

ROOTED EXCHANGE : TEA - HOUSE

UNCONVENTIONAL HOUSING + CULTURAL EXCHANGE for REFUGEES

Set within a Grade II listed Georgian townhouse in Newcastle, this project is rooted in the presence of an existing refugee centre within the building. This discovery informed a personal architectural brief that explores how spatial design can support cultural resilience, belonging, and transitional living for displaced communities. By focusing on refugees as the primary user group, the project engages with themes of identity, adaptation, and communal care.

The proposal reimagines the townhouse and its adjacent coach house as a layered sequence of spaces that accommodate both private reflection and public interaction. Through a sensitive intervention, elements of ritual, healing, and hospitality are woven into the historical fabric of the building.

Tea, a universal symbol of welcome, becomes a central spatial motif – shaping the café, workshop, garden, and contemplative zones now inhabiting the former domestic rooms. The original spatial hierarchy is subtly reinterpreted to reflect new modes of occupation, while maintaining the structure's rhythm and architectural integrity.

TEA ORIGINS



The ritual of tea

~ a universal cultural practice that serves as a bridge between tradition, healing, and social connection.

This project aims be to keep cultural traditions stay rooted for refugees in an unfamiliar city, helping prevent the feeling of alienisation. By integrating a tea café, artisan workshops, and a communal 'herb and tea' garden, it will foster rich knowledge of cultural exchange between all people.

The home as a teahouse for inclusivity, healing and renewal.

