

UNPICKING | MEA HOUSE

SPATIAL EXPERIENCE & RESPONSE

This proposal reimagines MEA House's historic role as a charitable hub by transforming it into a sanctuary for well-being and textile reuse. The spatial strategy involves stripping the Grade II listed building back to its base structure, revealing these historical layers and creating open, shared volumes fosters a deeply convivial atmosphere. This 'reset' spatially mirrors the tactile act of textile repair and incorporates elements of textile reuse. Ultimately, the scheme prioritises the sensory and lived qualities of interior space offering a place for the local community where connection is prioritised.

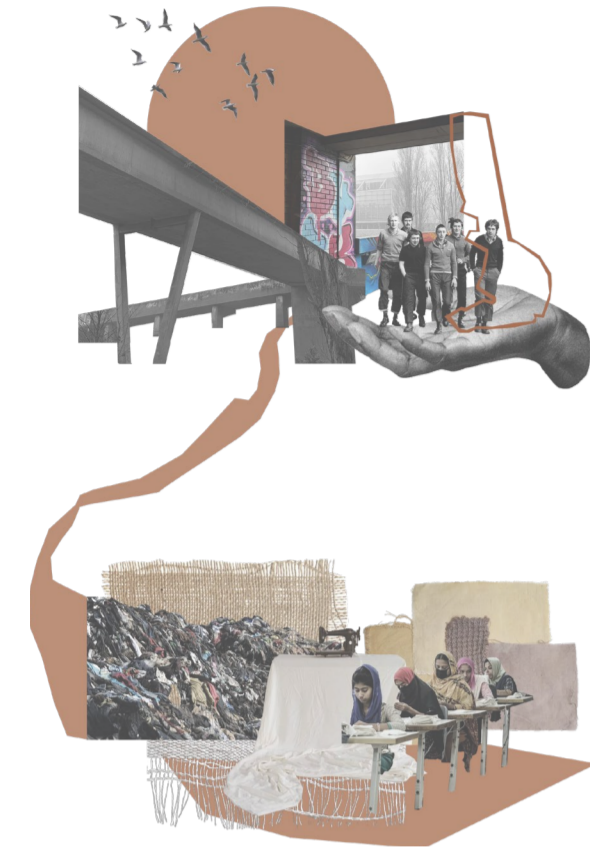
DESIGN BRIEF & INTENT

MEA House has sat in the Centre of Newcastle upon Tyne serving as a hub for charities aiding the surrounding community from 1974 - 2023. This project reawakens the spirit of the Grade II listed building through a focus on community well-being, education and action surrounding the reuse of textiles in response to the climate crisis and the deprivation present in the area.

Incorporating activities which can aid the deprivation present in the area will give local residents a space where rest and well-being are prioritised and a hub where they can socialise and build skills associated with the reuse of textiles.

MEA House acts as a hub to educate people in Newcastle upon Tyne about the effects of textiles on the environment, as well as the social issues related to fast fashion. Space for education on skills associated with the reuse and repair of textiles is also provided.

By resetting the building fabric to its base structure, revealing layers and creating shared volumes, textile repair serves as a convivial and community act.



Brief Investigations | social deprivation in local area + over consumption of textiles

SITE | MEA HOUSE

Listing

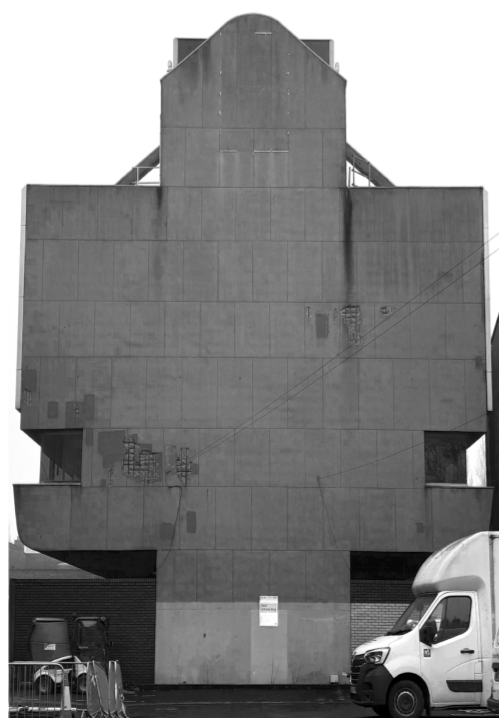
Grade II
List Entry Number: 1419279
Date first listed: 26 Jan 2015

MEA (me-ar) House is a Grade II listed building in the centre of Newcastle upon Tyne, England. The site's listed status is credited to:

- it's innovative design which incorporates a Vierendeel truss structural arrangement
- accessibility to the building via the elevated skywalks externally
- social context: the site was the first purpose-built community service building in the country



Stacked Forms | contrast in weight



Solidity | weight lifted at ribbon window

SPATIAL AMBITION

existing free plan structure inspires form of intervention | spaces are opened up to allow views between functions and across the building horizontally and vertically



