

THE STEPPING STONE



Imagine a world where every river is filled with plastic, the water unsafe to swim in, and wildlife struggling to survive. This isn't a distant possibility—it's our reality. Without action to curb overconsumption and waste, our rivers, health, and future are at risk.

But **SMALL**, collective **S T E P S** can create the **BIGGEST** of changes. This project reminds us that by caring for our rivers, we also care for ourselves and our communities. Together, we can restore balance and heal both the environment and our well-being.



PROBLEM

DISCONNECTION: PEOPLE & NATURE

People have become disconnected from nature, leading to neglect and pollution—especially in our rivers. Plastic waste in UK waterways is a clear sign of this crisis. We've normalized harm, forgetting that damaging rivers harms us too. In our tech-driven lives, we've lost touch with the healing power of green and blue spaces. Rivers sustain life, but if we continue down this path, both ecosystems and our well-being will suffer. To care, people must first be aware.

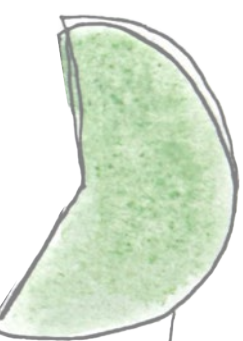


"Plastic pollution isn't just a domestic issue, its **impacts** are seen on **wildlife** and **humans** all over the world"
-Steve Backshall

80% of plastic in oceans comes from land based sources

Only 9% of plastic ever produced has been recycled.

Over 50% of plastic only gets used once and thrown away



THE BUILDING

The **Hulme Hippodrome**, a Grade II listed theatre, is home to 'The Stepping Stone' in its front section, the **Floral Hall**. Once featuring a full-height Edwardian atrium, the space embraces a "**bring the outside in**" approach—its **natural light**, spacious interior and **double-height void** inspiring a bold large scale experience.

FLORAL HALL



Glass apex roof- can this be restored?



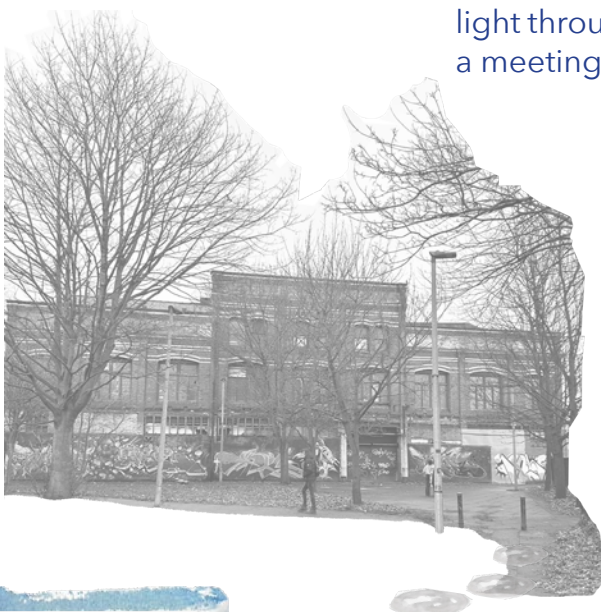
Promenade walkway, utilise the original function of space.

Large central void- use this as main feature.

Originally a full height Edwardian atrium, with glass apex roof. Over the years the atrium has been modified, division at first floor height, covering up the void, corrugated iron sheets replacing the glass roof.
- Focus on restoring it original charm with the void, natural light through roof and it being a meeting space.

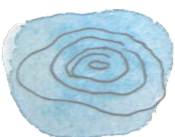
KEY:

- The Stepping Stone
- Rest of building
- Pathway access
- Roads
- Buildings
- Green space
- Uni Campus



SOLUTION

WHY WILD SWIMMING?



