

SITE MAP



02_SITE ANALYSIS



LONDON CANAL MUSEUM_

London's waterways played a crucial role in shaping the city, acting as the lifeblood of industry by enabling the transport of essential goods such as coal, timber, food, and gunpowder. The Regent's Canal transformed surrounding spaces into working landscapes of warehouses, wharves, and yards, supported by a strong canal community. Horses were essential to the operation of the canals, towing boats along towpaths and delivering goods by cart, while families lived and worked in narrow boat cabins, creating a close-knit, mobile way of life. The London Canal Museum is housed in a former Victorian ice warehouse, built before the invention of refrigeration, where ice imported from Norway was stored in a deep ice well and distributed across London. The building's name became known as the "Ice King of London" due to the scale of this trade. As refrigeration technology developed, the ice trade declined and the building was adapted to accommodate horses and stabling for delivery carts, reflecting its changing industrial role. Today, the museum tells the story of London's canals and ice trade, attracting visitors of all ages through exhibitions, family-focused events, and demonstrations such as historical ice cream making. Located just five minutes from King's Cross Station, the museum remains highly accessible and continues to connect people to the industrial and social history of London's waterways.

1 <https://www.com.com/07721619618-1088-0h>

1910 - "Horse Field" Site
 1910-1920 - Carlo Gatti took over the site. Building constructed as an ice warehouse storing ice imported from Norway for London's food trade.
 1920 - 1920 - Decline of ice trade. Stables added for canal horses. Bus open parts depot during WWII. Commercial canal ice declines. Building becomes redundant.
 1970 - 1970 - Building functions as an Italian food warehouse for wells are rediscovered during a survey of the building. Canal Museum Trust acquires the derelict building.
 1993 - London Canal Museum opens.

Carlo Gatti (1817-1878) arrived in Victorian London from the Swiss-Italian region of Ticino in the 1840s, bringing with him ambition and ingenuity. He began with coffee mills and chocolate-making, but soon transformed the city's relationship with ice. At a time before refrigeration, Gatti imported natural ice from Norway and stored it deep underground in well ice wells, one of which survives beneath the London Canal Museum today, the setting for well ice cream. He turned a raw luxury into a pleasure for everyday Londoners, leaving a lasting legacy to both the canal's history and Britain's food culture.



LONDON CANAL LIFE_

Life on London's canals has emerged as a viable alternative to mainstream urban living, particularly in response to rising housing costs and spatial pressures. Over recent years, canal boats have transitioned from heritage vessels to permanent homes for a growing and diverse population.

Advances in solar technology, battery storage, and mobile internet have enabled boats to function as self-sufficient live/work spaces, attracting retirees, full-time workers, artists, and those seeking a more value-for-money lifestyle.

While some choose this way of living for financial reasons, others are motivated by quality of life, autonomy, and a daily connection to water and landscape. However, limited access to permanent moorings means many residents live as continuous cruisers, required to relocate every 14 days, resulting in a transient and labor-intensive mode of living.



#01_STREET as COMMUNITY

This project began with a simple question: how do people and spaces shape one another?

From the very start, I was interested in designing a place where people from all backgrounds could come together-not just to pass through, but to truly share, explore, and socialise. I wanted to respond to the needs of the bargee community in particular, imagining a space that could gently pull them out of isolation and reconnect them with a wider social world.

When I first visited the London Canal Museum, I wasn't just studying a building-I was reading its history. The ice well, the layers of trade and transport, the quiet traces of labour and industry all spoke to me. Through both primary and secondary research, I began to understand the site not as a fixed museum, but as something with a living memory, waiting to be reactivated.

But as the project developed, it became more than research. It became personal. I started to think about my own childhood, growing up around canal-side spaces. I remembered how we used to gather without planning, without structure-just playing in the streets, talking, sharing space, not thinking about backgrounds or differences. It was effortless community. And that feeling stayed with me.