SITE INTERESTS | PHENOMENON



Listed Staircases
verticality and
materiality



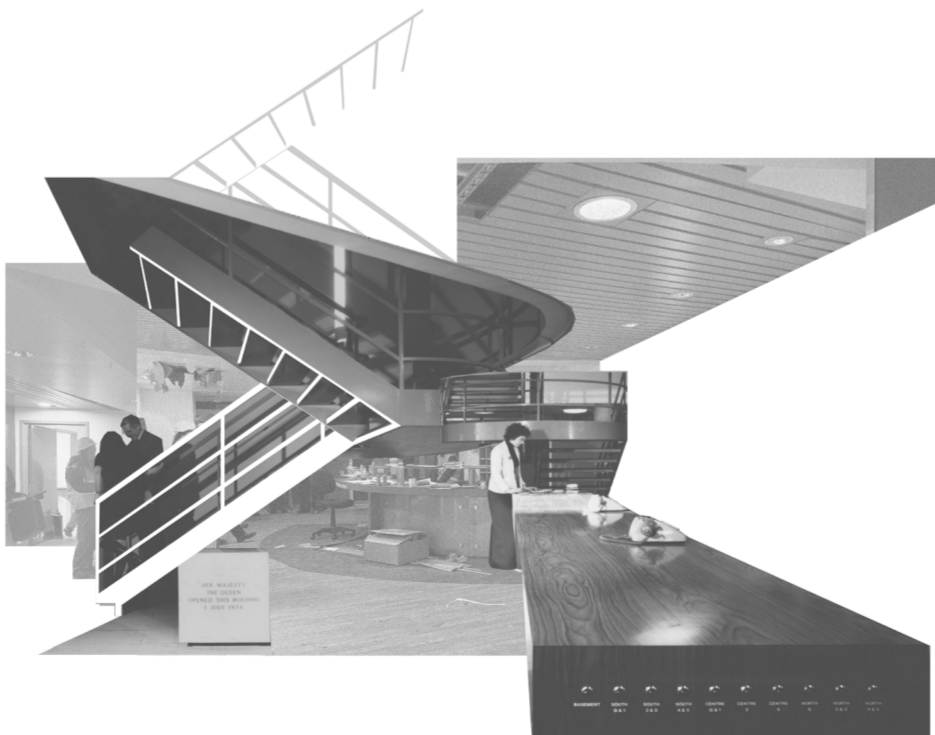
Free Plan
Structure
horizontality



Ribbon Windows
views out |
contemplative



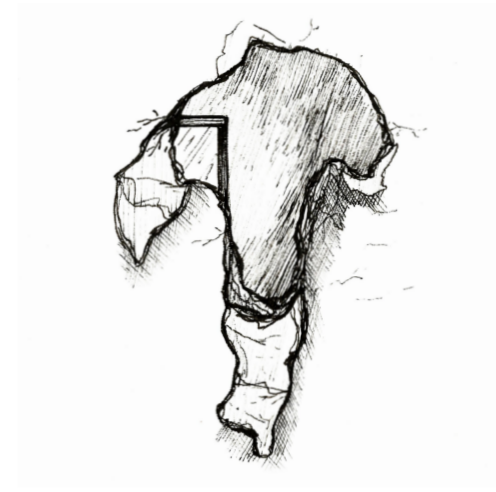
Interior Service Voids | ceiling + walls
building structure revealed



Existing Site Geometries

1974 fit out overlaid on current site (2026) | Linear and curved elements repeated on building interior: Grade II listed staircase + original fit out

INITIAL SITE RESPONSES | CONTEXTUAL INSPIRATION



Natural Light | pierces through holes made in site's deconstruction phase

Layers peeling back from wall | reveals materiality + impermanence of interior partitions due to free plan structure.



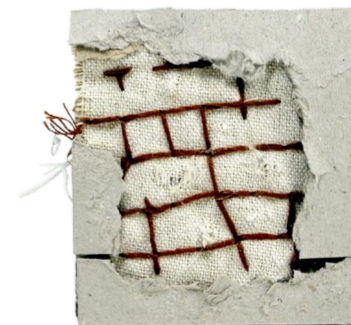
Views Through

Free plan structure allows for long views horizontally through the building.



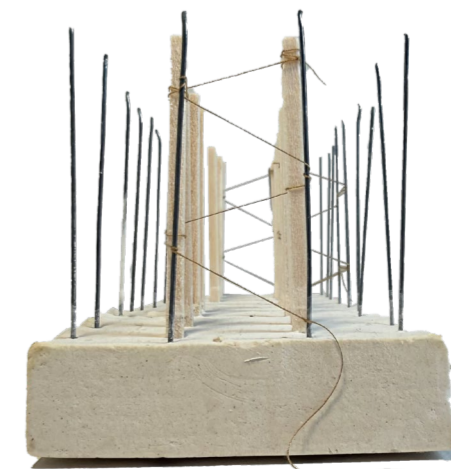
Building [Fabric] 01

The exterior of the building shows signs of deterioration, the exposed rebar inspires ideas of thread moving in and out of fabric.



Building [Fabric] 01

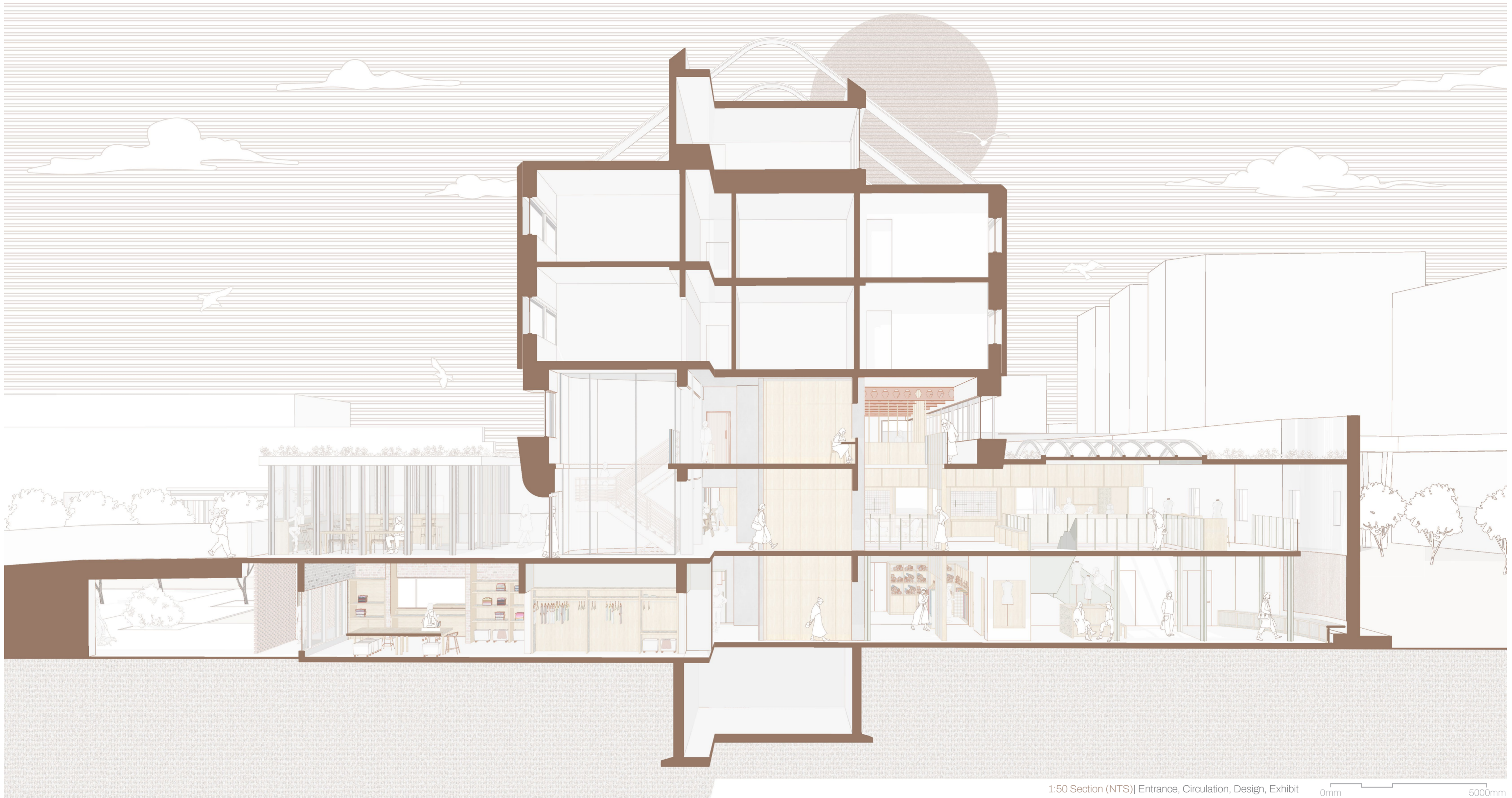
Detail texture of rebar and concrete is explored through a contrasting material choice: thread and fabric.