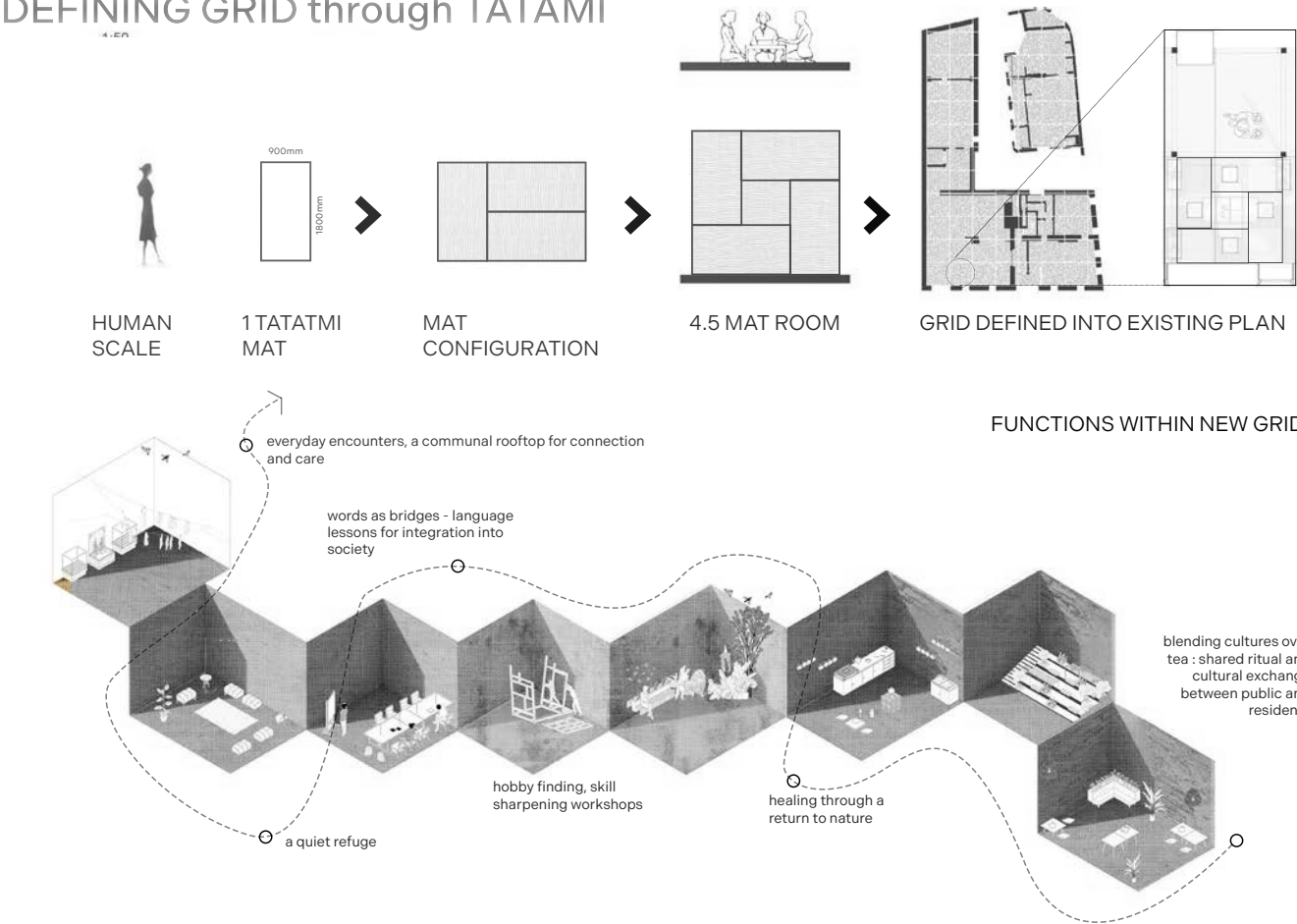


CHARLOTTE HOUSE
COACH HOUSE
EXISTING INTERIOR PHENOMENON OF MAIN BUILDING AND COACH HOUSE

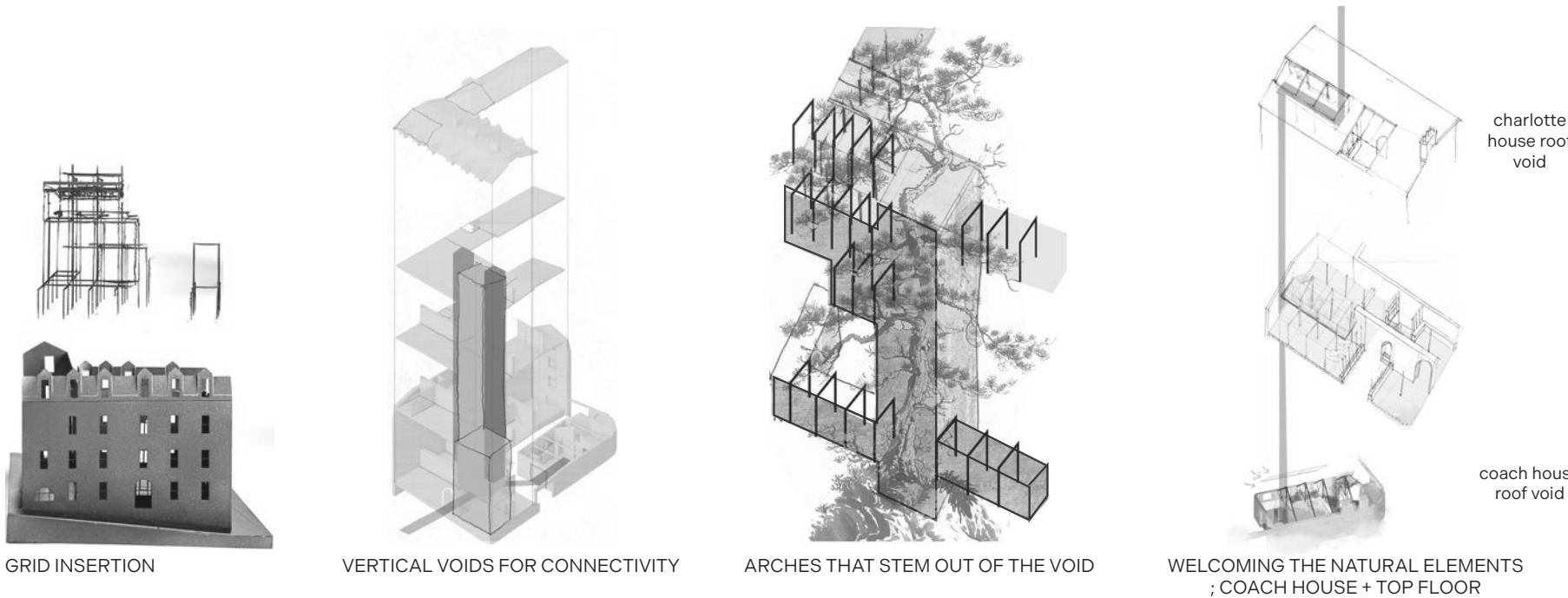


PERSPECTIVE SECTION

DEFINING GRID through TATAMI



SPATIAL STRATEGY



GRID INSERTION
VERTICAL VOIDS FOR CONNECTIVITY
ARCHES THAT STEM OUT OF THE VOID
WELCOMING THE NATURAL ELEMENTS
; COACH HOUSE + TOP FLOOR
charlotte house roof void
coach house roof void

1239

1237-1244

1770

1879

1880

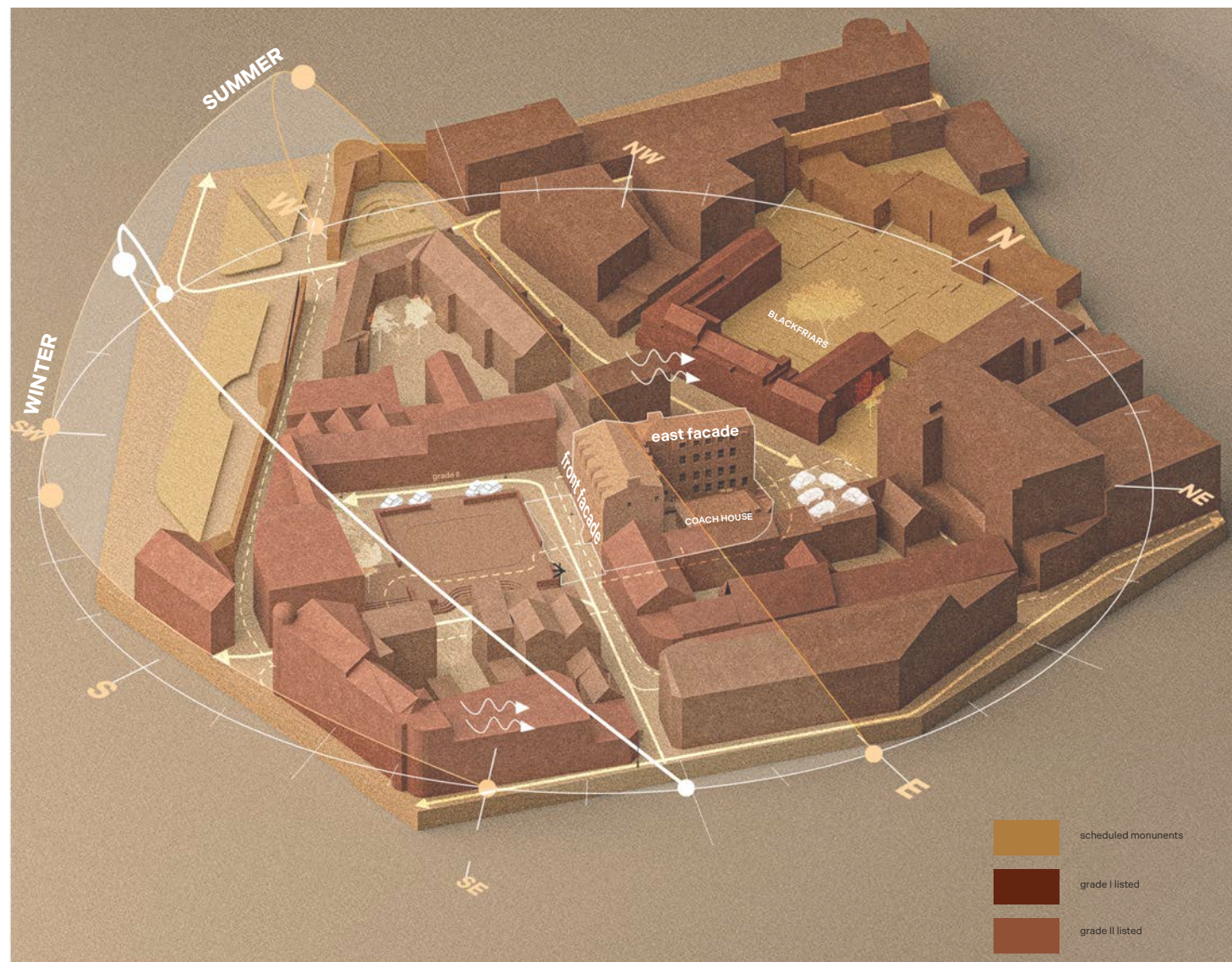
1972

1976

BRITISH AFTERNOON TEA ; origins



Just as Charlotte square once provided communal spaces of gathering, number 1 Charlotte square will aim to be a central hub of refuge and cultural exchange for these displaced individuals with a design that fosters cultural identity and “tea” to bridge between tradition and social connection.