Improves Mental health
..... - Manage anxiety, stress and depression



Connection to nature
..... -Deepens appreciation



Promotes mindfulness



Improves circulation & cardio-vascular health
..... - reduces inflammation



Boosts immune system



Increases clarity, alertness and energy



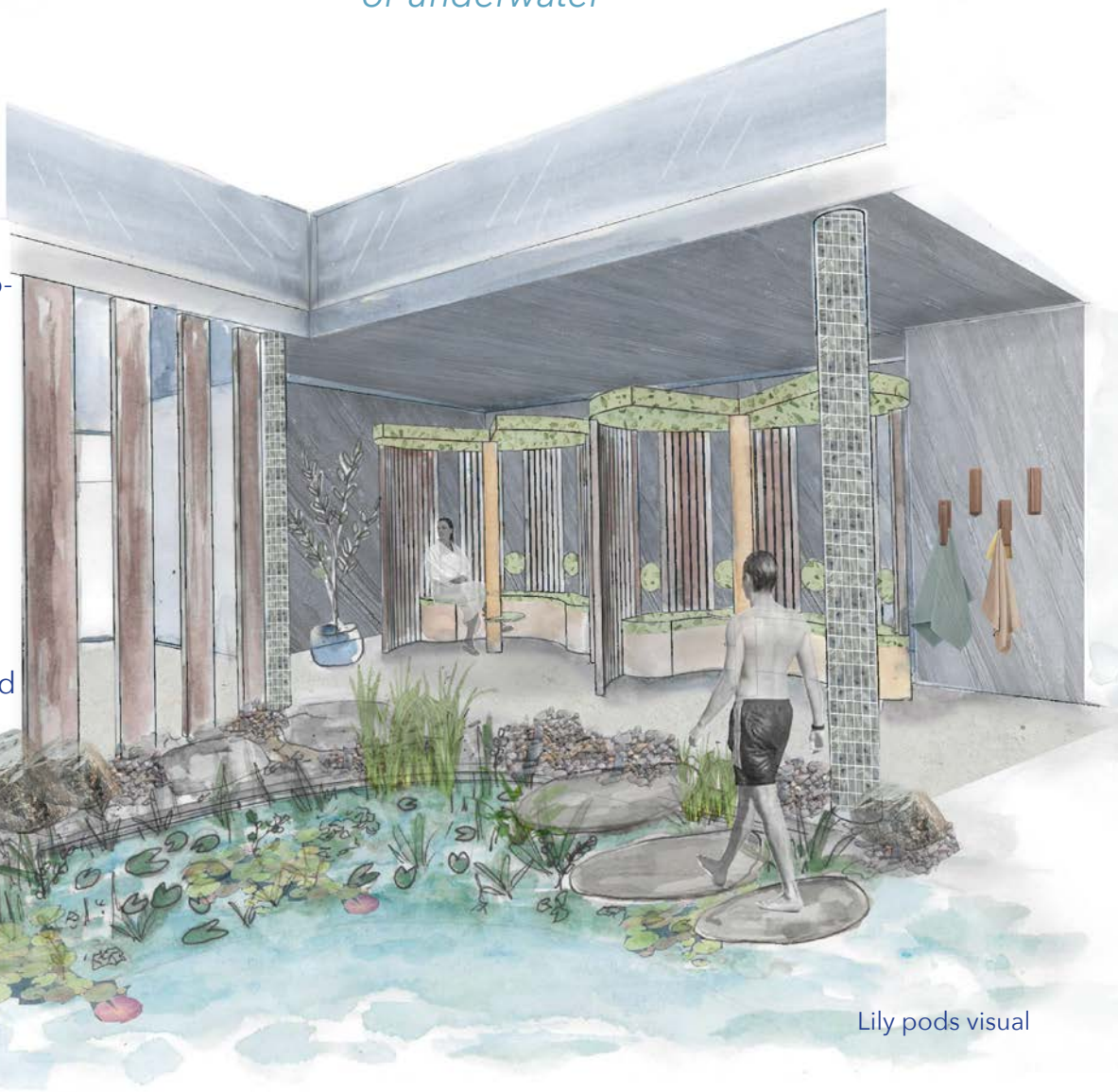
Builds Community



Releases endorphins (happy hormones)

Wild swimming is at the heart of The Stepping Stone—restoring well-being and reconnecting us with rivers we must protect. Healthy rivers support us; now it's our turn to give back. By raising awareness and inspiring action, we can help rivers thrive.

Blue Mind- the mildly meditative state we fall into when near, in, on, or underwater



