

HOME IN THE COMMUNITY

This project has been nominated for the Social Justice Award as it investigates, through extensive site and thematic primary research, how to create spaces for the un-housed within a city context. It challenges how we might design for inclusion by proposing design solutions that facilitate and allow, the often alienated, 'un-housed', a daytime 'home' and equal place within society and the local community. It provides safe, comfortable, and inspirational spaces to welcome all of society.

This project transforms the former Leith Methodist Church into a daytime community centre for the unhoused. Motivated by seeing how Edinburgh's housing crisis can isolate vulnerable young people and fracture communities this project explores how design can counter that; creating emotionally supportive, inclusive spaces that foster dignity and connection.

The building has been reinvented to maximise the use of the vertical height of the existing sanctuary space by creating an open, skylit interior courtyard community cafe. The surrounding cellular spaces provide activities to connect the community through design interventions and careful material selection, providing nuanced levels of privacy defined by spatial function and curated interior views.

EXISTING SITUATION

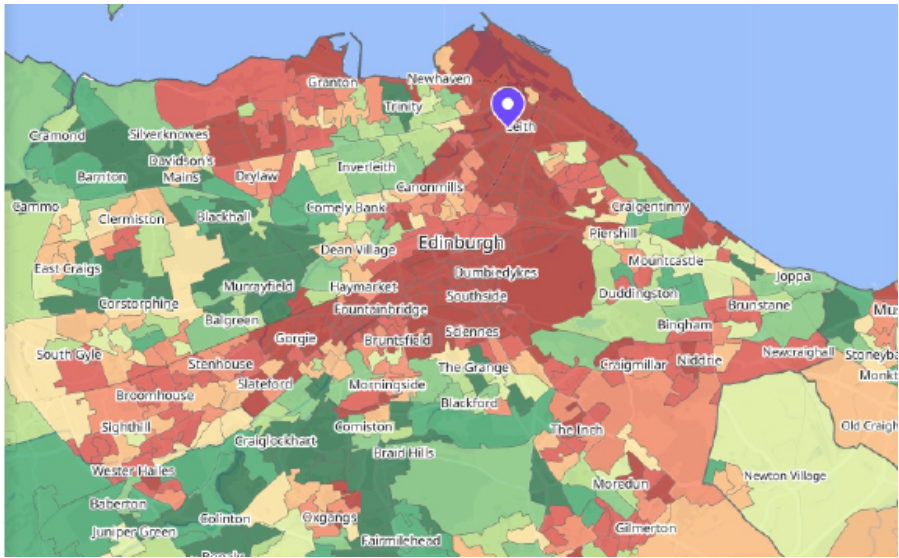
Edinburgh has one of the highest homelessness rates in Scotland, with a **23%** increase in applications from 2023 to 2024, far **exceeding** the national average of 9%.

Scot.gov.uk, 2024



Existing Situation Collage

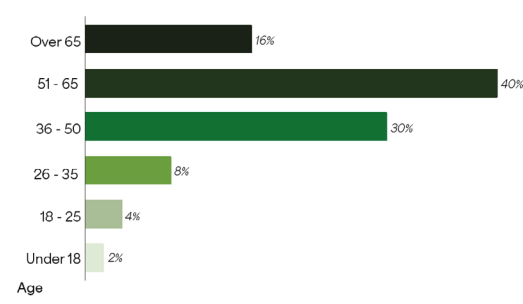
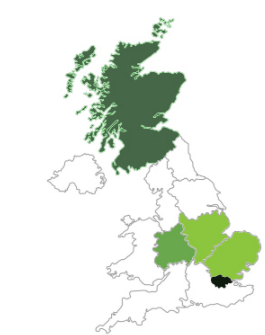
LOCATION



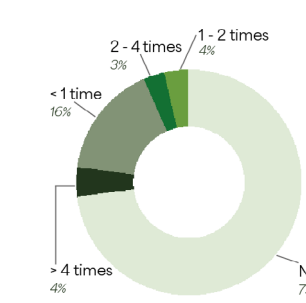
Map Showing Housing Depreciation in Edinburgh

USERS

Location of Respondents Age



Use of Local Centre (per month)



What features/spaces could your local community centre have for you to visit it more?
Responses of the unemployed:

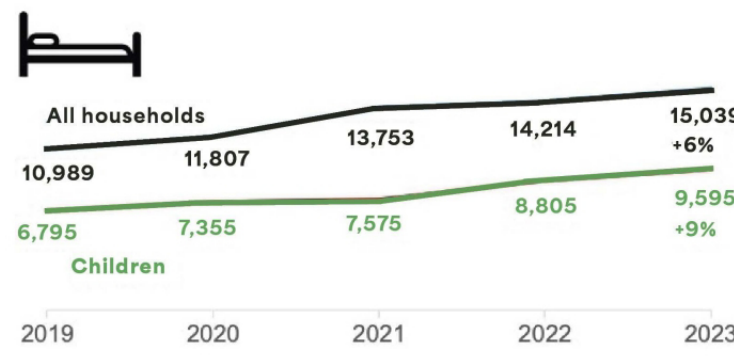
- Singers/comedians/entertainers, book clubs
- Evening and weekend activities
- Social groups, support groups, children's groups
- Coffee/tea mornings, book clubs, clubs for local youth/teens, games such as pool, craft hobbies like knitting, support groups for people with ADHD or ASD or suffering from mental health issues, homeless shelters

Showing there is a disengagement of engaging with local community centres within the younger demographic.

National Survey 28/08/2024 - 16/10/2024 Responses: 166

STATISTICS

Graph Showing the Increase of Children in Temporary Accommodation in Scotland Over the Last Four Years



Shelter Scotland, 2024

UN DEVELOPMENT GOALS

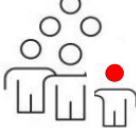
UN Sustainable Development Goal 11:

Sustainable Cities and Communities

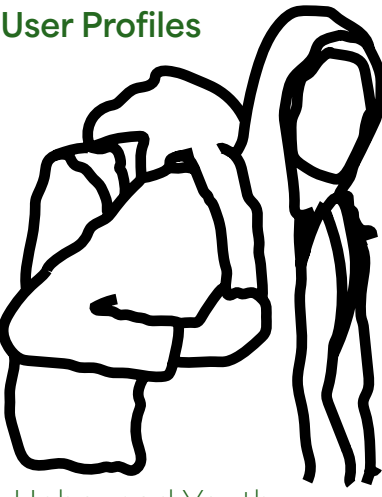
- Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

This proposed project also involves the redevelopment of a brownfield site part of promoting the value of existing buildings in the urban districts to the North-East of Edinburgh.

United Nations, 2025



User Profiles

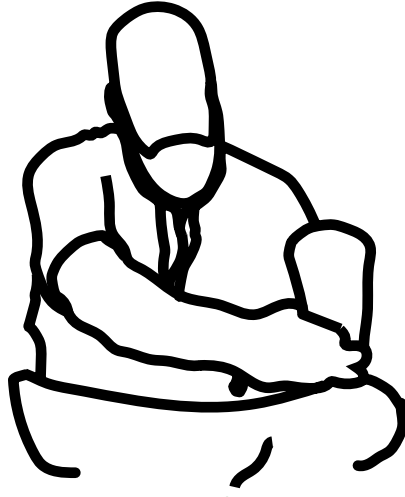


Unhoused Youth

Age: 16 - 25

Fears: Anxiety, PTSD

Wishes: Mentorship, life social skills training

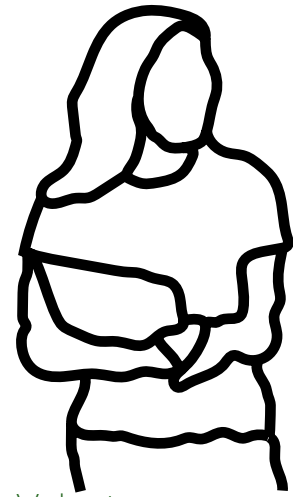


Unhoused Refugees

Age: 34+

Fears: Limited English proficiency

Wishes: Community connections, find employment

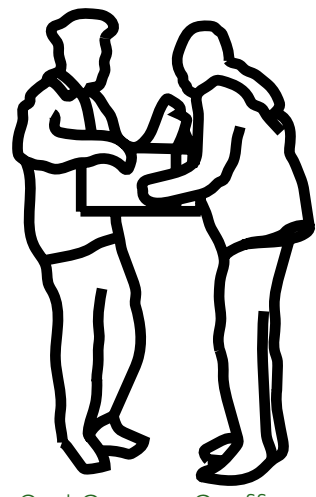


Volunteers

Age: 18+

Fears: Working in isolation

Wishes: Organising meals, supportive drives etc



3rd Sector Staff

Age: 25+

Fears: How to support clients with recovery

Wishes: Supervising mindfulness groups



Design Solution Collage

SITE SELECTION

Client Interview 23/10/2024

What to include:

I had an interview with a representative from the Bethany Christian Trust to understand the **architectural** and **environmental qualities** my chosen site should have relevant for such a vulnerable user group. Such as side entrances and a historical building that is both **familiar** and avoids being **imposing**, these are shown on the right.

