

# The People’s Place

Armley House, located within Gott's Park, remains an underutilised space surrounded by natural beauty. Given its position within the community and current use as a golf course, the location remains historically significant, a crucial symbol of Leeds' industrial history. The opportunity to redefine the heritage property to enable locals to connect with a key location previously concealed from view for generations.

With a focus on engaging all ages and promoting active play, the proposed concept for the future of Armley House considers the interior space flanked by the surrounding landscape to create a community-focused multipurpose place, fostering engagement through playfulness and facilitating communication.

The proposed regeneration could offer an engaging, casual setting accessible to everyone while optimising the gardens and landscape currently engulfed by a bustling urban city rapidly losing open green spaces in favour of development and housing.

An opportunity to revitalise a lost location and encourage community connection.



**Armley House**

Initial construction - 1781  
Unknown architect

Adapted to Neo-Grecian inspired villa - 1810  
Robert Smirke

Altered to remove wings - 1930's  
Work instructed by Leeds City Council

Aerial view of Armley House

## An introduction

Armley House is a Grade II listed mansion located within the Gott's Park Estate in Upper Armley, Leeds. The property was built in the late 17th century as a Georgian manor home and updated over time to present Greek revival features.

The building was utilised initially as a primary residence until the early 1900s. Over the following years, Armley House repeatedly transformed to meet the demands of the period until it was passed onto its current owners, along with its vast gardens and utilised as a golf club.



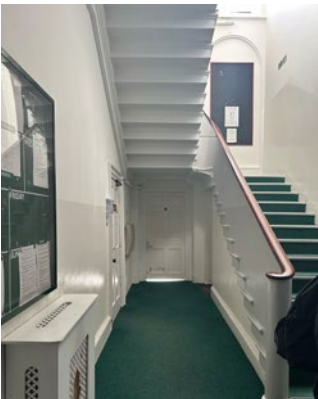
East Elevation - est 1902



Still taken from Humphry Repton's Red Book

Constructed in the late 17th century, Armley House was thrust into public attention in the early 1800s. With the property's new owners, the Gott family, renowned for their vast wealth built through the cloth trade, commissioned designer Humphry Repton to suggest alterations to the estate's gardens. Repton expanded his brief to speculate on changes to the main property, proposing changes to the facades and wings. The proposal provided by Repton was partly executed but fell short of modifications to the home.

Over the following decade, the Gott family consulted architect Robert Smirke, who presented the opportunity to transform the existing Georgian property into a luxury neo-Grecian villa, the first of its kind in the area. Since the alterations made by both consultees, the property and land has been adapted to suit new purposes, house patients in various hospital settings and presently remains a public golf course.



Interior views taken across all three floors

Within the space, the building is split into defined segments with the main areas utilised as business premises for the golf club, featuring a bar and clubhouse space, accessible to the public during open hours. The basement is currently used for storage and utility for the building, strictly monitored by the golf club. To the west of the space, on the first floor, the building has been altered to provide two independent residential flats with private access.

Within the interior, the mix of modern furnishings against the building's classic framework presents a blend of styles. With the property's current purpose as a golf club, the interior presents fragments of heritage updated to suit activity requirements with signs of care and repair over its tenure.

As Armley House has evolved, features that once remained a key element of the property's identity have been removed, changed or altered both inside and out. From damage or simple alterations, the building offers a story of what it once was against what remains from its various purposes and inevitable ageing. The wings of the property present the largest visible change, upon removal the building significantly reduced in size and usability. Many other features have been visibly adjusted or permanently obstructed to prevent further decay.



Existing community garden area

In its landlocked position, Armley House offers the ability to embrace the surrounding community. Within a densely populated area, the prioritisation of residential property altered the environment around Gott's Park drastically. Now a cluttered location with limited accessible green space, the opportunity to create something for locals is in both the community & council's interest.

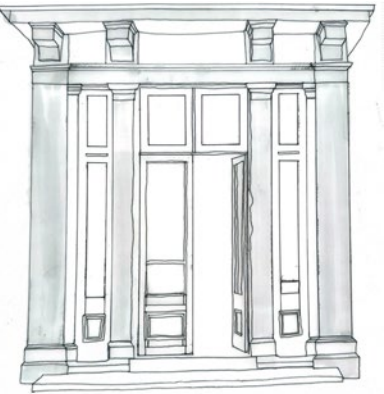
Around the area, few green spaces are available to use freely. Surrounding community places are comprised of a few sports centres and playgrounds. The community allotments and on-site rose garden already in place are considered a positive addition for locals.

Reviving the property to introduce a welcoming interior environment in a location previously hidden from the public would celebrate its surroundings alongside the cultural significance of the building.



View to the south-east

## Existing access & approach



West entrance



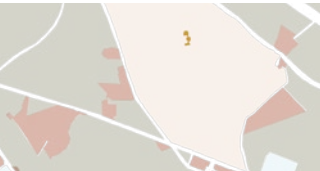
East entryway

Armley House is situated 3km west of Leeds centre. Engulfed by industrial and manufacturing locations to the north & east. On the northeast boundary, the property benefits from direct access to the Leeds & Liverpool canal, a busy waterway connected via a series of pathways. On the remaining boundaries, the green space is flanked by condensed residential areas providing homes to an estimated 27,000 people. The property offers vast green spaces and sheltered forest areas.

The site is elevated along a ridge area with its northeast boundary falling dramatically to meet the Leeds & Liverpool canal. Its elevated station offers exceptional views over surrounding districts - a key attribute for the Gott family.

A variety of transportation options can access the perimeter easily connecting the bordering areas and central Leeds. Within the grounds, a series of paths and paved areas connect the vast rolling landscape. Approaching from the city, the longest path route guides you through the gardens before reaching the main house.

Upon arrival, the two existing points of access offer very different experiences. Entering from the west presents a less lavish doorway whereas the east entry offers a stately capital flagged by detailed Ionic columns, a more extravagant experience. Upon arrival at Gott's Park, the experience of travelling along the long driveway leading to the property, the surrounding landscape conceals the building in the distance. As the location is set back from the roadside, the route offers an impressive first impression as you wander the winding road.



