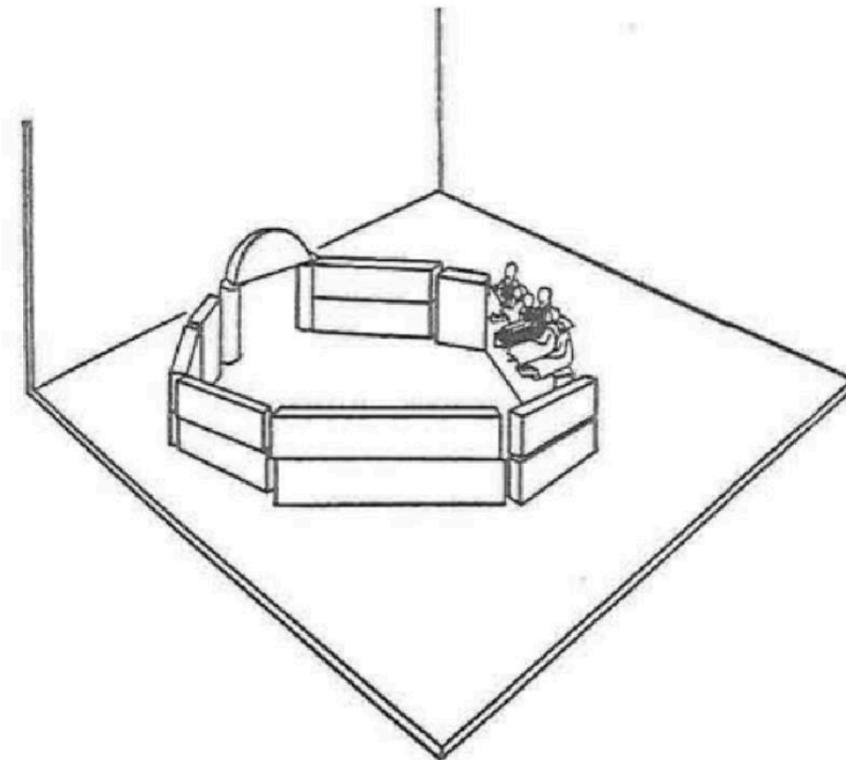
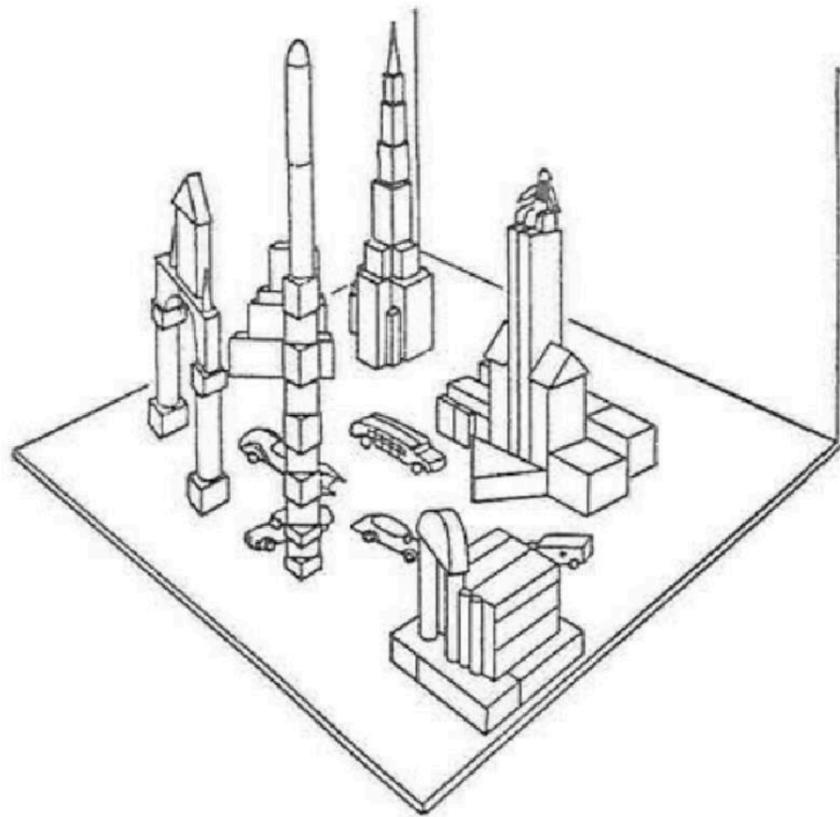


# PROTECTION AND CONNECTION: EXPLORING MASCULINE AND FEMININE DESIGN PRINCIPLES THROUGH THE DESIGN OF A WOMEN'S REFUGE



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## Introduction

Using 'Critical Care Architecture and Urbanism' as a touchstone and overarching theme, led this author to firstly explore the lack of care which can be seen in the development of Architecture over the centuries and how this legacy and its remnants are still visible and, arguably, in use today. By analysing the concept of Critical Care alongside the traditional values and factors which influenced Architecture, certain themes began to emerge; namely the concept of masculine and feminine values and how these shaped the development of Architecture. Critical Care undoubtedly evokes principles such as connectivity, sensitivity and the importance of relationships and users; values which can be viewed as more feminine in their outlook. A discussion of Critical Care therefore leads one to highlight how and why such 'caring' principles were lacking in Architecture over the centuries. As one examines the history of the Architect, a more masculine theme emerges; one built around concepts such as protection, productivity, autonomy and independence.

With these themes in mind, the author began to explore how the architecture of a building or site, could look and function, where the feminine principles (which are espoused in the concept of Critical Care) are elevated as the main driving force and influence when designing. In the first instance, a site in the NEIC was chosen, namely the site of the old Magdalene Laundry on Sean MacDermott Street. Exploring the history and development of this site also allowed the author to discuss and clearly demonstrate how masculine values shaped the architecture of the said Laundry. The haunting history of the site also added another layer to the case study as the 'lack of care' was apparent in many aspects.

The final aspect of this paper was to re-envision the chosen site in a way which elevated the principles of Critical Care as the main considerations when re-designing the building and site. Again, this proved to be a perfect vehicle in order to demonstrate how principles of care can transform a space into a building which is more akin to a living entity rather than mere bricks and mortar.



## Chapter 1: Architectural Interest

### Gender and Care



Figure 1 NEIC woman caring for her children (Source: NEIC Folklore Project)

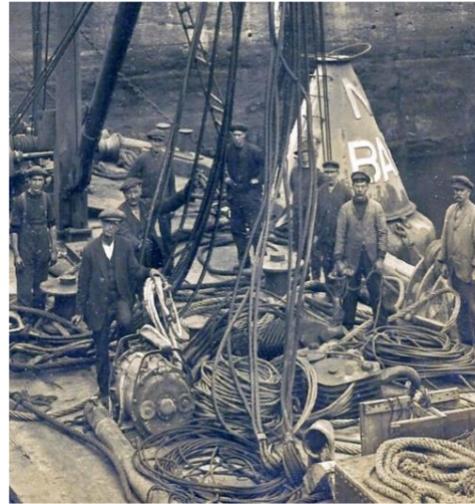


Figure 2 NEIC dock workers working to provide for family (Source: DublinDocklands.ie)

*“The development of masculinity typically involves valuing autonomy, rights, disconnection from others, and independence, while seeing other persons and intimate relationships as dangers or obstacles to pursuing those values.” (Held 1995; Blum 1988).’*

In a patriarchal world, masculine principles dominate. These principles value autonomy and independence. Therefore, the practice and application of masculine values may result in disconnection and isolation in society and consequently, architecture. In contrast, feminine principles and values have long been associated with the idea of care and the caretaker. ‘Care was widely held to be women’s labor and therefore, largely feminised’ (Federici, 2018). According to care and ethics theorist Carol Gilligan, women are more likely to express a perspective that values intimacy, responsibility, relationships, and caring for others, while seeing autonomy as “the illusory and dangerous quest” (Gilligan 1982). This perspective is known as the perspective of “Care” (Norlock, 2019). This would suggest that a big part of practising femininity, is to care for and connect with each other and the society and environment. Therefore if masculine value systems have largely dominated society and the world in previous centuries, this in turn has devalued feminine value systems and the feminine values associated with care giving. (Gilligan, 1982).

Of course, this is not to say that there are no caring qualities within masculinity. Care thinkers label the activities of ‘protection’ and ‘provision’ as caring masculine activities. (quote from Critical Care essays). So how have gendered values impacted Architecture?

## 1.2 Architecture and Gender

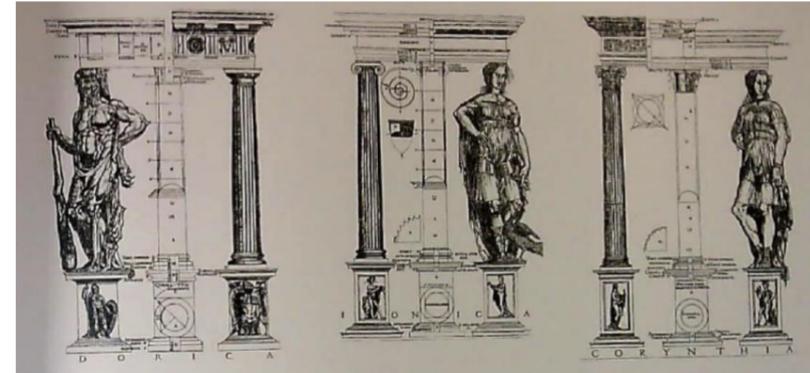


Figure 3 Gendering of columns is an early example of gendering Architecture (Source: from Adrian Forty essay ‘On Difference: Masculine and Feminine’)

*“The variety of the orders proceeded from the difference between the bodies of man and woman”.*

Gendering of architectural principles was commonplace in Architecture, stemming from the Classical tradition, whereby Doric, Ionic and Corinthian orders were compared to the anatomy of males and females. This was an attempt to create order and to articulate certain architectural principles. It gave architects and critics a form of distinction and it went on to become a customary and dominant descriptor of architectural style

from Classical times right up to Modernism. The types of vocabulary used to describe masculine and feminine principles are explored by Adrian Forty in the essay ‘On Difference: Masculine and Feminine’, from *Words and Buildings* (Forty, 2000). Forty explore the vocabulary used to describe masculine and feminine Architecture. He lists words such as: ‘proud’, ‘boldness’, ‘simple’, ‘solid’, ‘unaffected’, ‘robust’, ‘serious’, ‘purposeful’ were used when discussing masculine principles whereas words such as ‘weak’, ‘delicate’, ‘flimsy’, ‘affected’, ‘ambiguous’, ‘equivocal’ were used when discussing feminine principles. Architects and critics discriminated between architectural works by labelling the preferred form as ‘masculine’ and the less preferred as ‘feminine’ or ‘effeminate’. Forty concludes that the feminine principles are less explored and less articulated over time and rarely viewed in a positive light. From the mid- 20<sup>th</sup> Century the use of these descriptions ceased, but the influence of those masculine principles continue to dominate. (Forty, 2000)



Figure 5 Example of Architecture (Source: from Adrian Forty essay ‘On Difference: Masculine and Feminine’)



Figure 4 Example of Masculine Architecture (Source: from Adrian Forty essay ‘On Difference: Masculine and Feminine’)

‘On

In Margarit. I. Kennedy's paper 'Towards a Rediscovery of 'Feminine' Principles in Architecture and Planning' the writer attempts to reevaluate and rearticulate masculine and feminine principles that an architect/ designer may be motivated by:

*"In order to be applicable generally a definition of these principles must, therefore, encompass gradual differences instead of exclusive categories. (The stress in these cases will be on more and than) whereby the 'female' principle opposite the 'male' principle may be defined as:*

1. Feminine Principles

- more user oriented
- more ergonomic
- more functional
- more flexible
- more organically ordered
- more holistic/complex
- more social
- more slowly growing

2. Masculine Principles

- than designer oriented
- than large scale/monumental
- than formal
- than fixed
- than abstractly systematized
- than specialized/one-dimensional
- than profit-oriented
- than quickly constructed

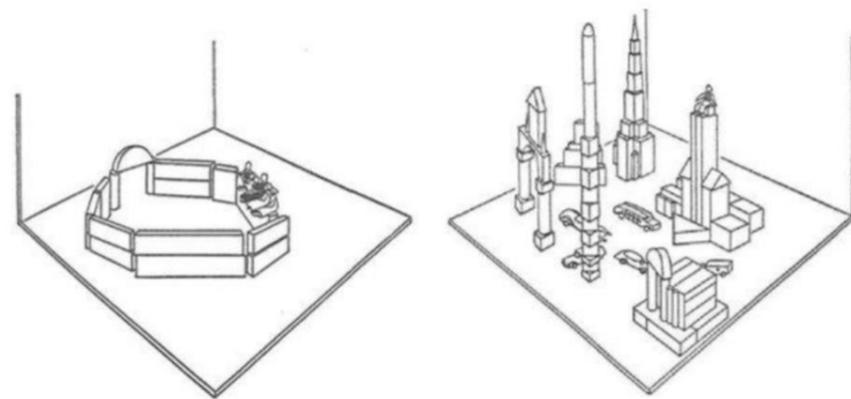


Figure 6 Design driven design(right) versus user driven design (left) (Kennedy, 1981)

What is interesting about Kennedy's perspective, is that she attempts to explore and describe gendered principles (in particularly feminine principles) where neither category is preferred and the differences are more nuanced than obvious. She arguably approaches this in a more impartial manner than many critics and architects before her. When you analyse the feminine principles, they seem more concerned with the needs of the user: The user's needs shape the design. These principles value the user's psychological, physical and social needs. In contrast, the masculine principles are more designer-focused; the Architect shapes the design and this in turn shapes the user's experience and behaviour. This approach arguably simplifies the Architect's task and role, and perhaps results in an Architecture that is easier to define.

If this thinking has been less favoured over time, how has this overemphasis of masculine values impacted Architecture?

The Disconnected Architect

The profession of Architecture evolved and developed in a patriarchal society and this has arguably led it to becoming a hyper masculinised profession (dominated by men and by male voices and values). So what impact has this imbalance had on the resulting architecture? Care theorist Elke Krasny is of the opinion that an overemphasis on masculine values and principles has led to the profession disconnecting itself from the feminised activity of care. In her essay 'Architecture and Care' Krasny cites particular periods or genres within Architecture where the Architect detached and elevated himself from certain relationships. The author describes how Architecture first became disconnected from nature.

In the first chapter of the second book of the 'Ten Books on Architecture' Vitruvius describes nature as the source of shelter, that provides us with natural resources to protect us from its own elements, like rain, snow, heat and cold.

*'Some made them [shelters] of green boughs, others dug caves on mountain sides, and some, in imitation of the nests of swallows and the way they built, made places of refuge out of mud and twigs.'*

But in the section "Education of the Architect", Vitruvius sets apart these types of protective dwellings that are 'rooted in nature' from what we consider as real architecture, which is rooted in culture:

*'[Vitruvius] lists geometry, history, philosophy, music, medicine, law and astrometry as the important fields an architect has to study and know. Nature no longer teaches the architect'*

(Vitruvius, ed. 1999)

According to Krasny, the Architect continued this autonomy over time. During the Romantic period, Leon Battista Alberti's treatise 'On the Art of Building in Ten Books' (which was the first book ever published on architecture) separated the Architect from the craftsman:

*'For it is not a Carpenter or a joiner that I must rank with the greatest Masters [...] the manual Operator being no more than an Instrument to the Architect.'*(Alberti, ed. 1991)

In Alberti's eyes, the Architect and the craftsman are not equals. He introduces the concept of the independent *architect-genius*. This way of thinking elevates the Architect's role above the contribution made by both nature (from the site to materials) and people (the practices, construction workers, craftsmen). This further intensified over time, particularly during the age of Modernism. Mies Van der Rohe's view was that the perfect geometry of his buildings existed only before people began to use the buildings. This way of thinking separated and elevates the object from the user(s). (Tronto, 2021)

This is not to suggest that architects are completely uncaring but rather to highlight that the dominate perspective within the profession has leaned towards and favoured masculine principles and values, and these are typically less care-focused than feminine principles and values. So what is the solution to this imbalance?

Kennedy's solution focusses on the need for a new vision which she already sees as growing (particularly amongst women). She quotes Phyllis Birkby (co-founder of the Women's School of Planning and Architecture (New York):

*'The health of our society, our very being, depends on providing new models(...) It is my hope that women's growing concern and involvement will posit cooperative modes of thinking and action that will produce visible realities as a force in environmental change: that the issues will be approached with an attitude which recognizes the interconnectedness of all phases of living and being; that women will use their unique skills and sensibilities in evolving new methods as well as results...'* (Birkby, 1980; p. 8). (Kennedy, 1981)

The Connected Architect

*'The ecological crisis we face is so obvious that it becomes easy—for some, strangely or frighteningly easy—to join the dots and see that everything is interconnected. This is the ecological thought. And the more we consider it, the more our world opens up.'*(The Ecological Thought by Tim Morton)

In contrast to the idea of the Disconnected Architect, care thinkers put forward the idea of Critical Care and discuss this using the concept of 'interconnectedness'. This perspective puts everything in the context of connectivity and relationships. In 'Critical Care. Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet', Elke Krasny's essay 'Architecture and Care' describes how 'Care thinks of subjects through connectedness with others' (Krasny, 2021). In her essay in the same book, care thinker and expert Joan Tronto describes how an architect can think and design through this perspective: 'Rather than thinking of buildings as things, thinking of them as relationships with ongoing environment, people flora, fauna- that exists through time as well as in space, changes the approach fundamentally.' (Tronto, 2021) Care theorists such as Peg Rawes add another layer of complexity and emphasize that this thinking needs to be intersectional, where those in most need of care take priority. '[there is a] need to consider and adopt ideas of intersectionality between human social value and environmental value' (Rawes, 2020)

*'Such architecture is inclusive to many different forms of knowledge relevant to inhabiting the planet. And, such architecture is an urgently needed form of care necessary for planetary well-being and survival including the intersecting needs of humans, non-humans and their environment.'* (Krasny, 2021)

When you look at Kennedy's feminine principles, there is more of an awareness of the connection between Architecture and the user and of designing through an awareness and sensitivity to the user(s) ('user-orientated'). For example, how users move around ('ergonomic'), how they use the building ('functional', 'flexible', 'organically ordered'), and how they interact with each other within and around buildings ('social'). Adding all of these considerations into the discussion arguably makes it more complex and could explain why architects and critics found it difficult to define and articulate 'ambiguous' feminine principles throughout history. In addition by focussing on the needs, experiences and interactions of the user, one can see how this also ties in with the feminine values of care.

