

1. PROBLEM

Underbanks, Stockport once the smartest and most prestigious shopping street in the early nineteenth century fell into decline as custom was lost to the Merseyway Shopping Centre in the mid 60's and then the Peel Centre.

The dense concentration of historic traditional building, steps, brows and bridges became neglected and the area became the least desirable and a general 'no-go' zones.

2. PROCESS

Research was conducted into the historical, commercial and typographical history of Underbanks. Interviews were conducted with people who both live and work in the area to ascertain their needs and desires. This investigation led to the identification of the demographic and target audience.

As well as an area that was the antithesis of the the large commercial shopping centres, they wanted a creative, flexible hub in which to work both independently and collaboratively.

3. PROPOSAL

The proposed solution is to re-think the working environment. To re-invent the workplace for how individuals within the creative industries like to work. The juxtaposition of environments, closed individual spaces for independent work alongside for cross-pollination of ideas and collaborative working.

The vertical stacking and interconnection of the spaces links both to the typography of the area which features different levels, steps and bridges and the working characteristics of a Colony of Ants with their organised manner as an individual within a community.

Why the Ants

Like humans Ants are social. They live and work together in societies called Colonies.

An Ant Colony operates without a central control or hierarchy and no Ant directs another but values teamwork.

"Ants decide what to do based on the rate, rhythm and pattern of individual encounters and interactions - resulting in a dynamic network that coordinates the functions of the Colony".

From 'Ant Encounters; Interaction Networks and Colony Behaviour' - 2010

Deborah M.Gordon, Professor of Biology at Stanford University California.