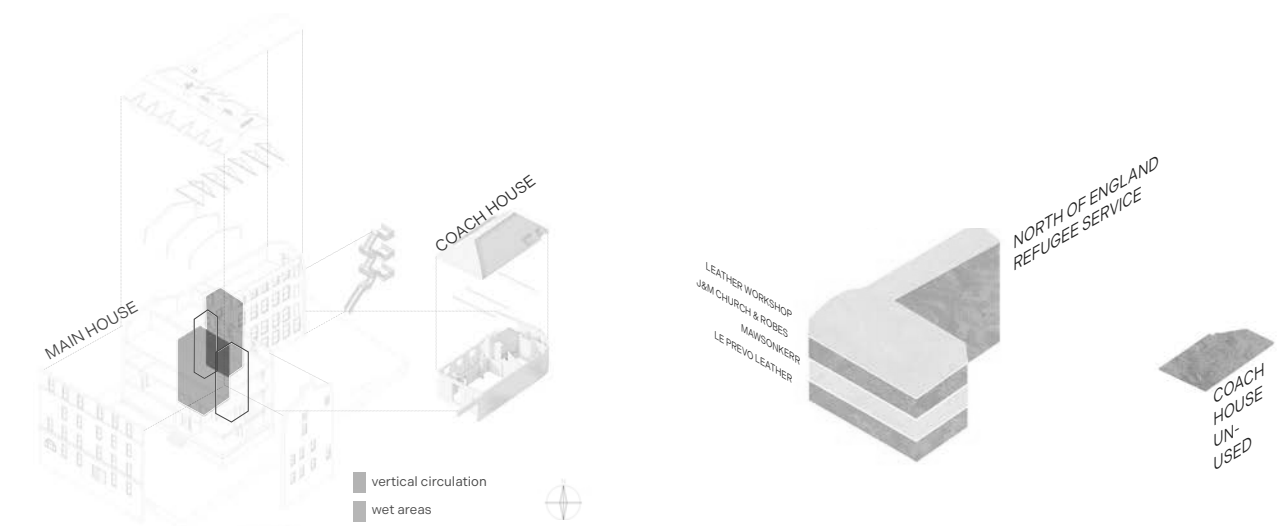
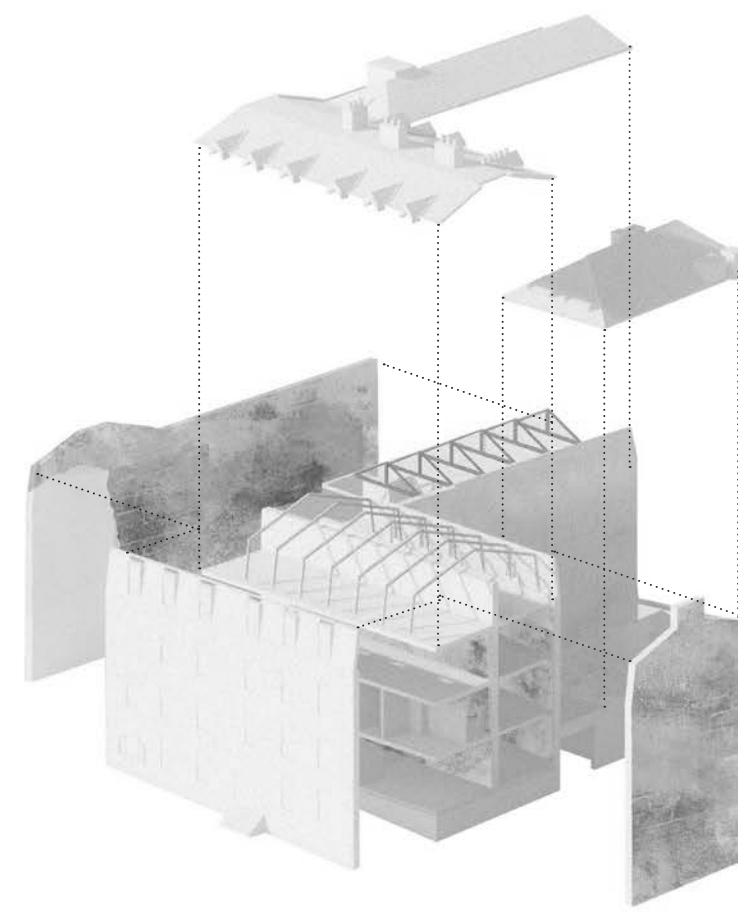


SITE ANALYSIS

2015

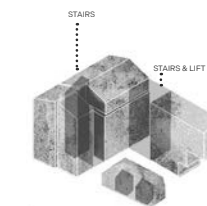
2025

EXISTING STRUCTURE + FUNCTION

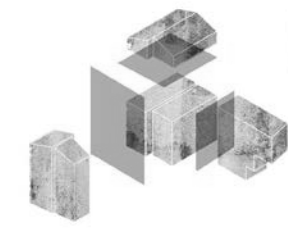


This diagram illustrates the exploded view of a window assembly. It shows the main window frame, a central sash unit, and two glass panes. Dashed lines indicate the assembly path and alignment of the components.

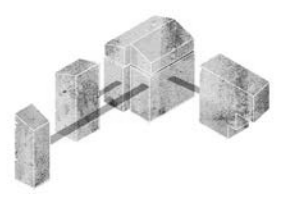
VERTICAL EXISTING MASSING



VERTICAL CIRCULATION



NEW DIVIDERS DEFINE AND ORGANIZE MASSING



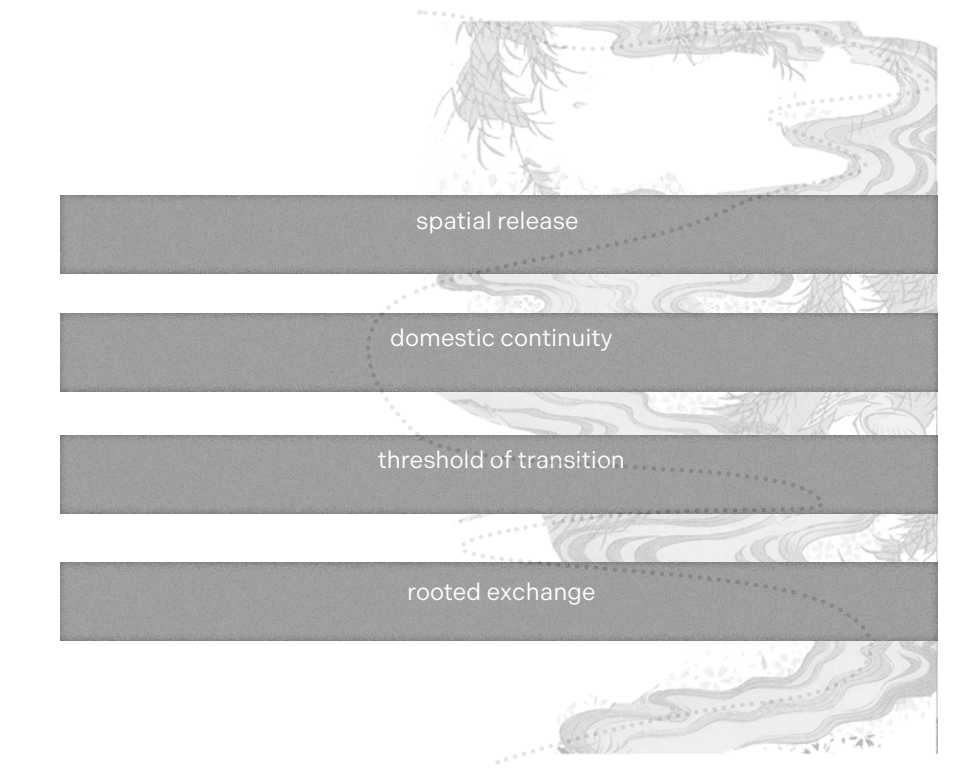
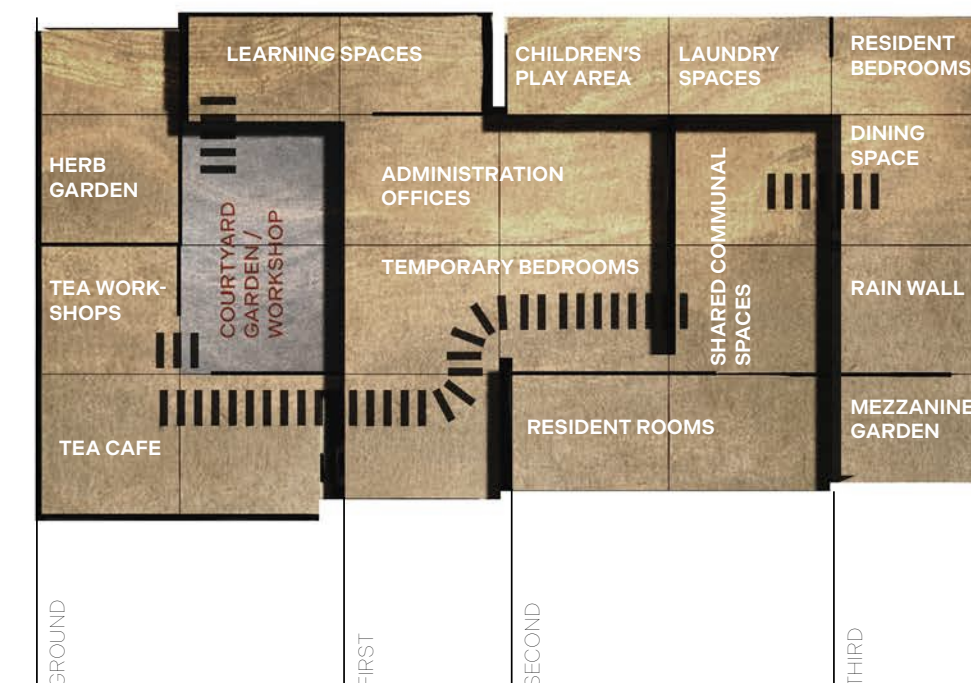
JOURNEY CREATION BETWEEN THE MASSES

