

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS



A Space for Autistic Children to Enhance Life Skills in an Environment Suited to their Needs.

The Project:

Bright Beginnings is a safe space, tailored to the specific needs of **autistic children aged 4-11**, creating comfort and safety for the children to develop skills so they can have **equal opportunities in later life**. These activities include building independence, kitchen skills, interaction, gardening, reading, serving and creativity, empowering children to engage with their surroundings to become more self-sufficient.

The Issue:

“There are over **180,000 autistic pupils in England**, 73% of whom are in mainstream schools. autistic children and young people are being **failed** by a woeful lack of appropriate school places and teachers are not being equipped to meet autistic students needs.”

-National Autistic Society, 2023



SENSORY TRAIL

Outdoor Sensory Trail



LOCATION



Entrance Space



Location:

Bright Beginnings is located on 50 New Walk in Leicester. The location is on a quiet, pedestrianized road which is ideal for autistic users. The site is a 12 min walk from town centre, with walking distance to the train station and multiple bus stops, which is also better for the environment. With limited schools within the surrounding area that specialise specifically with autistic children, it was bought to my attention the urgent need of designing a space suited to the specific needs of autistic children. Providing comfort and suitable environment for them to learn in.

THE SPACE

The Space:

Inspired by nature and mirroring the children's story "We're Going on a Bear Hunt," by Michael Rosen, the space maintains a calming atmosphere to enhance a proactive and less stimulating environment to learn in, taking children on a journey through overcoming obstacles, making choices and facing challenges. By incorporating elements that appeal to each of the five senses, the space provides a personalized experience for every child, accommodating their individual triggers while encouraging them to push boundaries and make their own decisions on that route they want to take through the space. On entry children are greeted by a staff member, with natural elements in the space to create a calming atmosphere. Integrated touch screen monitors so children can make their own decisions on what route into the space they want to take, with natural light pathways guiding them through.



Indoor Play Space

This interactive space includes a ball pit, slide, integrated seating with books, all situated around the centre Creative Tree, to encourage children to engage with others. Children's artwork is portrayed in the space and is a way of allowing them to express their emotions through art.



Scented Secret Forest

Space is designed around smell which to some children is comforting. The hanging tulip bubble features release a scent of nature smells by popping the bubbles, creating a calming aroma. This space also has a touch wall where children can identify different nature elements.



