

Overlapping Territories: the urban barn

Cherie Khue Anh Ho

Project Synopsis

The Palace Cinema has lapsed into a period of programmatic stagnation, a dead space too obsolete to restore, too vexing to demolish. The proposal revitalises its cinematic voids into a landscape of agricultural production and educational engagement. The project addresses how architecture can transform farming environments from systems of control into environments of care. The building shifts from a model of confinement to one of coexistence. Where once staged human entertainment now stages ecological relationships between humans and animals through an adaptive re-use narrative. Human space and animal space are reinterpreted as negotiated space, overlapping territories and adaptive boundaries as animals take ownership over the space.

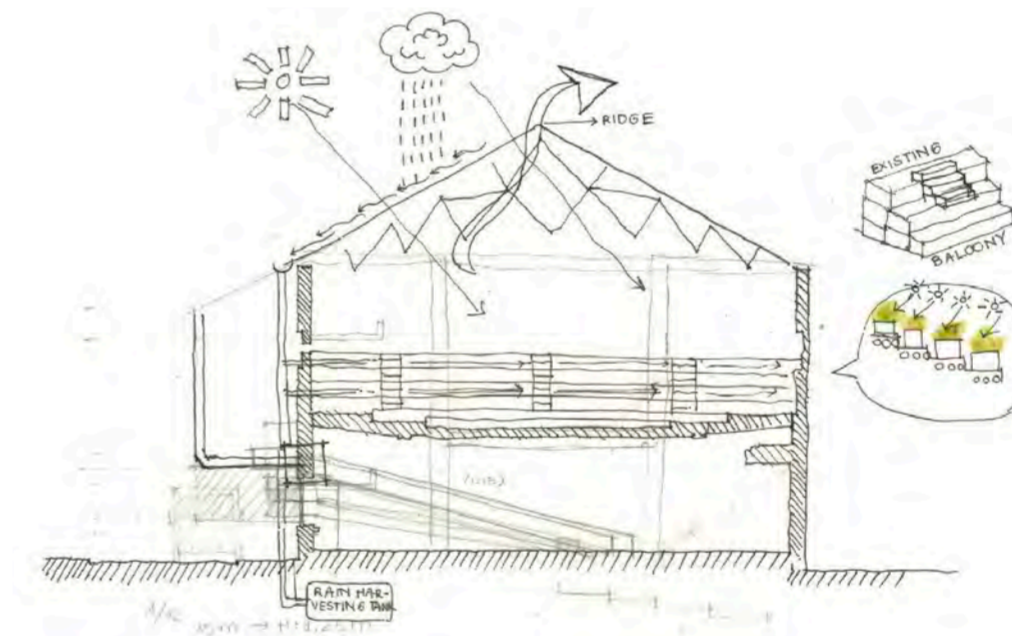
Why is this project relevant to the Social and Cultural Agency Award

This project transforms the disused Palace Cinema from a site of past human entertainment into a progressive monument of interspecies equity and community resilience. By challenging anthropocentric design, where architecture serves only humans, it reimagines the historic Edwardian venue as a negotiated, shared territory where humans and animals coexist. The narrative breathes cultural vitality back into Kentish Town Road through hands-on community workshops that process onsite wool into living, ecological building interfaces. This radical, ethical approach to adaptive reuse turns a dead space into an inclusive vessel for intercultural exchange, grounded deeply in social relevance, environmental care, and collective renewal.