STOCKPORT

SITE LOCATION
UNDERBANKS AND HILLGATE

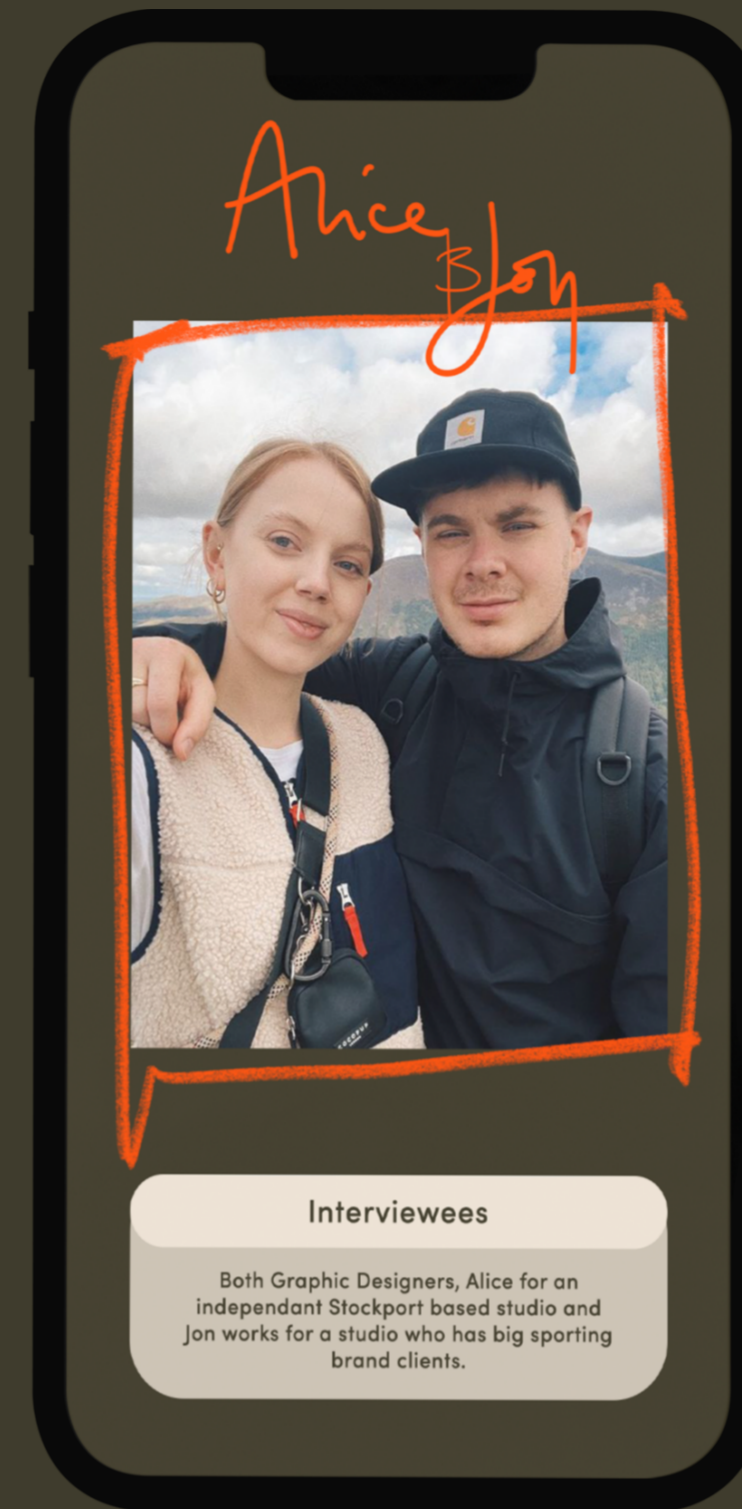
Street View



Underbanks has a dramatic historic townscape of changing levels characterised by a dense concentration of nineteenth century traditional buildings, steps, brows and bridges.

Little Underbank was once the finest shopping street in Stockport. All the needs of the town were available on Little Underbank from it's 30 shops with hosiers, milliners and jewellers.

Now it is home to a growing cluster of creative businesses who liken it to Soho.



THE NEW GENERATION OF Stockport

Me

What attracted you to relocate to Stockport from Manchester City Centre?

Alice + Jon

We feel like its going the new creative hub, a bit like Soho was in London. It's all the little independent creative businesses that are attempting to make the area cool. They have the vision and can see the opportunities.

Me

How has Stockport changed since Covid?

Alice + Jon

Stockport has changed but for the better. More people venture into the town centre, especially for events like foodie Fridays and the makers market. It gives the community time to connect and socialise. Also, due to Covid the requirement to always be office based has changed dramatically. Workers often have more flexible arrangements now with the option to work from home or co-working spaces.

Stockport, Manchester's 'Brooklyn to New York'. A thriving hub for tech and creative industries to be out of the city centre without losing the inspiration that comes from being surrounded by like-minded creative industries.

The incentive of the lower rents and real estate values encourages new start ups and in time the attraction of these new businesses will increase the value and perception of the area.