Lily pods visual

CONCEPT

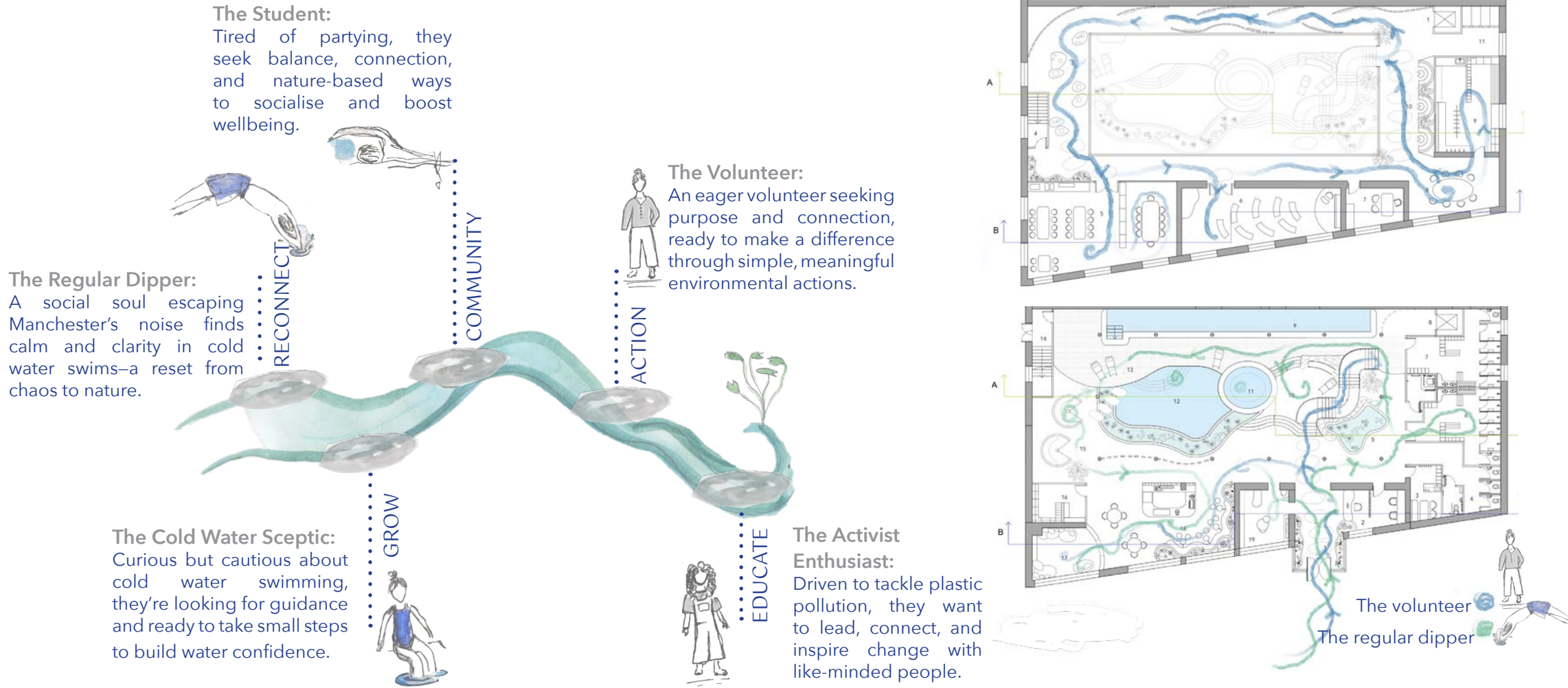


PURPOSE: The Stepping Stone exists to empower individuals to protect our rivers while enhancing personal well-being. As an urban wild swimming initiative, it helps adults reconnect with nature, raises awareness and action towards the plastic pollution crisis, and offers a restorative path to better health, and a cleaner future—small steps can lead to lasting change.

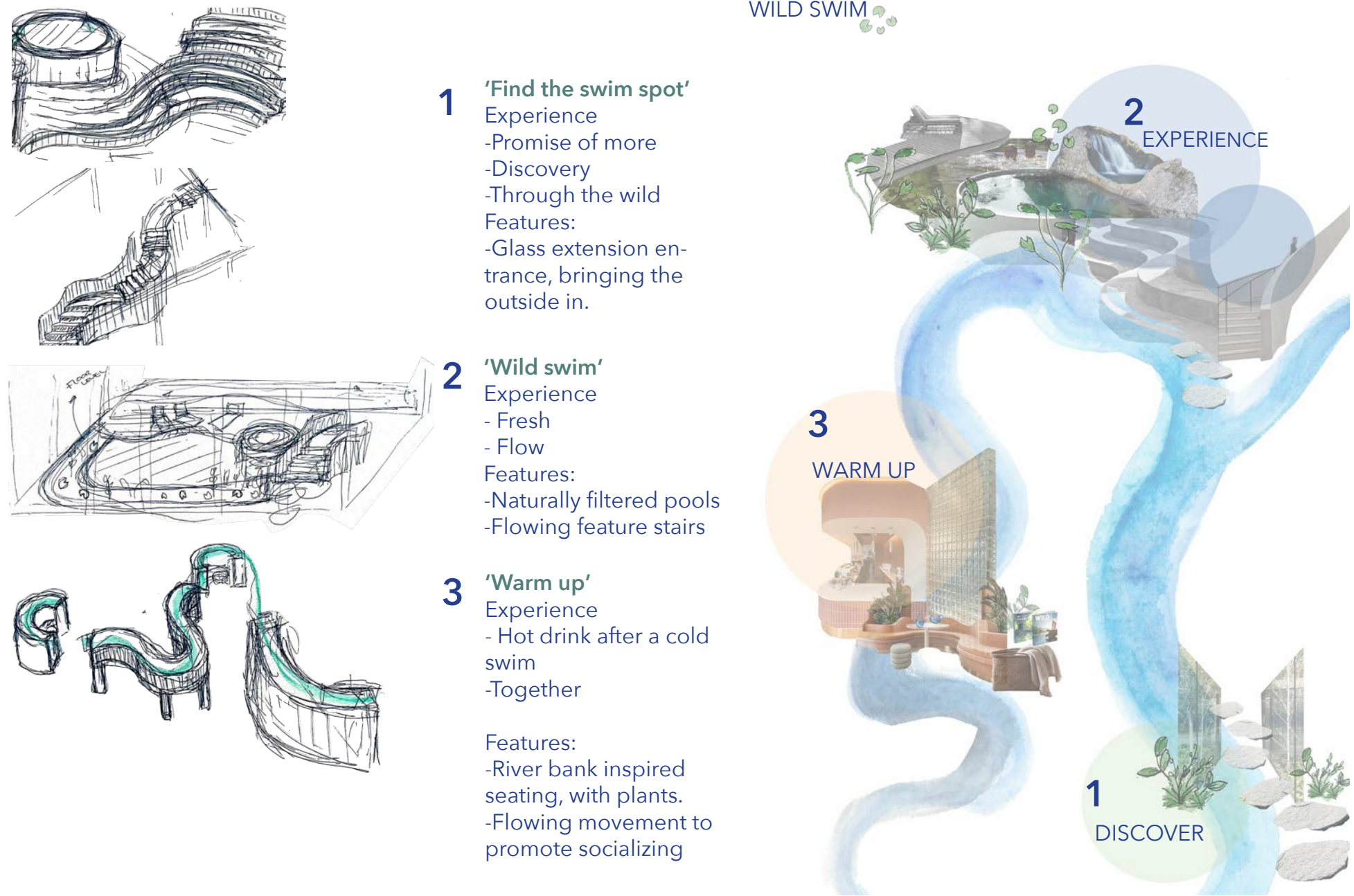
FUNCTION: By combining “wild” swimming with hands-on activities like river clean-ups and creative recycling workshop, these experiences build as strong sense of environmental awareness, supporting both personal and ecological well-being.

