



SERENITY & SENSES

Serenity & Senses began from something deeply personal. Dedicated and inspired by my autistic brother Adam and my step-mum Vanessa, who has carried the emotional weight of care for years, this space was created with them and families like ours at its heart.

Designed for autistic children aged 3 to 14 and their parents, it offers more than a place to unwind; it provides understanding, dignity, and relief. The sensory environment is built around the five senses: touch, sound, sight, smell, and taste, to soothe and support neurodivergent needs gently.

Alongside this, a spa for parents follows the same sensory principles, offering calm, rest, and emotional release through scent, texture, sound, and stillness.

What sets this project apart is its authenticity. It is built from real experiences, shaped by love, exhaustion, and hope. This isn't just inclusive design. It is a quiet shift and powerful shift toward creating spaces that genuinely care.

In England, over 180,000 autistic pupils attend school, with 73% in mainstream settings (National Autistic Society, 2023). However, many environments fail to meet their sensory and emotional needs, causing distress for children and stress for their carers.

My project tackles this by designing sensory-friendly spaces that use lighting, colour, texture and zoning to reduce stress and support wellbeing for autistic individuals and their families. The following facts highlight the urgent need for such spaces.

Each person with autism experiences environments differently. What calms one may overwhelm another.

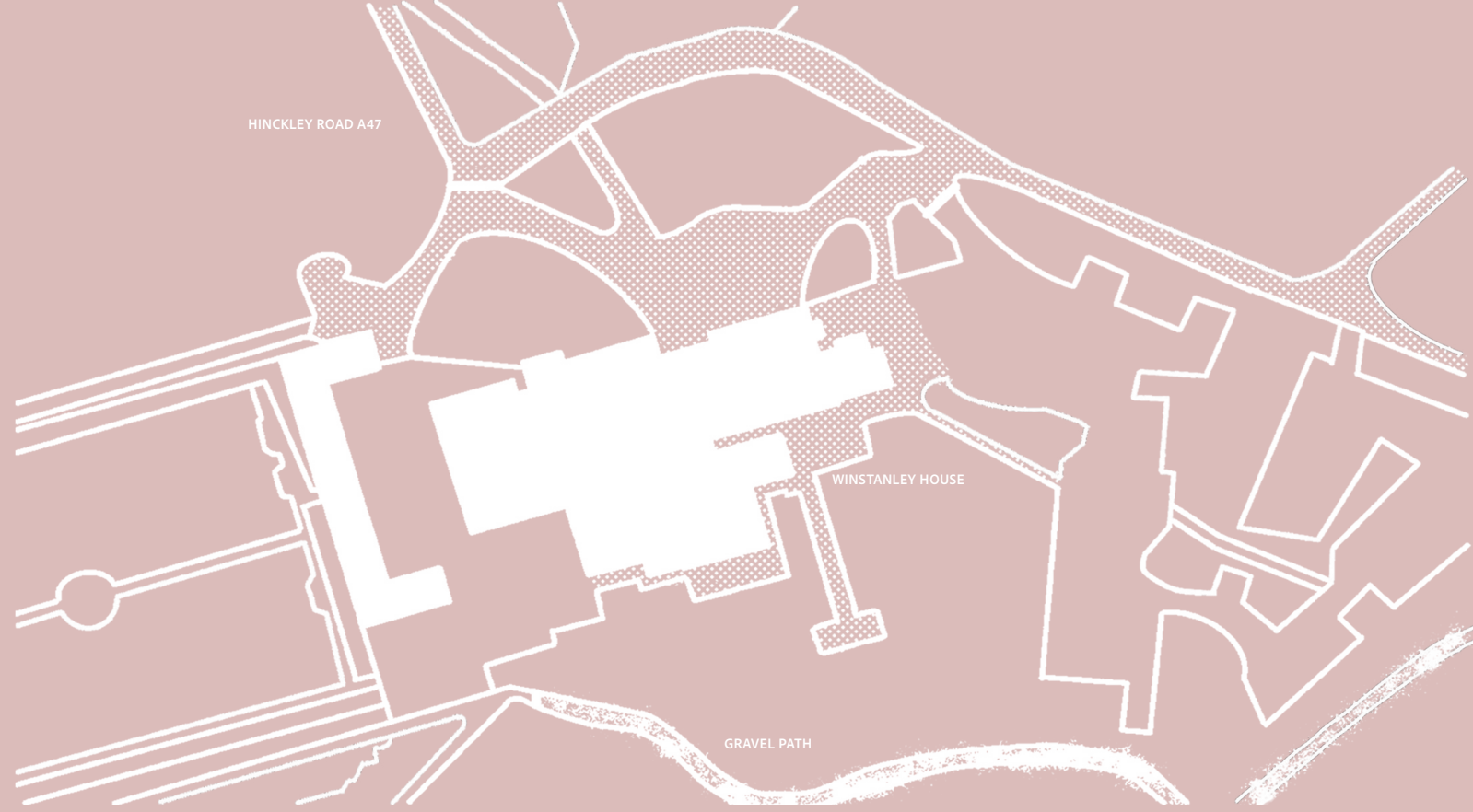
(Doty, 2017)

Gentle pastel colours help calm sensory sensitivities. Soft, muted tones are easier to tolerate than bright, intense primary colours.

