

Beyond Retail - An Interior supporting community well-being, visibility and connection

Project Overview

This project reimagines two traditionally opposing sectors by combining Vitra's design legacy with the support network of the Women's Trust within a shared interior environment.

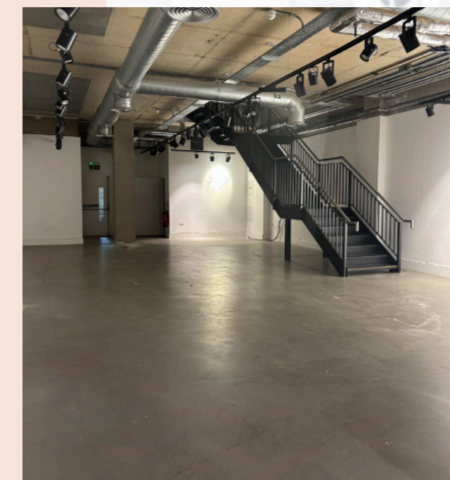
The proposal creates a socially responsive space where retail, well-being and community intersect through adaptable displays and flexible social areas that encourage participation, empowerment and connection.

Informed by user research and lived experiences, the design prioritises safety, privacy, accessibility, inclusivity and well-being. By responding to people, place and social context this project reframes the retail space as an inclusive interior that promotes healing, care and belonging.



Changing the original facade to a slanted glass facade that shows off indoor displays, guides customers into the space and provides a modern, fresh look.

SITE RESEARCH



Islington Grand sorting office constructed by the general post office



The former sorting office is a **symbol of community and communication** within the area, a hub that connected the city of London. Its central location helped with easy access to transport mail.

The new design of the site will reinforce similar ideas of **support, community and connection**, referring back to its historical context by re-imagining the space as a socially responsive **environment centred around well-being, inclusivity, and care**. The central location again will make it easy for people to access when needed.



Why should the space be located in Islington?

According to online research from Islington Council:

1 in 4 Women in London experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.	4,000+ Reported cases of domestic violence and abuse in Islington during 2019.	One of the leading causes Of homelessness and mental health issues in the borough.	A growing need for support Highlighting the importance of safe, inclusive and community-led environments.
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Physical Positives and Negatives of the site

- The glass facade creates a modern look to the space, creating a strong street presence, passersby can immediately see whats going on inside.
- It is an open plan space which can create flexible layouts.
- The high ceilings and 2 floored building make the space dynamic and adaptable.
- The open plan space and industrial materials can increase echo in the space.
- Due to the space being located inside a small tunnel, natural lighting is limited in the space.
- Only one entrance can make access into the space limited, the flow around the space may be affected.

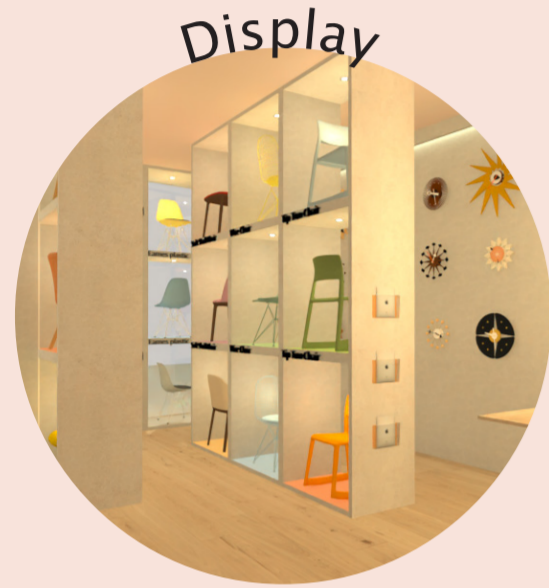
CLIENT INSIGHTS



What are Vitra's needs within the space?

Vitra believe that environments shape our thoughts and feelings in different spaces. They focus on creating designs that are functional, and use colours and textures as emotion rather than decoration, which will link well with the needs of the Women's trust to create a comfortable and inviting safe space.

The furniture has multiple functions as it's also used to divide spaces up, it encourages flexibility and movement. Vitra designs are open and orderly, every design decision has intent. Vitra's target audience are design-conscious homeowners, businesses, and professionals who value high-quality, timeless, and sustainable furniture for homes, offices, and public spaces so we need to ensure the space works for these clients aswell as the Women's trust. This can be done by introducing the idea of multi use spaces.



Display

Display areas need to be functional, show off the products well and allow customers to interact with the product. For example this shelving would allow customers to take an item down, test it out and put it back. They are shown in multiple different colours to show off the range but also bring joy into the space with colour.