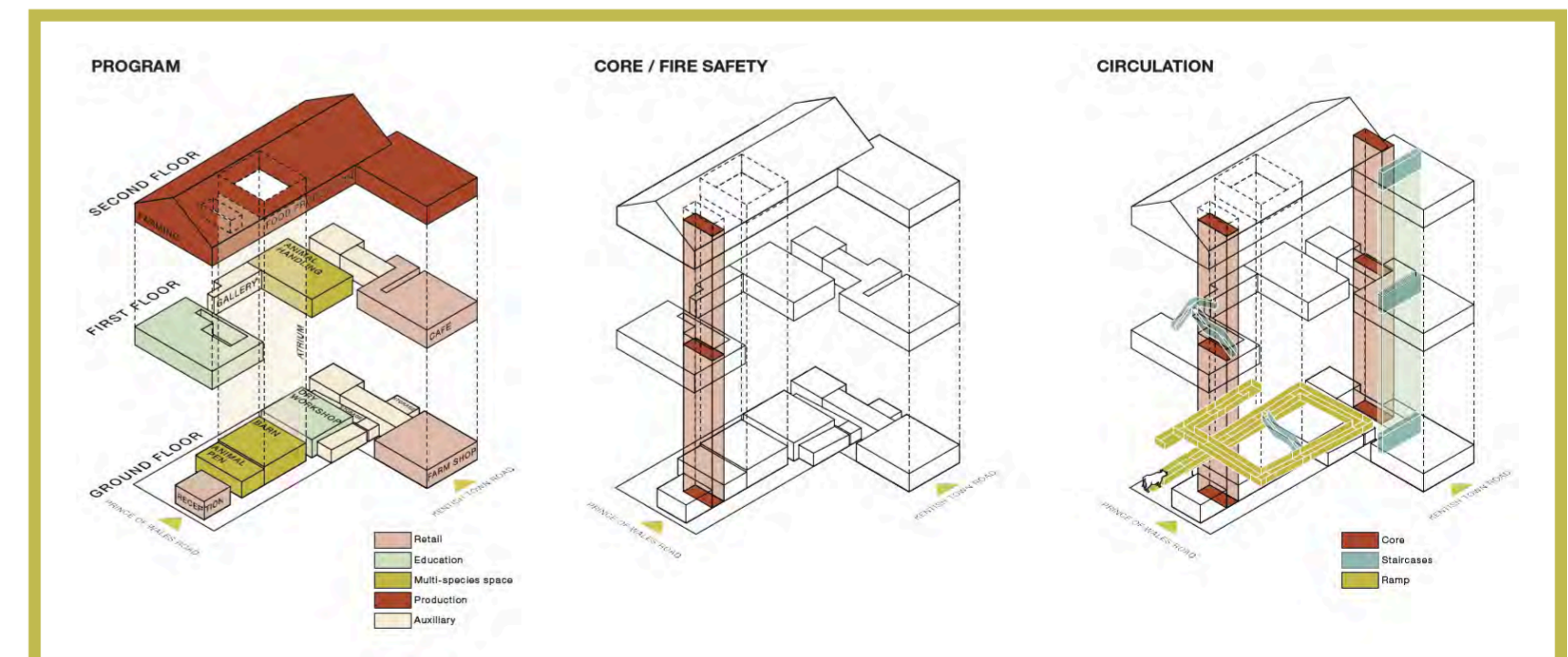


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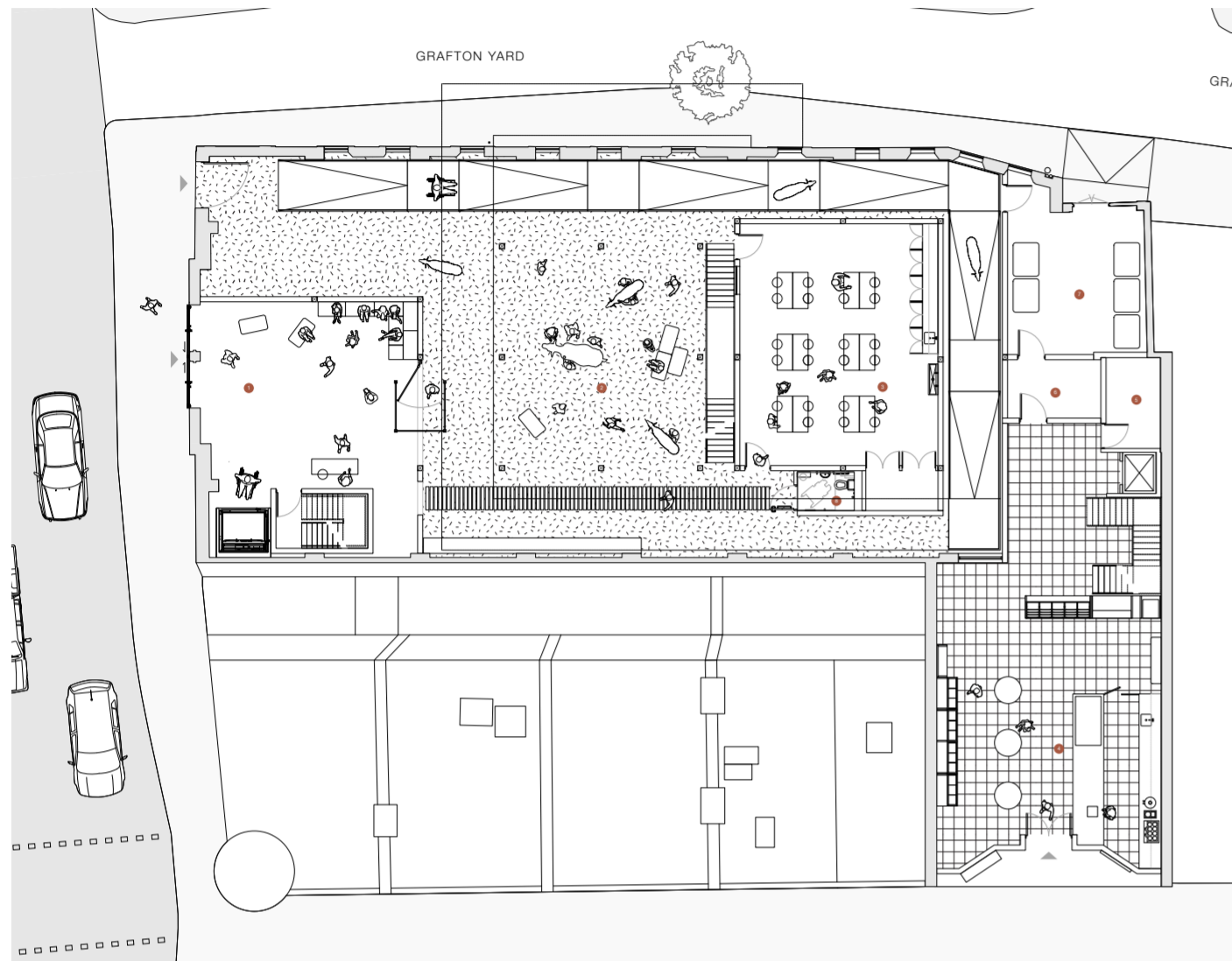
The purpose-built Edwardian theatre was opened when cinema-going became one of the dominant forms of mass entertainment following the Cinematograph Act in 1909. Prominently sited, the hall has always been serving as a key social and cultural gathering spaces for local residents ever since 1913. Designed by a prolific cinema architect John Stanley Coombe Beard, the building reflects Edwardian Baroque theatrical architecture characterized by a symmetrical composition



