

“The Comfort Zone” is a multi-functional private club house for people who experience hypersensitivity. This project is filling a gap as there are currently no spaces designed for this demographic. The club house is hosted by 3 connected Georgian town houses in the historic George Square, Edinburgh.

The club house will include an exhibition space, food shop, pub and a silent lounge. The exhibition space would be open to the public to explain the hypersensitive experience, exhibit artists’ work which focuses on senses and encourages empathy. The food shop will be a small shop that sells essential food/home products. Two methods in which you can shop include a order collection point and a digital check in/out system which allows members to take items from the curated physical shop, skipping the usual shop tills.

The pub will act as the main social space where members can eat and drink in a sensory managable environment where orders can be made digitally to reduce busy movement. The silent lounge and private rooms are quiet spaces for members to sit and read, to take a break from excessive sensory stimulation.

Designing for hypersensitivity involves several design values which wouldn’t normally be considered: brightness/flickering of lights, proximity of people, smell, noise and visual stimulation (colour, patterns etc.).

The appraoch to adapting the site was also a key point in the concept. The new elements will sit seperately to the old features, which are left in their raw material states. The separation is to respect the building and and bring back its Georgian style which it has lost over the years.



THE COMFORT ZONE

A

Acoustics refers to reducing background noise, echo and reverberation.

SP

Spatial sequencing refers to organising spaces in the chronological order in which they would be used.

E

Escape spaces refers to a “neutral sensory environment which provides minimal stimulation”

C

Compartmentalisation refers to organising a room/building into compartments with singular functions and a focus on one sensory element at a time.

T

Transition zones refers to a space which allows for someone to adjust before going into a new space with a different sensory focus and a new stimulation.

S

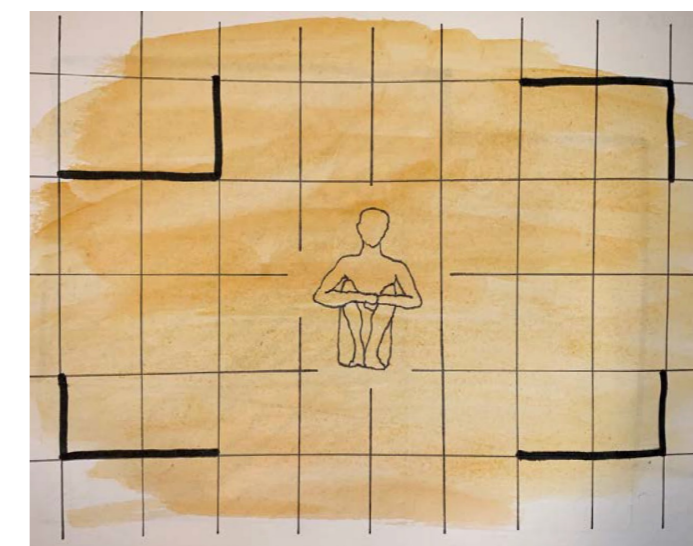
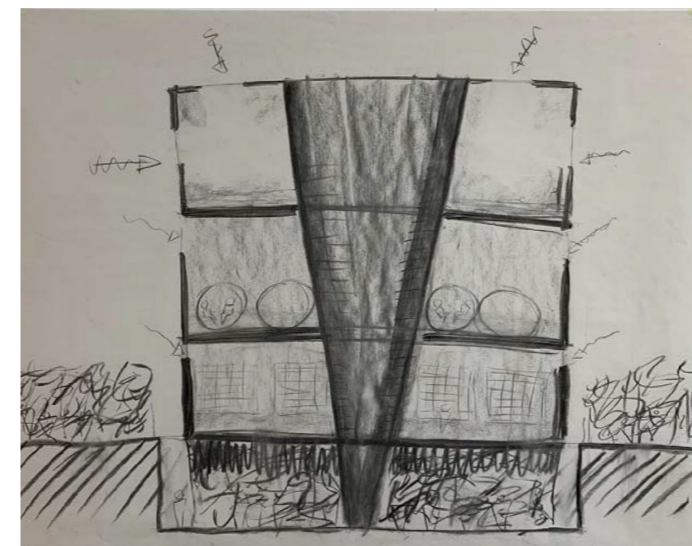
Sensory zoning refers to organising spaces by individual senses and using the transition zones between sensory zones.