My final choice is a historical building a with rich and **characterful** history that can provide design references in the entrance for visitors. The interior architecture is quite minimal, allowing the opportunity to create a homely and familiar feel. The ground windows are opaque offering some security. The building has the charm and character to provide the **required facilities** as well as the **location** for accessibility to its target users. Its previous uses as a children's club and yoga classes mean that it is already known as a community hub.

What to include:

- Historic Building
- Recessed Entrance
- Side/rear Entrance
- Close to Hostels/Temporary Accomodation

What to avoid:

- Large Windows
- Loud/busy Areas
- Large Complex Spatial Volumes
- Religious References

HISTORY

Brief history of the support of homeless people in Edinburgh, relating to community.



1880s - Great Junction Street



1913 - Leith Dockers Strike



1980s

Reuse of St Stephen's Church
Converted into a community welfare centre

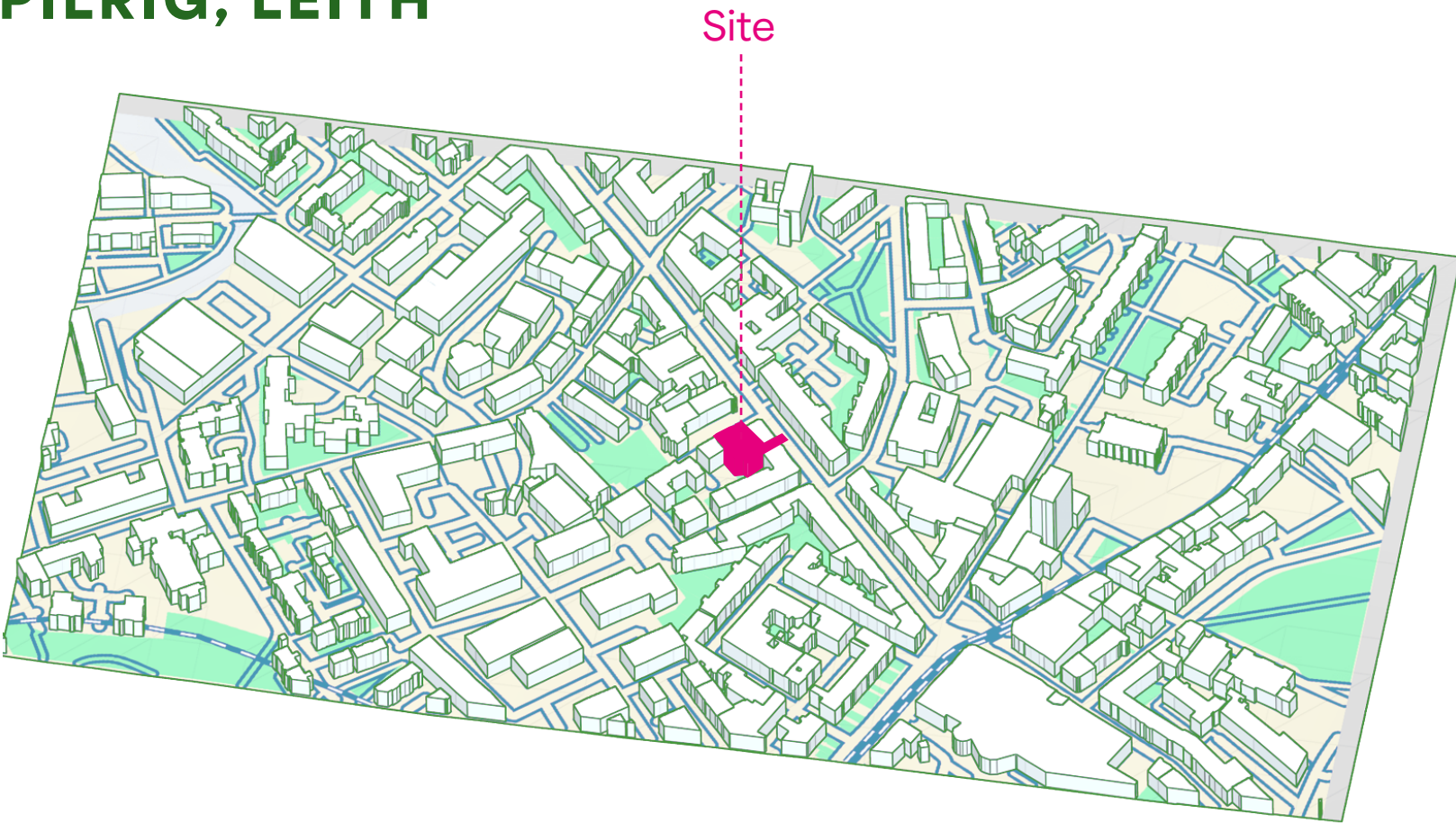
Bethany Care Shelter Launched
Bethany Christian Trust