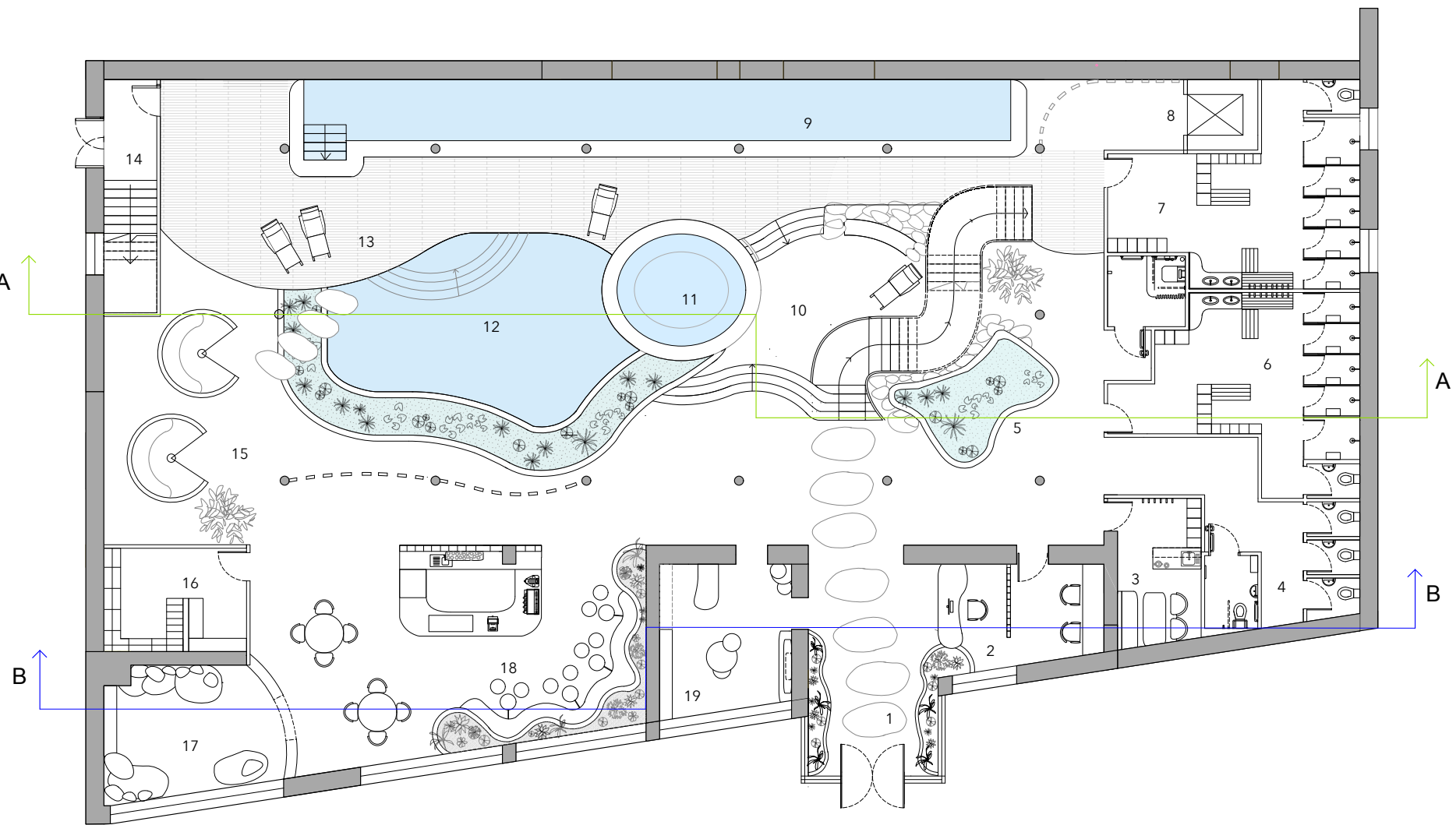
CONCEPT: Wild swimming & water

USER JOURNEY

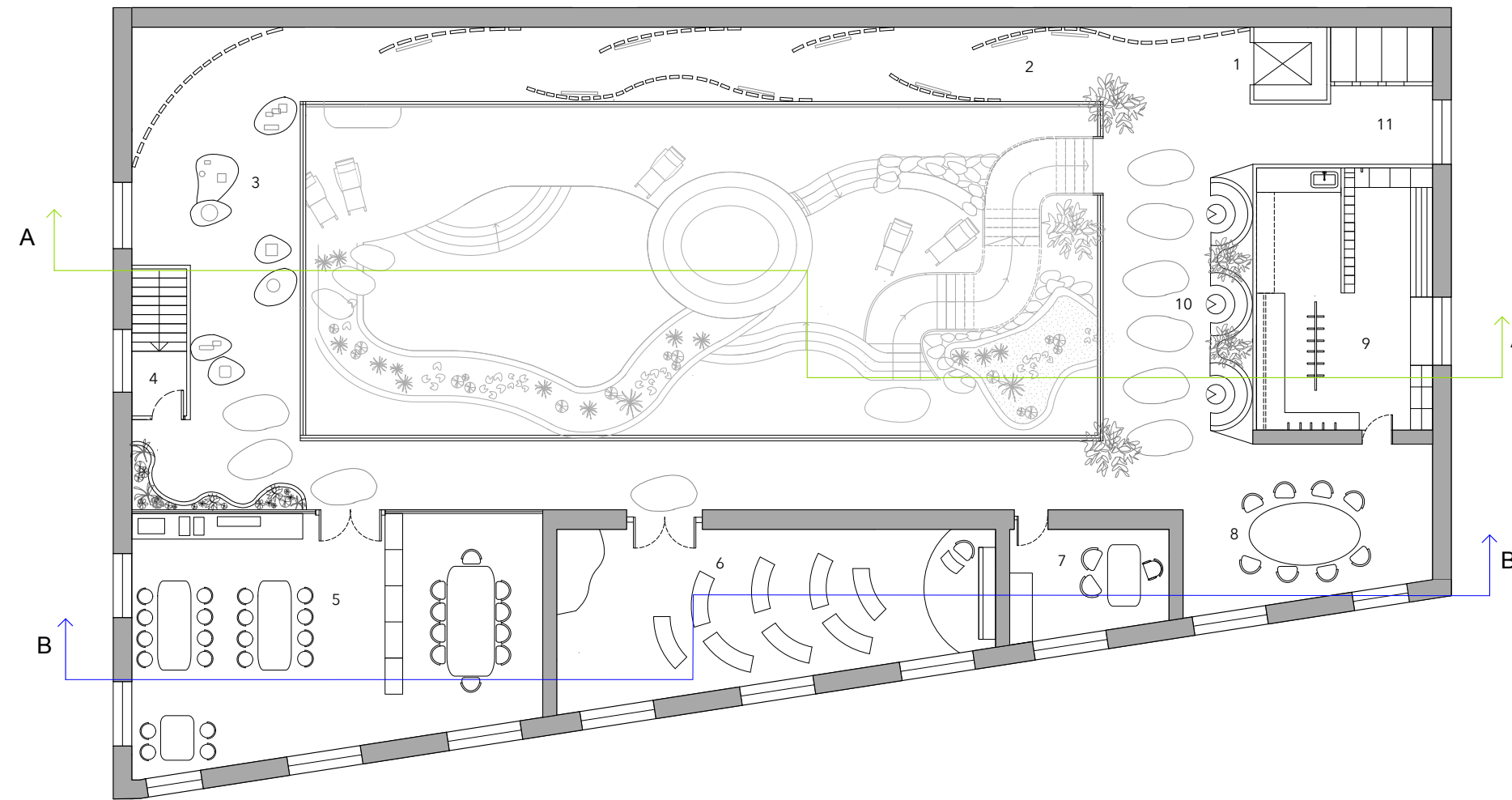


GROUND FLOOR
THEMATIC JOURNEY:
WILD SWIM





GROUND FLOOR: Wild swim experience
(not to scale)



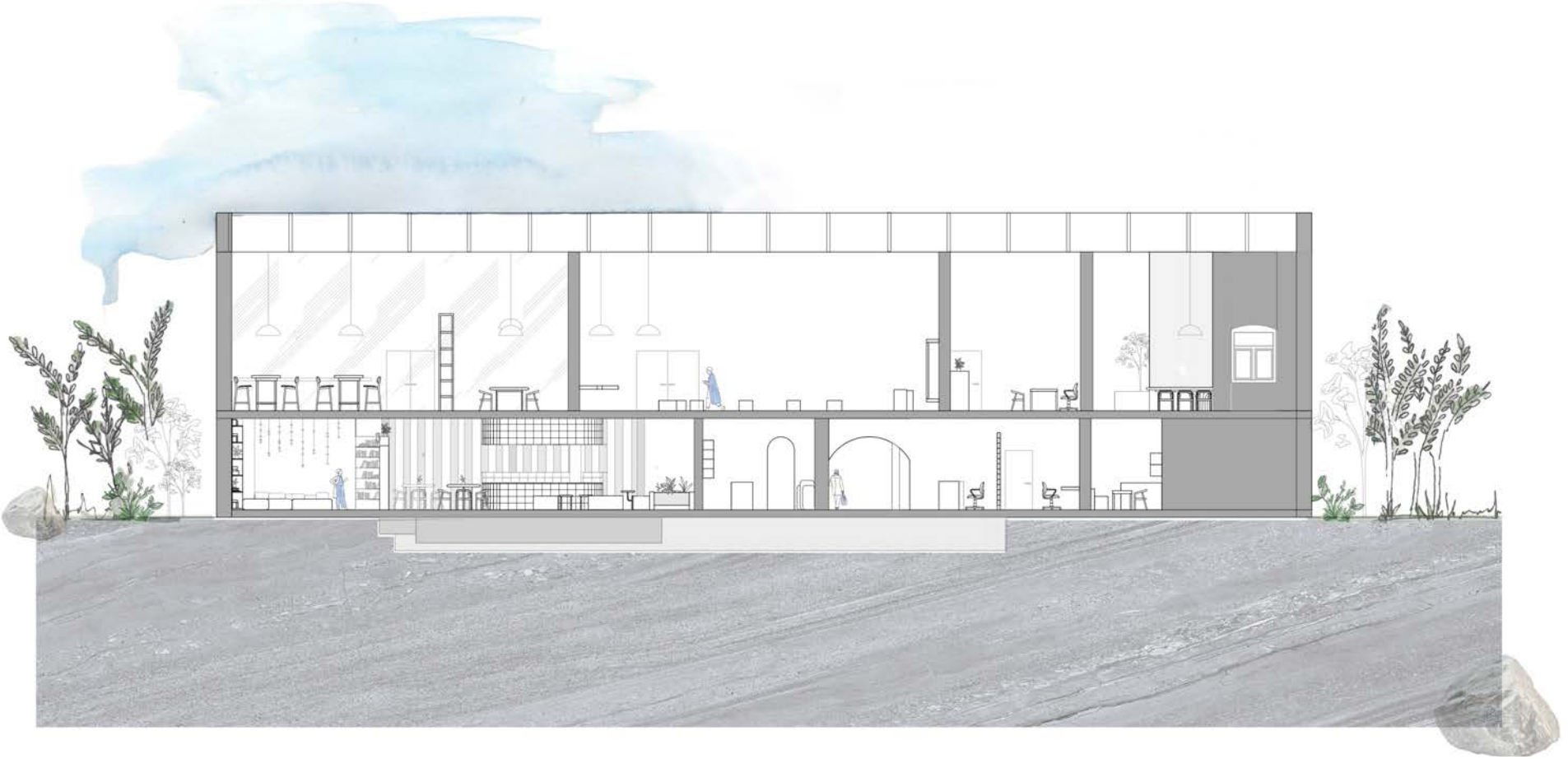
FIRST FLOOR: Steps to change
(not to scale)