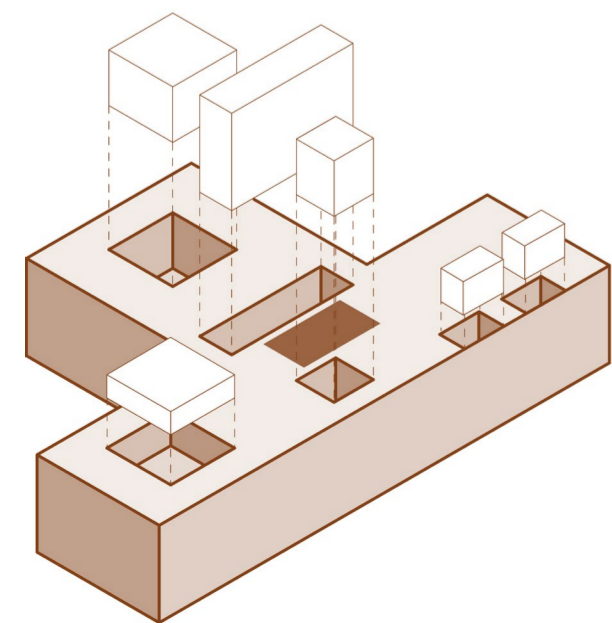
Structure as Spatial

The steel structure of the building reveals itself within the existing though long horizontal views.

The existing circulation paths weave around the structure vertically.



SPATIAL STRATEGY | VOIDS



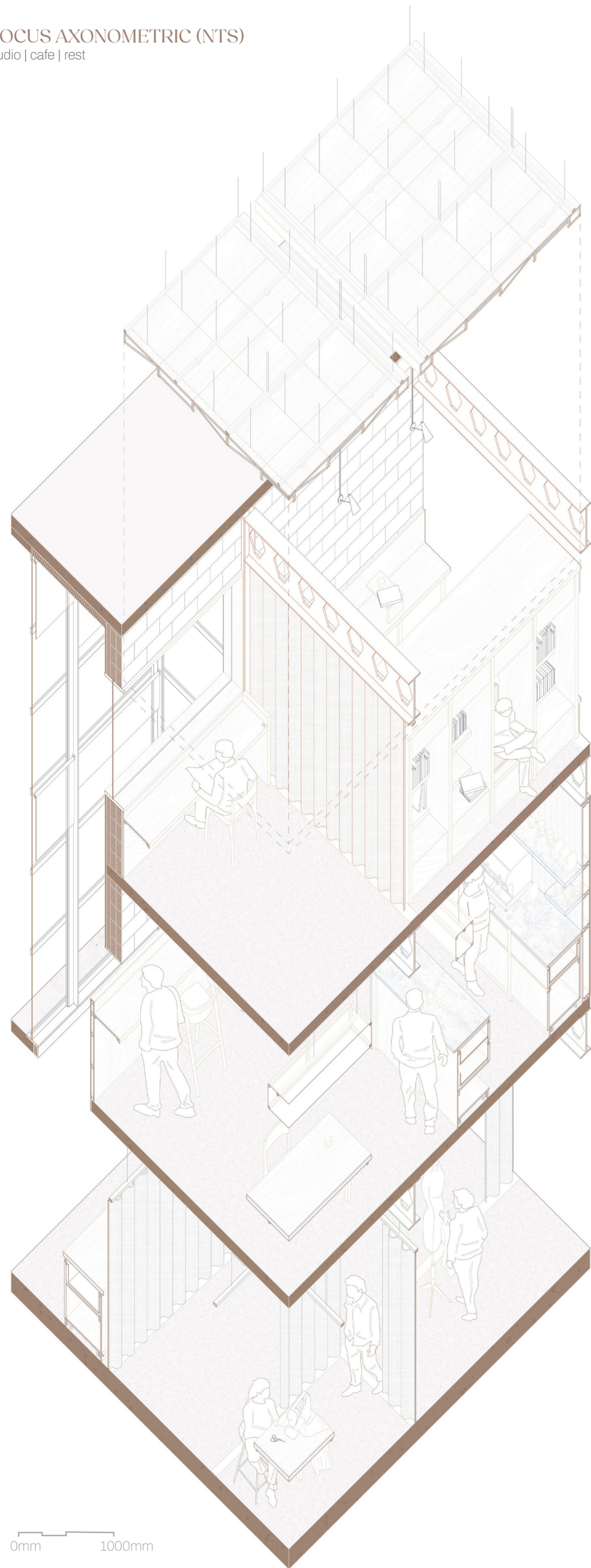
Reducing Weight for Connection

The scheme has been cast in concrete in the model to make reference to the existing building's weight and solidity. Whilst the scheme is lightweight and not static, voids are created to puncture through the existing, relieving the building of its heaviness.

The model represents the areas, at 1:100, which have been modified throughout the site, to allow visual connections between spaces over multiple floors; enhancing community connection throughout the scheme, and revealing layers of the building fabric that were once concealed.

1:100 SCHEME MODEL | POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES





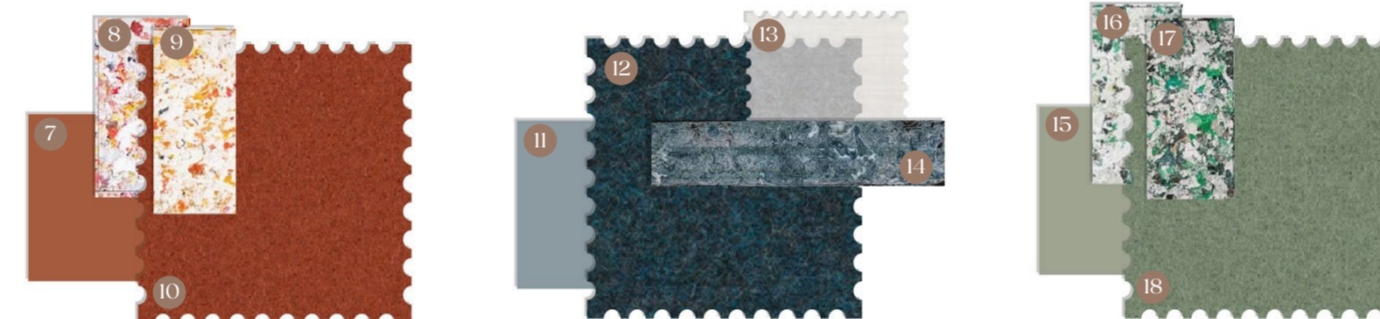
0mm 1000mm

MATERIAL PALETTE

Textiles are applied throughout the scheme as upholstery and as partitions. Materials made from recycled textiles are also used in various placements throughout.