After considering the above, it is interesting to consider how might Architecture and urban design look if we designed in a more feminine way, where care is given to the connections we share with each other, the environment and the buildings?

Chapter 2: Architectural Analysis

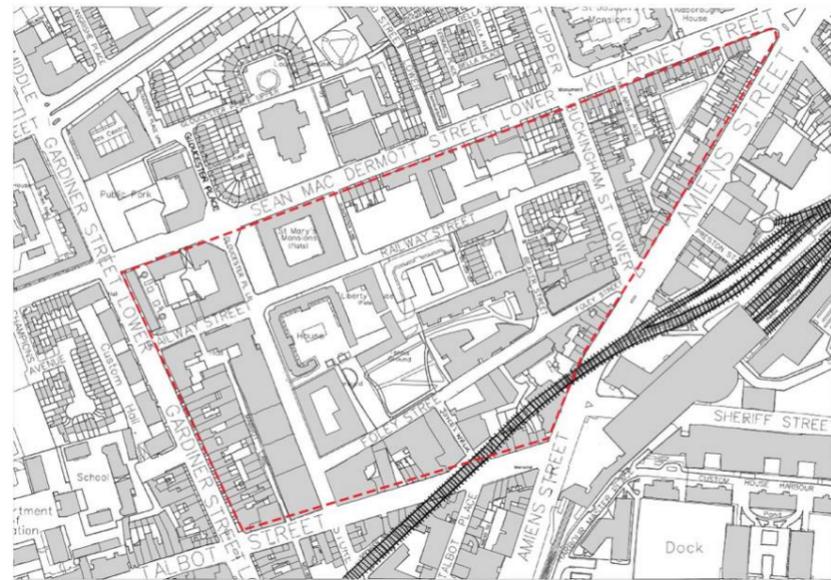


Figure 7 'Monto' Area, NEIC (Source: Author's Drawing)

2.1 Thesis Engagement Writing

*'In a changing world, our built heritage represent significant cultural ideologies which we may recognise for the first time only when individual structures are lost or threatened. It must be ensured that our heritage is conserved in order to pass it on to our successors'*

*(Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2011)*

The draft Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028 was released in 2022 for public consultation. The aim of the plan is to capture the strategic challenges of the city while keeping an eye on its future. Some of

the issues captured in this draft broadly align with the needs for the North East Inner City (NEIC) that our class identified in Semester 1. Students were asked to submit a short, considered observation in relation to our thesis research to this public consultation. My submission *'Conservation and Regeneration of Dublin City's Built Heritage and Culture'* opens with a direct observation:

*'Cranes flood Dublin City's skyline, but very few of these developments are for local communities or for the purpose of conservation*

*and heritage. Many Dubliners fear that the soul of our city is dying. The development of build to rent schemes and hotels (which are ubiquitous these days) benefit very few in local communities and are to the detriment rather than the benefit of Dublin City's heritage and culture.'*

*(Bryan, 2021)*

As the City's communities, culture and built heritage is under threat, how do we protect the NEIC from the type of development that does not care for the preservation of the area's culture and history? Rapid development of certain parts of NEIC has left many local communities feeling vulnerable and isolated. This type of development threatens the connection between Dubliners and their City Centre. How do we protect the NEIC's special character and keep people connected to their urban landscape?

*'My proposal is for areas in the NEIC to become Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA's). The designated Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) aims to identify an area of special character and architectural interest and to preserve that special character. This proposal is an impassioned plea to Dublin City Council (DCC) to save our city from the onslaught of developers and foreign investment companies who merely seek to profit at the cost of our city's culture and heritage.'* (Bryan, 2021)

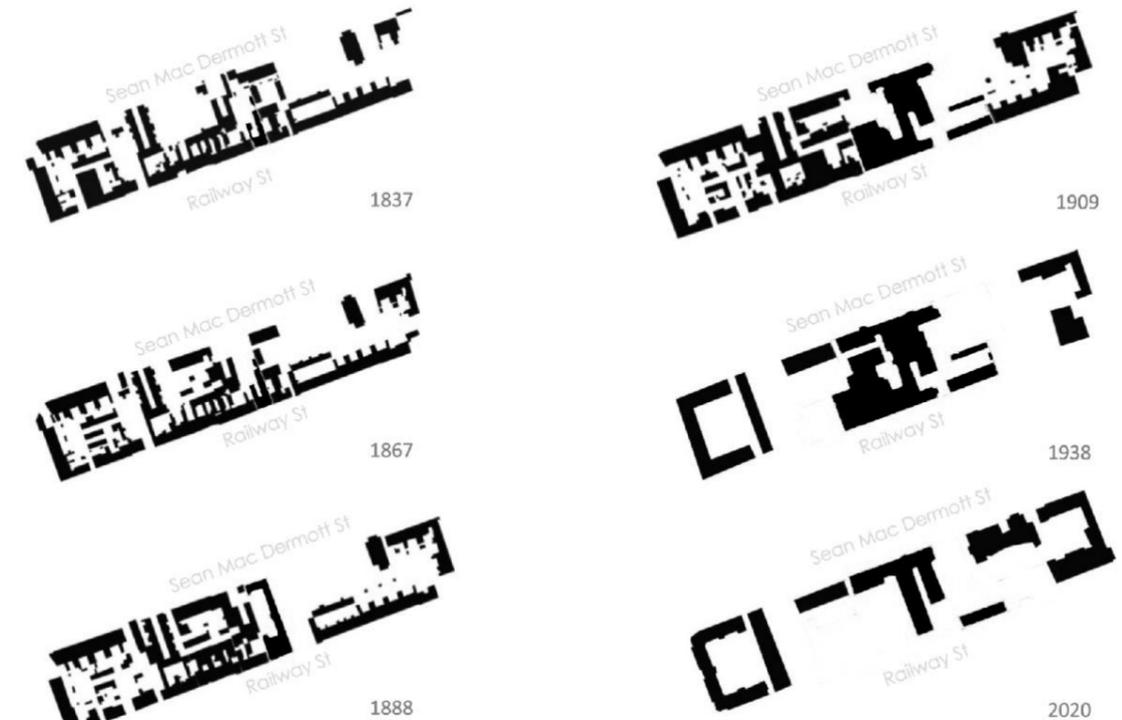


Figure 8 Changing Urban Fabric (1837-2021) (Source: Author's Drawing)

Early on in the thesis research in Semester 1, this project looked to the Monto area because of its changing urban landscape. The Monto area is bounded by Sean Mac Dermot St, Lower Gardiner St, Talbot St, Amiens St in what would now be regarded as 'Summerhill'. It used to be a highly active area and has an extremely rich history; a history that has been immortalised in songs, poetry, plays and literature. Yet very few of the Monto's original buildings, streets, laneways and street names remain. It's changing fabric over time has also led to a loss of public space and connections via the loss of alleyways and streets.



Figure 9 Loss of Laneways and connections over time (Source: OpenHeartCity's twitter account.)



Figure 10 19th Century Railway Street Streetscape (Source: Dublin Civic Trust's twitter)



Figure 11 Modern day street scape(source: Google StreetView)

Much of the demolition occurred in the 1930s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s; in an attempt to 'clean up' the area and detach it from its stigmatised past. The built urban landscape that exists today is largely disconnected from its history. The area has lost much of its historic built heritage, culture and original communities and therefore much of its special character.

To ensure that this loss of special quality and character such as this does not continue my submission calls for *'the protection of such areas in the NEIC, such as The North Strand, East Wall, Ballybough, Summerhill, Popular Row, Sheriff Street, to be deemed ACA's, in an attempt to save what remains of Dublin City's soul.'*

*'The Planning and Development Act 2000 provides the legislative basis for the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). Under the Act an ACA is defined as 'a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights that: is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, social or technical interest or value, or contributes to the appreciation of protected structures.'* My view is that DCC should show new vigour in protecting areas throughout the North East Inner City by designating them as ACAs. Moreover, DCC and the government should begin to take a proactive and leadership role in bringing these areas back to life (rather than simply monitor how they are developed by private enterprises). Where an area is designated as an ACA, the sole purpose should be to restore and preserve its heritage, culture and character. This is distinct from areas being developed with the sole purpose to create profit for developers and investors. Any new developments should be heavily scrutinised so as to ensure they preserve or promote the culture and heritage of the ACA. Although the designation of ACAs are there to typically protect structures of architectural interest, I think DCC should ensure that ACAs go beyond this and try to capture and protect anything in a community that lends to its special character. This could range from the communities themselves (that may be under threat from gentrification), community centres and public buildings, public spaces and squares, green spaces, local wildlife and ecosystems, locally owned businesses that serve the community, street art/ graffiti by local artists etc. Recognising that all this subjects, not just the buildings, give a place its special character is imperative. Protecting these qualities isn't an attempt to prevent development, it is to ensure if development occurs, it does not threaten the culture and heritage of an area. It could ensure the regeneration of an area's culture and built heritage and allow local communities to thrive, become more resilient and this in return could help revive Dublin City's soul.'

(Bryan. 2021)

This observation and proposal is a call to the people responsible for the city's development (councillors, planners, designers) to recognise the complex system of players that are involved in giving an area its special character. There are a network of relationships at play which give a place its character or 'soul'. We cannot protect NEIC culture and communities without recognising this. As previously discussed, feminine principles value connectivity and relationships. Critical care thinks through relationships and as mentioned previously, feminine principles value care and connections. If designers and urban planners have a more feminine perspective, could this allow us to critically care for the NEIC by making it more resilient and help regenerate its special character? As we have seen, it is quite easy to picture how the design of the urban landscape could benefit from thinking in a more feminine way, but how does this translate in the design of a building? This will be explored through the following Case Studies.

## 2.2 Case Study 1: Liberty House Flats. Analytical Analysis and Drawing

Liberty House Flats is a housing scheme designed by Herbert Simms in the Monto area in the late 1930s. It is a seemingly defensive building on first glance but on closer analysis it is evident that Simms was acutely aware and influenced by the needs of the residents that would use the building. For example, for each flat there was a toilet, a kitchen (influenced by the Frankfurt design), a cast iron bathtub located in the kitchen under the table, a courtyard to hang out clothes/ safe place for children to play. The design was centred around the needs of the wife and mother as it recognises her role as primary carer in the household and the design reflects that.



Figure 12 Sectional Analysis showing original design from 1938 versus what it looks like today (Author's Drawing)

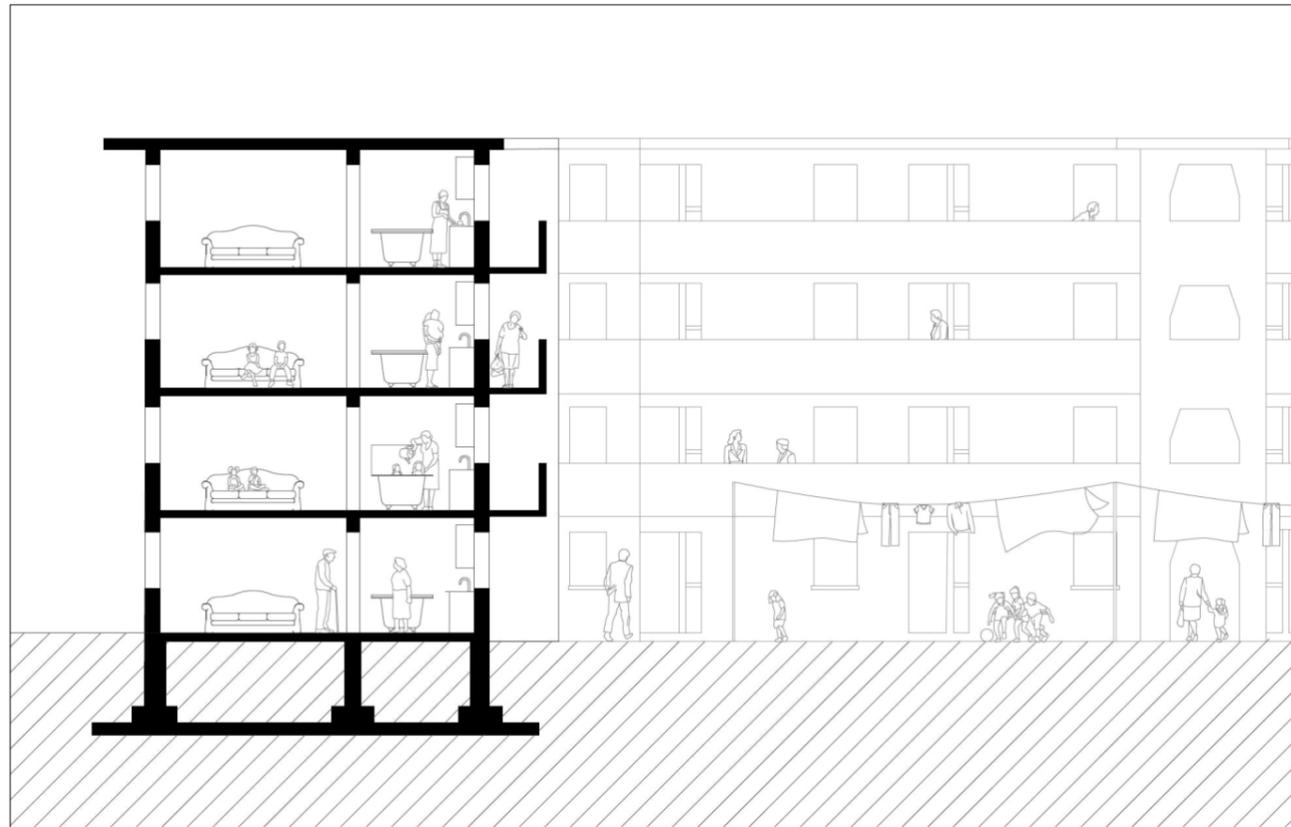


Figure 13 Close up of 1938 drawing (Source: Author's Drawing)

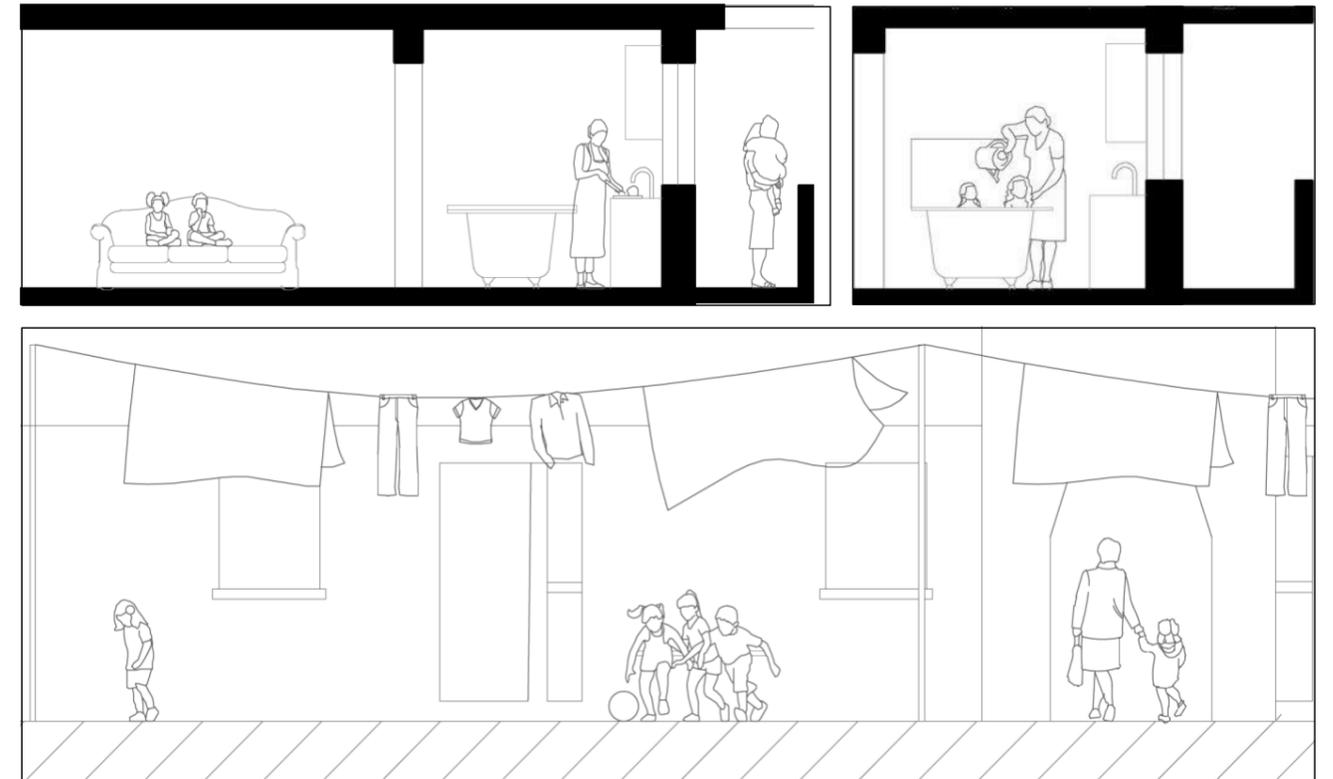


Figure 14 Close up showing how the design is shaped by the role of the primary carer of the family (Source: Author's Drawing)

### 2.3 Analysis of Sean Mac Dermott Street Magdalene Laundry

After analysing Liberty House municipal social housing complex, this writer turned their attention to the Magdalene Laundry on Sean Mac Dermott Street and Railway Street. Today the site lies partially demolished and unoccupied (apart from one community group which uses part of the main building) and is currently owned by Dublin City Council. This is an interesting site to analyse considering the history relating to the role of women and 'care'. It is a prime example of Ireland's Architecture of Containment. An institution created to house women and girls in the name of penance. Although the institute was described as a 'refuge', 'asylum', 'retreat' during its time operating, the testimonies from survivors describe a life void of care. They describe a life filled with suffering, hard work and isolation. Was this because the people in power did not care, or because their concept of care was very different?