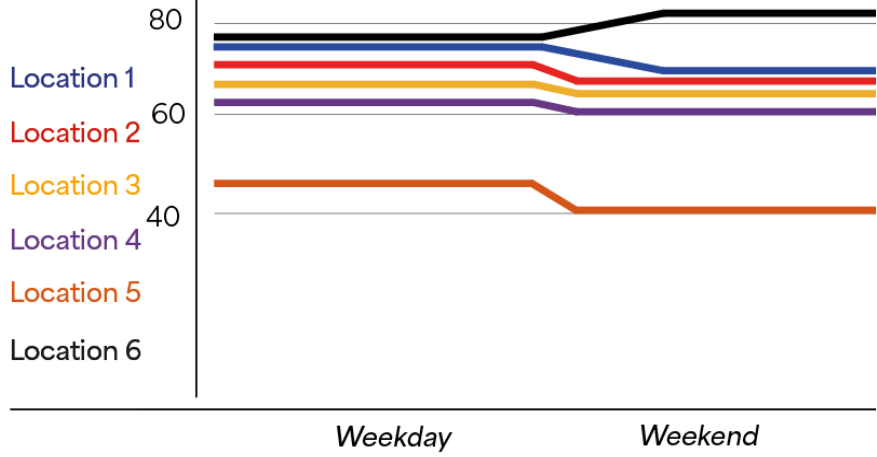
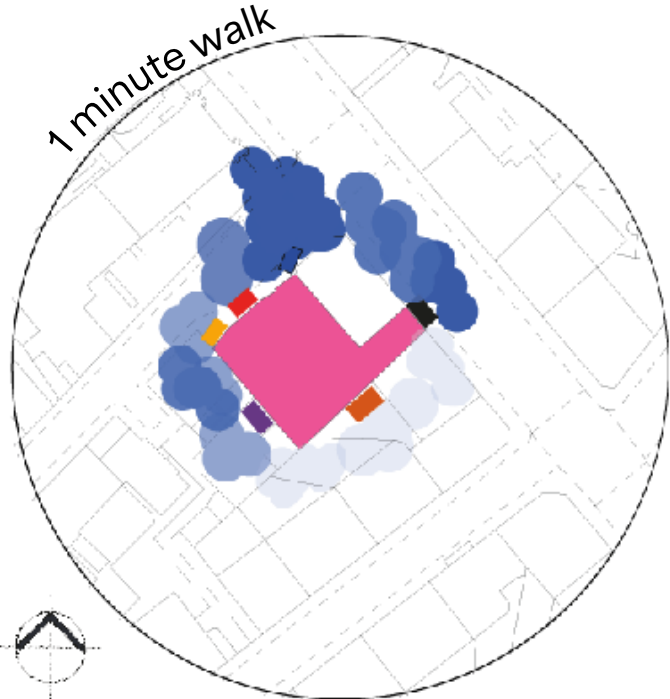
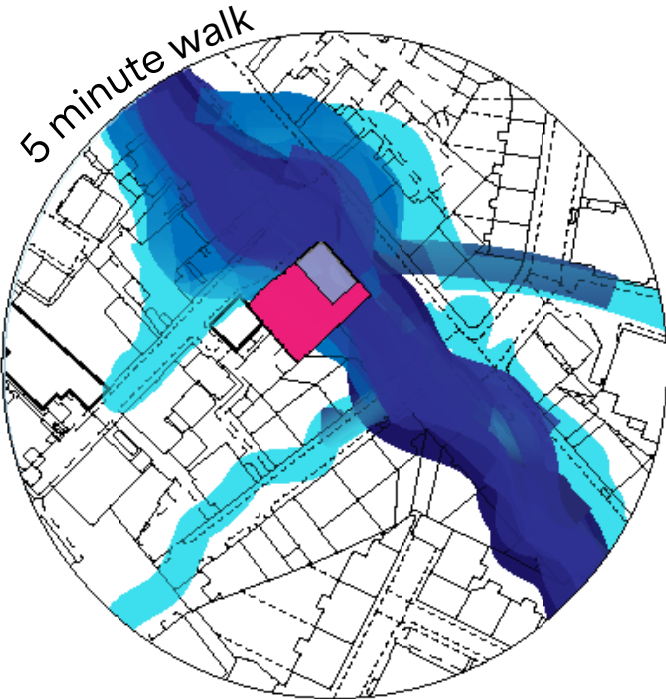
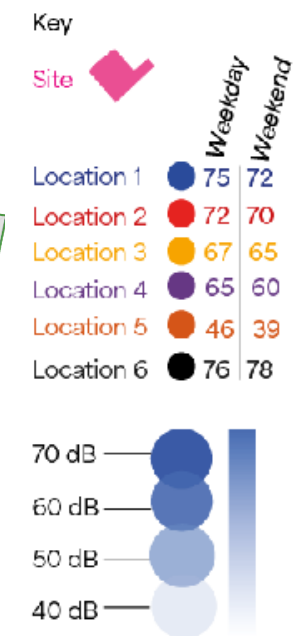
Edinburgh Student Newspaper
Showing increase in social iniatives that expand **past housing** for the homeless



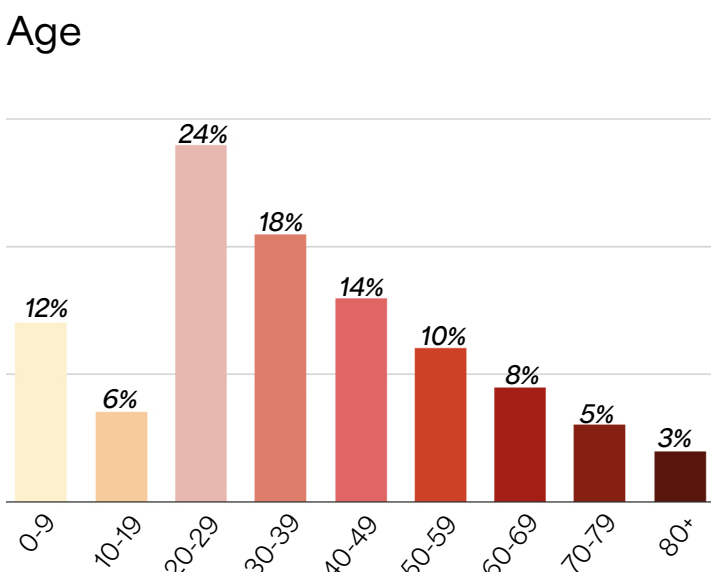
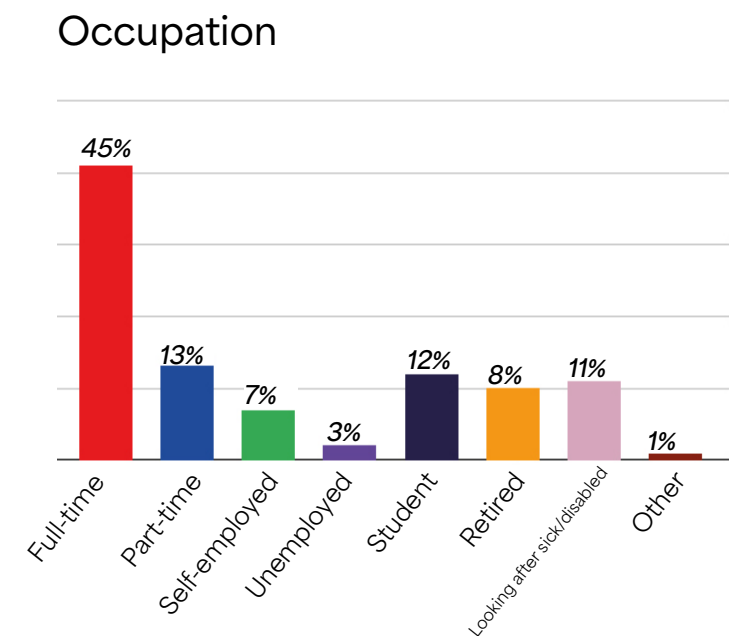
PILRIG, LEITH