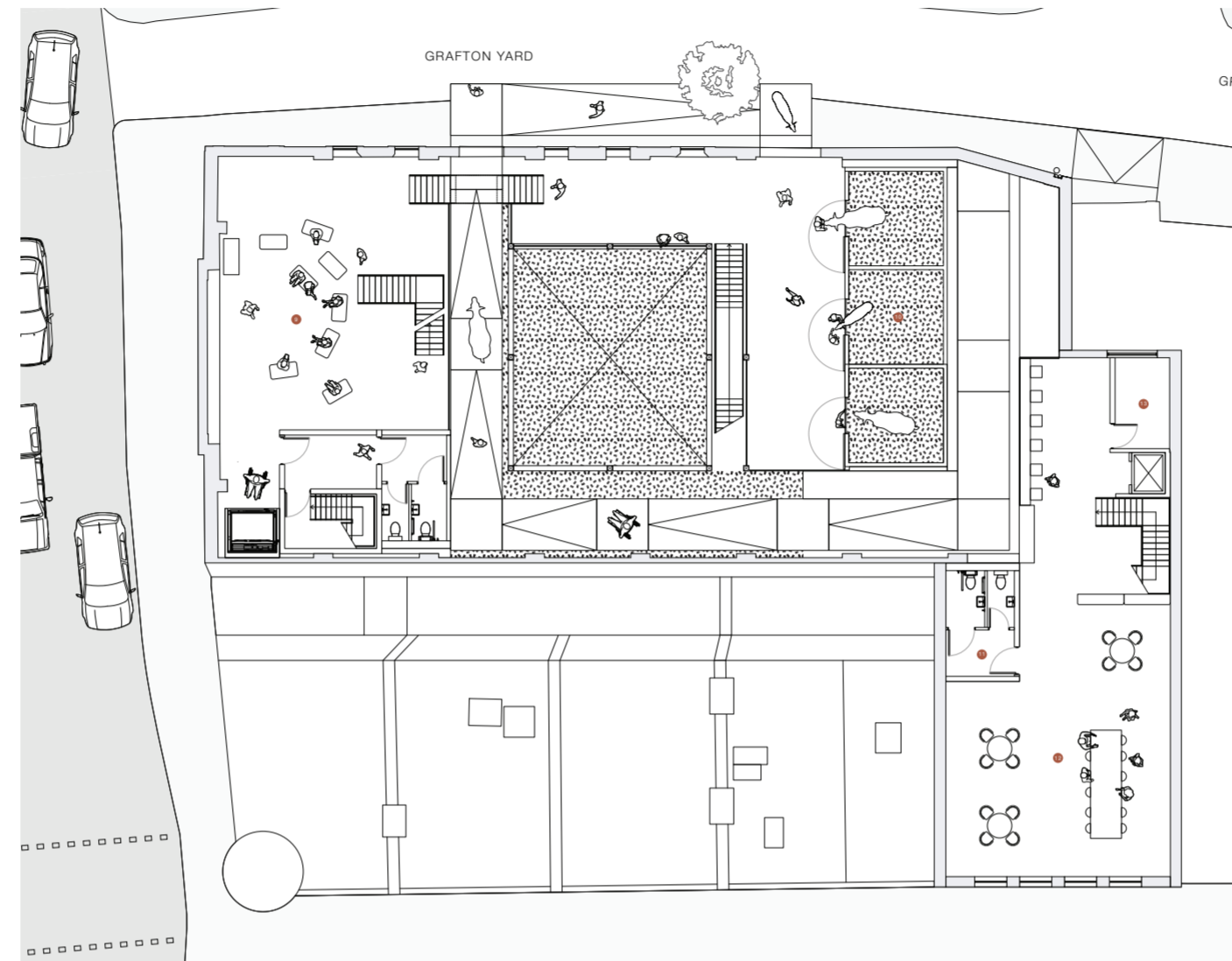
The main programme of the building is an educational facility for children. The building teaches people to adapt to animals, not the other way around. In summary, the building houses educational gardening and farming facilities, dry and wet workshops, indoor animal pens, a milk pasteurizing plant, a hydroponic garden and a community cafe and farm shop.