CONCEPTUAL IMAGE

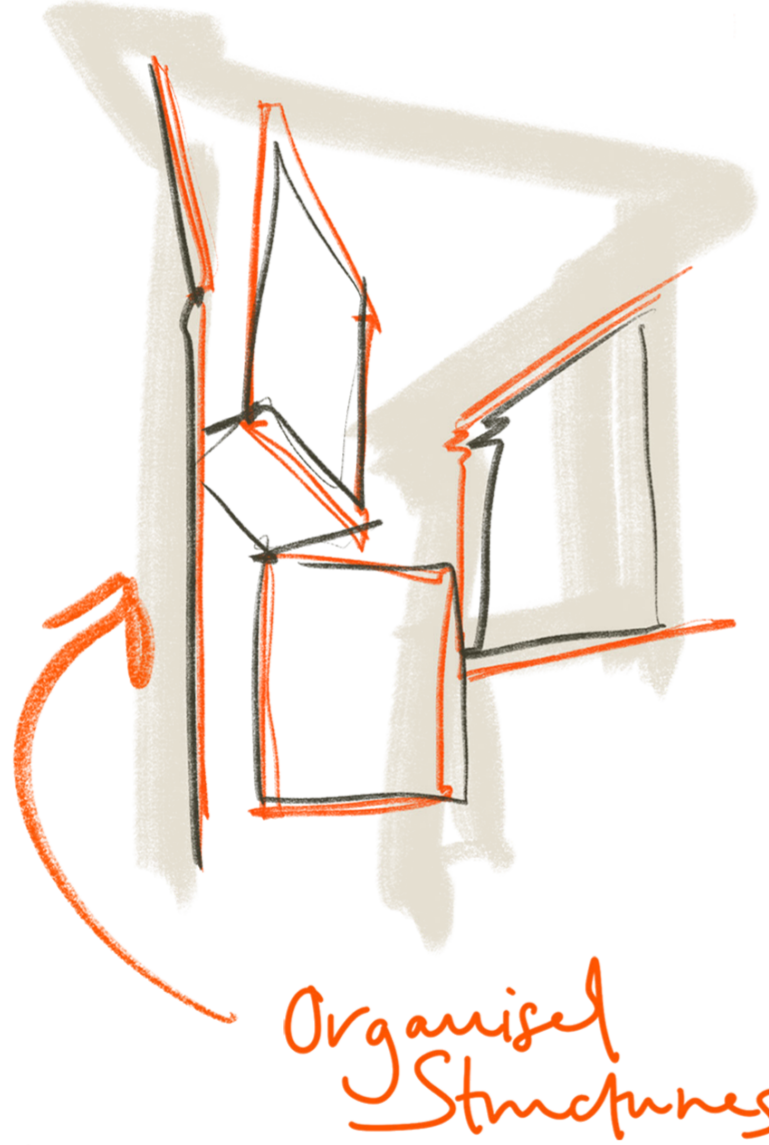
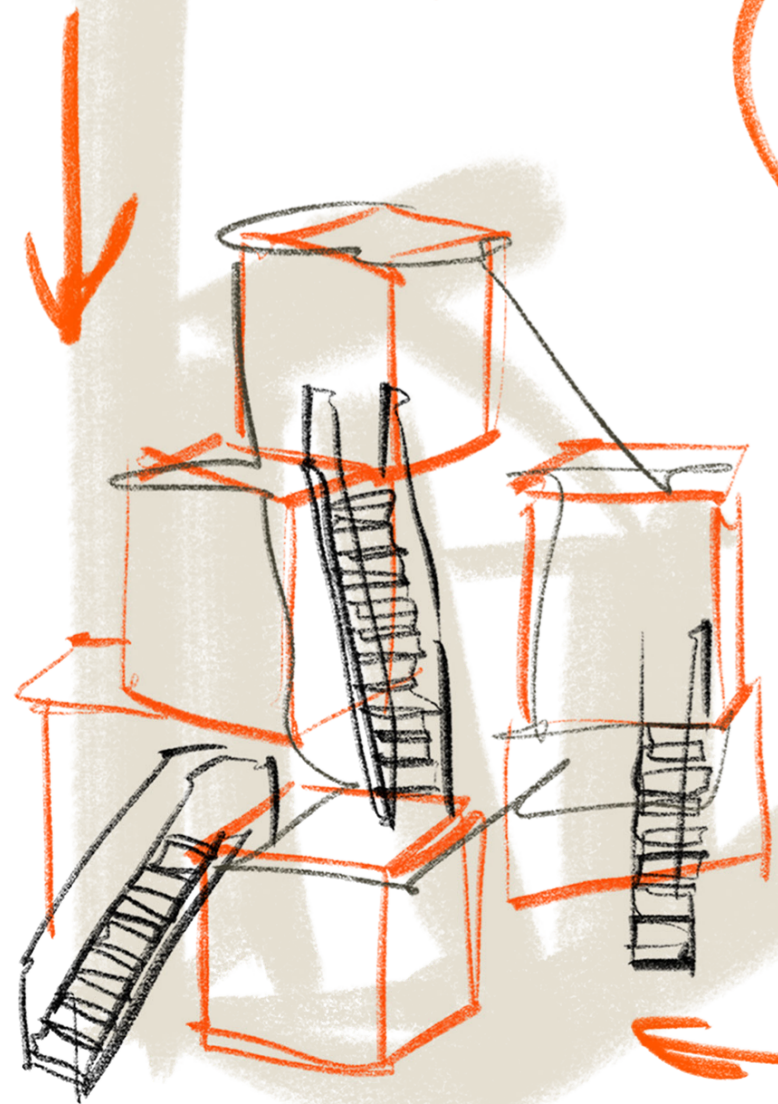
Rather than looking at the space in horizontal layers, it was considered as one vertical entity.