Retail counter

Retail counters and seating areas should be scattered around the store as an area to process orders and show customers more options of products that are not available in store. Having areas for this encourages customers to stay longer as there is areas they can sit to have conversations to ensure the products are the right fit for them.



Staff decompression areas

It is important that staff have areas to decompress and relax to avoid becoming overworked. This is where multi-use design works effectively, with private seating areas used by Woman's Trust also functioning as staff decompression spaces when not in use. Designed to feel calming, welcoming, and comfortable, these spaces support both clients.

Target Users

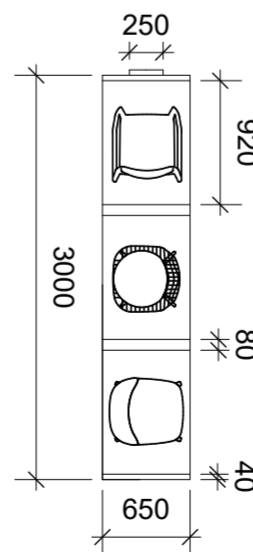
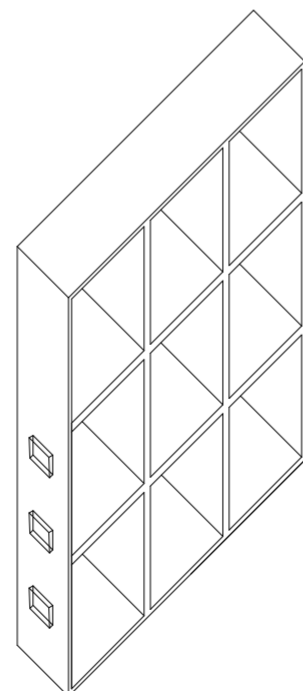
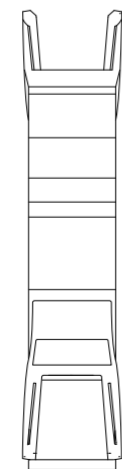
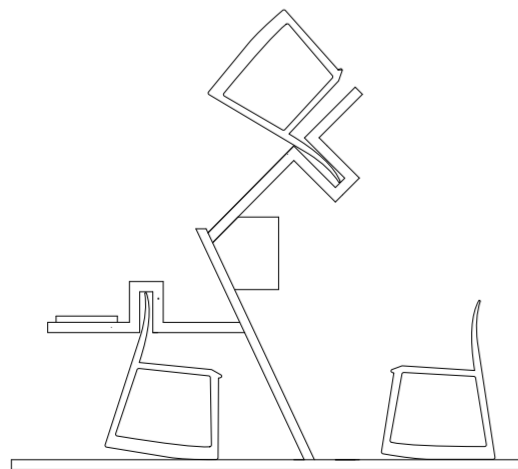
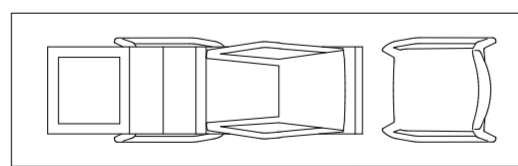


Retail visitors / customers



Retail advisors / staff

How can we improve everyday experience for customers and link design decisions to their needs?



Finding ways to show off and display products is key to allow customers to fully understand the item. Utilising vertical space makes displays more functional and practical in a store of smaller area. Customers will feel more engaged in a space with interesting, informative display choices.

Target Users



Survivors seeking Woman's trust support



Isolated or vulnerable women



Local community members



Staff, counsellors, facilitators

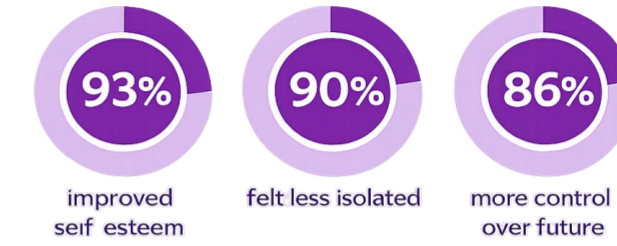
What support do the Women's trust offer? What do they need?

In 2024/25 women supported felt:

Before support:



After support:



The Women's trust need spaces to carry out all essential support services. They offer things such as telephone counselling, self development workshops, healthy relationship workshops and 1 to 1 talks.

All of these services will require a private, comforting and welcoming space so that phone calls and conversations stay confidential and in person meetings feel inclusive, accessible and safe.

Why do the Women's trust need this space?