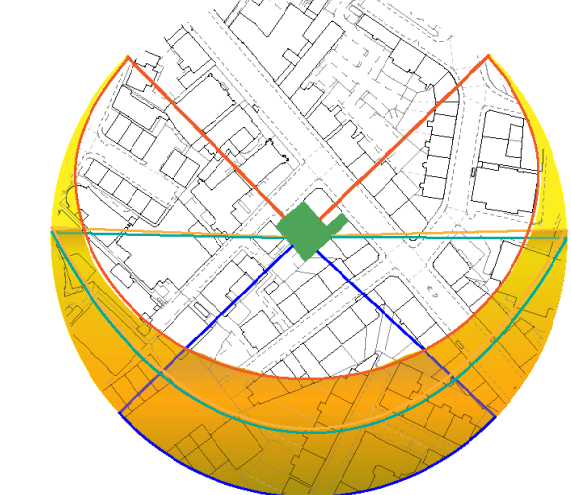
SOUND ANALYSIS



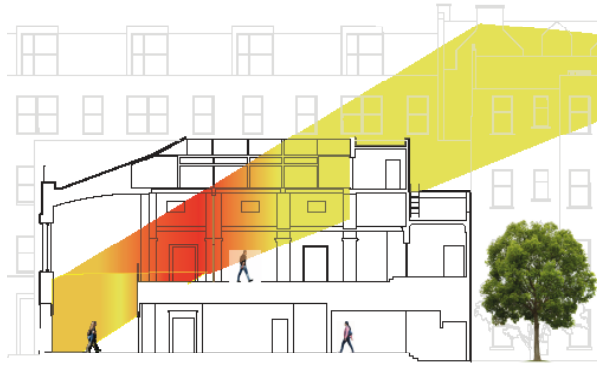
Pilrig Residents Characteristics



LIGHT ANALYSIS



Summer Solstice - 10:30 - 13:30

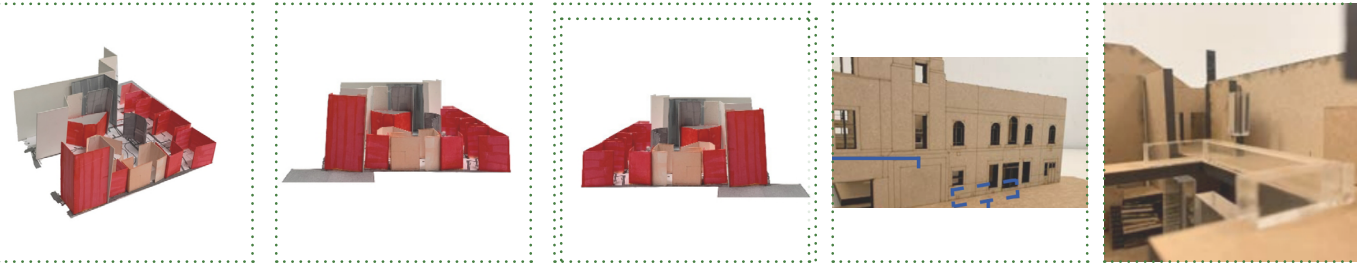
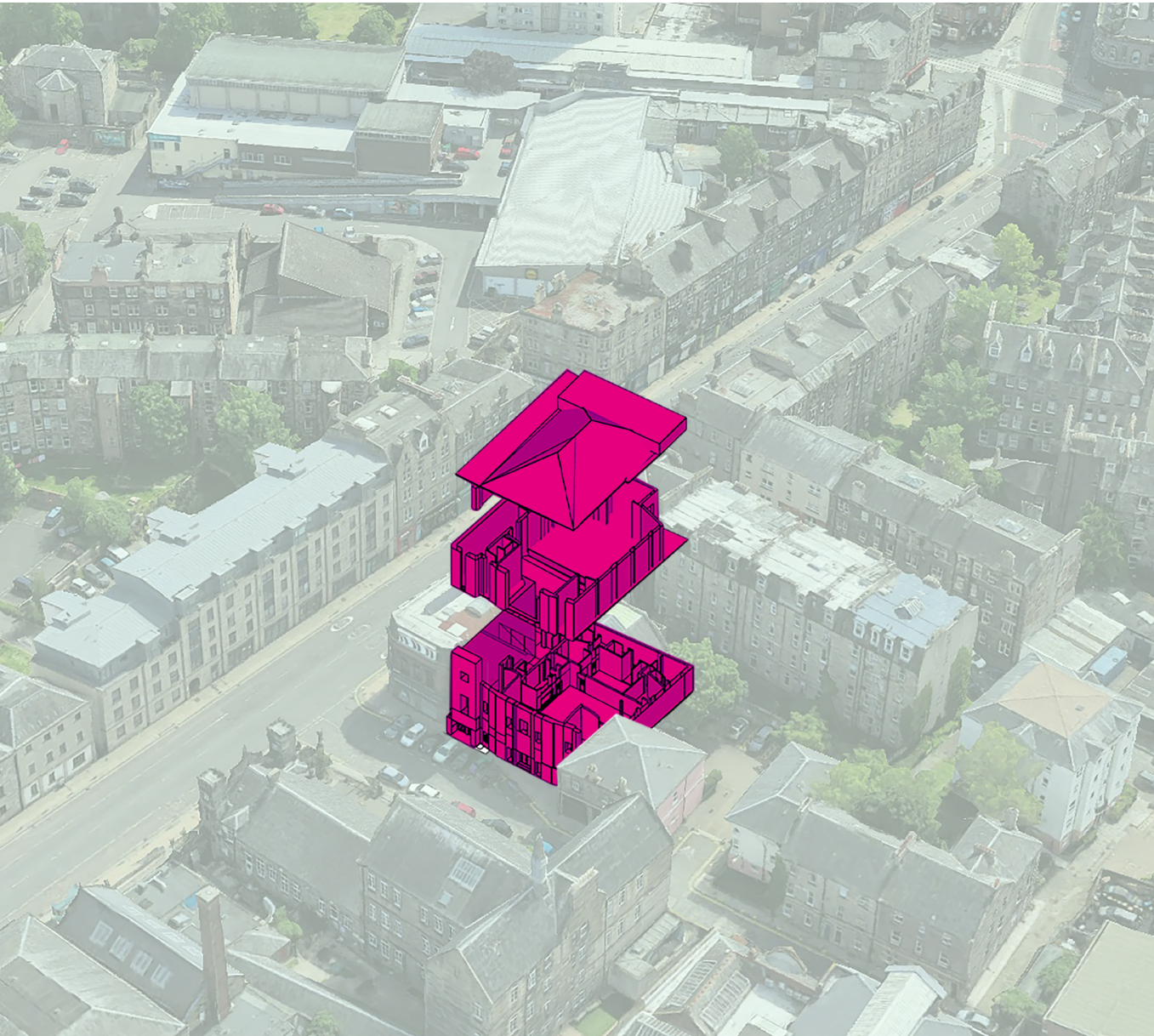


Vernal Equinox - 12:30 - 15:30

Existing Lighting Sections Study

Daylight availability and sunlight entering the space through the skylights provides improved health and well-being, regulating circadian rythmns and improved mood and sleep.

EXISTING SITE STRUCTURE



Exploded Existing Isometric & Sketch Models
It has four entrances, with one to the adjoining street - providing a discrete entrance/exit.



Ground Floor

CORE PRINCIPLES

Core psychological concepts that guide **trauma-informed design** for healing environments for people experiencing homelessness.