#### 2.3.1 Care as a Machine: The Rise of Institutional Architecture



Figure 1 Workhouse scene from movie 'Oliver' to show orphans working in exchange for care. (left) (Source: Google Images)



Figure 2 A drawing of the Cubitt Treadwheel used Kilmainham Gaol in the 19th Century. It's function was to tire inmates. Note the similarities between the life of the vulnerable and the life of a prison inmate.(right)(Source: Frieda Kelly's book 'A History of Kilmainham Gaol')

The concept of the machine has shaped both our ideas of architecture and care since the Industrial Revolution. Industrialisation led to urbanisation, and this led to the development of buildings which essentially functioned like machines. In Mark Pimlot's book 'The Public Interior as Idea and Project' he describes the object of these buildings 'to process their users, and whose organisation and spaces were instrumental in achieving certain patterns of behaviour in them, handling them and shaping activities to achieve predictable effects.' This way of thinking was not just confined to industrial buildings, it impacted how we designed everything, whether it be a factory, shopping mall, school, hospital etc. The idea behind many buildings was that they transformed and controlled people: 'Individuals entered, things happened to them, and they were passed through staged processes, events and experiences.' (Pimlot, 2016)

Institutions of care (hospitals, asylums, industrial schools) were similarly designed in this manner and furthermore, care was commonly paired with requiring the user to work. Through the mid-1800s, institutions developed in response to masses of people searching for employment

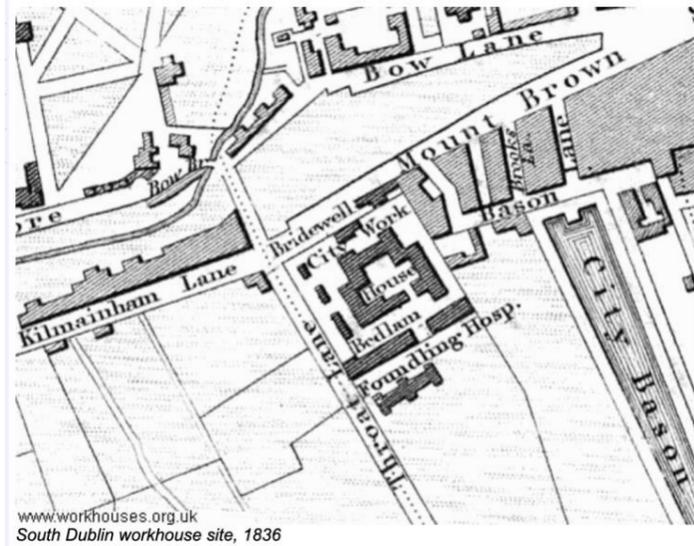


Figure 3 1836 Map showing origins of St James Hospital

and/ or relief. Individuals were given very basic forms of care like shelter, food, water, medical treatment, in exchange for unpaid labour. It is interesting to note that the origins of St James' hospital and Brendan's Hospital (a psychiatric facility) in Dublin was that of a House of Industry – a charitable institution which took the form of a workhouse. Penitentiaries operated in a similar fashion where work was used both to punish and reform the prisoners. (Higginbotham, 2022) In the context of architecture and care, the machine concept was all about productivity and void of any feminine principles associated with care. Conditions in workhouses were comparable to the conditions of capital punishment.

#### 2.3.2 Ireland's Architecture of Containment

In 19<sup>th</sup> Century Ireland, philanthropic institutions of 'care' were widespread, especially in the wake of the Famine. Even during this dark period, the belief persisted that the provision of relief must be paired with labour; often very hard labour. Workhouses were overwhelmed so relief work was created elsewhere in the building of famine roads.



Figure 6 Famine Memorial, NEIC. (Source: Google Images)



Figure 5 Famine Road leading no where (Source: Google Images)

Starvation and poverty continued to be endemic throughout Ireland in the decades after the Famine. After the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922, institutions became increasingly penal in nature, confining people and often forcing them to work difficult and dangerous jobs for no pay. (Woodham, 1991). The Irish Republic maintained the British system of Victorian Institutions run by religious orders for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The Catholic Church and the State were responsible for incarcerating vulnerable members of society, particularly women and children. By 1951, 1% of Irish citizens were incarcerated in an institution operated collaboratively by the Church/State establishment. This included psychiatric hospitals, industrial schools, residential schools for disabled children, mother and baby homes and Magdalene Institutions. (Walsh, 1963) These institutions continued to be places of essentially, unpaid labour. It is interesting to note that during this time, Ireland's prison population was a negligible percentage of the population. For example, there was an average of just 50 women held in Irish prisons. A natural tendency developed in Ireland to conceal and confine those deemed unfit to function within society. This is referred to today, as the Architecture of Containment. (OpenHeartCityDubin.ie, 2020) The Architecture of Containment, like Victorian Institutions, was very much aligned with the masculine values associated with care namely security/protection and productivity. The feminine activity of 'caring for' only proves to be present in the most basic of sense. How is this reflected in the architecture of The Magdelene Laundry?

The Magdelene Laundry on Sean Mac Dermott Street (hereinafter defined as the "Laundry") was situated in the heart of 'the Monto' - a well-known red-light district in Dublin's Northeast Inner City. In response to Dublin's growing sex industry in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century (which at one point was said to be the biggest of its kind in Europe), Protestant and Catholic churches took on the task of rescuing and reforming women and girls involved in sex work. They set up 'refuges' often near or in red light districts to persuade women involved in sex work to leave the industry. Here the women could receive a basic provision of care and check in, sleep, be fed and work as a form of penance. Initially the women could check out as they pleased, so they had more of a sense of autonomy and independence over their own lives. These types of institutions took on vigour in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, with the formation of penitent asylums which were set up near known red light districts in Dublin. (Fagan, 2005).

### 2.3.3 History of the Laundry



Figure 7 Context: 'Monto' area in NEIC (Source: Google Images)

### History of the Laundry. Continued.

By the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Laundry was taking in any women and girls who were deemed 'problematic' by their families, the State or by the Church. Not all the women and girls were admitted for committing societal 'sins'; some were sent by their families who believed that they would learn skills, get educated and be cared for by the nuns in charge. The women and girls lost autonomy and control over their own lives and were isolated from the outer community. The Laundry developed during a highly patriarchal period, its design was influenced by the Victorian concept which paired care with productivity. It was also influenced by Ireland's Architecture of Containment. (OpenHeartCityDubin.ie, 2020)

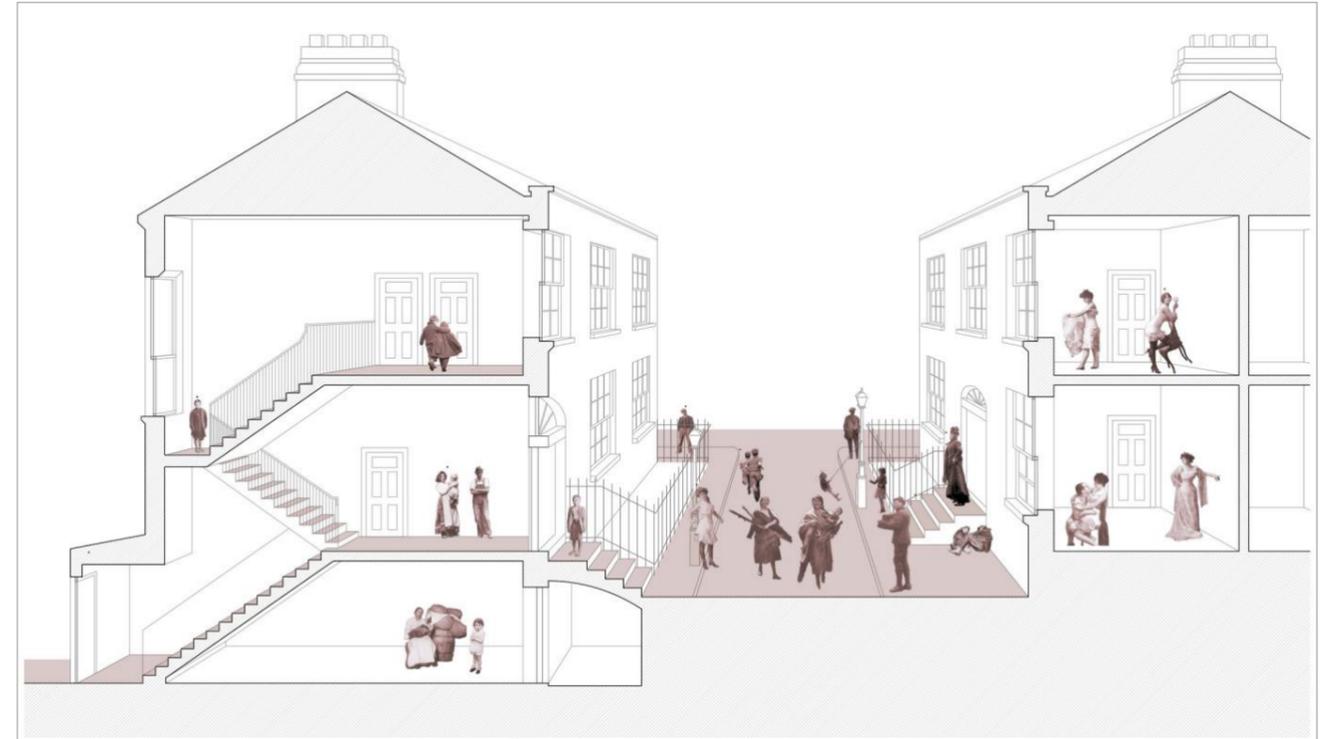


Figure 9 The Architecture and people of the 'Monto' (Source: OpenHeartCity's Twitter Account)



Figure 8 Location of Sean MacDermott St Magdalene Laundry and picture of the site ((Source: Google Images on right and Author's drawing on left))

The Laundry operated from as early as 1833 until 1996. Prior to 1833, it is believed that part of the land existed as a penitent asylum run by the Protestant Church from about 1822. It was opened by a charitable widow and the building was described as a 'humble dwelling' where women are engaged in 'doing penance for their lives of sin and occupy themselves in laundry work.' (Prunty, 2007). By 1833 it was fully established as a 'female penitents retreat' as per OS mapping. In 1873 the site was taken over by the Sisters of Mercy, before later being taken over by the Sisters Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge in 1887. The Sisters of Charity continued to operate the site until its closure in 1996. (OpenHeartCityDubin.ie, 2020). Although it was a matriarchal complex, ran by nuns and occupied by women and girls, the Laundry functioned within the patriarchal system of the Irish Catholic Church.

### 2.3.4 Architectural Style



Figure 10 North Elevation (Source: Queen's University Student Research Drawing)

The convent building of the Laundry faces onto Sean MacDermott Street and is a handsome example of Victorian Architecture. Although built in three stages (1868, 1888 and 1926) the different sections of the convent go seamlessly together. The convent rooms were described as 'bright and cheerful' (Prunty) bar the basement cellars (this is where the women and girls worked in the kitchen). The convent was a facade which belied the dark nature of what went on in other parts of the Laundry. All the other buildings at the back of it were of plainer, simpler design; in particular the industrial buildings. The Church part of the Laundry was also Victorian in style and was lavishly decorated and detailed. (BuildingsOfIreland.ie, 2011)



Figure 11 South Elevation over time (Source: Author's own drawing)

### 2.3.5 Development and Productivity

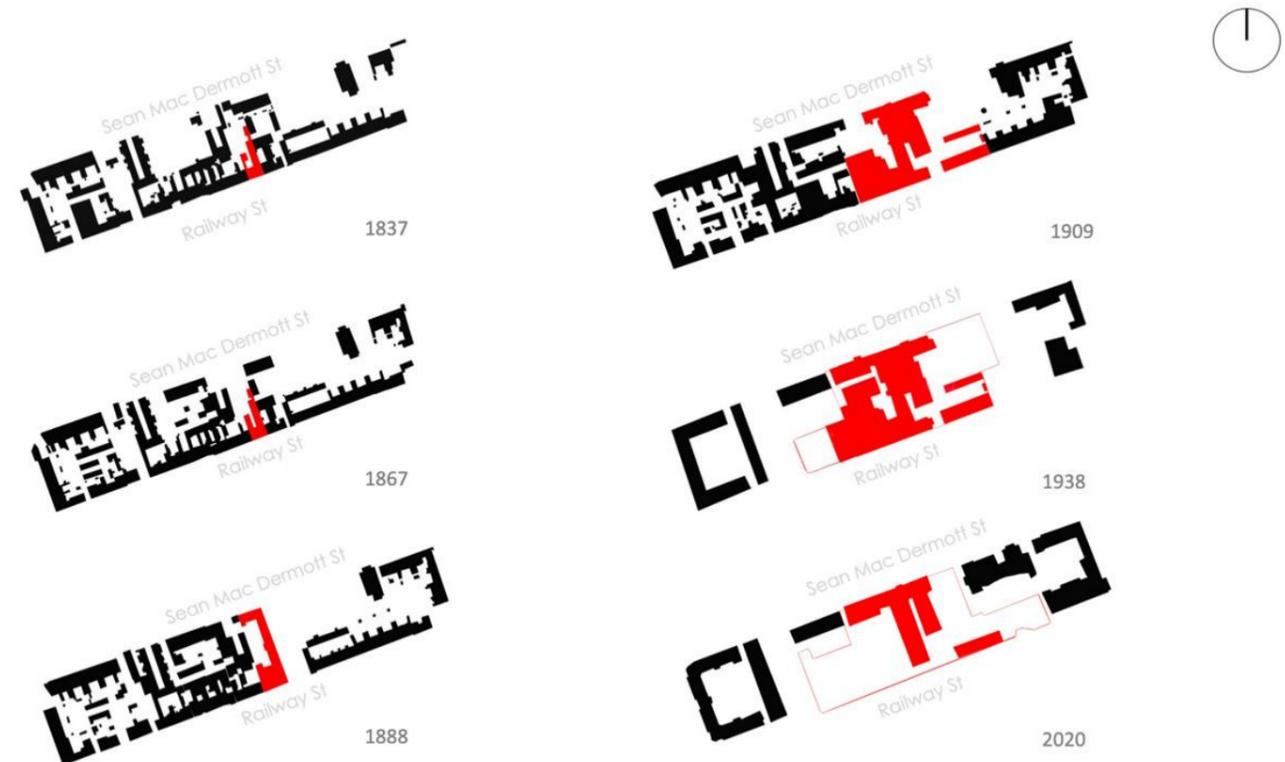


Figure 12 Drawing showing how block and Laundry transformed over time (Source: Author's own drawing)

The growth of the Laundry over time led to the demolition of the surrounding Georgian buildings and tenements. The expansion was aimed at increasing the Laundry's capacity and productivity whilst also reducing activity on Railway Street (reported as the most active and infamous street in the red-light Monto area).

### 2.3.6 Aspects of the Laundry's Buildings:

#### The Working Quarters:

The working quarters evolved from a one roomed laundry to multiple industrial spaces equipped with the latest machinery. Clothes were dropped off to be mended in the sewing room or washed in the laundry room. After being washed they were dried in the drying room, then ironed, folded and packed and dispatched. The older rooms have timber trusses and the later rooms have steel trusses. The rooms are brightly lit by roof lights in the newer buildings. The older buildings such as the laundry room have windows facing out on to Railway Street. It is clear that this area of the Laundry was designed to suit its industrial purpose. (W.H. Byrne & Son Architects, 1954)

The business of the Laundry served private businesses, the general public and the State. (OpenHeartCityDubin.ie, 2020) The Laundry was a very lucrative scheme; often outperforming and outcompeting similar privately run laundry businesses. Women worked long hours and every day was seen as a form of penance. (WomensWorkersUnion.ie, 2022) Again, we see that care was intrinsically linked to unpaid labour which ensured productivity and that the design of the living and working quarters facilitated work efficiency and allowed the buildings to act like a machine.

