

## PROJECT TIMELINE

### PREVIOUS WORK

- 2017: Purchase of George Hotel
- 2019: Work to secure structure
- Consultation Work Undertaken:
  - 2012: Stranraer TLC Report
  - 2018: 10,000 Voices – Young People Consultation
  - 2019: Discussions with local residents
  - 2019: Discussions with Local Business
  - 2019: Stranraer Active Street Review
  - 2021: David Hume Institute: roots conversation
  - 2021: RSL housing test study
  - 2021: Scotland's Towns Partnership: Your Town Audit
  - 2022: Artists: What we do now.
  - 2022: Community Council Survey
  - 2022: Discussion with local groups
  - 2022: Wigtownshire Health and Wellbeing Partnership: Community Survey

### CONCEPT STAGE

- Building on the consultation work done to date, this stage involved an initial exercise exploring potential options for the George Hotel Site and developing a concept design, outline costs and programme for Levelling Up Funding application submitted in June 2022.
- Submitted full feasibility report to Dumfries and Galloway Council.

### CURRENT STAGE

- Longer creative engagement process with Stranraer Development Trust (SDT) appointing dedicated staff for this with input from The Stove Network (creative place-making team who are based in Dumfries).
- Develop community capacity to inform and drive the project forward.
- Appoint specialist team for further detailed site investigations.
- Develop planning stage drawings for submission in December 2022.

### DETAIL DESIGN + STARTING BUILDING WORK

- The creative engagement process will be used to inform the developing design. This will be continuously reviewed to ensure the design meets the project brief.
- The design will be developed in detail to be costed and a contractor appointed.
- A start date for the construction work will be agreed and everyone will be informed of the timescales to the building being completed and ready for use.

## ABOUT LEVELLING UP FUNDING

- Levelling Up Funding is provided by the UK Government and aims to reduce regional inequalities in funding. It is aimed at enabling improved services and infrastructure, which includes town centre sites and community facilities.
- One of the key focus areas of the Levelling Up Fund is to help with Regeneration and Town Centre Investment, including specifically, upgrading redundant buildings.
- The George Hotel site, due to its condition, effect on the town, and the location of Stranraer means that the site is a suitable candidate to be considered for the funding.
- Announcement of successful applicants for the Levelling Up Funding is expected by December 2022.

2017

May 2022

August 2022 onwards

2023 onwards

## HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

The George Hotel is dated 1876, making it almost 150 years old. It was built as a Coaching Inn. It was said in The Visitor's Guide to Wigtownshire by W McIlwraith (1875) that the hotel had:

'capital accommodation for both man and beast.'

Historic Environment Scotland explain that the George Hotel was listed because it reflects an important aspect of late 18th century Stranraer life as a staging post for the short crossing from Stranraer to Ireland and it has both special architectural and historic interest.



Planning Policy requires that preservation of buildings is considered fully before the option of demolition



Above: George Street circa. 1880 Canmore © HES



"The historic environment is a key cultural and economic asset and a source of inspiration that should be seen as integral to creating successful places."

SCOTTISH PLANNING POLICY 2014, PARAGRAPH 130



## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

The George Hotel is a considerable and long-standing part of Stranraer's built heritage. This means that development works, or demolition of all or any part of the building cannot be carried out without full consideration of the effects of these changes to both the building itself and the character of the surrounding area.

### The Building Itself

The building is Category B listed. This means that the George is of special architectural or historic interest, and is legally protected against alterations or demolition without an application process where these changes are considered and approved or rejected.

Listed building consent is required for changes to a listed building which affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest.

For any development carried out here, we will have to go through the process of applying for Listed Building Consent. The National Body Historic Environment Scotland oversee this process and are responsible for the final decision over what alterations can be carried out.



## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

### The Surrounding Area

Conservation Areas were first introduced in the UK in 1967. Stranraer Conservation Area was first designated in 1977. It includes the core of the old town, the waterside areas along Agnew Crescent and the old town along Lewis Street. The George Hotel is considered a key building in the conservation area.

A conservation area is "an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" and local planning authorities are required to identify areas which merit this status. It is both the buildings and the spaces which are of interest in a conservation area.



The front facade of the George was designed to be a significant asset to George Street and the town, with a well-considered layout of windows, roof dormers and the central, decorated doorway.