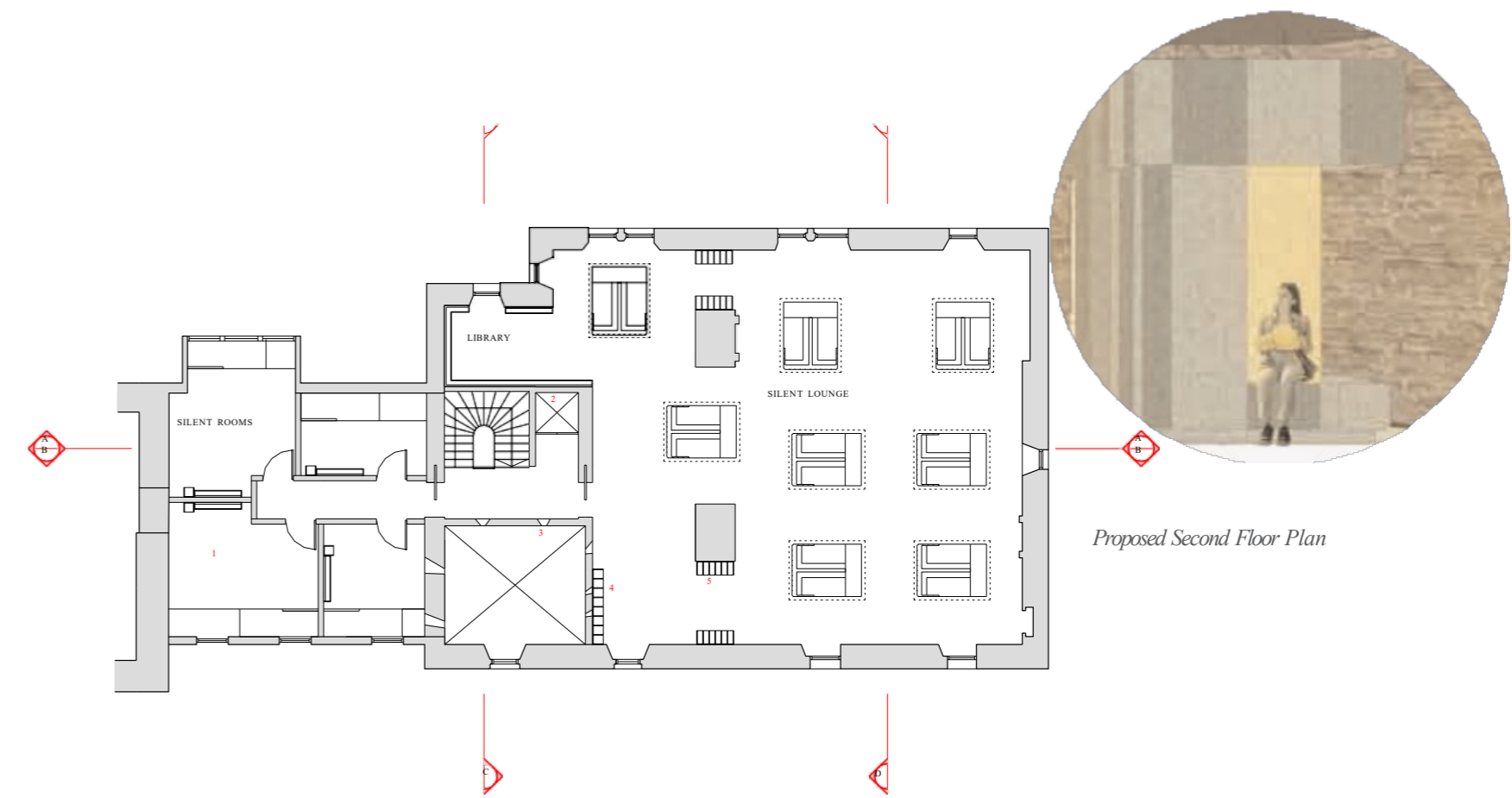