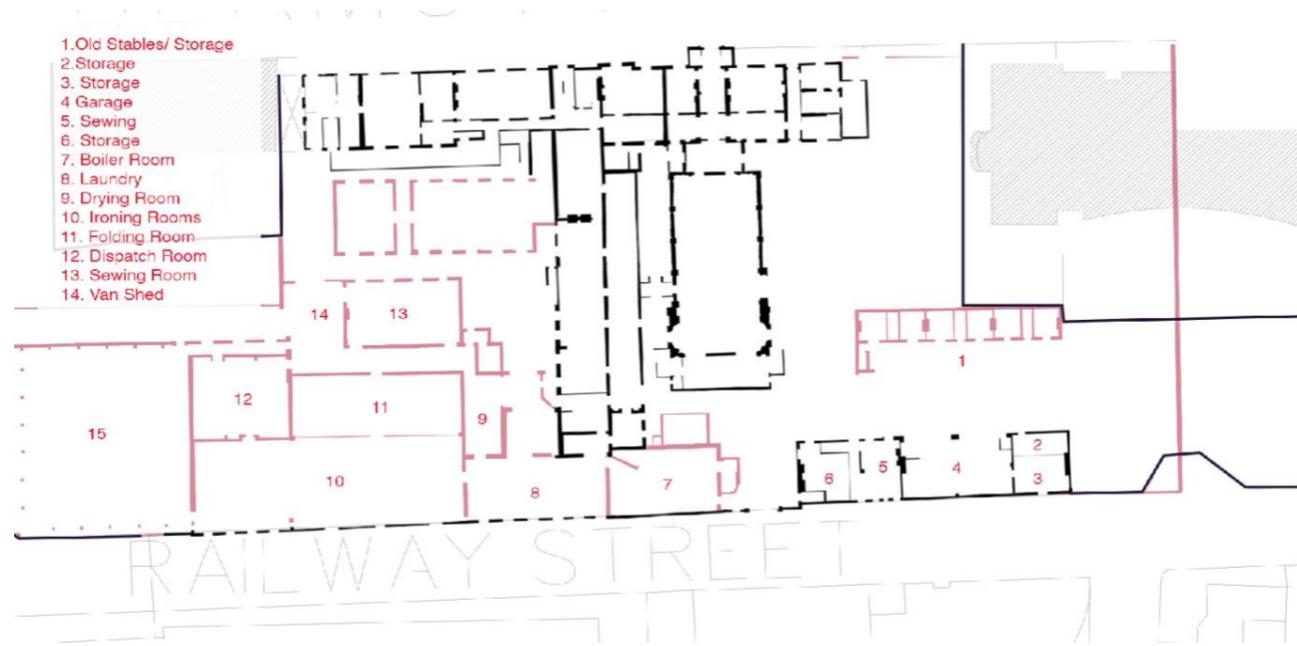


Figure 13 Ground Floor plan showing the now demolished Industrial buildings (red) (Source: Author's own drawing)

The Living Quarters:



Figure 15 Ground Floor Plan of living quarters of the site (Source: Author's own drawing)

The buildings that made up the living quarters of both the Sisters and inmates are all that remain on the site to this day. The inmates slept in shared dormitories on the first and second floors of the dormitory wing (although the shared dormitories were eventually made into private bed spaces for women and girls in the late 1970s). Although the records show that there was a recreation room and hall, refectory and shared living and working quarters, this did not and was not to promote social activity as survivor testimonies state that speaking was forbidden. In reality the recreation room did not facilitate recreation in its design and it appears that the room was only used for religious singing. (OpenHeartCityDubin.ie, 2020)

The east end of the convent on ground floor level was to entertain guests, visitors, and it was also where women would be first brought to be interviewed before staying in the Laundry. The main entrance faced the internal entrance of the chapel. These were all adjoined by the Main Hall.



Figure 14 Section across Railway St ironing room and sorting room (Source: Queen's University Student Research Drawing)



Figure 16 Section of Dormitory Wing with no connection to outside. (Source: Queen's University Student Research Drawing)

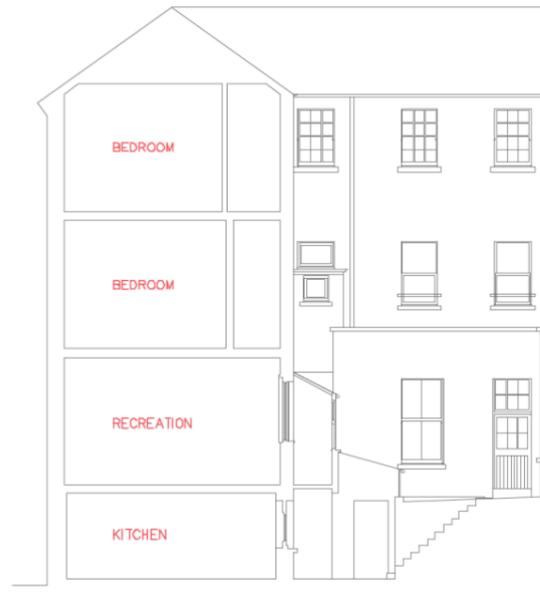


Figure 17 Section of convent showing Sister's living quarters overlooking street. (Source: Queen's University Student Research Drawing)

The cells where the Sisters slept were private and either single or double cells. They were located on the first and second floors of the convent building. The refectory used by the Sisters was described as the nicest room in the convent (located on the west end of the convent on the ground level). The rooms in the convent were highly decorated and the nuns' garden had vegetation and trees. All the rooms facing Sean Mac Dermott Street had large windows and double height spaces. This design ensured the rooms were brightly lit and there was a connection with the outside. (W.H. Byrne & Son Architects, 1954)

### 2.3.7 Deindustrialisation and End of Activities

The Laundry on Sean Mac Dermott Street was the last Magdalene laundry in Ireland to close in 1996. Following a fire in 2006, Dublin City Council demolished the remaining industrial buildings apart from the Ri Villa Training Centre which still remains today and which is located on Railway Street. (OpenHeartCity.ie, 2020)

## 2.4 Analysis of Kennedy's Gendered Principles:

*An analysis of the Laundry and how its design and development espouses masculine design principles:*

The design of the Laundry tends to lean towards masculine principles in the following ways:

1. Some elements could be described as designer oriented and some user oriented. For example, the design is shaped by the routine of the residents. But does this routine care for the user? In the context of the women and girls, it does not go beyond the very basic concept of care (eating, sleeping and exercise quarters. The industry and business shape the design, not the needs of the women.
2. The design of the convent and the church could be described as large scale/ monumental. It is less so on the Railway Street side as the industrial buildings did not go beyond 2 floors. The most notable feature on this side was the chimney attached to the boiler room, which was a dominant feature in the surrounding area. (see Figure 32, 33)

3. The convent and church are more formal in design. The industrial buildings are obviously more functional as they were designed and developed into a sophisticated line of productivity. By today's standards however, this functionality did not 'care for' the women and girls.
4. The design is more fixed than flexible.
5. In a sense the design is organically ordered to accommodate the strict routine of the nuns and women/girls in the living quarters and the line of productivity in the working quarters. Using today's concept of care, we could describe this as abstractly systematised as the routine controls rather than cares for the users.
6. Due to its scale, the design seems complex but it really only functions as a convent and industry. Therefore, the Sean MacDermott side is specialised and one-dimensional as it functions as a convent. The Railway Street side is specialised and one-dimensional as it is an industry. So I would say that by today's concept of care, it leans towards the masculine principle.
7. By analysing the buildings and testimonies, it's clear it was a profit driven complex. There would have been more social activities between the sisters but the women and girls were not allowed speak.

*"...and we were shut...brought upst[airs], then we were put into a room and then upstairs...I think about seven or half-seven we were put to bed. It was like prison really...and the doors were locked behind us and we were put into this big huge dormitory done...divided with a partition, you know and you weren't allowed talk or nothing." – Survivor Martina Keogh*

8. Although by today's standards the development of the complex would be considered quite slow, for that time it developed quite quickly to accommodate demand. (See Figure 26)

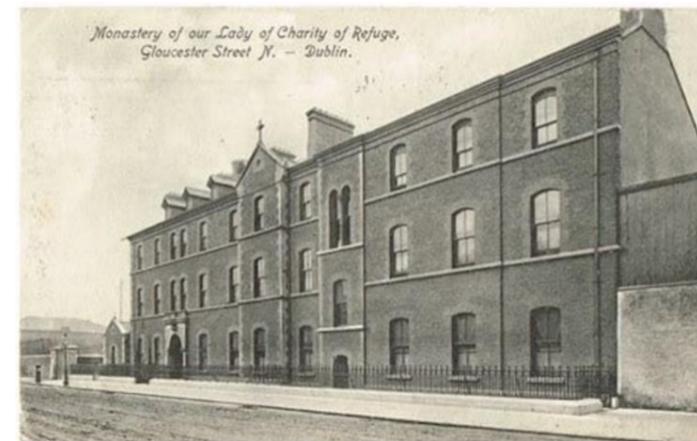


Figure 18 Old postcard showing scale and monumental nature of building (Source: AtlasOfLostRooms.ie)



Figure 19 Railway Street Elevation showing the old chimney (Source: AtlasOfLostRooms.ie)

By contrast the Laundry lacked the connectivity and user friendliness we would associate with a design principles that we would term 'feminine'. For example, the buildings are autonomous and independent within the surrounding community. The Architecture and testimonies of the survivors reflect a controlling environment which contained and concealed the women and girls that lived there. It did not promote social interactions and relationships either between the residents or with the surrounding communities. The gardens show there was some interaction with nature but this was limited. In addition the Laundry would have emitted fumes into the surrounding area (which was widespread in the city at the time.) so this would have impacted the health of the environment and community. Undoubtedly, industry and profit was the overarching purpose and function of the Laundry and it pursued these objectives at the expense of the surrounding community and residents you inhabited it. Overall the architecture and system, did not care for the users, the area or the environment.

## 2.5 Prospect-Refuge Theory

Seeing as the building was described as a 'refuge' in OS historic mapping, how does the Architecture measure up to the Prospect-Refuge Theory (*A tendency to prefer environments with unobstructed views (prospects) and areas of concealment and retreat (refuges)*)? Does the Architecture allow for prospect and refuge so that users feel protected and connected to their surroundings? In Figures 39-43 you can see only the North facing elevation give users views of the outside. All the windows on the Railway Street side are positioned in a way that prevents users from looking out and people outside from looking in.



Figure 20 Current Site Plan (Source: Author's Own Drawing)



Figure 21 Section AA ( above) and Section BB (below) (Source: Author's Own Drawing)

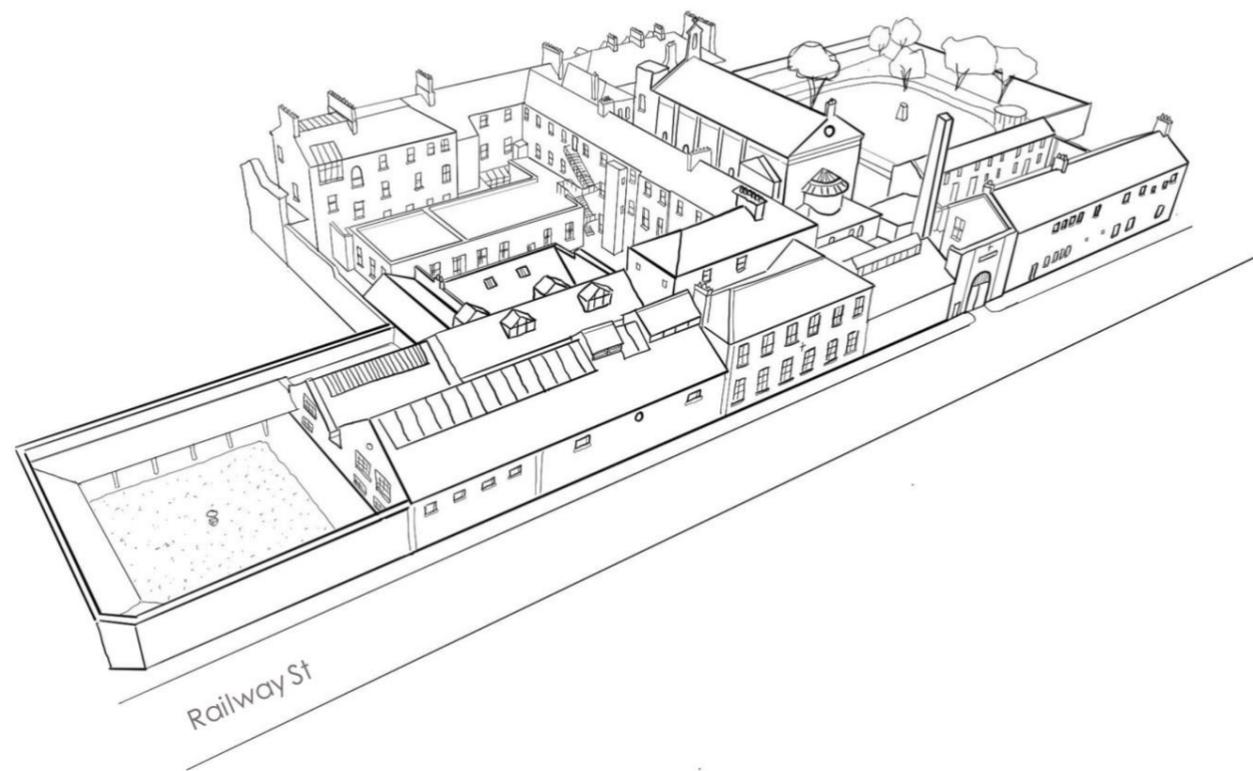


Figure 22 Drawing of Magdalene Laundry Sean Mac Dermott St 1954(Source: Author's Own Drawing)

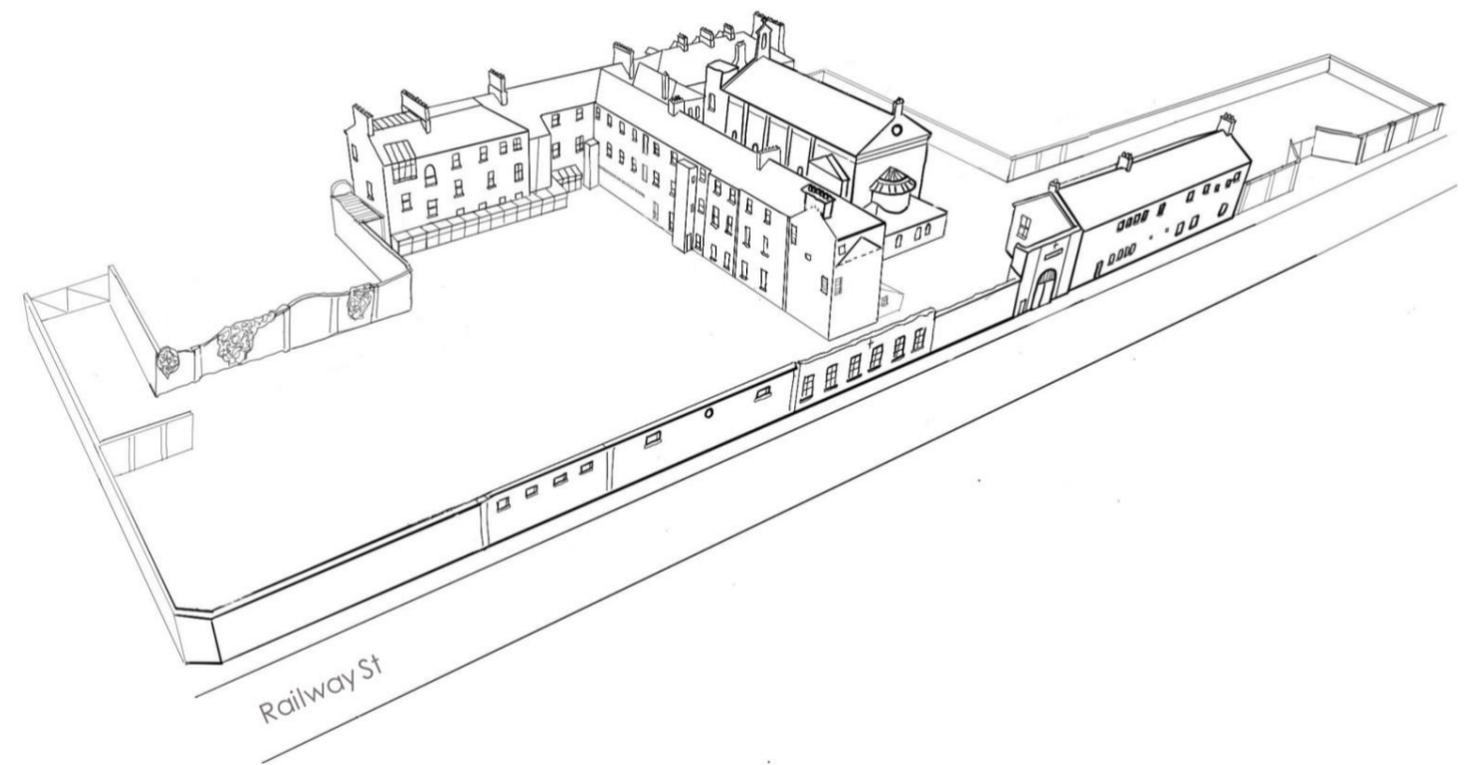


Figure 23 Drawing of Magdalene Laundry Sean Mac Dermott St 2021(Source: Author's Own Drawing)