The front facade is the most recognisable part of the George; can it be retained and reused?

Development in a conservation area is expected to preserve or enhance character and this means that designs for new development must demonstrate how they achieve this by referring carefully to character and context. - (DGC - LDP2 Supplementary Guidance)

Images: 1969 Canmore © HES Courtesy of JR Hume <https://canmore.org.uk>



## THE SITE TODAY

- The building is obviously in a poor state of repair.
- A condition survey was carried out in 2019.
- It highlighted that much of the masonry would require repair or replacement.
- It concluded with the suggestion to:
  - Retain external walls to George St. and Church St.
  - Demolish and redevelop internal layout.
- This was proposed as a balanced option between meeting planning and heritage policy and enabling future development of the site.



Images: Top - Asher Associates 2020. Bottom: CAL 2021

Some interesting and historically valuable features remain inside the George. We should consider how to retain them.



Internal view looking north

Original internal walls in very poor state or repair - recommended for removal.

Potential for south facing courtyard to take advantage of southern light.



Existing staircase

Original staircase in poor state of repair - potential for elements to be salvaged and incorporated into redevelopment proposals.

INTRODUCTION

Dumfries and Galloway Council (DGC) are developing this project to serve the needs and interests of the town of Stranraer, therefore from the inception of this project it was vital that comprehensive and meaningful engagement was undertaken.

As noted, the redevelopment of the George Hotel is to serve both residents and visitors to Stranraer, and the mix of uses identified for inclusion in the development must be both welcome and complementary to the residents and the existing provision of spaces and services by existing buildings and businesses or organisations in the town.

Community engagement about the proposal was carried out in May 2022, prior to the refinement of the design proposals for submission to the Levelling Up Fund in June 2022. The engagement was carried out whilst the proposals were in an early developmental stage, equivalent to being within Stage 02 of RIBA Work Stages (2020). This means that the proposals are at concept design stage, and still in-flux according to feedback and further discussion on the design brief. Both the design brief, determined by DGC, and the design proposals were not fixed at this stage, and were open to discussion and consultation.

The timing of this engagement has allowed the responses received to be fed back into the design process, resulting in some changes to the brief, and the proposal, as discussed later in this section.



The May 2022 Engagement built on previous consultation (summarised above) by other community groups about the George

Survey form example

ENGAGEMENT FORMAT

The engagement was carried out in three parts — 1) an in-person stakeholder presentation with round-table discussion; 2) a drop-in community consultation; and 3) a survey (provided in printed, and online format).

1) Stakeholder Presentation and Discussion (13/05/22 11.00-13.00)

This event was attended by 14 people, comprising local businesses, creatives and those involved in the operation of other community and creative spaces in the area, including from other Dumfries and Galloway areas outwith Stranraer.

The event was held at the Millennium Centre, Stranraer.

2) Drop-in community consultation (13/05/22 15.00-19.00)

This event was attended by 41 people who engaged with printed information on large format boards, a digital presentation on-screen and a scale model of the proposals.

Staff from DGC and Collective Architecture were on hand to discuss the proposals, and many people engaged with in-depth discussions about the site and their hopes for its future.

The event was held at the Millennium Centre, Stranraer.

3) Survey

The survey was launched on 13/05/22 and made available online for two weeks. The survey was also distributed in printed form on the day of the consultation. 105 responses were recorded in total (12 paper and 93 online).

FEEDBACK

The discussion on the day and the open-ended questionnaire format allowed people to raise specific issues or questions.

Main Themes

1 Considerable support and enthusiasm for the indoor activities / climbing wall space, including that this could be extended into the outdoor spaces.

2 Bunkhouse accommodation was widely supported — some wished to see this in a hotel rather than bunkhouse format. People wished to see this coordinated with the water-sports offer at Loch Ryan / the marina and saw potential in this attracting and sustaining visitors.