A 3D perspective diagram of a community center layout. The building is composed of several interconnected volumes. A legend on the right indicates that dark gray represents 'private' spaces and light gray represents 'public' spaces. The layout includes:

- Top Volume (Dark Gray):** Labeled 'living spaces'.
- Middle Volume (Dark Gray):** Labeled 'admin & consultation rooms'.
- Bottom Volume (Dark Gray):** Labeled 'workshops'.
- Left Volume (Dark Gray):** Labeled 'sensory rain wall & dining space'.
- Left Volume (Light Gray):** Labeled 'Living spaces'.
- Left Volume (Light Gray):** Labeled 'English learning classes'.
- Left Volume (Light Gray):** Labeled 'cultural cafe'.
- Central Volume (Dark Gray):** Labeled 'quiet tea rooms'.
- Central Volume (Light Gray):** Labeled 'contemplation zone'.
- Central Volume (Light Gray):** Labeled 'wide area'.
- Right Volume (Light Gray):** Labeled 'tea & herb garden'.

Arrows indicate spatial relationships: a double-headed arrow connects the top and middle volumes; a single-headed arrow points from the middle volume to the top volume; a double-headed arrow connects the left and central volumes; a dashed arrow points from the central volume to the right volume.

OVERVIEW OF SCHEME



Visitors	Residents	Staff	Floor	Room	Function
X	X	X	G	cultural cafe	CULTURAL & SOCIAL EXCHANGE
X	X		G	quiet tea room	
X	X	X	G	tea workshops	
X	X		G	herb garden	CONTEMPLATION & WELLBEING
X	X		G,1,2,3	contemplation zone/s	
	X		3	outdoor roof mezzanine	
	X		2	prayer room	
X	X		G,3	rainwall & rain skylight/	
			G,1,2,3	Tea nooks	
	X	X	1	english classrooms	LEARNING
	X	X		resident workshop/s	
	X		1,2,3	bedrooms	RESIDENTIAL LIVING
	X		1,2,3	shared kitchen	
	X		3	laundry room	
	X		1,2,3	living spaces	
	X		2,3	equipped live hallway/s	
X	X	X	1	refugee administration offices	SUPPORT & ADMINISTRATION
X		X	1	consulation rooms	

FACADE: HISTORICAL AND GRADE II LISTED ELEMENTS



FLOORPLANS + KEY ROOMS



GROUND FLOOR

1. Cultural Cafe

2. Intimate Tea Room

3. Live Tea Bar & Kitchen

4. Support Kitchen & Storage

5. Community Workshop Space

6. Resident Studio Workshops

7. Bike Racks

8. Courtyard Seating
- Coach house

9. Tea & Herb Garden

10. Harvest & Processing Corner

11. Tea Nooks

25. Herb Garden

Circulation

12. Stairs

13. Lift



FIRST FLOOR

14. Residential Learning Space

15. Contemplation Zone (Double-Height Restorative Space)

16. Resident Communal Kitchen

17. Shared Resident Bathroom

18. Resident Living Room (Transitional Refuge)

19. Temporary Arrival Bedrooms

20. Accessible Toilet

21. Administration Offices
22. Admin Waiting Area

23. Staff Support Kitchenette

24. Consultation Room

Coach House Community Annex (Continuation of Tea Garden)