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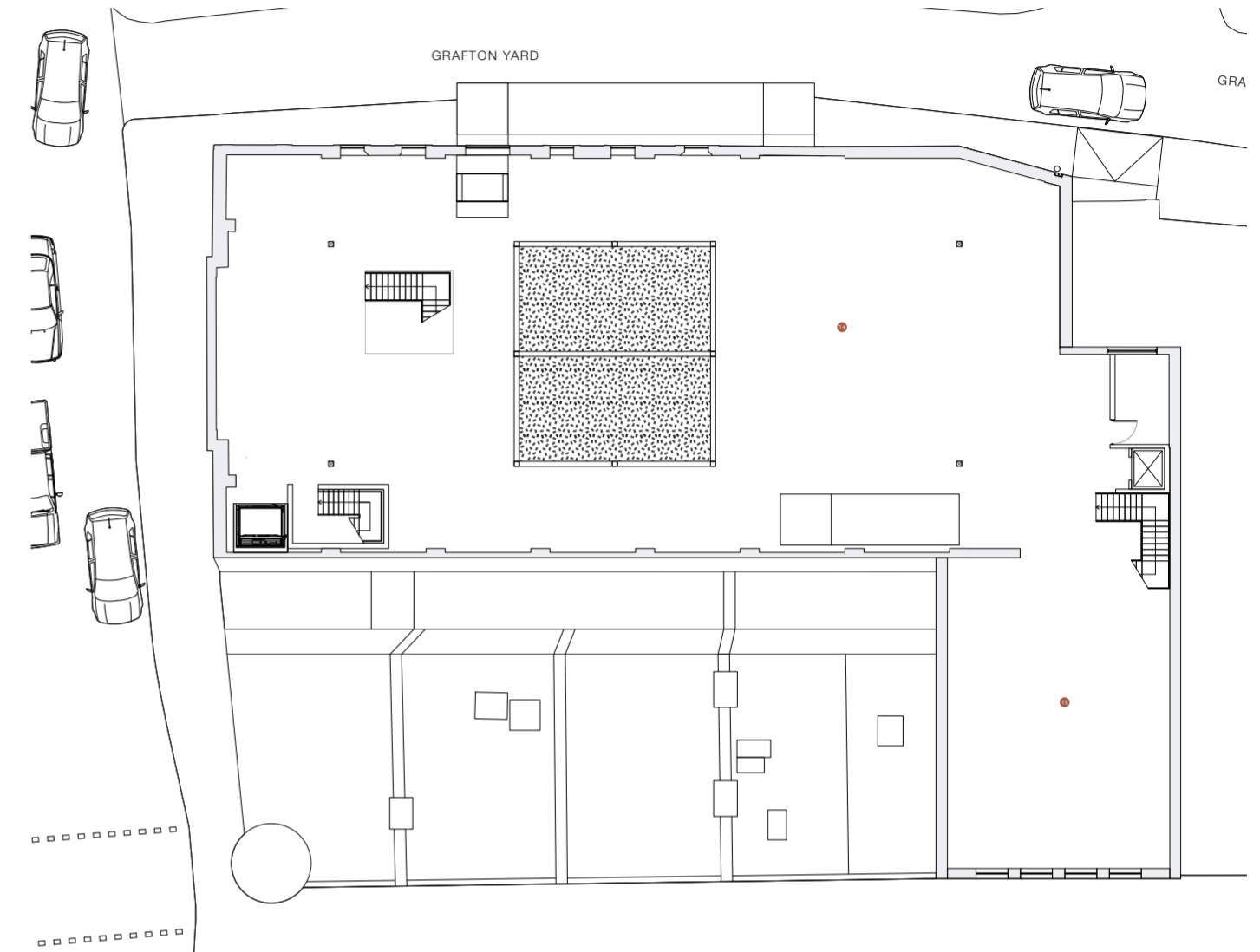
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Ground floor plan