1. Existing Concrete Core
2. Existing Breeze Block
3. Forbo Marmoleum | Walton
4. Formica | Natural Oak
5. Kvadrat Apo | 601
6. Grestec Testa | ANI32792
7. Intumescent Coating | CYMK 0%, 56%, 86%, 41%
8. FabBrick | Terracotta Uni
9. FabBrick | Terracotta Motif
10. Kvadrat Wave | Divina 3 552
11. Intumescent Coating | CYMK 17%, 5%, 0%, 44%
12. Kvadrat Wave | Divina MD 873
13. Kvadrat Erin | II 0013
14. Denimolite
15. Intumescent Coating | CYMK 5%, 0%, 15%, 42%
16. FabBrick | Jungle Uni
17. FabBrick | Jungle Motif
18. Kvadrat Wave | Divina 3 856

↑ Scheme-Wide Palette



ZONING | COLOUR BY FUNCTION



READ | EDUCATE | UNPICK

UNPICK | exchange

REPAIR | DESIGN

This colour coding spans across the entire scheme and offers a wayfinding strategy for the public, creating clear separation between zones so convivial and rest areas can co-exist. Each colour creates an atmosphere for the specific function types that connect spaces by being recognised throughout the building.

1:20 FOCUS MODEL



The model explores the texture of the textiles around the scheme through the application of paper creates from fibres.

This same paper is wrapped around the existing and additional steel structures to reflect the seamless transition between materiality.

Textiles in the scheme are just as important to the spatial form as the exposed steel structure is.



O2 REST Curtians surround the desk zones to provide adaptable work spaces. The undulating form of textiles is reflected in the hung ceiling system which is only adopted in the Rest areas of the scheme.



O1 COMMUNITY THERAPY The scheme is open and wraps around the existing. Glazing partitions this zone from the rest of the floor to maintain visual connection.

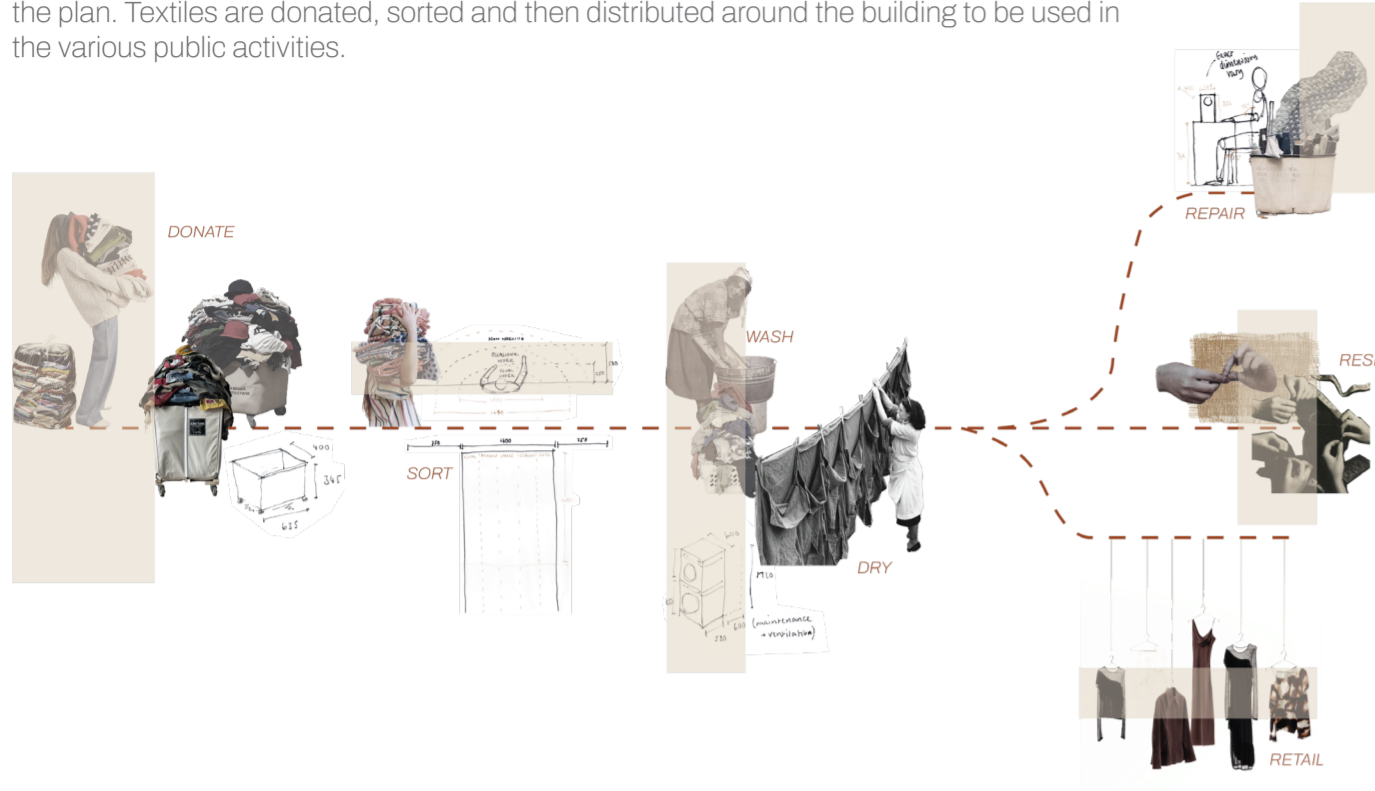


O0 REUSE STUDIO The elements in this space are all moveable to allow full adaptation for collaboration. Glazing separates spaces physical but visual connection is maintained. The existing structure is exposed and it's form is celebrated.