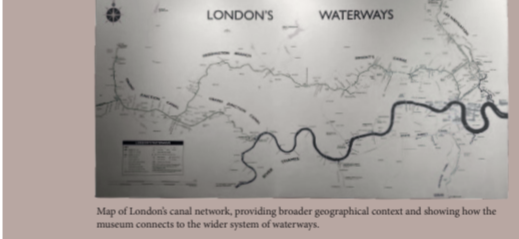
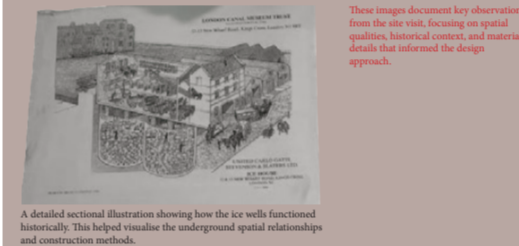
So I began to wonder: what if the Canal Museum could feel like that? That question led me to imagine the museum not as a quiet, preserved space, but as something closer to a street-alive, messy, social, and constantly changing. I looked towards places like Camden Market along the Regent's Canal, not to copy them, but to understand how energy, movement, and interaction can define a space. From there, the idea of a new kind of high street emerged-one that is familiar, but also unique to this site and its history.

SITE VISIT_

These are my site drawings, which helped me focus on specific areas within the museum by highlighting key features.



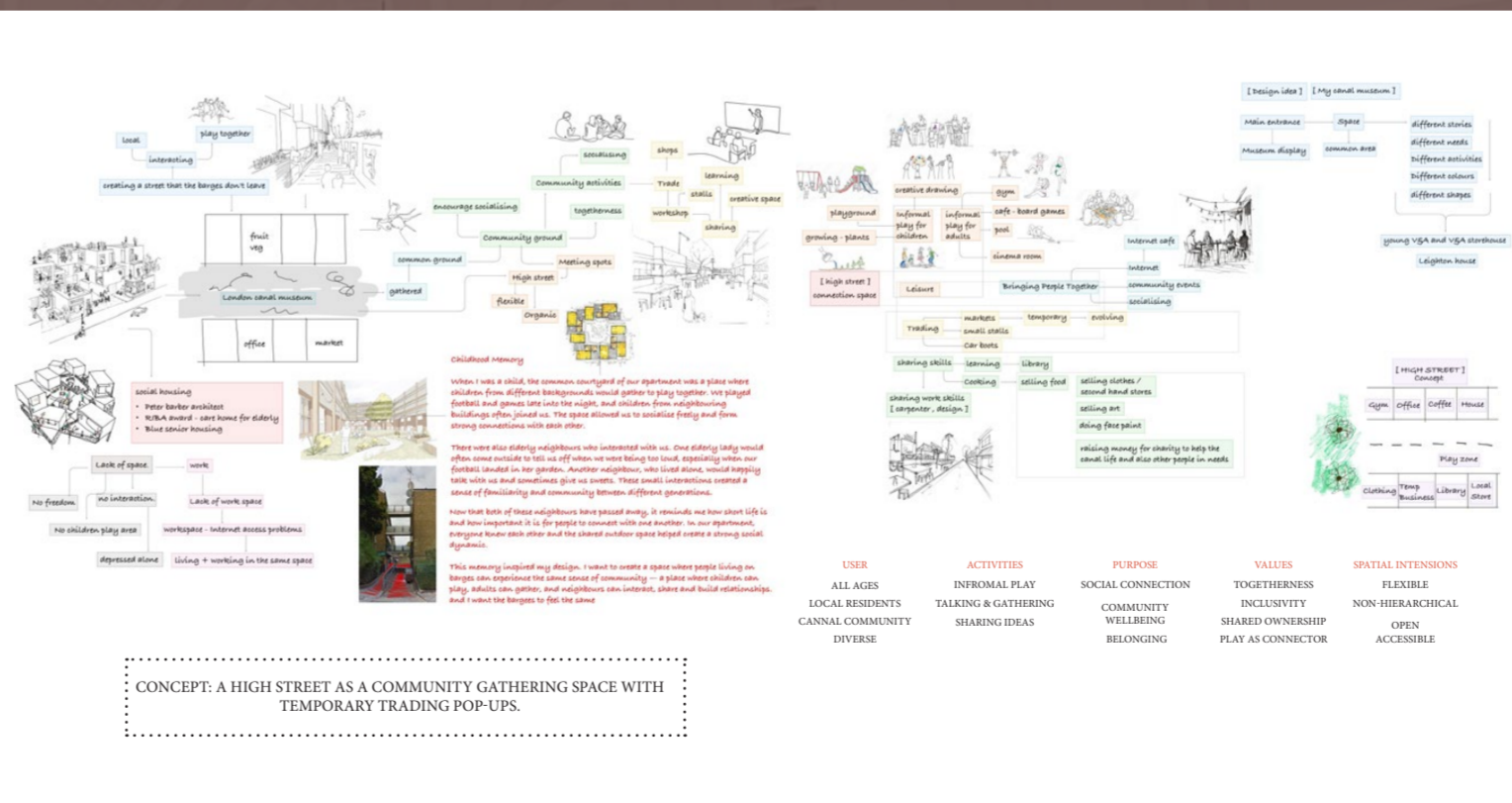
A combined sketch and photo study of the museum's exterior along the canal. Focuses on materials, surroundings, and how the building interacts with the water.