Privacy



Empowerment



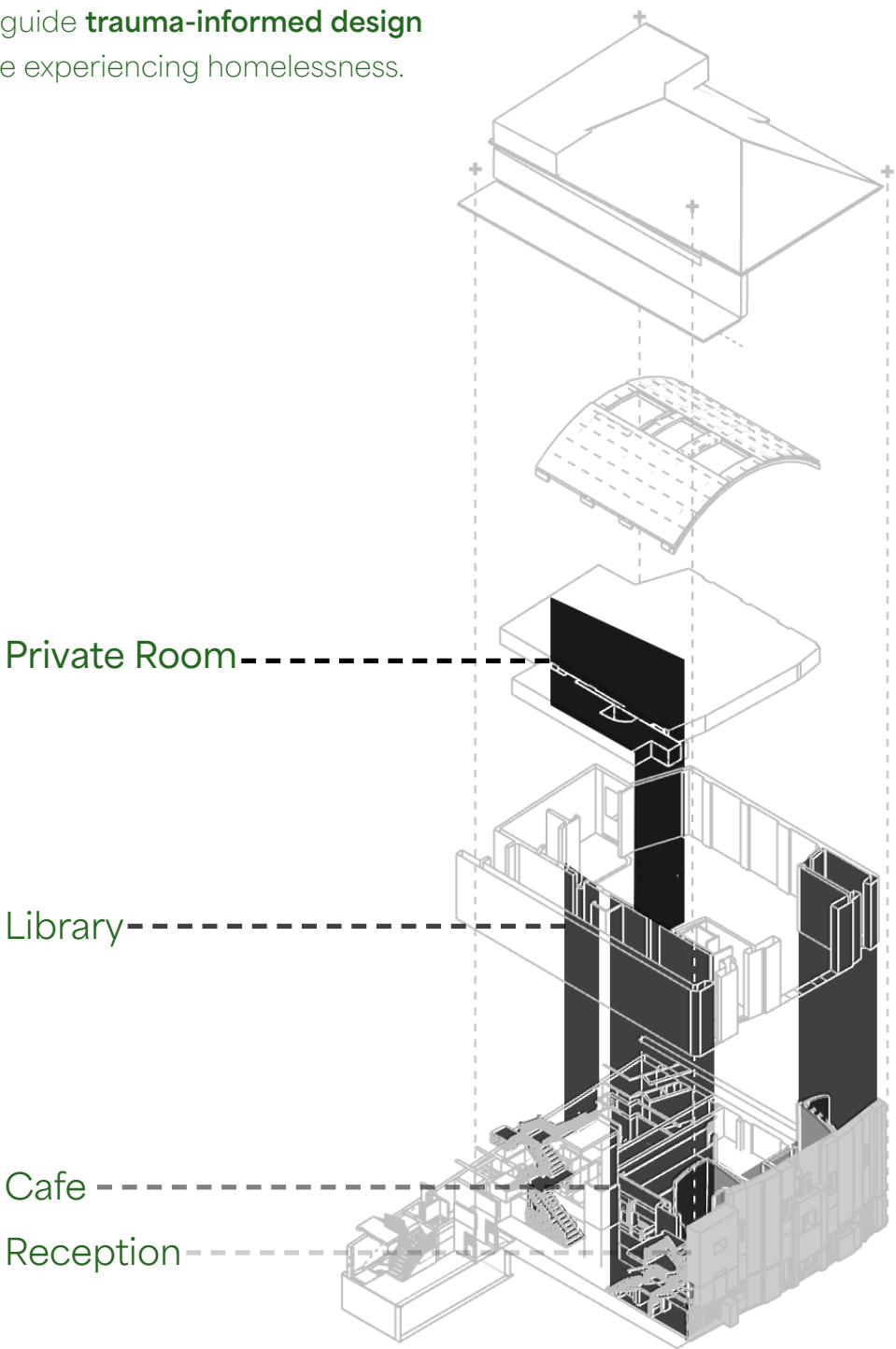
Security



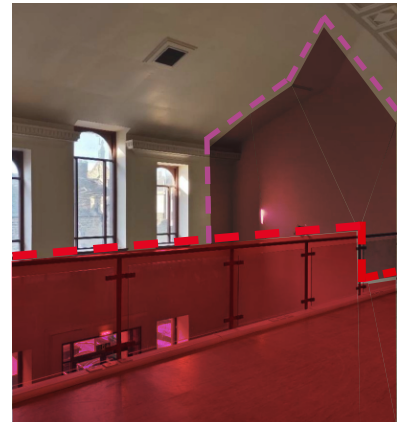
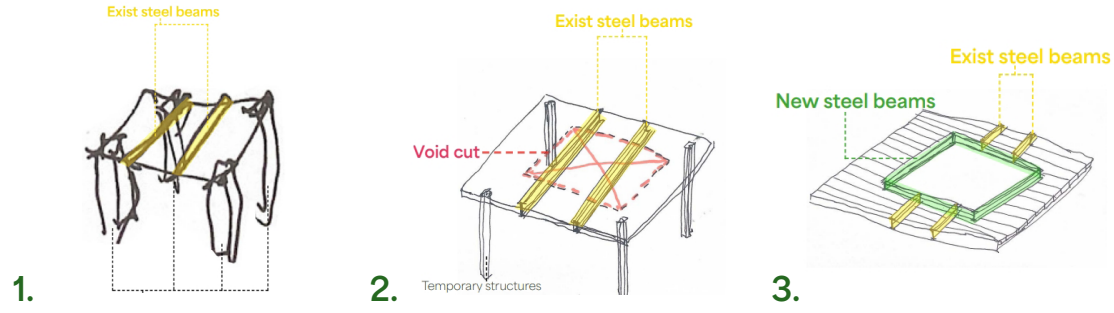
Beauty