Gott's Park & surrounding area  
Dated: 1900



Gott's Park & surrounding area  
Dated: 1950



Gott's Park & surrounding area  
Dated: 2025

Private  
Public

Industrial/Community  
Gott's Park Estate

## Gott's Park & surrounding landscape

Residential  
Green spaces  
Community buildings  
Business premises  
Travel infrastructure  
Water ways  
Walking routes  
Access points  
Public transport



View point to north

Arrival to Armley House west entrance/  
Gott's Park Golf Club reception

First glimpse of Armley House

Tree lined drive way leading to car parking area

Immediate directions and side entrance to Rose Garden

Arrival point: Armley Ridge Road (North-west entrance)

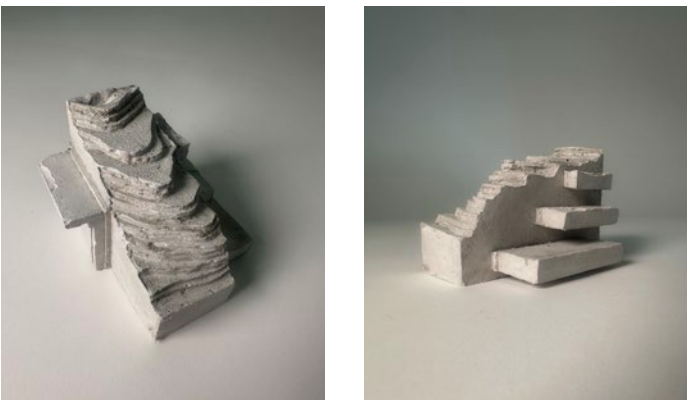
Arrival experience documented via  
photography from main transport route to  
existing west entry point

Since the 1900's the availability of land has been overtaken by requirements for housing and essential infrastructure.

Set in a densely populated area, the prioritisation of residential property dramatically altered the setting. Now a cluttered location with little accessible green space, the opportunity to maintain a large expanse of parklands and generate a safe space for activity, is in both the community & council's interest.

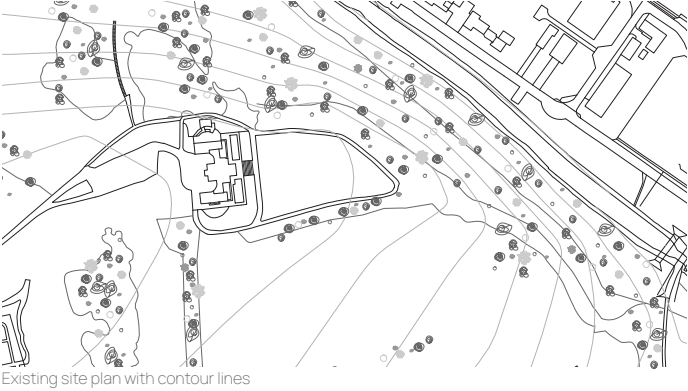


Exploring the surrounding land & contours



Considering the surrounding environment using a clay cast model as a medium. Alongside the property, the location in which Armley House sits creates a unique, heightened point with outlooks across the surrounding vicinity.

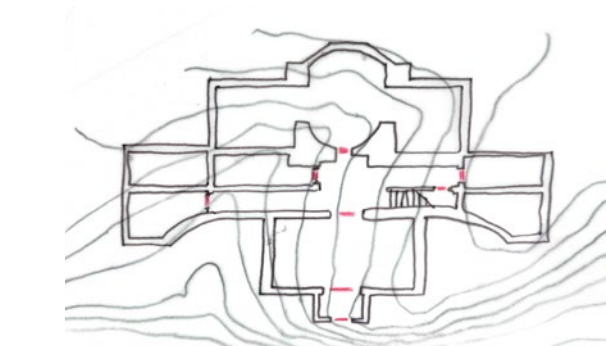
Taking the steep contours of the location as inspiration, paired with the initial points of entry and concept of three floors, signifying the interior circulation.



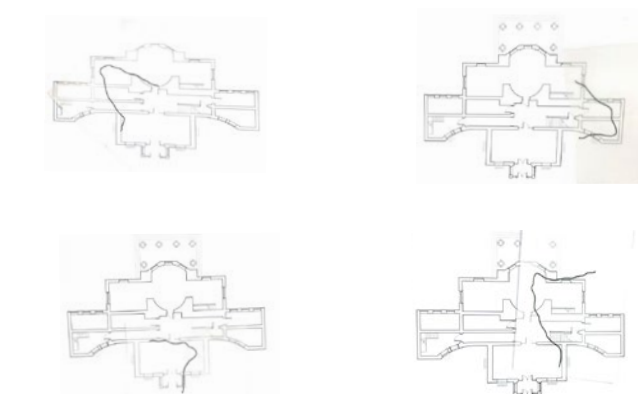
Existing site plan with contour lines



Traced contour lines



Overlaid contour lines across existing plan drawings, choosing specific detailed areas

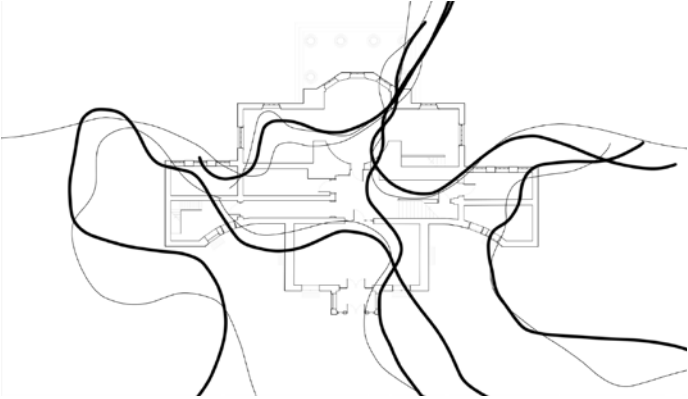


Taking inspiration from the contours. The current site shows the dense nature of the land, which levels off at the property, the highest point on the site.

Considering how the curving lines could divide the existing building, focusing on overcoming the current difficult layout.

By taking the existing property and overlaying the contour lines taken from the site plan, the concept of engaging with the property's surroundings, bringing the location back indoors, could develop to offer a smooth, flowing interior layout influenced by the unusual landscape around the site.

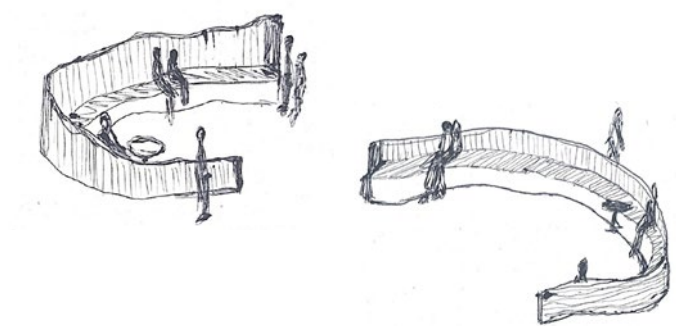
Detailing suggested final thoroughfare dictated by the chosen contour lines



Developing the interior



Concept model of multi level height dividers

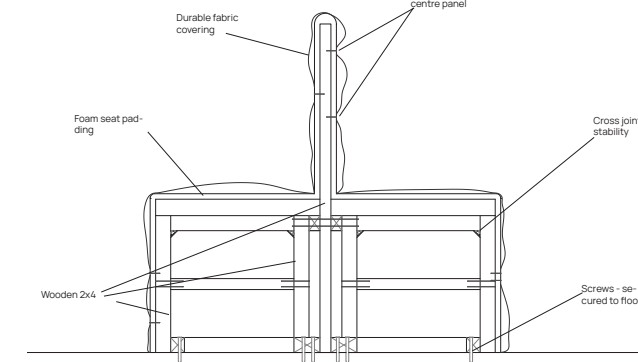


Initial sketches of dividing seating fixture

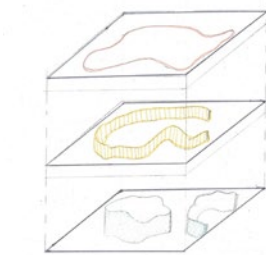


Concept model of seating detail element

Moving forward with the concept of different height division, a series of maquettes displayed above offer multiple purpose zones, inspired by the sweeping contour lines. The concept provides ample opportunity to develop the idea further from initial conception as simple dividing walls and floors into material research, such as texture and sound control elements, alongside customisation for specific activities as required.