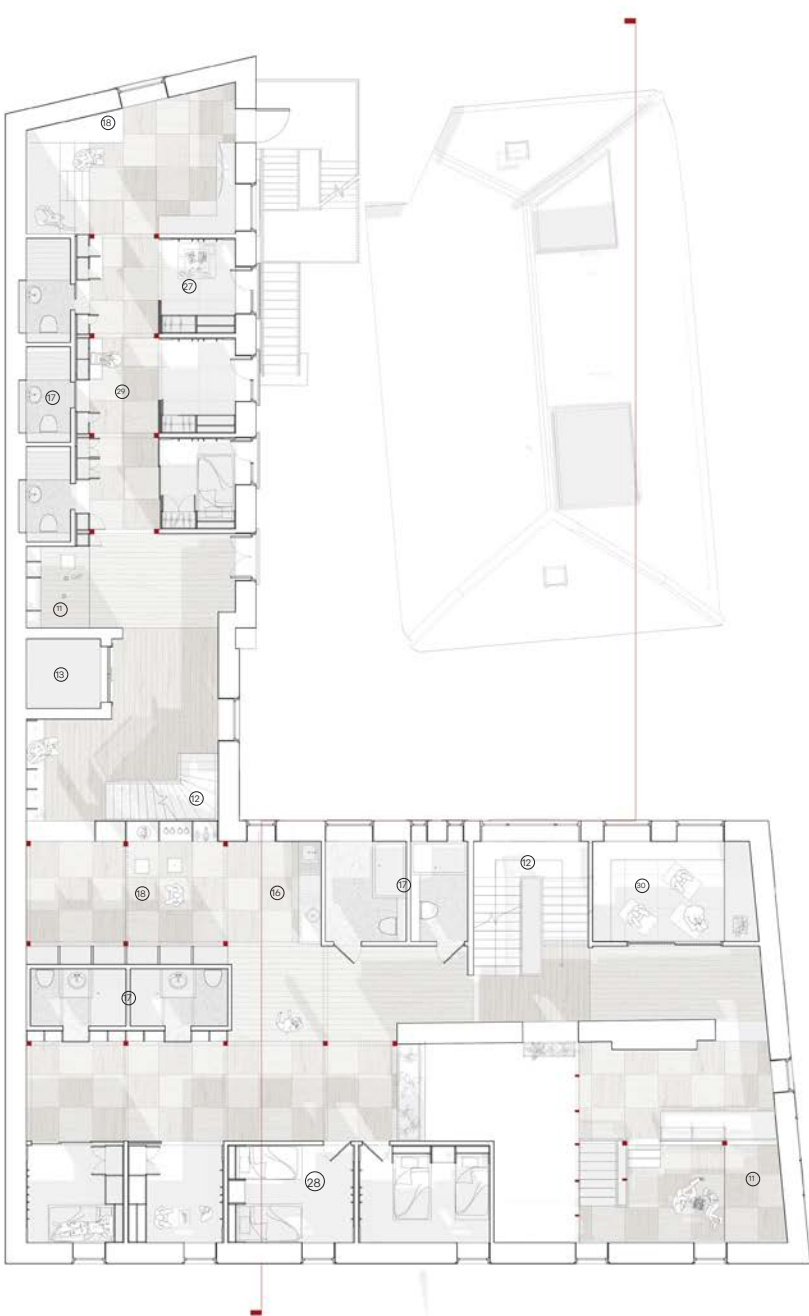
25. Herb Garden

26. Mezzanine & Seating zones

Circulation

12. Stairs

13. Lift



SECOND FLOOR

27. Singular Resident Bedroom

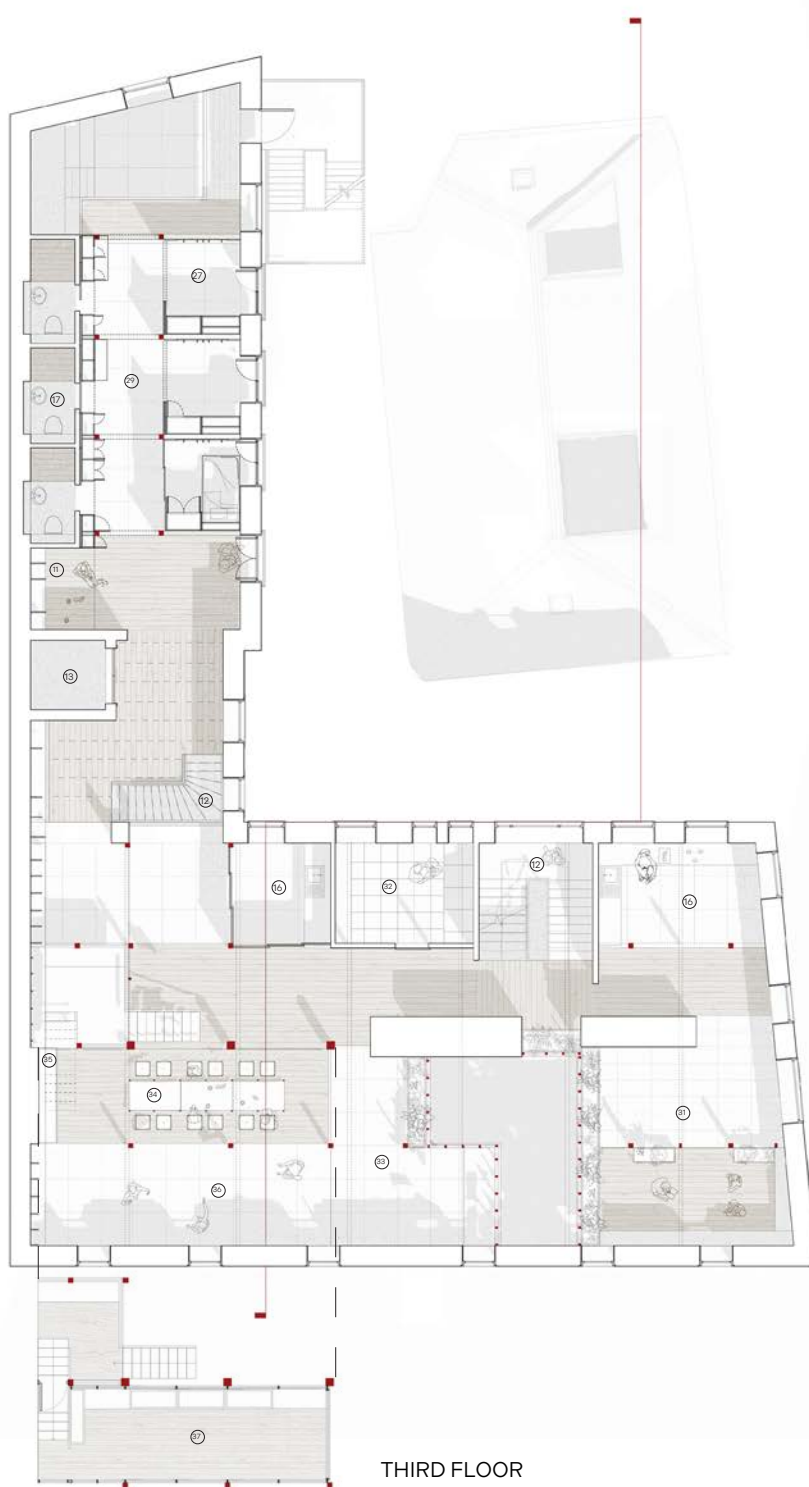
28. Flexible Resident Bedroom (family) (Social Thresholds)

