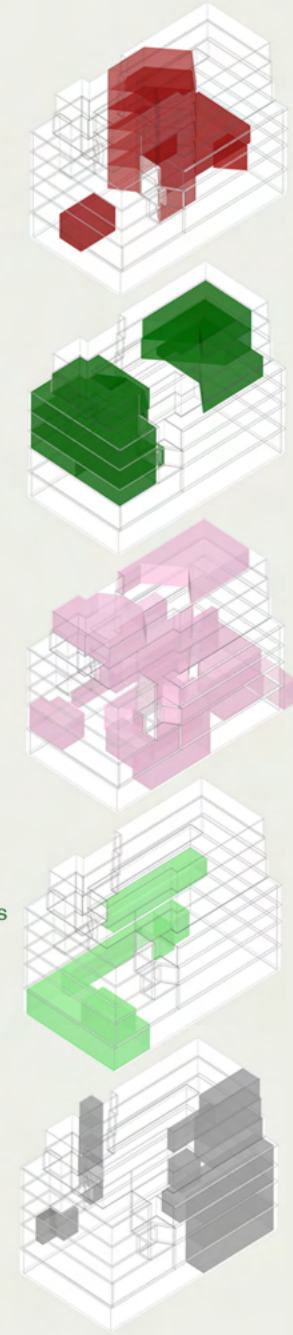
Void

Private

Social

Amenities

Facilities



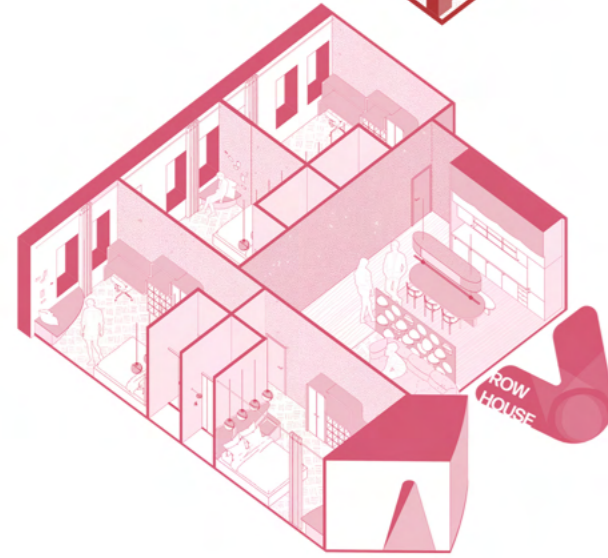
Concept Visualisation through Sketch Models and Sketch Process

Design Outcome

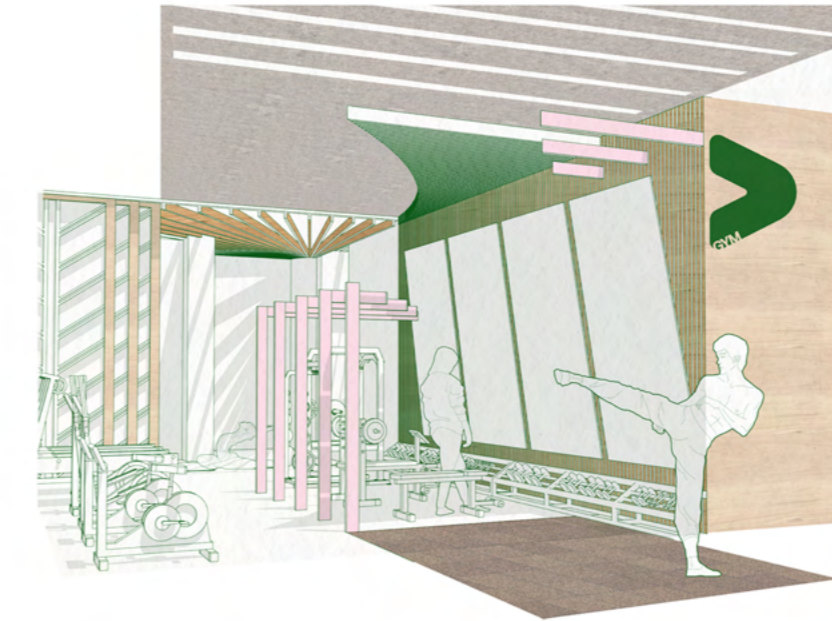
The final design for The Assembly balances relationships between private and communal spaces, creating opportunities for both individual retreat and collective experience.