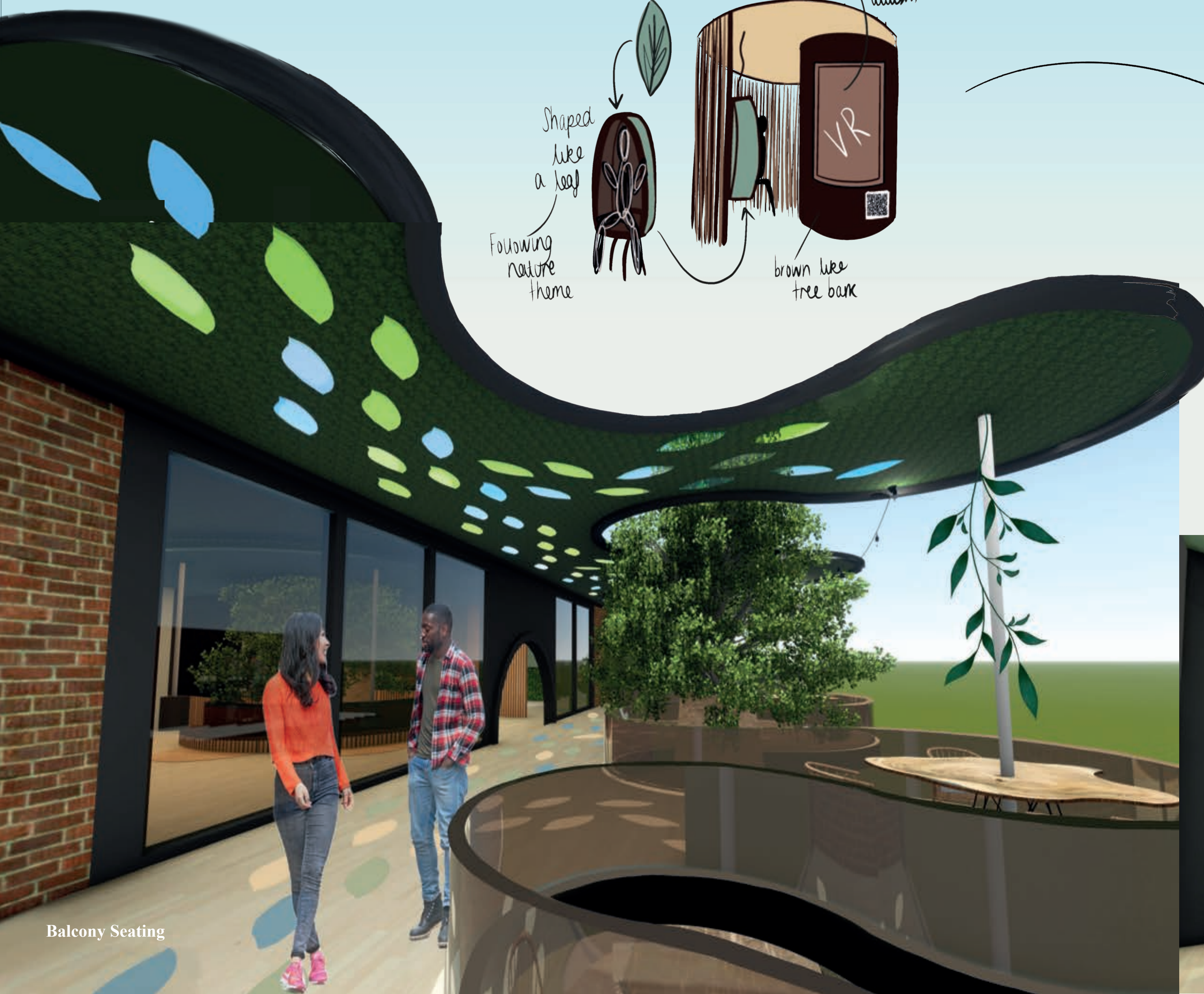
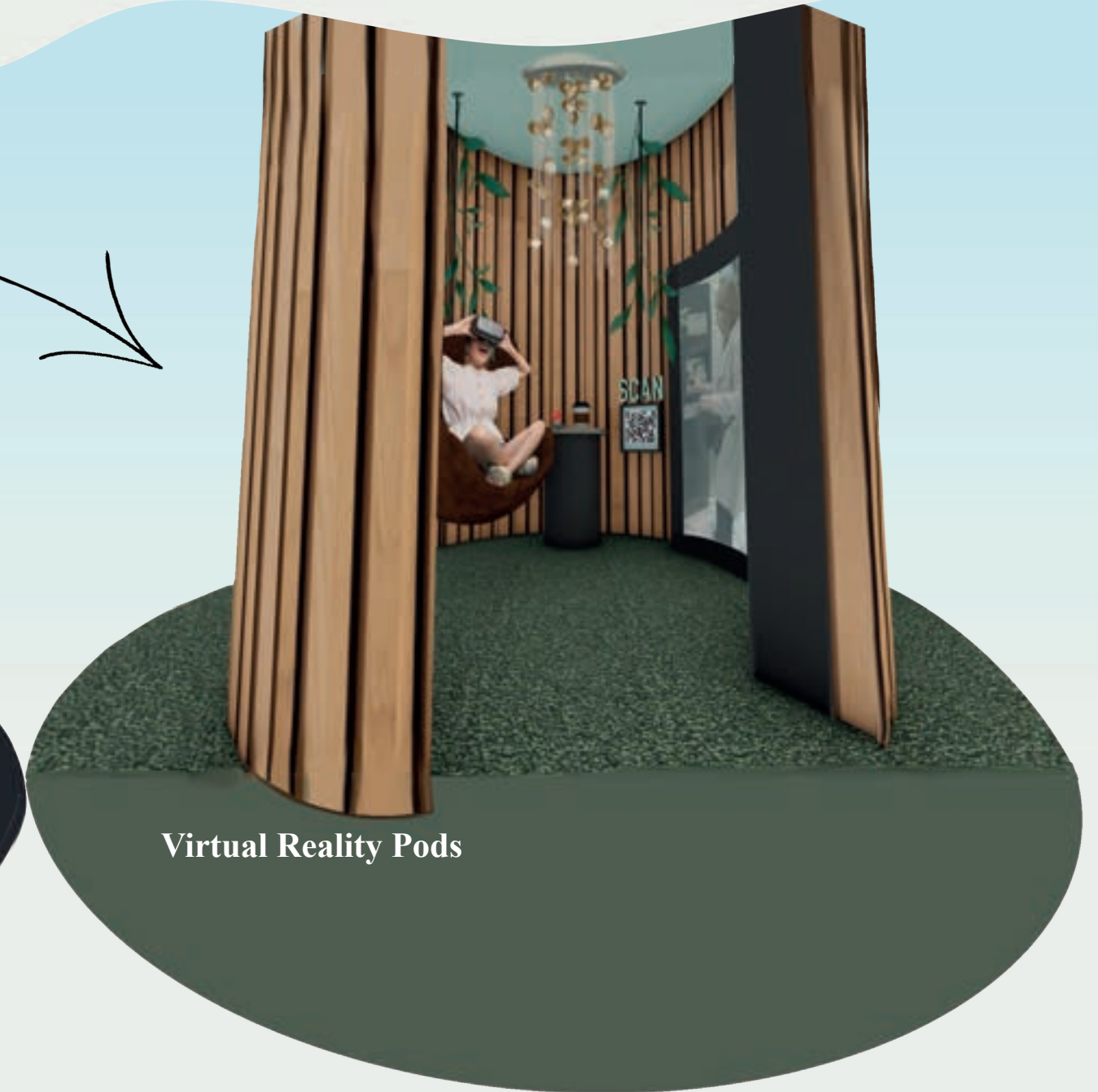