Having support spaces merged with Vitra's retail space provides a safe, private outlet for those in need.

The design needs to ensure not to be too 'obvious' so that people in need don't feel 'embarrassed' to enter, or have to explain to someone where they are going. I will ensure the space has women's trust branding but inside so people are aware of it when they enter. Online advertisement can make people aware too.



How can we link some design decisions to the Women's trust needs?



Looking at Vitra's product colour range inspired me to look at colour theory and how it affects emotions. By understanding how colours make someone feel can help inform design decisions to evoke certain emotions within a space. It is a main design driver in my design.

- Red: energy, passion, power, danger.
- Orange: enthusiasm, creativity, warmth, sociability.
- Yellow: happiness, optimism, intellect.
- Green: balance, growth, calmness, health, safety.
- Blue: trust, calm, intelligence, serenity.
- Pink: Love, compassion, warmth, femininity, tenderness, nurturing, sensitivity.

woman's Trust
recovery from domestic abuse

DESIGN DIRECTION

Design Aim

To create a multi use space that combines Vitra's furniture retail experience with the Women's Trust's mission of safety, support, and empowerment.

The goal is to create a space functions as a showroom for Vitra's furniture but also but also as a safe, welcoming place where women can access resources, speak to trained support staff, or simply feel comfortable and seen.

FUNCTIONAL



APPROACHABLE

MULTI USE



SAFETY

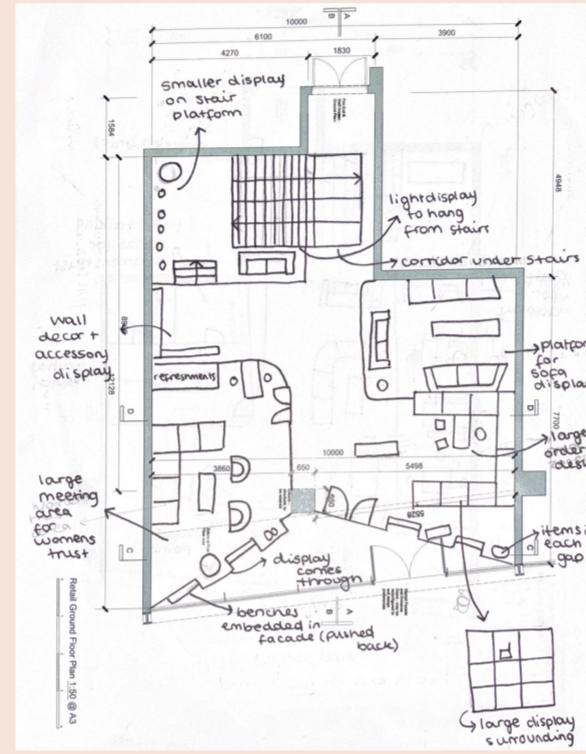


COMFORTING

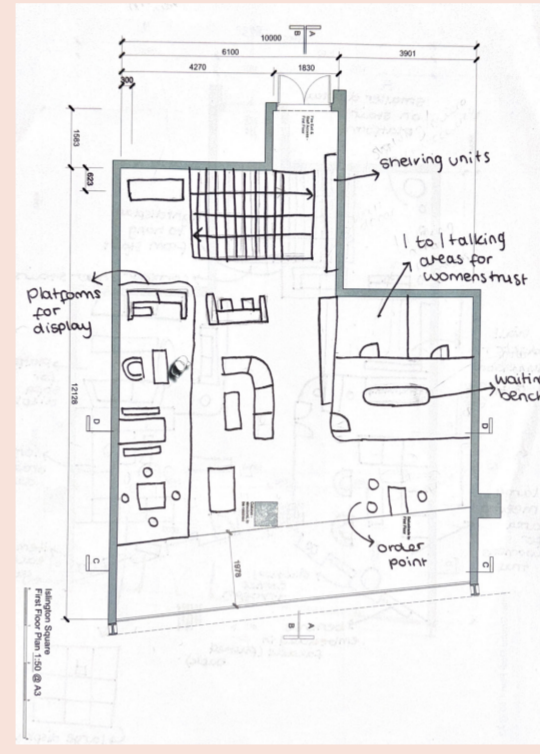
Development process

I began developing ideas by creating small, fast-paced sketch plans to determine an optimal layout for the space. I needed to ensure that the layout was accessible, flexible and functional for both Vitra and the Women's trust. I experimented with different display designs, private room layouts and stair placement. Stair placement was a key factor in making the space successful as they can draw people to explore the first floor level too. I explored the idea of changing the front facade angle to guide people into the space from the main street, which then influenced the experimentation of angling displays throughout the space.