Construction drawing of seating divider in section format

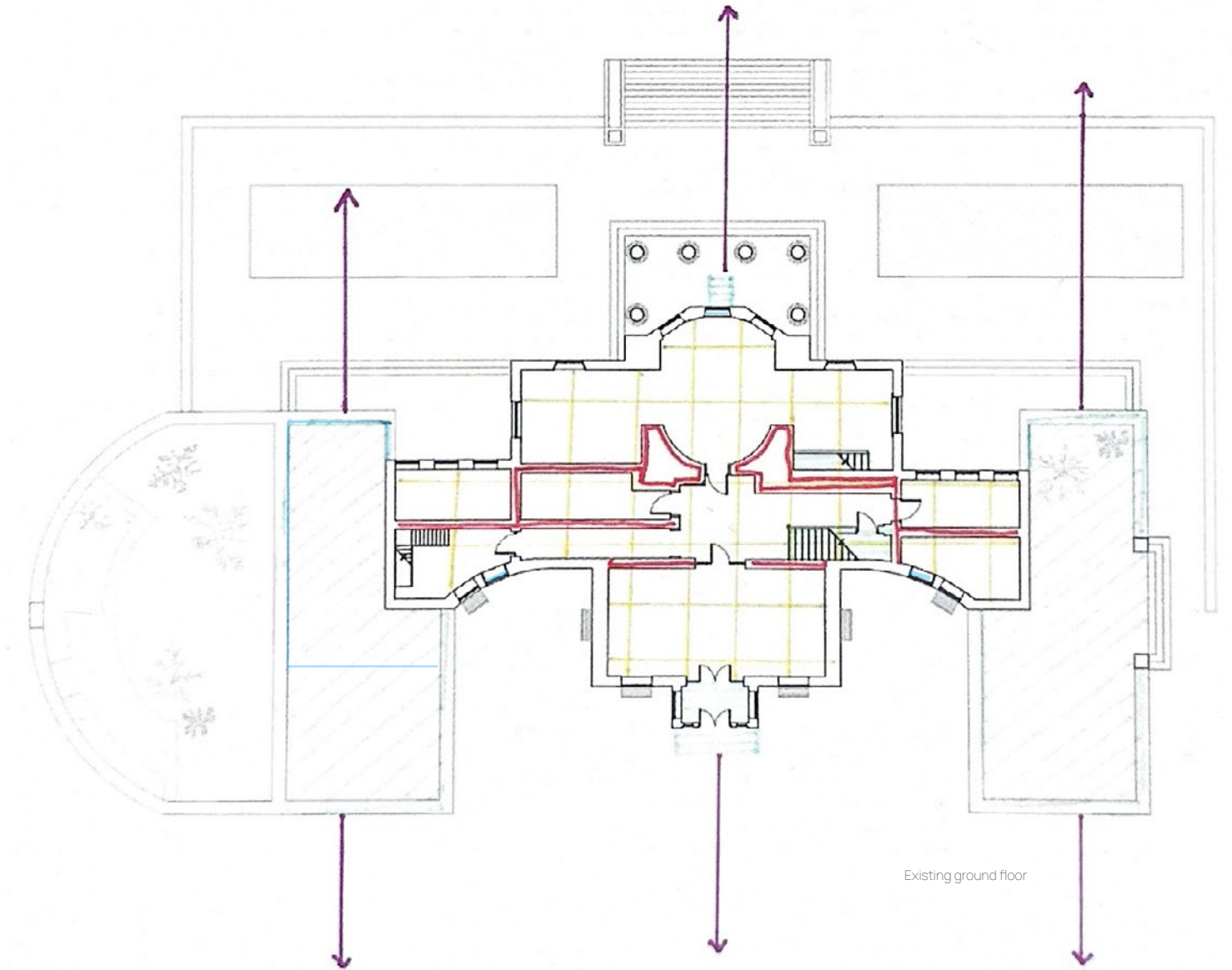


Approach to the three floors

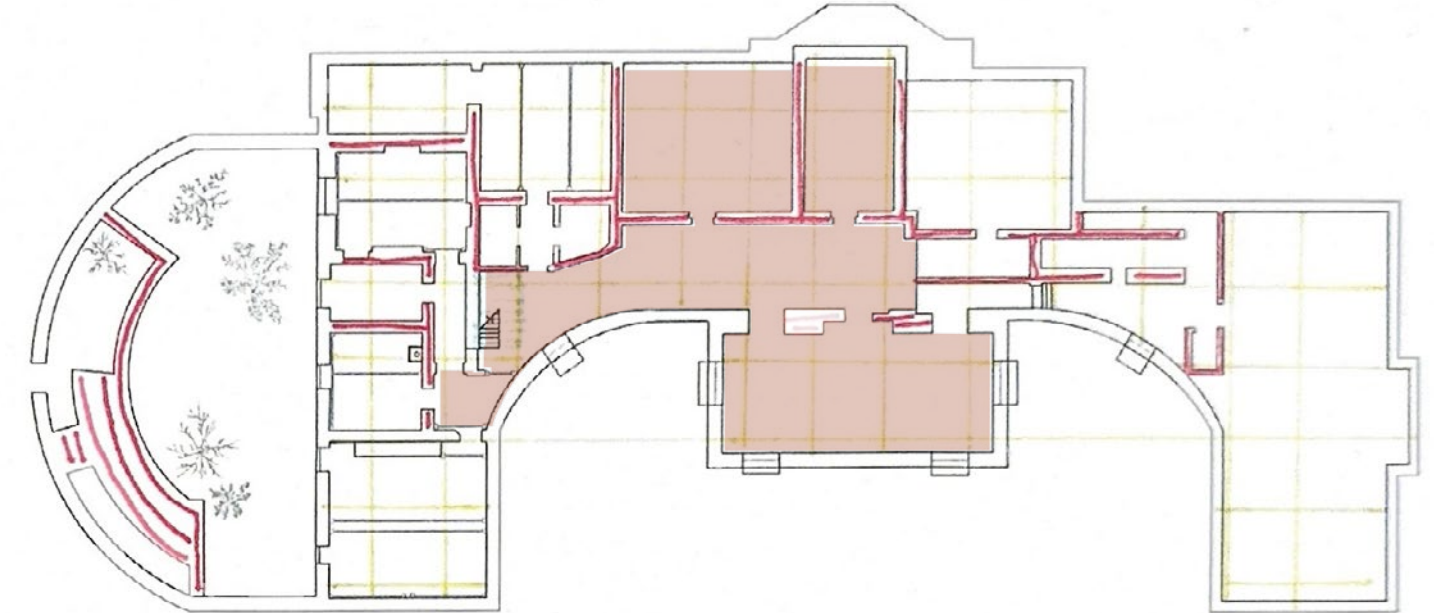
The existing property is split across three floors, a dark dungeon-like basement, a restricted ground floor and a divided first floor. When approaching the building, the intention is to reunite the building without losing a sense of division.