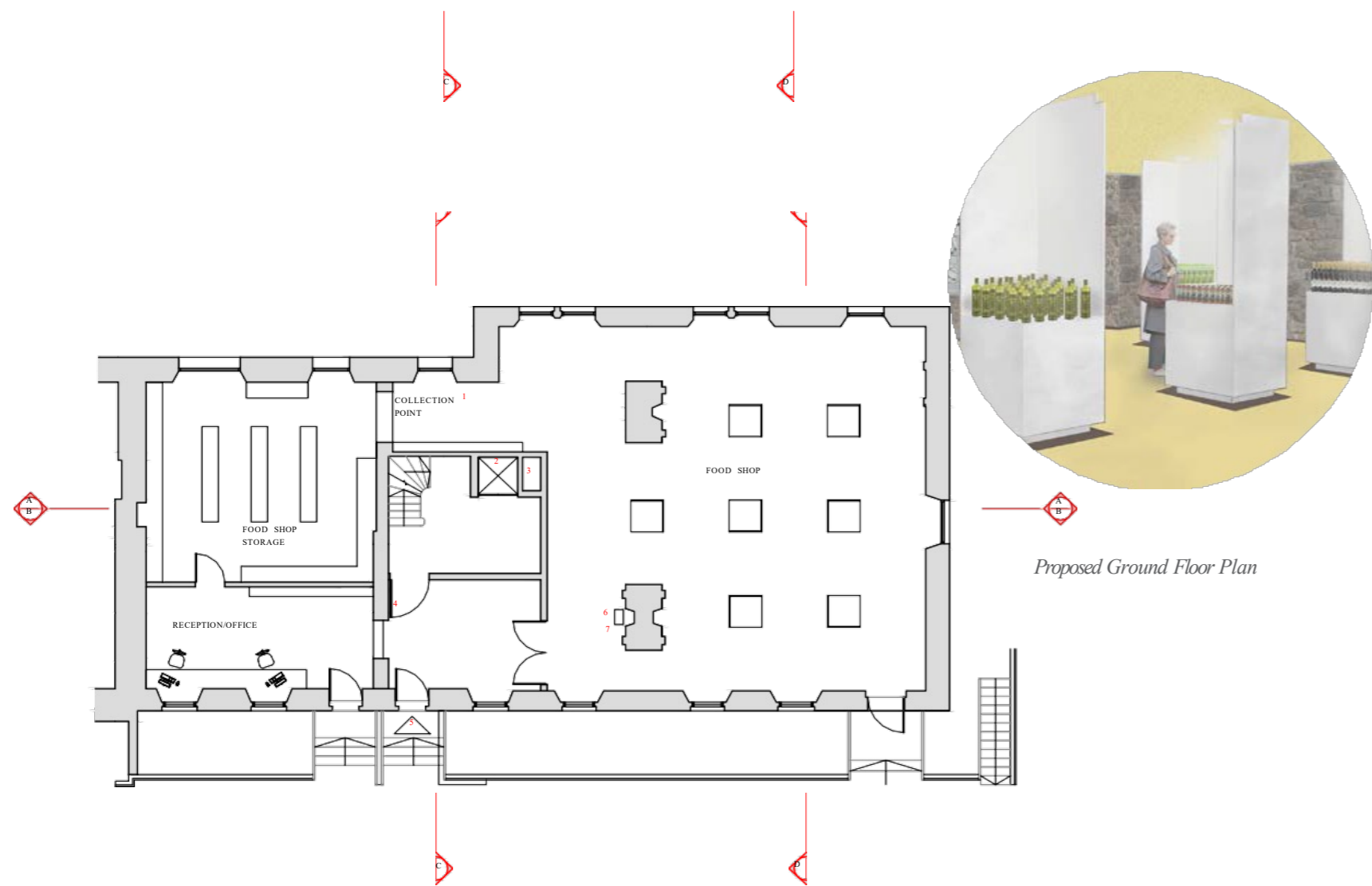