Community



Exploded Proposed Isometric Model



Balustrade & Load-bearing wall



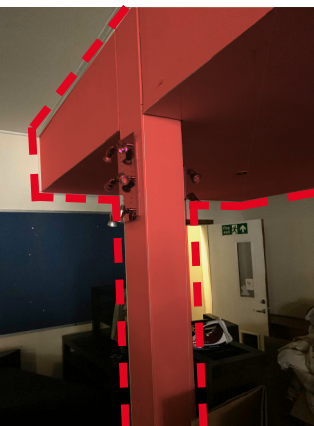
Existing vault supports



Existing lift

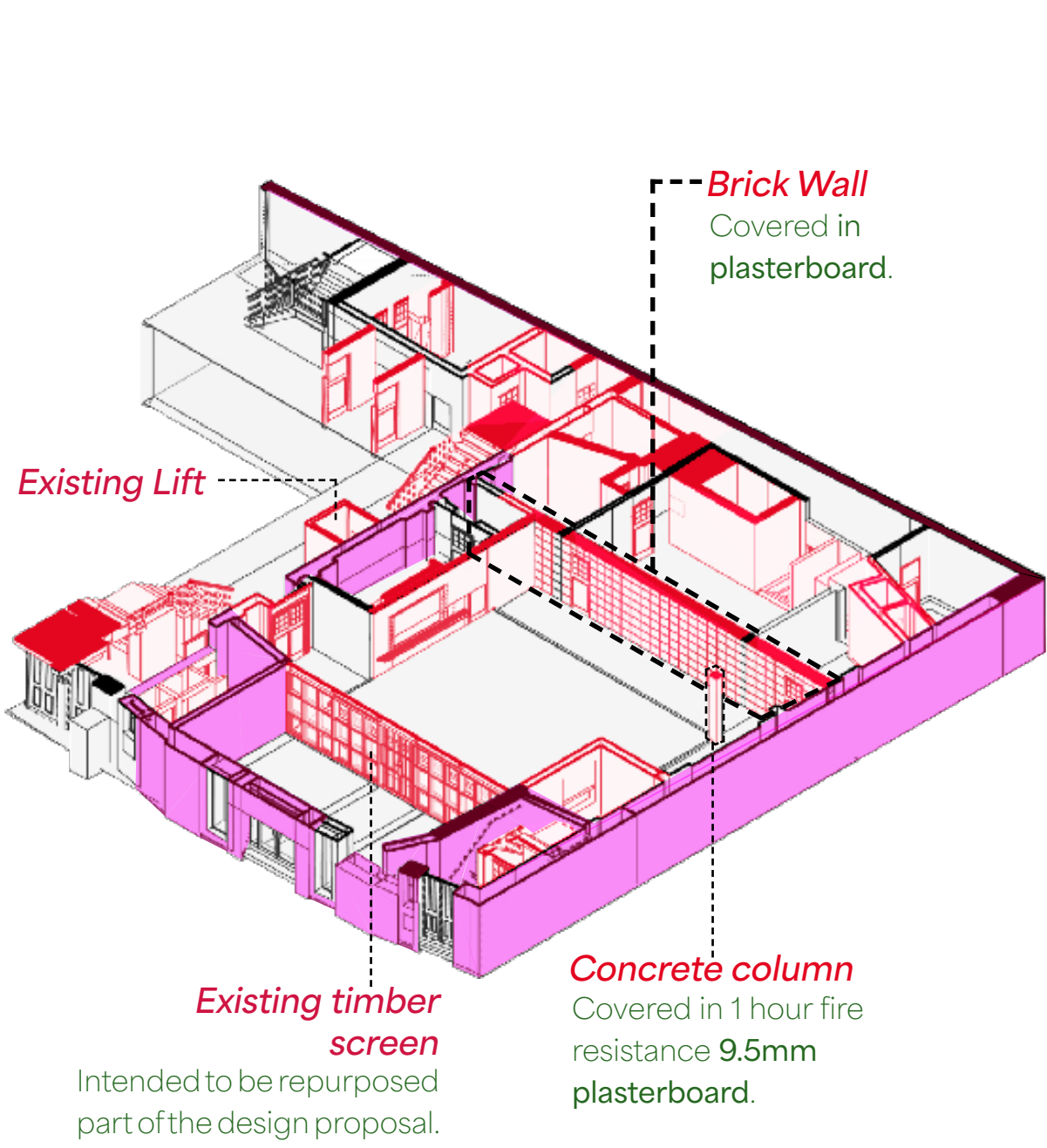


Exist timber screen

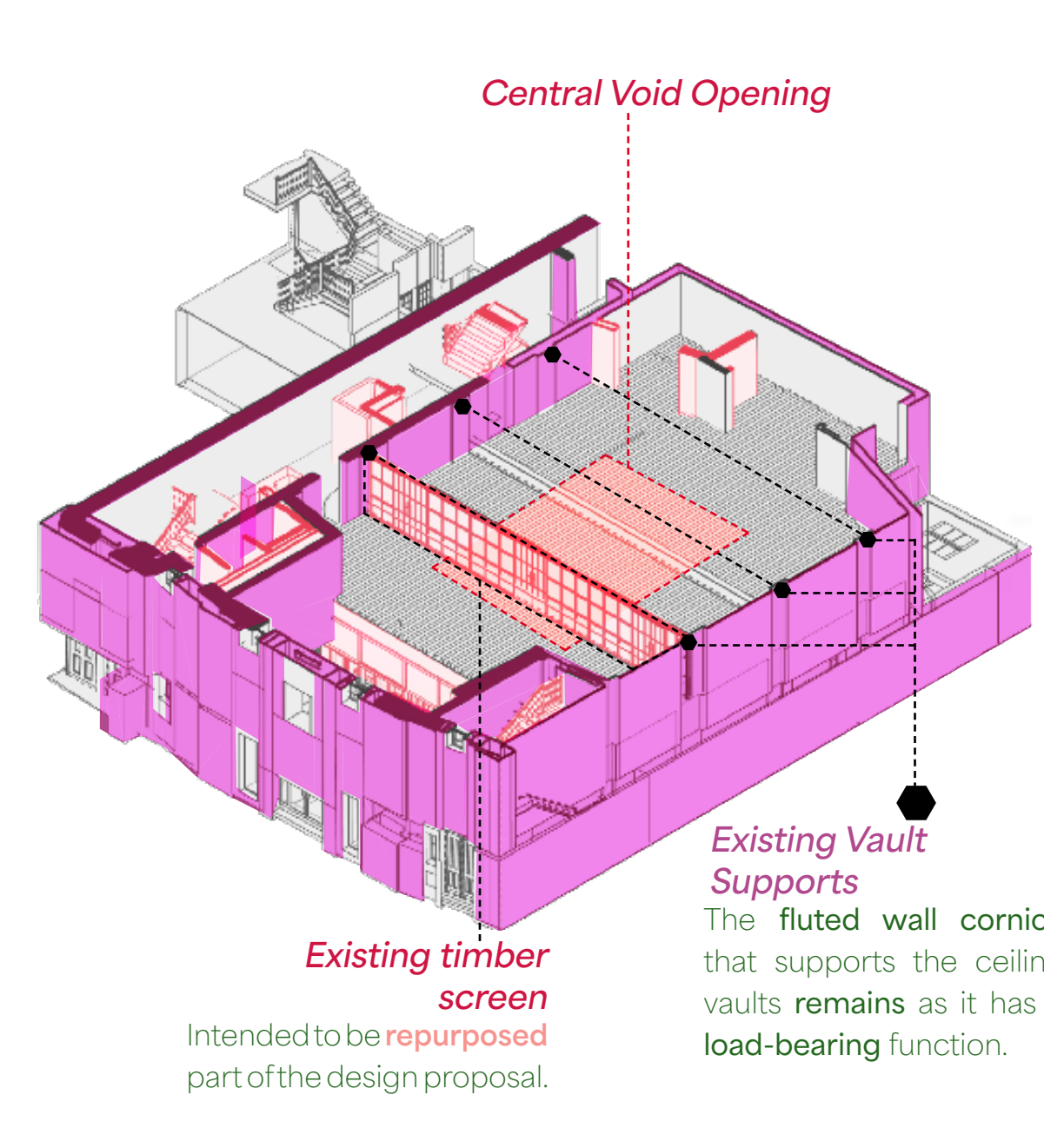


Concrete column

PROPOSED DEMOLITIONS



First Floor



Ground Floor

DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Having explored the core psychological principles on the previous page next I established how the key elements of an interior can represent these principles through:

Accoustics | Lighting | Mobility | Materiality | Furnishings

Beauty

Beauty

Security

Privacy

Empowerment

Community

Security

Privacy

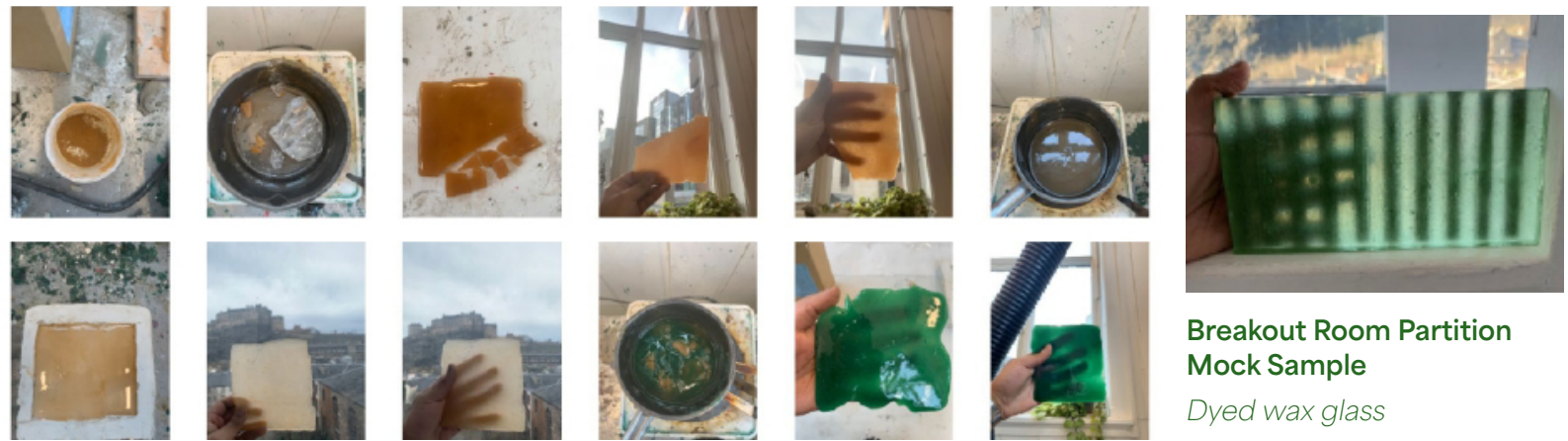
Sketchbook Video

Showing further material/concpetual investigations.

MATERIAL RESEARCH

It is important to create a user-centred approach for this, in creating a threshold between Private and Public. As the user should feel both in a safe and secure environment while the centre should also be accessible to the user.

PUBLIC-----SEMI-PRIVATE-----PRIVATE



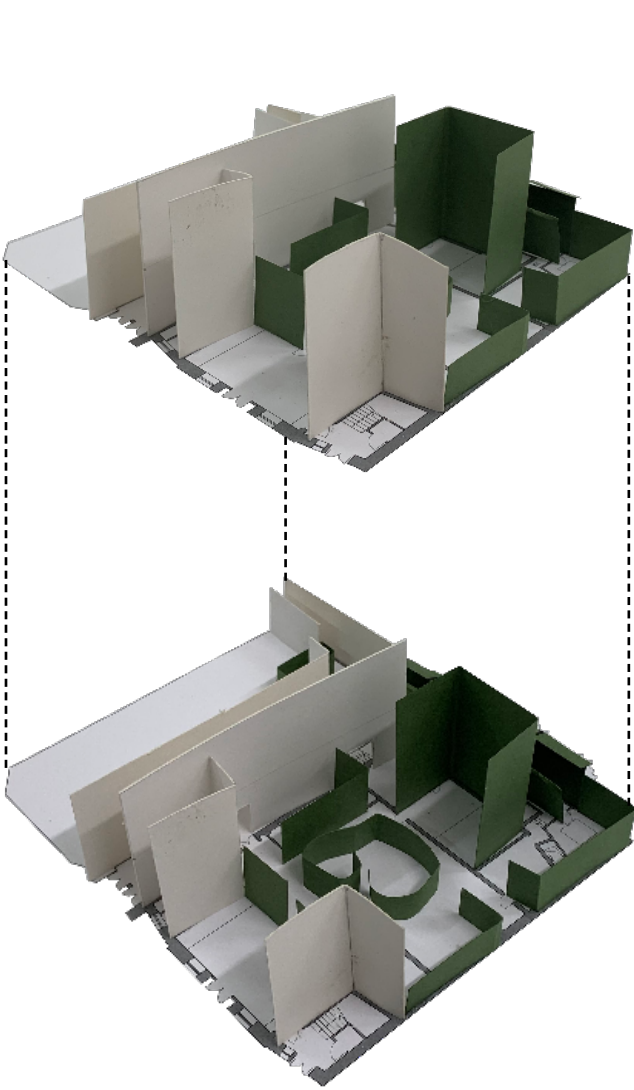
Library/Reception Partition Mock Samples

As previously established it is important these walls within the building are **slightly translucent** in order to provide **security** of the users - by allowing **visual access** into other rooms. However it should also act as a clear **barrier** before entering a more private place

Dyed wax glass

SPATIAL ZONING

This initial sketch model features a radial spatial strategy for the ground floor to provide a constant social atmosphere to this level. Preventing it from becoming a quiet dead area/wating room, with auxillary staff offices placed around a central point.