The suggested activities conducted on each floor create the opportunity to develop unique, independent environments on each level. A concept of gradual openness, spread between the floors with quieter activities requiring more controlled light conducted on the lowest through to bright, unrestricted noise on the first floor. To bring the space together, the concept of similar dividers and zoning techniques through floor markings, mid-height walls through to full-height walls separating the space in a more usable, approachable manner.

Actions & tactics for the design



Existing ground floor

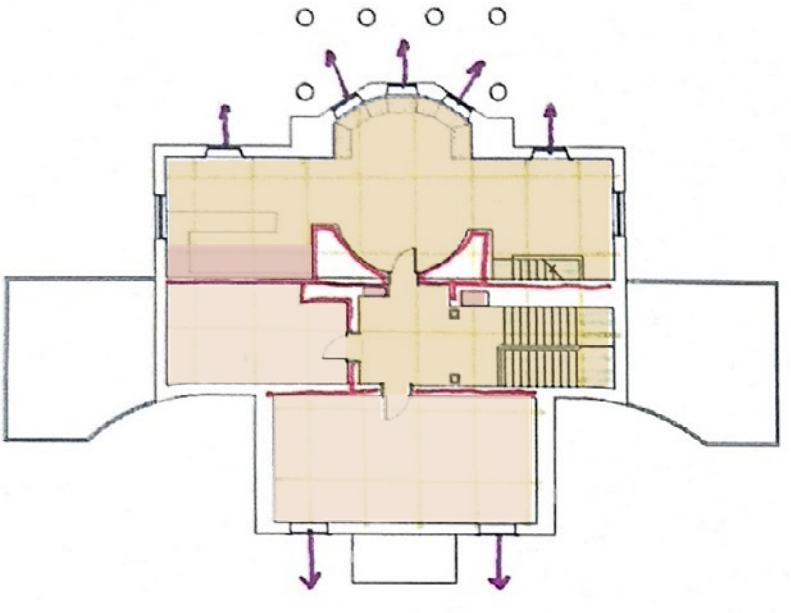


Existing basement floor

When approaching the design of the mansion house, the pivotal tactic is to increase usable space, directly improving the accessibility of the location and providing more freedom for community involvement.

At present, the property is enclosed with complex circulation and damage gained over its tenure. By introducing new points of entry, improving the existing circulation elements, and dividing the floors by activity, navigation will be considerably enhanced.

By reworking the space's interior, addressing the existing areas of concern and upgrading the interior flow, the building will be able to develop into a unique venue for its community. Delivering numerous zones for activities, social areas and solo calm moments whilst integrating the outdoors through external activity features and offering an easier access experience across the entire site.



Existing first floor

Existing analysis

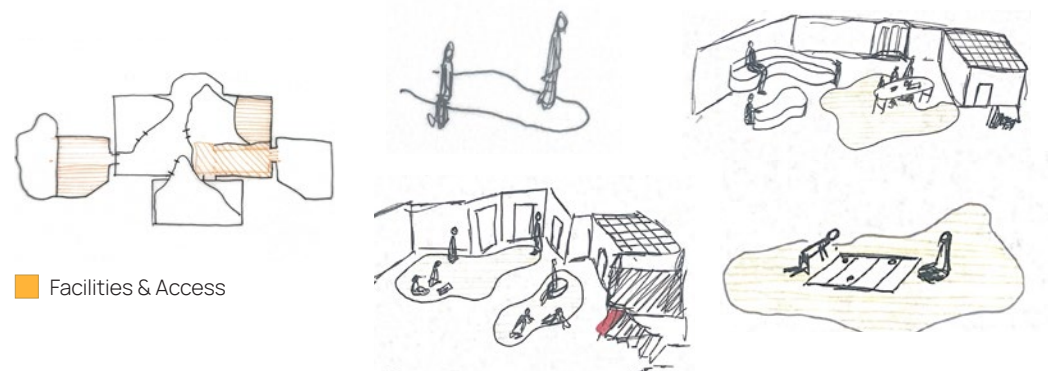
- Public
- Private - Residential
- Private - Golf Club

Proposed alterations

- Introduce new points of entry & improve circulation
- Divide space on each floor to best suit activity
- Encourage integration with the surrounding gardens
- Expand usable interior space