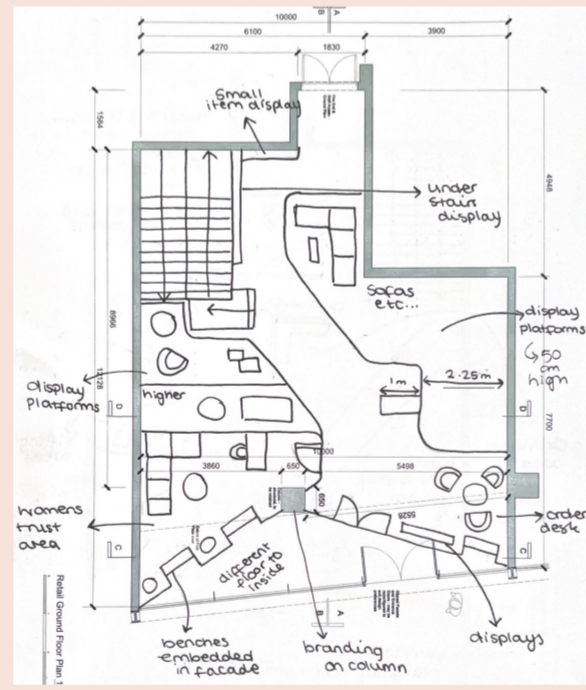
GROUND FLOOR



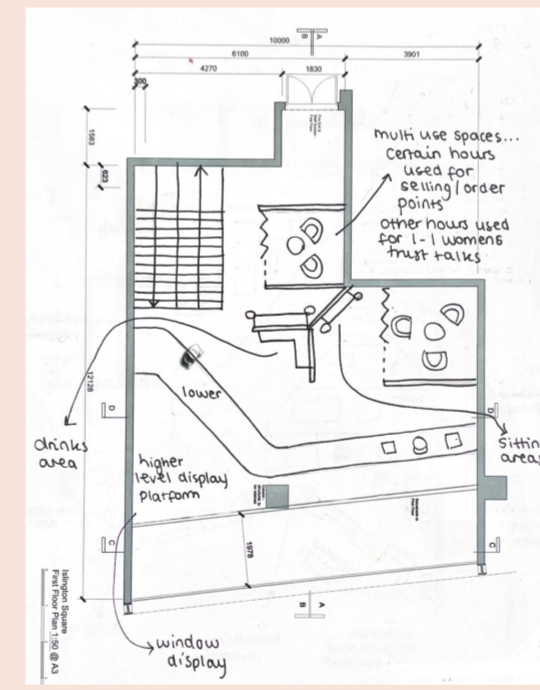
FIRST FLOOR



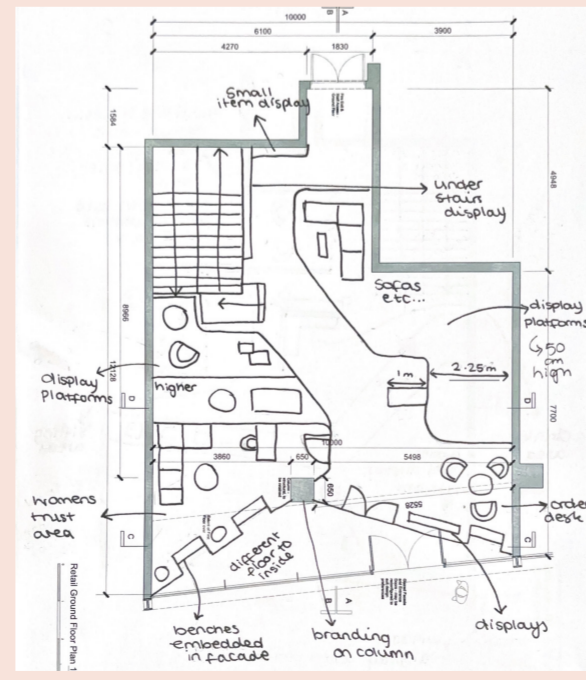
GROUND FLOOR



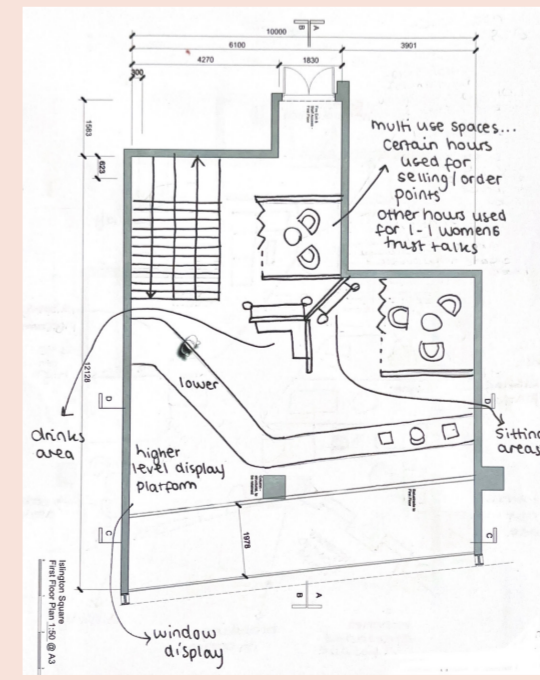
FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

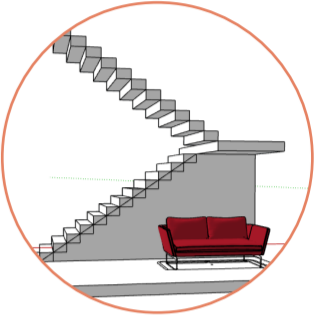
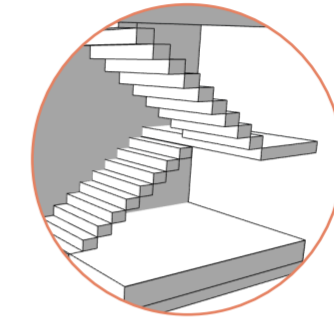


FIRST FLOOR

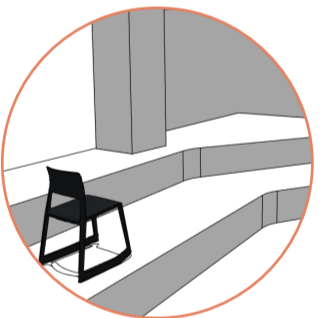
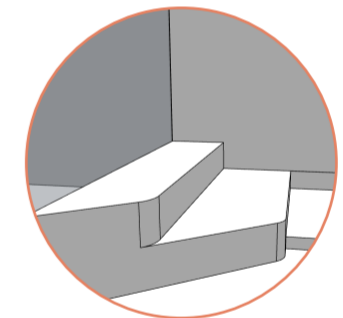
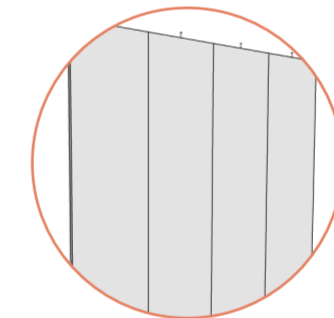


3D design concepts

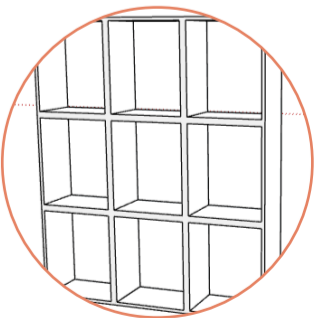
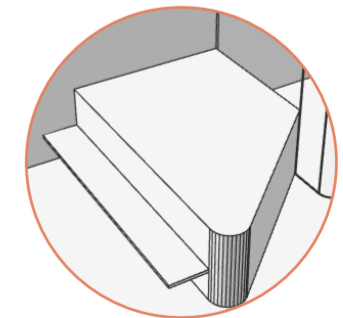
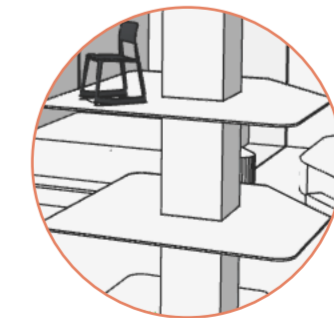
I then moved onto 3D designing to test out key ideas from my sketch plans. I did this to ensure dimensions worked in the space and that circulation was good through the space. Visualising the design in 3D allows us to easily see if it works well and how customers will engage with and react to the space.



Experimenting with stair displays as a way to lead customers upstairs too. Sometimes upper floors get lost if the ground floor design 'hides' the stairs and so incorporating them into a display ensures people that visit see them and know they are there and where they go. Window displays are also important as passersby can see what the store has to offer.



Double height displays allow more items to be shown in the store. It utilises space in a functional, practical way. This helps customers as they can see a larger range of products in person and picture the items in their space. I also experimented creating sliding doors on sketch up to make certain rooms private when needed. Foldable doors create a flexible space that can have many purposes.