- PUBLIC SPACES
- SEMI - PRIVATE SPACES
- PRIVATE SPACES

DRAFT INTERIOR VISUALS

Applying the pyschological principles

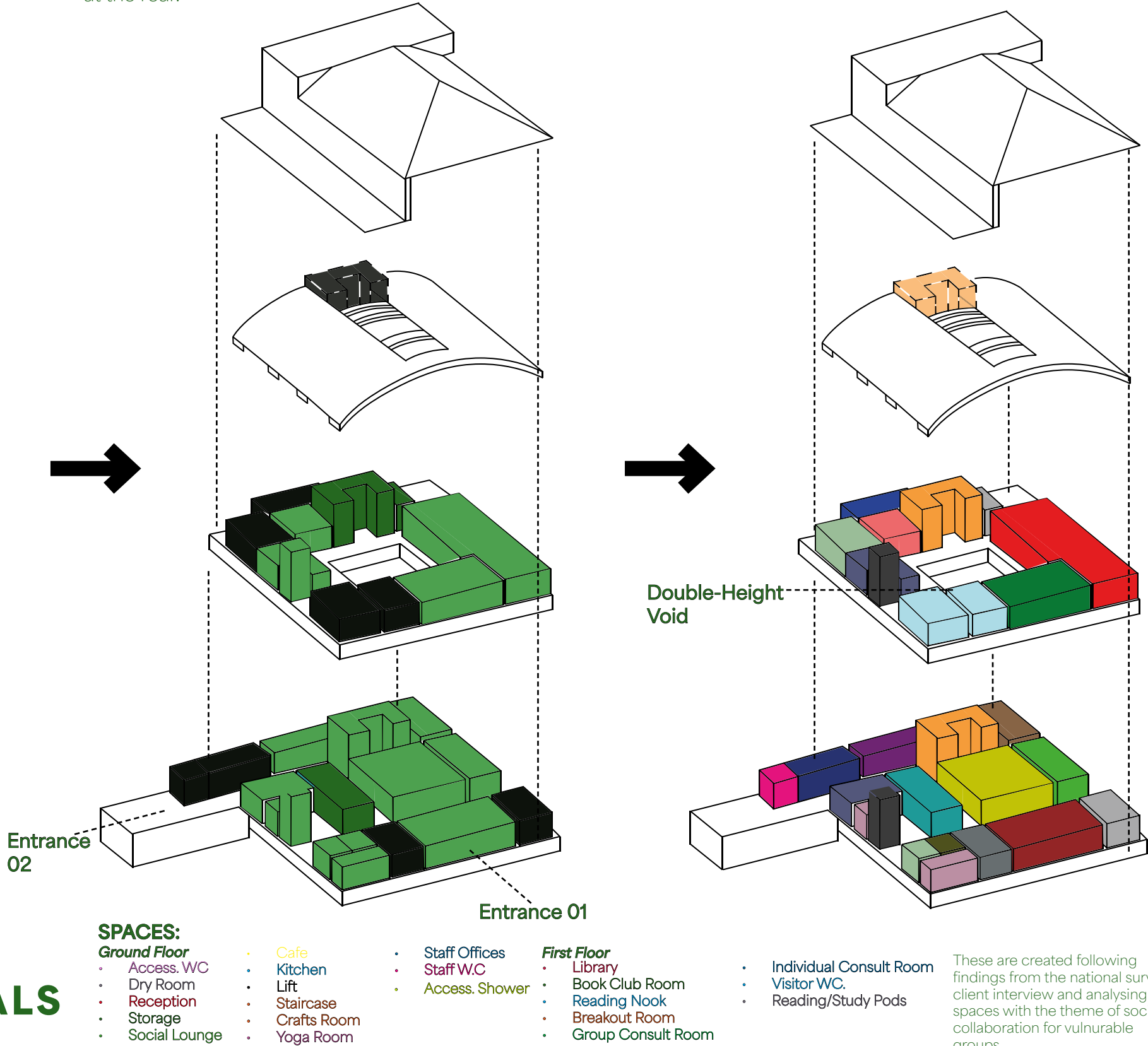
Using the tailored design framework for key zones in the design, driven by the rationale that a built environment can positively influence its users.



Library

This is a space that is open to all Ediburgh citizens, however due to the general function of the building will operate as a quiet & cozy atmosphere for the users.

This more refined diagram illustrates the **balancing of public and private areas**, this is crucial for an effective community centre. The public areas are on the ground floor, as it is most accessible being the first space visible upon entering. The back of house facilities such as storage, staff offices & staff toilets are at the rear.

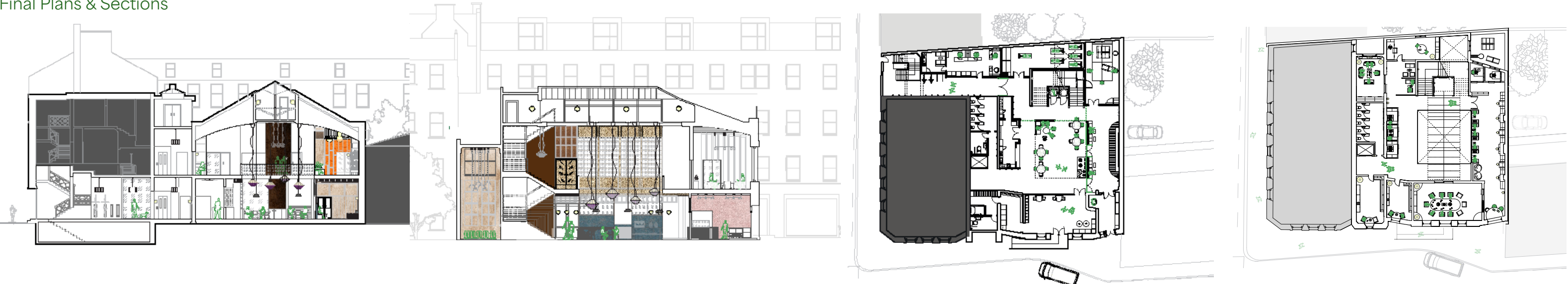


Floral Glass Screen

Signifying the consultation room with a local pattern without reducing all visual barriers but still providing full security for those entering this **transition space**.