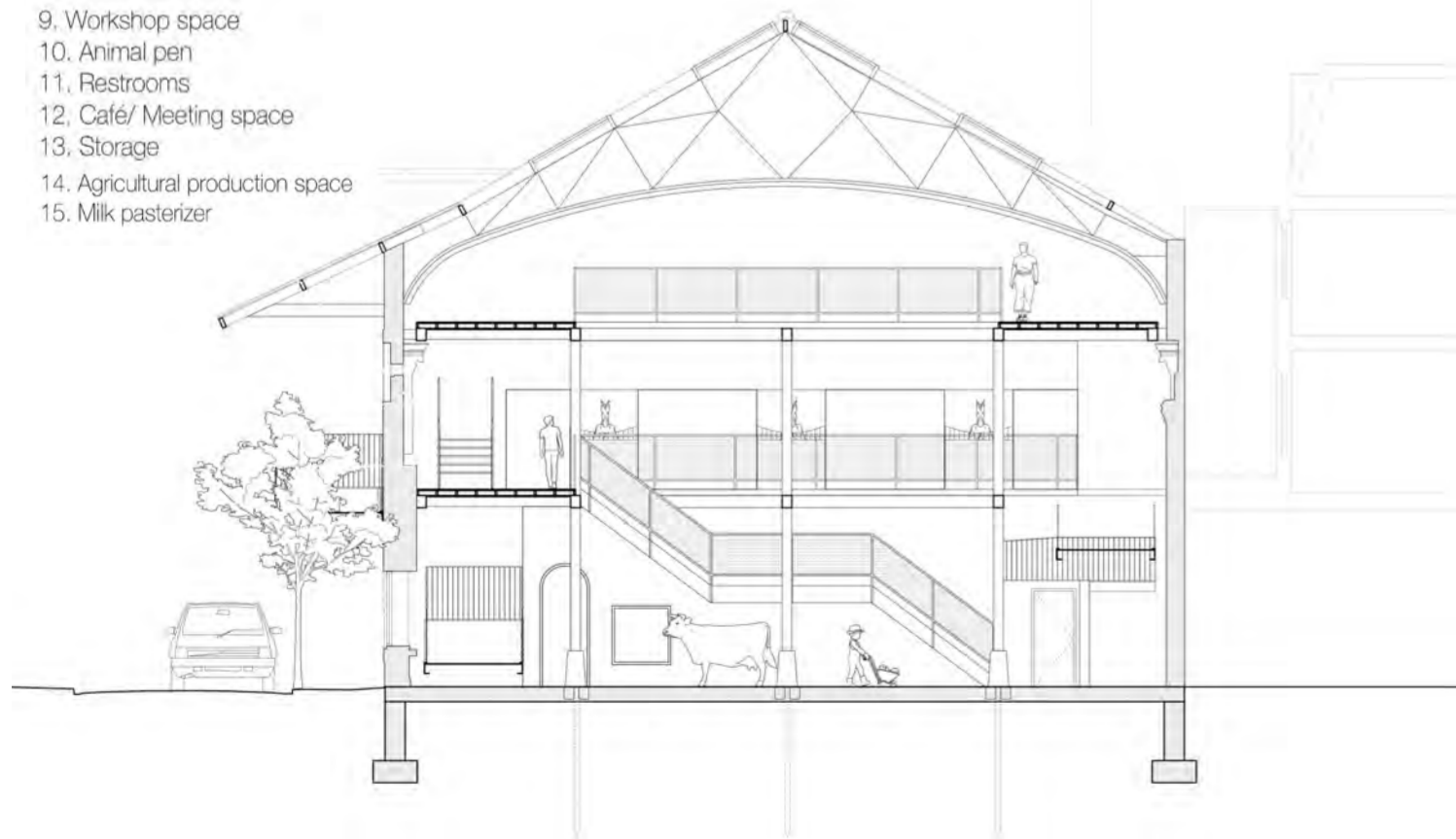
First floor plan



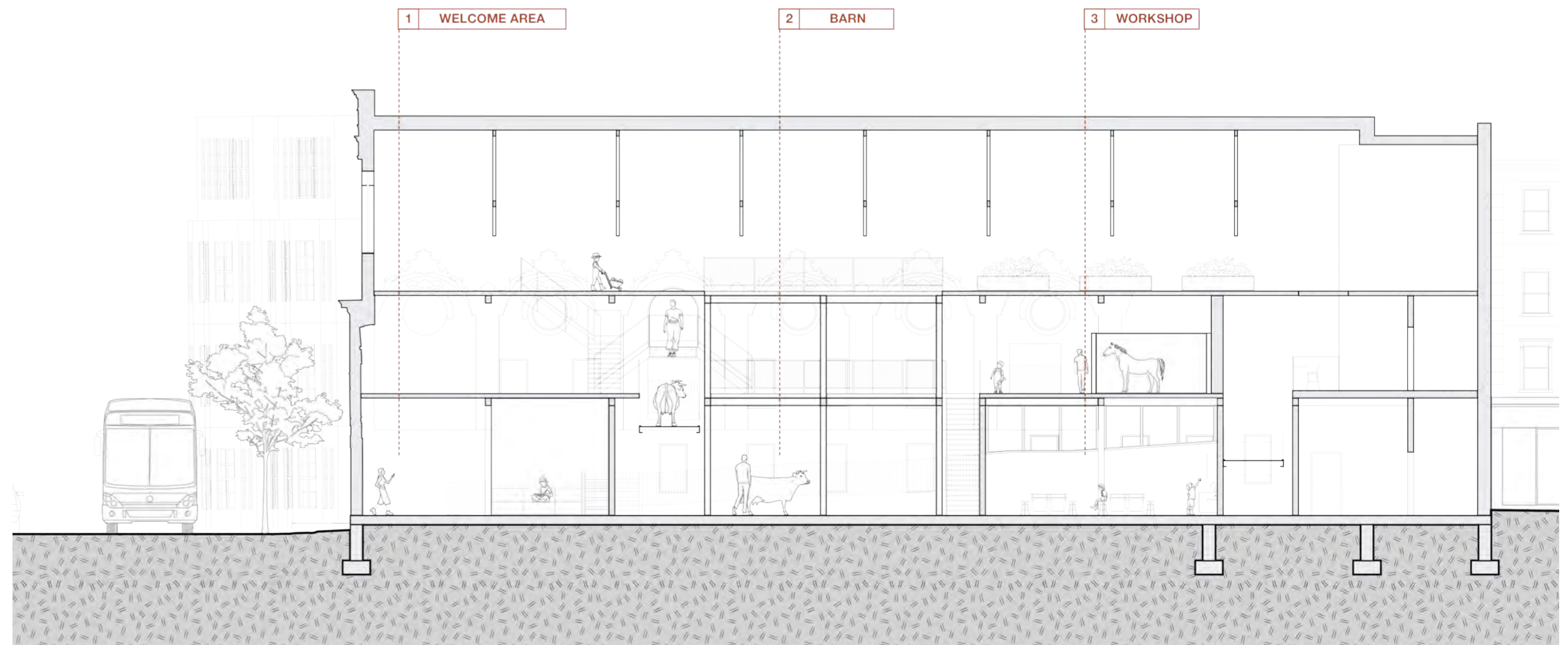
Second floor plan

KEY

1. Reception
2. Main Barn
3. Dry Workshop
4. Farm Shop
5. Storage
6. Waste Processing Station
7. Bin store
8. Accessible Toilet
9. Workshop space
10. Animal pen
11. Restrooms
12. Café/ Meeting space
13. Storage
14. Agricultural production space
15. Milk pasterizer