First floor programme

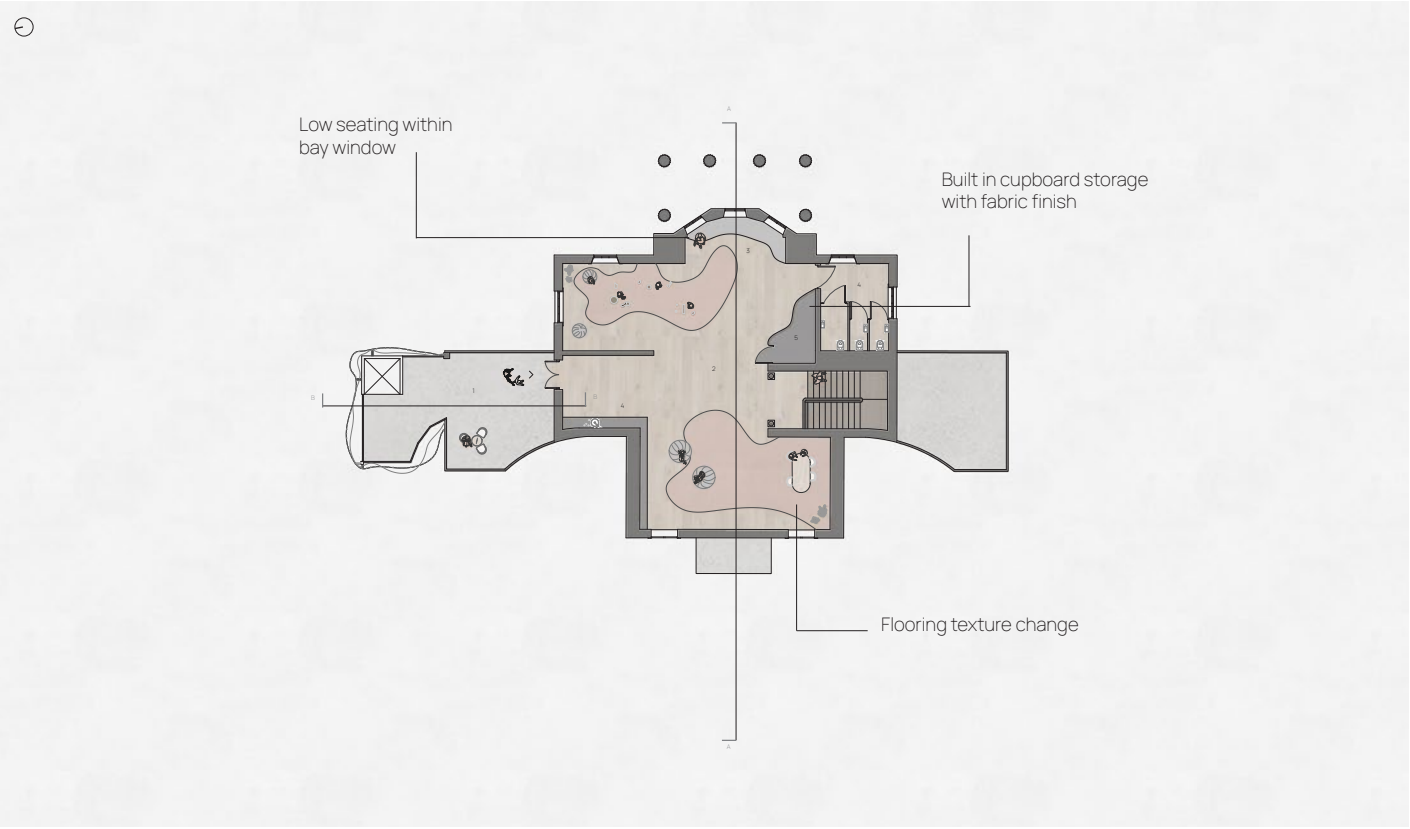


A location for playfulness, unrestricted loudness and pure fun. With available toys, board games, the space welcomes all ages and supports active play through little division and minimal interactive interior elements.

Throughout the area, the priority remains bright, light-filled open areas, so the furniture elements will be limited and movable to provide a transitional space for all.

The room will provide minimal stimulation with decor muted, highlighting the views through windows and activity supplies within. By removing the existing restrictive interior walls, the space is supported by many windows providing brightness.

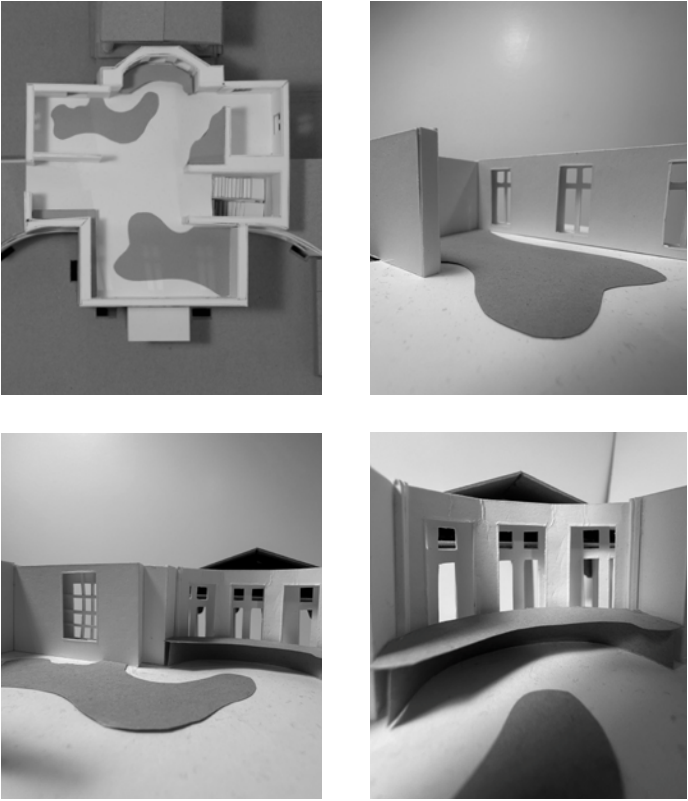
The layout will be limited to markings on the floor to support the feeling of unobstructed fun.



Proposed first floor plan

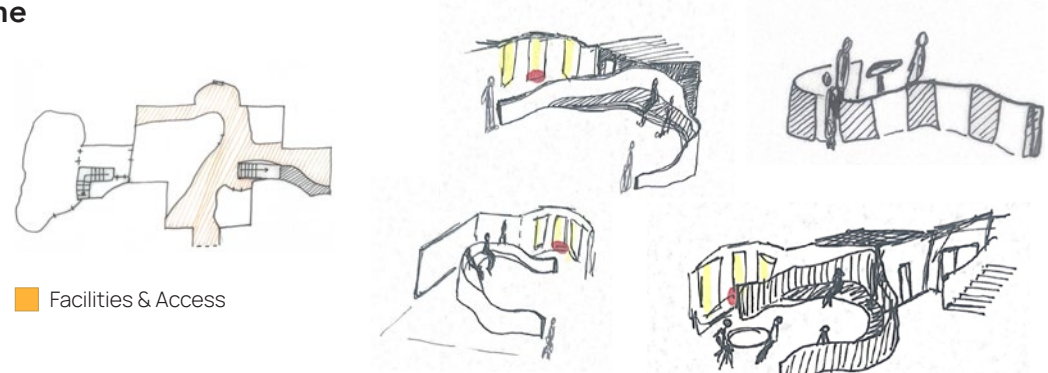
A bright, fun, unrestricted space focused on play, engagement and communication. A loud or quiet area, depending on activity and attendance, a multi-use space with facilities for crafting alongside toys and board games for adults and children.

- 1 New access from installed lift over existing north wing
- 2 Large open area with minimal intervention, flexible furniture and low level flooring to present division if activity desired
- 3 Fixed seating to encourage integration with the outdoors and surrounding views
- 4 Facilities - bathrooms and public kitchen area
- 5 Storage space hidden behind facade contour wall



