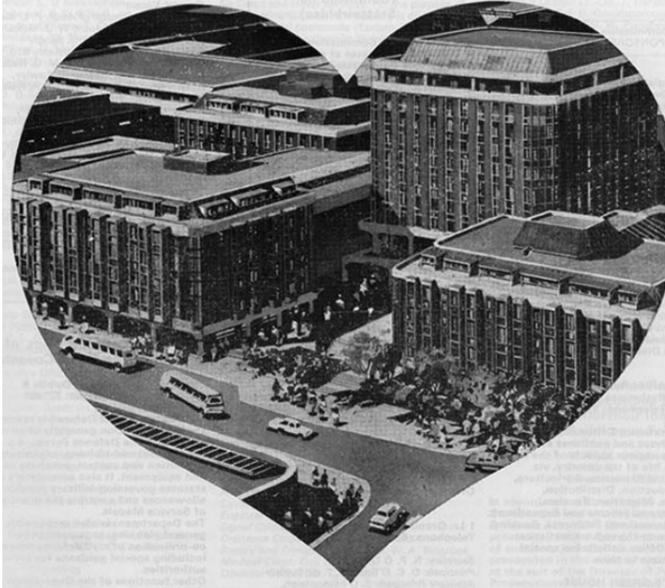


**There's new life in the  
heart of Dublin.**



## **The Irish Life Centre**

Fifty apartments. A large shopping centre. Enough office space for 3,000 workers. Irish Life's own new Head office complex. Nine blocks centering on a public plaza. A recreation centre with swimming pool, squash courts and badminton courts, gardens and sculpture.

**Irish Life**  
ASSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

### **Urban Commons at Irish Life.**

*a resource centre to support and be managed by a  
community.*

Tadhg Spain  
B. Arch 2022

***Urban commons are generally constituted by three elements:  
a pool of common resources; a community that uses and  
reproduces these resources; and a set of values, protocols and  
norms for collaboration, sharing, and care that this community  
agrees upon.***

-Peter Linebaugh, *The Magna Carta Manifesto*, 2008.



Source: Book cover image of Richard Sennett's 'Together.  
The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Co-Operation'

Thesis Cover Image:  
1980s advertisement for 'The Irish Life Centre'  
source: [https://www.archiseek.com/2010/1980-irish-life-centre-abbey-street-dublin/#google\\_vignette](https://www.archiseek.com/2010/1980-irish-life-centre-abbey-street-dublin/#google_vignette)

A thank you...

To my tutors Cian Deegan & Kieran O'Brien for their encouragement and efforts as I grappled the project through the year, and all the staff of the Dublin School of Architecture who have nurtured my passion for architecture through their own over these 5 years.

To the Easa Commons team of Louis, Joe, Lucia and Bia who sparked my interest in this subject and allowed me be part of the discussion, and Tom Moore of Sheffield University for kindly sharing the 'Urban Commons Handbook' with me.

To my autie and godmother Therese, who put me in contact with the people behind Irish Life.

To Liam Keighery, who gave me access to the Irish Life Centre's drawing archive and provided me with the information to understand the development and company in creating this proposal. Carol Pollard for sharing her research into the site, and Caisin for sharing her own experience as a resident of the Irish Life Centre.

Finally, My mother Helen and father Enda, along with my family and friends who have supported me through this journey.

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## Abstract

This thesis endeavours to understand the ties between current social inequality, political and economic ideology and the resulting architecture found at the Irish Life Centre and its immediate context. This condition is characteristically uncaring and the resulting urbanity of a capitalistic and neoliberalist city.

Commoning practices require a foundation of care and ways of doing that respect and understand limits. This vein of research is then applied to the site, and imagines a resulting architectural proposal.

The proposal takes the form of an extension to the Irish Life Centre, creating a public space and building on the vacant site at Marlborough Place. This results in a facility which unlocks resources necessary for *affective labour*. In doing so creating a space which cares for and is cared for by the community who use the building.

*Affective labour* is work carried out that is intended to produce or modify emotional experiences in people.

## Critical Care and Urban Commons.

The concept of ‘care’ is helpful for articulating the ethos underlying the situated and negotiated practices of commoning. Tronto defines care as “everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair ‘our world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all that we seek to interweave in a complex, life sustaining web”

Commoning practices require a foundation of care and ways of doing that respect and understand limits. These ethics centre the *affective*, moving beyond technical and outputoriented resource management.

“Capitalism continually perpetuates itself through the enclosure of our capacity to support and reproduce life. This capacity for social reproduction involves not only giving birth but a multitude of acts bearing, protecting, feeding, clothing and socialising that cannot be individualised and depend on collective care. By contrast, commoning practices can foster a resilient transition towards alternative social structures, allowing individuals to feel supported and empowered as a collective.”

Maria Puig de la Bellacasa & Joan C Tronto cited in ‘Urban Commons Handbook’ -Urban Commons Research Collective. (Barcelona: dpr-barcelona, 2022)



Talbot Lane December 2021

### The Flaneur.

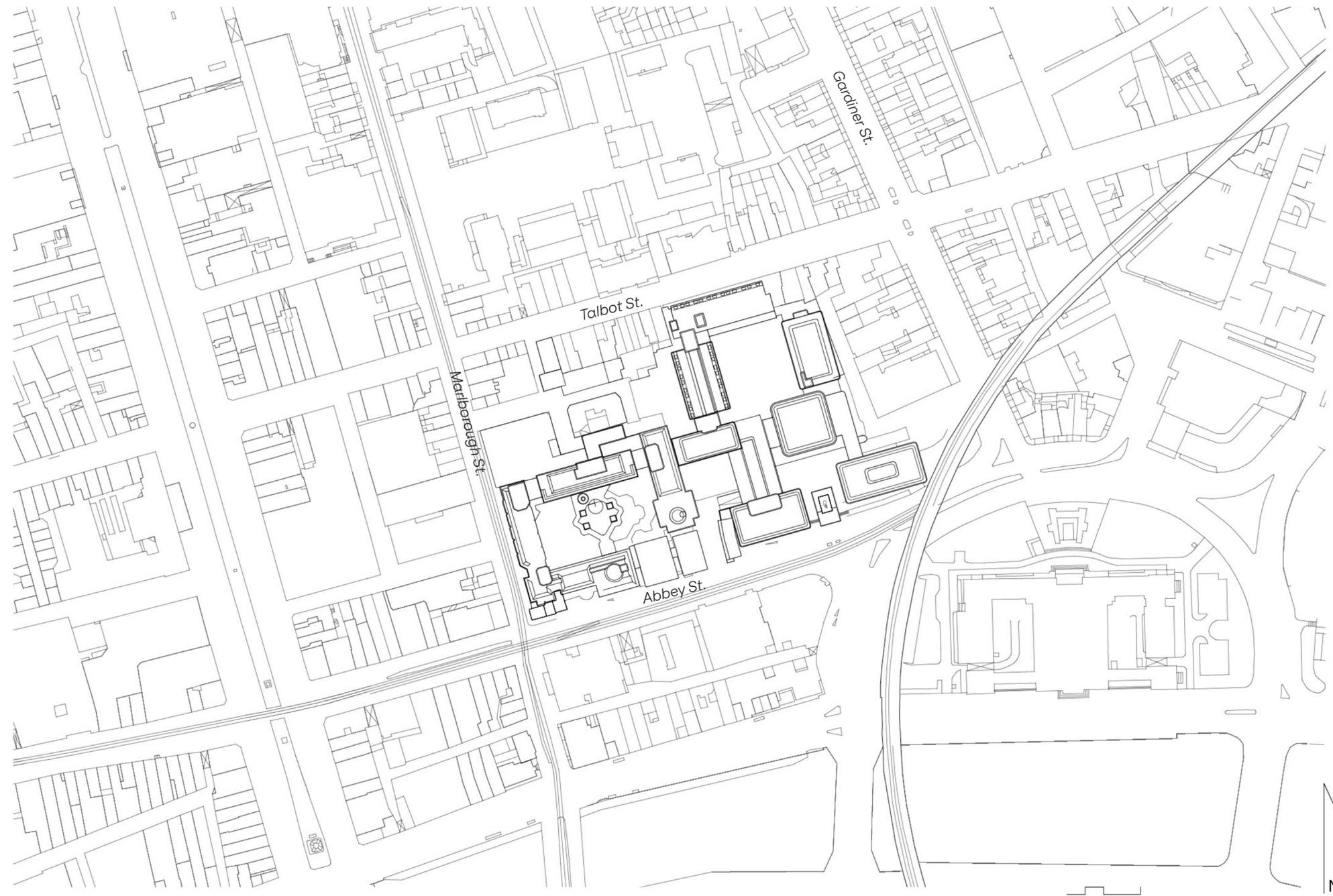
*Passing through the market thoroughfare of talbot street, the passer-by can feel as if they are a stranger. This is not an alien feeling, the modern city is strange, occupied by strangers, dedicated to strangers. As a person walks through nature they acknowledge their surroundings as nature, and themselves as a viewer of nature. (2) To be human is to be more than a beast. To be human is to be of the city. I walk through Talbot street, and although I am not of Dublin, I at least study it. This is a vibrant piece of urban fabric dedicated to the market, and as tourists, foreign settlers, the yuppies and locals, all of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds navigate this street you hear the shouts, the cheers, the expressions of different dialects and language. A contested pedestrian street, a common good serving the private market economy that encloses it. Is this a segregated community? Or is this a version of utopia that modernity champions? As I pass through I wonder who feels most at home here? The tourists, shoppers, loiterers? The venerable Matt Talbot himself? (1) With the spire dominating the vista in front of me I take a left down Talbot Lane, to my immediate right an amusements emporium, and central to my view a man squats down on his hunkers facing a corner. A corner made by a vacant stone building which narrows the exit of the lane. A rancid smell meets my nostrils but I grit my teeth and move forward. I brave the corridor and burst out into an accidental square, a forgotten enclave.*

1 (<http://www.ballinteerparish.ie/matt-talbot-story.htm>)

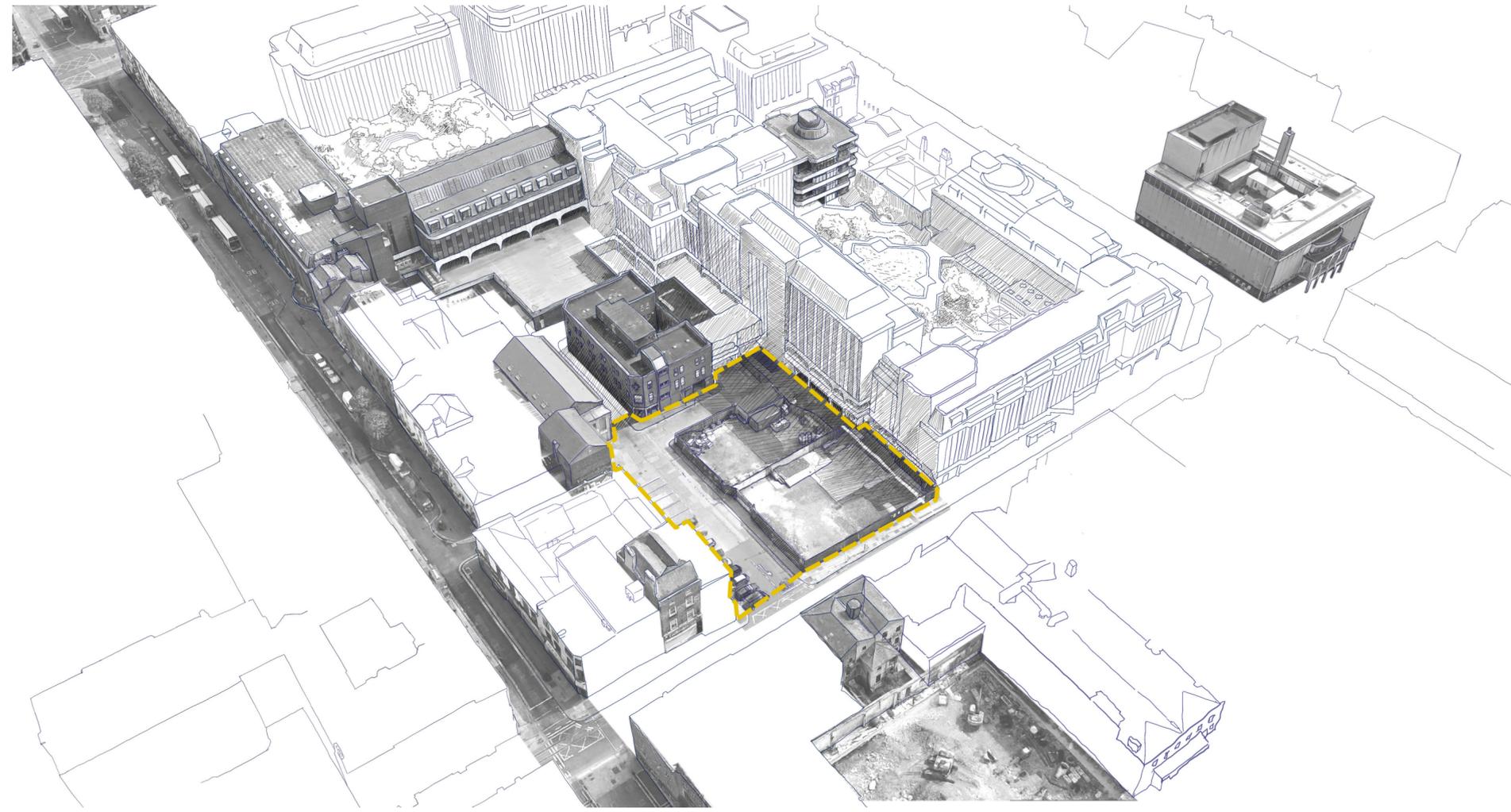
2 (*Is Landscape...? Essays on the identity of landscape* G.Doherty, C. Waldheim)



Project in the context of the NEIC.  
30 corresponding to list of  
student proposals as part of the  
Critical Care exhibition



10 The Site of the Irish Life Centre.



Marlborough Place, a parcel of land in ownership of Irish Life, and the buildings surrounding who need this space.

## Section 1

### A Precarious Place.

In the beginning of this thesis, I found myself drawn to the people hanging in and around my chosen site. Talbot street has always been a successful shop street in Dublin 1, however there is another quality which is striking to someone observing the life this street holds.

This is a quality I tried to capture in my written response as I walked down Talbot Street toward the spire.

Upon return from my field research, see ‘the flaneur’, I was inspired to understand why Talbot Street appeared to be a type of social supercharger, with multiple nationalities congregating, loitering and ultimately waiting around outside. “Gardiner Street alone has 138 homeless service units that are registered.” Councillor Flynn said, we are “congesting them in one area of the city - it’s already a case of segregation.” Declaring that people need to move away from the “not in my backyard” mentality. (Bowers, 2019)

Gardiner Street has the highest density of emergency accommodation beds in the country. At this epicentre you can also find a hostel dedicated to refugees. “Old George Ltd runs the Georgian Court hostel, with seventy residents, on Lower Gardiner Street, Dublin, which at times acts as a reception centre for newly arrived asylum seekers.” (Grayson, 2017) If Gardiner Street is a bedroom for these people, then Talbot Street is their living room.

Guy Standing explains how the commons, our shared wealth, is needed by ‘the precariat’ the most. The strata of suffering people in need of accommodation make up only one portion of ‘the precariat’. The other portion are people of ‘an emerging class with distinctive patterns of labour and work, a distinctive structure of social income, and is losing citizenship rights.’ These people survive on the money they earn from their employment alone, employment that is increasingly precarious with the growing popularity of ‘Zero Hour Contracts’. (Standing, 2019) A major source of wealth for the previous generation had been the ownership of their households, this being a security which is not afforded by young people today as Ireland’s housing crises deepens. ‘A lot of young people are now realizing they will never own their own home’ a scary reality in a country that, not long ago, had ‘one of the highest home ownership rates’ of the west. (O’Loughlin, 2019)

In response to my site visit or ‘flaneur’ which terminated at Marlborough Place, it became apparent that the buildings that frame the ‘public realm’, are either lifeless decaying shells or vacant plots suspended in transition. This condition has robbed Dublin and its inhabitants of desperately needed spaces of public appearance. Hannah Arendt describes this condition as against ‘the conviction that the greatest that man can achieve is his own appearance and actualisation’. It is the market which has commodified this land, exhausting the resource of ‘The public realm, the space within the world which men need in order to appear at all’. (Arendt, 1998) This friction between the binary concept of the private and public realm is one of ownership. The homeless shelter, Cedar House, a building in ownership of the State, given up to the homeless service ‘Cross Care’. Their neighbours, ‘The Irish Life Centre’, Ireland’s largest investment property manager, have made their business on the commodification of land. (Irish Life, 2021) These investment funds have allowed vacant buildings to become abstract assets as opposed to physical objects in a city, the owners of these buildings waiting for the right price, instead of investing in the building themselves. This dichotomy of public and private ownership presents an opportunity for a tertiary force, the commons.

Silke Hellfrich, sees natural and man-made common pool resources (CPRs) which constantly surround us in our everyday lives, and claims we only have to answer this question: “What do we want to do with them? Do we want to produce commodities and convert everything- our collective knowledge, our genes, solar energy, public arenas and spaces, water, beaches, social care etc. – into commodities? Or do we want to sustain and reproduce them as commons? It’s our choice.” (Hellfrich, 2011)

This inspires my research question:

***Can we create, sustain and reproduce resources in a city block which lessen the financial burden on its people, in turn forming a social income to those in need?***



Site photos

top: Marlborough Place

bottom: Marlborough Street



## Something outside.

The political economist Elinor Ostrom is critical of the binary arguments of the market and the state as systems which control common pool resources (CPRs). She defines CPRs as a natural or man-made resource system that is sufficiently large as to make it costly to exclude potential beneficiaries from obtaining benefits from its use. (Ostrom, 1990)

Ostrom spent her life studying independent organisations of people who were unknowingly commoners, and such an organisation were not organisations of the market or state. These people, in the case of the 100 local fishermen who fished the waters surrounding Alanya, Turkey, in the 1970s had overfished and competed over the prime fishing spots to such a degree they had put the economic viability of the activity under threat. Following these events, they formed a local cooperative which designated an appropriate and equal rotation system of the boats so that each boat had equal opportunities to fish the best spots. If a fisherman decided to fish at a prime spot outside of his timeslot it would be noticed by the fisherman who possessed that timeslot, these disputes would be solved at the local coffeehouse. (Ostrom, 1990)

The common pool resource of the fishing waters at Alanya is a crucial precedent in understanding how people can organise themselves to achieve their collective and individual interests. These ‘institutions are rarely either private or public... Many successful CPR institutions are rich mixtures of “private-like” and “public-like” defying classification in a sterile dichotomy.’ (Ostrom, 1990) For example, although property rights of the waters are not sold as the market would want, the boundaries of these sites and the designated time an individual has on them are well-defined.

These concepts Ostrom has defined have enabled more contemporary projects come to life in not only the natural, but the built environment. As the urban realm continuously battles with it’s own framework of ownership plot lines and arbitrary zoning plans people have had to find their own place within this system. A key precedent which is a response to the intense commodification of space, is House of Annetta in London. This house, which is legally owned by the Edith Maryon Foundation acts as a space to nurture social conviviality and discussion surrounding land justice, the key purpose for the foundation. “*We hope that in the future, the house can be an evolving resource that supports people with time and space to think critically about the world around them. Is there a way the revenue and management model of the house could be based on an economic model that includes values, investment and returns in metrics that are not purely financial?*” (House of Annetta, 2021)

Although this project is running since 2021, the history of the house is tied closely to land justice and reform, the previous owner Annetta Pedretti, having used it as a space to experiment and research how design and thinking can change how we interact with the world. (House of Annetta, 2021) Other projects of the commons have not found as secure a location as seen in the R-Urban commons project.

The R-Urban project took place across 3 hubs in the suburban town of Colombes, near Paris. The conception of the project began in 2008 and it took seven years to implement the strategy of ‘commons-based resilience.’ These 3 hubs were conceived as an experiment by an interdisciplinary research and design practice, atelier d’architecture autogeree (aaa) which sought to build these infrastructures in a ‘pluralist’ approach that would provide a platform for wider participation.

The citizens of this disadvantaged area are encouraged to participate in the project and in doing so become ‘more ecologically, economically and politically affluent’ (Petrescu Petcou & Baibarac, 2016), they ‘are encouraged to change the city by changing their way of living and working in it.’ (Harvey, 2008) Not only is the scheme a response to social and economic disadvantages of the area, but it enables the participants to learn and respond to the climate crises. (Petrescu Petcou & Baibarac, 2016) When actors come together to achieve a common goal and manage a shared asset, cohesion and conflict are inevitable. An ‘agonistic space’, allows conflict of interests and values, and an expression of different alternatives, this arguably, is the prerequisite for true collaboration and thus the keystone of radical democracy. (Mouffe, 2005)

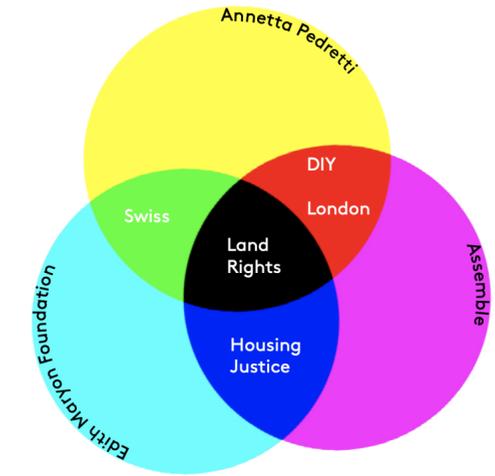
The value of this ongoing movement, despite the downfall of the project in Colombes, has been invaluable in understanding how ‘the new commons’ can work. In 2014, after a change in the municipal administration post a local election in May, the state dismantled both the ‘Agrocite’ and ‘Recyclelab’ (the third hub was never realised) ‘With some irony, the new administration decided to demonstrate their interest in ‘resilience’ with plans to build a 4000 m<sup>2</sup> privately owned vertical farm on the site where the ‘Agrocite’ community farm already exists.’ (Petrescu Petcou & Baibarac, 2016)

...Text continued on page 18



Shared Workspaces of HoA

source: <https://houseofannetta.org/About>



Shared Interests of HoA

source: <https://houseofannetta.org/About>



R-Urban hub:

Recyclelab

source: <https://innovationinpolitics.eu/showroom/project/r-urban-ecological-transition-movement-involving-citizens-in-civic-resilience-networks/>



R-Urban hub:

Agrocite

source: <https://innovationinpolitics.eu/showroom/project/r-urban-ecological-transition-movement-involving-citizens-in-civic-resilience-networks/>

**Dublin City Council Submission regarding Chapter 7:  
The City Centre, urban villages, and retail.**

Dear Development Plan Team,

I would like to make a submission which focuses on the importance of 'healthy public space' in one of the key urban villages you have identified. Marlborough Place is an area of huge opportunity in the North East City Centre that is set to be developed in the future. Currently it is served by both Luas lines and is a key area for retail with Talbot Street and O'Connell Street, tourism with the Cleary's hotel quarter. However the site suffers from lack of investment and cohesion between the stake holders, as identified in the 'reimagining Dublin One laneways' report from Sean Harrington Architects in 2018 for the DCC.

The hoarding which encloses the vacant site at Marlborough Place is owned by Irish Life who, from my own thesis research, have not redeveloped that part of their site because of the anti-social behavior associated with the emergency accommodation 'Cedar House'. To avoid the immoral relocation of this critical service in the area, I believe it is the responsibility of the DCC to work with the Irish Life and stakeholders present to transform this sickly piece of the city from the backyard of the Irish Life campus to a key public space serving the surrounding businesses and people of the area. This historically and economically important district lacks any public squares or spill over areas to improve the quality of the already busy streets.