(Ahrentzen & Steele in Doty, 2017)

Parents of autistic children experience high & chronic stress. Caring for a child with autism often leads to emotional exhaustion, with over 40% of parents experiencing clinically significant levels of stress.

(Mannion & Leader, 2023)



LOCATION

Winstanley House, a Grade II listed Georgian building in Leicester, offers excellent transport connectivity. Located just off Hinckley Road (A47) and about 3 miles from Junction 21 of the M1 motorway, it is easily accessible by car from surrounding areas. The site is also 3.5 miles from Leicester Railway Station, with frequent services to major cities like London and Birmingham, as well as easy taxi and bus connections. The local bus network along Hinckley Road connects the venue to the city centre and nearby towns. Situated next to Braunstone Park, Winstanley House provides scenic pedestrian access, enhancing its appeal. Its proximity to several schools creates a strong sense of community, while nearby attractions like the King Richard III Visitor Centre add cultural significance. With a mix of road, rail, public transport, and pedestrian access. In conclusion, Winstanley House is a highly connected and appealing venue within Leicestershire.



DEDICATED TO MY LOVELY BROTHER ADAM



AROMATHERAPY ROOM



WORKSHOP ROOM



MAIN RECEPTION

Winstanley Neurodiverse Design Concept

Reception Hub

The entrance leads into a reception area colour-drenched in linking light pink, creating seamless transitions for neurodivergent visitors through recognisable comfort. Sound-proofed seating areas minimise overstimulation whilst tactile wayfinding circles feature Braille and bold lettering in colour-coded palettes: pastel purple for spa, soft peach for restaurant, and pastel green-blue-pink for sensory areas. Floor lighting around edges guides those with visual impairments, whilst wheelchair-accessible routes are integrated throughout.

Sensory Zone (Ground Floor - House Area)

Nature-inspired sensory rooms utilise pastel colours and natural forms. The smell room for example, features oversized flowers releasing herb garden scents when petals are squeezed, providing controlled sensory experiences for those prone to overstimulation. Connection to the sound room occurs via crawl tunnel or accessible archway, where circular tree motifs glow during audio play. Wireless headphones offer concentrated sound options for children overwhelmed by ambient noise.

Restaurant (Taste Experience)

The restaurant completes the five-senses journey with sustainable, seasonal menus sourced from the on-site herb garden. Ingredients change seasonally to support local ecosystems whilst providing fresh, natural flavours that connect to the sensory rooms' scent experiences. Accessible design principles create neurodivergent-friendly dining environments with controlled acoustics and flexible seating arrangements.

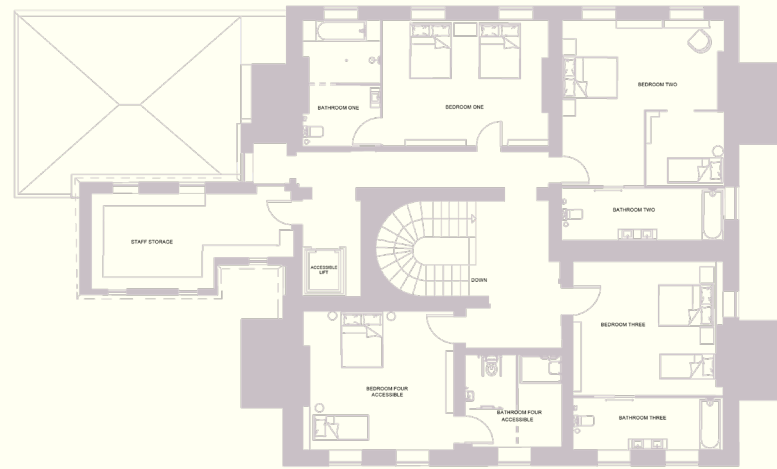
Spa (Ground Floor Extension)

Designed primarily for parents but accommodating children, the spa features wet zones with sensory showers, LED light therapy, aromatherapy, sauna and steam facilities. Dry areas include hydration stations, treatment information tablets, quiet reading rooms, and hanging chairs with biophilic LED walls. Sound-proofed treatment rooms include one accessible space for enhanced comfort.