Just as an Ants Colony would evolve after a period of time as their needs change. The space drew inspiration from this ethos and considered the changing, diverse and evolving needs of it's users.

STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

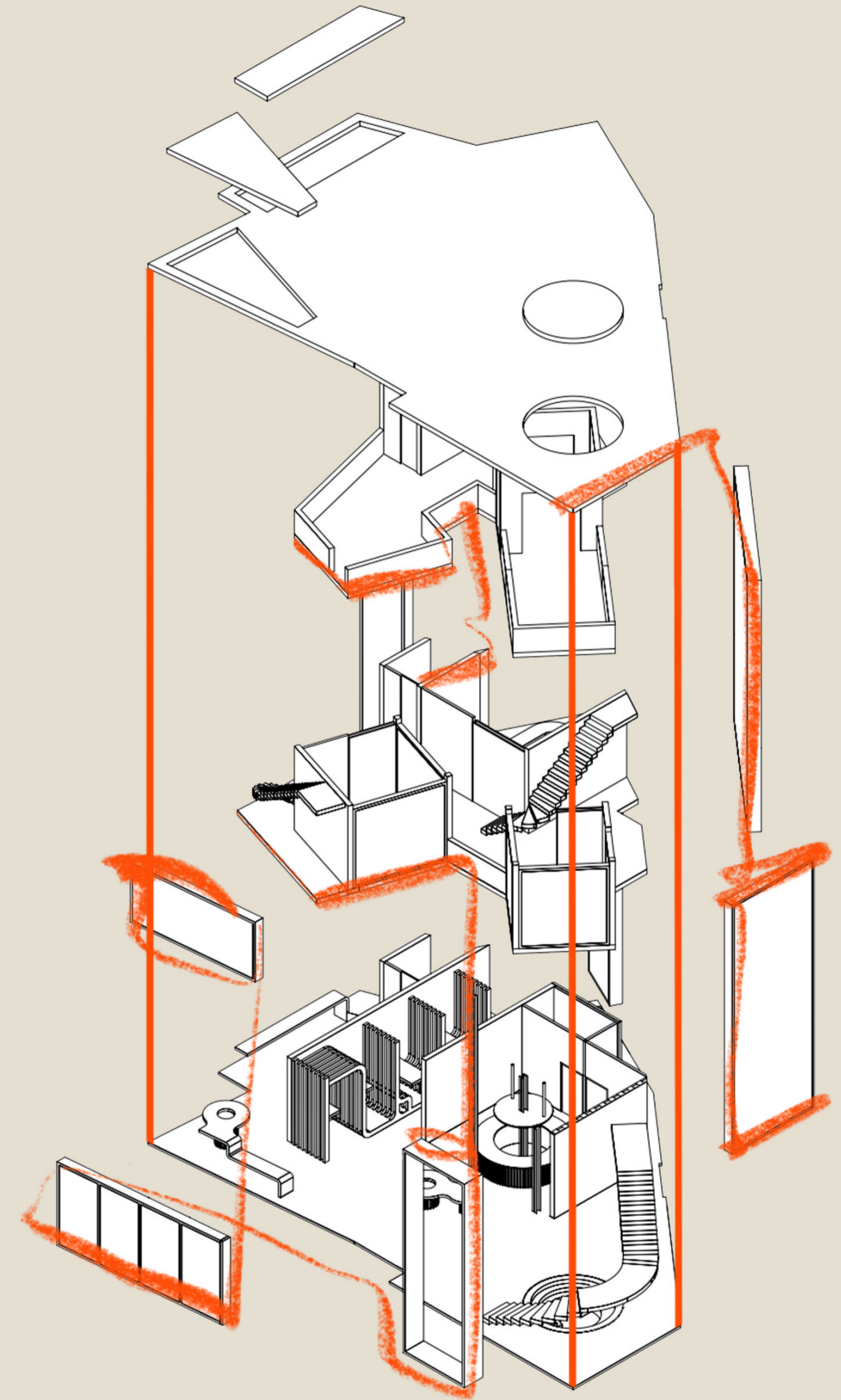