2 An outdoor performance space was mentioned a number of times.

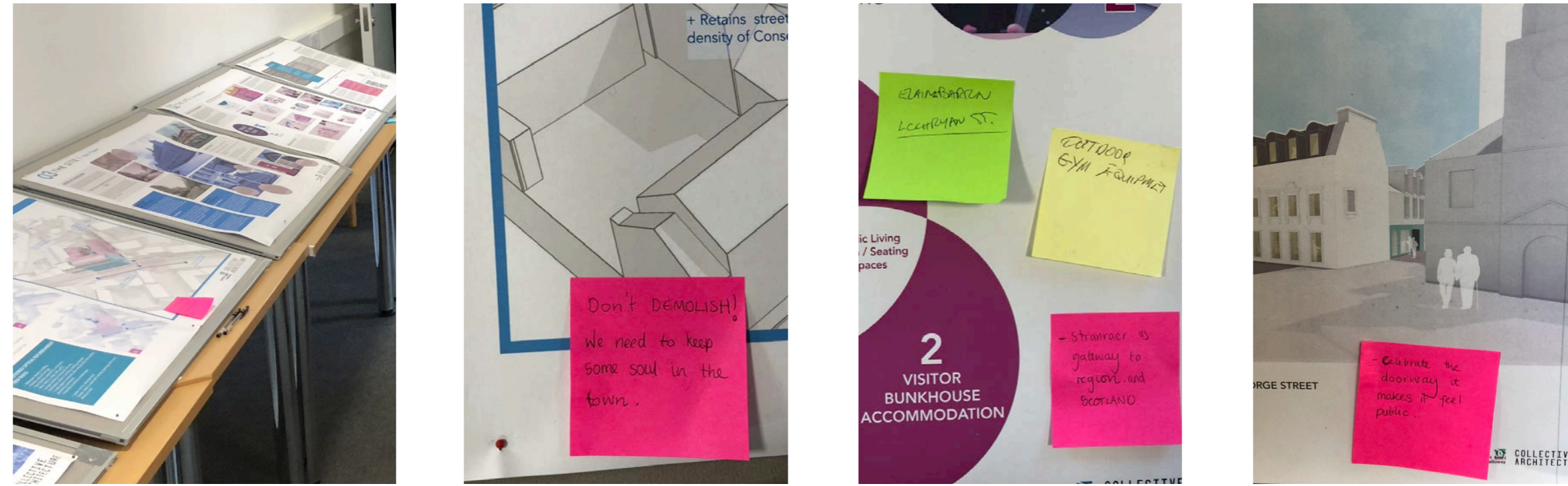
3 Specific creative spaces mentioned were: Printing facilities and graphics studios, Exhibition spaces, digital creativity spaces / tech hub.

4 Space for food growing was also mentioned as part of the courtyard garden.

5 People expressed a wish for the sustainability of the project though carefully planned management of the facilities proposed.

6 The facade retention was largely supported with a sense that this would retain and enhance the character of the old hotel — adding a point of interest to the town.

7 Some respondents discussed whether parking needed to be included in the proposal.



Photographs from drop-in community consultation and post it feedback (13/05/22)

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Stakeholders raised the following points:

1) The sustainability and continuity of the revenue stream would be more certain if there was further work in developing the groups / potential end users for the creative spaces. Aligned with this, concern about duplication of services with existing facilities and spaces in the town was also raised.

In response to this, the role of the arts and engagement coordinator (1yr post) was discussed, with their remit to focus on building engagement with the potential for the building set to help determine this user group further during the next design stages.

This discussion highlighted the importance that the arts and creative community is engaged fully during the next design phases, and that the instigation of meanwhile creative programmes and spaces by the arts and engagement coordinator is vital in testing and developing these uses during the next 12 months, to ensure the design brief is fully informed by the nuances of the creative practices involved.

2) The balance between arts and sports was thought to be important, with some concerns over the sustainability of arts funding over the longer term to sustain the creative workspace portion of the proposal. It was thought that the wider strategic re-visioning of Stranraer aligned with active sports, particularly water-sports, would have longer certainty and self-sufficiency and that therefore the proposals could be more weighted to these activities which support this sector (i.e. the bunkhouse, and the climbing space).

In response to this, the design team considered how the climbing space could become more integral to the overall development with a larger floor space and more dynamic and exciting space.

3) Sales / Retail / Display space was noted as being important for the creative sector in the area, and the proposal was thought to have significant potential to fulfil this gap, particularly if people are attracted into the building via a number of other uses.

In response to this, the display / retail space for creative work was moved into the foyer space of the main building (at the entrance from the old hotel facade on George street), having more prominence and integration with the building.



Word cloud showing open-ended responses to "What type of uses would you like to see in the building?"