29. Resident Hallways (Prayer / Reflection Space)

30. Multifunctional Quiet Room
- Circulation

12. Stairs

13. Lift



THIRD FLOOR

- THIRD FLOOR MEZZANINE

37. Outdoor Mezzanine Garden
31. Children's Playroom

32. Laundry Room

33. Laundry Drying Area

34. Communal Dining Table (Rain Wall Experience)

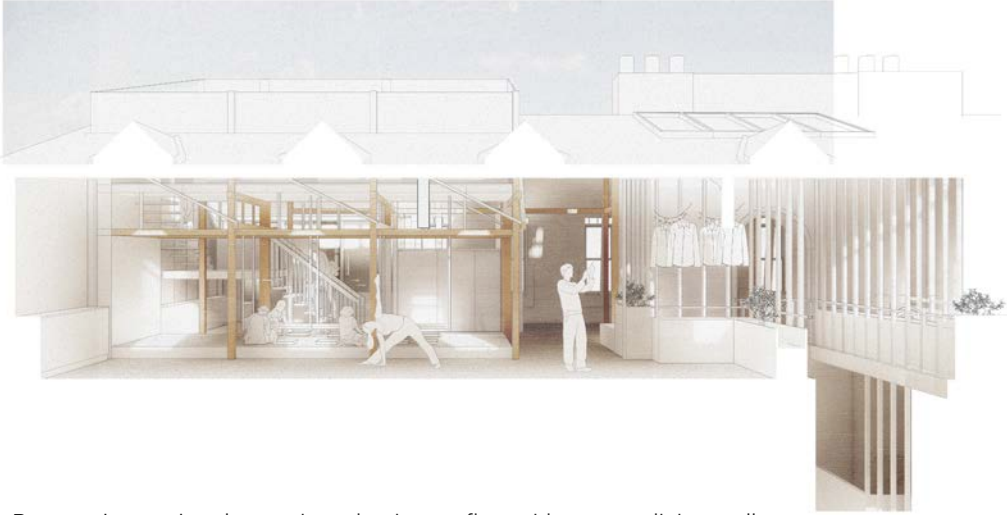
35. Rain wall and rainwater storage

36. Flexible Communal Activity Space

Circulation

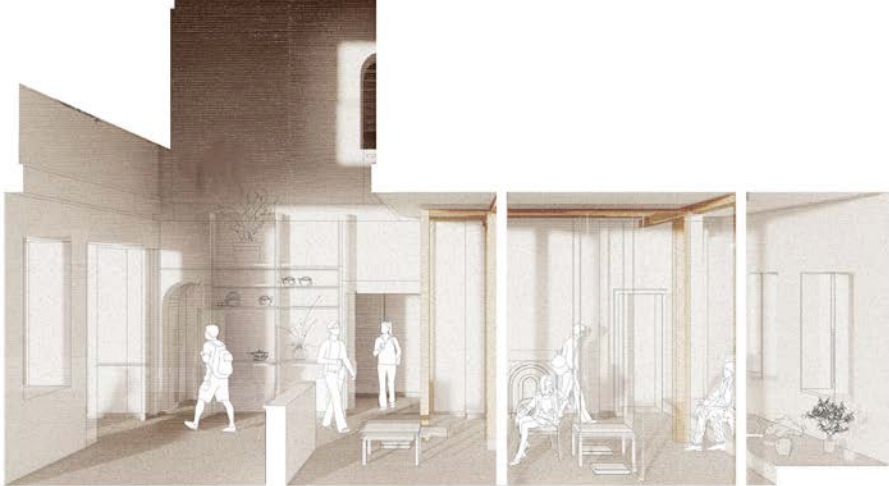
12. Stairs

13. Lift



Perspective section showcasing adaptive top floor with sensory dining, wellness activities, and meditative rooftop retreat

COMMUNITY



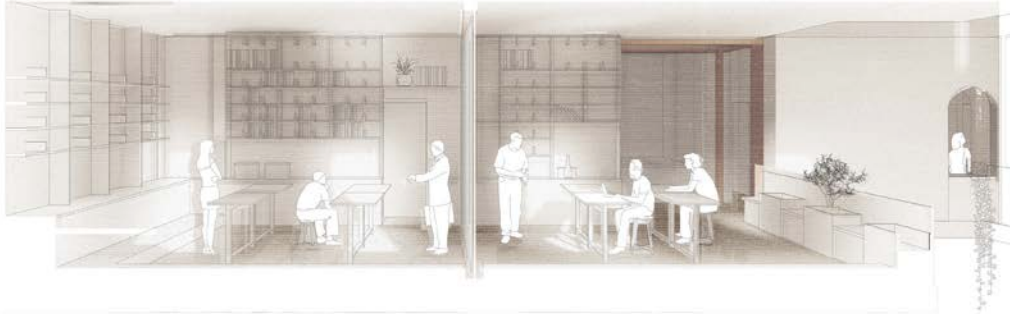
Perspective section showing extended space of ground floor public cafe with void

PUBLIC SPACE



Perspective section showing double height contemplation living space

CONTEMPLATION



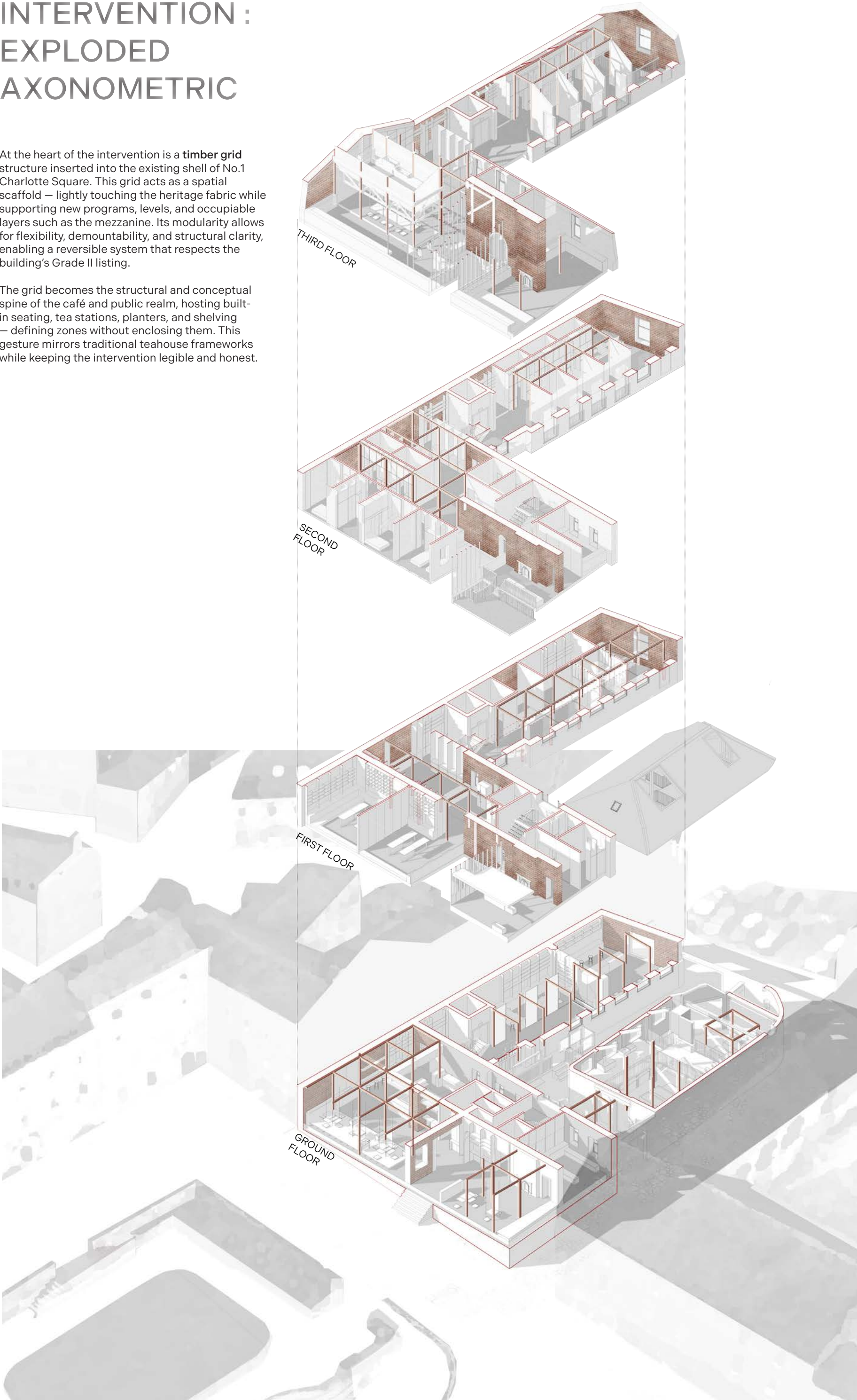
Perspective section showing resident learning spaces

LEARNING

INTERVENTION : EXPLODED AXONOMETRIC

At the heart of the intervention is a **timber grid** structure inserted into the existing shell of No.1 Charlotte Square. This grid acts as a spatial scaffold — lightly touching the heritage fabric while supporting new programs, levels, and occupiable layers such as the mezzanine. Its modularity allows for flexibility, demountability, and structural clarity, enabling a reversible system that respects the building's Grade II listing.