FUNCTION INFORMING SPATIAL ORGANISATION

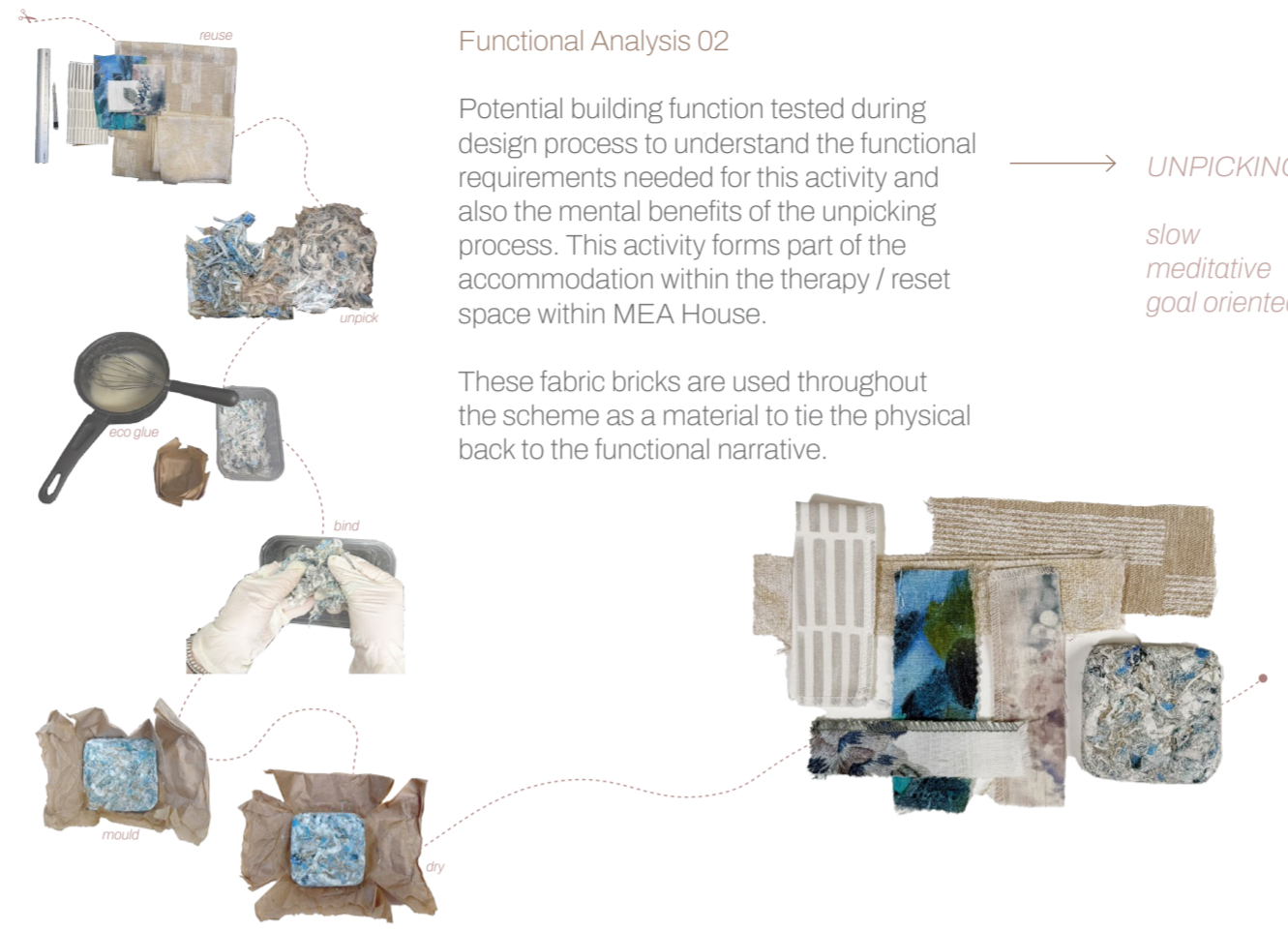
Functional Analysis 01

The scheme creates a public space where textiles can be reused through creative processes that foster social connection. Functional analysis directly informs the spatial organisation of the plan. Textiles are donated, sorted and then distributed around the building to be used in the various public activities.



Functional Analysis 02

Potential building function tested during design process to understand the functional requirements needed for this activity and also the mental benefits of the unpicking process. This activity forms part of the accommodation within the therapy / reset space within MEA House.



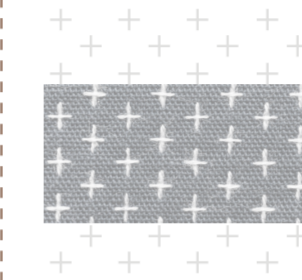
These fabric bricks are used throughout the scheme as a material to tie the physical back to the functional narrative.

Detail Narrative Derived from Function

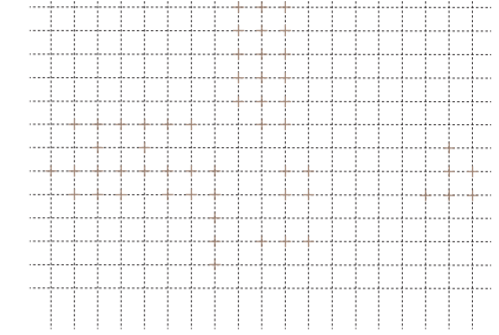
Sashiko, a traditional Japanese fabric mending technique to reinforce worn, torn, frayed edges, informs the placement of elements on the existing building grid.

Scheme elements fall directly onto the grid crosses, creating a sashiko-like pattern.