Images of final model (proposed first floor) completed at 1:100 scale

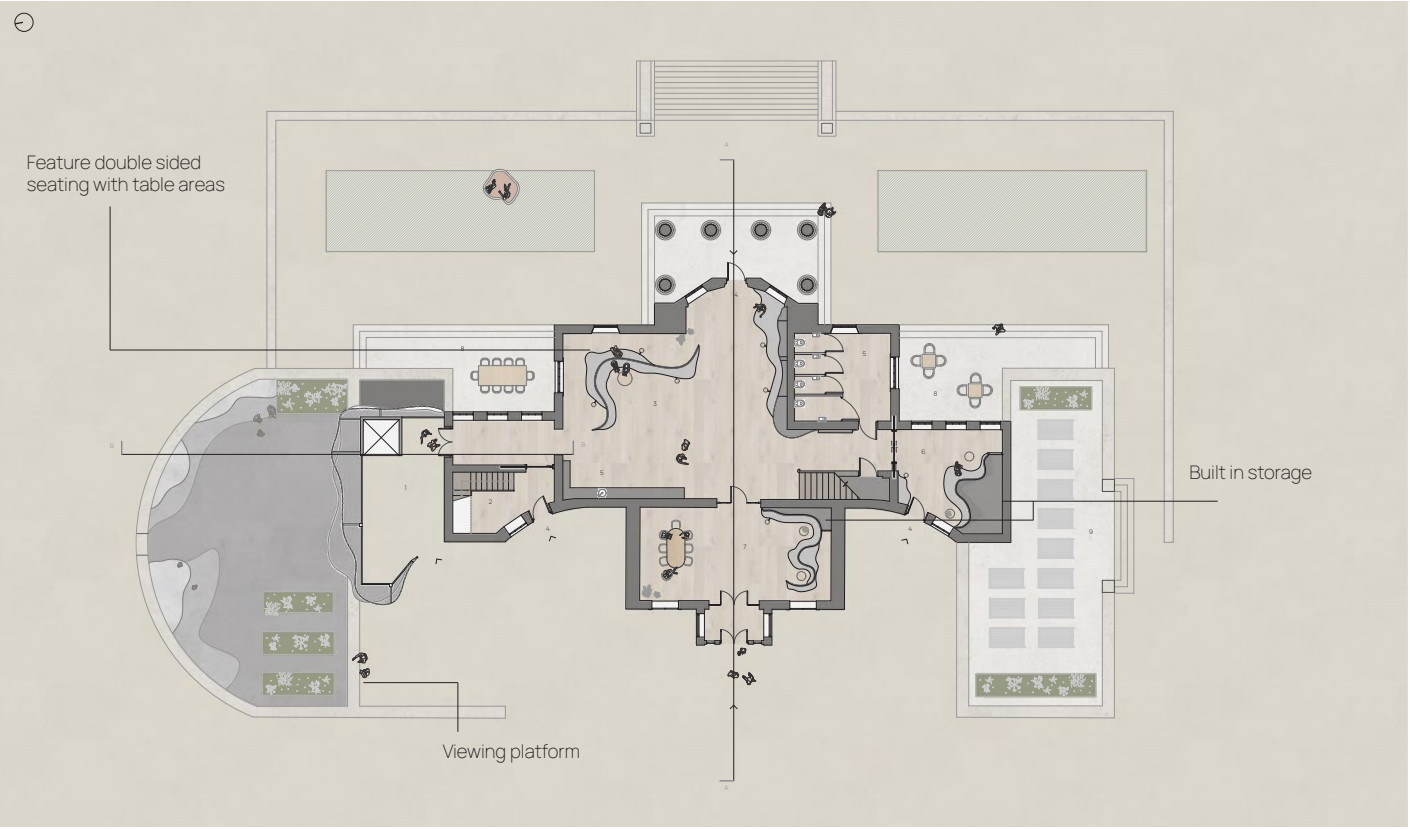
Ground floor programme



The ground floor is intended to create a welcoming community space for all with careful consideration given to ensure the property evokes a positive first impression.

By removing walls to increase floor space, small areas can be created to house hidden storage and facilities. With half-height walls and seating providing cover, the space will remain an open, large zone, but will provide areas for quieter discussion spots.

Within the space, the bright openness will be the first impactful element, with a line of sight right through to the exterior opposite, the location will feel connected to its surroundings and act as a transitional space between the out and in.

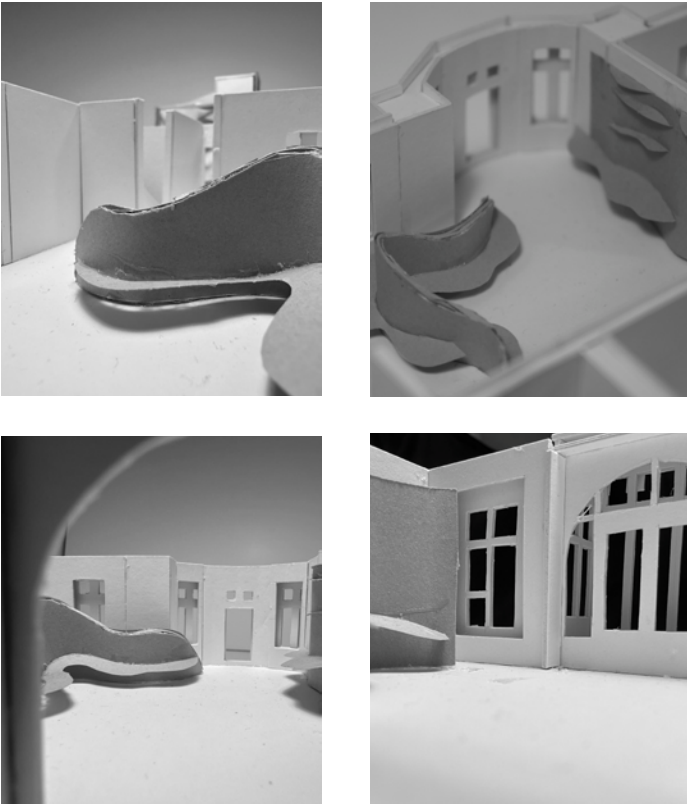


Proposed ground floor plan

A welcoming, diverse space catering to multiple activities, group sizes and formats.

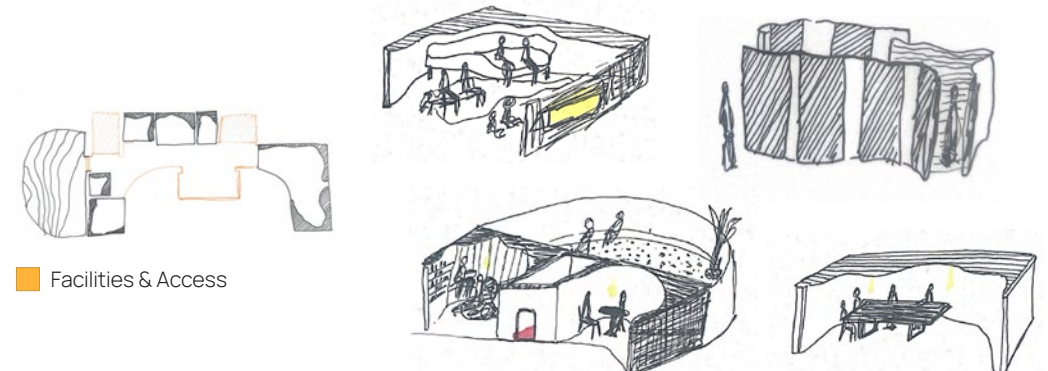
Suitable storage interlaced amongst statement seating, bringing the outdoor contour lines in through curated curves.