A STREET THAT REMEMBERS_



Over time, a street begins to tell its own story. The ground wears down, gathers marks, and quietly records the lives that pass over it - footsteps, movement, moments of connection. What might seem like damage becomes something more meaningful, a memory embedded in the surface itself. This reflects the ethos of Mosaic Factory, where materials are allowed to age, carry imperfections, and hold traces of life. Inspired by this, I see the street not as something that deteriorates, but as something that remembers - a living surface shaped by the people who inhabit it.



BARGEES_1

1. Maya Lewis — Freelance Graphic Designer, Continuous Cruiser

Age: 29
Boat: 20ft narrowboat, continuous cruiser (on permanent mooring)

Lifestyle & Work
Maya works remotely as a freelance graphic designer for small cultural organisations and start-ups. Her work requires long periods on her laptop, reliable internet access, and visual focus. She moors her boat every 10-14 days along the Regent's Canal and Grand Union, planning her cruising around client deadlines rather than leisure.

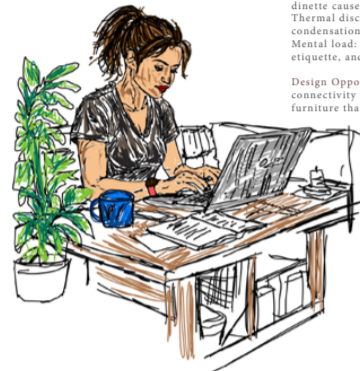
Her days are quiet and self-directed, mornings working at the director, afternoons walking the canals for calls, evenings sketching or editing by warm LED lighting. She values independence, minimalism, and proximity to nature while remaining embedded in the city.

Values, Interests & Ambitions
Values: autonomy, low environmental impact, and creative freedom
Interests: in illustration, typography, urban ecology
Ambition: to give a sustainable solo practice without needing a fixed studio or flat

Opportunities Compared to Conventional Living
Dramatically lower living costs than renting in London
Fluid boundary between work, home, and landscape
Strong sense of ownership and self-sufficiency

Limitations & Problems
Inconsistent connectivity: mobile signal varies drastically along the canal, affecting deadlines
Workspace ergonomics: prolonged laptop use at a fixed distance causes physical strain
Thermal discomfort: overheating in summer, condensation and cold in winter
Mental load: constant navigation of CRT rules, mooring etiquette, and movement schedules

Design Opportunities: adaptable workspaces, portable connectivity solutions, flexible lighting, multi-use furniture that supports creative work without clutter



BARGEES_2

2. Tom and Aisha Rahman — Young Family with a Home Mooring

Age: 38 and 36
Children: Sam (7) and Lina (4)
Boat: 60ft widebeam on a residential mooring in East London

Lifestyle & Work
Tom works as a civil engineer, commuting three days a week. Aisha is a part-time community arts facilitator and primary carer. Their boat is permanently moored, functioning much like a compact floating house.

School mornings are tightly choreographed, preparing children in a narrow corridor, negotiating shared facilities on the mooring, managing laundry and storage carefully. Weekends are spent cycling along the towpath, visiting nearby parks, and hosting friends who are curious but unfamiliar with boat life.