KEY Ground Floor

1. Stepping stone entrance extension.
2. Reception desk and admin area
3. Staff room
4. Unisex & accessible toilet
5. Raised pond
6. Male changing & showers
7. Female changing & showers
8. Lift
9. Natural cold lap pool
10. Raised area & seating, access to small pool
11. Small cold pool
12. Main cold pool with natural filtration system: plants & sediment.
13. Pool side seating
14. Fire stairs
15. Lily pod gazebos
16. Cafe storage
17. Pebble Library
18. River Cafe
19. Reeds Retail

KEY: First Floor

1. Lift
2. Curved gallery & information walk through.
3. Walkthrough plastic exhibit space
4. Fire stairs
5. Recycled plastic community workshop
6. Events space with stage, screen and movable benches
7. Office
8. Volunteer meeting space
9. Kit equipment room
10. Booth seating with plants
11. Recycle collection point



SECTION B
(not to scale)

PHYSICAL MODEL: 1:100



NATURAL SWIMMING POOLS

Swimming ponds are essentially made up of two merging zones, which together, make up an **ecologically balanced** and **self cleaning pond**.

WHY A NATURAL POOL?

Natural Filtration:
Plants in the regeneration zone absorb nutrients that could cause algae blooms, and a biological filtration system breaks down organic matter and impurities.

Chemical-Free:
Natural pools do not require chlorine or other chemicals to keep the water clean, making them safer and more environmentally friendly.

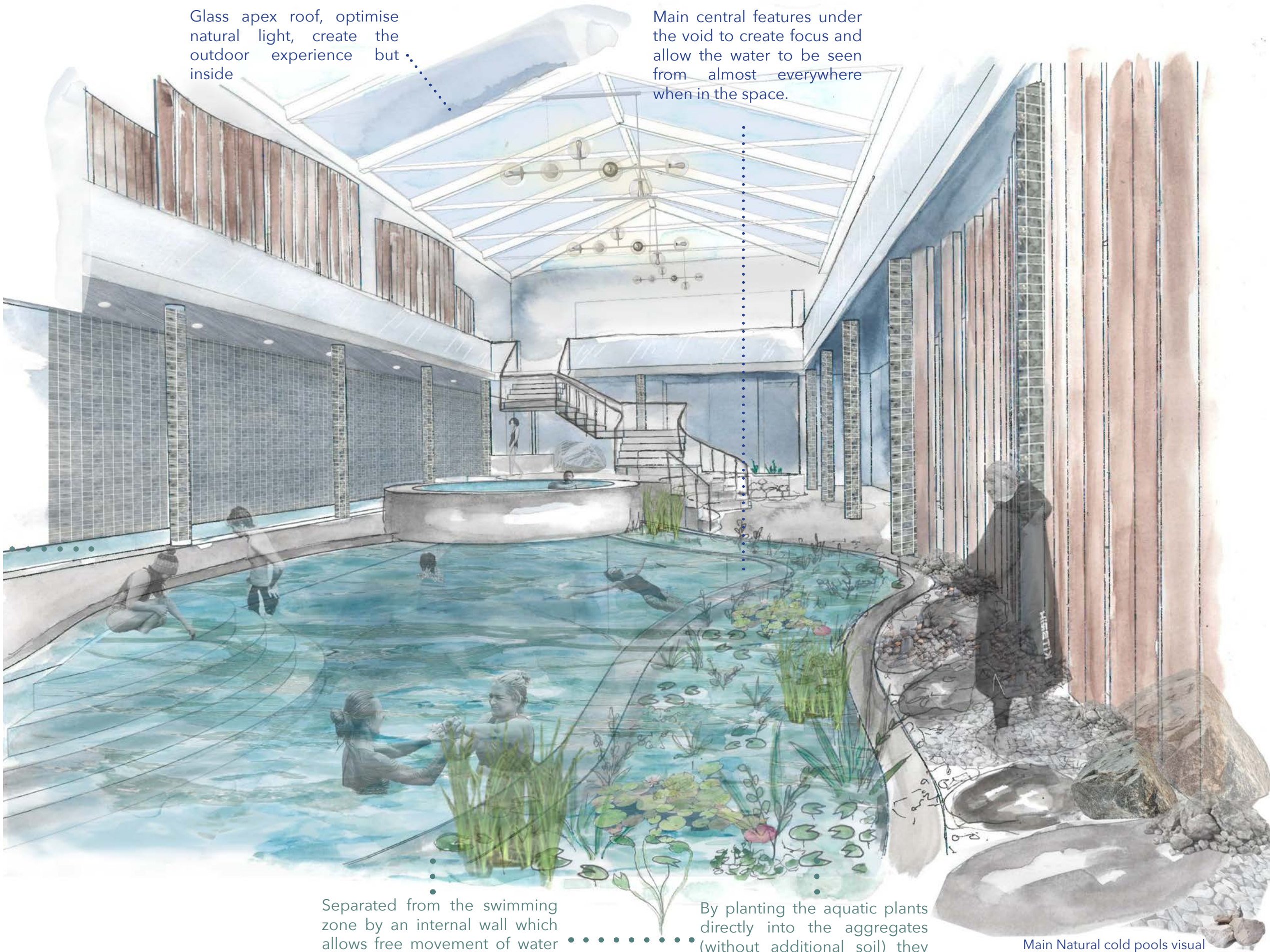
Low Maintenance:
With a well-designed system, natural pools require minimal maintenance, primarily involving removing larger debris and occasional filter replacements.