The lower ground floor accommodates key amenities, while the existing church auditorium forms the heart of the design through an open social space centred around congregation. The upper floors comprise of 'houses' interwoven with amenities and integrated social zones, while the top floor contains a bar and gardens. Adaptable spaces support changing patterns of occupation and personalisation, while a central void and staircase encourage movement, visual connection and spontaneous interaction throughout the design.

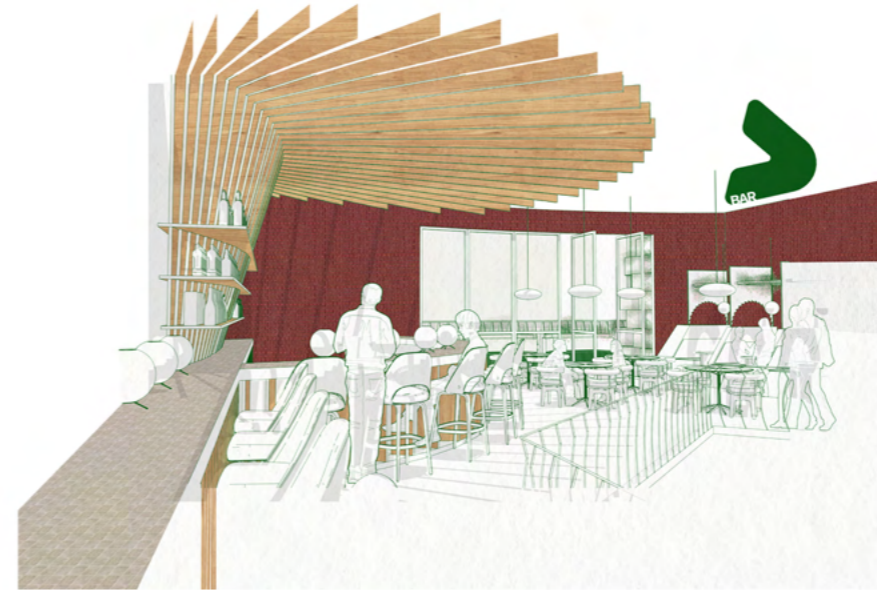
Plans



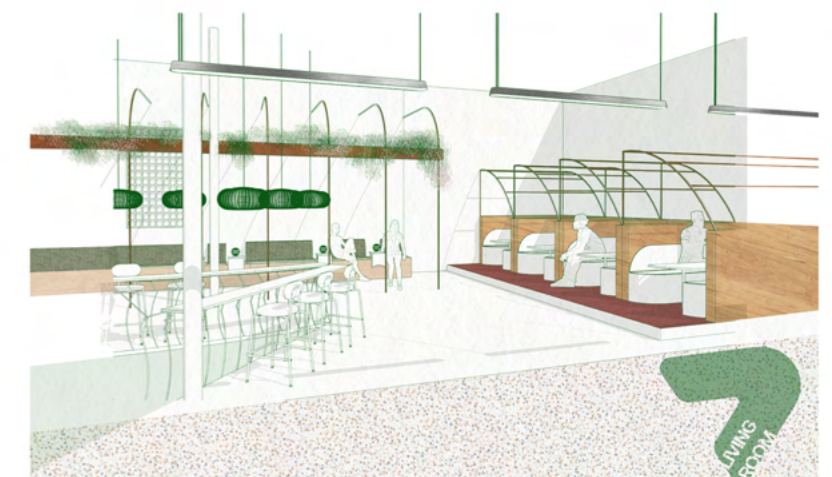
The Living Room as the main congregation space on the Ground Floor, featuring tiered seating, eclectic furniture and a games area, encouraging gathering, interaction and visual connection to the study pods above