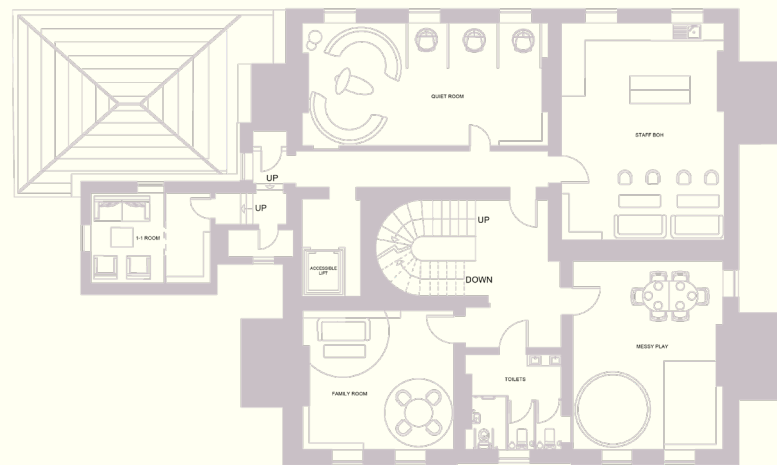
First Floor (House Area)

Second Floor Hotel (House Area)

Accessible family suites with adjoining semi-private children's rooms, allowing independence whilst maintaining parental proximity. Features adjustable sensory controls for lighting, sound and temperature with accessible bathrooms and clear sightlines.



SECOND FLOOR PLAN - SCALE 1:100@A1



FIRST FLOOR PLAN - SCALE 1:100@A1



GROUND FLOOR PLAN - SCALE 1:100@A1



Sensory Materials & Colour Palette

The sensory spaces feature carefully curated tactile materials in soft pastel palettes, specifically selected for neurodivergent sensory regulation needs. Sound-proofing fabrics reduce auditory overwhelm whilst textured surfaces provide calming tactile stimulation. Materials include soft-touch wall panels, weighted sensory cushions, and varied textile surfaces that support self-regulation through touch. The pastel colour scheme creates visual calm, preventing overstimulation whilst encouraging exploration. Each material is chosen for its therapeutic properties, supporting children’s sensory processing needs through safe, controlled tactile experiences that promote emotional regulation and comfort.

The images below, from left to right:

The collaborative workshop features a floor-to-ceiling canvas accommodating standing and seated activities. Suspended paper rolls enable easy material interchange, whilst magnetic boards behind height-adjustable desks celebrate children’s achievements. Group activities are supported by a dedicated self-regulation corner with seating for breaks.

The smell room features scent-releasing flowers with tactile garden trails celebrating the herb garden’s sustainability whilst educating children about the senses. Colour-drenched in pastel greens resembling a garden field with flower motifs, the space includes a half-height archway providing visual connection to the adjacent sound room with its illuminated tree features.

The circular image is the sight room provides 360-degree projection immersion with nature-themed scenes. Weighted blankets, bean bags and cushions offer sensory comfort, whilst hanging chairs provide private spaces for children requiring individual regulation and solitude.



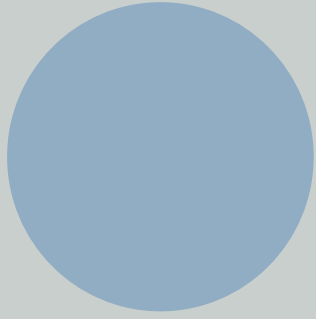
SENSORY LIGHT ROOM



WORKSHOP ROOM



SENSORY SOUND ROOM



Spa Materials & Colour Palette

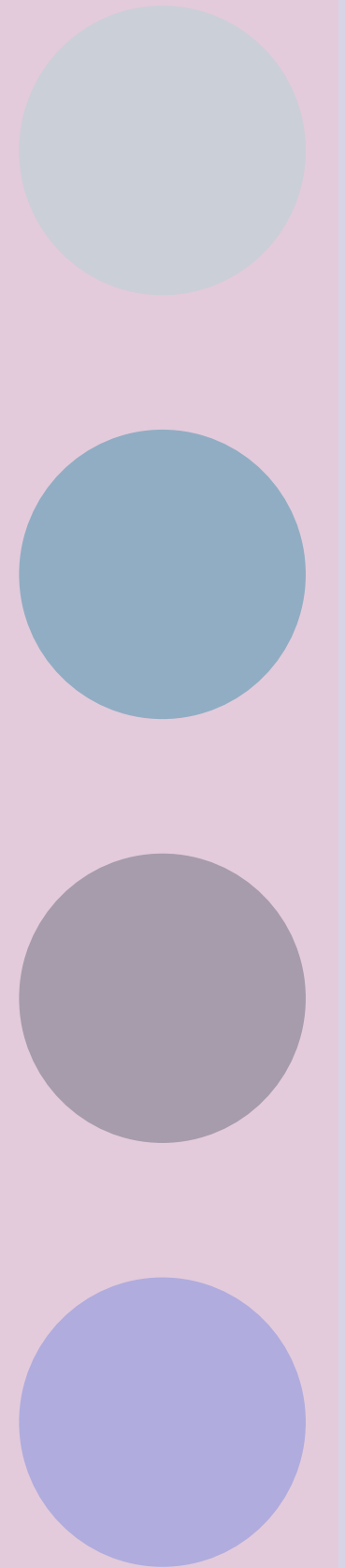
The spa area, designed with parents in mind, uses a calming palette of lavender, soft blue, and muted purples to encourage relaxation and relieve stress. Lavender, a key herb from our garden, is not only central to the scent profile but also shapes the visual identity of the space. Sheer curtains from Panaz offer soft privacy in treatment areas, while being durable and compliant with UK regulations for wet and dry zones. Upholstery from Kirkby Design and The Romo Group adds tactile comfort and sensory richness. The flooring is slip-resistant and water-safe, chosen to meet UK safety standards while blending beautifully into the pastel scheme with textured, soft-touch surfaces that feel grounding and secure underfoot.