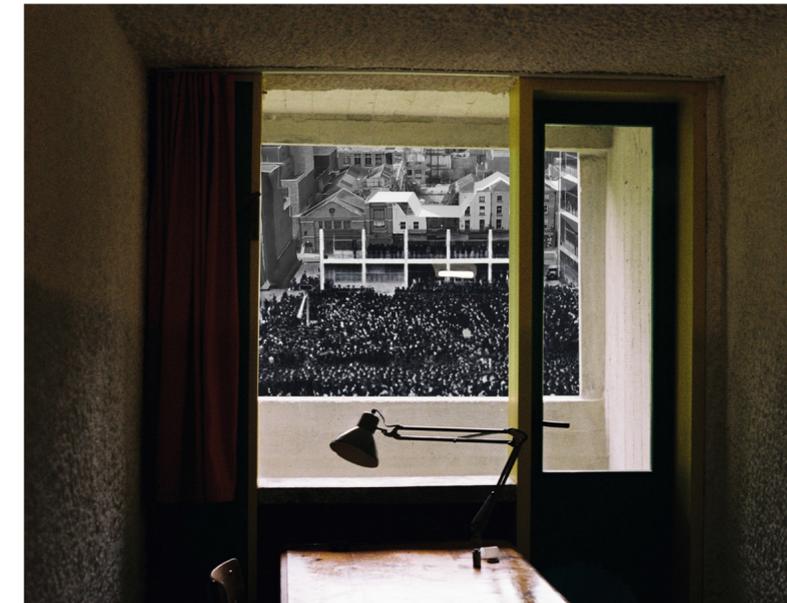
The people of the area cannot rely on private developers alone, as this results in privately-owned public spaces which are available at Irish Life currently. These spaces do not engage the public, who can be told to leave at any time and are constantly watched. Furthermore, the public have completely lost their ability to walk through the city block that the Irish Life campus occupies, with the closing of the route through Talbot Mall which is now a Lidl. The Lidl is a very welcome development for the public, however the importance of walking through this piece of the city has been neglected by the owners. A public private partnership, a way of collaborative design which includes the public and developers would result in more engaging, healthy, and vibrant public space. By engaging the public at the design process, and collaborating with the property owners of Marlborough Place, a public square for this key urban village in Dublin 1 can be created which provides space for the public to linger, use facilities which they see as important (there is a demand for public toilets in these key urban villages, that is just one suggestion). A key precedent of this collaborative process between the public, the state and private stakeholders is 'Luchtsingel' in Rotterdam in the Netherlands. This sustainable method of redevelopment would bring new life to the city centre as the Irish Life once promised, and reintegrate this architectural gem to this key urban village.

It is the responsibility of the Dublin City Council to facilitate this engagement with the public and the private property owners who are holding onto vital space we should all be able to use. Through collaboration we can find a solution which benefits us all.

Kindest regards,  
Tadhg Spain  
Fifth year architecture student,  
TU Dublin.

“the root of the ancient estimation of politics is the conviction that man qua man, each individual in his unique distinctness, appears and confirms himself in speech and action... The public realm, the space within the world which men need in order to appear at all, is therefore more specifically ‘the work of man’ than is the work of his hands or labor of his body.”

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*. 1958.



Early conceptual collage of the call for spaces of public appearance.  
Marlborough Place viewed from Cedar House.



Late model of sloped public space, ramping to the podium.  
Marlborough Place viewed from Cedar House.

**The Tragedy, The Plunder.**

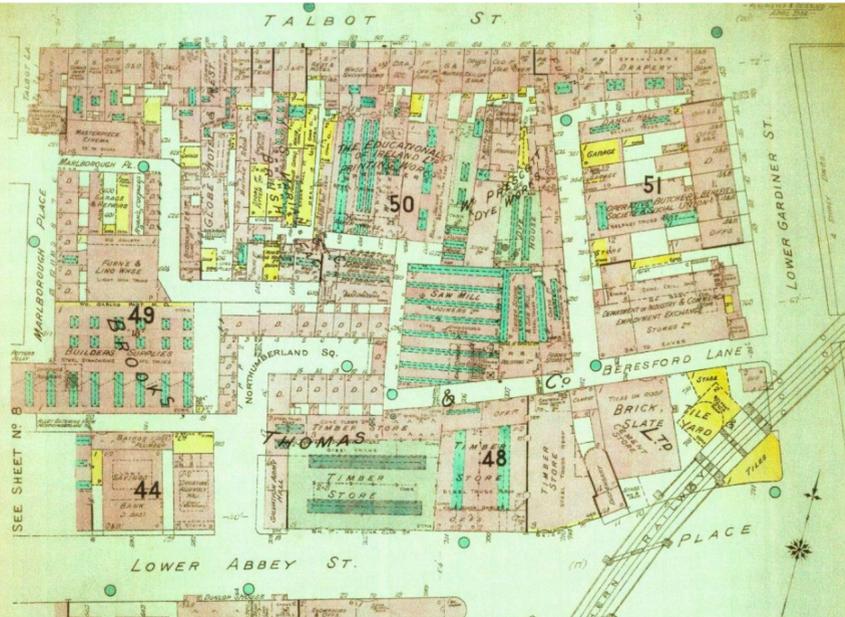
Elinor Ostrom offers us a way of understanding the commons and how the key determinant of their success being the group’s ability to co-operate. However, she describes the influential models which are most frequently used to inform state or market solutions, models which condemn people as incapable of cooperating and achieving a collective goal over personal gain. She cites Garrett Hardin as he created the expression ‘the tragedy of the commons’ to symbolise the degradation of the environment from overpopulation. “Therein is the tragedy. Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit – in a world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons.” This model amongst ‘the prisoner dilemma game’ and ‘the logic of collective action’ are plagued by the ‘free-rider problem’. (Ostrom, 1990) The problem is that these models were used in metaphorical ways to inform policies which accelerated the privatisation of public goods. A phenomenon we are still experiencing today as neo-liberalism continues to blight society. These models actively disputed people’s ability of collective action, allowing politicians such as Margaret Thatcher to erode our shared wealth, our commons. “Who is society? There is no such thing!” (Standing, 2019) The beginning of this ‘plunder’ is when the lords pass the enclosures act. A direct attack on the rights that commoners had to land, namely “the right of subsistence”. These lords simultaneously encroached on ‘The Charter of the Forest’ signed in 1217, one of England’s founding documents alongside the Magna Carta. (Standing, 2019) In this rich vein of research into the commons Standing builds on the sentiments such as those expressed by Silke Hellfrich in her ‘The Wealth of the commons, a world beyond the market and state’ in 2013: “The history of capitalism is the history of the so-called ‘enclosure of the commons’ both by the market and the state. Common pool resources are constantly being converted into commodities or taken hostage by the powerful.” (Hellfrich, 2013)

The commons existed on the site to which this thesis is based. Marlborough Bowling Green, before becoming a bowling green for the new and affluent residents of the Gardiner Estate, was commonage. (Costello, 2007) These free spaces also accommodated the civic assemblies that took place, for example the public executions at Oxmanstown Green and St. Stephen’s Green. Not only did these spaces serve the city as vital parts to “take in air” they were also crucial for poorer people to keep livestock of pigs and cattle. On Stephen’s Green “Until 1765 some citizens were allowed to build pens for horse and cattle on the Green in return for a fee.” Even before this, people had built shelter on the open spaces of Dublin as they struggled to survive. In 1635 it was noted that ‘many beggars and other vaccabondes doe most presumptuously build cottages upon the commons and the highways of the suburbes of the city, and doe breed and multiplie’. And in 1664 the Assembly passed a resolution that: “the outskirts of St Stephen’s Green and other wastelands about this cittie, that now add nothing at all to plesure or profit, may be set ...for the reputation, advantage, ornament and pleasure of this cittie.”(Costello, 2007)

This record shows the shifting ideology of those who were in power. The Wide Street Commissioners had ambitious plans to influence the rapidly developing city, buying up the “wasteland” sites that were crucial to the commoners’ subsistence. This commodification of the land is echoed by John Berger in his 1979 novel ‘Pig Earth’, when he describes how a “culture of progress’ was displacing ‘a culture of survival’ . (Standing, 2019) This theme continued throughout the successive centuries. As the city progressed Marlborough Green was built over, creating a morphology of busy streets and permeable ‘burgages’. However, the permeability of the site waned in tandem with the decline of artisanal skills in the area, such trades being replaced by larger companies. This is known as the ‘Burgage Cycle’, which transforms an urban area from one where people live to one where they work. This cycle increased as the 16 families which lived in a strong community at Northumberland Square were displaced by Irish Life who, after purchasing the Brooks Thomas Warehouse site, continued to acquire more land of the city block. (Pollard, unpublished) See pages 22 for the record of this injustice.



John Roque 1756  
Irish Life Site outlined in red. Marlborough Bowling Green, Commonage to the north east.  
Source: <https://iif.harvard.edu/manifests/view/ids:10135320>



C.E. Goad Fire Insurance Map 1940  
Showing Northumberland Square and the ‘Burgage’ condition of the city block.  
source: Pollard, C (unpublished).

## Co-operation and the Changed Role of the Architect

For Peter Linebaugh, “commoning” is a process – i.e., the social processes of users in the course of managing shared resources and understand the commons as something socially produced. (Linebaugh, 2014) This ideological shift starts with the architect. The practices within a ‘commons’ development are not exclusive to the ‘professionals’ who make up the ‘design-team’ but also the so-called ‘laypeople’ who also hold important knowledge about the city. Understanding the complex character of the interactions among these different actors as matters of care, affective labour, and negotiation might bring us to different design approaches of the city. (Avermaete, 2020) Affective Labour is work carried out that is intended to produce or modify emotional experiences in people. (Hardt, 1999)

This paradigmatic shift in the profession of architecture is described by Tom Avermaete in 3 forms. A shift in thinking about urban resources, considering spatial, social, and material resources, thinking of them as CPRs. A shift in how urban projects are initiated and commissioned. The ‘client’ is no longer a singular actor seeking permission from an authority but a complex actor network of co-producing and collaborative ventures. (Latour, 2005) This results in the final form which is the emergence of new types of places that can neither be qualified as fully private or fully public. Through the research conducted for this thesis, I am acting as the architect, but in the commons, this role is more about stewardship and listening. Primary research as listener and observer were crucial in informing the decisions to transform the resources held by the owners (Irish Life). Transforming the resource (property) from a commodity to a CPR through architectural tools is how the architect becomes a commoner. By listening I am identifying the need of the site, a practice of integration and dialogue between two opposing forces in the city, the public and the owners. Once these forces collaborate, they become commoners.

This call for solidarity is not new. Richard Sennett reminds us of the ‘social question’ movements which sought a bottom-up approach of reform. A key example being Robert Owen (b. 1771) who oversaw, as a teenager, textile factories in Wales. He was unhappy as he saw the dreadful conditions the factory workers encountered daily, and the conditions of the colonies who produced the cotton his workers used. He envisioned a workshop which followed his ‘Rochdale Principles.’ (Sennett, 2012)

There is no commons without community, (Mies, 2014) more specifically, ‘the cooperative communities’ envisioned by many like Owen. Another example of solidarity built from the ground up was ‘the Settlement House’ which Sennett describes as the star exhibit from the ‘short-lived Paris Commune of 1871, which existed for a period of months after the fall of the empire of Napoleon III’. This voluntary association operated a building in a poor urban community, where poorly skilled workers could get advice on everyday problems, upskill, or receive education and find a warm, clean place to simply be. (Sennett, 2012)

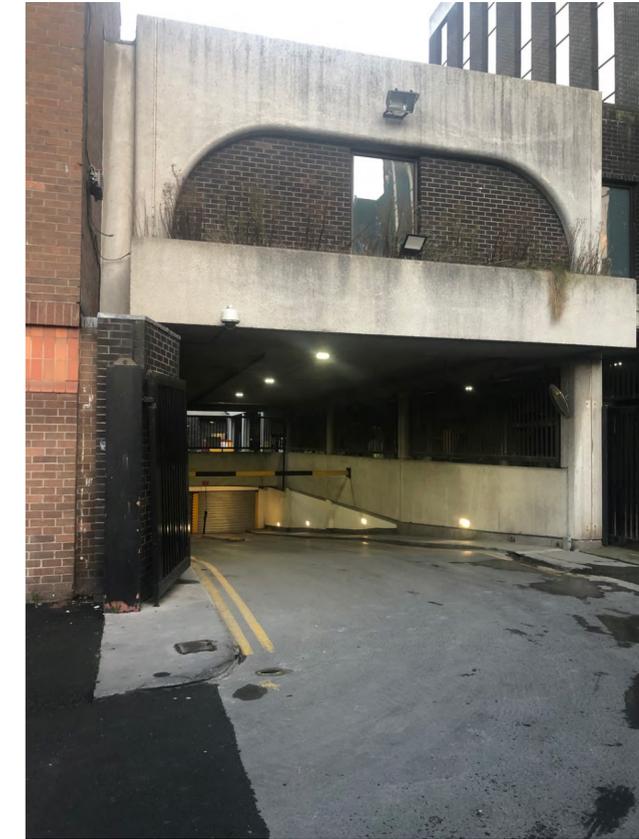
Evidence of this empathy takes the form in a ‘win-win arrangement’ between the Irish Life Centre and its neighbour Cedar House, or as it was known in the 1980s the Dublin-Central Mission (DCM). () “The prime example... of the win-win arrangement... is a business deal where all parties gain.” (Sennett, 2012) Irish Life as client gained floor space, a critical dimension of their business model, in the form of added stories overshadowing DCM and encroaching on DCM’s property line. The architect gained in not having to adjust the structural grid, which would compromise the architectural expression of where the buildings met. Finally, DCM gained accommodation as two bays of the three which met their building, are given to them. (Keighery, interviewed 2021)

If this solidarity is to manifest itself in a building it requires money, both from Irish Life as client and custodian and Dublin City Council. It is the role of the architect to understand these constraints within which they can initiate change. Irish Life and the DCC establish a win-win arrangement with the commoners. The DCC are providing the means for care work to be carried out by the community who will use the facilities in the conventional form of funding. Irish Life as the client, create an extension, a charitable act, unseen in Dublin since the Iveagh Trust, unlocking resources to the community surviving around its peripheries. Firstly, Irish Life can claim this as another method by which to reach more people, essentially providing life assurances or security to people who currently cannot afford their current model of business. Not only does this make their influence on the city greater but their exposure and association with charitable acts becomes a very powerful marketing tool. The architect, in creating attractive images for their client, and eventually, an attractive building, operates within the confines of the market, with a mind to provide for people outside of the market.

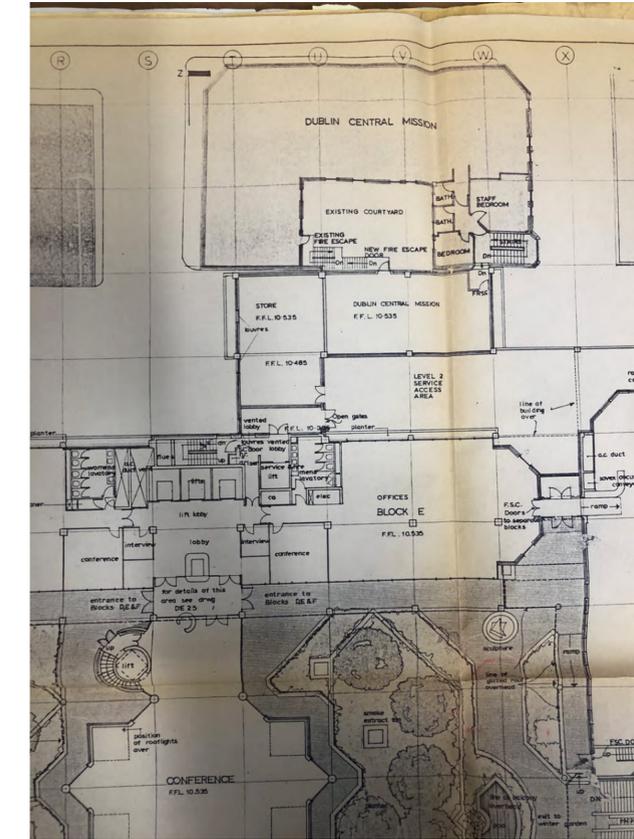
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## ‘Rochdale Principles.’

1. Workshops available to anyone (equality of employment)
  2. One person one vote (democracy in the workplace)
  3. Distribution of surplus in relation to trade (profit-sharing)
  4. Cash Trading (he hated ‘abstract debt’ and eschewed the modern credit-card)
  5. Political and religious neutrality. (toleration of differences at work)
  6. Promotion of education (job training tied to employment).
- (Sennett, 2012)



Irish Life architecture  
adjoining DCM



Plan of where the ILC  
and DCM  
(now Cedar House)  
source: (Irish Life Draw-  
ing Archive, 2021)

**The Broken Community of Northumberland Square**



“They were all craft workers, most of them who lived in their own home worked in their own home. Now it was a family of painters lived in number 8 and we never once paid for our house to be painted, that’s what they did and they were the ones to do it. And it was the same as all the people round. Anyone who could sew would make or mend your clothes, all free of charge. It was just the thing to do, we all lived together as one.”



“It’s alright for people redeveloping property with money, wanting to make more but we were never consulted. The people who are actually living in those houses are the people they should come to first. We were never invited to any of those meetings of the project. We knew absolutely nothing of what was going on. Kept in the dark we were. Yet this house is part of our lives, we’ve lived here all these years, I consider this house part of my self. By having to give up this house and leaving it I’m giving up part of myself. The community is broken up, everything is broken up.”

*-Daughters of Mrs. Flynn, resident of Northumberland Square.*  
RTE Archives 1973

**Conventional Market State dominated actor network vs. The New Commons actor network**

diagrams by Tadhg Spain

Below are the 4 roles within the commons, each equally important in how a resource can be used, sustained and reproduced.

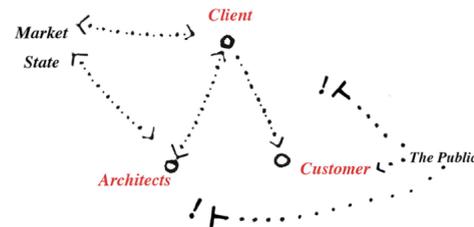
**Partners:** referred to by Guy Standing as Custodians, Partners give up their resources to the commons, with the understanding that their philanthropy earns them no personal wealth, only the shared wealth of the commons.  
Market Partner (Lidl, Irish Life) State Partner (DCC initiative)

**Stewards:** an organiser within the commons, these people establish and nurture the relationships which are vital for the commons. An example here is the architect who maintains the connection between partners and commoners.

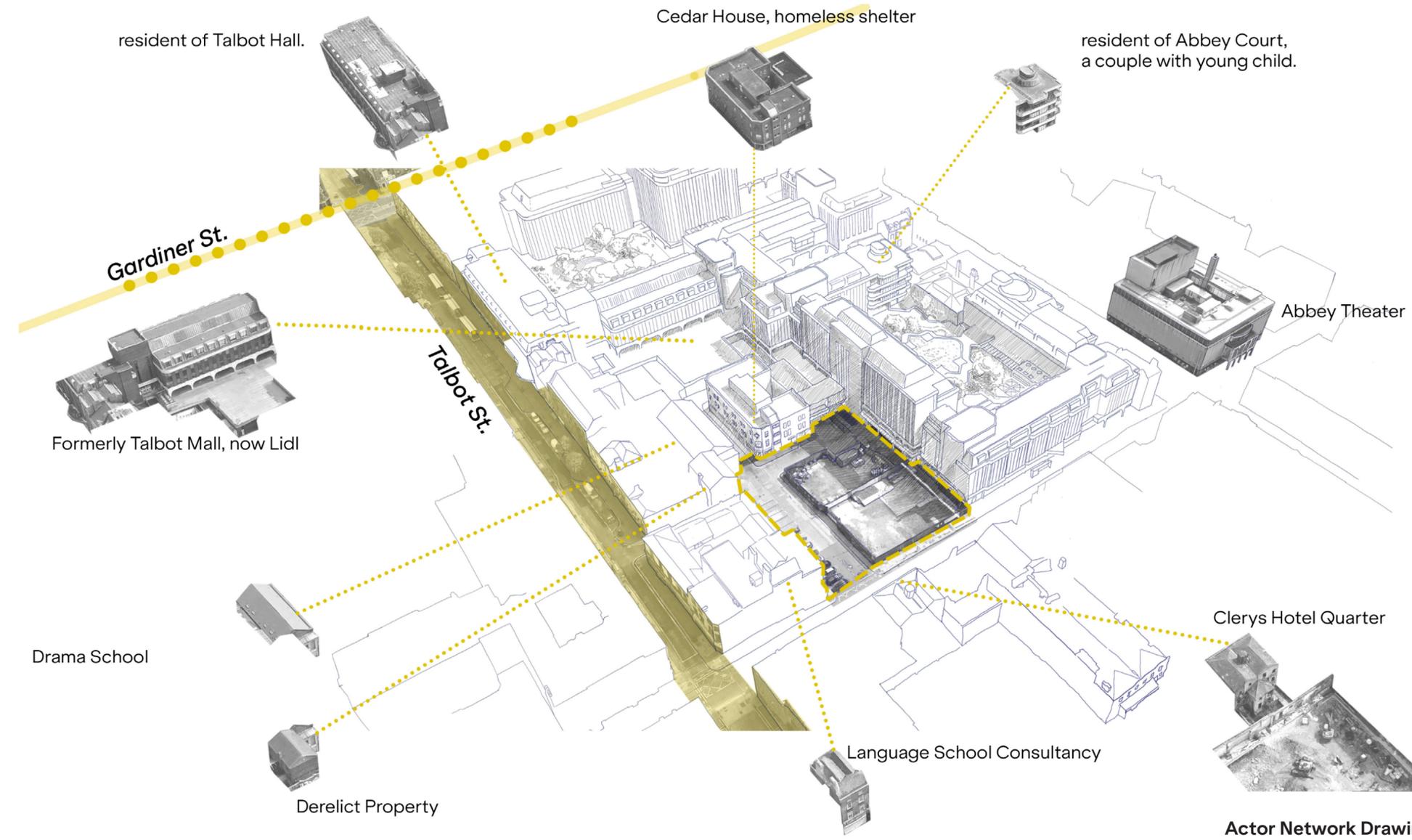
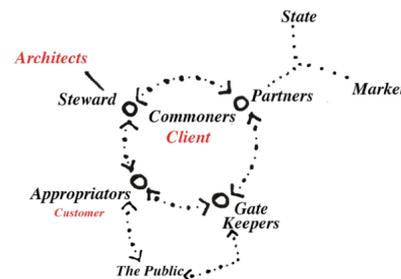
**Gatekeepers:** an impartial 3rd body of commoners elected to ensure Stewards are honouring their roles.

**Appropriators:** the commoners who use and maintain the resources, they have influence on this shared resource and approach gate keepers and stewards with their interests and concerns.

**Conventional procurement actor network.**



**‘The new commons’ actor network.**



The buildings surrounding Marlborough Place represent the different stakeholders who have an interest in what comes of this site due for redevelopment. This drawing is also trying to illustrate the importance of the people found on Gardiner and Talbot street as they have no building to represent them.

**Actor Network Drawing**



## Irish Life Mall as a common-pool resource

The commons can be defined as resources (material and immaterial) that require collective action to be managed for the general interest, often with a view of sustainability or resilience (climate and social justice). It often implies the simultaneous production and management of that resource and the build-up of a community. (Bollier Cassiers & Dedeurwaerdere, 2012)

Irish Life is an interesting 'client' to engage with for multiple reasons, this idea of 'client' is within the context of the paradigmatic shift in how we conceive projects as mentioned above in 'the changed role of the architect'. Irish Life's history is tied very closely to the State, being State owned (up to 90 percent of shares) for most of the company's life. After the recession in Ireland the State then sold the company to Great West Life Co in 2013. (Irish Times, 2013) It is the interest of every person to have security and fitting that a company which deals with 'life assurance' as a commodity would become a partner and facilitator of the commons. Irish Life's investment models focus on longer term properties, managing and refurbishing, rather than selling. (Keighery, interviewed 2021)

When Irish Life was completed (Phase I & II) in 1978, architect Andy Devane held "in the firm belief that urban living in the heart of the city can be a pleasant, practical and economical experience". (RKD, 2017) However this offering to the city in the form of a shopping mall and privately owned public space (POPS) is criticised for not truly being public. 'In the "public" spaces of the theme park or shopping mall, speech itself is restricted: there are no demonstrations in Disneyland. The effort to reclaim the city is the struggle of democracy itself.' (Sorkin, 1992) The architect understood the importance of the permeability through this large urban block however his design would always be at the mercy of its private owner. Irish Life closed the arcade, and the new tenant of the space is Lidl. "The development will result in the closure of the existing pedestrian route through the mall between Talbot Street and Abbey Street which Irish Life said is necessary for security and safety reasons." (McCárthaigh, 2021) Another pedestrian passageway was envisioned as part of Phase III, which was completed in 1988, which linked Marlborough Street to Northumberland square. The ground floor was conceived as a shopping mall and an extension of the original one, again providing 'much needed permeability' through the urban block. Due to commercial circumstances, this mall never materialised, and the ground floor was occupied as offices. The original design had the main entrances of these offices through a first-floor level garden. (RKD, 2017) This results in an office block which has no relationship to the street, a far cry from the architect's original intention.

Irish Life as an architectural resource for designing both in material and language bares a heavy influence on the extension. Understanding Andy Devane's original intent as the architect and on subverting the uncaring condition as it is found today. The following design reflections outline how this manifests in the resulting proposal.