Values, Interests & Ambitions
Strong belief in alternative, community-oriented living
Value education, cultural openness, and environmental responsibility
Ambition to raise children with resilience and adaptability with boat life

Opportunities
Close-knit mooring community provides informal childcare support
Children develop spatial awareness and independence early
Strong connection to water, weather, and seasonal rhythms

Limitations & Problems
Space negotiation: children need privacy and play space that doesn't exist simultaneously
Safety anxiety: constant supervision near water
Storage pressure: clothes, toys, and school materials overwhelm limited cabinetry
Social stigma: persistent perception that boat living is unstable or unsuitable for families

Design Opportunities: reconfigurable children's zones, integrated safety features, modular storage, and family-oriented spatial zoning within narrow constraints



BARGEES_3

3. George Whiby — Retired Carpenter and Long-Term Boater

Age: 67
Boat: 55ft narrowboat, owned for 22 years

Lifestyle & Work
George is a retired carpenter who built much of his boat's interior himself. He lives slowly and deliberately, moored for long stretches along quieter sections of the Lee Navigation. His income is a modest pension supplemented by occasional woodworking commissions.

His day revolves around maintenance: checking the engine, repairing woodwork, managing coal and diesel, and chatting with passing boaters. The boat is both home and lifelong project.

Values, Interests & Ambitions
Values: craftsmanship, self-reliance, and tradition
Interests: in boat history, hand tools, and mechanical systems
Ambition to age in place without being forced back into conventional housing

Opportunities
Deep sense of identity tied to making and maintaining his home
Low living costs allow financial independence
Strong informal support network among older boaters

Limitations & Problems
Aging body: tasks like lifting fuel, climbing in/out of the boat, and roof access are becoming difficult
Healthcare access: registering with GPs and receiving consistent care is complex
Energy inefficiency: traditional systems are labour-intensive and physically demanding

Design Opportunities: age-inclusive adaptations, safer access systems, low-effort maintenance solutions, and discreet assistive features that respect dignity



SITE COLLEGE_

THIS WAS OUR EXIT POINT FROM THE CANAL WALK.

THESE BUILDINGS INCLUDE BOTH RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL USES.

THE LONDON CANAL MUSEUM IS LOCATED HERE

HERE, THE CANAL EXPANDS AS IT GOES DOWN

START OF THE REGENT CANAL FROM KINGSCROSS

HAVING OTHER LIFE FORMS, SUCH AS DUCKS, MAKES THE PLACE FEEL MORE LIVELY AND CONNECTED TO NATURE.

THIS PATHWAY ALONG THE REGENT'S CANAL IS COMMONLY USED BY LOCALS AS A QUIETER ALTERNATIVE ROUTE, OFFERING AN ESCAPE FROM THE BUSY ATMOSPHERE OF KING'S CROSS.

BOAT CHARGING POINT USED BY CANAL RESIDENTS.

MANY PEOPLE LIVING ON THE CANAL BOATS USE SOLAR PANELS TO GENERATE THEIR OWN ENERGY, REFLECTING A SELF-SUFFICIENT AND OFF-GRID LIFESTYLE.

This collage documents the route we took along the Regent's Canal to reach the London Canal Museum. Approaching the site via the canal offered a slower and more immersive experience, providing a different perspective compared to the direct route from King's Cross. The journey revealed the changing character of the canal edge and highlighted the contrast between the busy urban environment and the calmer waterside setting.



BARGEES_4

4. Elena Rossi — Performance Artist and Temporary Resident

Age: 53
Boat: Short-term rental narrowboat, 3-6 months at a time

Lifestyle & Work
Elena is an Italian performance artist who uses canal boats as both living space and artistic subject. She documents daily rituals of boat life—fishing, washing, mooring—as performative acts. Her income is irregular, based on grants, residencies, and teaching workshops.

She treats the boat as a mobile studio, rehearsal space, and archive. Living afloat is part of her artistic research into transience, labour, and marginal living systems.

Values, Interests & Ambitions
Values: experimentation, cultural exchange, and lived research
Interests: in feminist geography, urban rituals, and sound art
Ambition to develop a major body of work rooted in canal life

Opportunities
Boat becomes both subject and site of creative production
Heightened awareness of routine and bodily movement
Access to unconventional performance spaces along canals

Limitations & Problems
Lack of permanence: difficulty customising or adapting a non-owned boat
Storage vs. equipment: conflict between living essentials and art tools
Isolation: temporary status limits deep community integration

Design Opportunities: temporary, non-invasive spatial systems, fold-away studio elements, flexible display and documentation surfaces



CONCEPT: STREET AS A MEETING PLACE FOR THE COMMUNITY & TEMPORARY TRADING POP UPS



CANAL BOATS

MARKET STALLS

PEOPLE COMING INTO THE INCLOSE HIGH STREET

YELLOW LINE SHOWS PATHWAY

SITE MAPPING



The temporary, reusable stalls echo the concept of pockets of pods.