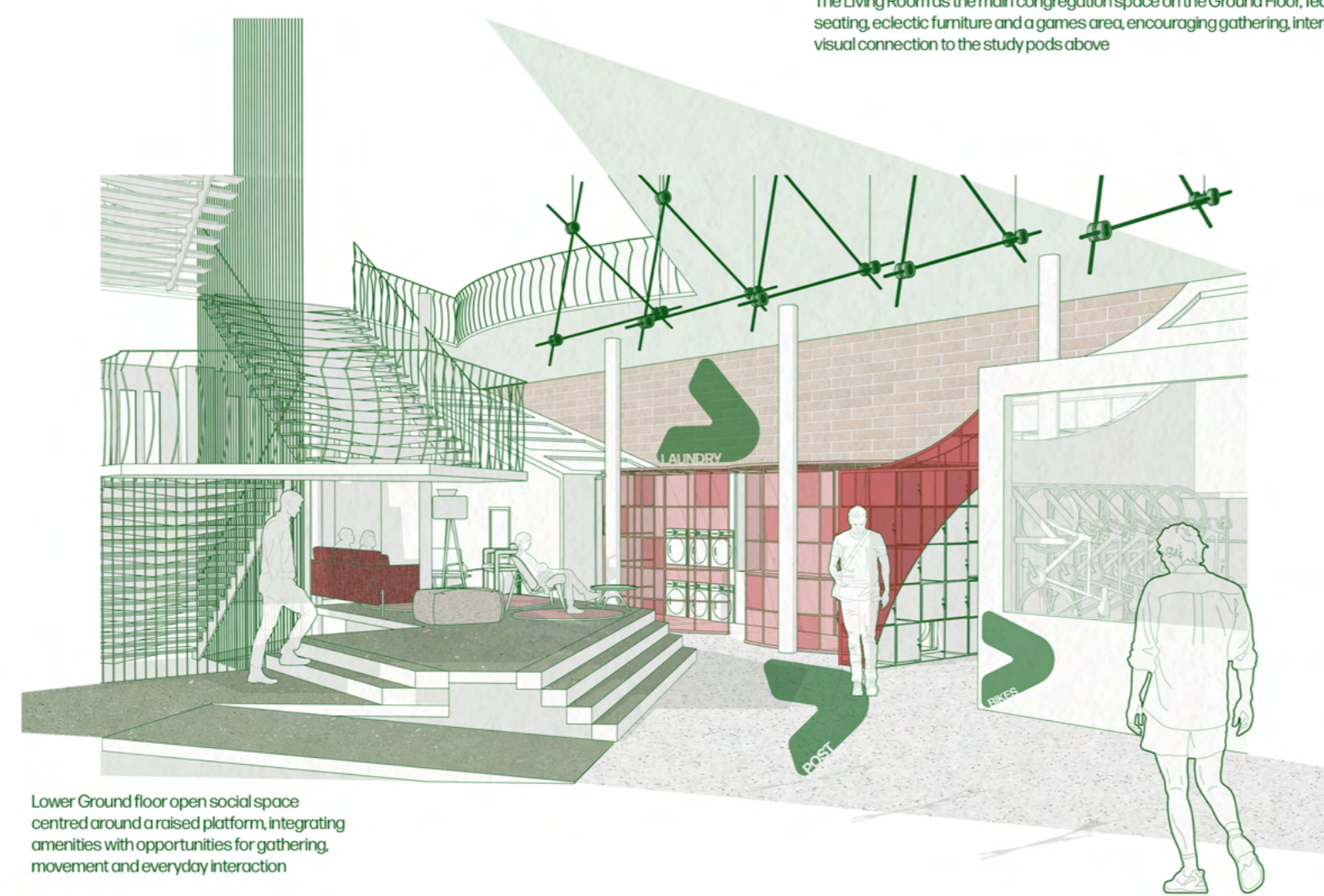
Gym space combining exercise, movement and adaptable studio areas, supporting a range of activities and flexible occupation