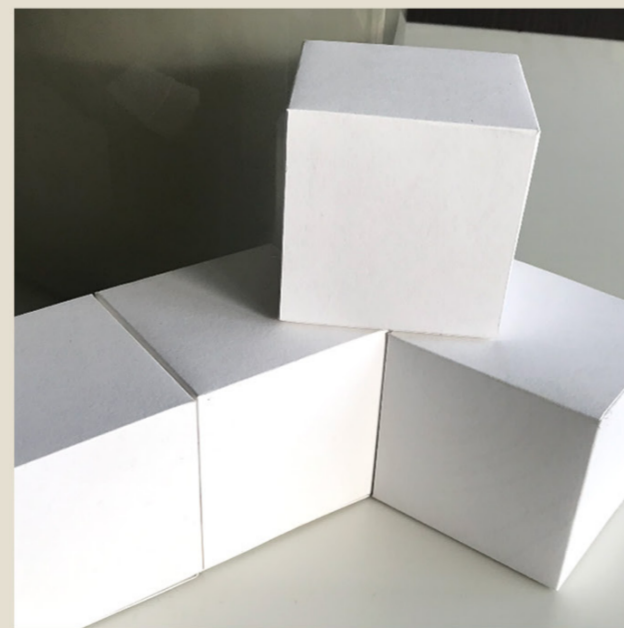
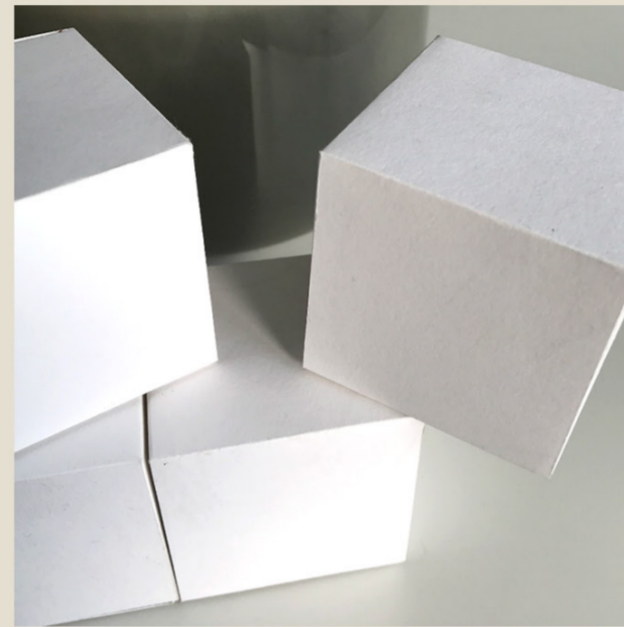
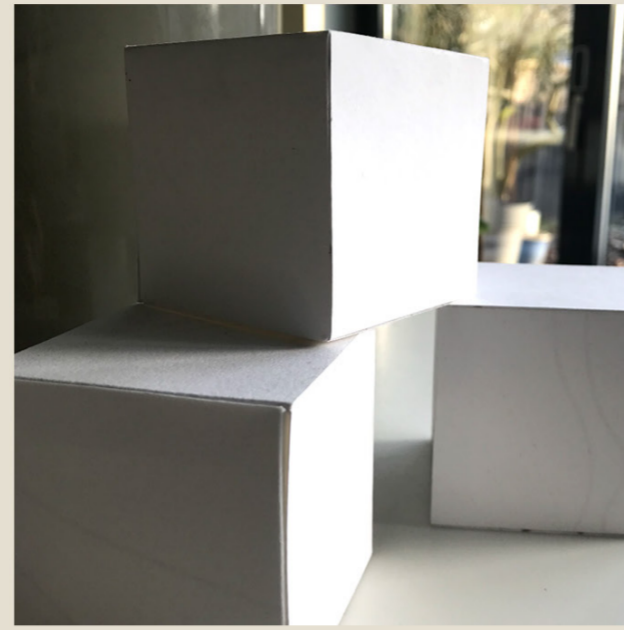
Thus the idea of a multi-levelled, multi-functional interconnected series of work, thinking and leisure spaces evolved to facilitate both individual and collaborative working needs.