Outdoor seating and stalls provide openness to the exterior.

Natural light filters through the architecture, enhancing spatial openness and fostering an airy, liberating atmosphere.

Colors and design guide the crowd, creating a sense of flow and movement.



My research extended beyond the London Canal Museum to explore its wider context, including access points, transport links, and the relationship between the canal and the surrounding community. By walking along the canal during the site visit, I was able to experience part of the journey that bargees make every day and observe what they might see, hear, and feel.

Having grown up around canals myself, I felt a strong connection to the site, which helped shape my understanding of the place. I analysed everything from movement and activity to the area's transport infrastructure. One of the site's key strengths is its location within the regenerated King's Cross district, making it highly connected and accessible.

Bringing this research together, I created a manifesto-style collage that captured the atmosphere, opportunities, and community-focused vision behind my proposal.

#01_STREET as COMMUNITY

At the heart of the proposal is a series of temporary market stalls that create opportunities for trading, exchanging ideas, and sharing knowledge. Designed for bargees, locals, and visitors alike, these spaces encourage interaction, visibility, and a stronger sense of community.

A collaboration with the Mosaic Factory introduced a further layer of engagement through the use of recycled mosaic waste and broken ceramics. Visitors can create ceramic pieces in on-site workshops, which are then used to fill cracks throughout the museum and market space.

These cracks become more than signs of deterioration; they become places for storytelling and self-expression. Through this collective act of repair, individual identities are embedded into the architecture, transforming the building into a living record of its community.

Ultimately, the project is about more than redesigning a museum. It is about creating a shared experience where history, memory, and community come together, allowing people to leave their mark on both the space and each other.

The design responds to a wide range of user needs through accessible and inclusive features, including lifts, ramps, stairs, and a slide that connects different levels of the building.

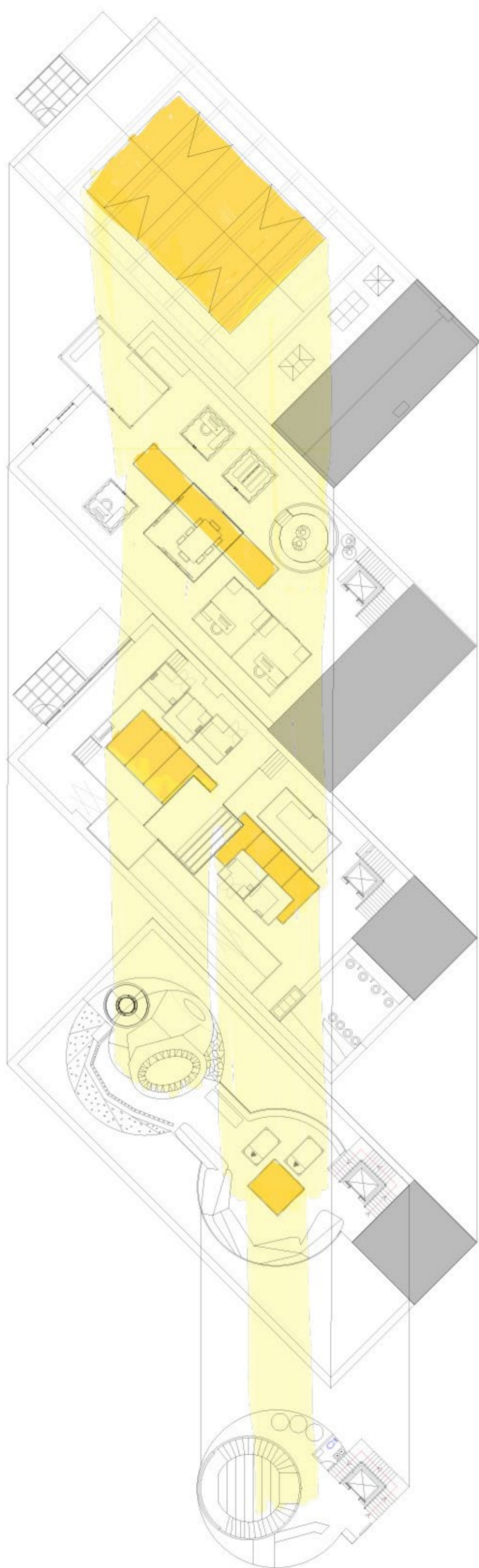
The basement is dedicated to play and recreation, featuring a children's activity zone with soft foam surfaces, climbing elements, trampolines, and playful floor forms. Alongside this is an adult lounge area with pool tables, board games, and social spaces designed to encourage interaction between different age groups.