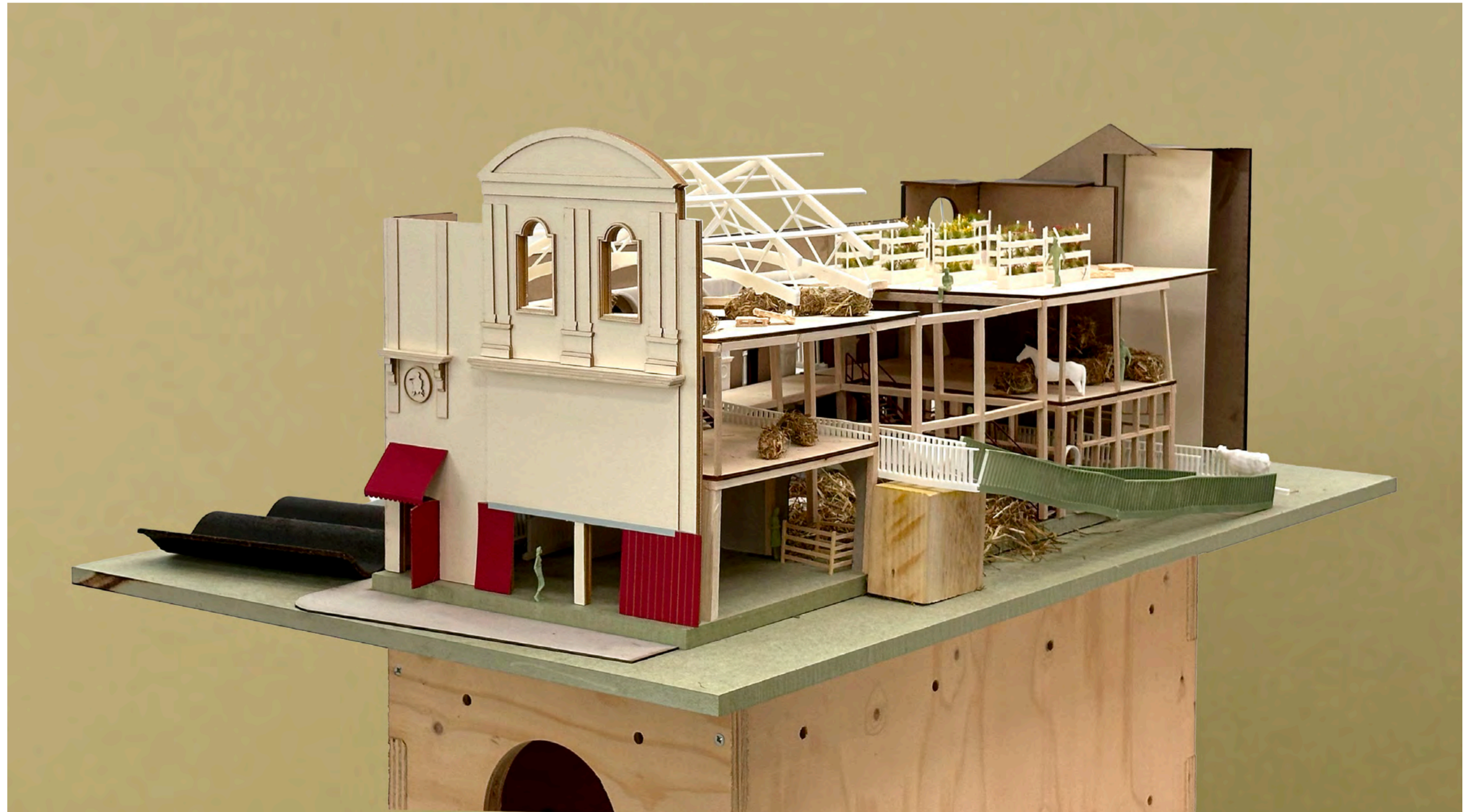
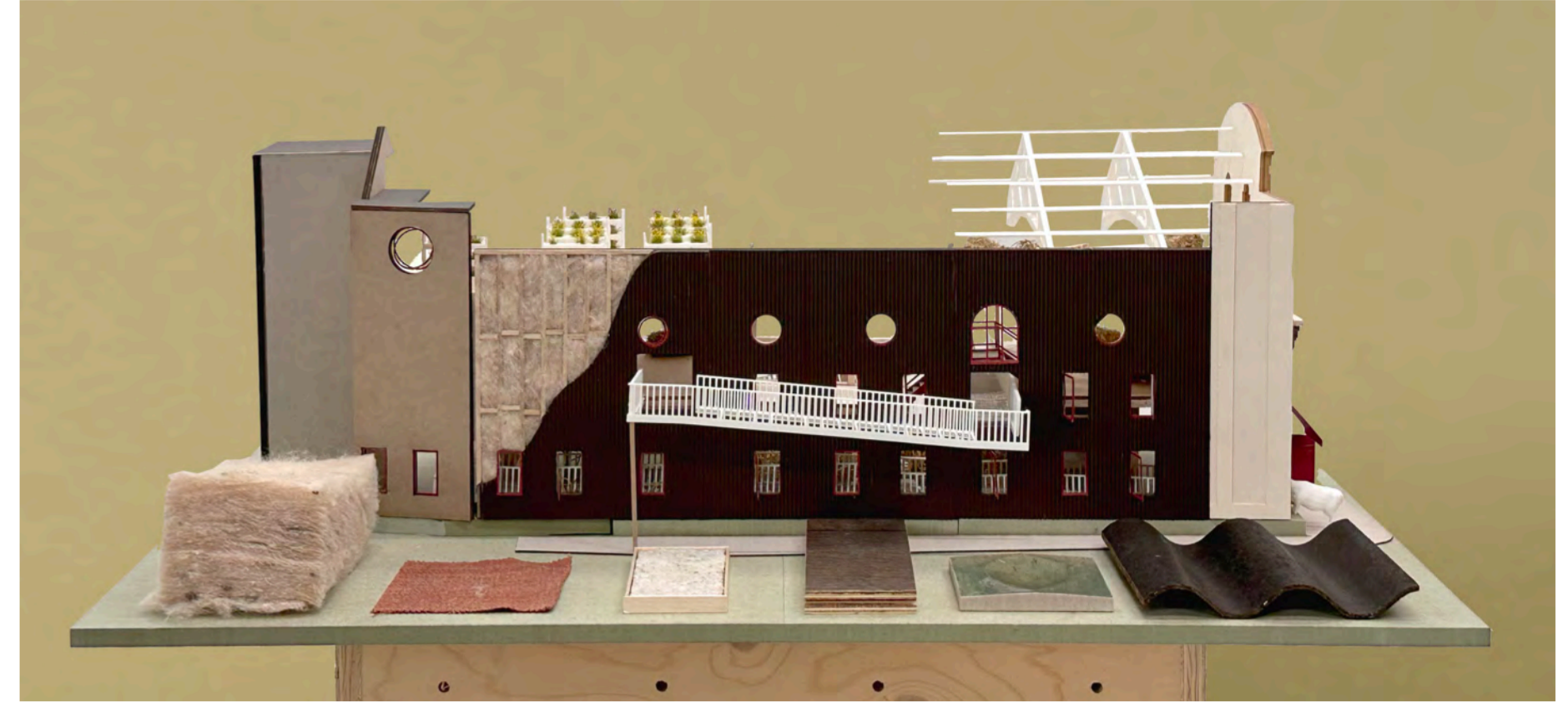