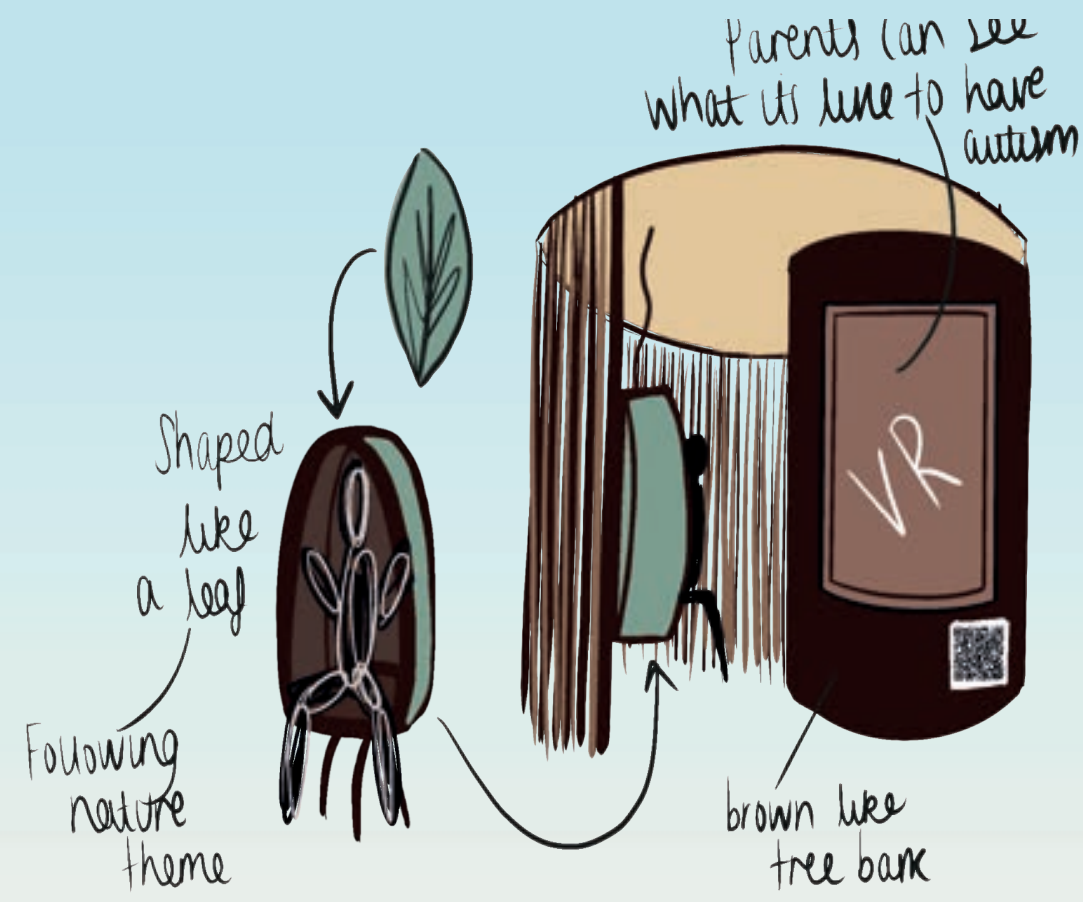
Light Immersive Experience