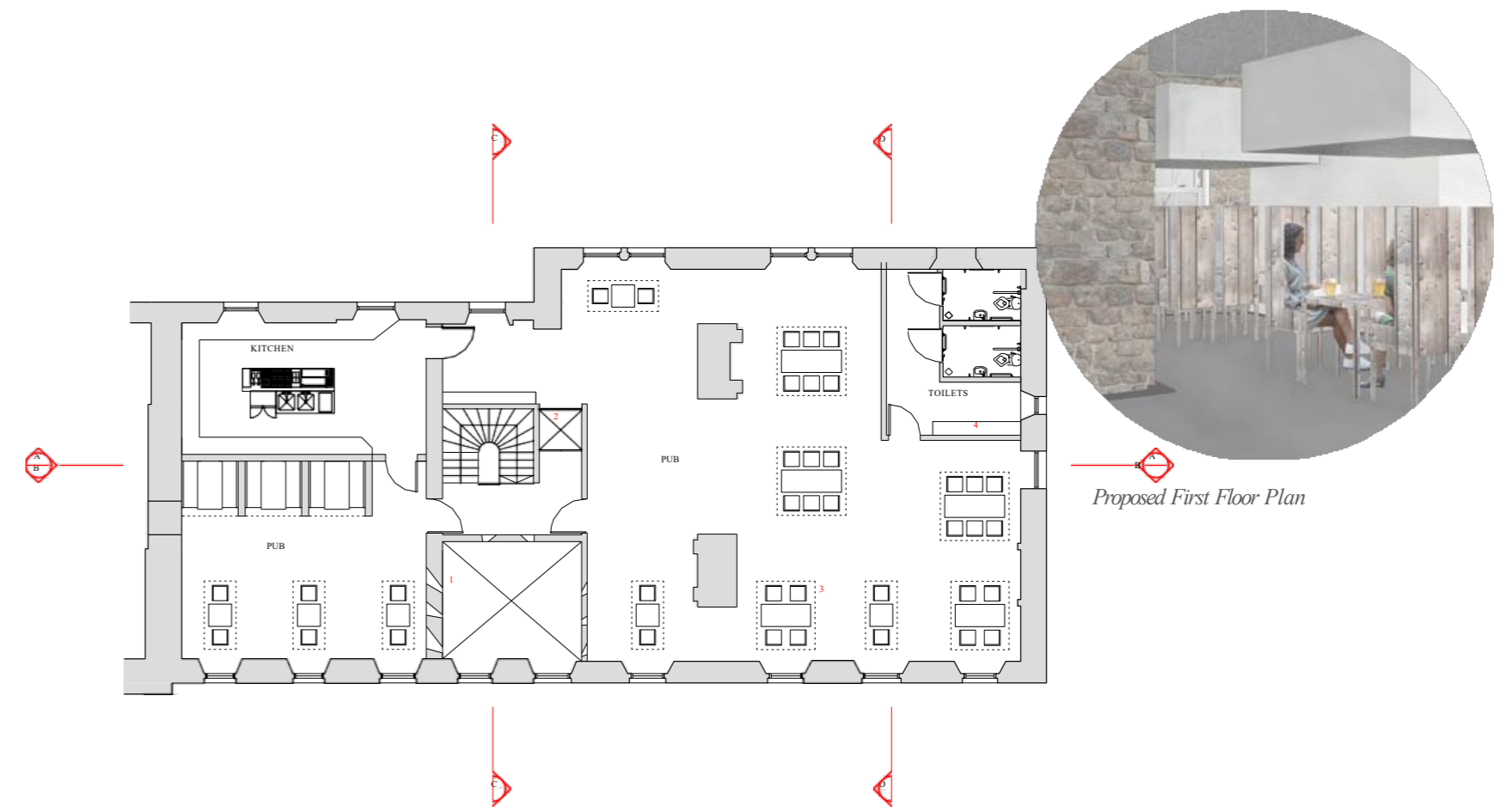