Bar made up of a timber structure with booths and communal seating, extending into the rooftop social garden to encourage shared experiences and social interaction



The Living Room with booths and bar seating overlooking the central void, creating visual connection and interaction between the levels



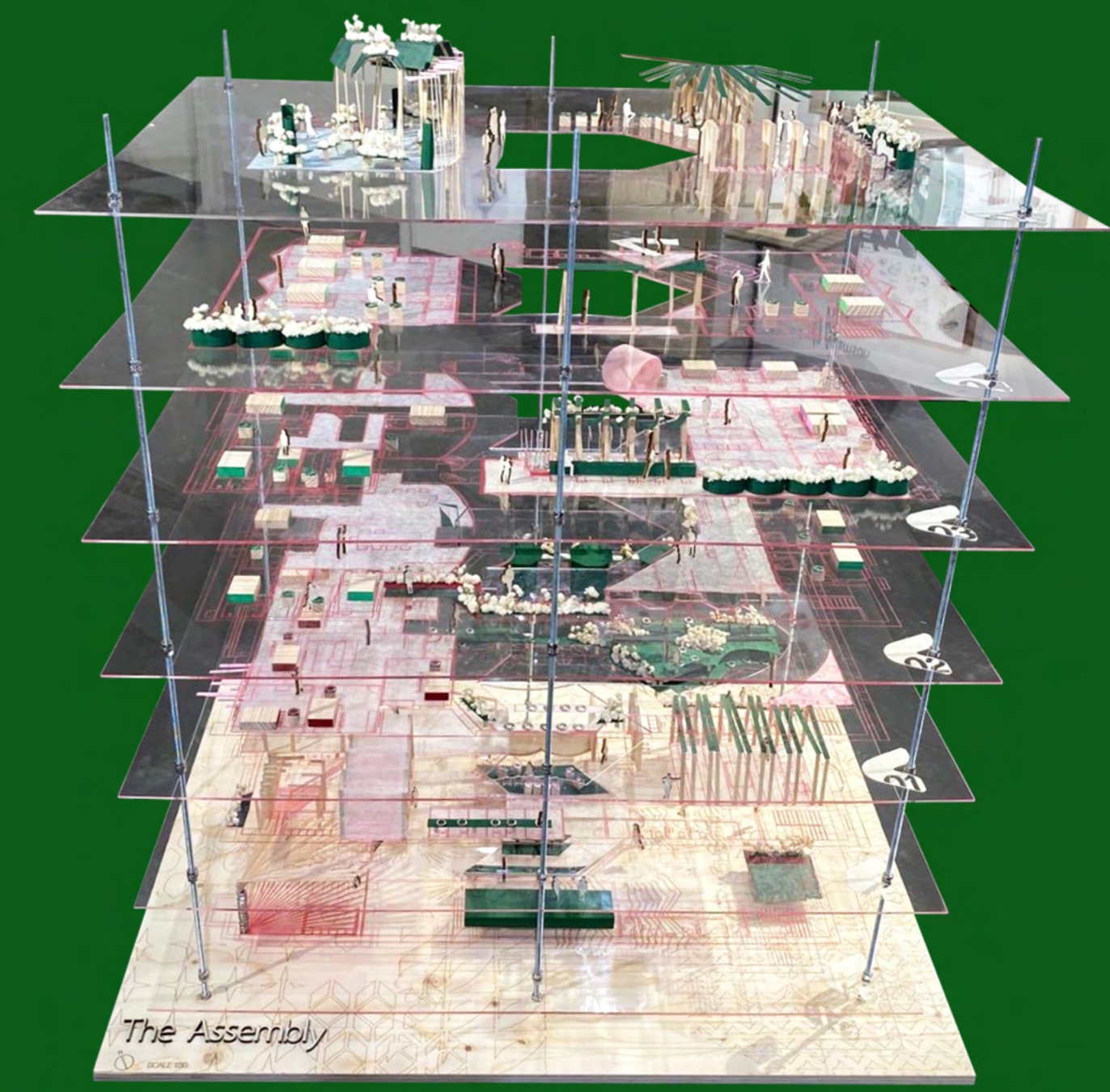
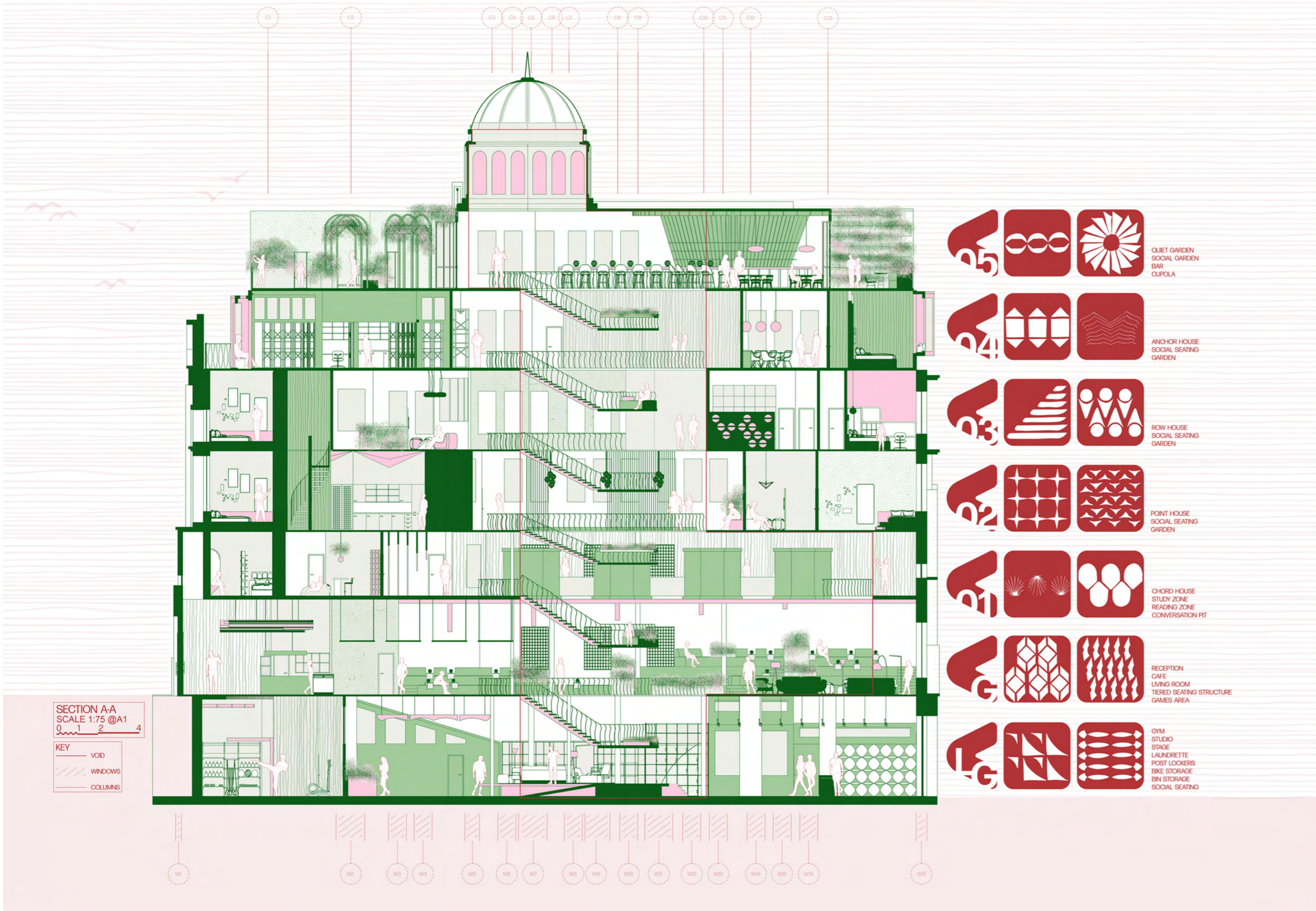
Lower Ground floor open social space centred around a raised platform, integrating amenities with opportunities for gathering, movement and everyday interaction