### Design Reflection on the Public Space in question and modelling process.

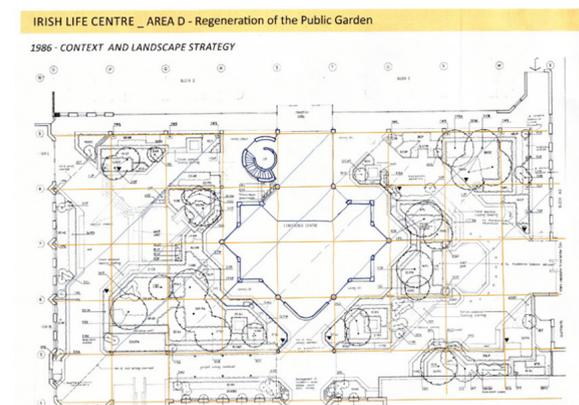
The design iterations seen in the chronological arrangement of model photos capture a hesitancy and repeated questioning of the intervention with the Irish Life Centre. The only constant throughout has been the location of where to open the podium level garden. In terms of the more aggressive intervention of occupying the ground floor under this podium level garden, I began with balancing between getting light down into the ground floor to make it usable and retaining as much of the original geometric language and secluded nature of the garden.

Post the interim review of semester 2, the investigation into the ground floor as resource concluded that the instinct to repair the site at Marlborough Place became secondary to the intervention. Digging into the basement floor also revealed technical challenges which did not align with the thesis idea of necessity and economy or realism. I felt it was important to retain a sense of realism for the project to make the end solution more potent. This then became a driver for the project as I pulled back from the ground floor and focused on representing these people who are otherwise alienated and under represented in terms of the built environment. The 'commons building' then could act as the base camp for this greater urban transformation.

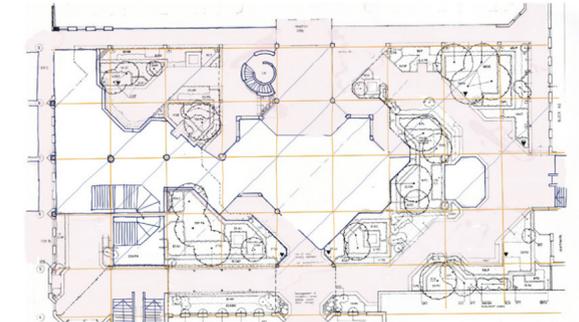
Progressing to the latest design, the intervention evolved from mimicry or subservience to one of imposition. Directly cutting through leaving the bare minimum of structure behind. As the resource of public space is then unlocked through opening the podium level garden, the design of the ramp flows down to allow the podium to become universally accessible. This ramp becomes a spatial organiser of the new square proposed at Marlborough Place, dividing it into



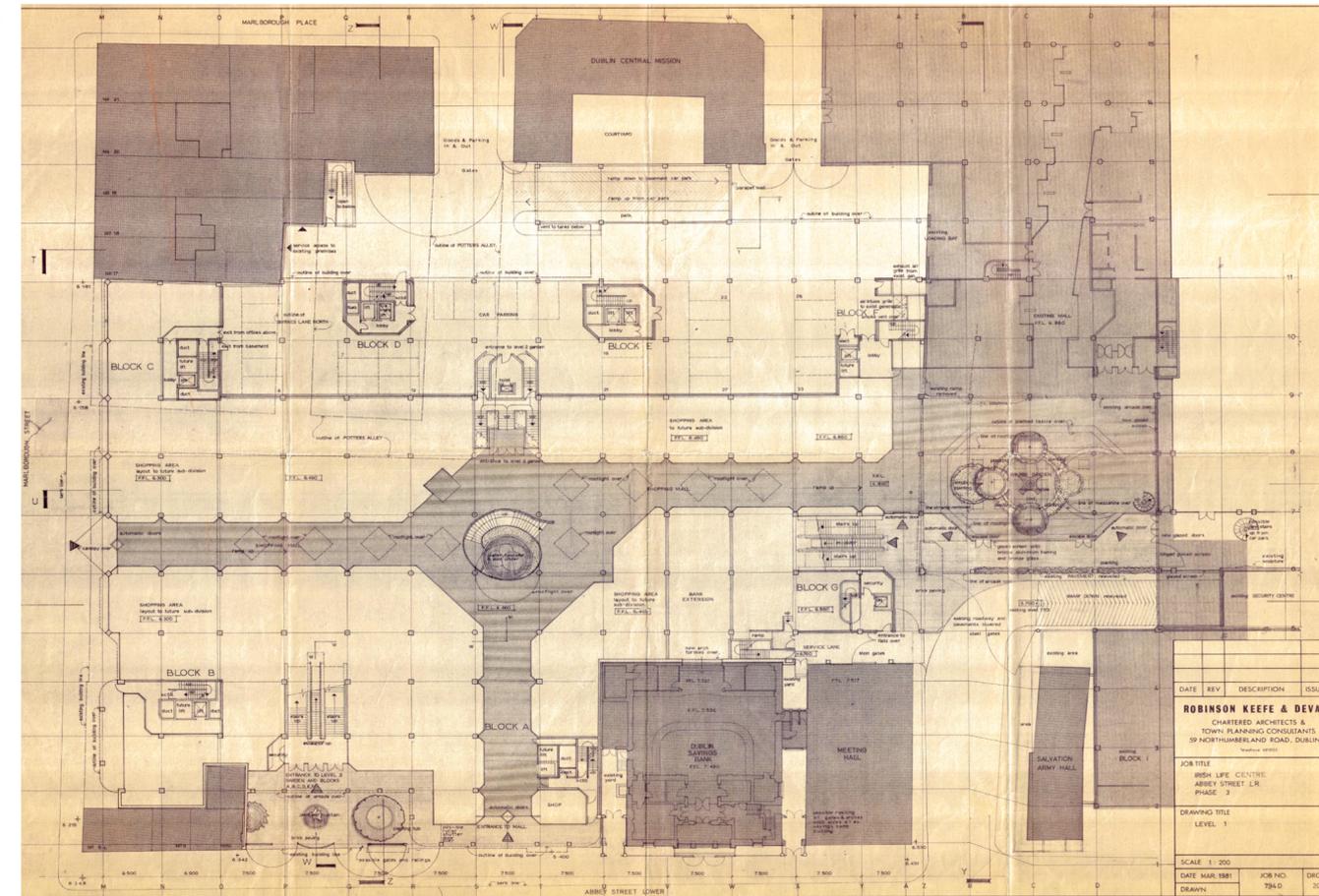
Rainbow Rapids Water Themepark  
source: <https://www.ossiansmyth.ie/dun-laoghaire-baths-whats-going-on/>



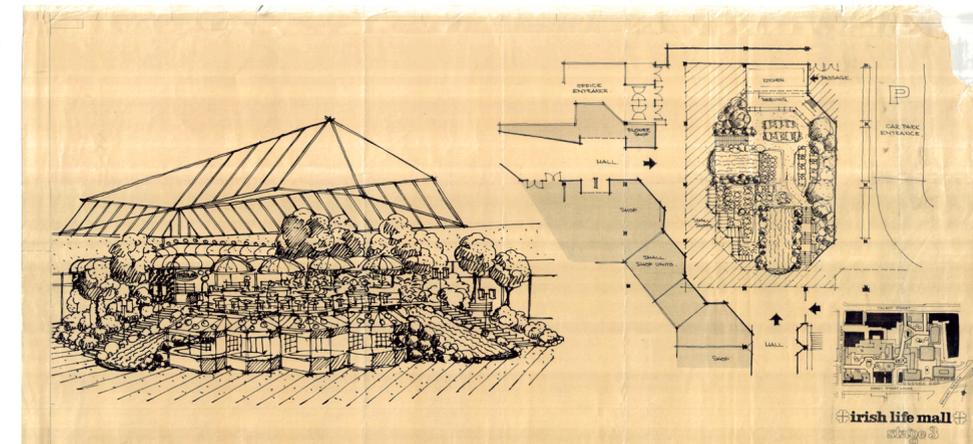
Early design process. An extreme cutting through of the slab, mimicing the design principles of 45 degrees bisecting the 7.5 m structural grid.



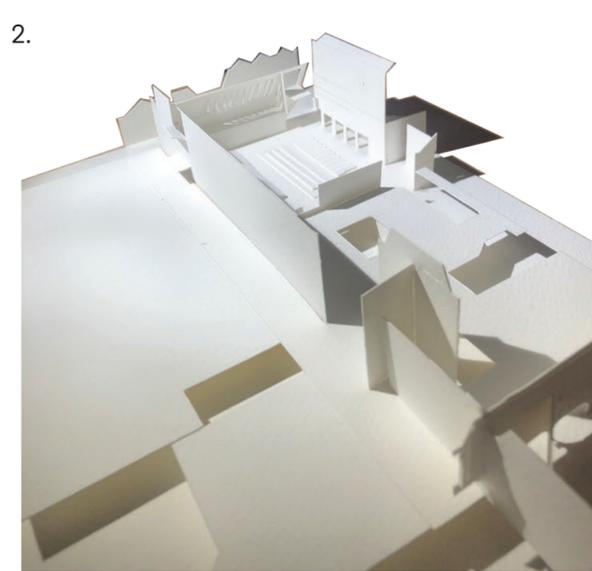
Plan of Mall, 1981 (never realised)  
source: Irish Life Drawing Archive.



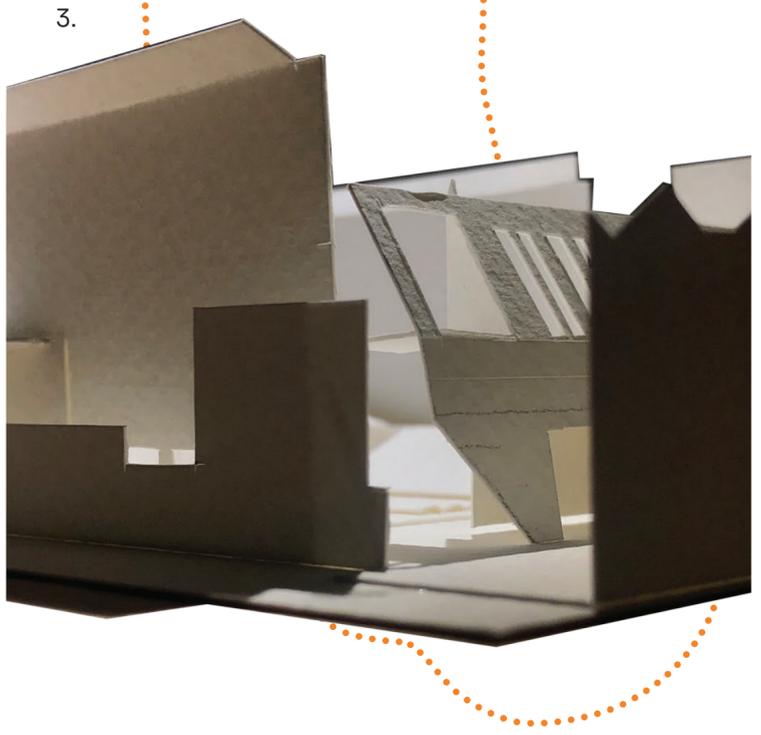
Andy Devane  
Winter Garden  
design to connect  
the two arcades.  
(demolished)  
source: Irish Life Drawing  
Archive.



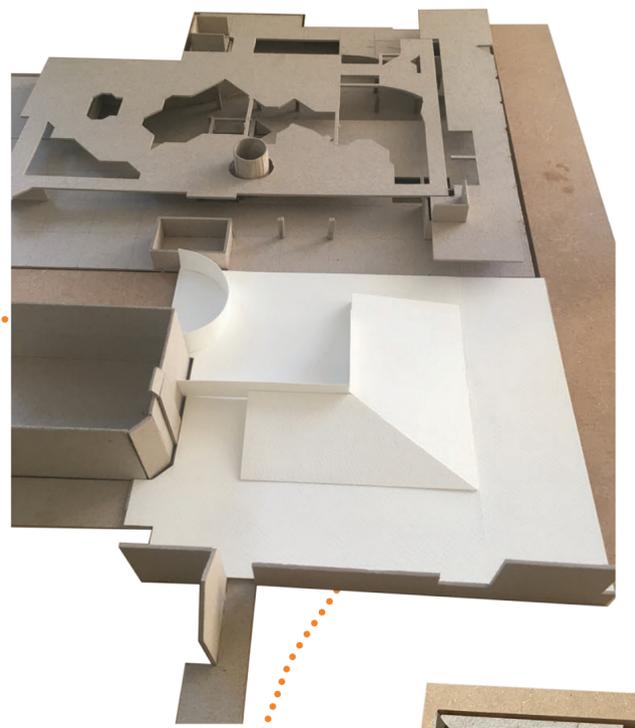
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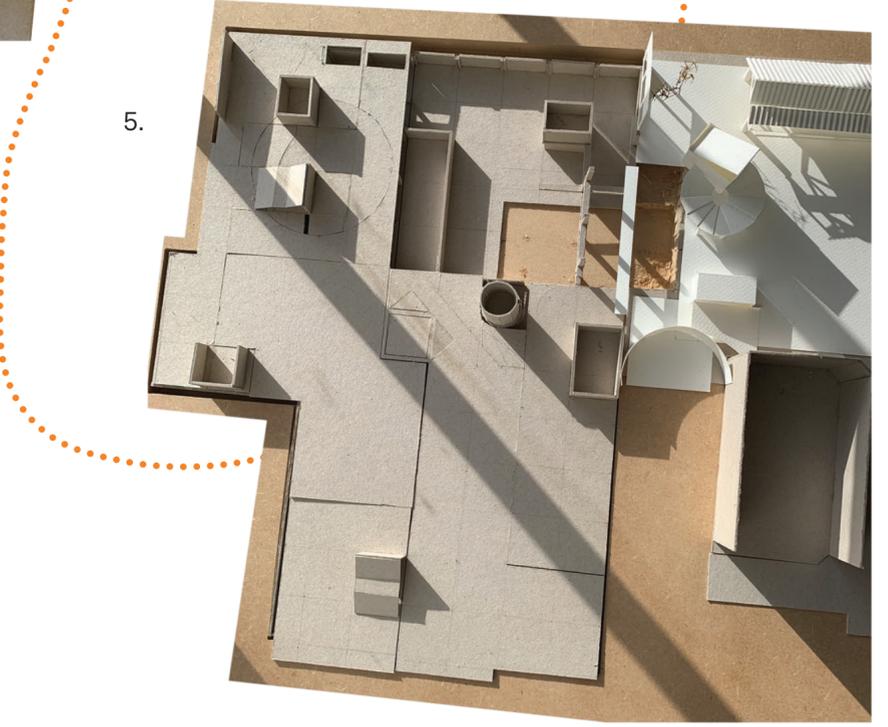
2.



3.



4.



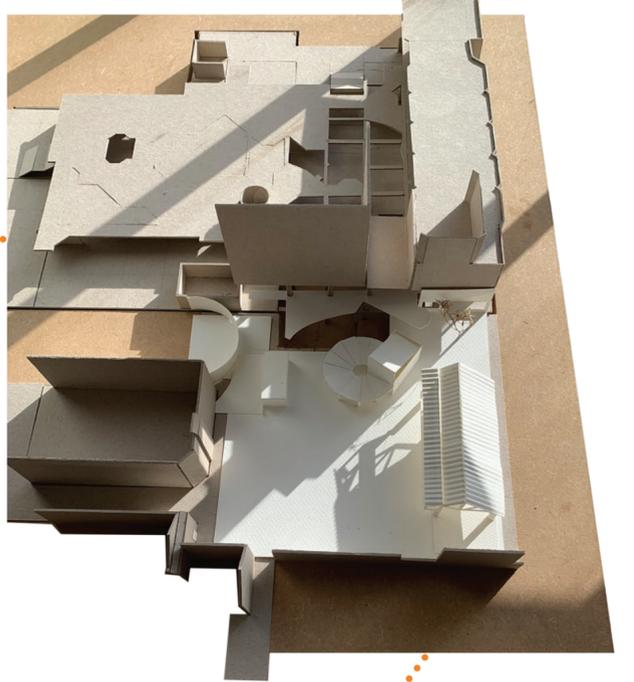
5.



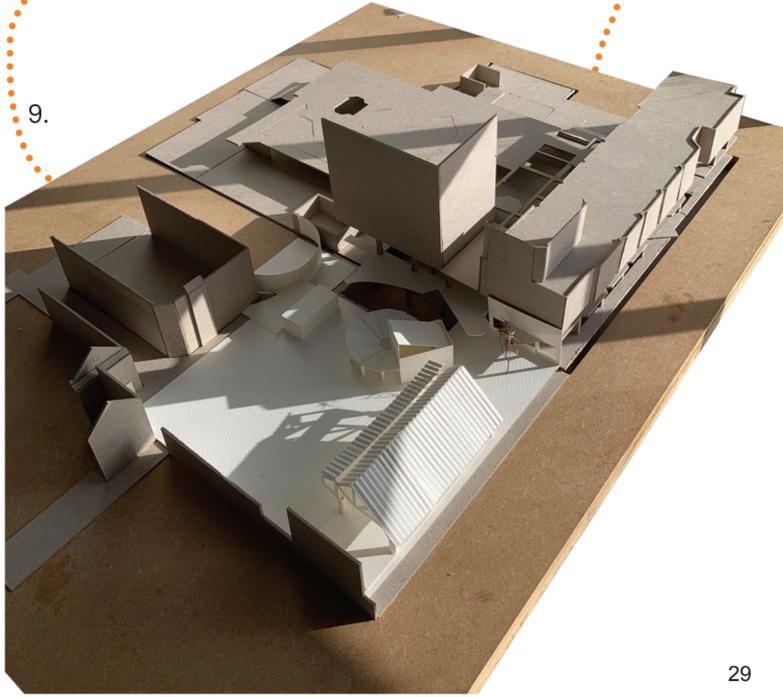
6.



7.



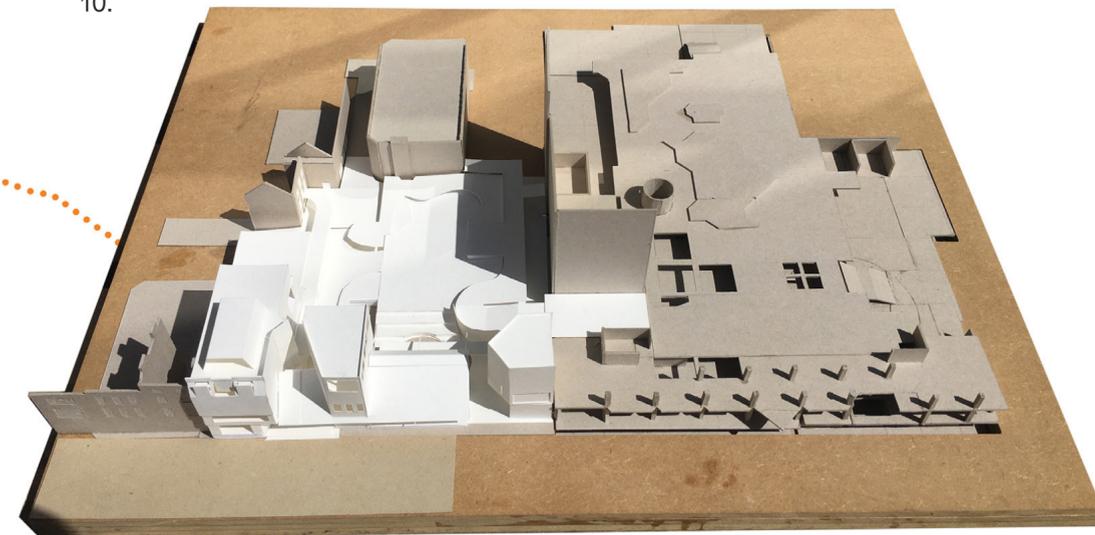
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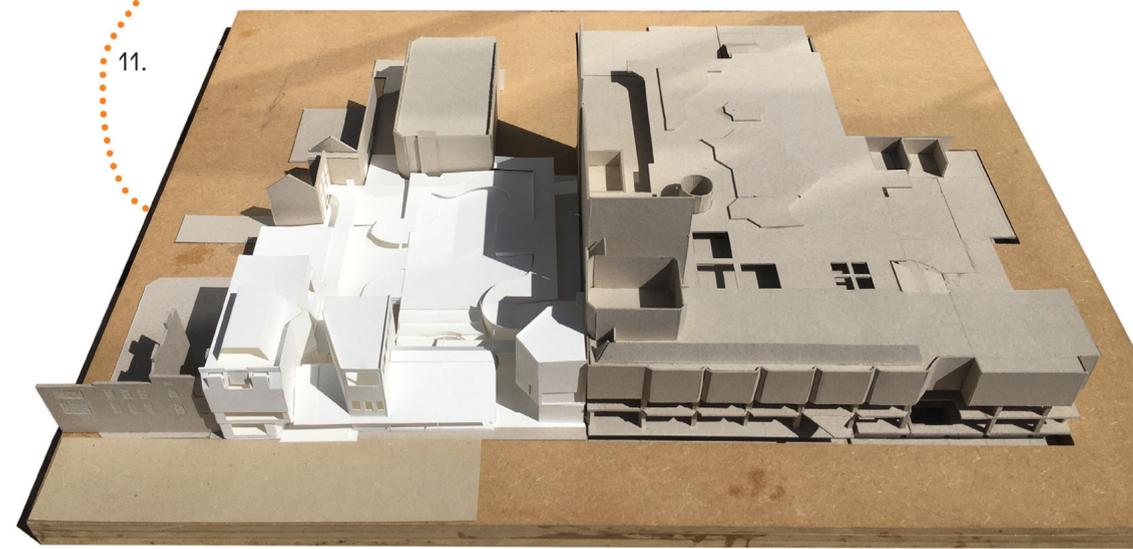
9.

- Key**
- 1. & 2.** First sketch model of Marlborough Place, aerial views of ramp to ILC Podium
  - 3.** Marlborough Street threshold, bridging the podium across.
  - 4.** Later model exploring the ramp up and podium cuts
  - 5.** investigating the ground floor and basement as possible resources
  - 6.** view of extreme cuts
  - 7.** Pre-Interim design opening up the basement
  - 8. & 9.** Pre-Interim design
  - 10.** Final design with ILC office block removed to see connection of public spaces
  - 11.** Final design

10.

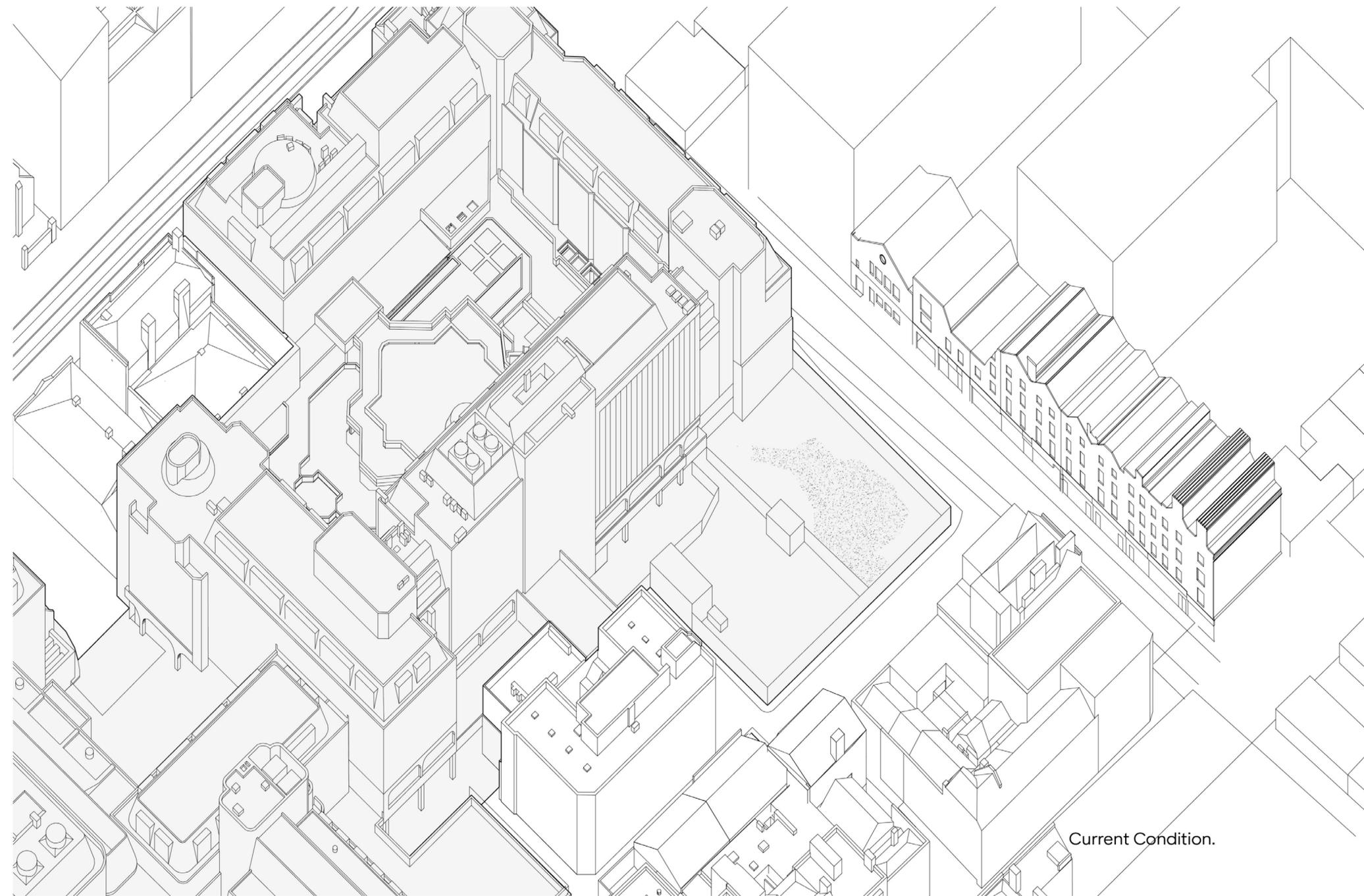


11.