Attaching seating to a display piece can provide a place to sit whilst a customer goes through decisions of items they want to order, it encourages people to stop and spend more time in the space. Tiered displays again save space and allow more products to be shown, they can also act as a good barrier between private spaces like the women's trust areas and non private spaces, without adding a physical solid wall.

DESIGN OUTCOME

FRONT FACADE



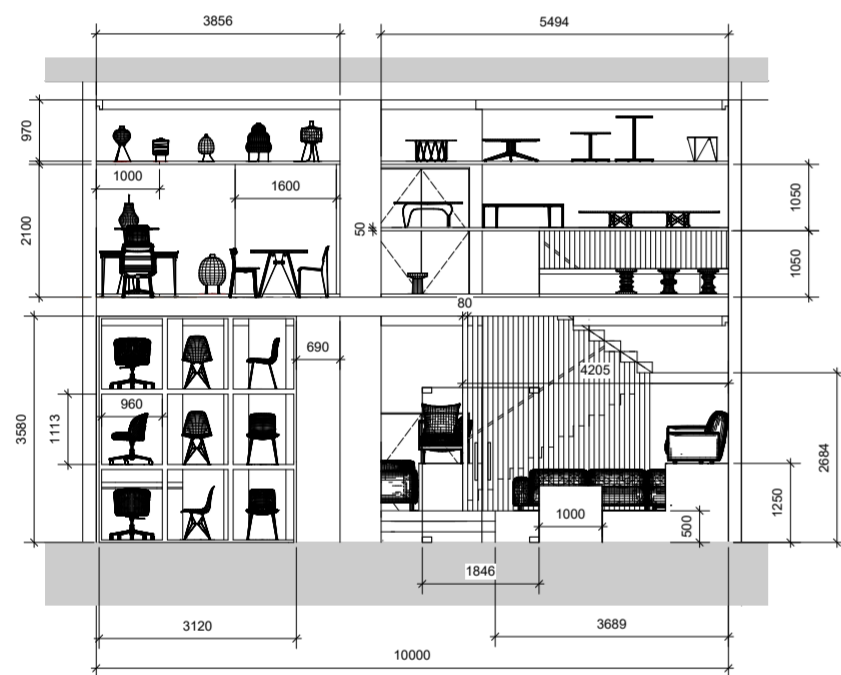