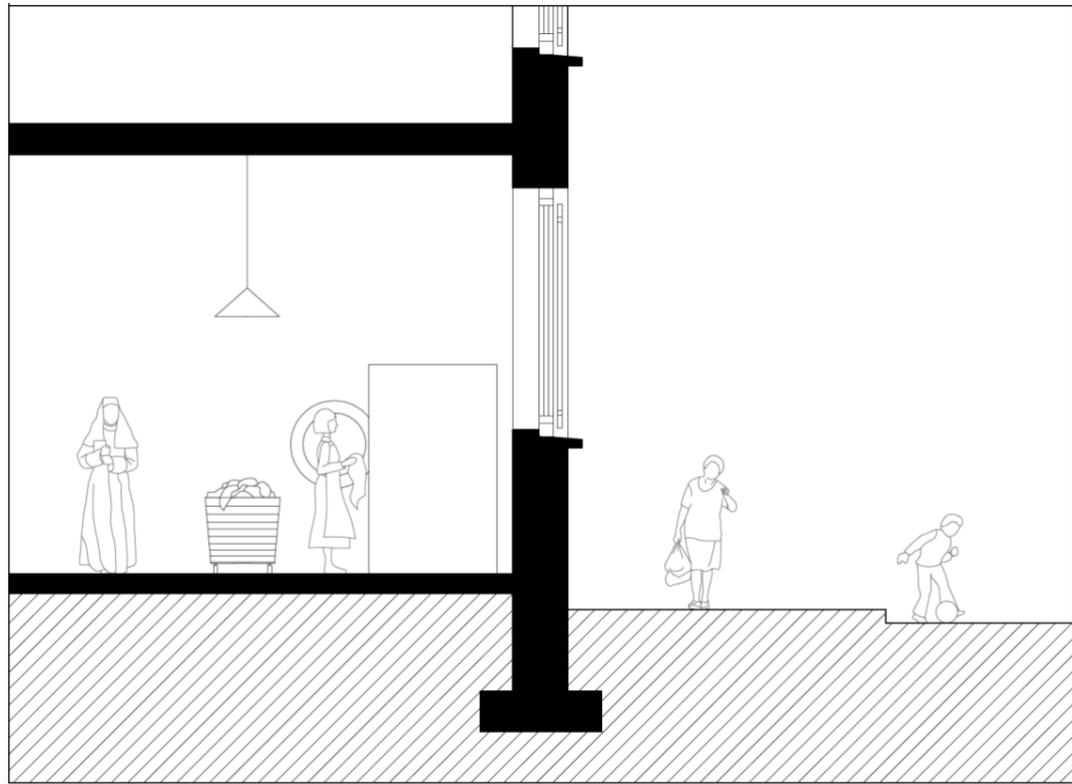


Figure 25 Section of Laundry Room on Railway St side(Source: Author's Own Drawing)

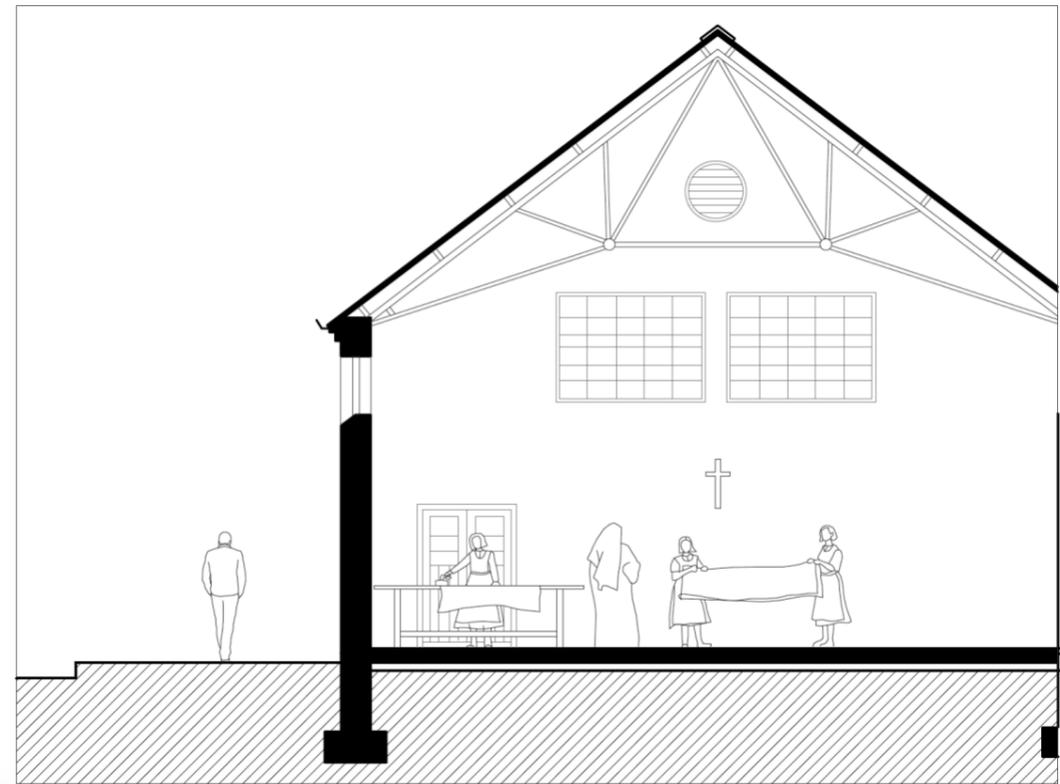


Figure 24 Section of Ironing Room on Railway St side(Source: Author's Own Drawing)

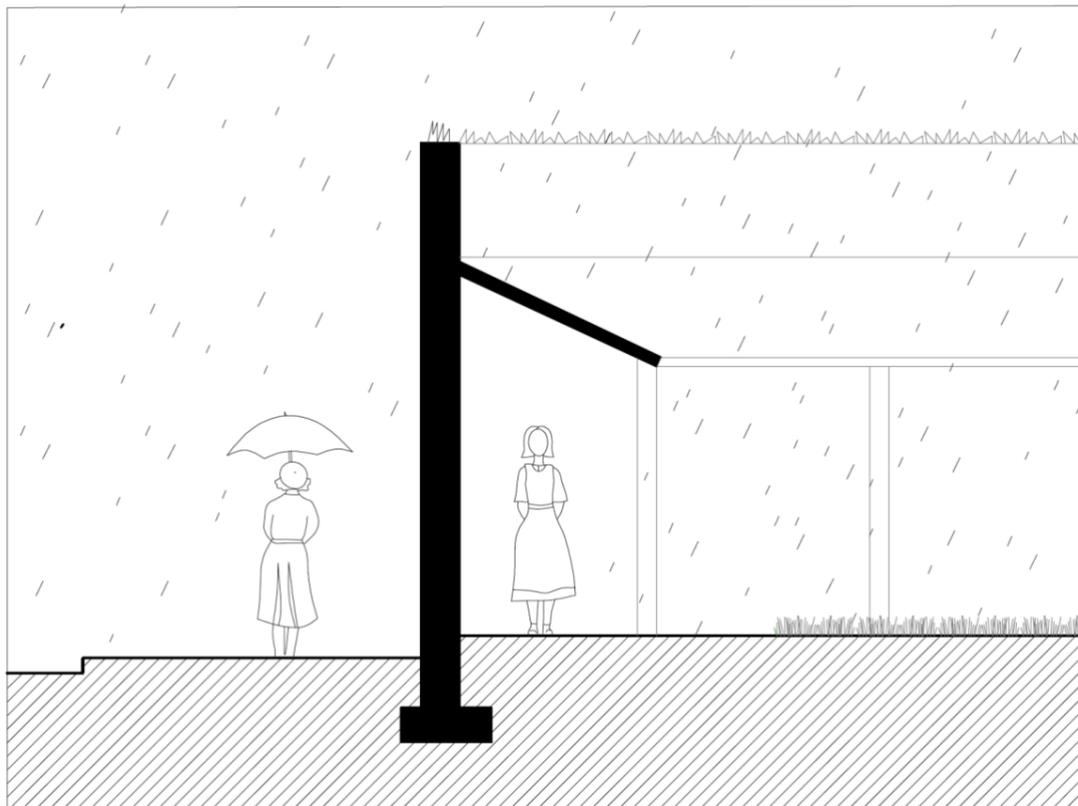


Figure 26 Section of Cloister at Railway St side(Source: Author's Own Drawing)



Figure 27 Close up of Section AA showing section of the Convent (Source: Author's Own Drawing)



Figure 28 Close up of Section BB showing section of the Convent (Source: Author's Own Drawing)

## 2.7 A Women's Refuge - Brief and Site Selection

On the back of the Architectural Interest and Analysis which has been discussed heretofore, I felt that the best vehicle to explore masculine and feminine principles was through designing a women's refuge on the site of the Magdalene Laundry in Sean MacDermott Street. This both acknowledges the abuse and legacy of the past whilst providing a service which cares for women who suffer abuse today. A refuge calls for both a protected and connected design; safe but not isolated from the local community. The design I am proposing critically cares for the site, the legacy and the women and children that would use the refuge. The design of the refuge will also be done in a way that critically cares for the surrounding environment. Designing the refuge with these



Figure 1 Chosen site for Refuge (Source: AppleMaps)



Figure 44 Cloister site prior to demolition (Source: AtlasOfLostRooms.ie)

subjects and their inter-connectedness in mind, is what Critical Care is all about.

### 2.7.1 Program

The program of the building was shaped by an interview with the service manager of 'Sonas Refuge' in Dublin and *Building Dignity* Website: <https://buildingdignity.wscadv.org>

## 2.8 Precedent Studies

The following precedents identified in the below images were particularly helpful during the design process:

- Aoihneass Refuge Coolock – Burke, Culligan & Deegan



Figure 45 Plan for Aoihneass Site in Coolock (Source:Archdaily.com)

- Maggie Centre, Manchester, UK – Foster Partners



Figure 46 Maggie Centre, Manchester (Source:Archdaily.com)



Figure 47 Collage Study

- Collage Study: Fisher House – Louis Kahn, Casa Barragan – Luis Barragan, Muller House – Adolf Loos)

This collage was influenced by the Prospect- Refuge theory. Using these precedents I used the technique of collage to create a main communal space that offers both Protection and Connection, Prospect. This space allows users to have a good spatial and contextual awareness of the room and everyone else in it. For example, a mother can have a sense of comfort being able to see their child at all times.



Figure 28 Model Stud of Communal space

## 2.9 Design Objectives

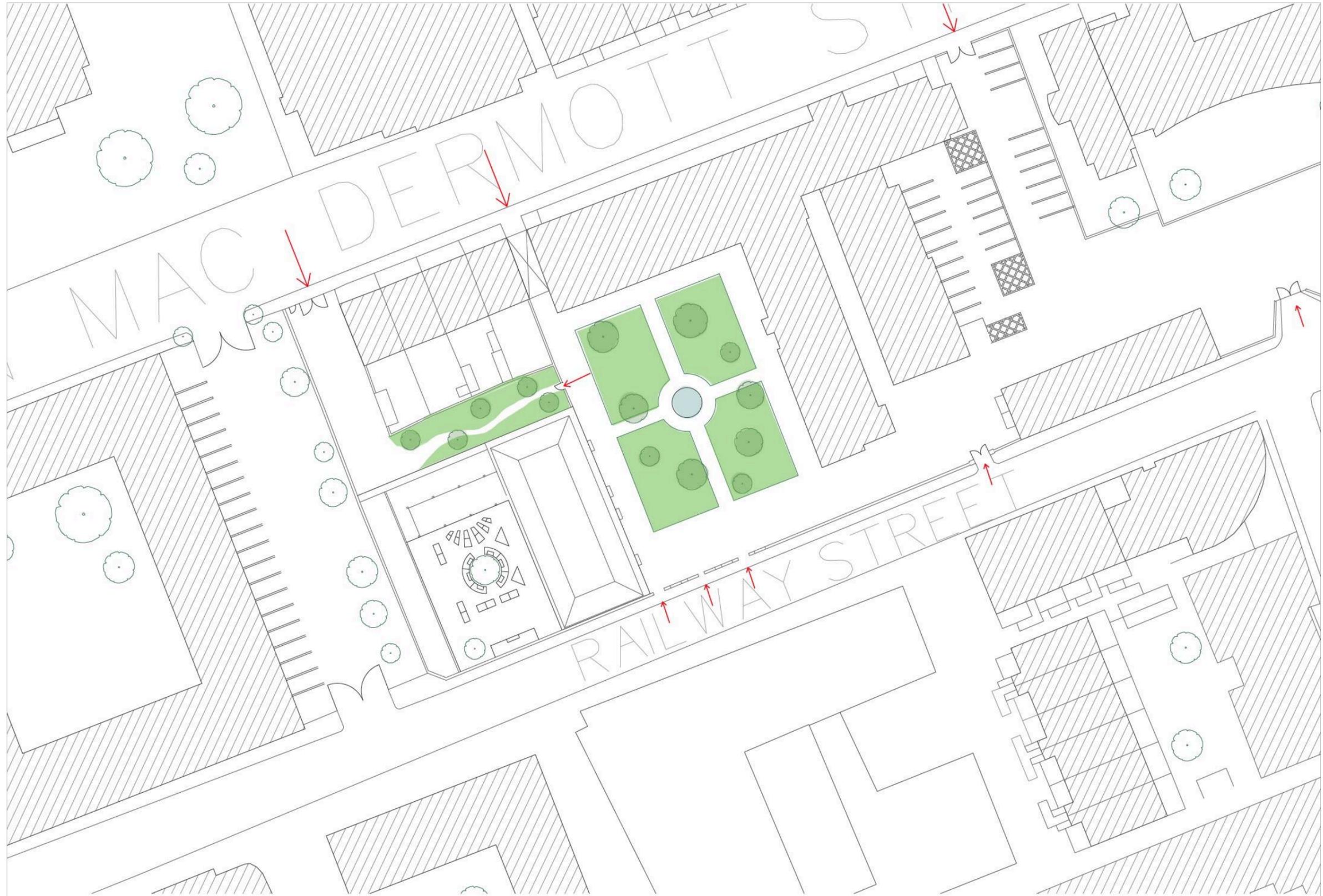
The above precedents and the subsequent collage studies undertaken (as noted above) proved quite successful and beneficial when designing the refuge as it emphasised the need to design with the user in mind. As highlighted in Kennedy's Principles, the user's experience and needs should shape the design. These model/collage studies helped shape my objectives which are itemised below:

1. Ensure Protection from: External Threats to safety and privacy through:
  - Threshold Design
  - Opening Arrangement
  - Buildings Height
  - Self-contained private apartments
2. Ensure Connection to: Outer Community through:
  - NEIC Location (Close proximity to shops, amenities, services)
  - Height (Visual Connection to City)
3. Ensure Connection to Nature through:
  - Private and Public Gardens on site
4. Ensure Connection between residents and staff through:
  - Communal and nested spaces



Figure 3 Collage Studies of spaces





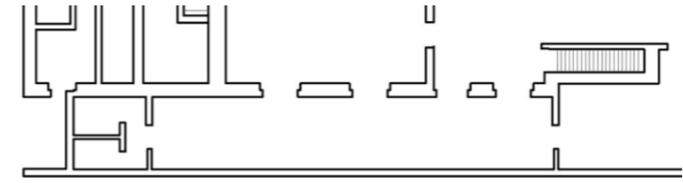
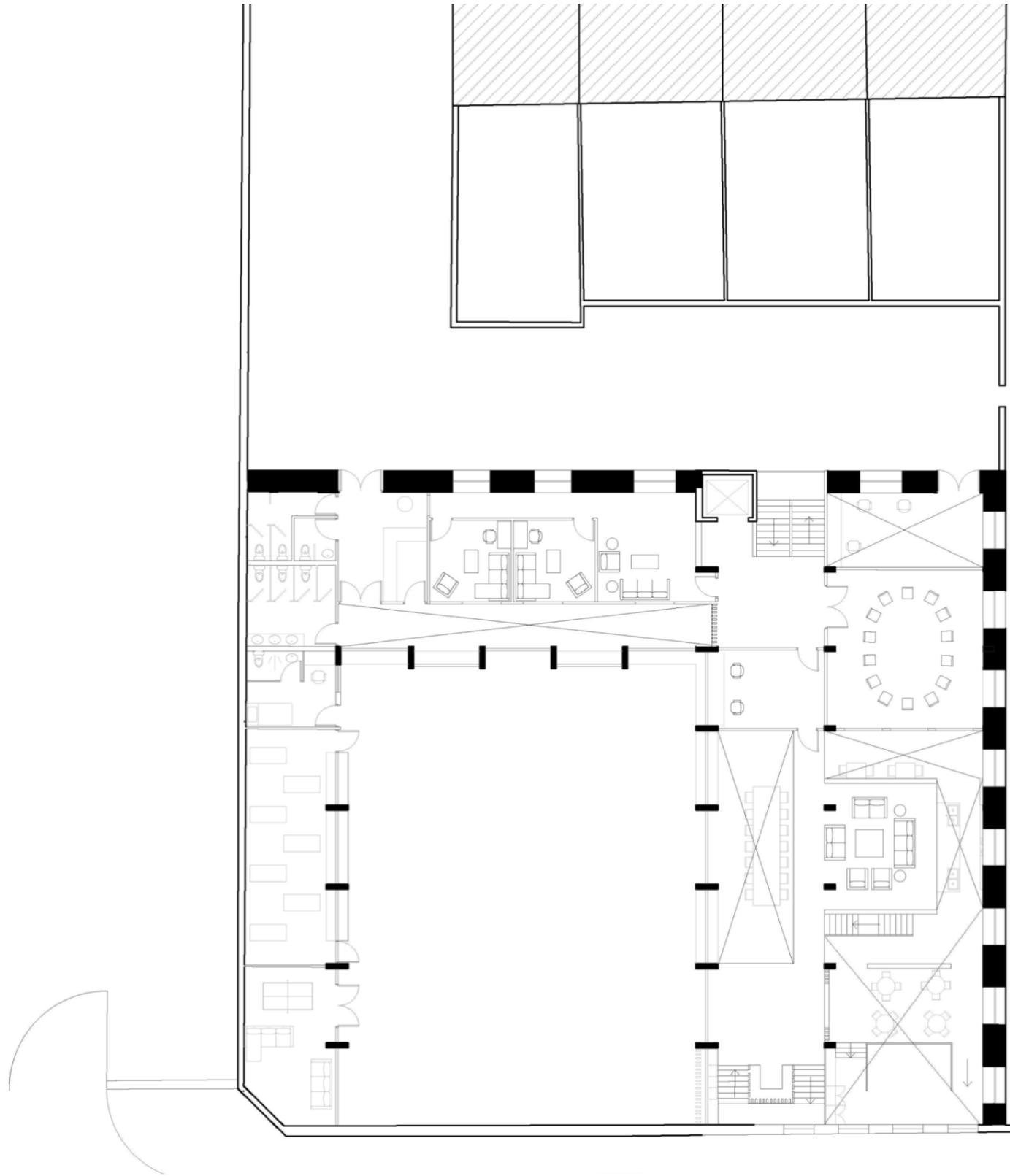
1.500