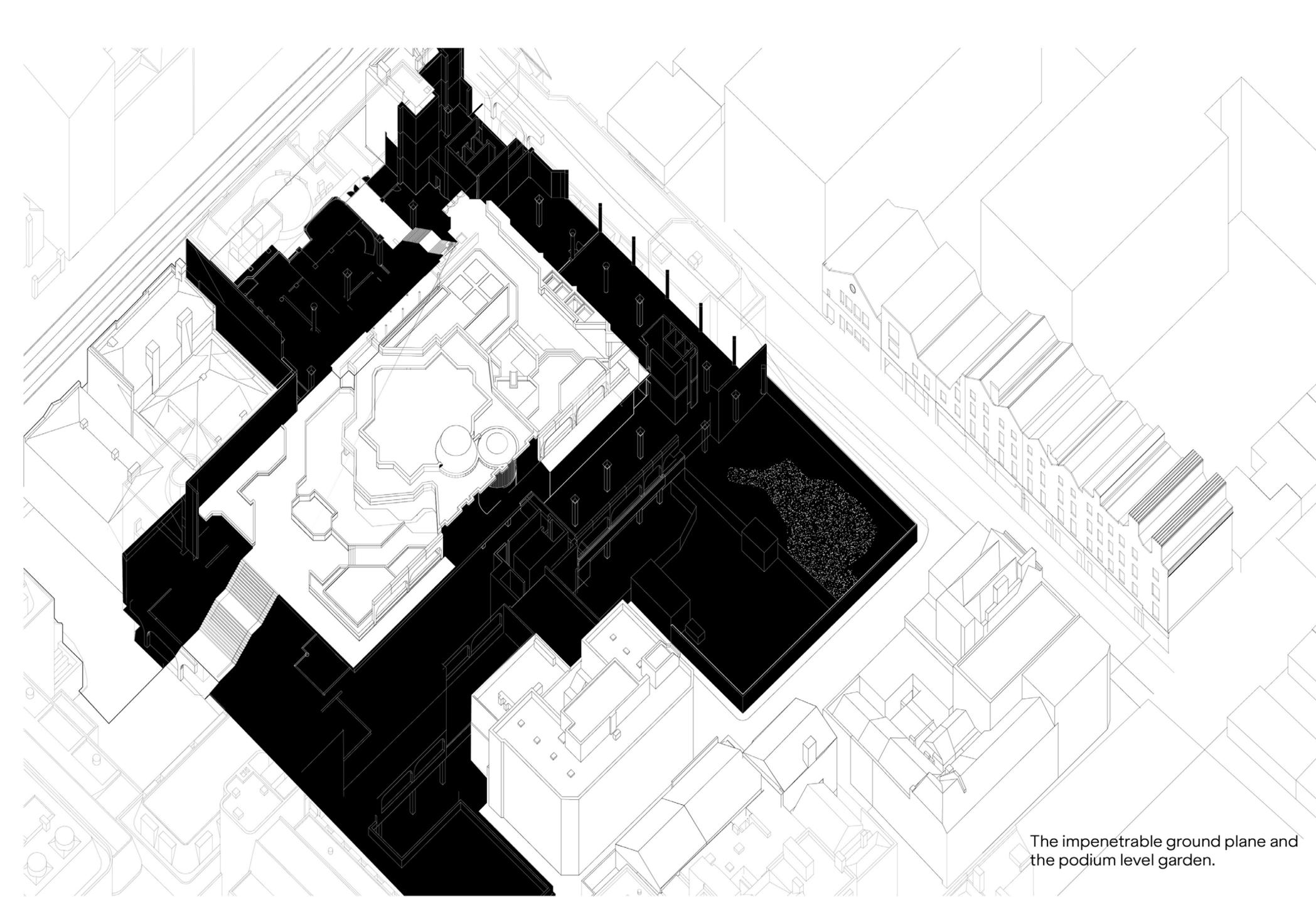


a main square at +2000mm above street level and a dining square at +1000mm. This new public space design creates a dialogue between the rigid geometric language existing in the garden, this geometry dissolving, melting like a surrealist painting, as it gently meanders to the ground.

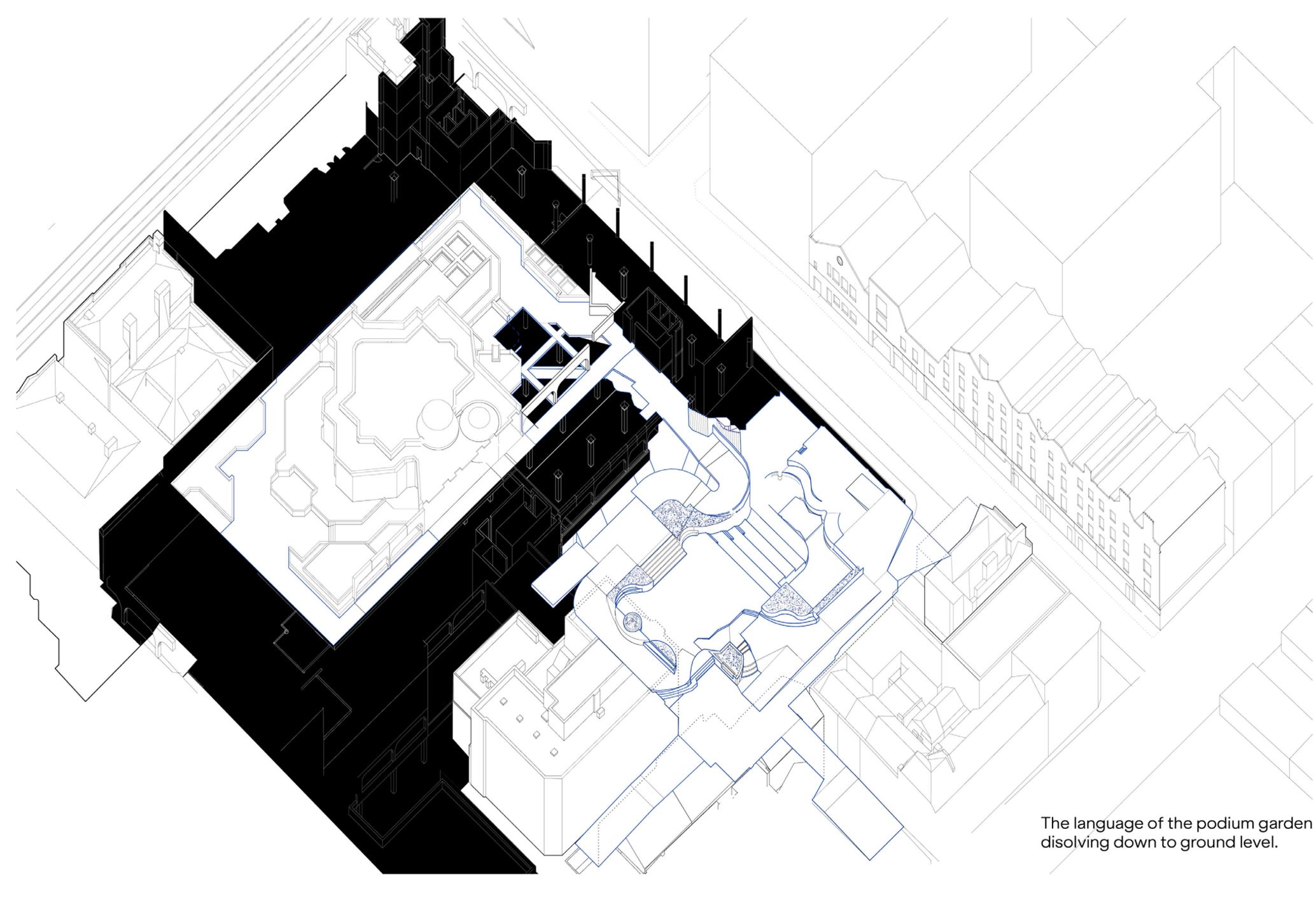
The resulting amorphous landscape was likened to 'Rainbow Rapids' a water theme park from the 80's located at Dún Laoghaire Baths. The theme park-like public space is a built reaction to Michael Sorkin's writings in 'Variations on a theme park'. Michael Sorkin's criticism of shopping malls and theme parks deserve to be remembered in the architecture. In doing this it is allowing Andy Devane's original vision of the 'public' spaces of the lost shopping mall to be remembered in the proposal too. Despite the eclectic influences on this space, the act of the public interacting with this public square subverts the negative, defensive language present and overtime the embedded influences can become apparent to these users. One such users being the children of the community who use and manage the commons creche and playground.



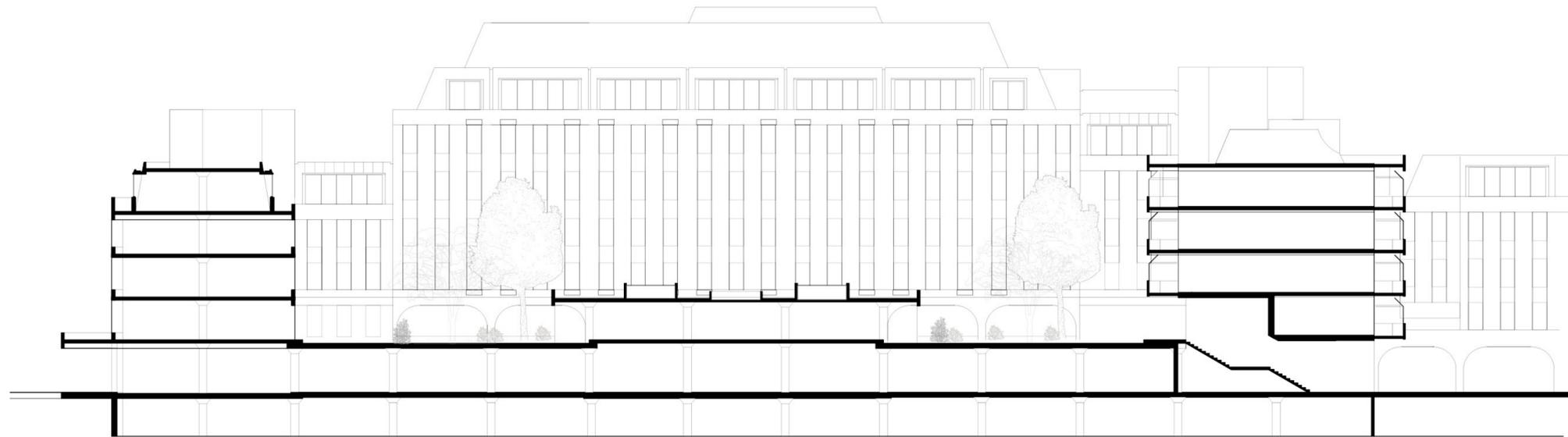
Current Condition.



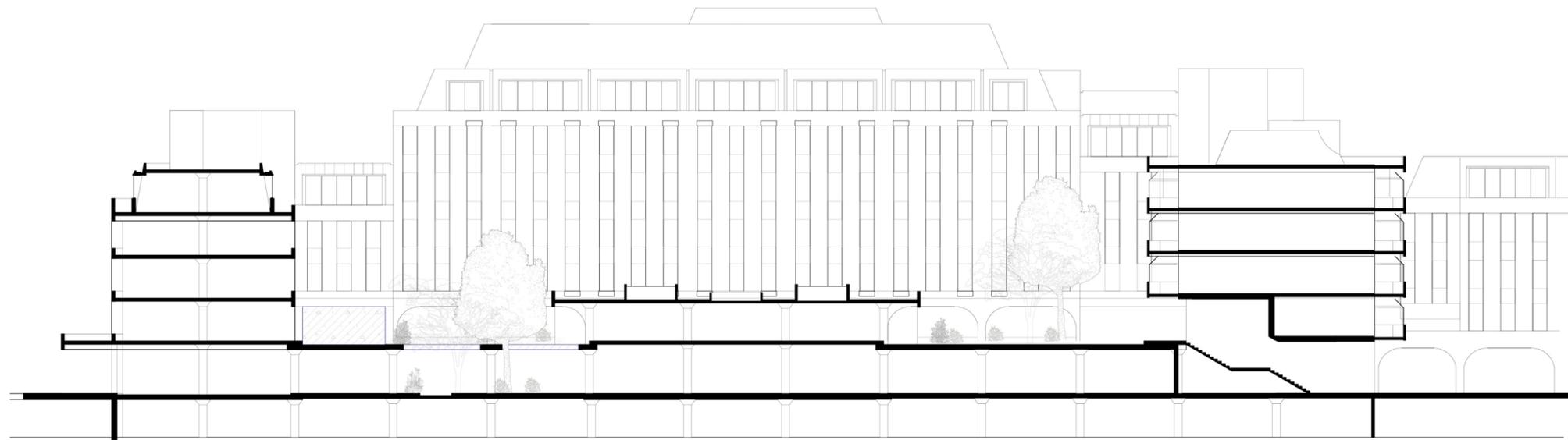
The impenetrable ground plane and the podium level garden.



The language of the podium garden dissolving down to ground level.

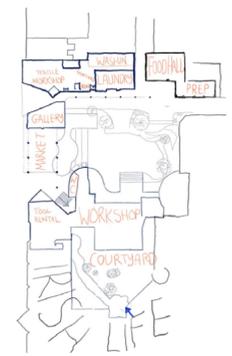


1 3 5m



1 3 5m

The act of cutting avoids the reinforcement which runs along the grids between each column of the ground floor. This allows for much needed light to flood the courtyard which acts as a buffer zone, a shared garden between the Irish Life workers and the commoners, providing a visual connection also between the two floors. The water feature present at the podium level garden is refurbished and the water then flows from here out to the amphitheatre in the new square. This water flowing through the commons references Lina Bo Bardi's SESC Pompeii another key precedent for this proposal. The flowing water motif showing how unlocking one resource then creates an opportunity for another resource to present itself.



Collage of cuts through existing structure.

- 1. Marlborough Place
- 2. Vacant Brick Building
- 3. Cedar House
- 4. Offices with Drama School above

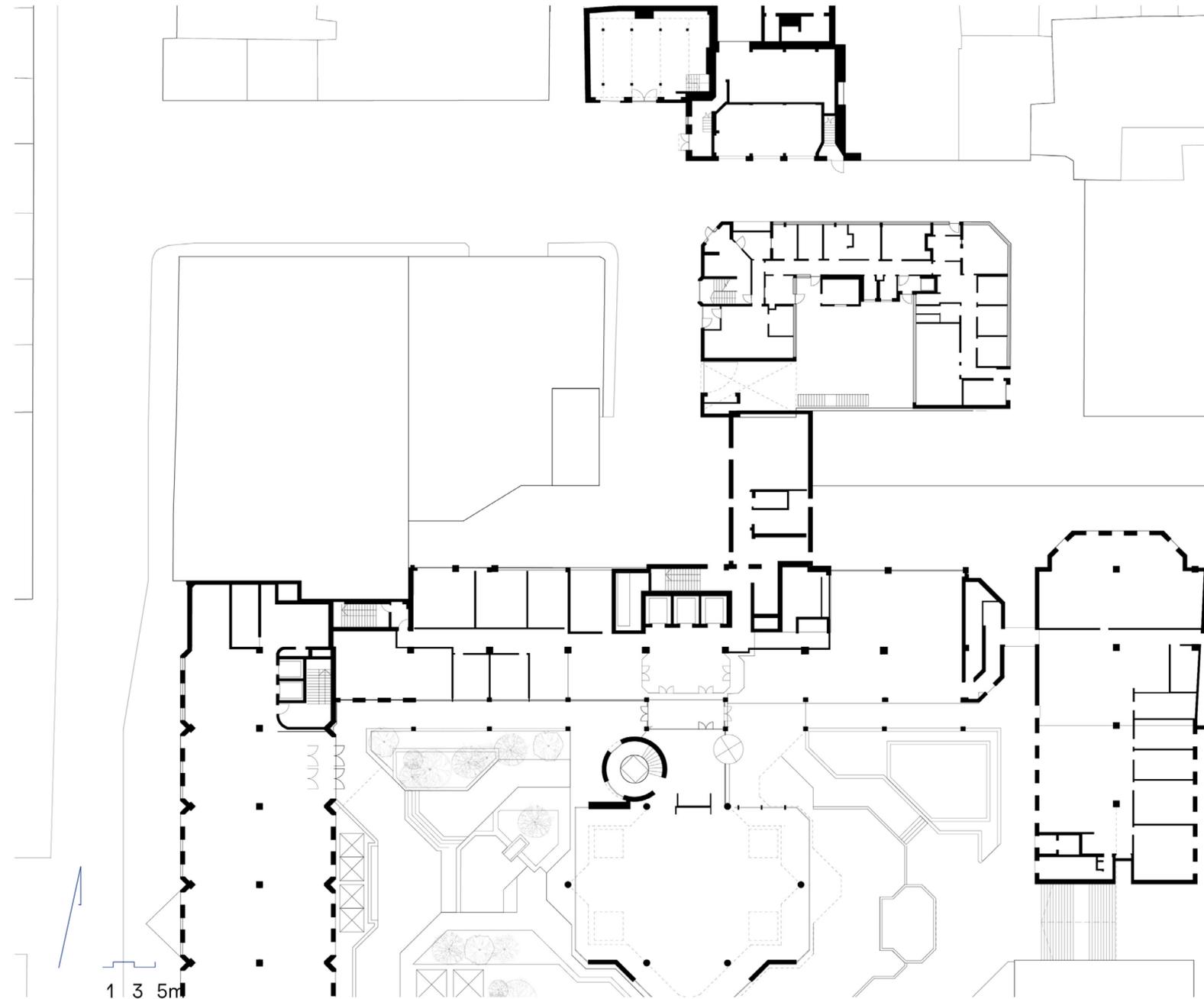


Existing Ground Plan

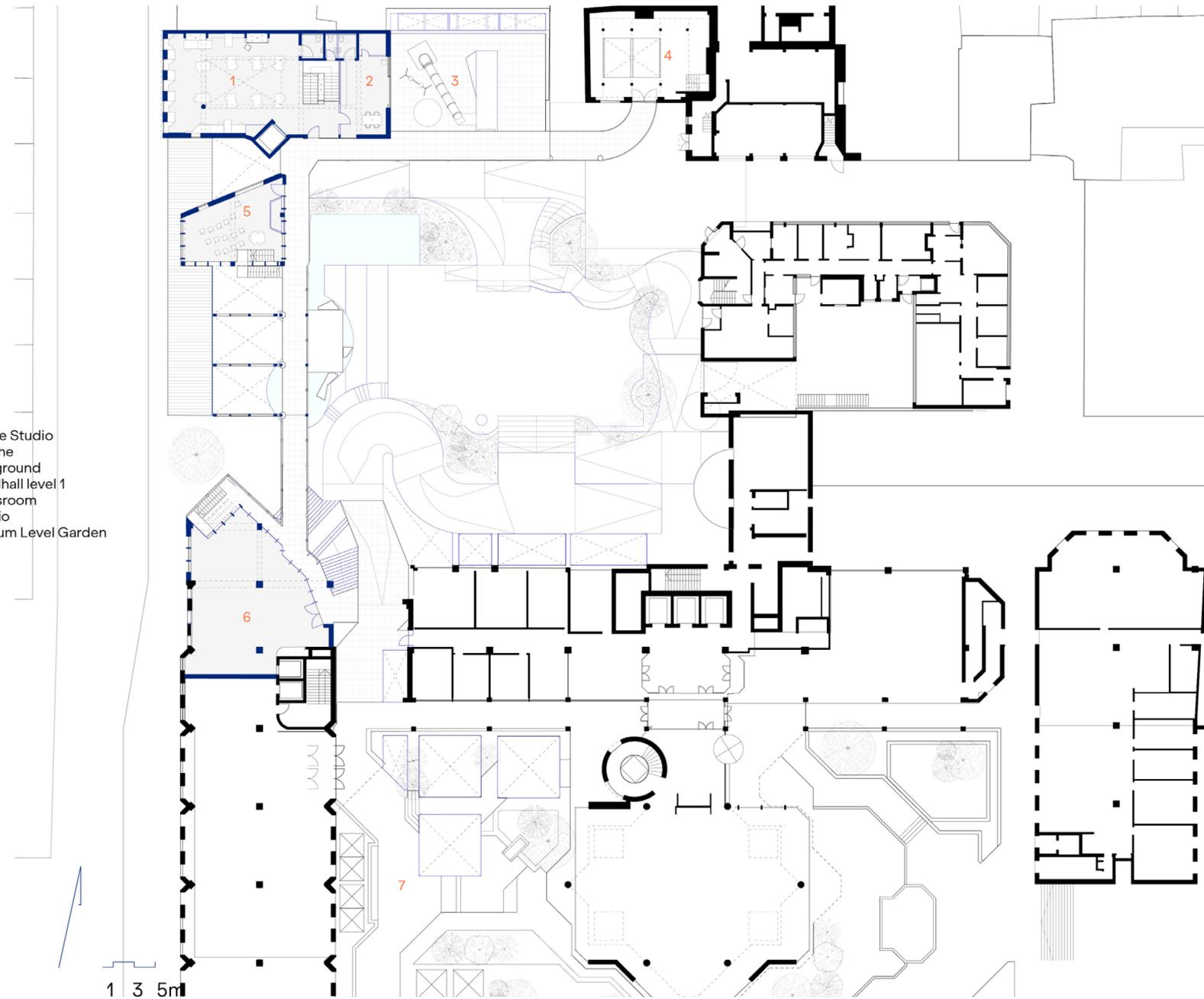
- 1. Textile Workshop
- 2. Sorting and Ironing
- 3. Laundry
- 4. Foodhall level 1
- 5. Classroom
- 6. Tool Hire
- 7. Workshop
- 8. Shared Courtyard
- 9. Public Toilets



Proposed Ground Plan

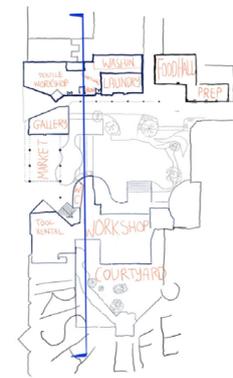


- 1. Textile Studio
- 2. Creche
- 3. Playground
- 4. Foodhall level 1
- 5. Classroom
- 6. Studio
- 7. Podium Level Garden