Word cloud showing responses to "describe your hopes for the future of the site in three words"

GENERAL SENTIMENT

Youth and Skills

Respondents were generally very keen that the site is redeveloped to provide a series of spaces which activate the town centre, provide a lively and welcoming place which is attractive to young people and gives them another option for how to spend time. People also expressed enthusiasm that the building would host activities where people could learn new skills (both skills aligned with physical activity and creative work.)

Urgency

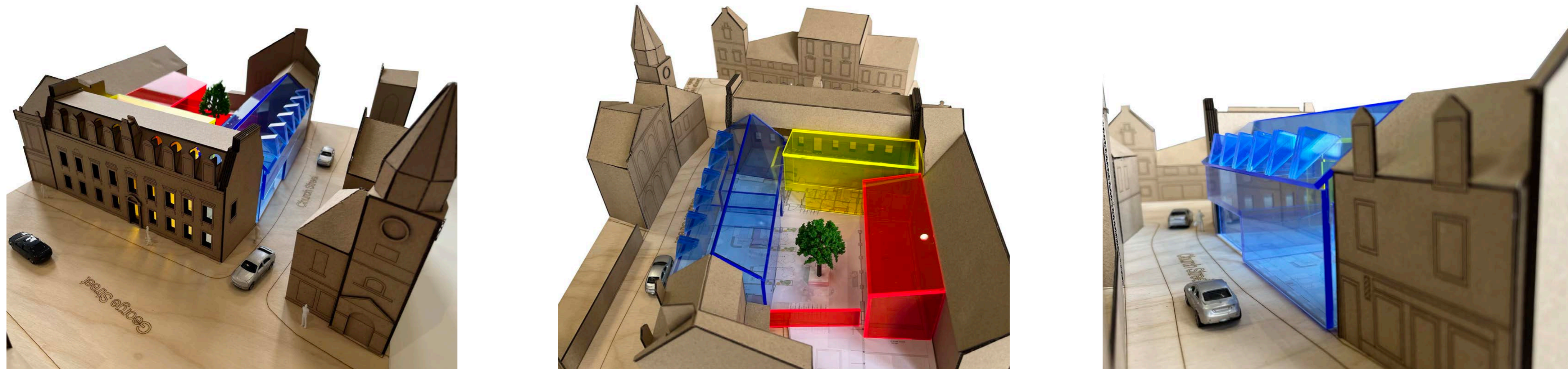
People expressed their desire to see the site transformed urgently as it is detracting from the town and will only deteriorate further. The discussion about facade retention seemed to bring this into sharper focus given the support for this idea to retain the building's character.

Affordability for Target Market / Ongoing Sustainability

Some concern was expressed about the ability of the town to support all of the uses proposed given the available spend of the community to pay for rental / admission / purchases.

Combination and Interaction of Uses

Some expressed opinion that the unique combination of uses on the site needed further explanation of how they would work together and support each other.



Photographs of the concept model from engagement event

## CHANGES TO THE PROPOSAL FOLLOWING THE CONSULTATION

Respondents to the consultation asked for the streetscape to be improved:

The public realm in front of the building at George Street now includes improvements to enhance the entrance to the building and the use of the street space outside as a prominent part of the streetscape. This includes a widened pavement, feature hard landscaping, lighting and cycle parking.

Respondents to the consultation asked for a dedicated space for interactive digital arts:

The gallery shop space on the ground floor has been moved into the foyer, to accommodate a separate flexible arts space which can accommodate digital media.

Respondents to the consultation wanted to see more climbing wall areas throughout the site:

An external climbing wall has been added in the courtyard.

Respondents to the consultation asked for the climbing zone to be iconic and significant:

The courtyard frontage of the climbing activity building has been made more dynamic with an undulating facade for external climbing and inclusion of external climbing / caving pods which cross from outside to inside. The extents of internal climbing wall space has increased also.

The roof profile over the external climbing zone projects and now includes roof lights to maximise natural light.

Respondents to the consultation suggested that the building be made particularly suitable for workshops / educational arts:

An open studio / workshop space has been included on the first floor including pottery, arts classes and reprographics .

There were responses asking for more use of the courtyard space, such as an outdoor performance area:

The courtyard size has increased to maximise usable climbing area and breakout space. There is an improved visual connection between the creative gallery space and outdoor courtyard.