SASHIKO | little stabs

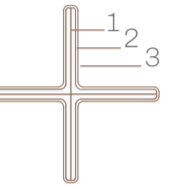


Building Grid | 3000 x 3000 mm

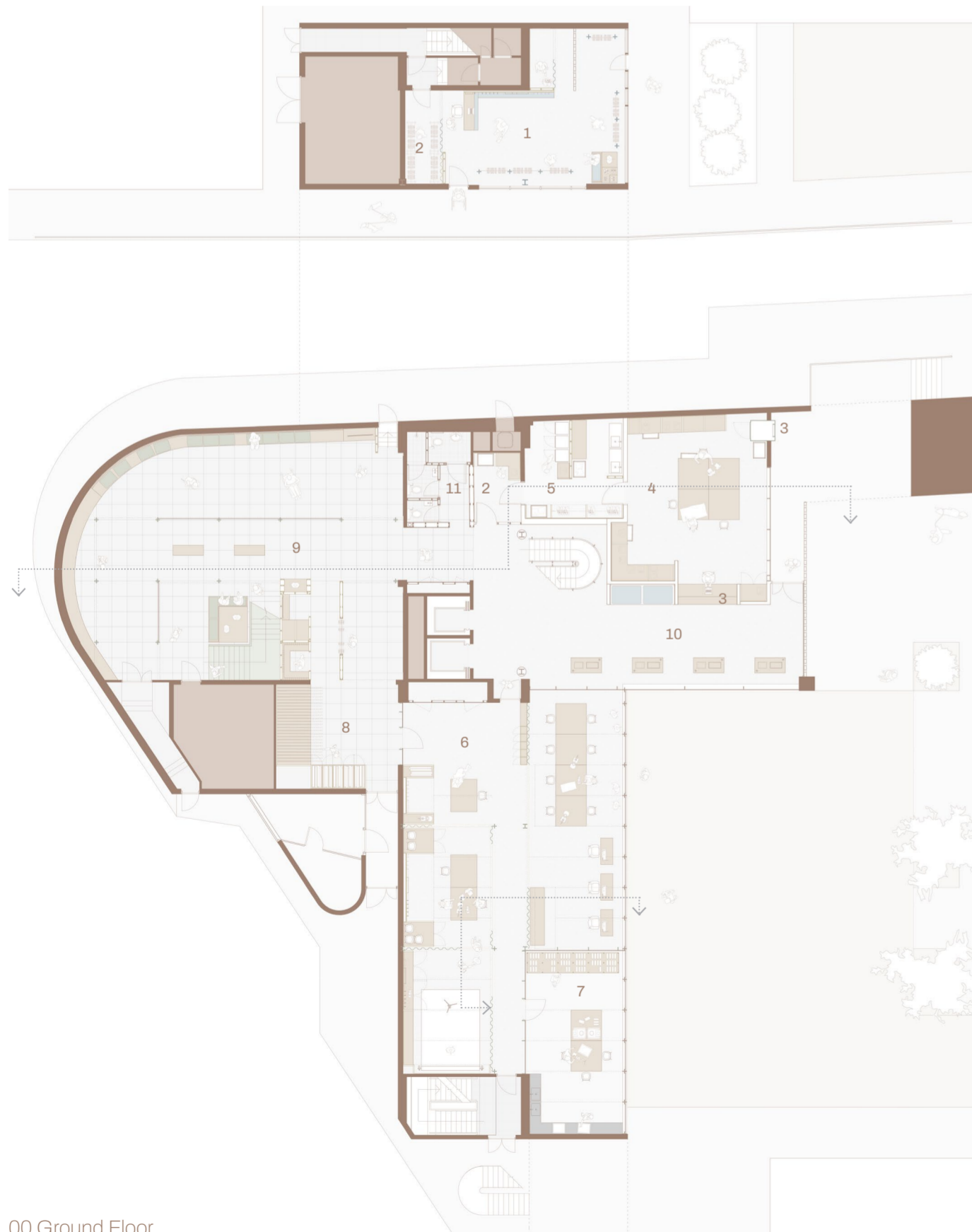


1. Rolled Steel L Angle, Welded
2. Intumescent Coating
3. Top Coat (Red, Green or Blue)

1:5 (NTS) Cruciform Column Detail



1:100 FLOOR PLANS (NTS)



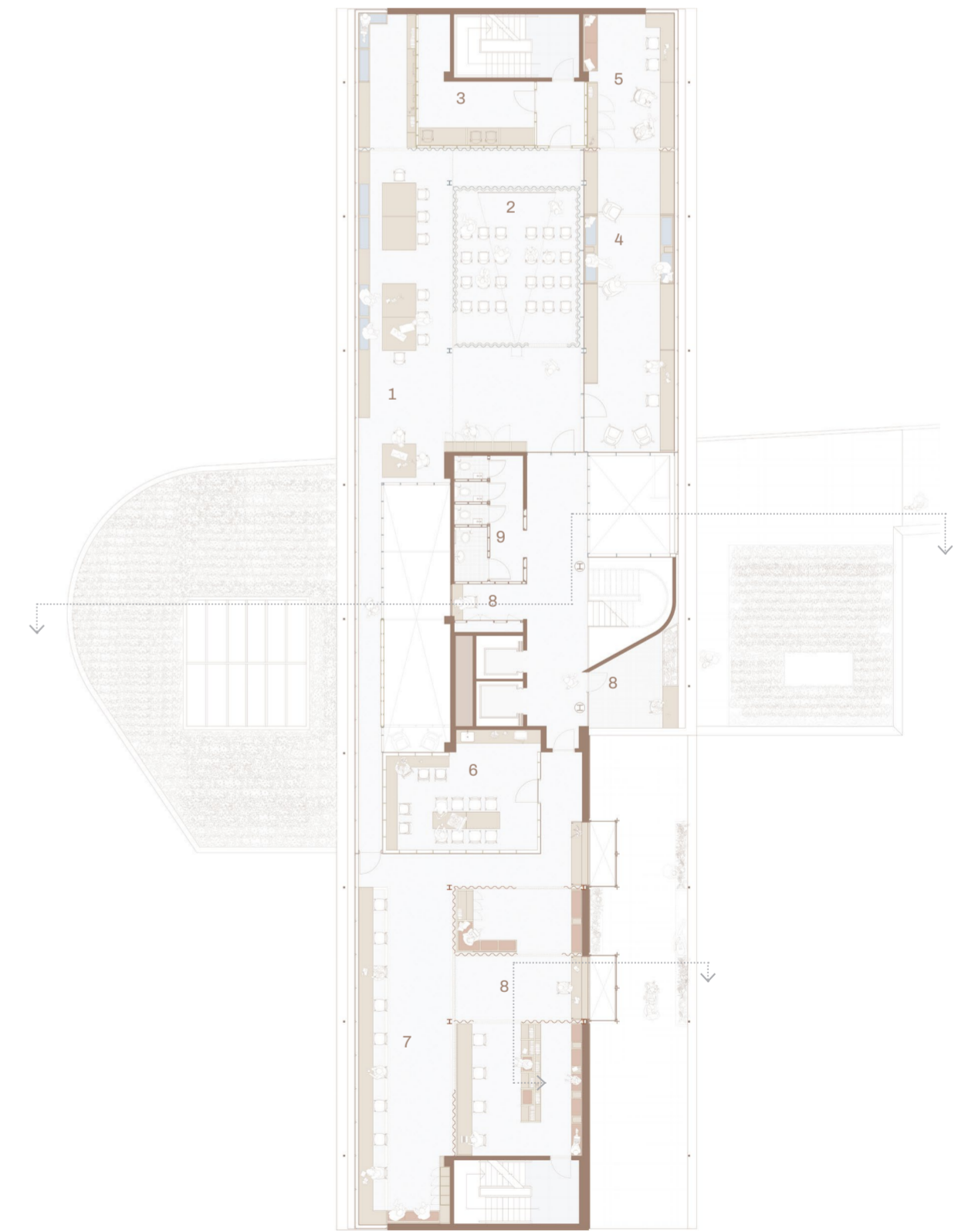
00 Ground Floor

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--|--|---|
| 1. Retail | 4. Sorting | 7. Experimental Studio fabric bricks | 10. Exhibition fabric unpicking process |
| 2. Storage | 5. Washing + Drying | 8. Material Library | 11. WC + Shower |
| 3. Textile Donation | 6. Reuse studio adaptable workspaces | 9. Exhibition current work | |