Site Plan



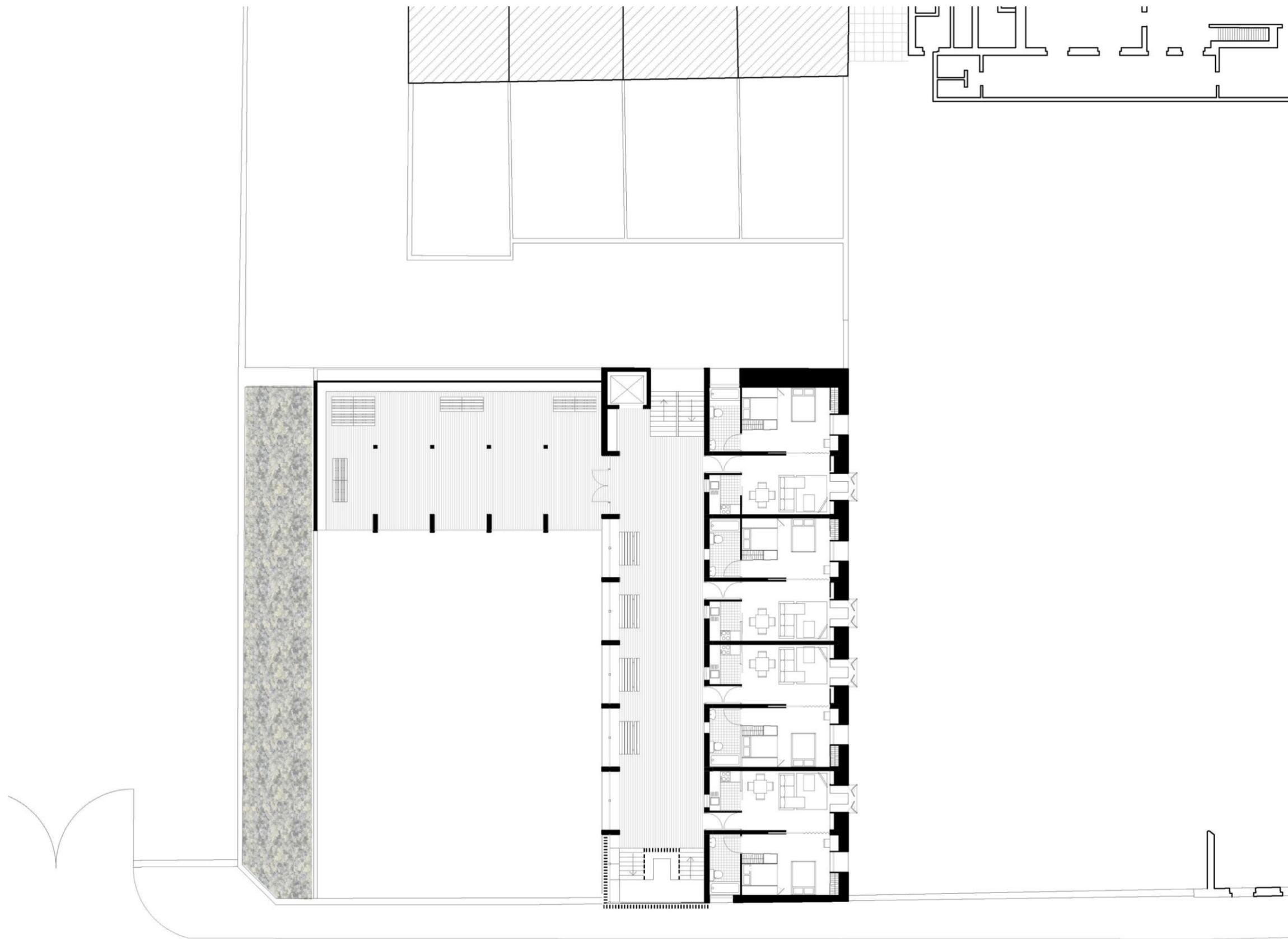
1.200

Ground Floor Plan



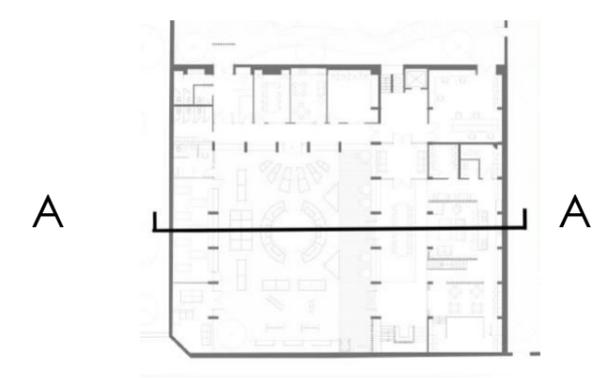
1.200

Mezzanine Level/ First Floor



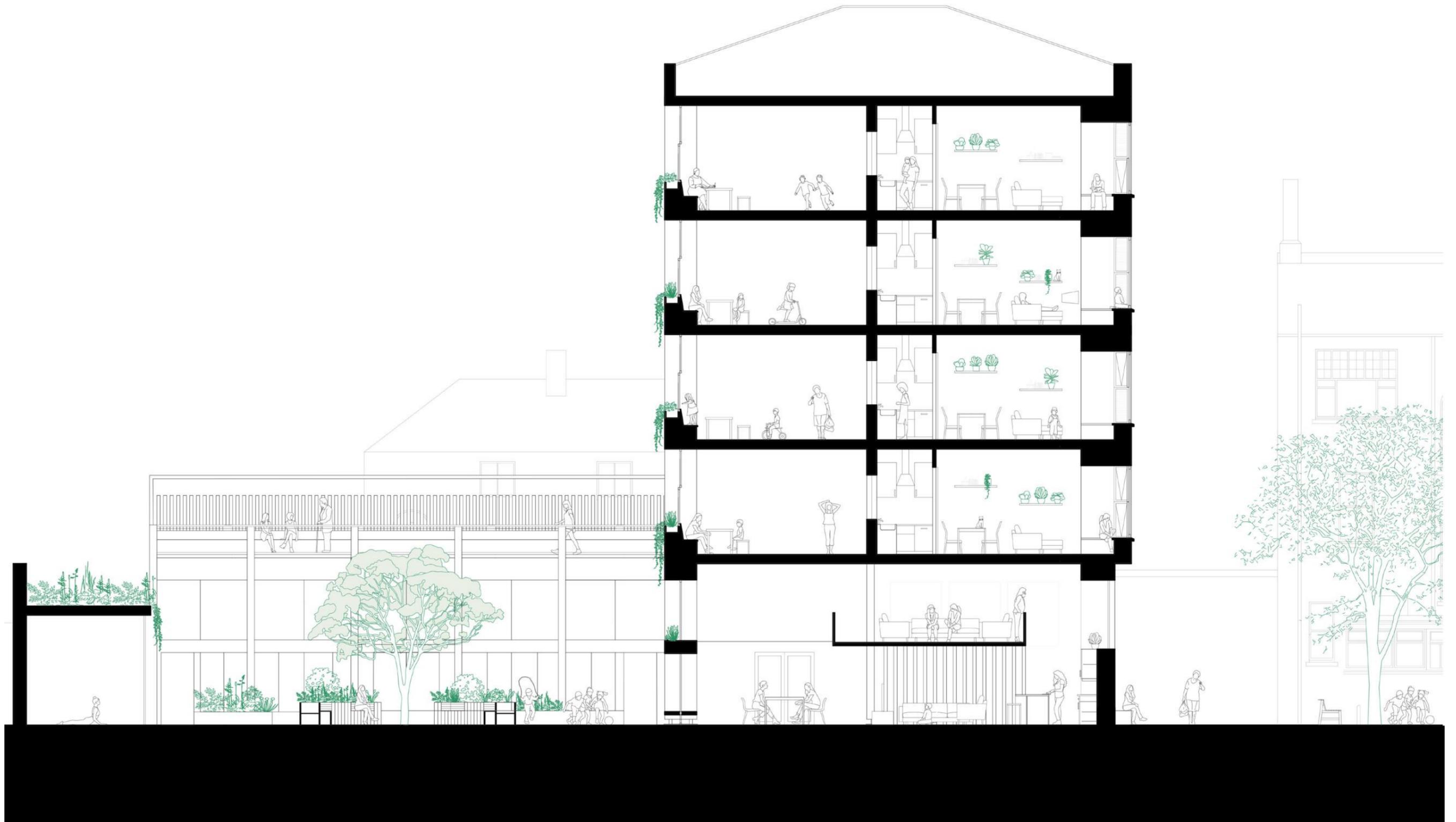
1.200

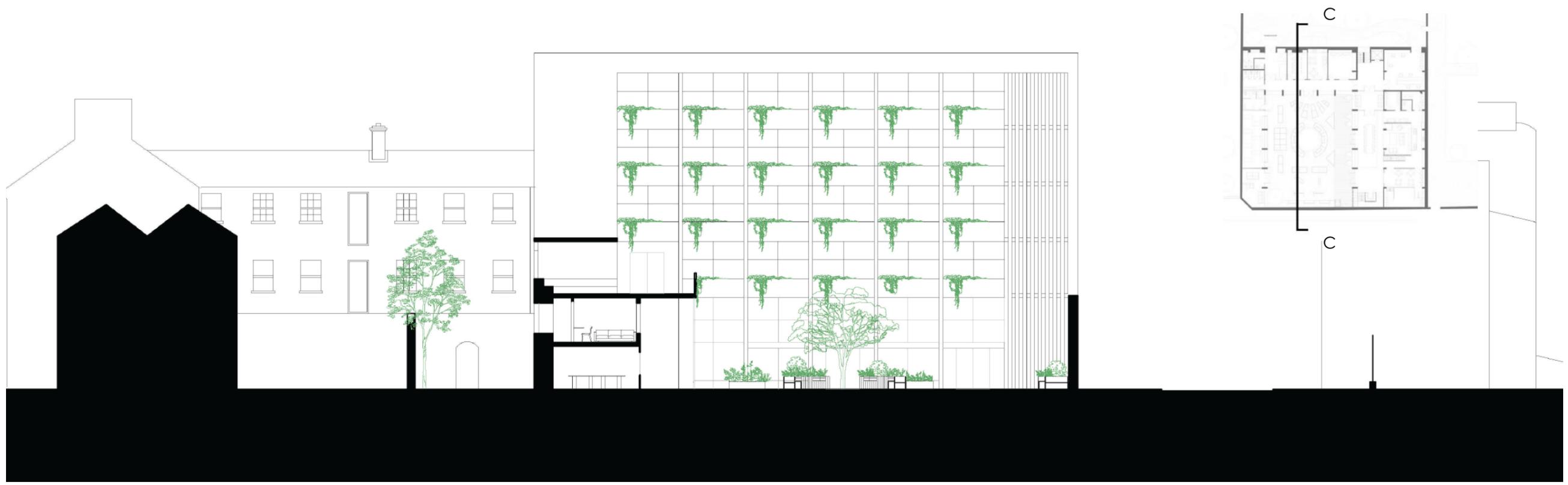
2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Floor