DESIGN RESOLUTION

Final Plans & Sections



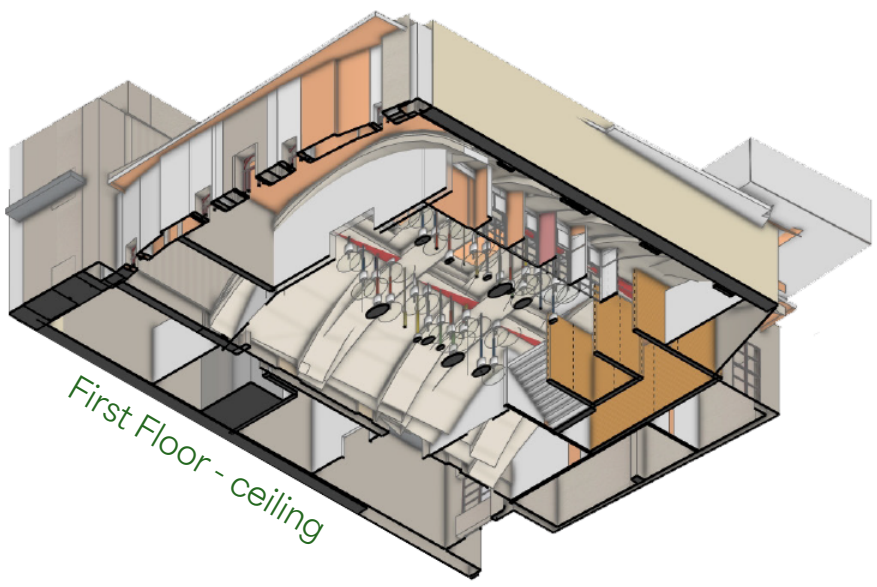
Having explored what are the design features that create a supportive environment, I understood how vital **connections / associations to home** are to facilitate **dignity**. As these convey a feeling of security, in addition I have learnt how the beauty of a space lies not just in its form and structure, but its ability to be **personalised** and **reflect** the community that it is intended to respond to.



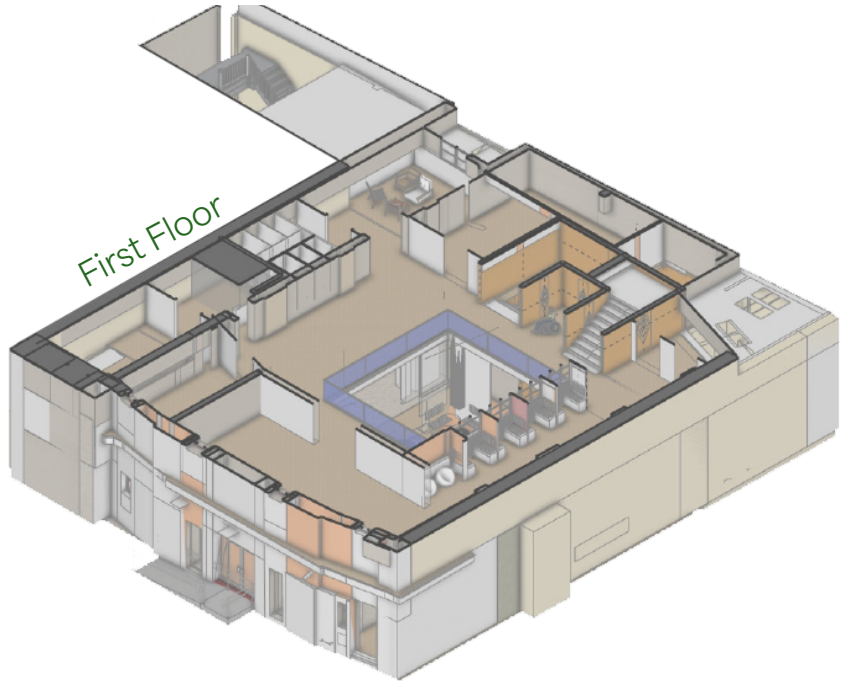
Decorative WC mirror
Promoting empowerment & dignity.



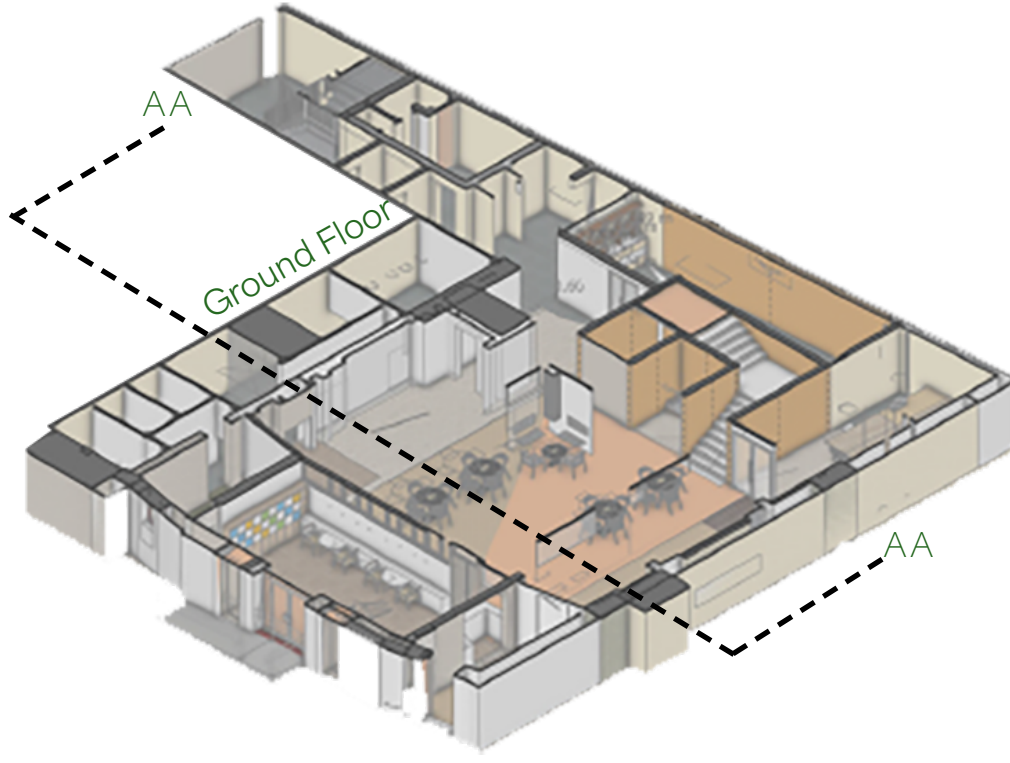
Dog Beds
Facilitating pets increases user security.



First Floor - ceiling



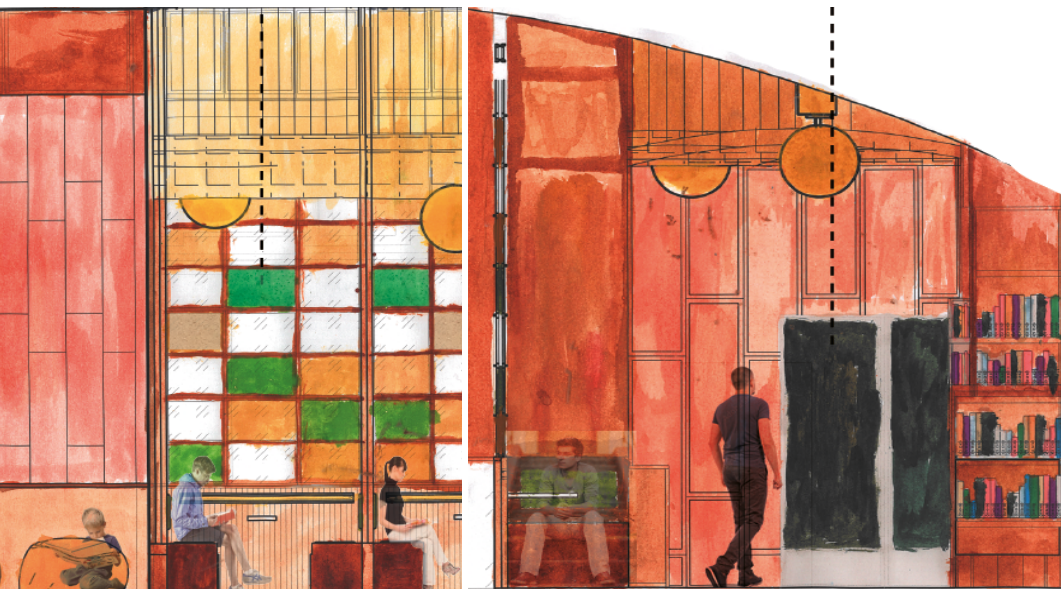
First Floor



Ground Floor

Final Digital Model

FINAL VISUALS



First Floor - Library



Ground Floor - Social Lounge



Ground Floor - Cafe



Ground Floor - Reception



SECTION - AA
Perspective Section