01 First Floor

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Visitor welcome | 4. Kitchen + Food Store |
| 2. Retail | 5. Design hub |
| 3. Café | 6. WC |

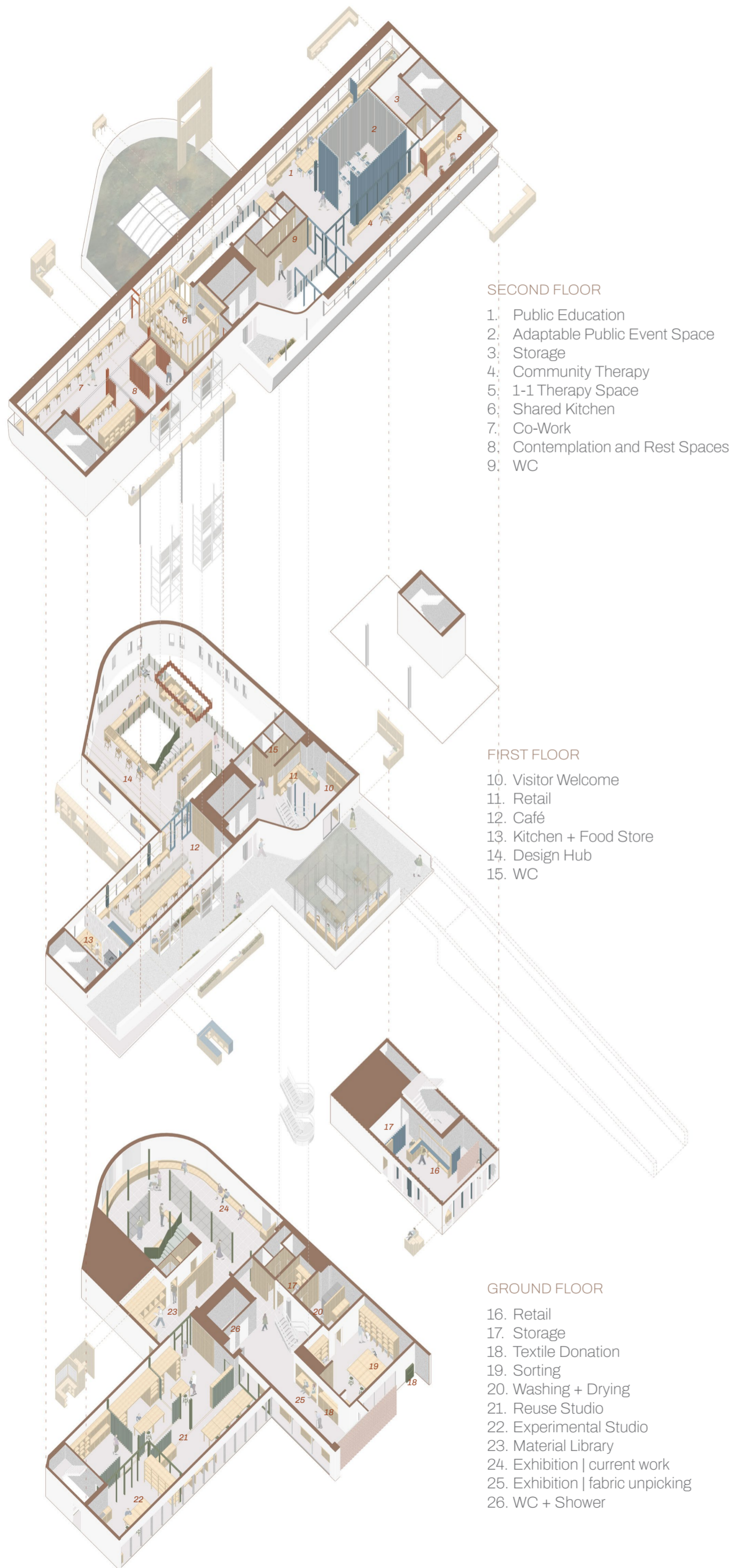


02 Second Floor

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Public Education | 4. Community Therapy | 7. Co-Work |
| 2. Adaptable Public Event Space | 5. 1-1 Therapy Space | 8. Contemplation and Rest Spaces |
| 3. Storage | 6. Shared Kitchen | 9. WC |



1:100 SCHEME AXONOMETRIC (NTS)



SPATIAL STRATEGY | CONTEMPLATION RESPONDING TO EXISTING



Inspired by the second floor ribbon windows, the scheme wraps around the existing (exposed) structure.

By wrapping around the existing, the scheme orientates visitors to look out of the ribbon windows and relax / contemplate. The heaviness of the existing creates a protective atmosphere within the interior where a calmness can take place.