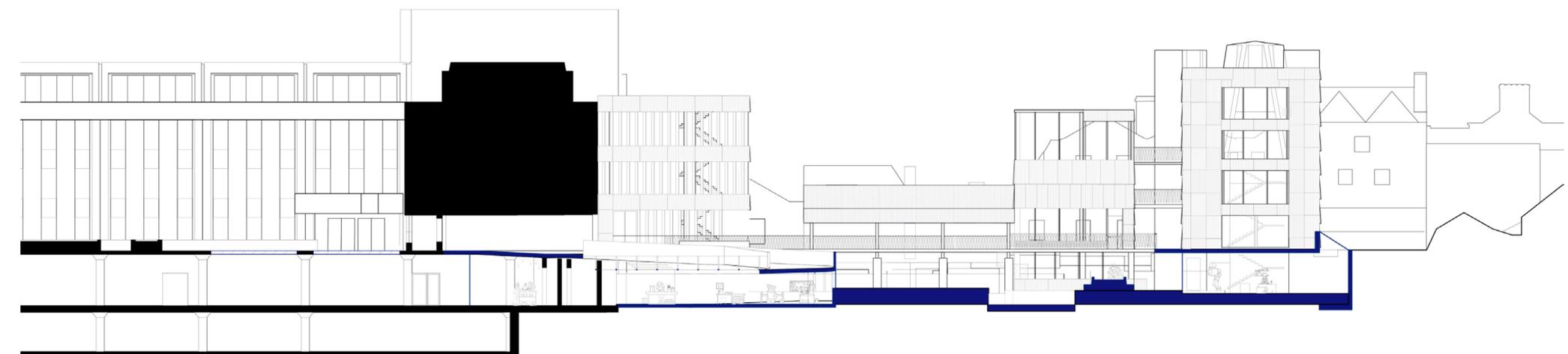




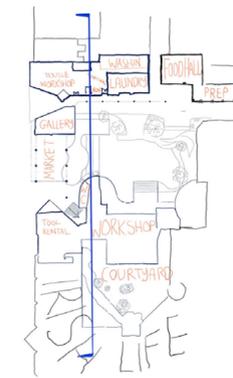
1 3 5m



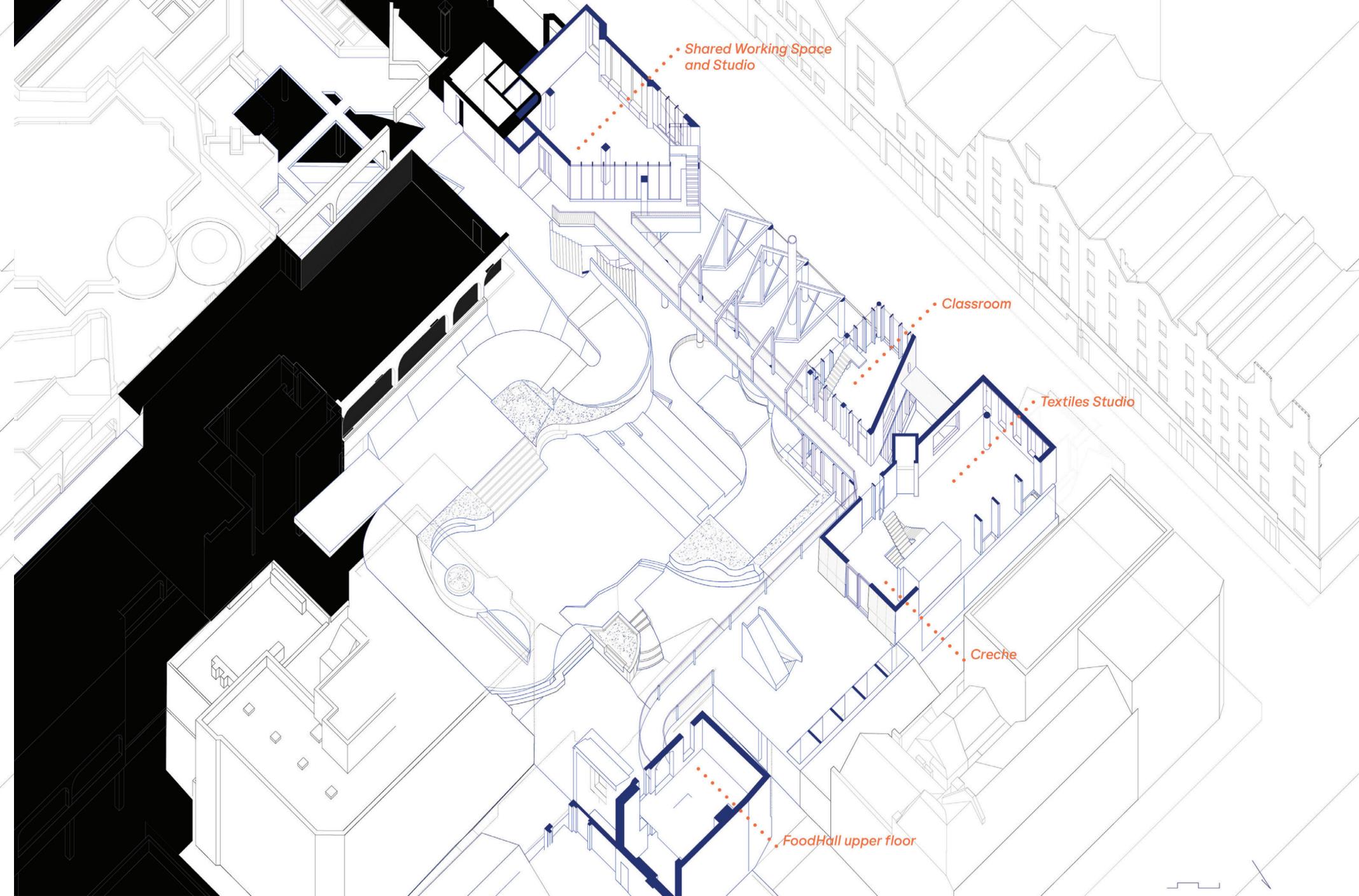
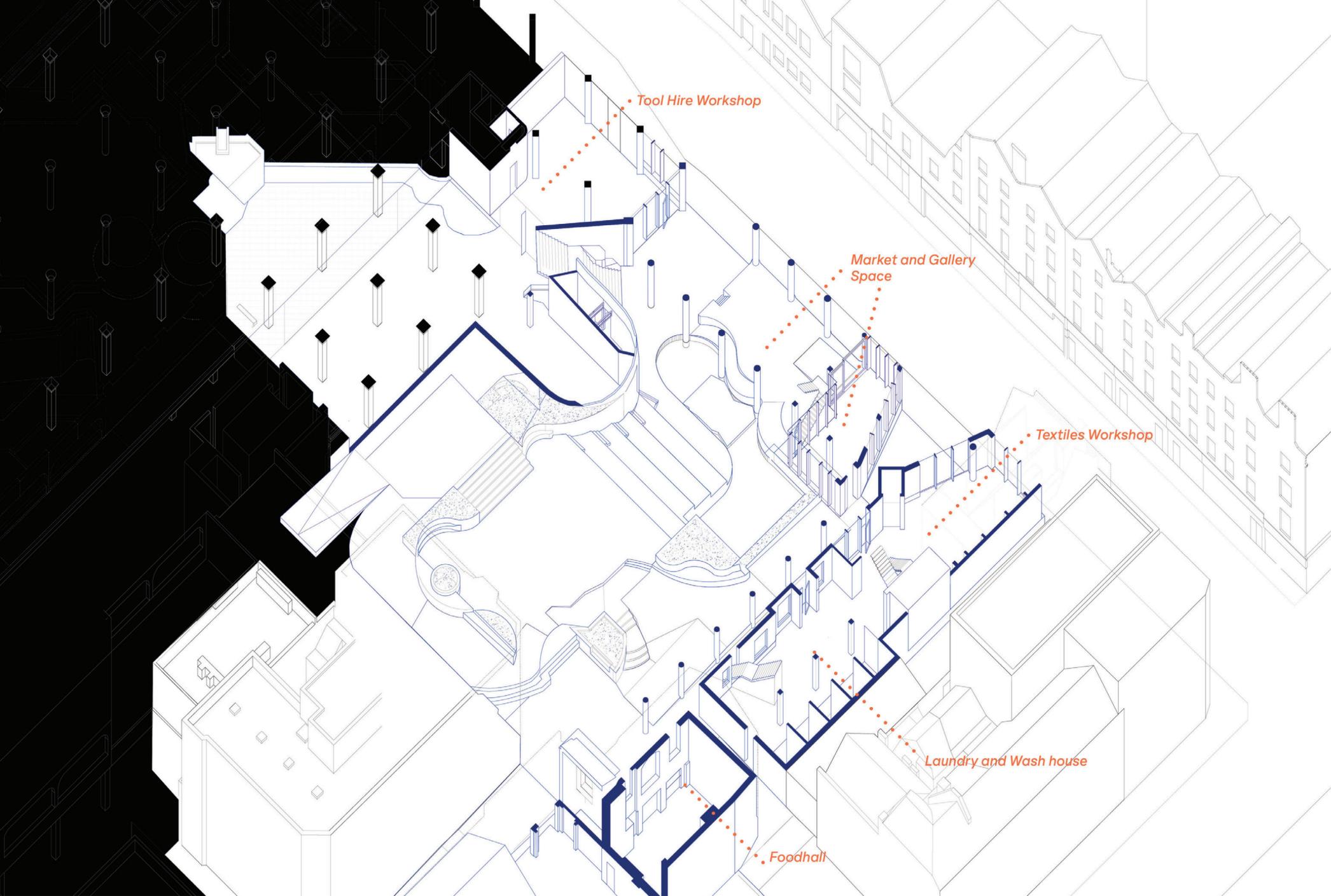
Existing Section through Marlborough Place. Looking West

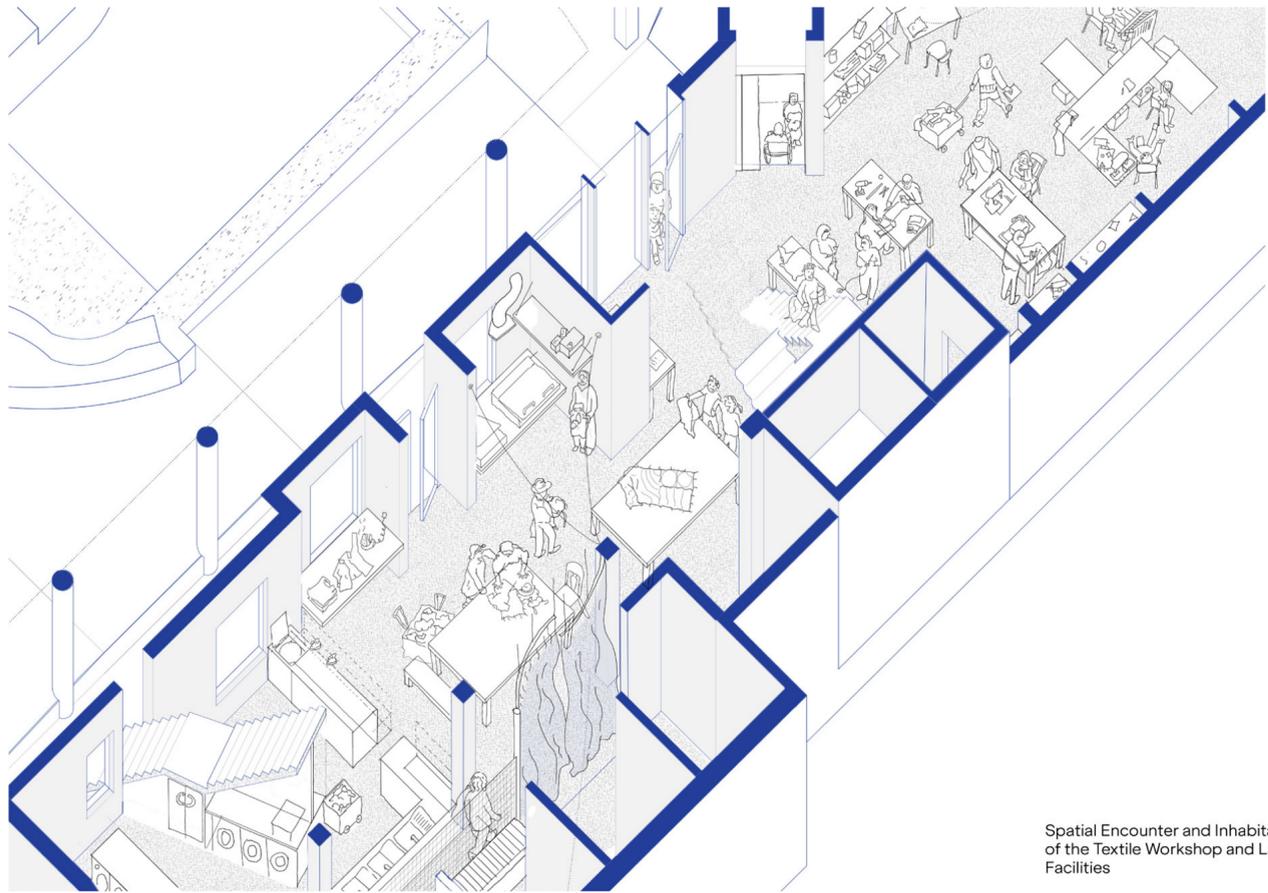


1 3 5m



Proposed Section through Marlborough Place. Looking West

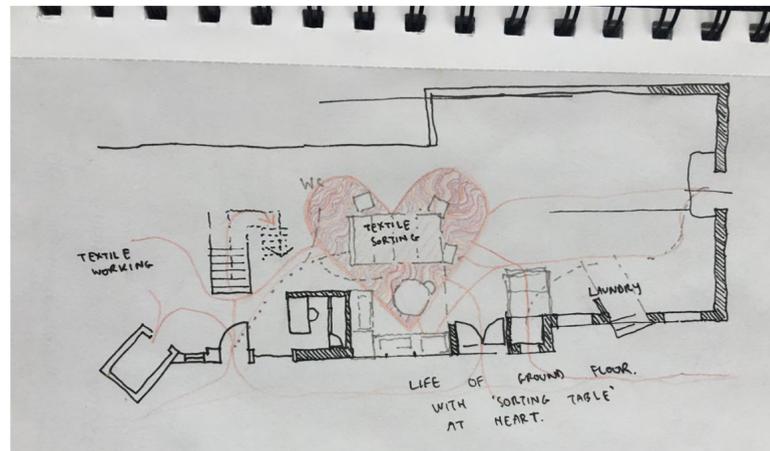




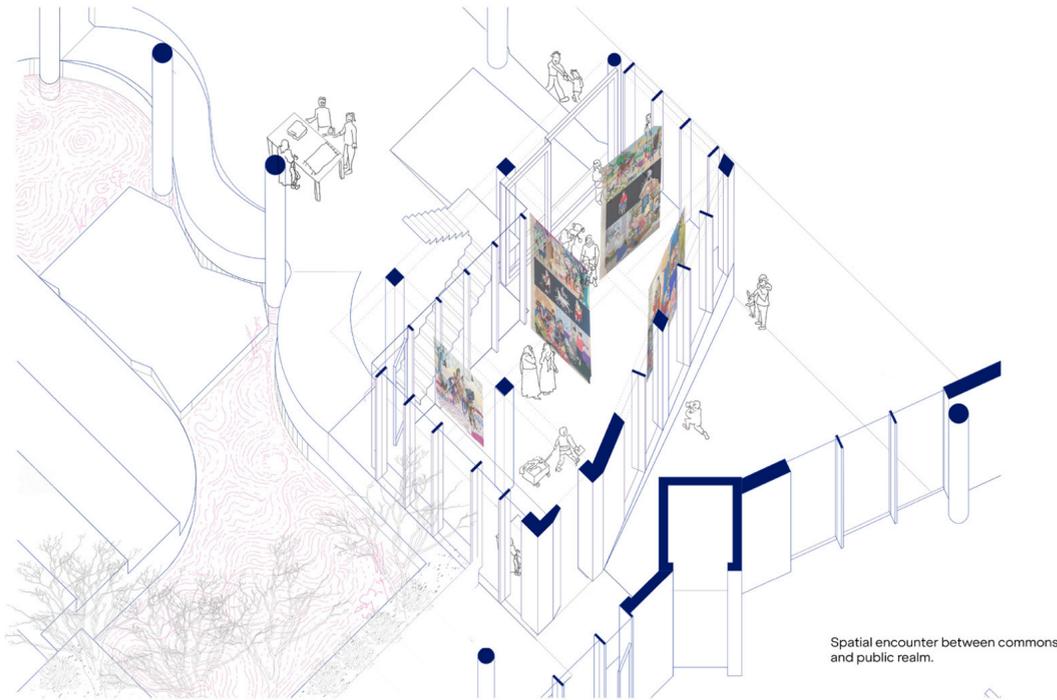
Spatial Encounter and Inhabitation of the Textile Workshop and Laundry Facilities

The above drawing imagines the community who could use these facilities and the infrastructure then becomes a vehicle for socialisation of the different groups, as they collectively use and manage the resource. Sharing the burdens of care work together.

This ground floor becomes the heart of the building, as it transforms the resource of clothing waste to upcycled textiles or repair clothes. The building itself provides the space and equipment necessary for these undervalued materials and people to transform them.

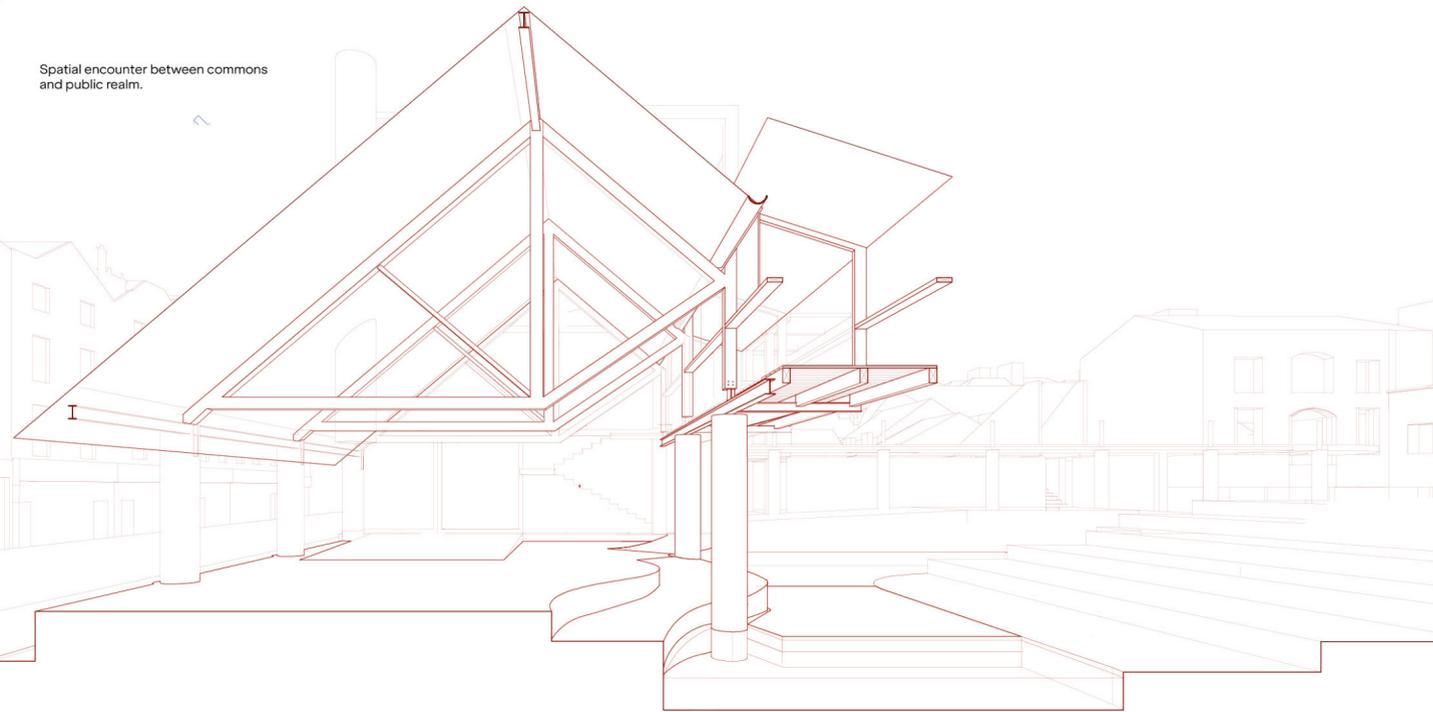


Collage looking at the Commons Square from Textile Workshop entrance.



Spatial encounter between commons and public realm.

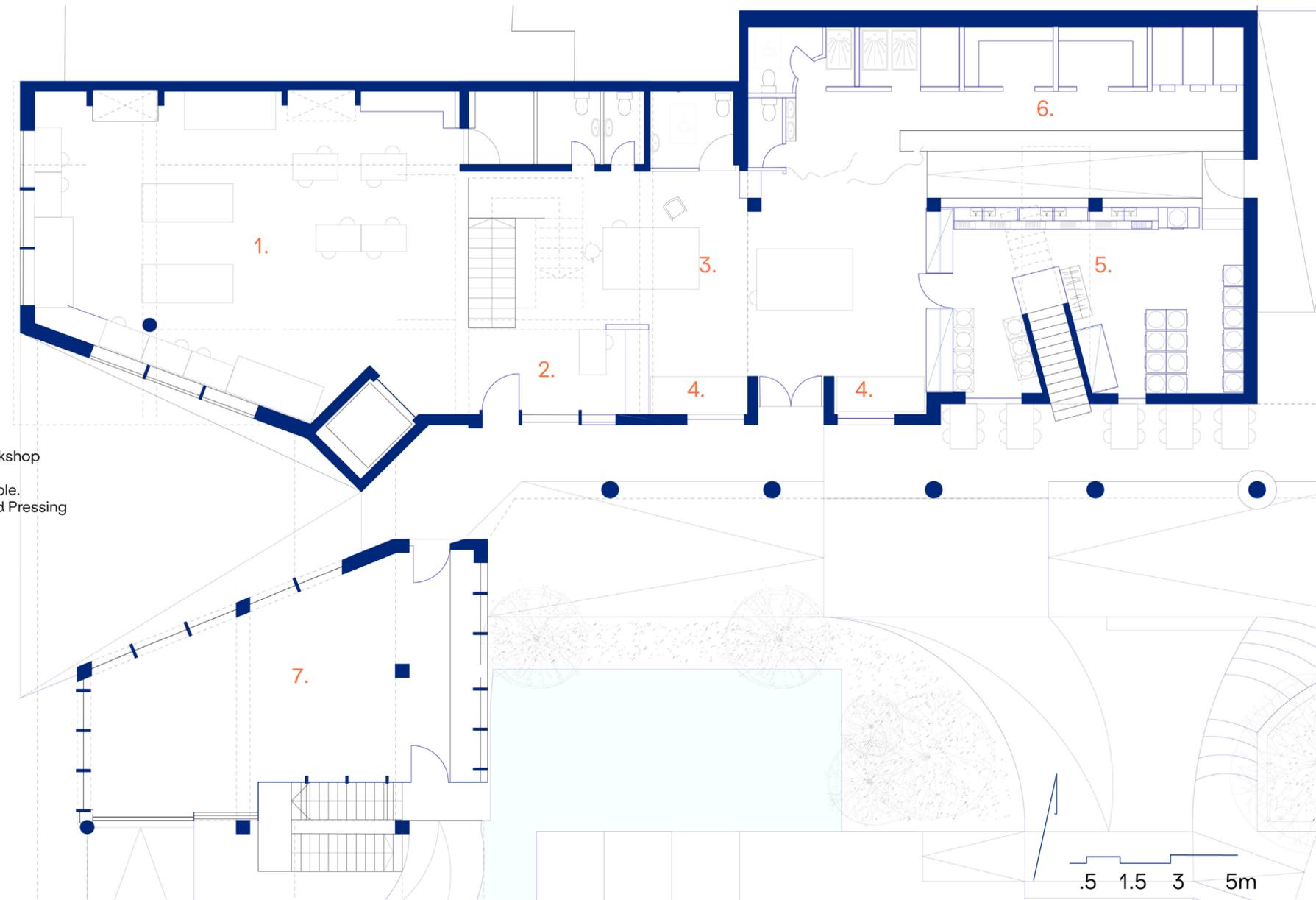
The gallery fronting to Marlborough street could become a stronghold of interaction and appearance for people who deserve it, the Roma population in Ireland live in some of the poorest conditions and have featured in the polish pavilion in this year's biennale. The space provides exhibition and market and the opportunity for commoners to profit from their own creations and for the public to grasp the commons. The free market is raised 600 mm from street level allowing it to be liberated from the ground plane. This is the beginning of the climb to the podium level of 4200mm. By keeping it at 600mm it allows the space to be separated from the street without railing and creating a bench along the street side for people ambling or waiting on the Luas. The construction and concept perspective on the right is not a fully realised solution however it expresses the simplicity of this shed structure sitting on stubby columns. The ramp which navigates this 600 mm rise meanders around these columns as it follows the line of the water which has appeared from the culverted route it took from the new waterfall created from the cutting of the existing podium level slab. These con-sawn 250mm concrete slab off cuts are re-used in the making of the sloping public space, again allowing the story of the intervention to be read. One of the off cuts has made its way to the centre of the pond and acts as a theatrical stage or moment as the amphitheater encloses it. These smaller, resourceful moves are the essence of the project, unlocking space as the primary resource in the city. The theatre holds discussion as well as performance and can be the stage for the drama school nearby.