SECTION AA



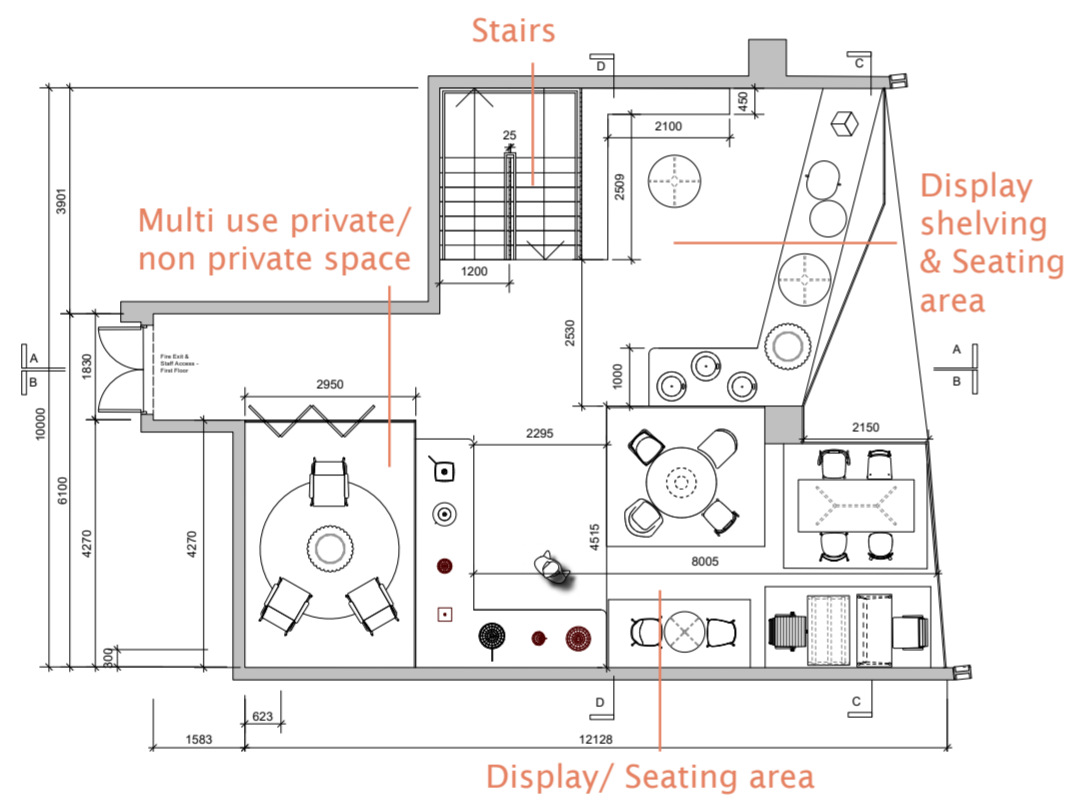
SECTION BB



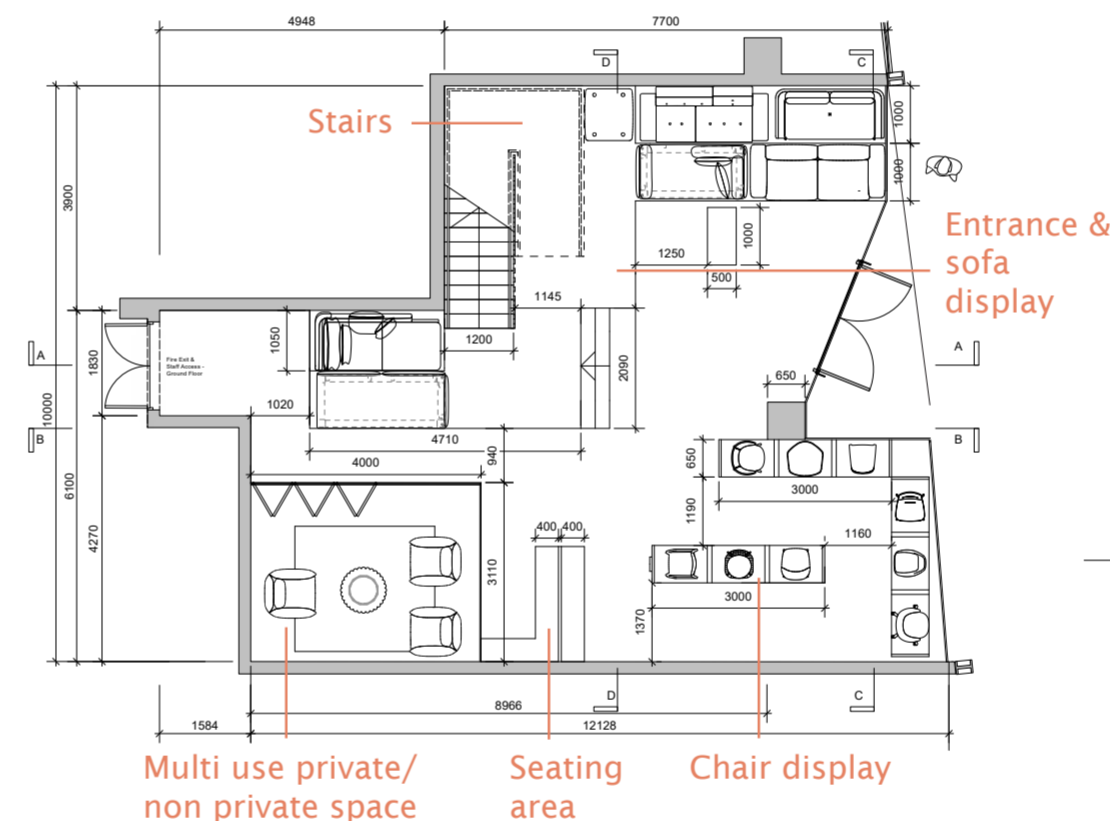
FRONT FACADE



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



Materials used:



My main focus with materials was to use materials that are sustainable but also durable. A lot of these products are more sustainable 'copies' of the original authentic material which saves money, is better for the environment and is usually more long-lasting.