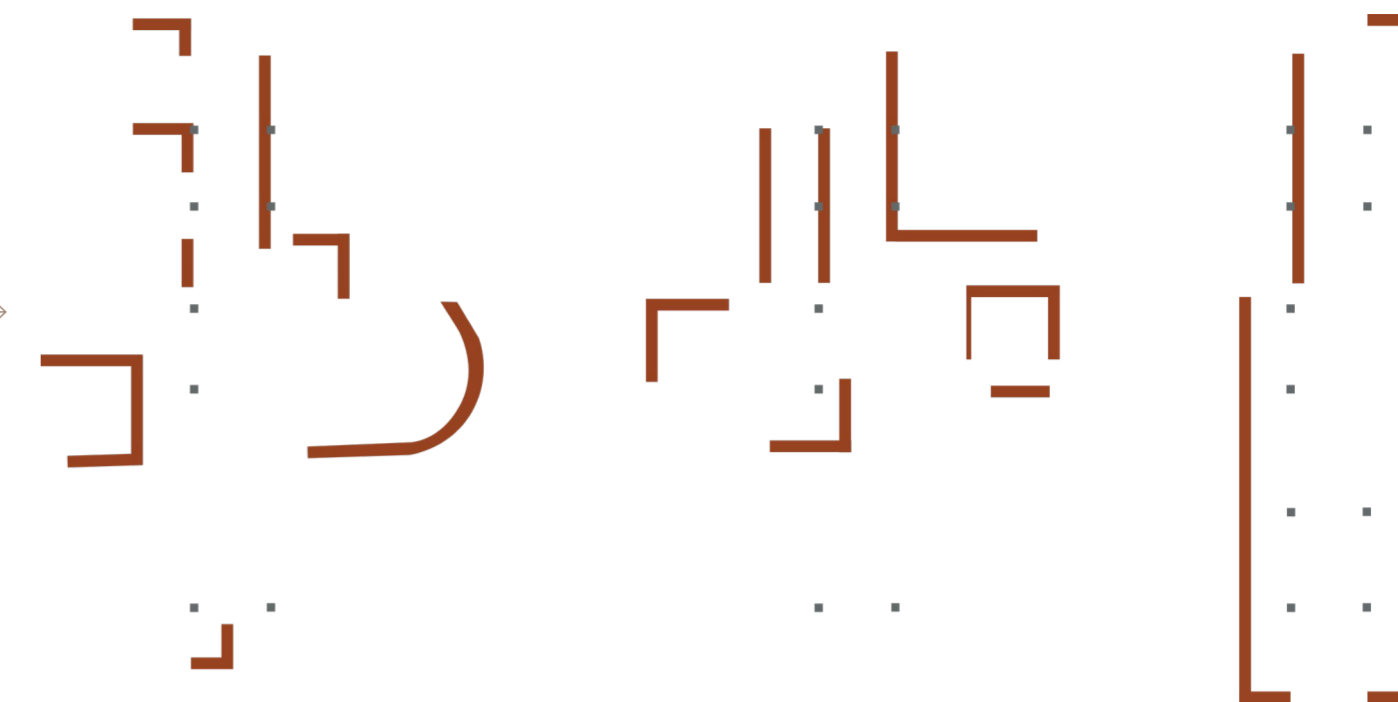
DETAIL NARRATIVE & STRATEGY | BUILDING GRID



GROUND FLOOR

FIRST FLOOR

SECOND FLOOR



⊕ Elements wrapping around the existing structure (steel beams, walls and cores)

CONTEMPLATION THROUGH VOIDS



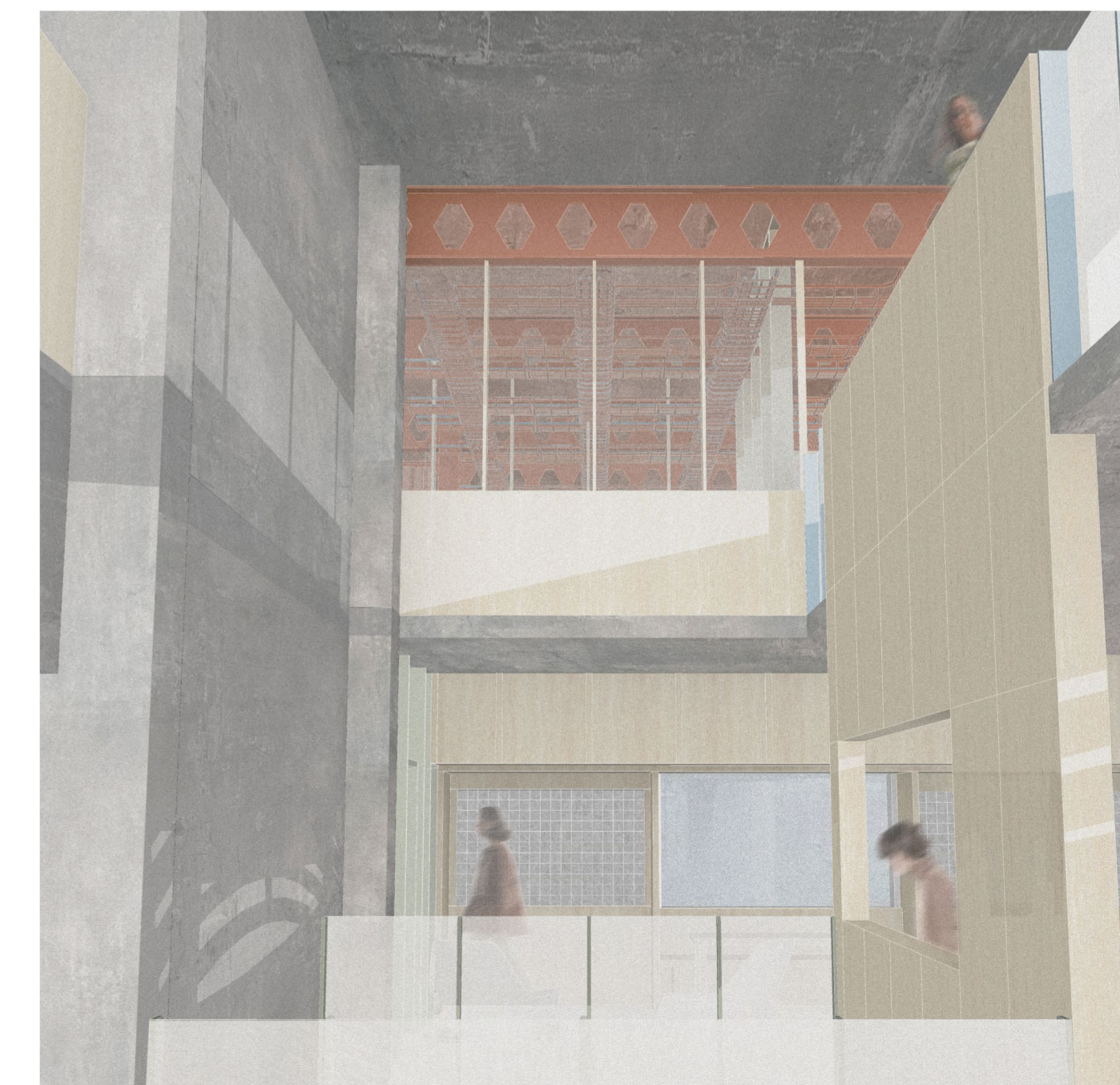
02 REST & 01 CAFE | framed views

1:20 Model highlights contemplation areas formed from additional voids in the east facade.

The insertion wraps around and into these voids to create areas where visitors can sit and view out.

Textile is introduced to this intervention through blinds and curtains that allow the space to be fully adaptable to an individual's preferences, linking back to the function of the scheme.

TRIPLE HEIGHT VOID | VERTICAL DETAIL CONNECTION



Dimensions between the balustrade railing and glazing frames, as well as the dimensions of plywood sheet correspond to the building grid. Vertical connection is created through the links in dimension, allowing spaces across floors seamlessly connect.