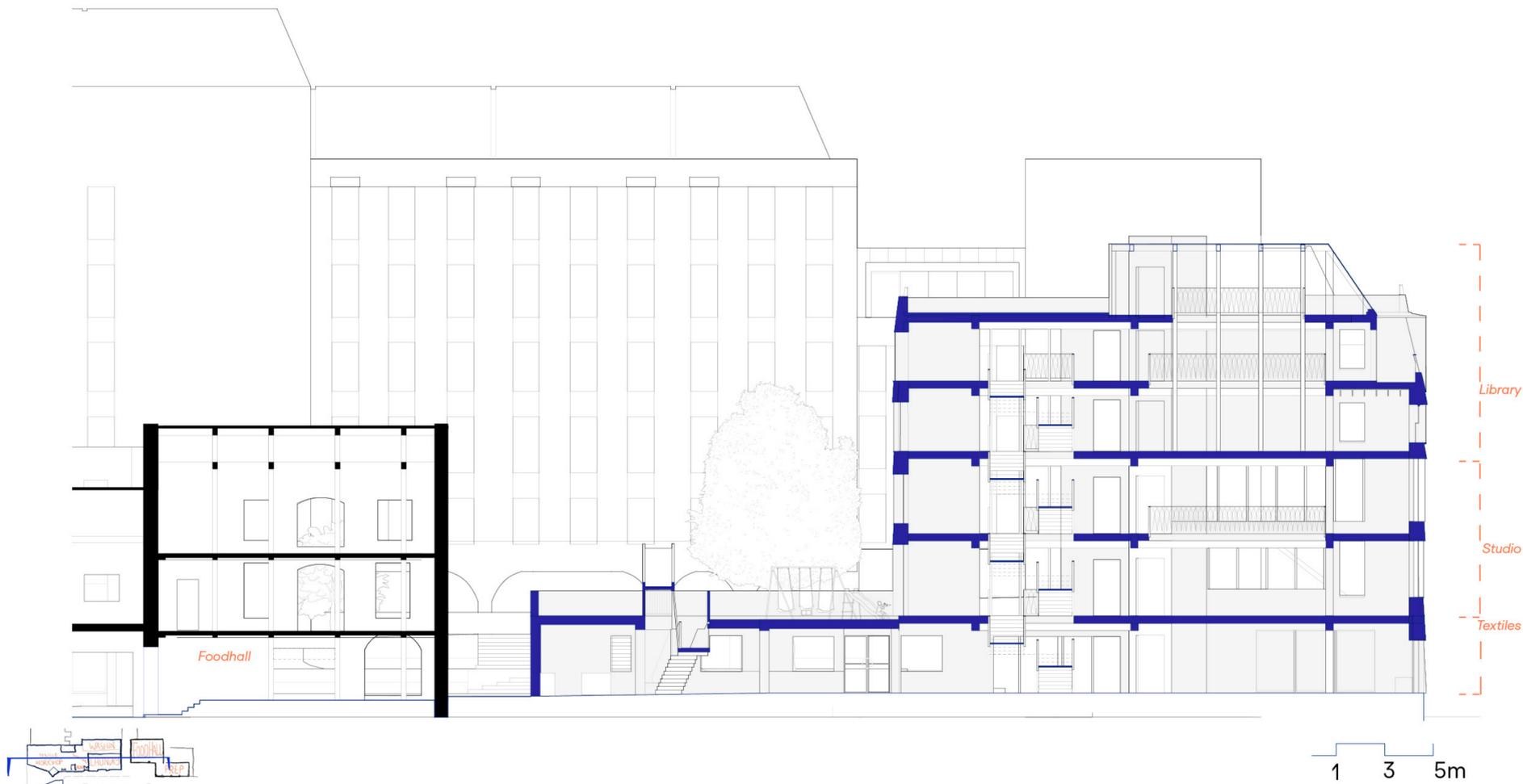
concept of simple construction of the market space under the sloped roof, with the gallery in the back

Ground

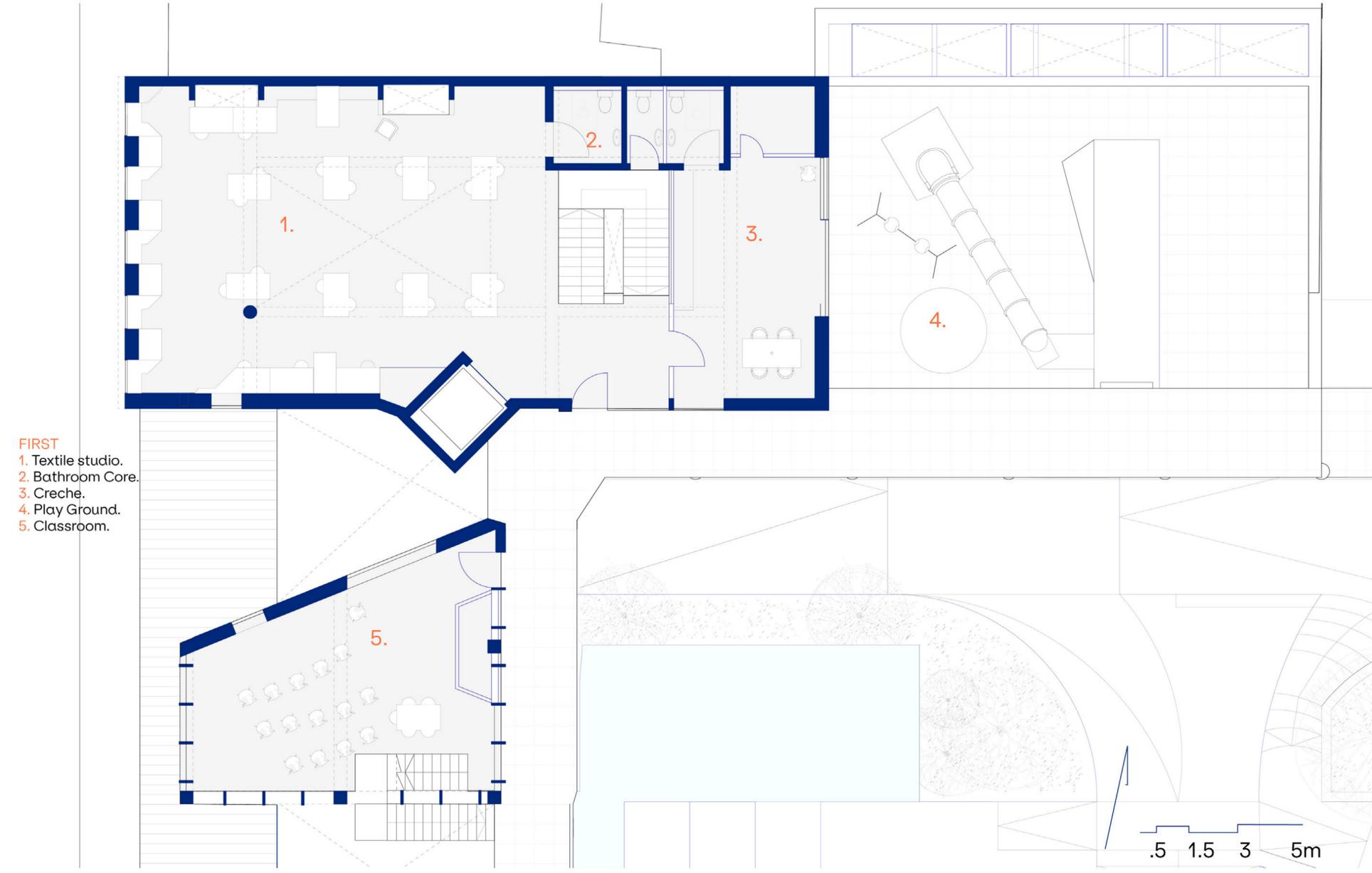
- 1. Textile workshop
- 2. Front desk
- 3. Sorting table
- 4. Ironing and Pressing
- 5. Laundry
- 6. Showers
- 7. Gallery



0.5 1.5 3 5m



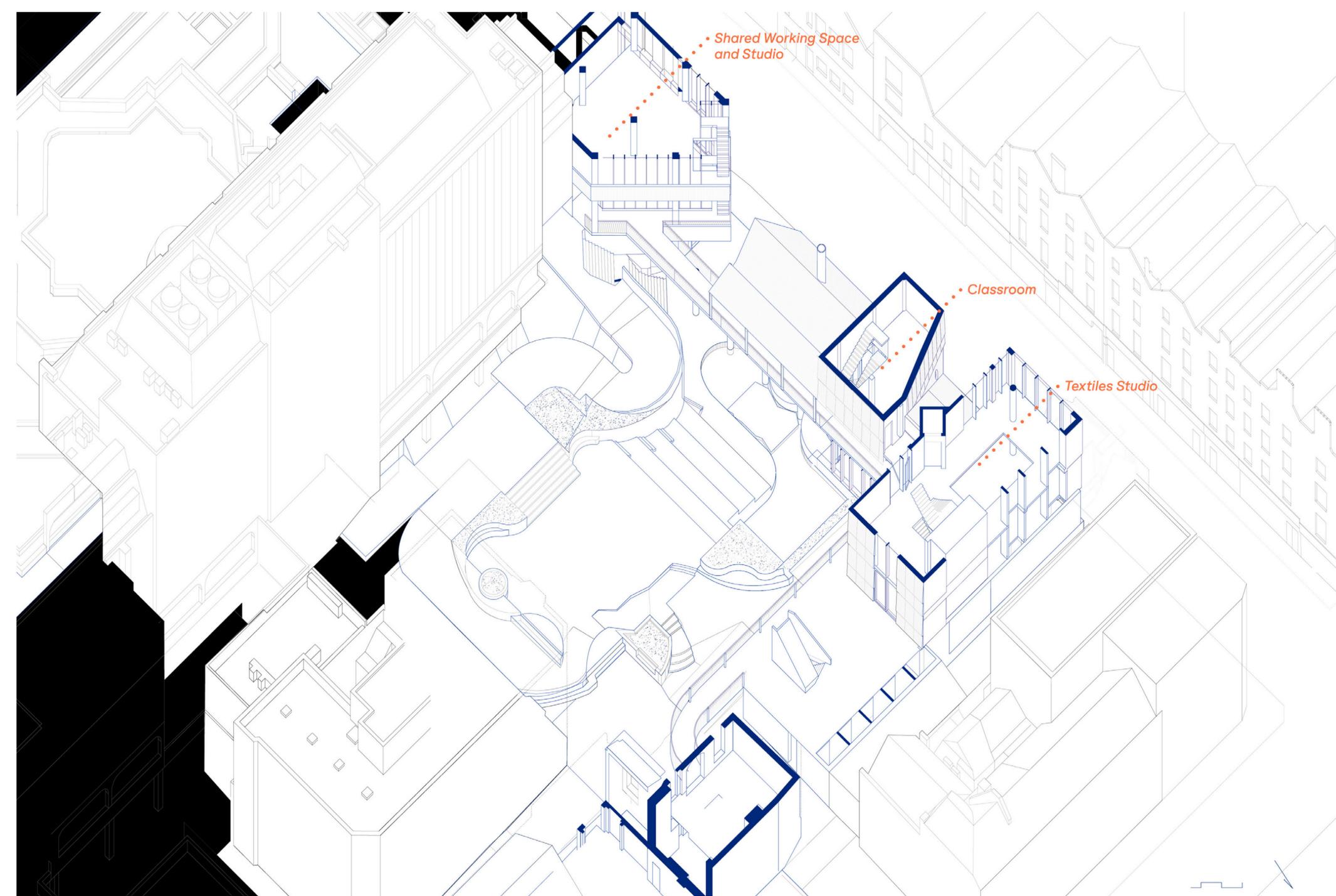
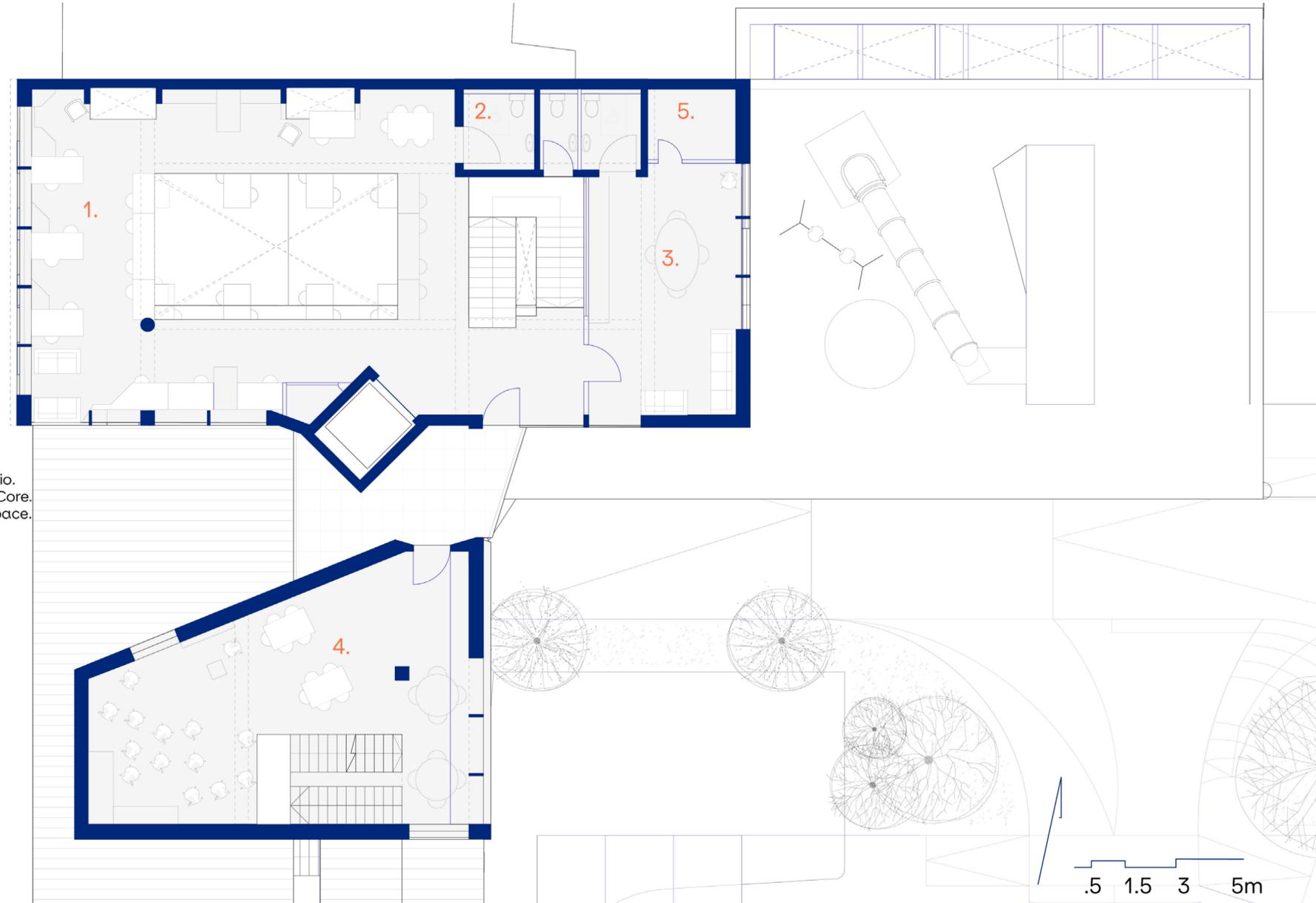
Proposed Section through Food Hall and Commons Building. Looking South

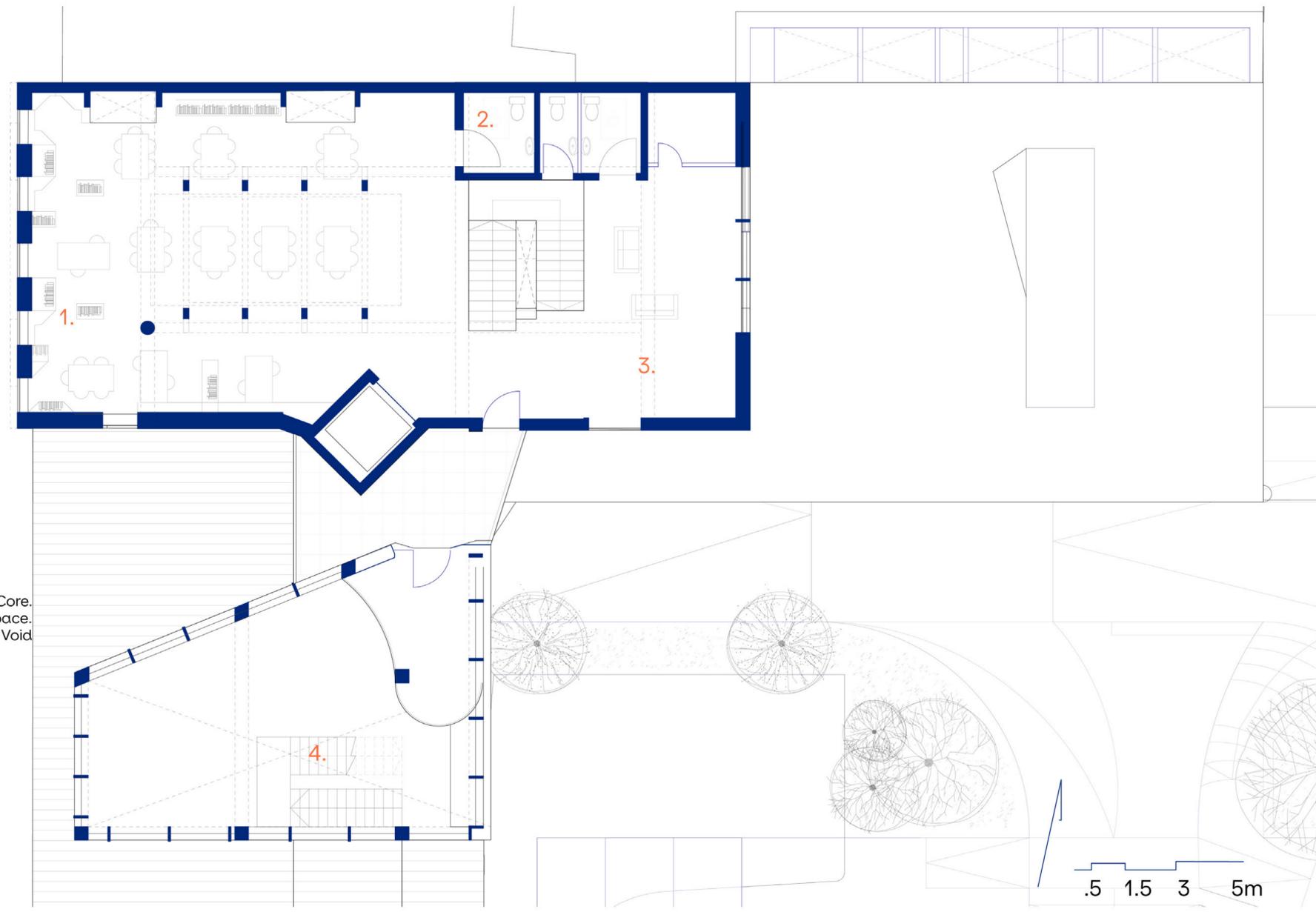


- FIRST
- 1. Textile studio.
  - 2. Bathroom Core.
  - 3. Creche.
  - 4. Play Ground.
  - 5. Classroom.

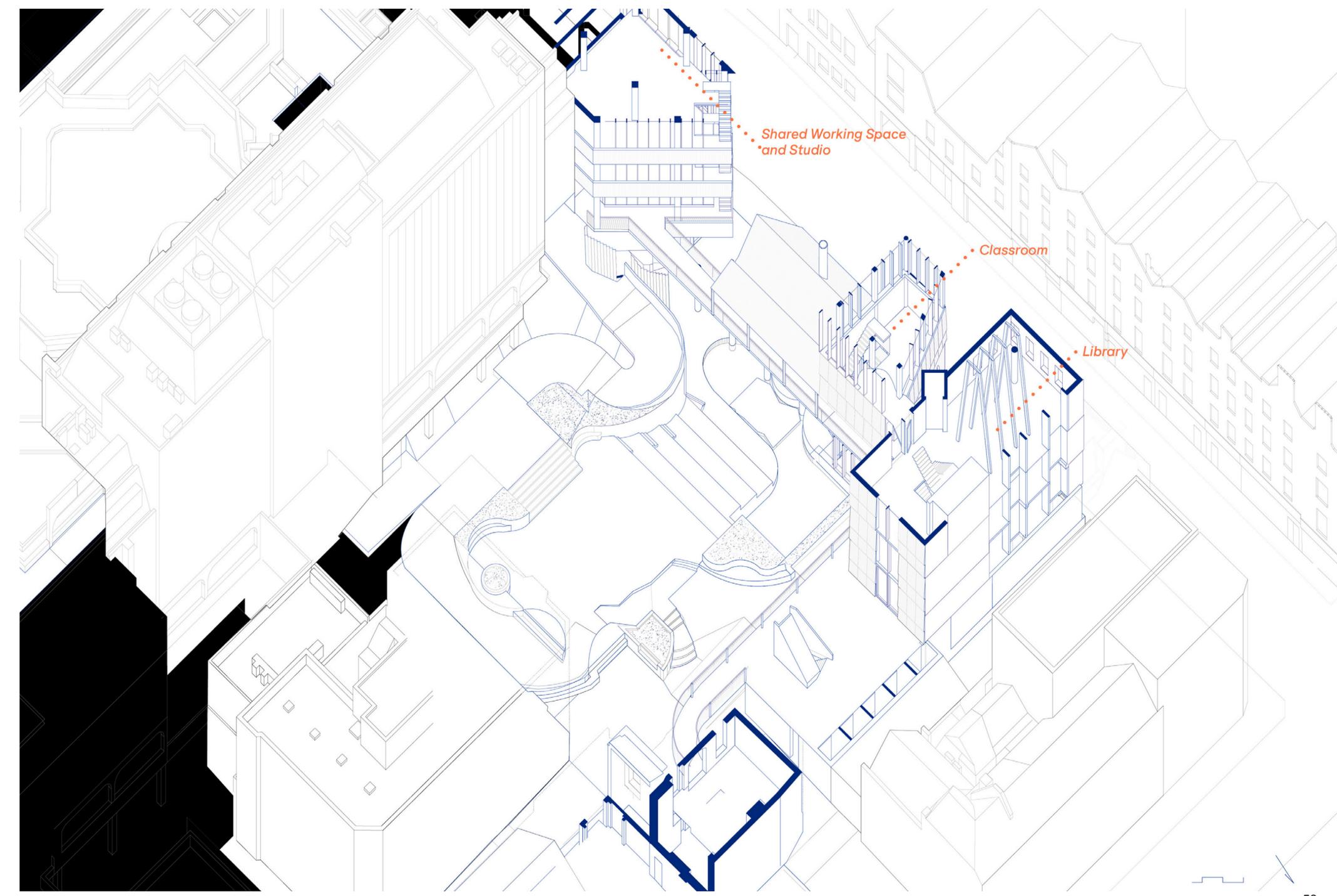
SECOND

- 1. Textile studio.
- 2. Bathroom Core.
- 3. Meeting Space.
- 4. Classroom
- 5. Store





THIRD  
 1. Library.  
 2. Bathroom Core.  
 3. Meeting Space.  
 4. Classroom Void