Interconnection



Organised Structures

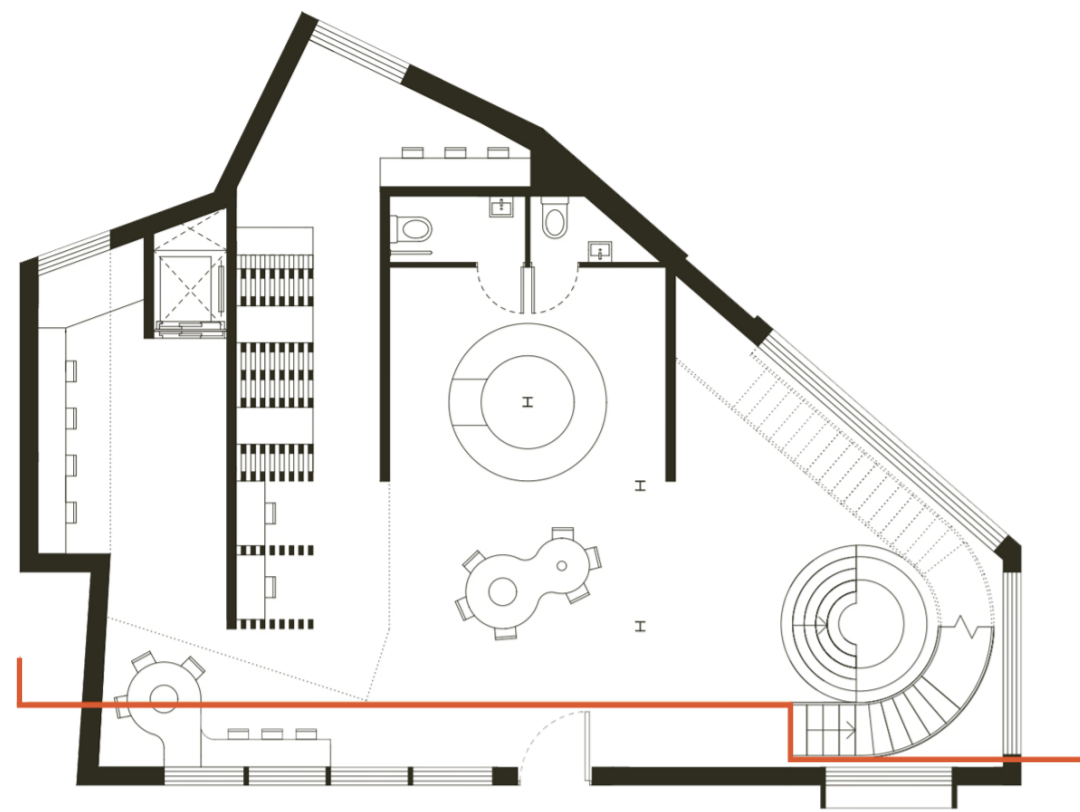
Vertical habitats



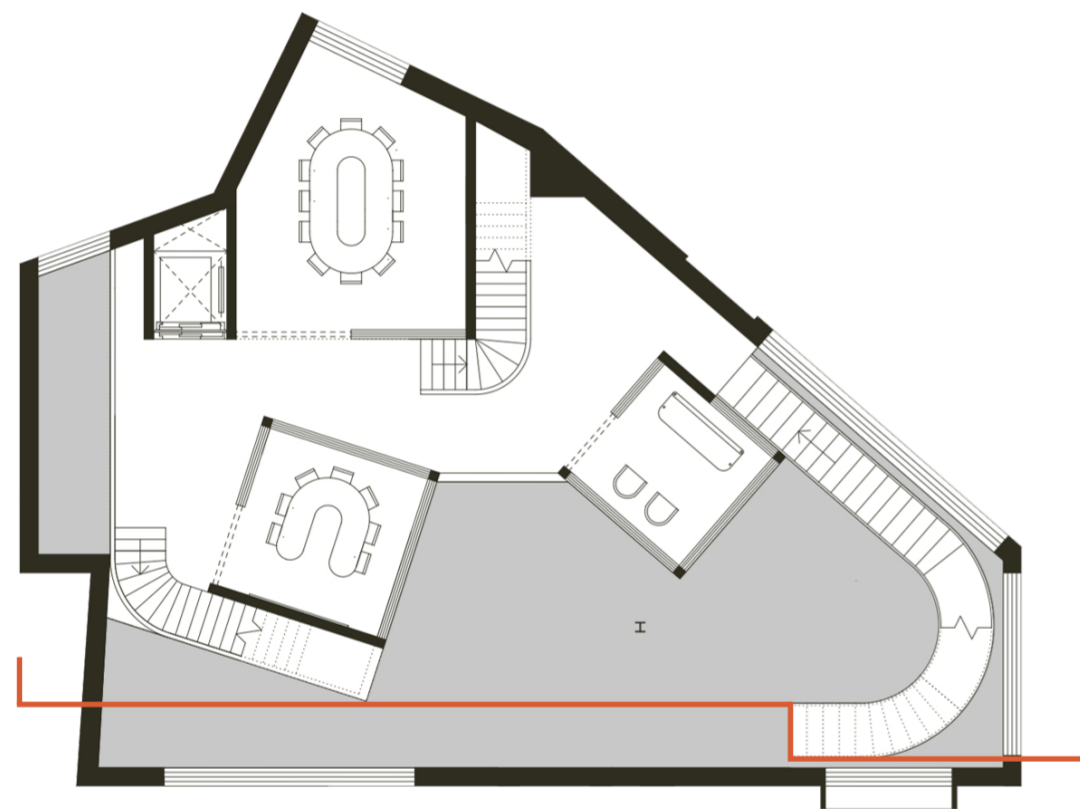
AXO

The Axo view attempts to show the vertical, multi-levelled space de-constructed. It allows you to view the flow of the interconnected work areas and spaces. It is important that the negative spaces i.e the voids have been utilised for the interior trees and plant life to bring a sense of wellbeing into the space.