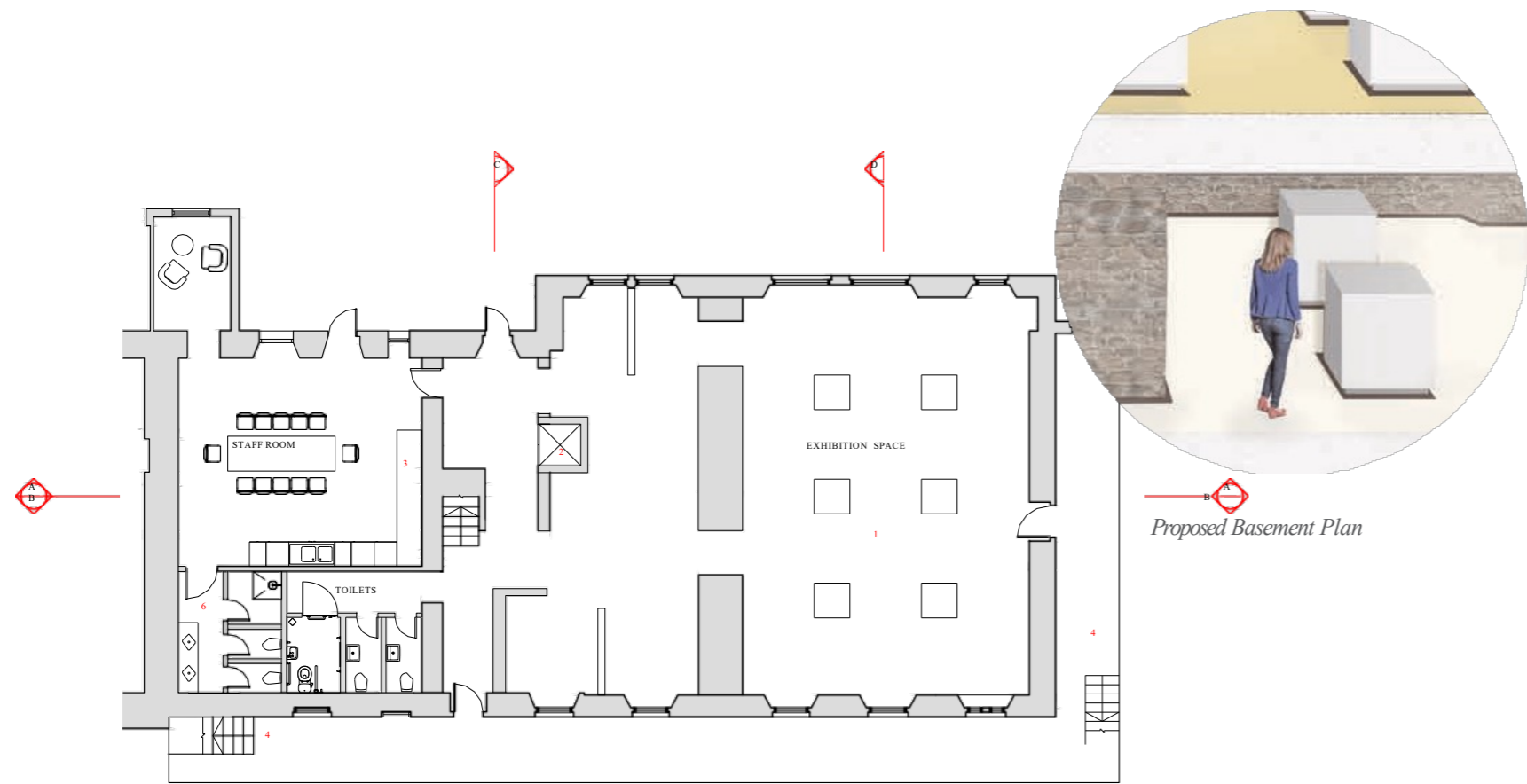
S