The grid becomes the structural and conceptual spine of the café and public realm, hosting built-in seating, tea stations, planters, and shelving — defining zones without enclosing them. This gesture mirrors traditional teahouse frameworks while keeping the intervention legible and honest.



CAFE + WORKSHOP



The public café occupies the L-shaped corner of the ground floor, opening directly to the courtyard through the re-activated rear fire exit, now functioning as the new public entrance. Visitors arrive not into a commercial lobby but a garden threshold — a transitional space that slows the journey and connects inside to outside.

Once inside, the café unfolds as a multi-sensory cultural space, anchored by live tea preparation, material tactility (clay, cork, timber), and storytelling through ritual. Adjacent to the main café is a quiet tea room, offering intimate, calm space for reflection or private cultural ceremonies.



RESIDENTIAL LIVING



SPATIAL REUSE OF RESIDENTIAL LIVING QUARTERS

DAYTIME
sliding partitions open bedrooms to hallway ; occupation of hallway
HALLWAY WALLS
retractable desks unfold ; working and studying
seating nooks + bookcases ; reading, conversation, reflection

NIGHTTIME
partitions close - re-establish private bedrooms

The residential spaces reimagine traditional domesticity through fluid, adaptable boundaries. Inspired by Japanese domestic planning and refugee cultural practices of communal living, the design treats hallways not as circulation corridors but as extensions of the home.

This approach proposes a more collective, nomadic logic — one that adapts to different family types, transitions, and rituals of daily life.

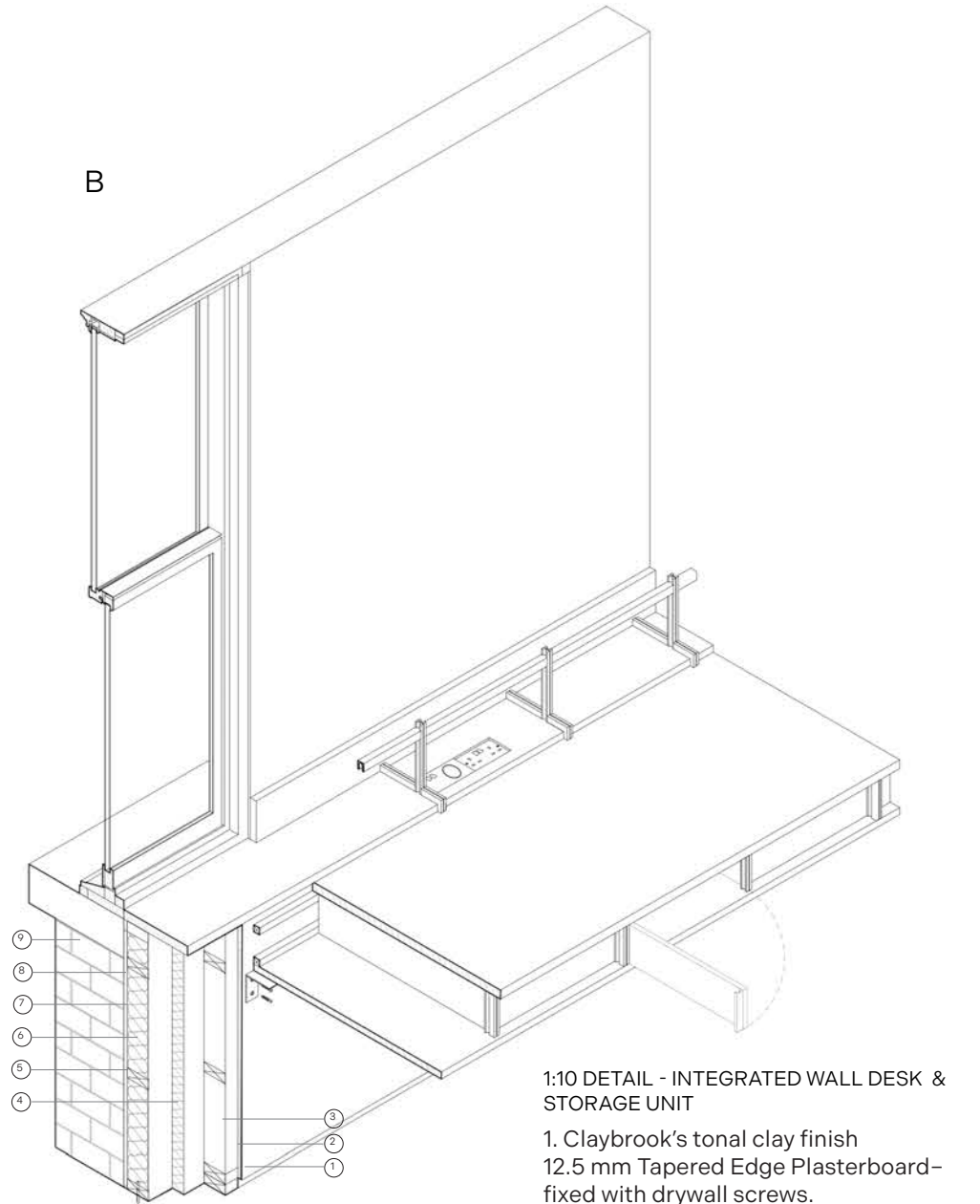
COACH HOUSE



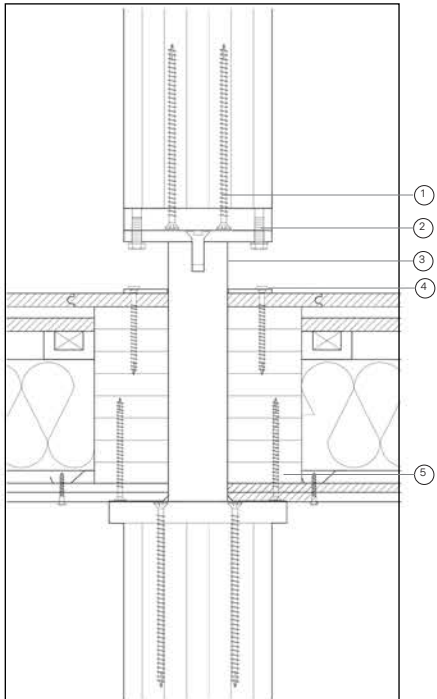
COACH HOUSE ACTIVATION

The coach house, once a domestic service building, is now repurposed as a complementary program — housing herb drying areas, outdoor seating, and a lightweight mezzanine that encourages informal gatherings. It supports both the café’s functional needs (herb processing, informal tea tasting) and the residents’ interaction with the public through shared making, serving, and growing rituals.