Health Benefits:
Swimming in natural, chemical-free water is often considered to be a healthier experience.

POOL LOCATION
The pools are set on **different levels** to evoke a more **natural, organic feel**. Inspired by the **Fairy Pools** in Skye, the circular cold plunge—dark and crisp—contrasts with the larger, curving pool that subtly reflects the movement of a river. Positioned **centrally**, it draws the eye and **mimics the presence of a true body of water**. This open visibility supports the **Blue Mind Theory**, allowing everyone to experience the calming **effects** of water, both visually and audibly.



Lap pool visual



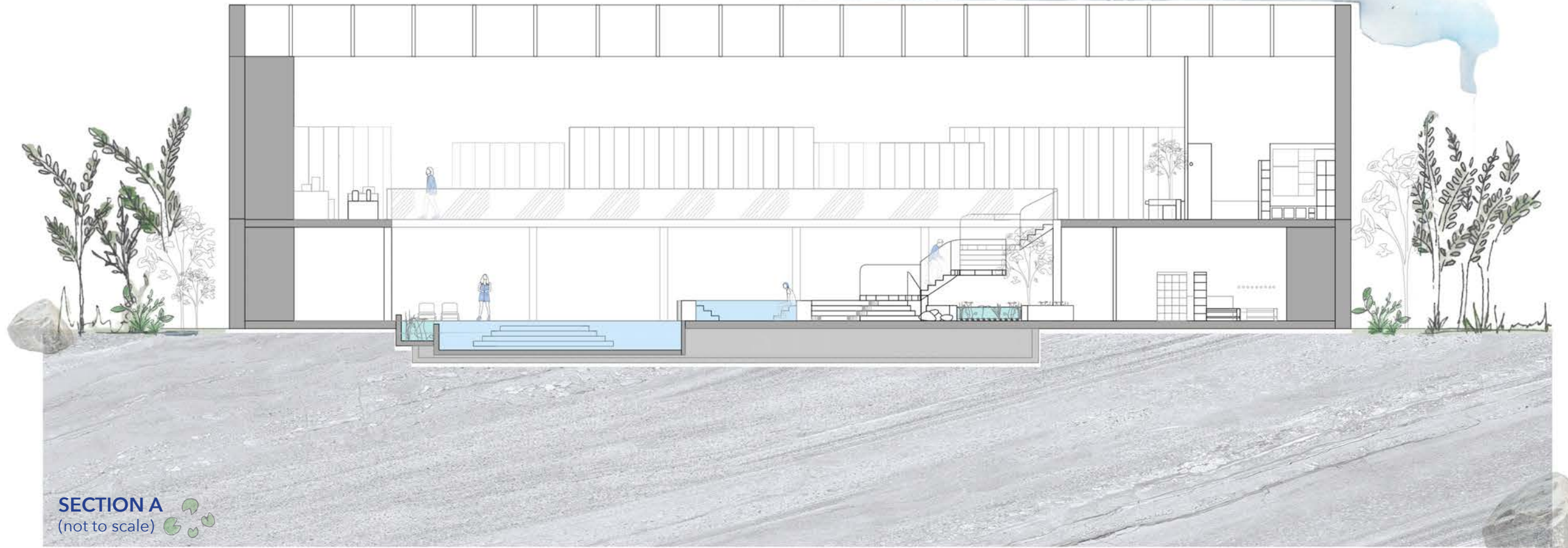
Glass apex roof, optimise natural light, create the outdoor experience but inside

Main central features under the void to create focus and allow the water to be seen from almost everywhere when in the space.

Separated from the swimming zone by an internal wall which allows free movement of water between the two zones and ensures the swimming area is kept free of vegetation.

By planting the aquatic plants directly into the aggregates (without additional soil) they must draw their nutrients directly from the water.