Scale 1.200

Section AA

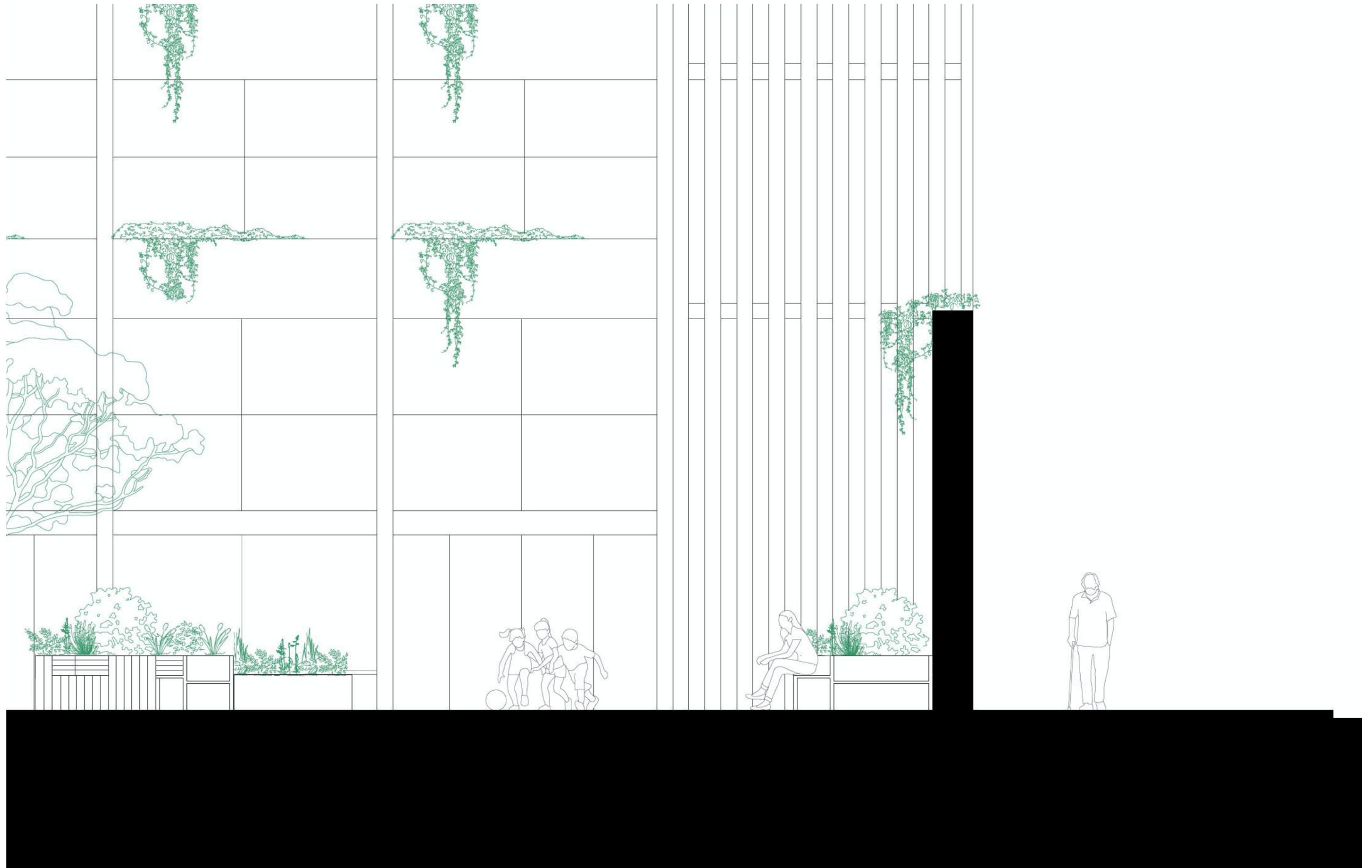




Scale 1.200

Sections BB + CC



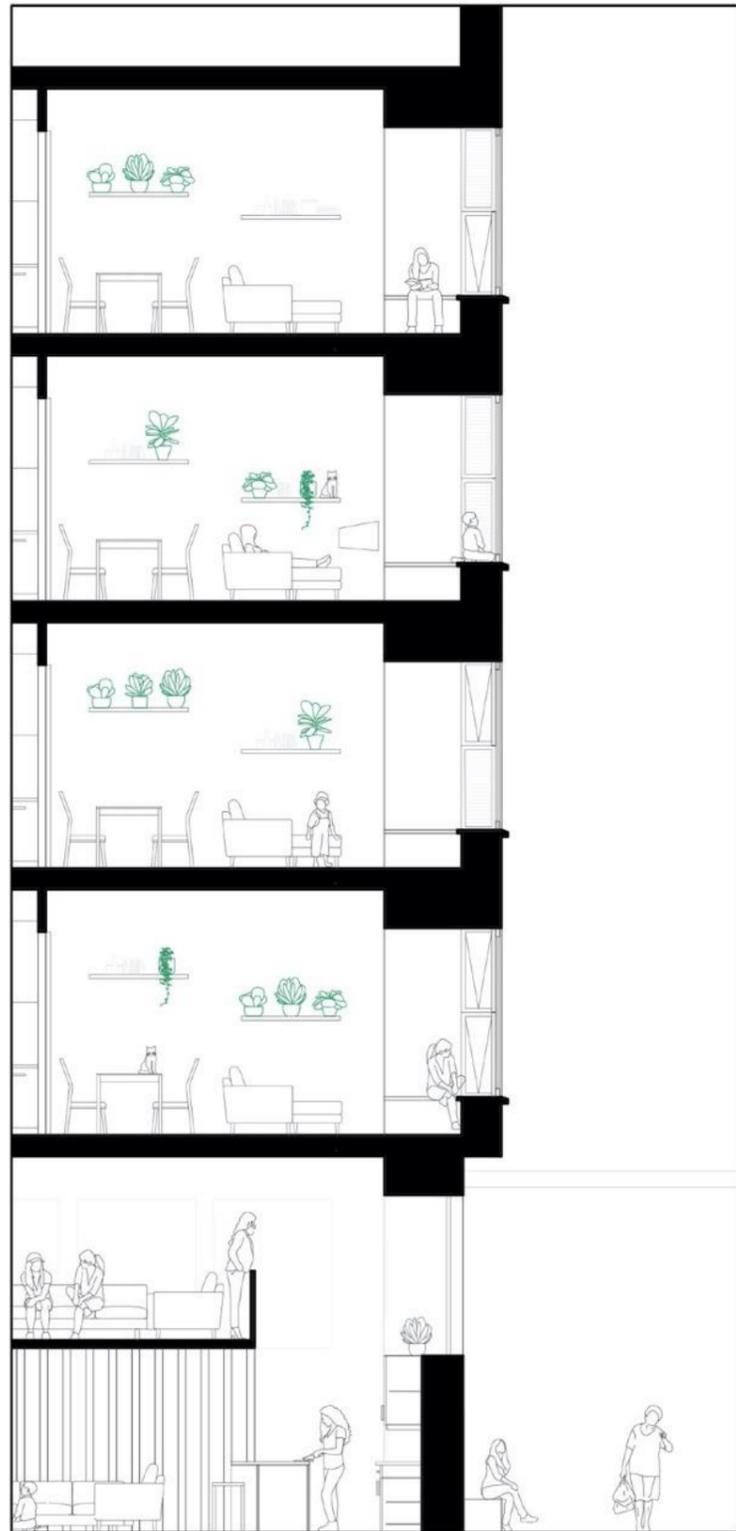




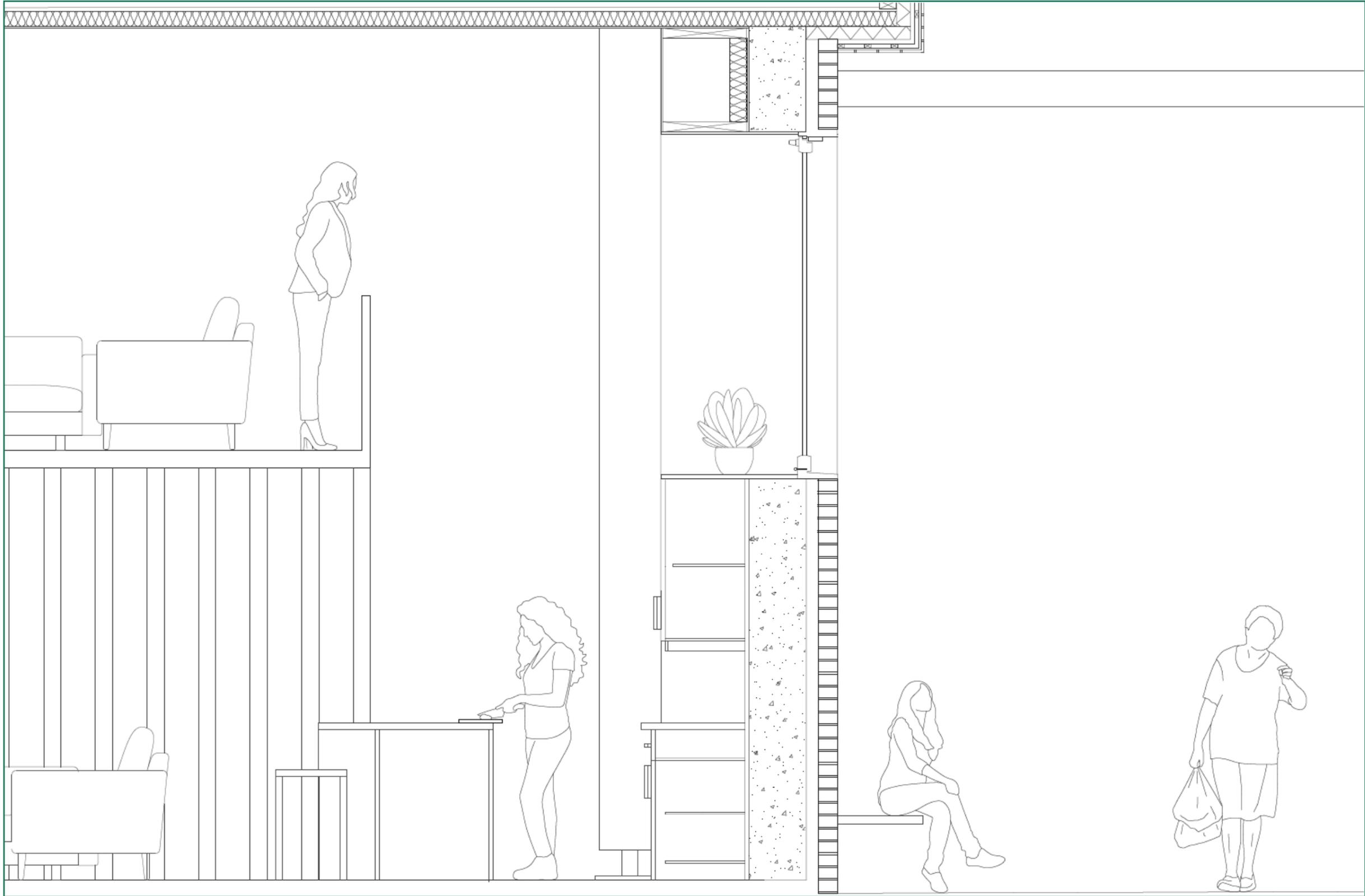
Railway St Elevation



NE Elevation



Threshold Facing Public Garden



1.20

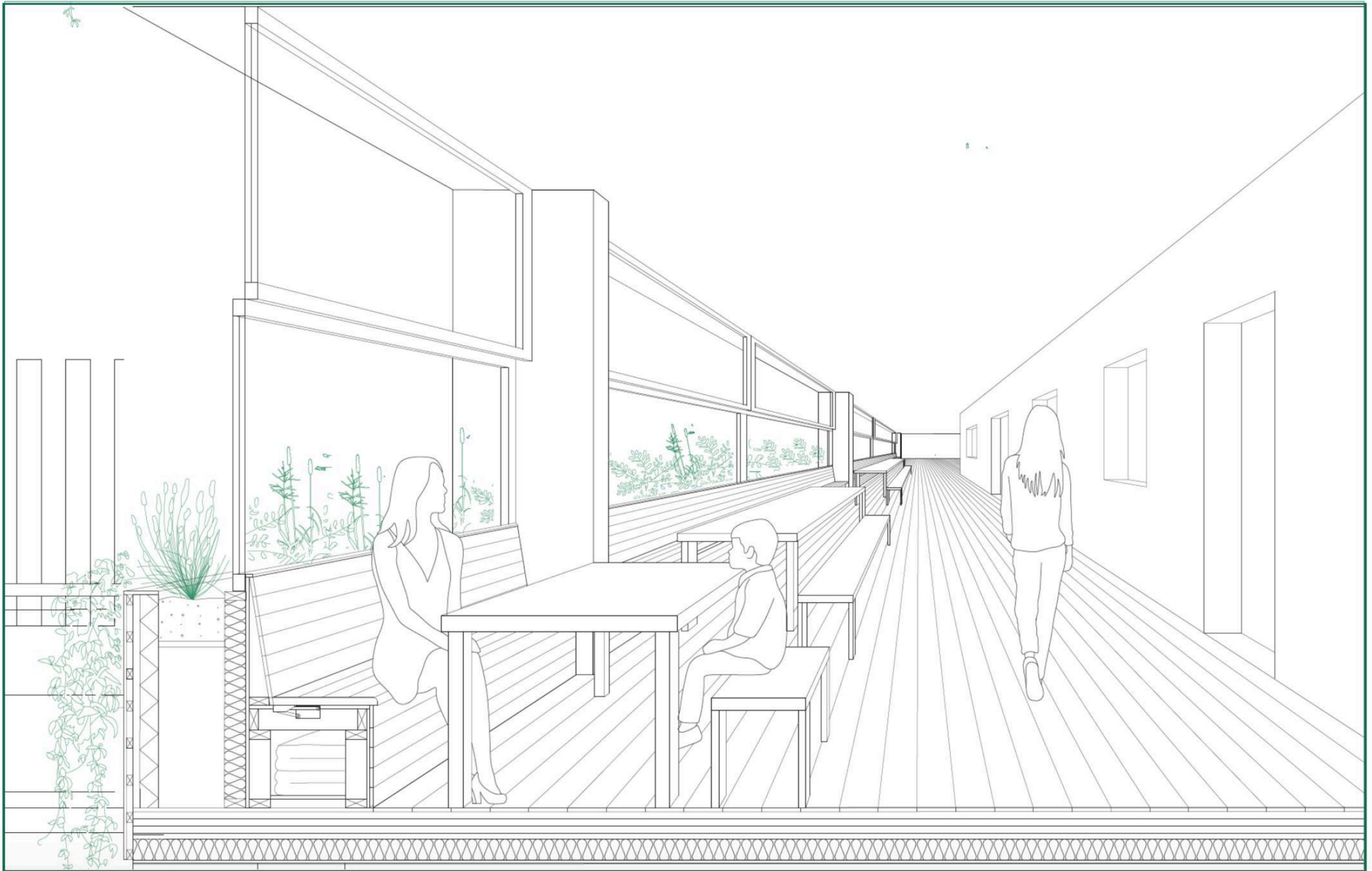
Detailed Perspective - kitchen



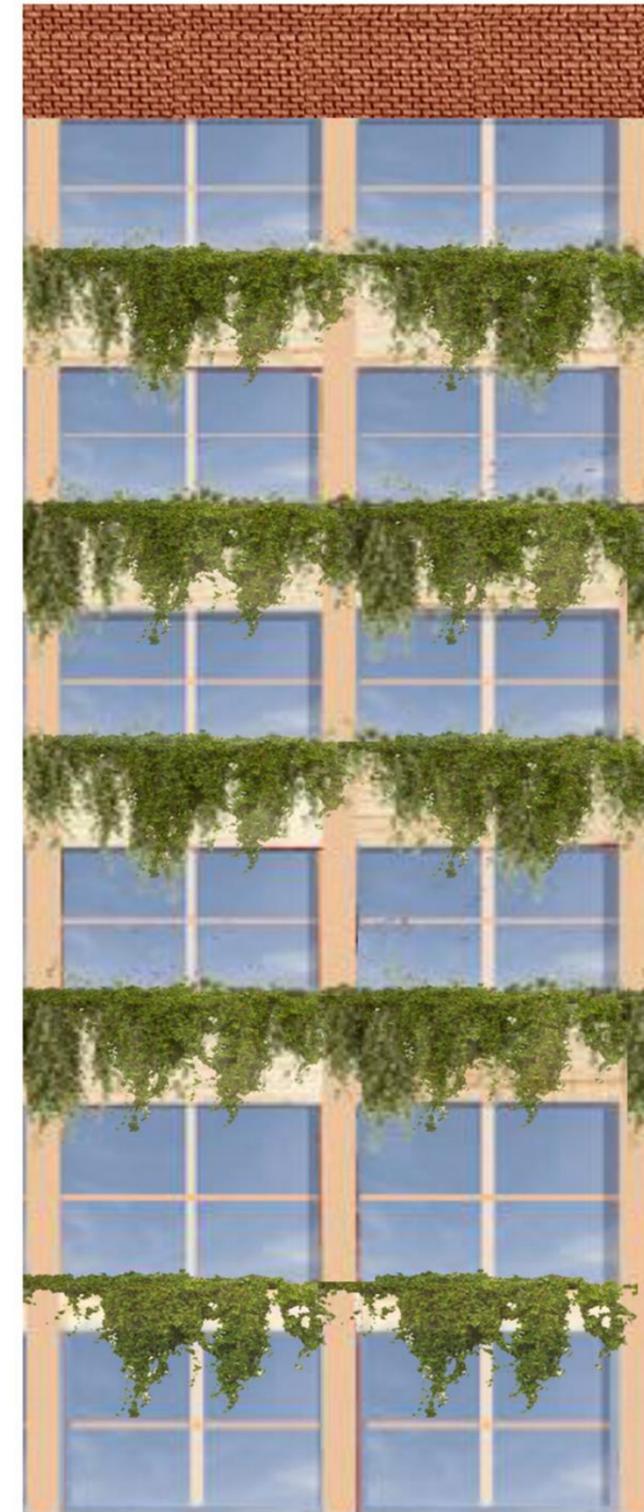
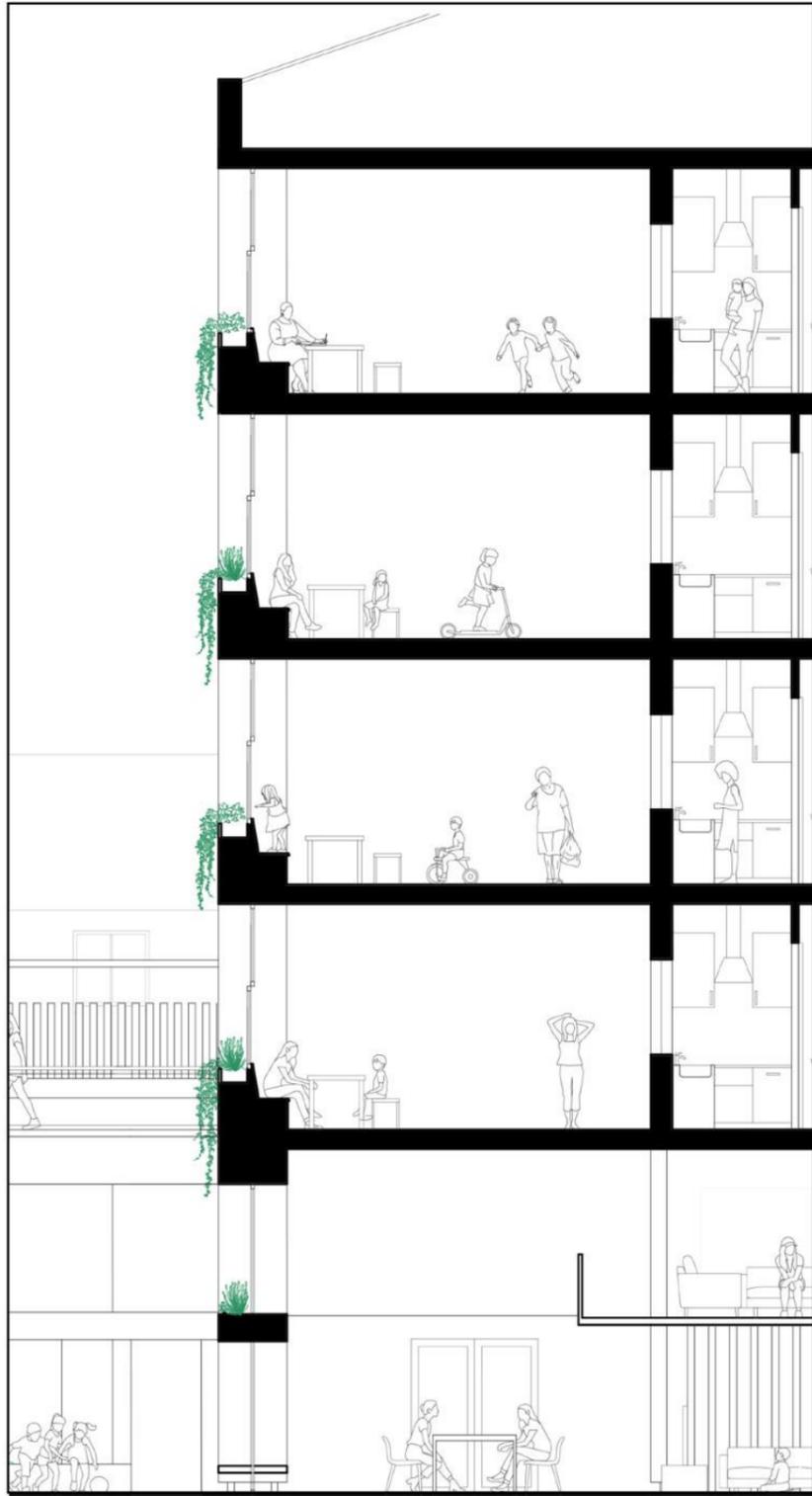
Communal Area