DETAIL

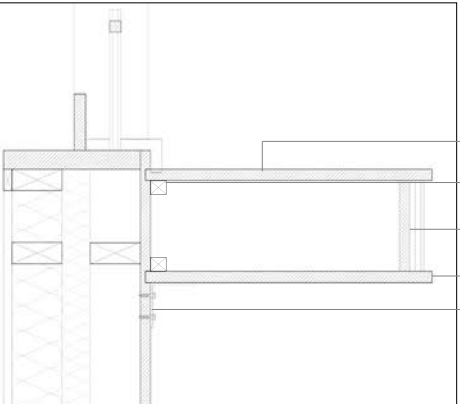


- 1:10 DETAIL - INTEGRATED WALL DESK & STORAGE UNIT
- 1. Claybrook’s tonal clay finish
 - 12.5 mm Tapered Edge Plasterboard—fixed with drywall screws.
 - 2. Pro Clima Intello Plus Airtightness Membrane - sealed at joints and penetrations.
 - 3. 89 x 38mm Service Void Battens @ 400mm ctrs - void for electrical services
 - 4. 50mm Foil-Faced PIR Insulation Board
 - 5. 89 x 38 mm C16 Treated Softwood Stud Frame @ 400mm ctrs.
 - 6. Rockwool Flexi Mineral wool Insulation fill between studs
 - 7. Pro Clima Solitex Fronta WA Vapour-Open Breather Membrane
 - 8. 25mm Ventilated Cavity between studs and brick
 - 9. 290mm Existing Solid Brick Wall



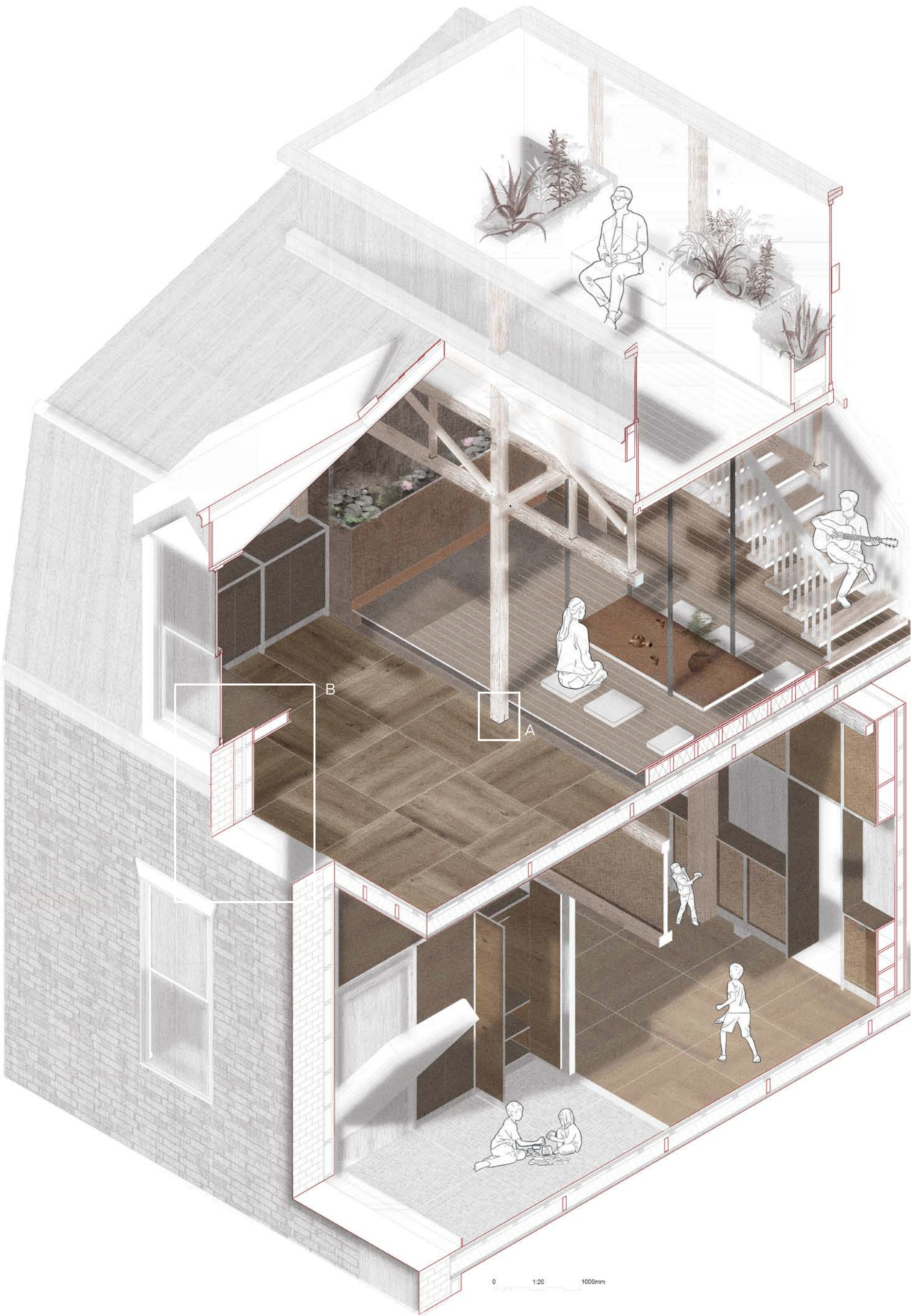
A
1:5 DETAIL - GLULAM TIMBER POST TO POST CONNECTION THROUGH FLOOR

- 1. top & bottom column screws
250mm VGS11250 wood screw w/ hexagonal head
- 2. top plate bolts
35mm Hex Bolt SPBOLT1235
- 3. SPIDER galvanised steel connection system
- 4. fixing plate screws
120mm HBSP8120 wood screw
- 5. reinforcement screws
140mmVGS9140 wood screw w/ hexagonal head



B
1:5 DETAIL - INTEGRATED WALL DESK & STORAGE UNIT

- 1a. Natural shellac finish (darkens over time)
24mm birch plywood with walnut veneer
sliding dovetail joinery
- 1b. 25x25mm - reclaimed softwood battens sourced from existing building fabric
- 1c. linseed oil finish
18mm reclaimed birch with carved opening
- 1d. linseed oil finish
24mm reclaimed birch sourced from existing building fabric
sliding dovetail joinery
- 1e. matte black powder-coated steel L-bracket
140mmVGS9140 wood screw w/ hexagonal head



DETAILED AXONOMETRIC DRAWING SHOWING CONTEMPLATIVE ZONES AND RESIDENTIAL ROOMS