- 1 New entryway with lift access offering route to all floors
- 2 Improved basement staircase, widened for safety
- 3 Central space with feature seating and storage systems. Zones for conversation, solo time and group settings
- 4 Reinstated entryways providing direct access to outdoors
- 5 Facilities - bathrooms and public utility/kitchen space
- 6 South room with fixed seating and storage, able to enclose into private space with viable entry/exit
- 7 Front room with existing west entrance. Multipurpose area with table and chairs or casual seating located along storage
- 8 Outdoor seating areas open to all Gotts' park users
- 9 South wing solar area with community planters



Images of final model (proposed ground floor) completed at 1:100 scale

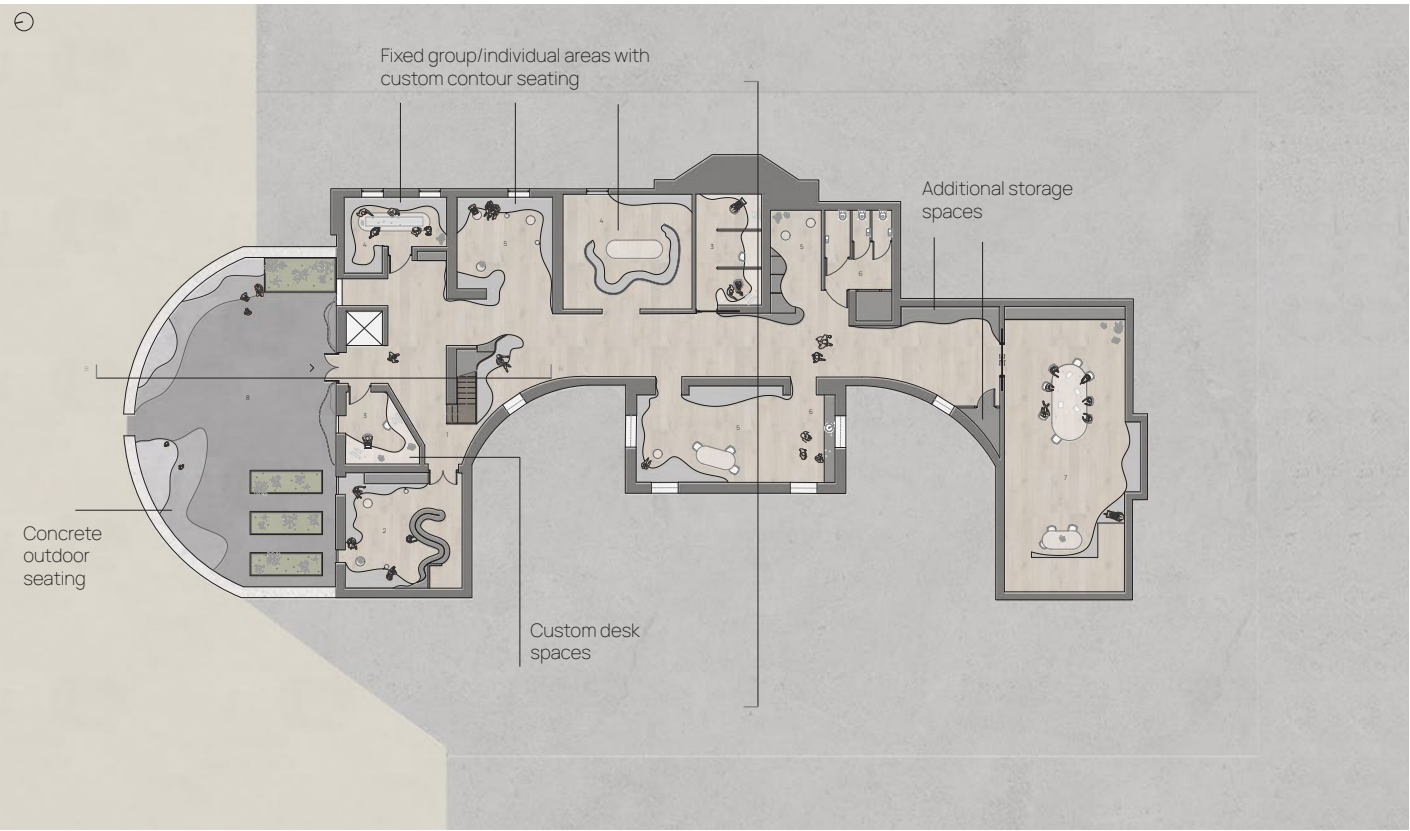
Basement programme



Activities for all, library and reading spaces, computer and digital zones. A location for calm, reflection, relaxing and quiet activities. In smaller rooms with welcoming furniture and an inviting atmosphere.

Within the space the softness of the curves will create an inviting, enveloping feel pulling you deeper into the calming zone.

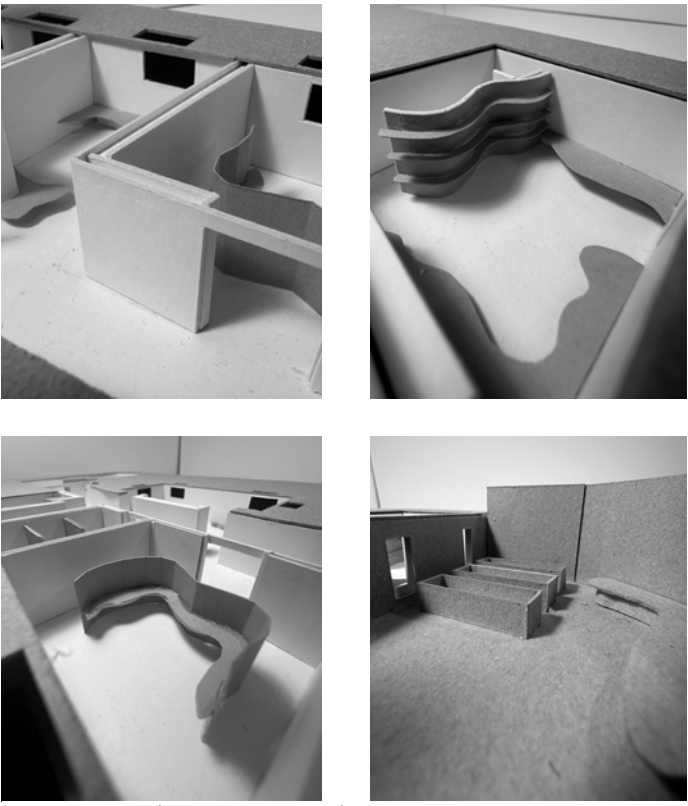
Light via windows at height and outdoor garden area to bring in the surrounding location. Utilising the contour lines to create full height divisions in certain areas and furniture in others. Clever design with hidden storage, seating and shelving. Throughout, easy, smooth access.



Proposed basement level plan

Sheltered zone space focused on activity-specific purpose, open areas for communication and direct access to the outdoors with established community planting space.