Safety refers to the prevention of self injury which is higher risk amongst people with autism.



The **concept sketches** express some of the project's key design values. The sketch on the left shows the boundary of exterior noise and the rise of a vertical transition space through the centre of the design. The density of marks reduces further up the drawing showing a decline in sensory experiences further up the building. The sketch on the right shows the balance of the calming atmosphere being paired with a reliable regularity. A person calmly floating in the wash of yellow-orange demonstrates the atmosphere of the silent room which is the pinnacle of quiet and calm within the building. The **grid** shows the design language used in the layout of the spaces as well as the furniture itself. The bold corners show the containing of the experience which is important because there needs to be a separation from the outside and inside world at the moment because hypersensitive design rarely exists elsewhere in the city.







Food shop – calm retail environment , easy to navigate and minimal distraction

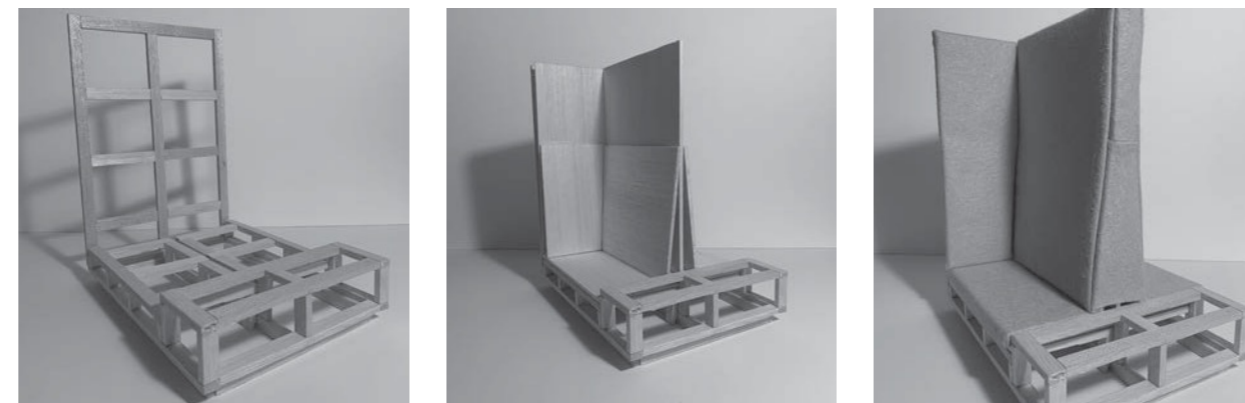


Choosing **materials** for this project were based on a couple of different topics including the approach to the site, sustainability and sensory experiences. The new materials should contrast with the old meaning that they should look contemporary, have a smooth texture and have a lightness to them. Sustainable materials were necessary in this project and is shown in the use of wood-wool panels, natural rubber, mohair, wool and Scottish larch. Materials which dampen acoustics throughout the building include the textiles in the seating and ceiling, rubber floors, rugs and the wood-wool acoustic panels. The texture of the materials is important for all touch points which lead me to use mohair in the seating and brass for other touch points like handles. To reduce excessive visual stimulation I didn't choose anything which had obvious patterns.

Beyond the general arrangement layouts and building wide design, I also designed a main space within the project to far more detail. The silent lounge on the second floor was a unique space which I wanted to explore further. This included a lot of material specifications, lighting and detailing of the silent lounge seating pod. The space uses monochrome lighting and, combined with the seating design, creates a space which is completely focused on reducing all types of sensory stimulation in a pleasant and relaxing approach.

I **detailed** a seating pod for the silent lounge. The silent lounge is a space where members can completely get away from overstimulation. The goals for the seat was for it be almost like a day bed which allows the person to adjust and use the seat to their sensory needs. It needed to mainly reduce and isolate any noise, give the user the option to recede away and minimise visual stimulants in a semi-enclosed space or enjoy the silent lounge without being tucked away at all. It therefore needed to accommodate multiple modes of sitting.

Photos of model showing construction sequence



Sections showing the 'safe place' seating