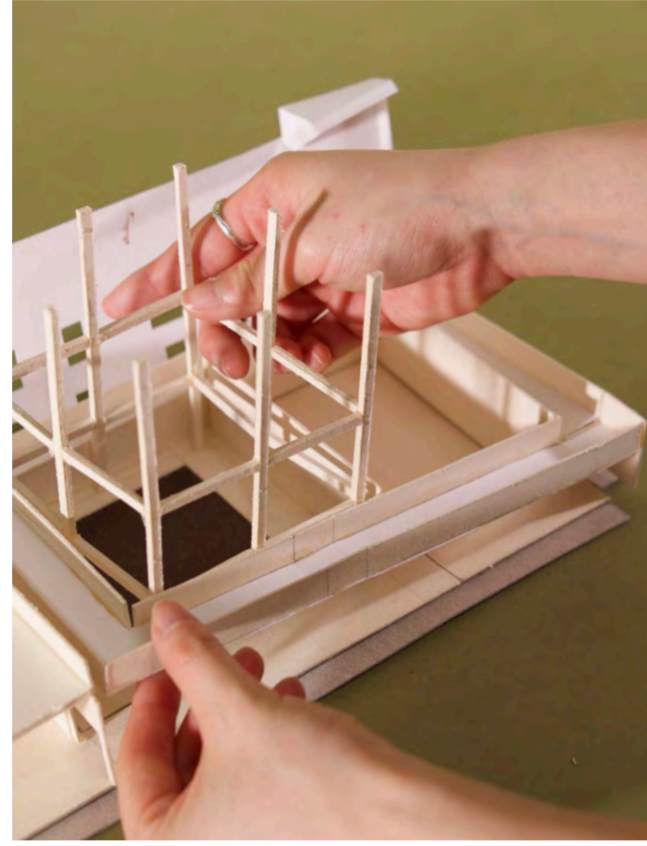
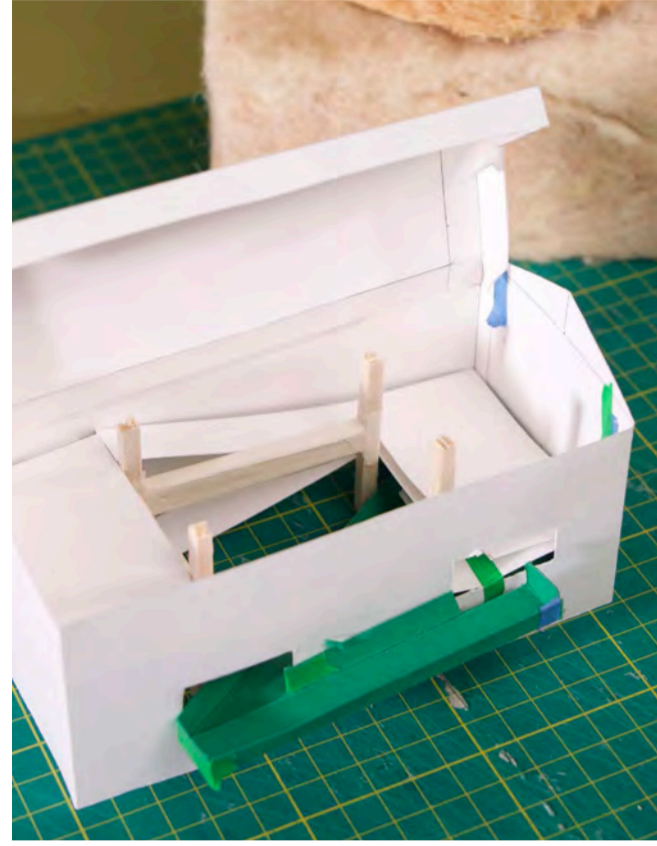
Short section