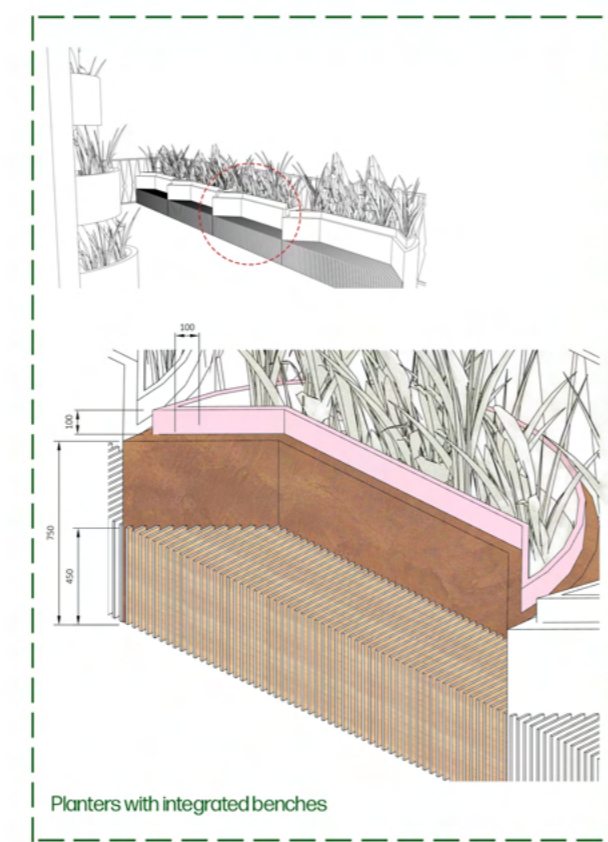
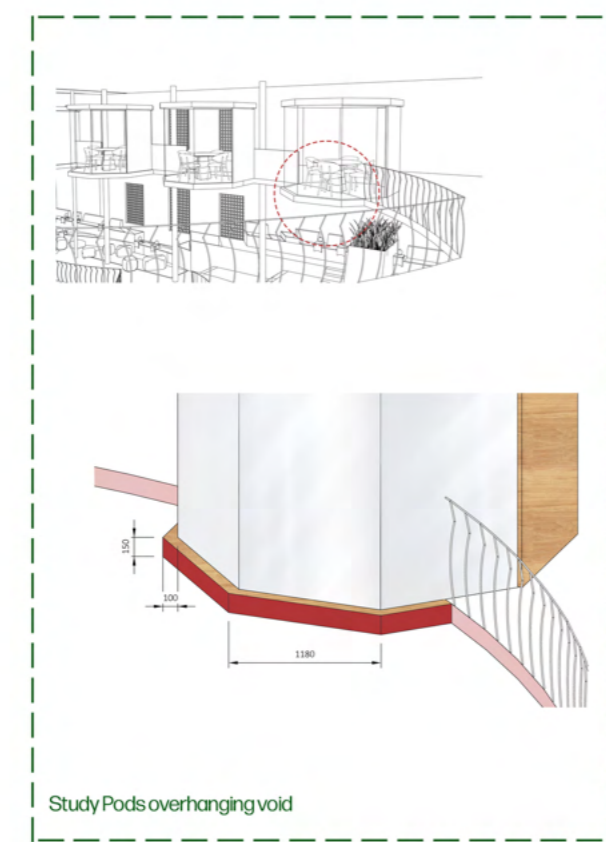
Communal rooftop garden connected to the bar, encouraging gathering with views across the Tay



Quiet garden as a rooftop retreat for solitude and reflection, featuring seating, an exercise area and large-scale planting



Section A-A
Scale 1:75 @A1



Details

Materials