Secluded Light Projection rooms to create a calming space for overstimulated children. Each space is controlled by touch screens to adjust the light, colours and nature theme to attain to individual preferences.

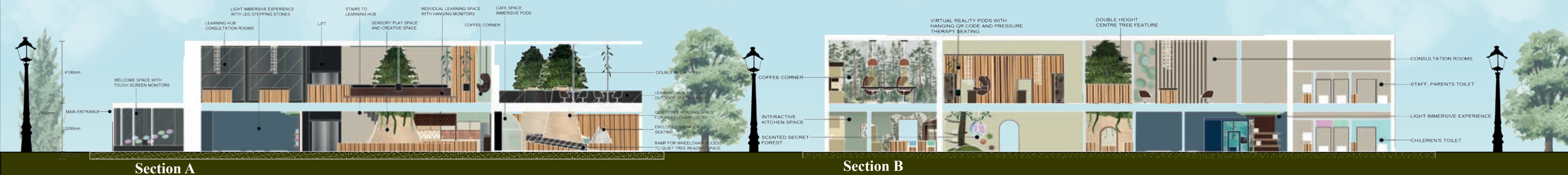
AUTISM AWARENESS

Alongside the space for autistic children is an opportunity for parents and carers to use the various spaces to learn about autism. Including the independent learning space, have 1-1 consultations with a specialist to learn more information about how an autistic person thinks to gain a better understanding.