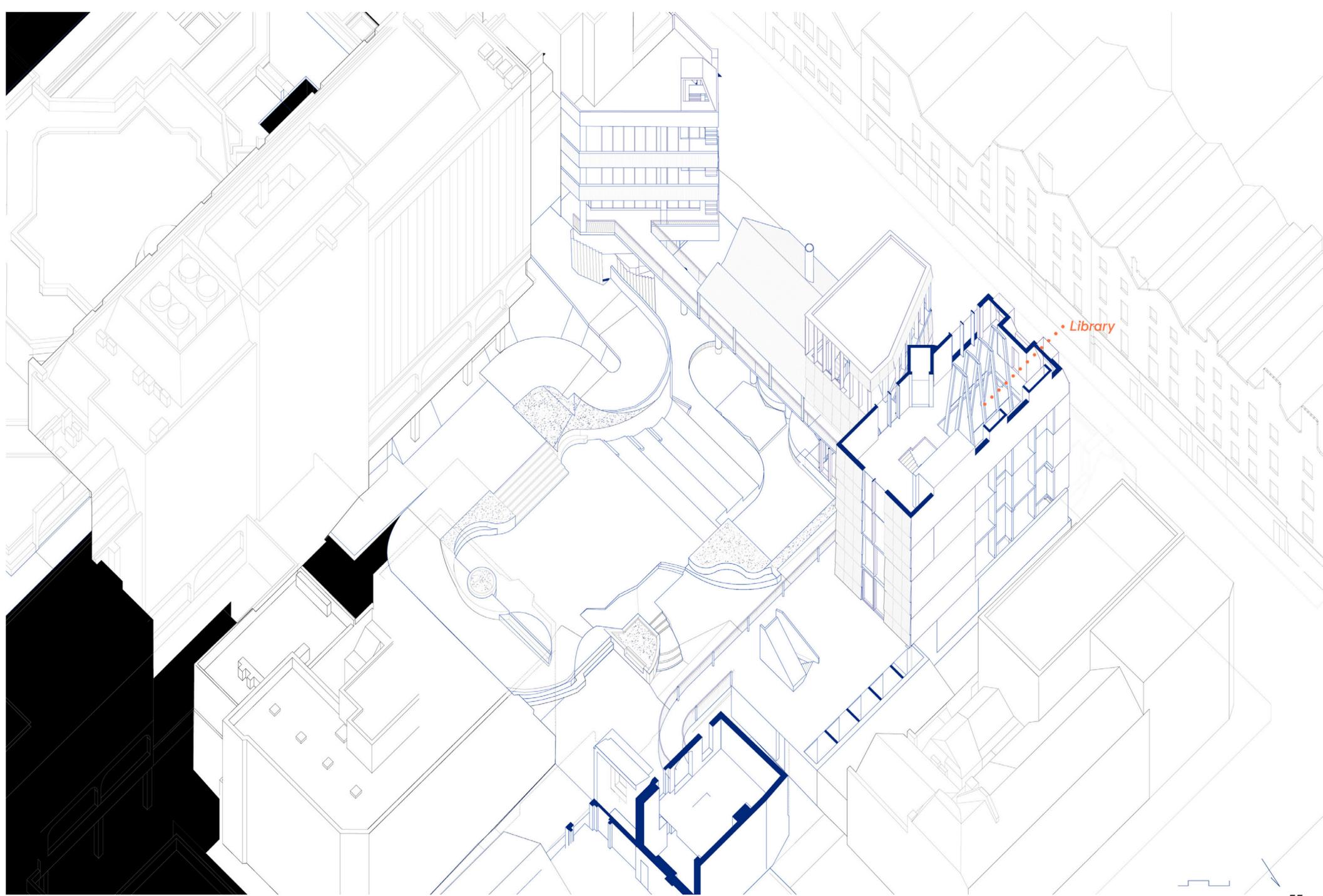
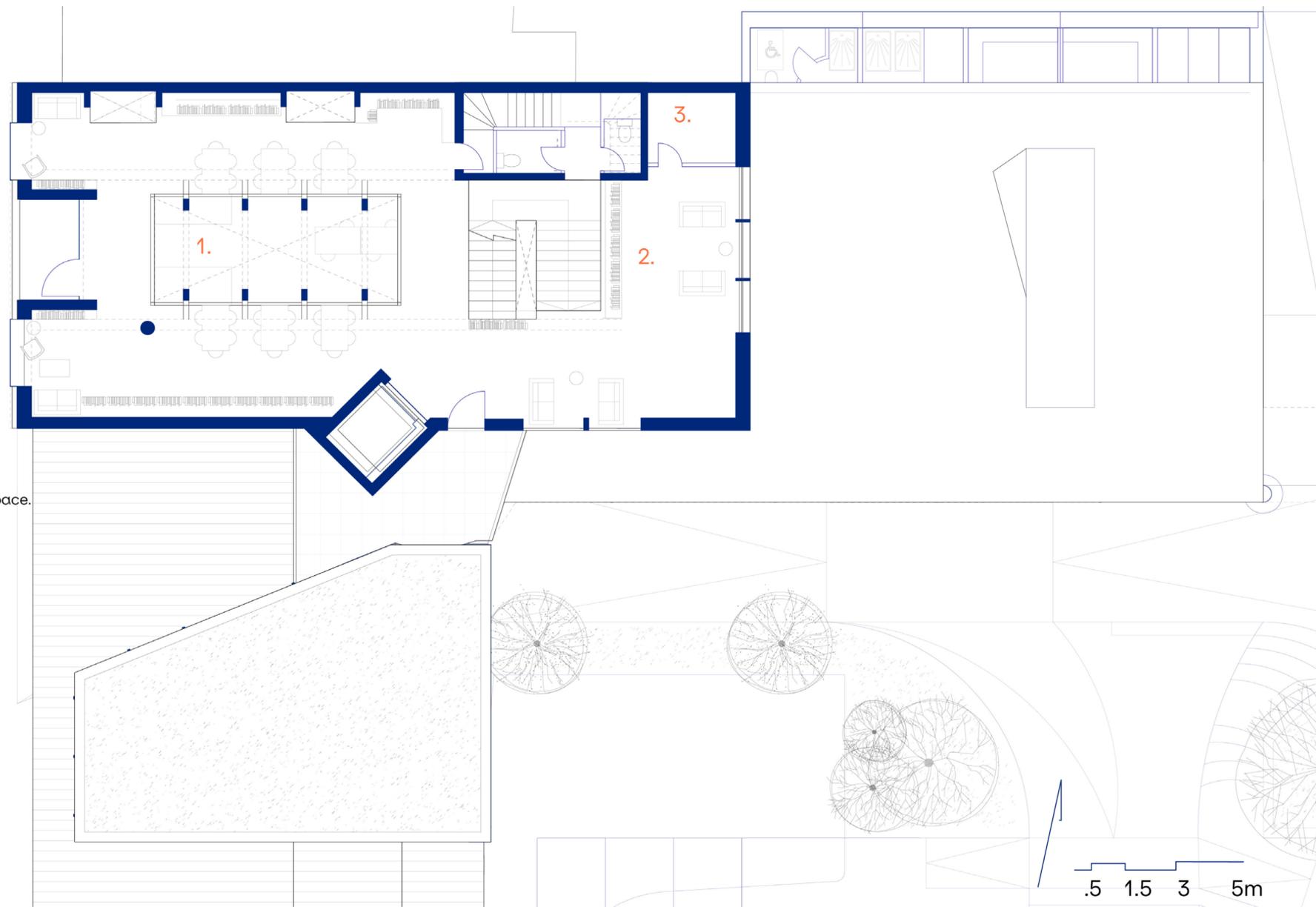


Shared Working Space  
 and Studio

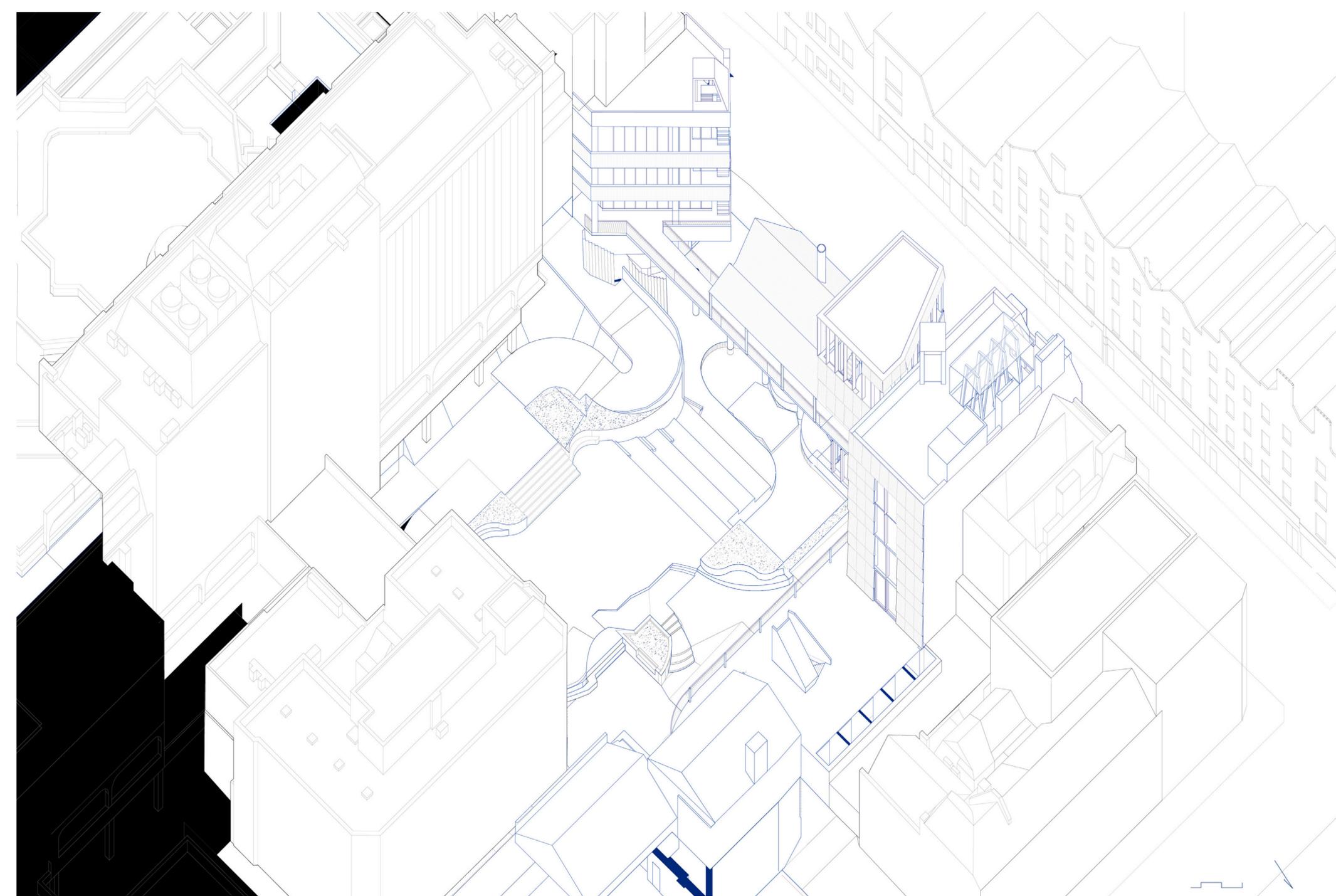
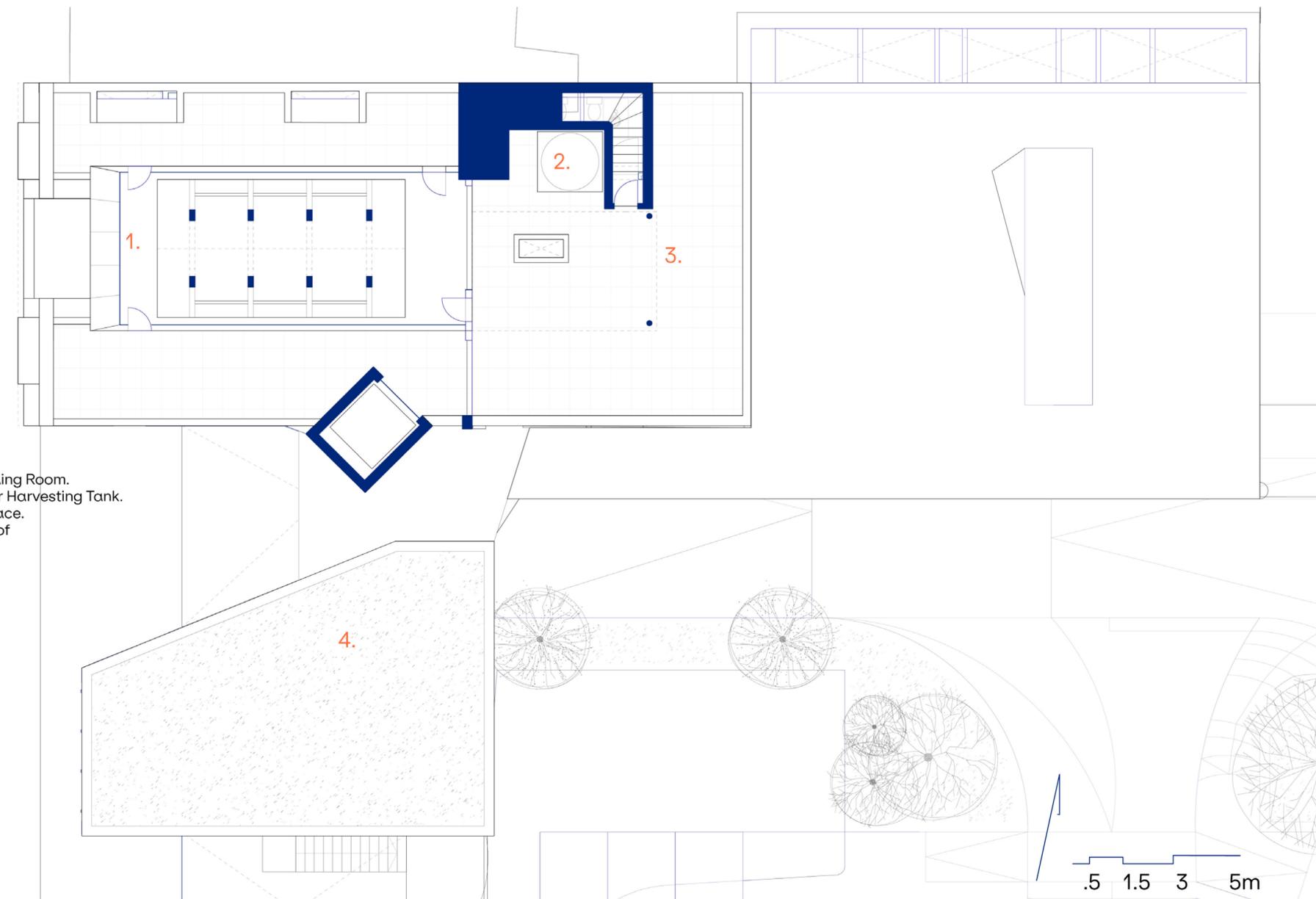
Classroom

Library

FOURTH  
1. Library  
2. Meeting Space  
3. Store



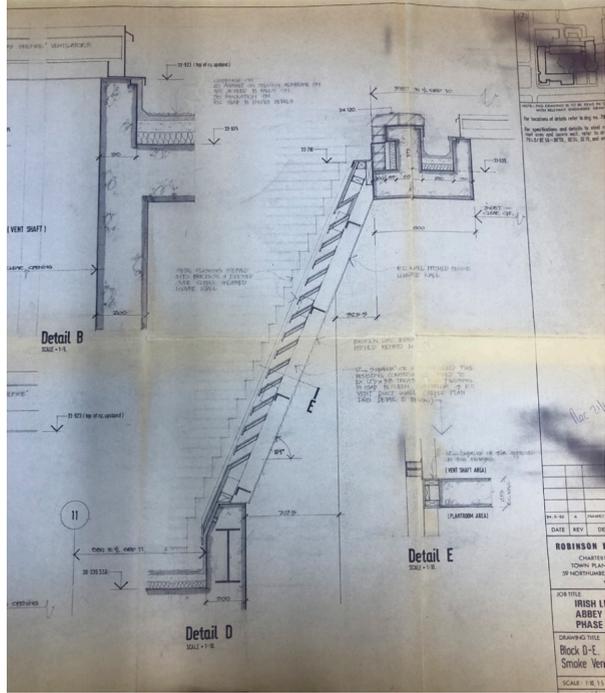
- FIFTH
1. Sun /Reading Room.
  2. Rainwater Harvesting Tank.
  3. Roof Terrace.
  4. Green Roof



**Urban Commons Building**

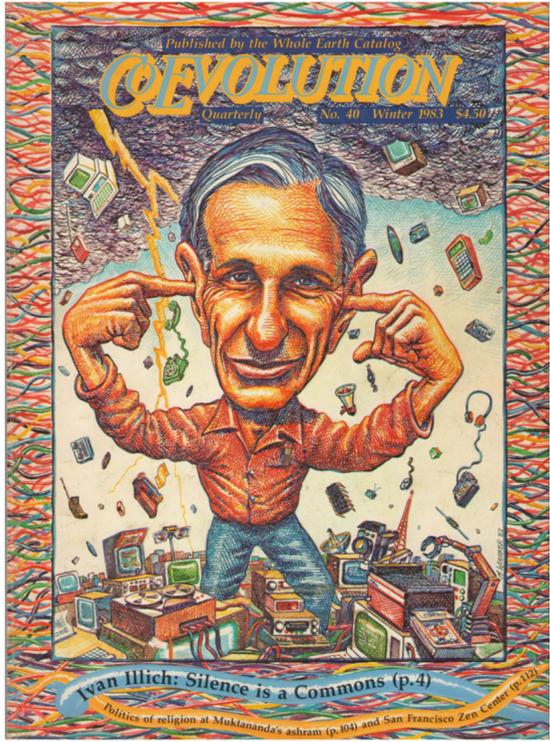
The ground floor of the scheme is the basis of this place of public appearance. As the towers stack floor space above those resources of labour on the ground, different kinds of resources are unlocked. Studio spaces necessary for the finer creations of the ground floor to be worked on. Desk space, as in the precedent of House of Annetta, unlocks possibilities of work and co-production beyond the specifics of the ground floor. This mixed-use building, or resource centre, takes much of its influence from the georgian architecture of a townhouse. The domestic functions of the ground and spaces of comfort and contemplation above culminate in the library, occupying the top three floors of the building. This library holds the possibility of knowledge for learning new skills and development. The resource of silence, contemplation, and a space of calm at the centre of the city is a luxury not many have been afforded. In Ivan Illich's essay 'Silence is a Commons' he explains how, in the case of this library for example, the people who seek refuge in this public room are searching for silence. Reaching the top floor, a space lit by a lantern or sunroom on the roof, they find other people seeking the same thing. Silence being the goal of the collective, as they enjoy it together.

The construction of the building takes direct influence from the Irish Life Centre as a cast in-situ concrete structure. The fibre cement corrugated sheets contrast the oak finish of the internal reading spaces. The mansard roof angles away from the line of the parapet, similarly to the setback floors of the Irish Life. The idea is to represent the people which society currently fails to protect in a building and this building wears its influences and pragmatism proudly. The 8 columns which fall into the space of the library, create drama within a central atrium. This volume connects the 3 floors of the library and creates a central space of light and air, contrasting the cellular reading spaces and niches which store the books on the peripherals of the space. This idea of more private like spaces contrasting with more exposed public like spaces as in the central atrium adds to the idea of the commons as a resource to be appropriated or accommodate its user. The proportions and idea of columns as spatial organisers in this public room are heavily influenced by Mackintosh's Glasgow School of Art Library as it looks west over Glasgow. The commoner's look west over Marlborough Street to O'Connell Street as they take in and survey the city, looking out of the large dormer windows of the library.

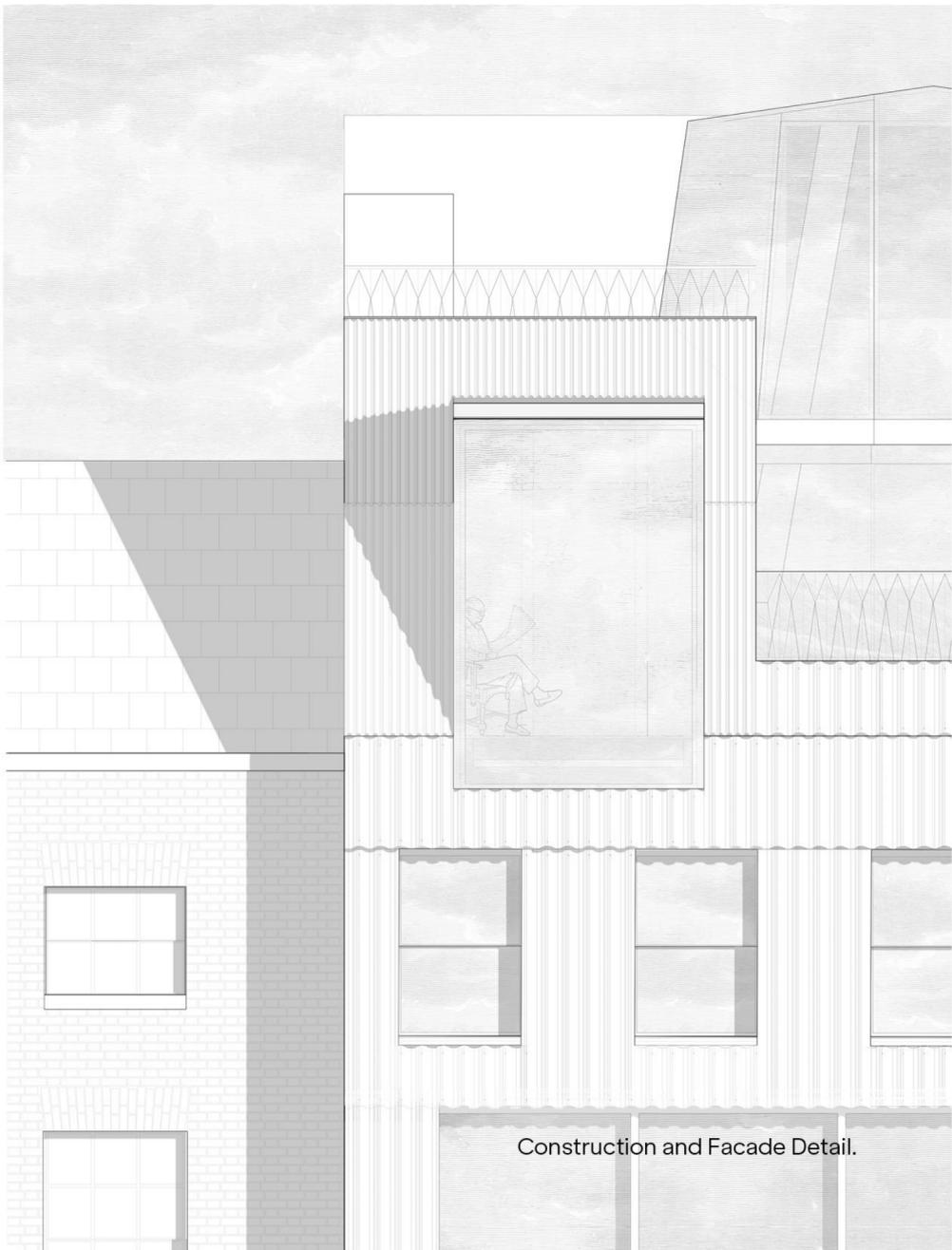
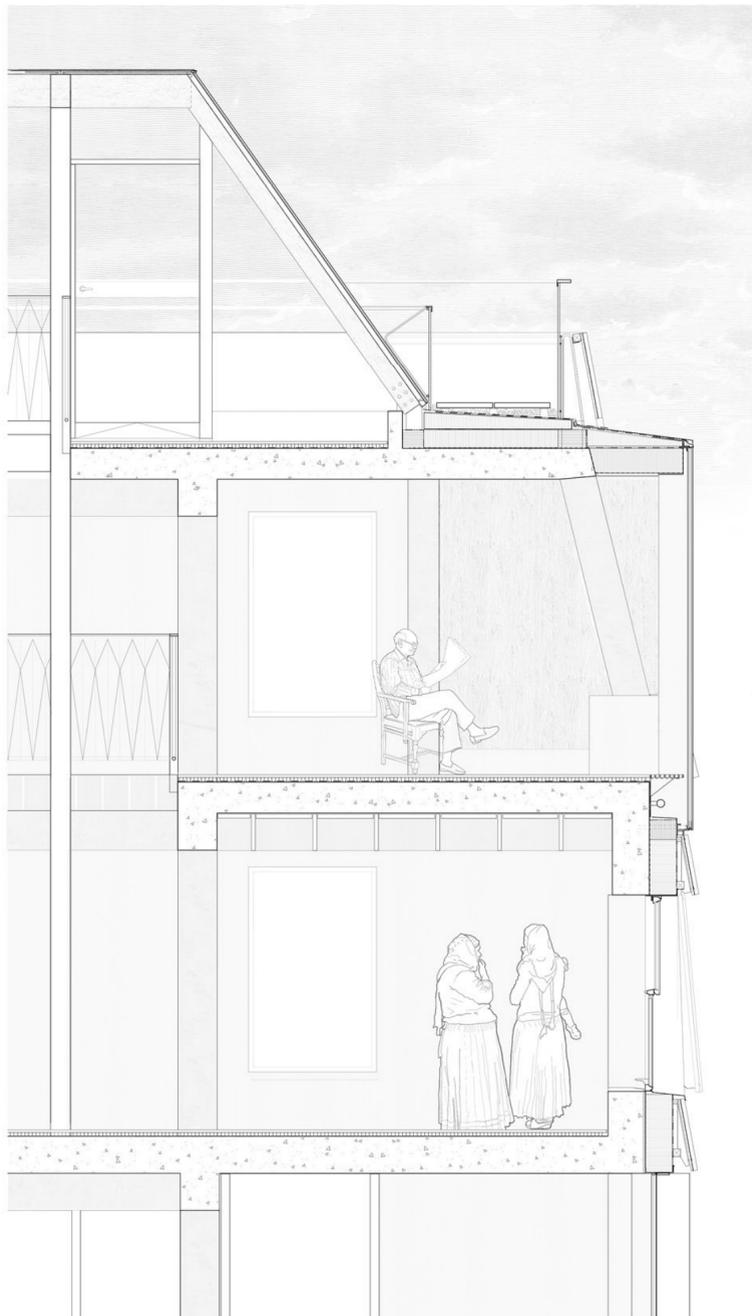


Irish Life Set Back Floor Detail  
source: Irish Life Drawing Archive

*“People called the commons that part of the environment which lay beyond their own thresholds and outside of their own possessions, to which, however, they had recognised claims of usage, not to produce commodities but to provide for the subsistence of their households.”*  
-Ivan Illich, Silence is a Commons. 1983



- wall construction:**  
 6mm corrugated fibre cement panel  
 48mm battens  
 counter battens with incline (48mm top, 96mm bottom)  
 waterproof sealing layer  
 200mm rigid insulation  
 300mm reinforced cast-insitu concrete  
 40mm cavity  
 25mm Oak Veneer mdf board

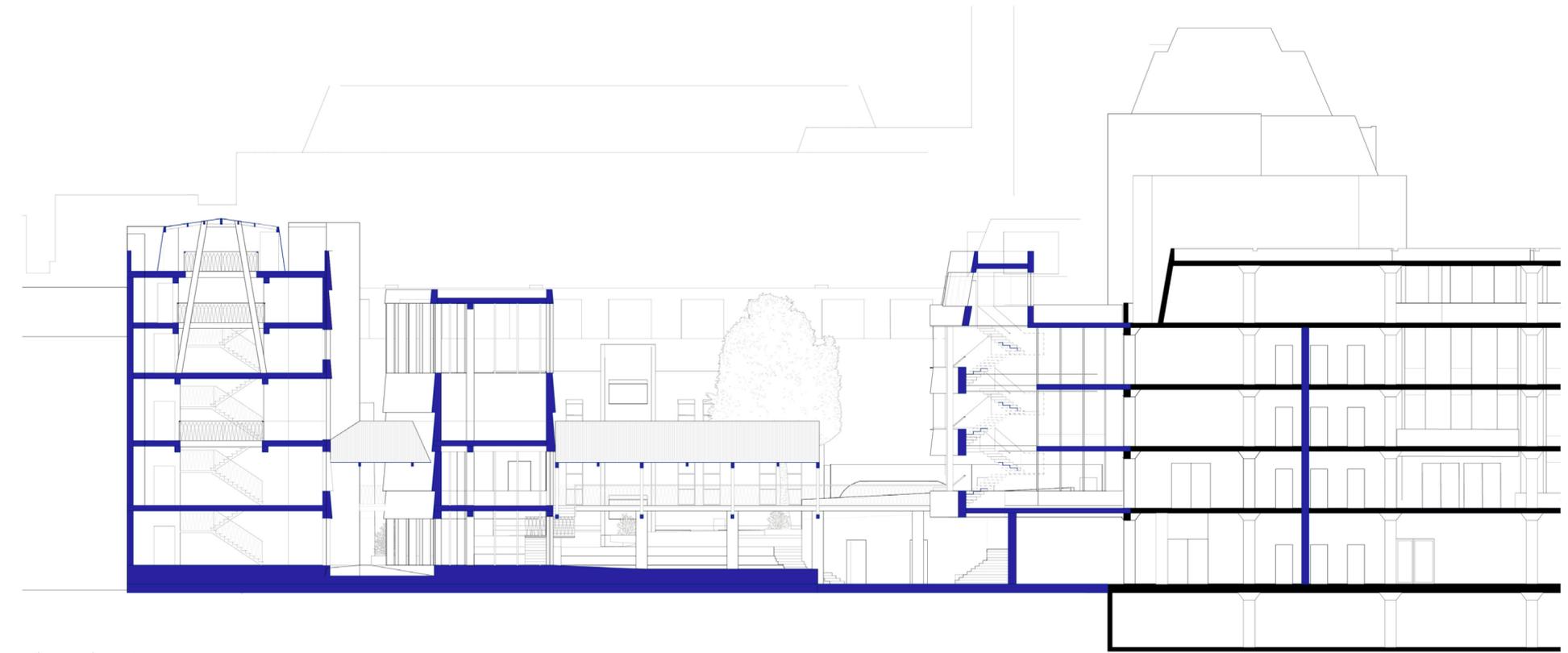
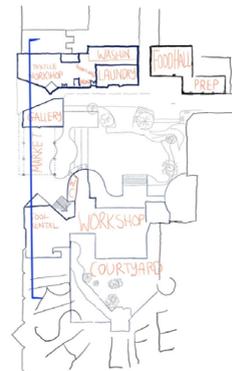


Construction and Facade Detail.