The images below, from left to right:

The first image is the aromatherapy room, inspired by scent and amethyst crystals—a crystal and color associated with calm and distress relief. These crystals have been designed to hold the scent box diffuser, discreetly dispersing scent into the air. The sides of the room are lined with acoustic panels that provide a tactile element while dampening noise from the adjacent pool area.

The next image is one of the treatment rooms, designed with serenity in mind. It features a neutral color palette with warm dark brown wood, handleless cabinetry, rounded edges, and organically shaped mirrors. A small indoor tree adds fresh oxygen to the space. The concrete plaster effect walls give a clean yet tactile element, making the room feel cohesive and calming.

The last image shows the spa entrance, where customers can use iPads to browse treatments, check ingredient information, and book appointments. Behind the lady is an LED biophilic wall that encases the hanging chairs room, providing a secluded space for those requiring solitude.





TACTILE WAY FINDING CIRCLES WITH BRAILLE

Sight (front) & Touch Room (Back)

360 Immersive nature scenes and cocoon style swings in the Sight Room offer calming visual input and private sensory regulation. Behind it, the Touch Room encourages exploration through woodland inspired tactile games, glowing stepping stones, and water and sand play. The space supports self soothing, curiosity, and safe sensory discovery.

Smell & Sound Rooms

The Smell Room uses scented flowers and herb trails to support sensory learning through natural shapes and fragrances. A tunnel crawl space offers comfort for autistic children who enjoy enclosed spaces, while a half height archway provides wheelchair access. The Sound Room features noise cancelling headphones, calming soundscapes and glowing tree forms to support focus and relaxation.

Collaborative Workshop

A creative space designed to help families reconnect through shared activity. A suspended roll of paper invites children to climb and paint freely, while height adjustable tables and supportive stools with fold down arm rests ensure comfort and access for all abilities.

Inclusive Design Features

Tactile wayfinding circles with braille, directional arrows and warm LED lighting at floor level guide visitors calmly through the space. Sheer suspended curtains in soft peach tones divide the reception and restaurant, allowing natural light to filter gently while maintaining a cohesive and calming atmosphere.

Spa Treatment Rooms

Designed for calm and comfort, the rooms feature tactile plaster walls, adjustable beds and customisable LED lighting. Soft lavender tones and biophilic elements, including indoor trees and lavender from the herb garden, create a soothing, nature inspired environment for stressed parents and carers.

LED Light Room

This tranquil space features three water safe reclining beds and flooring, surrounded by soft sheer curtains for privacy. Customisable LED panel walls allow users to select their preferred light therapy, creating a calming environment tailored to individual needs.

Aromatherapy, Steam & Sauna Rooms

The Aromatherapy Room uses calming purple tones and amethyst-inspired scent diffusers for a peaceful multisensory space. The soft blue Steam Room has a curved bench to support different seating needs and safe steam use. The pink Sauna Room features a Himalayan salt wall and wraparound wooden bench, offering relaxing heat and touch in an inclusive social setting.

Spa Entrance

The spa entrance features iPads for browsing treatments, ingredients and oils. An adjustable-height bench ensures easy access for all. Nearby, a quiet room offers a bookcase with varied shelf heights, a low profile sofa, and a hanging chairs room area for solitude. A hydration station promotes wellbeing throughout the visit.

Main Entrance & Reception

The open plan entrance features automatic double doors, wheelchair and pushchair stair lifts, and two height-adjustable reception desks to ensure accessibility for all. Waiting areas allow wheelchair users full access with ample turning space. Rounded furniture edges enhance safety, while pastel colours support neurodivergent sensory comfort. Clear signage, LED floor lighting and dimmable overhead lights guide visitors calmly through the space, creating a welcoming and inclusive environment that reduces overwhelm and promotes ease of movement.