1. Armourcoat kocrete honed polished plaster - Winter heath 025
2. Havwoods Venture plank - Blanco
3. Solus honed R9 Terazzo - 7BAB030
4. Sonic stone Limestone persiano bamboo design
5. Gerflor DLW UNI WALTON Linoleum- 0095 Spring Blue
6. Gerflor DLW UNI WALTON - 0062 Mediterranean orange
7. Gerflor DLW UNI WALTON - 0010 Pompeji Red
8. Glass
9. Armourcoat - Armuralia polished plaster - 076 Sunlit Glacier, 085 Worn Denim, 088 Icy Fjord, 089 Moonlight Shadow
10. Formica Doors collection Laminate - F8858 Just Rose, F5348 EnergyEgger Laminate - U363 ST9 Flamingo pink
11. Formica Doors collection Laminate - F5493 Arctic Blue, F7880 Thistle
12. Zentia Prestiuge Colour Ceiling board - RAL 010 90 10 / RE5
13. Claybrook - Discotheque buggles - tiles for outside the door

When people use the space, their experience is one of the most important factors. When designing I considered how someone may move around the store to ensure the space is accessible, user friendly and inclusive. This spatial sequence shows how the design supports real human behaviour:

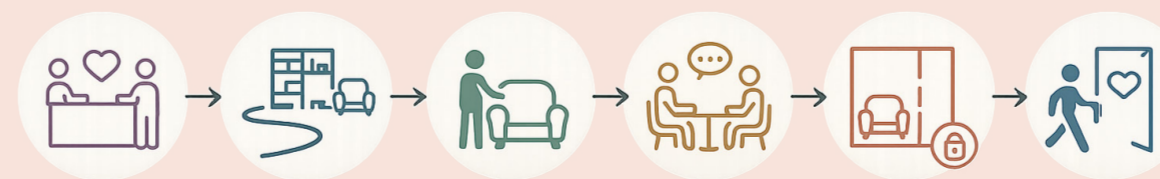
GROUND FLOOR

1. Enter - Welcomed at the desk and given a quick orientation.
2. Follow the Loop - Walk the shelving route that wraps the front façade to view furniture.
3. Browse & Try - Interact with displays and the platform that leads to the stairs.
4. Order - Sit either in the private area or open area to process orders with an employee.
5. Request Privacy for orders or a chat with Women's trust - Staff can take to the adaptable private area with sliding doors
6. Checkout / Leave - Return to the desk for small purchase, follow-up info, or leave feeling supported.

FIRST FLOOR

1. Arrive from downstairs - Come up the stairs and enter the space.
2. Notice the window display - The angled façade that already drew interest from outside.
3. Follow the wrap-around shelving display - Shelving guides you naturally through the store.
4. Explore table set-up - Real life layouts help customers imagine the furniture in their own spaces.
5. Pause in seating areas - The private area can be opened or closed with sliding doors, for Women's Trust for private chats, or Vitra design consultation or ordering use.
7. Checkout & Leave - Finish visit and depart feeling supported and informed or satisfied with purchases.

User Experience:



1. WELCOME DESK & ENTRANCE DISPLAY



The entrance space features double-height sofa displays, a retail desk, and blue columns that guide visitors towards the stairs. Warm lighting and soft materials create an inviting atmosphere, while the blue Vitra backdrop reinforces branding and promotes feelings of trust and calm.

2. PRIVATE/ NON PRIVATE SEATING AREA



Private rooms support confidential conversations and telephone consultations for the Women's Trust. Sliding doors make the space adaptable for multiple uses, including staff well-being, customer consultations, or showroom displays. Soft pink tones create a warm and compassionate atmosphere.

3. CHAIR DISPLAY/ SEATING AREA



The design maximises spatial potential through vertical chair displays that highlight each piece while encouraging interaction. A flexible seating area supports both Women's Trust visitors and the public, creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment.

4. UPSTAIRS FURNITURE DISPLAY



This upstairs display allows customers to experience furniture in a real-life setting. Coloured laminate creates defined zones by wrapping from the ceiling onto the floor, helping the space feel less overwhelming while highlighting the products.

5. UPSTAIRS PRIVATE/ NON PRIVATE SPACE



Private and semi-private rooms are provided on both floors to ensure accessibility and give visitors a choice of environment. This helps create a less intimidating experience for Women's Trust visitors, while the use of blue tones promotes feelings of trust, calm, and serenity.

6. UPSTAIRS DISPLAY SHELVING/ SEATING



Dual-sided displays engage passersby from outside while allowing customers inside to explore products in more detail. Multiple seating areas encourage longer visits and create flexible spaces for the Women's Trust and Vitra to meet customers, host events, or provide places to relax.

The design aims to create an inclusive and welcoming environment that combines Vitra's retail experience with supportive spaces for the Women's Trust.

Flexible and multi-use layouts, accessible private areas, and interactive furniture displays encourage comfort, connection, and longer engagement within the space.

Calming colours, soft materials, and warm lighting help reduce intimidation and promote feelings of trust, well-being, and relaxation, while still maintaining a strong and recognisable Vitra brand identity.

7. SECTION BB



8. SECTION AA