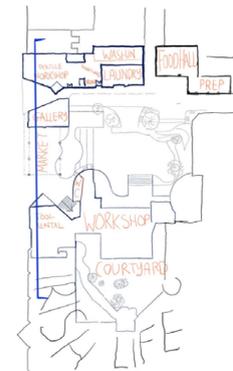
1 3 5m

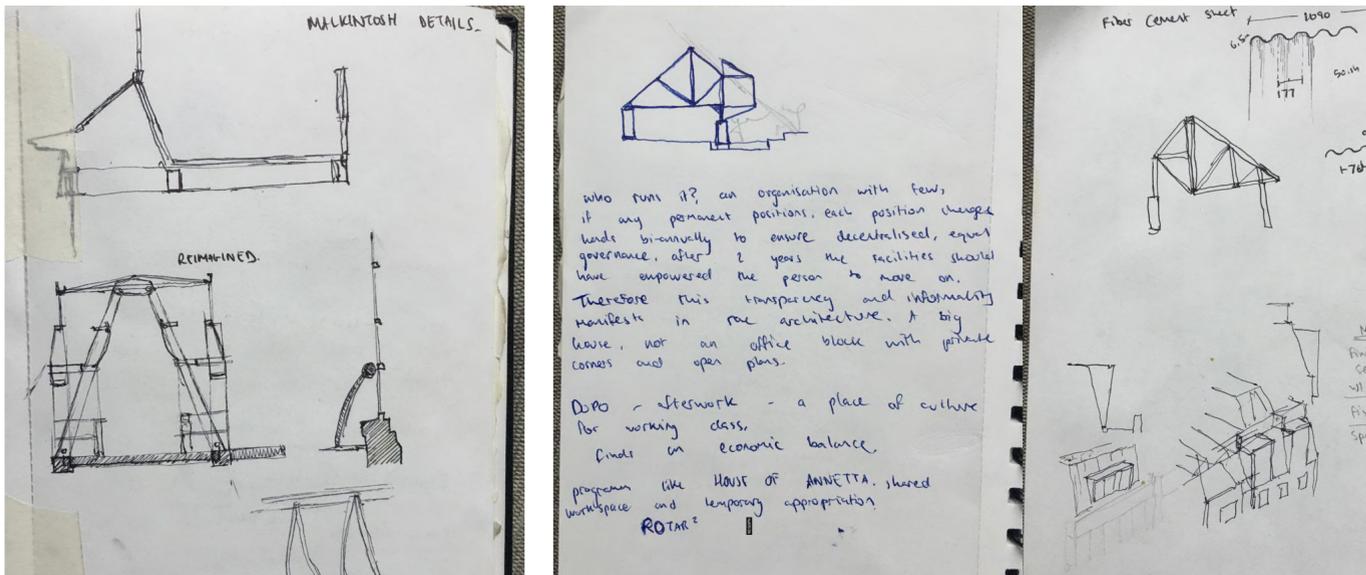
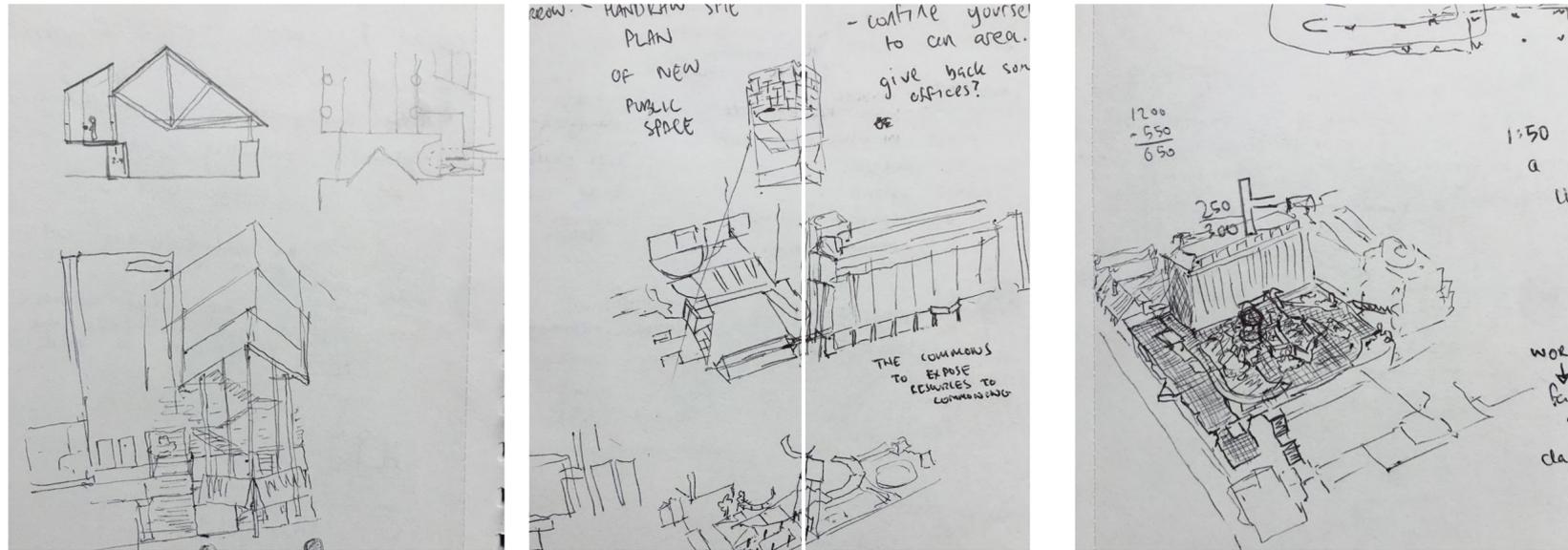
Existing Section through Marlborough Place, looking East.



1 3 5m

Proposed Section through Marlborough Place, looking East.

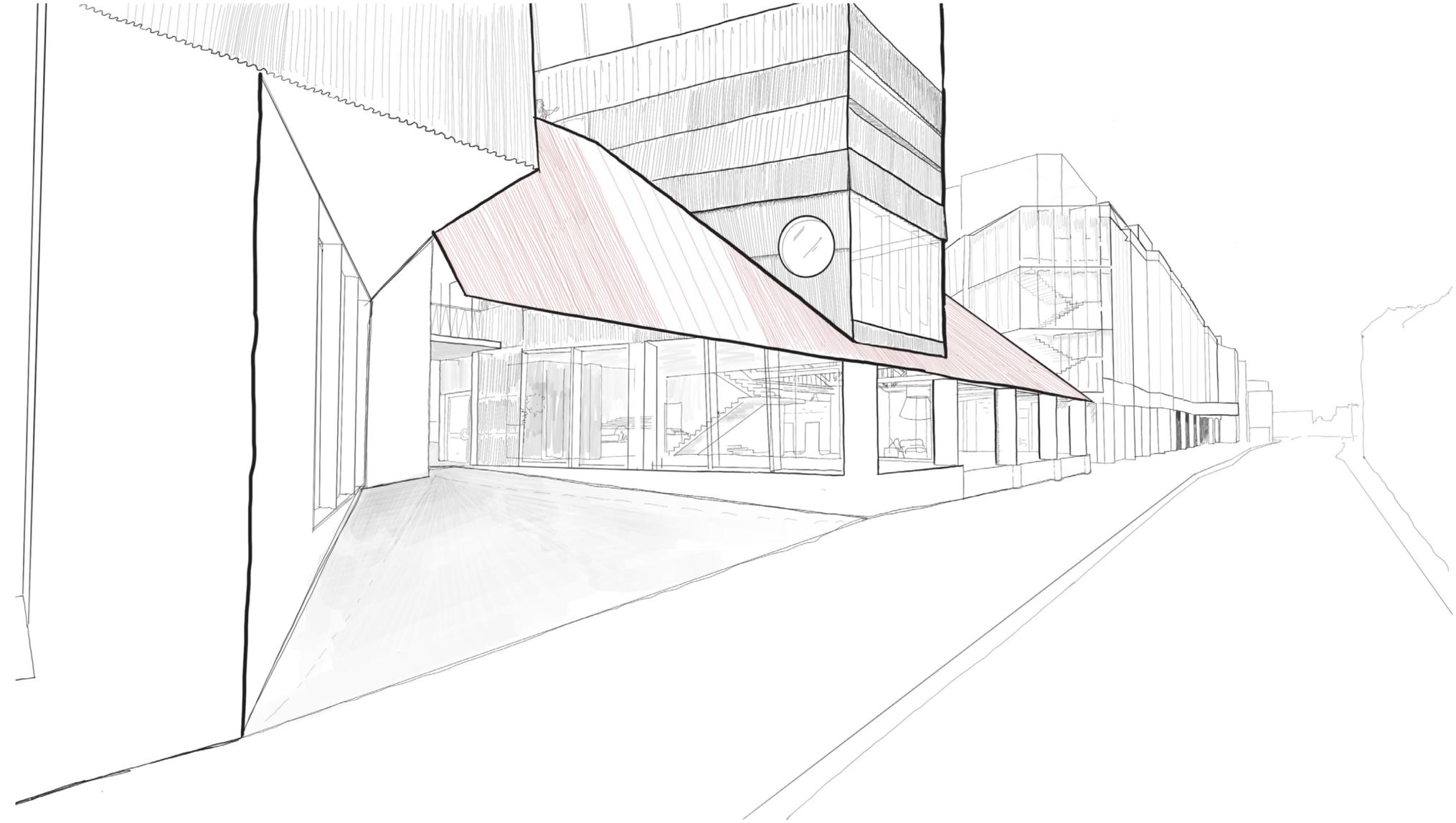




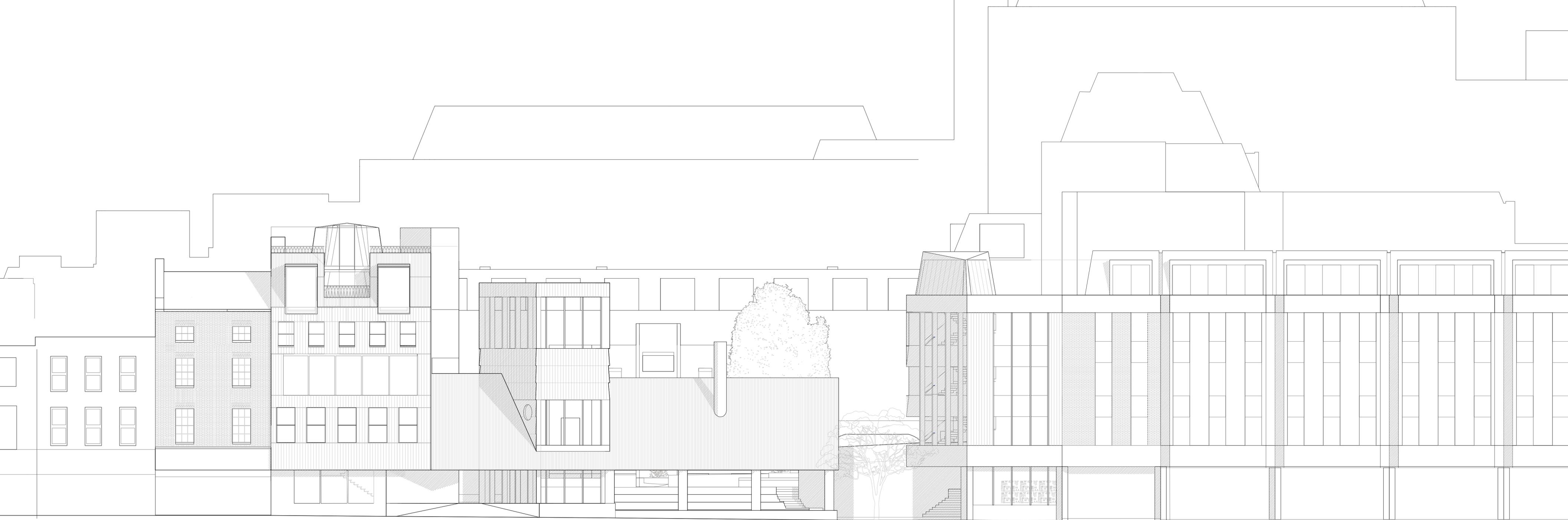
Exerpts from sketchbook as process to pull the references precedents and ideas together.



Image to capture the subversion of the language of Irish Life. The stairway to unlock the Irish Life's Garden from this uncared for side. The tools for hire presented in the windows for viewers to understand the use behind the glass



Threshold Sketch looking south to Liffey.



## Design Reflection on the ‘bookend’ extension to the Irish Life Block.

The tower containing the shared workspaces and studio directly above the tool hire workshop is physically attached to ‘block C’ on Marlborough Street. This results in an extension which is another bay of the 7.5 metre structural grid. The gable end of this bay takes a triangular shape in plan, taking direct influence from the ghost threshold on Marlborough street. The granite strip above the glazing on the street facade was to signify the entrance to the mall that was never realised. This piece of story telling is listened to in the design of the extension. The glass wall that runs along the Marlborough Street edge which was covered with opaque material is subverted in the new extension, the glass revealing the tools for hire hung on cages backed against this glazing, making it obvious to the passer by that the resource of tools can be available to them.

## Final Reflection

Upon reflection of the final review I drew the Marlborough street elevation of ‘the commons’ fitting into the street in response to questions of the aesthetic nature of these combined styles, or lack of cohesion or control between them. This sloping roof binding the towers together is to be understood as a basic shelter, its essence being a threshold and refuge from the rain. The agricultural referencing is less an aesthetic choice but a response to need. The human scale achieved by the roof, allows the square behind to have an interaction with the people passing by. The eaves of this roof reach the street in such a way that it becomes strikingly different and hopefully more welcoming than if Marlborough place had been developed under the pressures of capital, rather than the responsibility of need. It is the anthesis of the defensive reflective glazed office space present on the current street facade. The bookend extension as mentioned above fulfilling the requirement of respect needed when interacting with the Irish Life Centre’s architecture, allowing this juxtaposition of industrial or agriculture motifs to sit into the street facade. On the other end, the building similarly taking influence from its Georgian neighbour both in plan and elevation. This part is more loosely influenced by its context as Georgian architecture in Dublin allows for variation. Past the parapet line then the roofscape of the commons building plays a game with the dormer windows which top the Irish Life Centre blocks, and the mansard roofs of nearby O’Connell street. The central tower which pierces the sloping roof stands proudly in isolation, freed of the aesthetic influences which have morphed the other two towers. The materiality of fibre cement corrugated sheets allude again to the economy of industrial and agricultural buildings, allowing the proposal to be read as one coherent development, a necessity given the collage of influences and resulting architecture. The project, given its size, subject matter and complexity meant it was a struggle to present and allow other people into it, despite this it was a joy to struggle with and the resulting project. If I am ever lucky enough to design something like this in my career, I will have had valuable experience in battling with something of this scale and next time, have a group of people and partners to work alongside.

## Conclusion

Projecting into the future the Urban Commons Building could reform how people of different backgrounds work and interact with one another. Requiring more spaces for working and affective labour, the ground floor of the Irish Life Centre, where the commons meets the rented offices, could recede to make way for more commons. This project becomes a precedent of how uncaring urban environments, and the stakeholders found there, can take on social responsibilities and continue to operate their businesses simultaneously. Architects and other professionals who recognise these problems of alienation have a vital role to play in mediating between these two opposing forces, as they themselves need spaces to operate in too. Unlocking resources to those struggling to find a foothold in society and collectively managing and reproducing these resources so they may help more people in need.

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## Apendix:

### E-mail Interview with Caisin Nic An Bheatha (Resident at Northumberland Hall Irish Life Apartments)

Tadhg (T) How fit is your apartment for a young family?

*Caisin (C) I am in a One-bed apartment, in short it is unfit for a young family. It was manageable up until my baby was 5 months old, and then it became extremely difficult to achieve basic tasks.*

*Very little space for drying clothes, lack of storage for the items a baby needs eg. high chair, buggy, cot*

*Kitchen too small for a family mealtimes, fine for a single person.*

*Small apartment means that there is very little space for baby to play or roam freely.*

*He began crawling at 5.5 months.*

(T) Are there any facilities on offer to you which benefit family life?

(C) The gardens and open space by the fountain have been brilliant.

Security staff nearby has also been a good factor. Helpful to have someone who I could call for help or rely on if something went wrong. I found this a necessity since there is no real sense of community in an urban environment. In close knit towns or communities this wouldn't be as much of an issue.

(T) Are you on parental leave?

(C) I was on maternity leave for 9 months. I returned to work Nov 1st.

(T) Have you a plan in place for child care if you intend on returning to work?

(C) I always wanted to return to work but not until baby was established on solid food 6-8months old. I availed of the extended leave. I didn't receive any state support during this time but it was better than any alternative.

When this leave ran out, my partner and I swapped places. He quit his job to become primary carer and I went back to work. Our income is halved but it makes more sense financially as well as for personal reasons. We didn't want baby in a crèche during pandemic either.

(T) Would child care be the biggest financial burden on your family? (If not what is? Or how much child care might cost?)

(C) Yes 100% Apologies can't remember exact cost but it was about same adventure my partners salary, roughly 250 euros per week.

If we had rent to pay that would be second biggest cost.

(T) If the apartment you live in was being rented, how much would it make per month?

(C) About 1800€

(T) Would a childcare facility which was offered by Irish Life(or Canada Life etc) be of benefit to you and encourage you to raise your family in Dublin City centre. (If you weren't moving away)

(C) Absolutely ! Having childcare close to home would be ideal.

(T) If not the city, where would you ideally raise your family? (Reasons for moving)

(C) Ideally somewhere with fresh air, sense of community and space for little ones to run around without being in danger of traffic or litter.

Junkies would often use drugs near the entrance of my apartment block, completely unsuitable for kids/young people to be around.

### Semi-structured interview with Liam Keighery:

Tadhg (T) Could you describe what it is a Irish Life do, I understand they provide Insurance and Assurance but how is this done?

*Liam (L) Our customers give us their money as a safe investment, we then put that money into a fund where a fund manager will oversee where that money goes, whether that's a refurbishment to get an office space to the highest standard, or a new property elsewhere. The customer's investment then grows as we get returns on these properties.*

(T) An understanding of how the building is currently used, are there vacancies or underutilised parts?

(L) *It is an office campus, Irish Life is the home to many other companies who have a lease with us. To organise this there is an agreement reached between the solicitors but we usually go for longer term agreements like a 20 year lease. A lease agreement is like the Bible in property. Our only truly vacant space*

*at the moment is above a retail unit on Talbot St. Typically we would expect to agree a lease for 45 euro per sq ft, per annum.*

*The offices are operating at a reduced capacity because of covid also.*

(T) Details if possible on the ambitions for the extension and expansion of the complex, I understand MCA architects are working on refurbishments, is this to expand the office programme or is there residential units included?

(L) *Ok, again, we'll discuss and I need to be careful I don't issue you with something of a sensitive nature*

*considering we have only applied for planning permission. Politics behind this one so we'll discuss in more detail when we meet next. <Transcribed next meeting> It is an expansion of office space to bring Irish Life into the future, it's your job to anticipate that future. We have gone down the google route of providing breakout spaces and expansion of informal work spaces. It is solely for the offices of Irish Life, not a space for us to let. It is a statement of our commitment to our site. In our business if you have a good building, in a good location then it is a good investment.*

(T) My thesis idea is to have Irish Life as my client and provide an extension to the north of the complex (at Marlborough Place) which would build on the site of Cedar House. Therefore I would love to ask if Irish Life have attempted to buy this building in the past? If there is evidence of this or how did the attempt go?

(L) *Ok, I have an A3 presentation of the proposed development that was planned back in 2007, this will be useful, I'll get copied and will have ready for your next visit. Again, we'll discuss in more detail when we meet next. <Transcribed next meeting> We have a good relationship with Cedar House but we will not develop that part of the campus as it doesn't make sense as there are social problems beyond us there. As you can see we had plans 14 years ago to develop the Marlborough Place site but with the crash and permanent tsb separating it didn't go ahead. Anti-Social Behaviour has grown steadily since the reopening of Cedar House in 2013. In my ooinion I think Irish Life would be interested in that property if it was for sale.*

End of Semester 1 Review, discussion on the Irish Life Centre:

Colm Moore (local architect & past pupil of nearby school):

“It's a place I know quiet well Tadhg, I used to go to school up the hill from it. Everyday I would get the bus from the stop just adjacent to where that fountain that Tiago was talking about. My journey was to go to Mannings Bakery, buy some sugary sweet thing and walk through the Arcade and stand against the wall waiting for the bus with a couple of pals... the section struck me, the courtyard raised up from the street is extraordinary, as a child it felt extraordinary, that I walk up a staircase and arrive at a courtyard. And again we used to sneak in there too until we got chucked out, So I do think there's something interesting in thinking about common ground.

Tiago Faria (local architect & educator):

“I went here with my students. We were looking at the public space of Irish Life at Beresford place. We went in there and walked under the apartments to the courtyard. One of the security gaurds came from one of the buildings and told us that we were not allowed take photographs and to put their camera away. Then later I myself walked up the steps to the upper courtyard, the landscape garden and another guard came out to say we couldn't be there, that it was private... I see you've included stills from the RTE archive footage of when Irish life opened, Talbot Mall specifically, how it was an offering to the city, a new piece of city... What we were discussing specifically was the fountain that is placed at Beresford Place which tightens the passage either side of it, so that in having to move around that object you go past the two control points which are the reception desks at ground floor of those two offices. And y'know basically, that's where you unwittingly, get checked. Equally how the mirrored glass of the offices allow you to be seen but you cannot see. So there are a load of spatial devices that operate to reinforce the idea of ownership and the private nature of this development.”