Long section

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A Spatial Reawakening

The Palace Cinema has lapsed into a period of programmatic stagnation, a dead space too obsolete to restore, too vexatious to demolish. The design repurposes its cinematic voids into clusters of intercultural exchange, initiating social recirculation and spatial renewal. The building reawakens as a vessel for collective encounter and spatial renewal. The building once staged human entertainment, the project now stages ecological relationships between humans, animals through an adaptive reuse narrative. There was a sense of life and vitality to Kentish Town Road that is now lost.

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Circular Material Ecologies

The project closes the material loop by reintroducing farm by-products into building material. A community-led material production workshop turns raw sheeps' wool into insulation and enables local participation, fostering a process of construction shaped by and for the community.



Self-sustaining Economy

By selling locally produced farm goods at the farm shop, the project generates revenue streams that support both the further building's construction and long-term operation.



Nature-informed Design

The principles of movement ecology are embedded into the circulation system and inform the ramp design. Operating as a resource-driven landscape, the ramp restores natural and instinctive grazing behaviors of animals despite the urban setting.



The Feet of the Building

Treating the architecture like an animal, materials are not seen as mere passive surfaces, but they function as environmental mediators, like the skin, organs and limbs of a body



Time as a Material

Time is of the essence, the building is intended to weather through time. It values endurance over trendiness, locality over globalization.



A Hemp Rainscreen

Hemp represents a huge eco value over traditional materials with extremely high carbon sequestration, makes it a great plastic alternative. The hemp panels are particularly chosen because of its weathering properties. Made from hemp fibres and bio-resin, they will weather and lighten in colour over time.