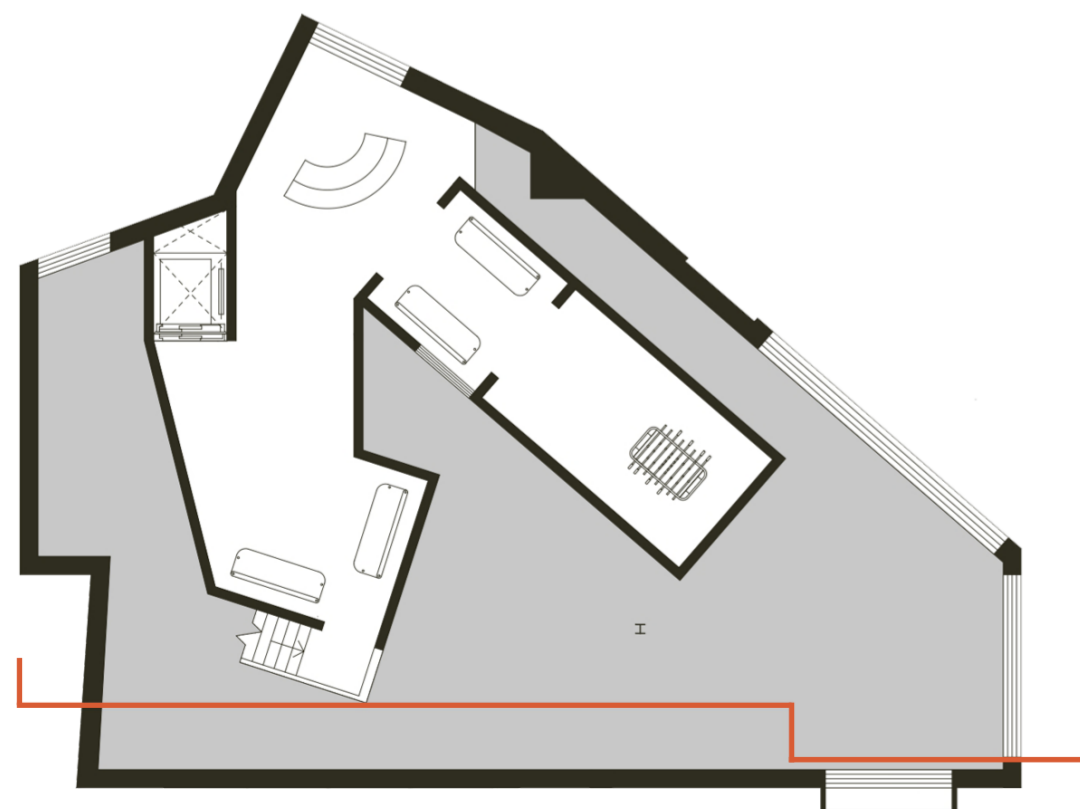
Sections & Floorplans



GROUND FLOORPLAN
NOT TO SCALE



FIRST FLOORPLAN
NOT TO SCALE



SECOND FLOORPLAN
NOT TO SCALE

The floorplans illustrate the diverse structure of each level and when viewed vertically appear more like assembled building blocks linked by stairways and bridges. This is a conscious and deliberate move to make a connection with the topography of the Underbanks area which has many changes in levels that are linked with bridges and steps.

The section illustrates the vertical interconnected spaces together with the proposed material schedule selected to connect with Stockport's industrial past. The juxtaposition of the past industry in a semi rural location inspired the inclusion of the birch plywood and trees as well as creating a sense of wellbeing and a connection to nature whilst in a work environment.



NOT TO SCALE

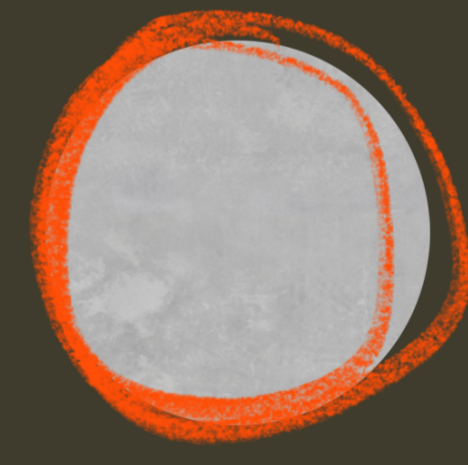
MATERIAL SCHEDULE



BIRCH PLYWOOD



CORTEN STEEL



POLISHED CONCRETE

the Working of the Nest NORTHWEST



The rendered images show how the multi-levelled spaces connect with each other. Each level inhabited brings a different aesthetic to the workspace. From high level, tree top work spaces to promote 'blue sky' thinking to cocoon like, singular working environments on lower levels.

The space aims to consider a diverse, ever evolving set of needs from an equally diverse tech and creative community. It was important to consider the use of the negative space within the environment. It is an integral part of the design and acts to counter balance, offset yet enhance the structural element of the design.

The approach to this community workspace project 'Colony', after the initial research, began with conceptual ideas and most importantly drawing. Drawing for me is the catalyst to the development of ideas - it's thinking aloud with lines and space. I wished to consider the space in it's entirety, not on a conventional floor by floor basis. Experimenting with three dimensional shapes allowed the birth of more experimental and tangible ideas.

Thinking and drawing in 2D & 3D allows me to visually articulate ideas. To visualise and demonstrate function and user interaction Vectorworks and Photoshop is used to render and present of variety of viewpoints.