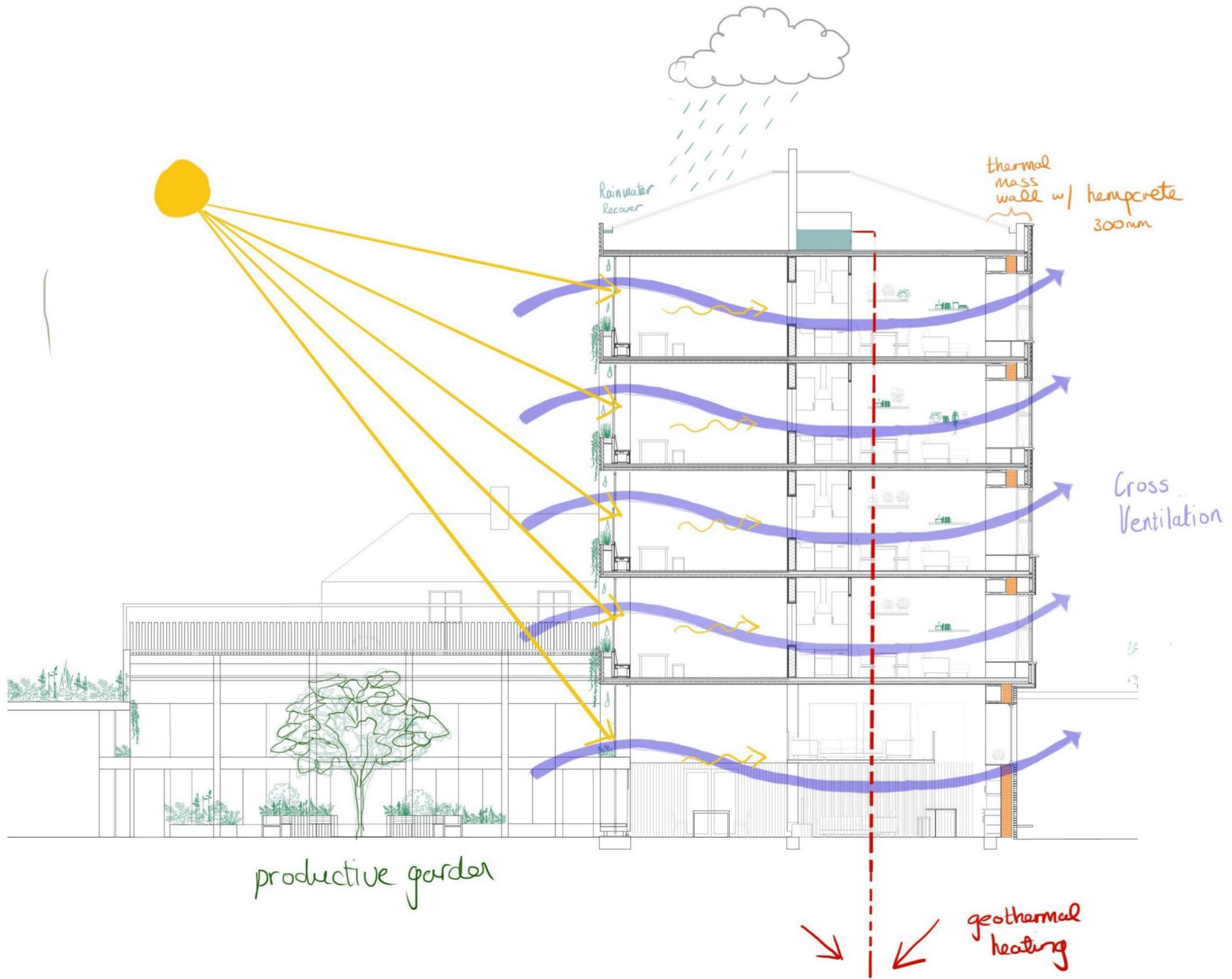
SW Elevation



Detailed Perspective of Communal Hallway



Threshold Facing Private Garden



Structure + Environmental Analysis



Entrance



Entrance Hallway

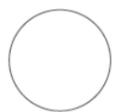
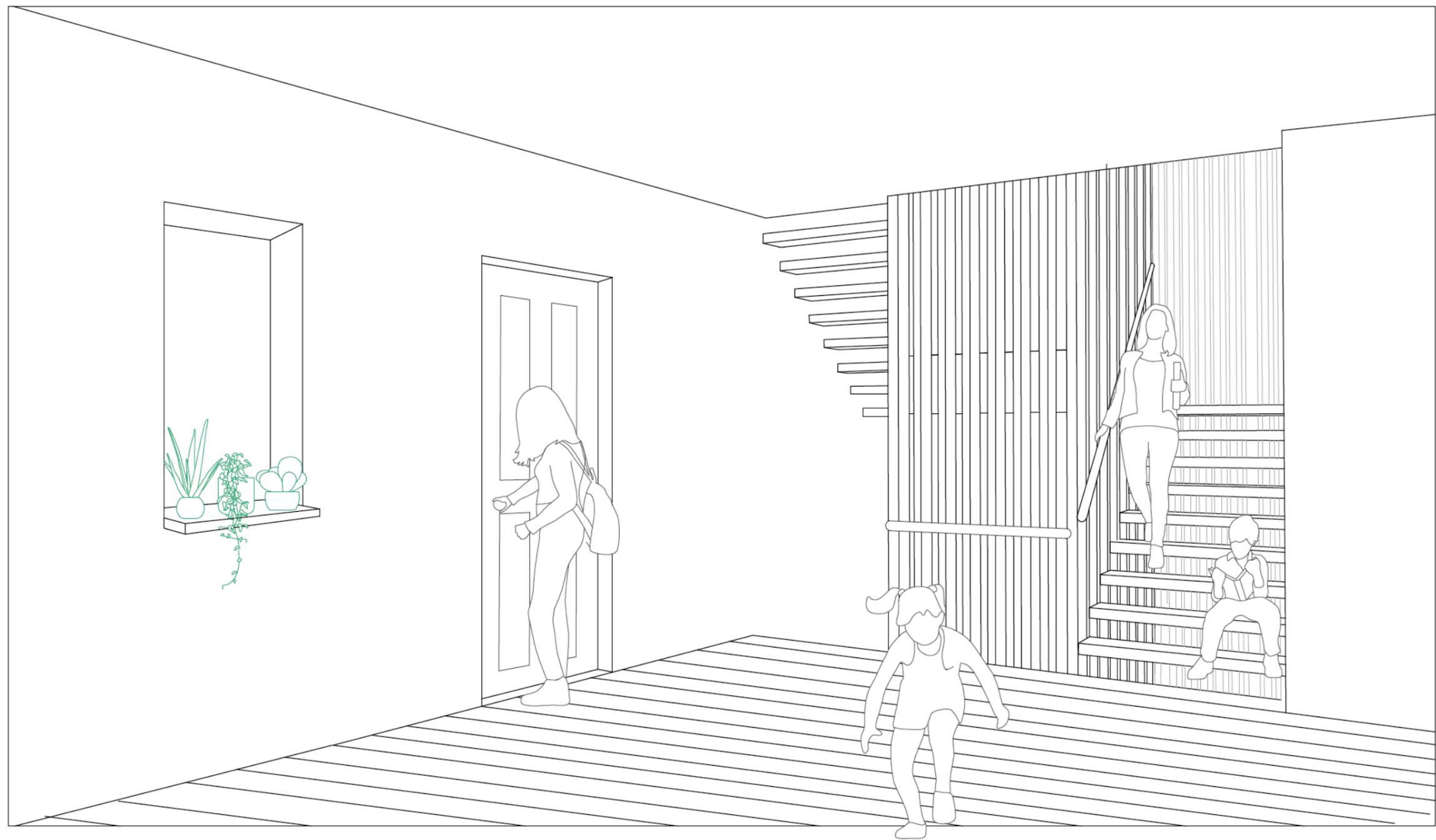




Private Garden



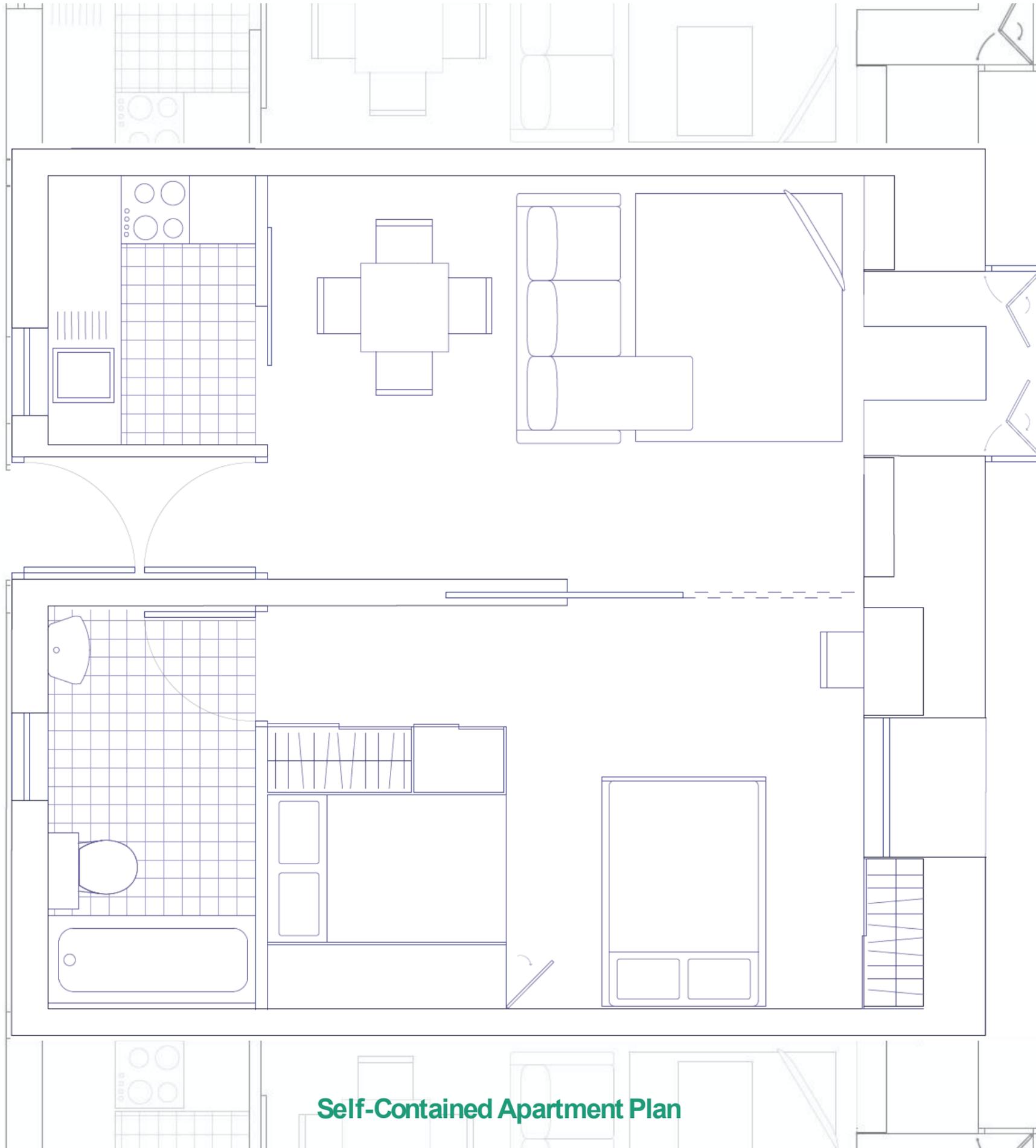
Stairwell



Communal Hallway



Communal Hallway



1.20

**Self-Contained Apartment Plan**



Living Area Detailed Section





Detailed Perspective of Bedroom



## Conclusion

The concept of Critical Care requires a sensitivity and awareness to all subjects which are impacted by Architecture (whether that be the users of a building or the environment and community a building is set in. As we have seen, the architect can cause and promote disconnection and isolation if they think of the design as a singular and isolated object. Leaning into feminine principles can add complexity to the design process as one must consider more variables and moreover, these variables are often not fixed. However, this author's view is that designing in this holistic way results in a more rewarding design process. To add to this, the NEIC (where the case study was set in) is a rich and diverse cultural area and therefore this area needs sensitivity and awareness when being the subject and location of a new design. Any design in this area needs to both regenerate and conserve the many facets of the area which give it its special character.

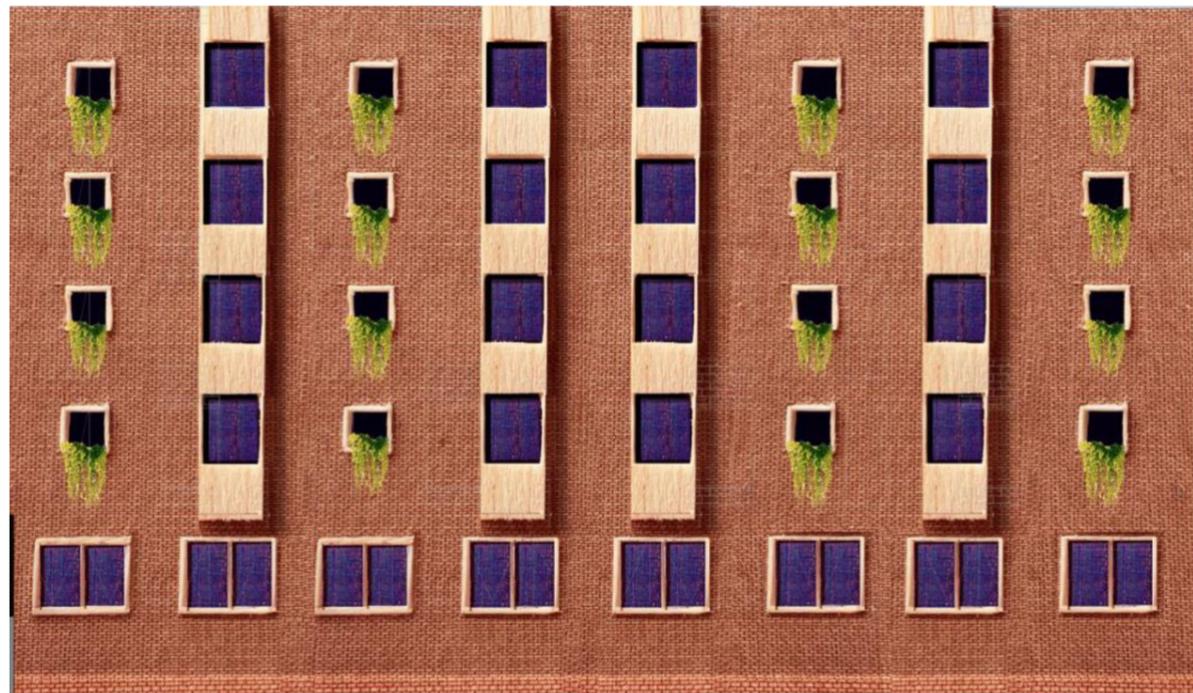
To conclude, exploring feminine and masculine principles was an interesting way to think about Protection and Connection and the overall concept of Critical Care. In the current climate, which sees hotels and aparthotels popping up along the inner city's skyline, there is a real risk that the NEIC is losing its culture and heritage. It is clear that certain interests are pushing for types of development which do not value or appreciate all the factors and subjects that give a place its special character. This is resulting in Dubliners feeling disconnected from their city and the rich culture and history which was long embedded in its streets and buildings.

## Final Reflections

Overall I managed to achieve all my design objectives. The following observations crystallised towards the end of the design process:

### 1. Elevation:

The masculine principles were more design driven and are more evident through form and scale. For example, you can easily pick out masculine principles when you inspect the NE elevation and threshold of the refuge.



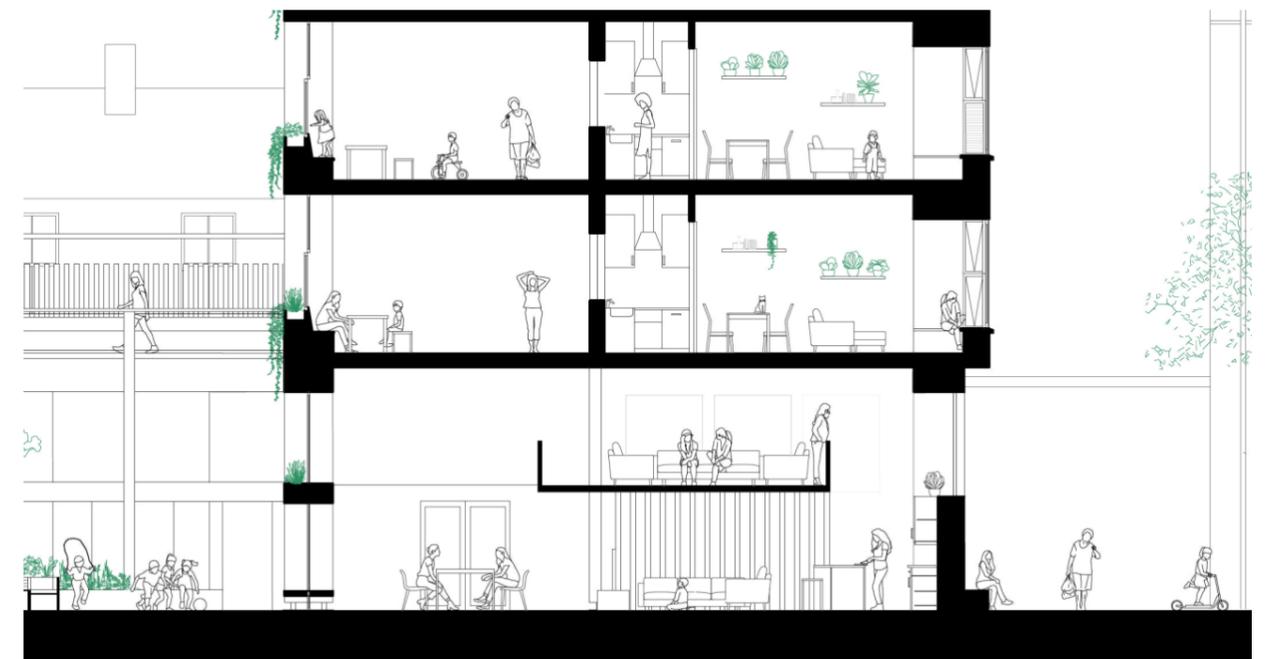
2. Space: I found Kennedy's Feminine Principles to be helpful when designing spaces for users to connect. When exploring feminine principles, you have to look into the rooms themselves to how you can design for their needs and make use of the space. I also tried to ensure that the protective wall functioned beyond its defensive role. I did this through

ensuring that the wall had generous storage as well as 300mm of hempcrete for thermal mass. Like in Simm's design, I wanted it to look defensive, but have a practicality.



### 3. Opening Arrangement:

When you analyse a section of a design, you can see how the opening arrangement impacts the users within. Such as we saw in Simm's Liberty House Flat scheme and the Magdalene Laundry complex, opening arrangements were used to either connect users or isolate them. This proved to be the same in my own project. Interactions were best designed through sections at different scales. If opening arrangement is designed appropriately it can promote care between users, the building and the outside environment.



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