Main Natural cold pools visual



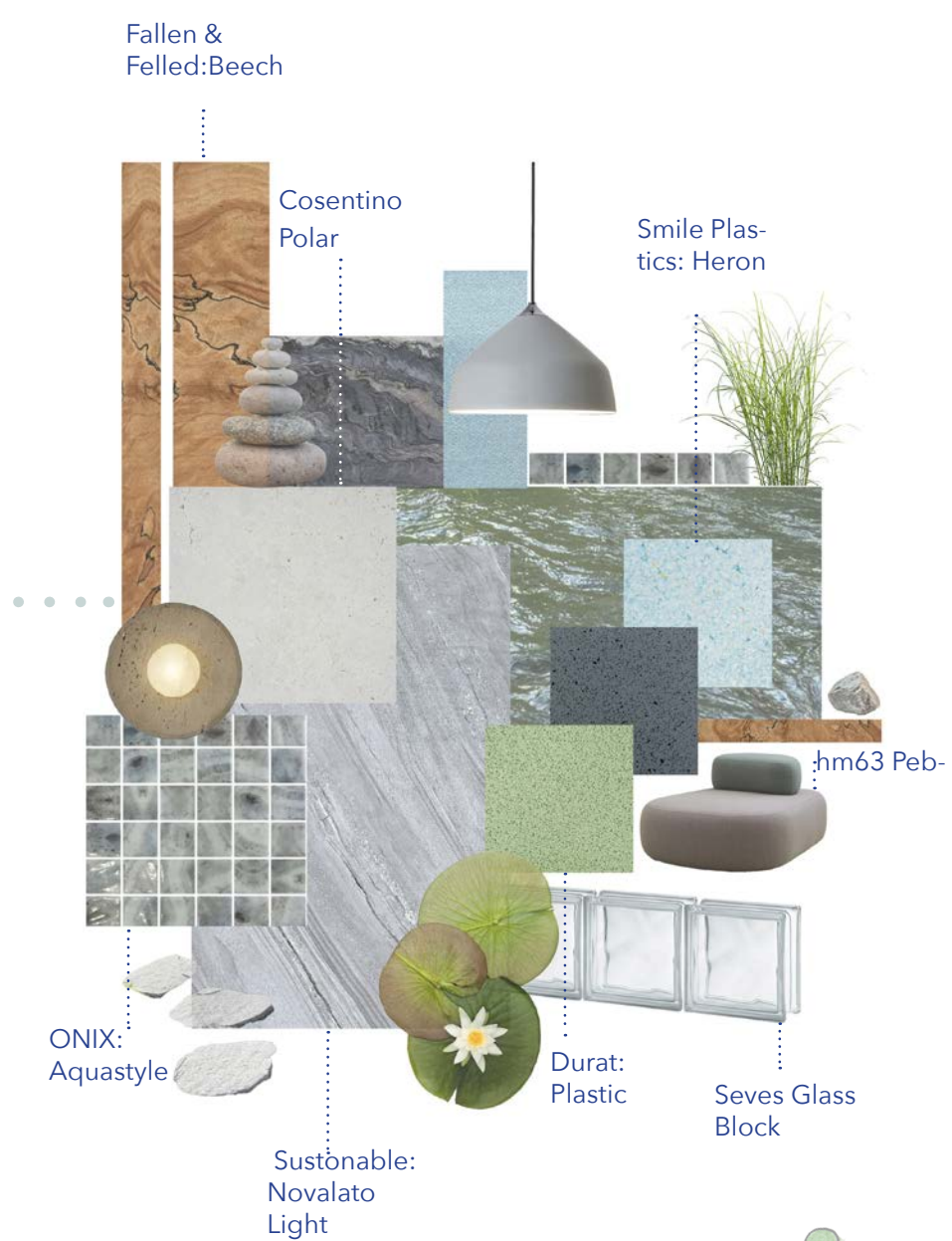
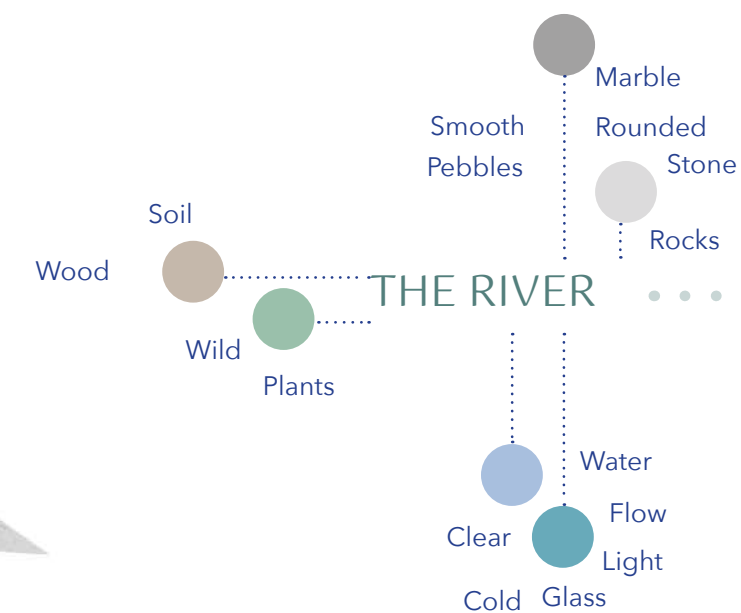
SECTION A
(not to scale)



River cafe design: Glass blocks mimic water and create a key design focal point in space

Warm lighting to create a warm inviting atmosphere after the cold swim,

Sitting at the river bank concept seating, natural forms, plants and colours. Encourages sitting together and connection



Pebble Library Visual



Gallery walk through visual