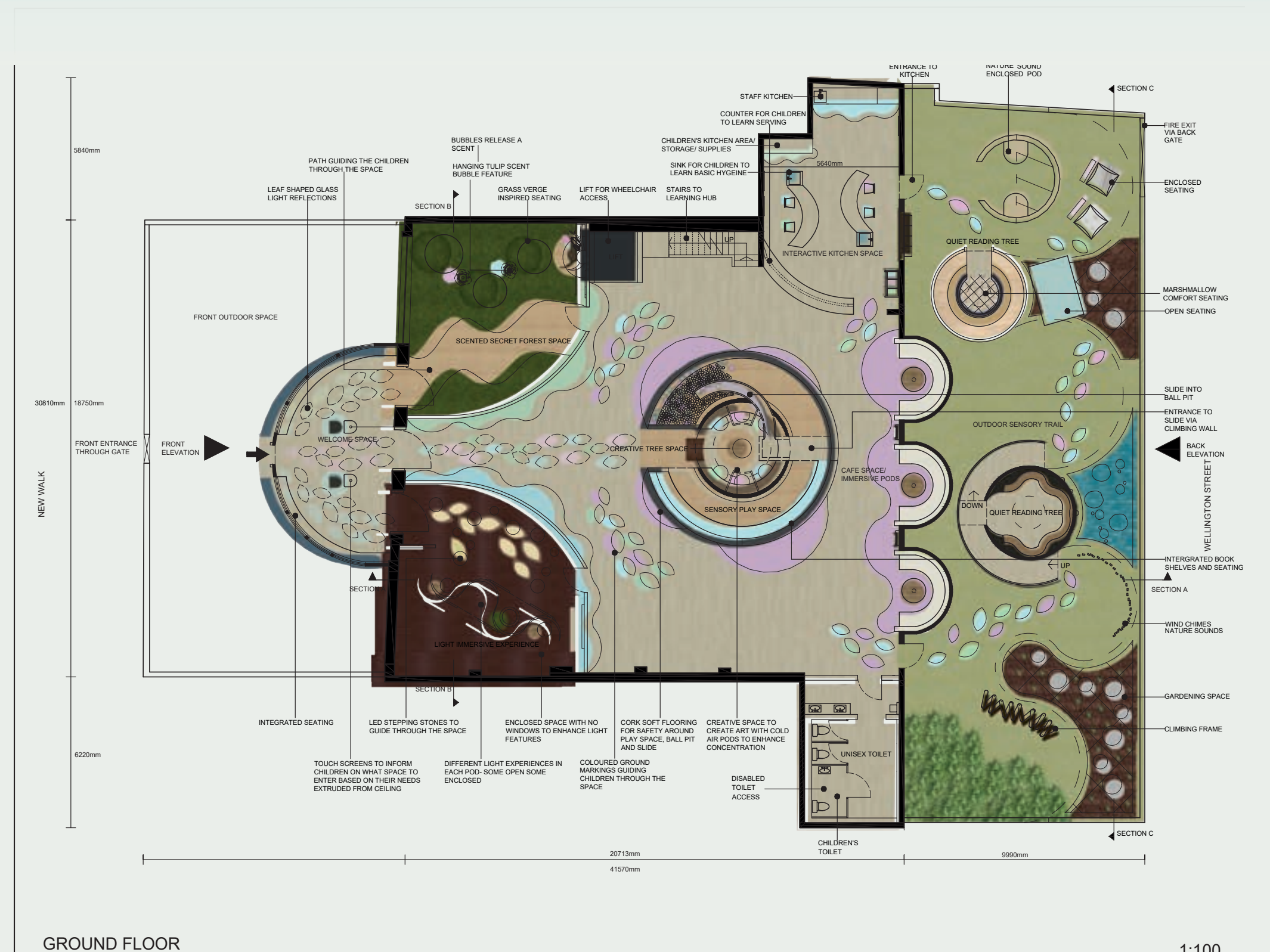
VR pods generated by scanning a QR code, projecting how an autistic person's mind works to make others aware. Includes "Pressure Therapy" seating which mimics the feeling of comfort which eases a child from overstimulation.



MATERIALS



The idea of using nature throughout the space is to keep a calming atmosphere for children whilst symbolizing the forest like design and journey through a nature trail. Using materials like exposed wood to replicate the natural elements within trees, accompanied with neutral tones with grey undertones for a less stimulating environment. Tactile materials were used throughout for a versatile variety for the children to choose from, depending on what provides them the most comfort, maintaining the use of nontoxic and sustainable materials for children's safety and to better the environment.



GROUND FLOOR