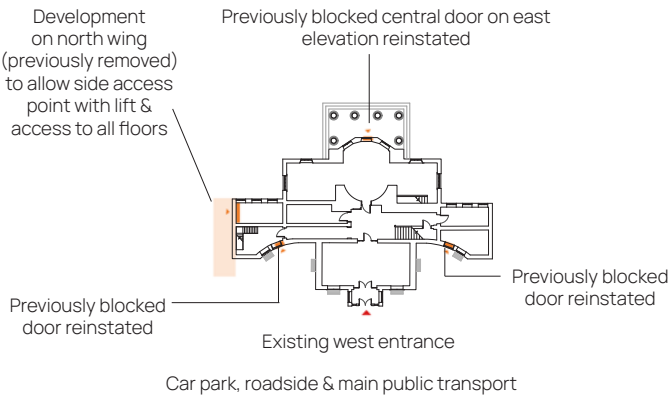
- 1 Improved stair access with feature seating and bannister
- 2 Library room with quiet reading spaces and bookshelves
- 3 Desk table top areas suitable for gaming, working and writing activities
- 4 Group/ large space activity areas with arranged seating
- 5 Common areas for conversations, hang out spaces and solo zones with seating and open floor space
- 6 Facilities - bathrooms and public kitchen area
- 7 Multi purpose south room with movable furniture and large storage section, ability to make private if desired
- 8 Basement outdoor space with community planters and fixed auditorium seating



Images of final model (proposed basement level) completed at 1:100 scale



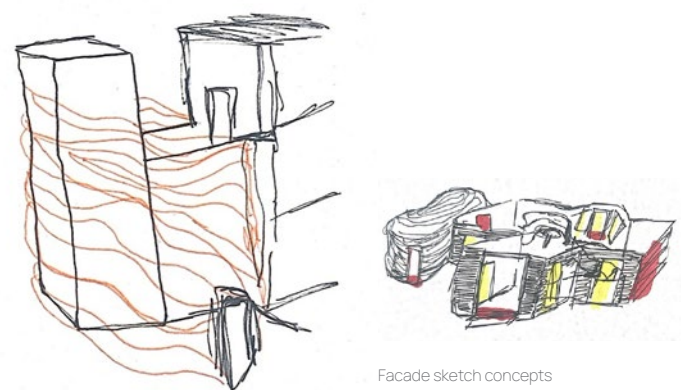
Developing the exterior & considering heritage preservation



Throughout the interior and exterior, the signs of ageing and repairs are evident. The approach used within this proposal is minimal intervention where required in the interest of safety, operation and sustainability. Overall the intention is to maintain and celebrate the existing heritage.

Through thorough site analysis, areas of neglect require additional intervention such as restoration to the outdoor walls for public safety, improvements to windows to provide better light flow and specific changes to the building to improve access standards to match present legislation, e.g. changes to stair widths, resurfaced floors for smoother level surfaces. The above diagram explores the essential changes and opportunities to introduce a much improved internal circulation whilst treating the existing structure with care.

New entrance & facade detail

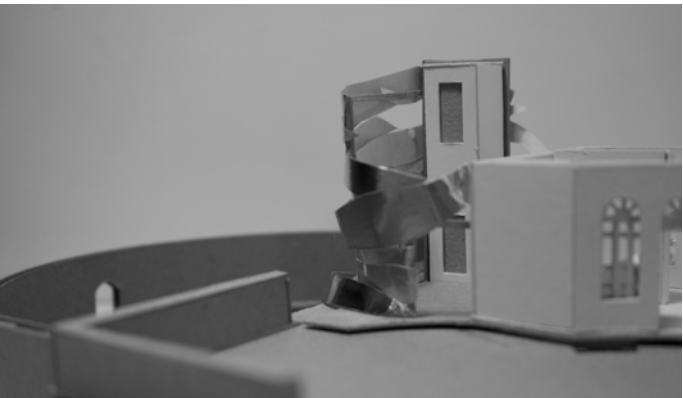
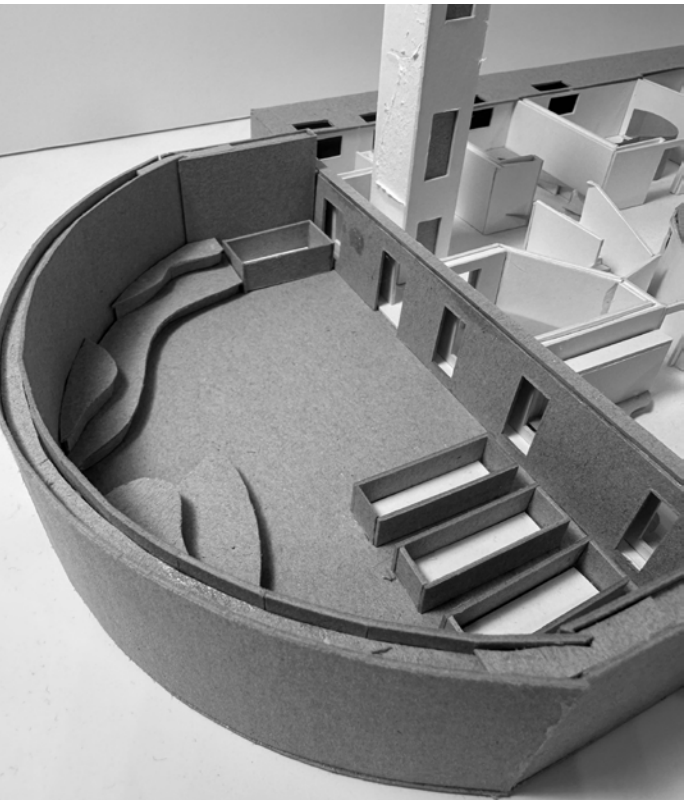


To ensure the property delivers accessible transport between its floors, the installation of an external lift to the north of the property is included. The addition of the passenger lift allows access across all floors and creates the opportunity to develop a new entryway to compliment the heritage property. Working with the contour lines, the concept of encapsulating the curved landlines around the lift shaft continues to mimic the flow of the steep hillside.

With minimal attachment to the existing building, the facade will be supported by the lift building and provide a new point of entry on the west side. By developing on the removed west wing, the opportunity arises to utilise the space on the opposing east wing for energy generation. With long hours of sun, the existing platform would provide an environmentally aware solution to assist in managing the community space.



Research into cladding presented the chance to utilise thin copper sheeting, which could mimic contour lines while offering a natural finish that fades over time to a green-grey patina. This provides opportunity to further integrate the property into its surroundings, with the tones blending into the landscape. The left precedent, Utah's Natural History Museum, by Ennead Architects (2011), shows the result within a rural setting.



Within the scheme, considered steps have been taken to ensure the space is easy to navigate, entertaining without restricting users. The interior space is much larger offering more usable space, with key heritage areas restored and renewed, ready to welcome the community back to the property.

By integrating further elements such as the basement outdoor space, the current connection to the community is developed. The proposed concept builds on the existing scheme to welcome community by increasing usable space and facilitating gathering zones in an attempt to strengthen the bond between residents and Armley House.

The property retains its charm and features but allows the chance for a new collection of people to enjoy and engage with its hidden grandeur.



Section BB of proposed external and internal design focused on facade



A view into the interior & activity