At Basement Level 1, a mini cinema with sunken seating and curtains provides a flexible and immersive space for screenings, presentations, and community events.

The ground floor acts as the social heart of the building, containing workshops, market stalls, a cafeteria, and a multi-purpose community room. This level opens directly onto the canal, extending activity outdoors through seating areas and play spaces. Museum artefacts are integrated throughout the floor, allowing visitors to engage with the site's history as they move through the building.

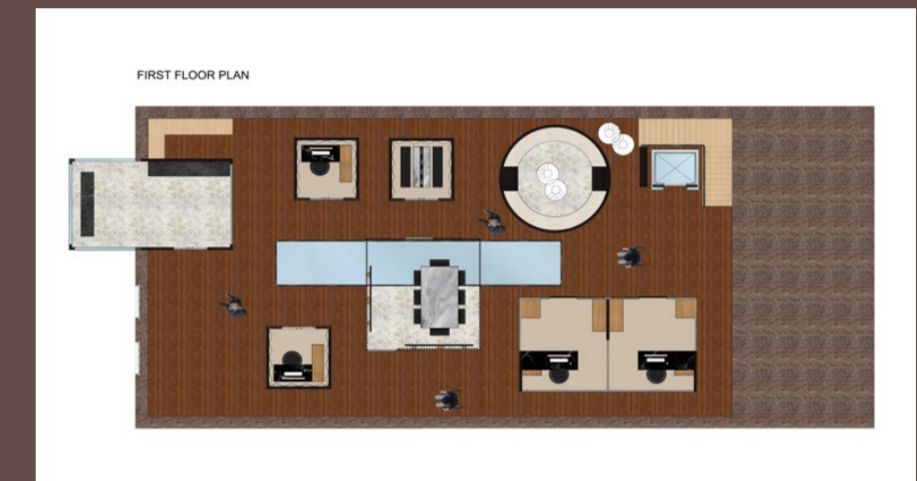
The first floor provides quieter and more focused spaces, including private pods for studying, meetings, dining, or individual use, alongside office spaces and museum exhibitions. A viewing box projects outward, allowing visitors to experience views of the canal while remaining sheltered within the building.

The rooftop is designed as an open glazed space that maximises transparency and daylight. Natural light filters through the building from roof level down to the lower floors, creating visual connections between spaces and reinforcing the project's overall theme of openness, accessibility, and community interaction.



THE LIGHT ENTRANCE





MY REFLECTIVE COMMENT

To conclude, this project became both a design exploration and a personal reflection on my own experiences of place, community, and public space. Memories of growing up around Camden Market, playing on the streets, and walking along the canal regularly all informed the way I approached the brief and shaped my understanding of informal social interaction.

Through this process, I also developed a deeper awareness of the bargee community and the realities of life along the canal. Despite living nearby, I had never fully understood the history of the London Canal Museum or the significance of its surrounding waterways. Researching this context allowed me to respond more meaningfully to the needs of the site and its users.

The final proposal brings these ideas together in the form of a dynamic, high-street-like environment within the museum. It creates a layered sequence of spaces where different activities happen simultaneously—children playing, adults socialising, markets operating, and cultural exchange taking place. The use of temporary stalls and flexible programming ensures the space remains constantly active, unpredictable, and adaptable.

Ultimately, the project aims to go beyond serving a single group. While it responds to the needs of bargees, it also opens itself to the wider local community and visitors, transforming the canal museum into a vibrant social hub. It is a place designed to encourage connection, break down social boundaries, and bring people together through shared experience.