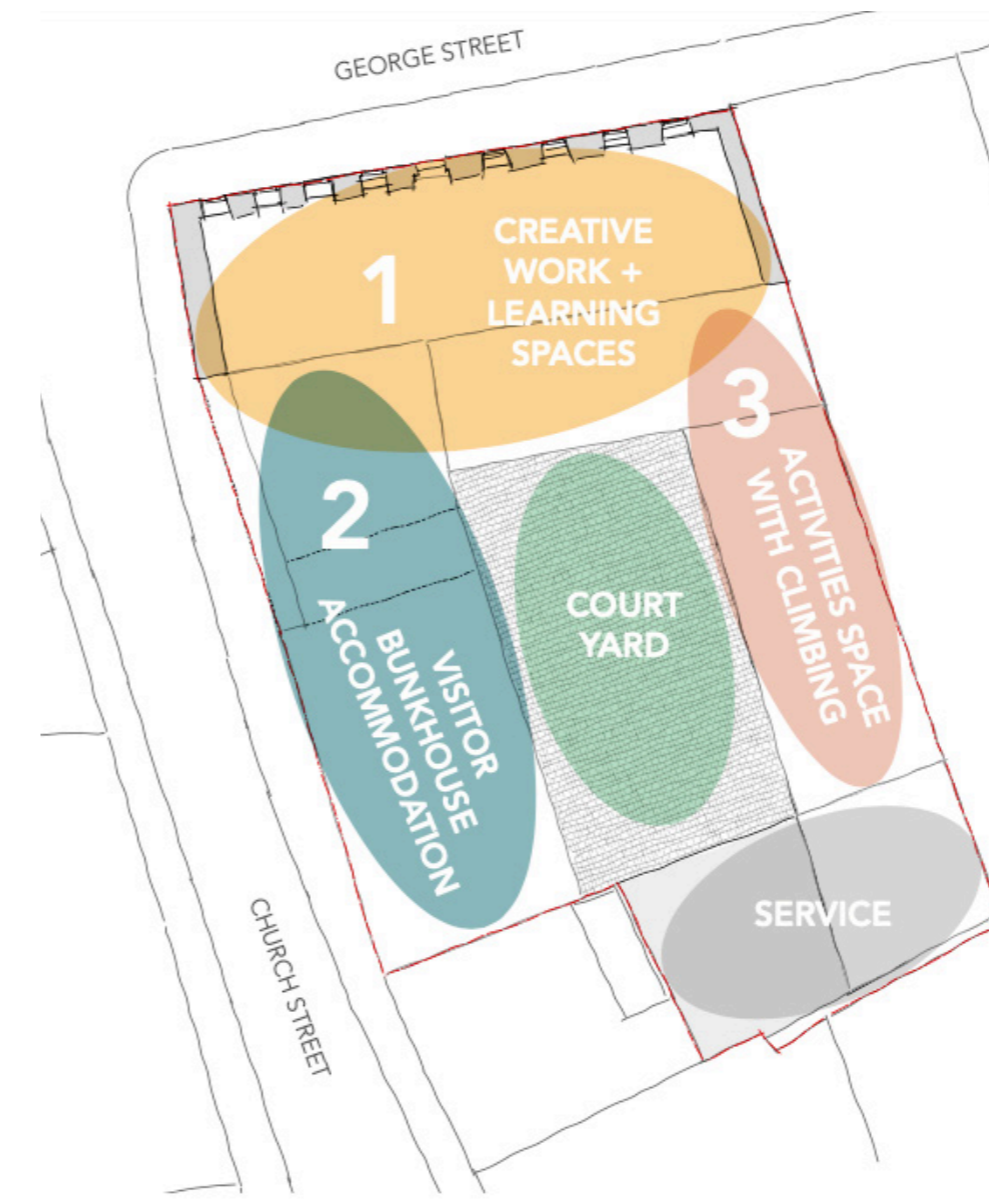


Diagram illustrating proposed organisation of uses on the site

REBUILD the roof to George Street as it was.

RETAIN and REPAIR external walls to George Street and gable to Church Street. New build to rear.

REPLACE external walls to Church Street with new building.



3D sketch from George Street showing proposed partial facade retention strategy combined with new build elements.

## HOW ARE THESE USES ARRANGED ON THE SITE?

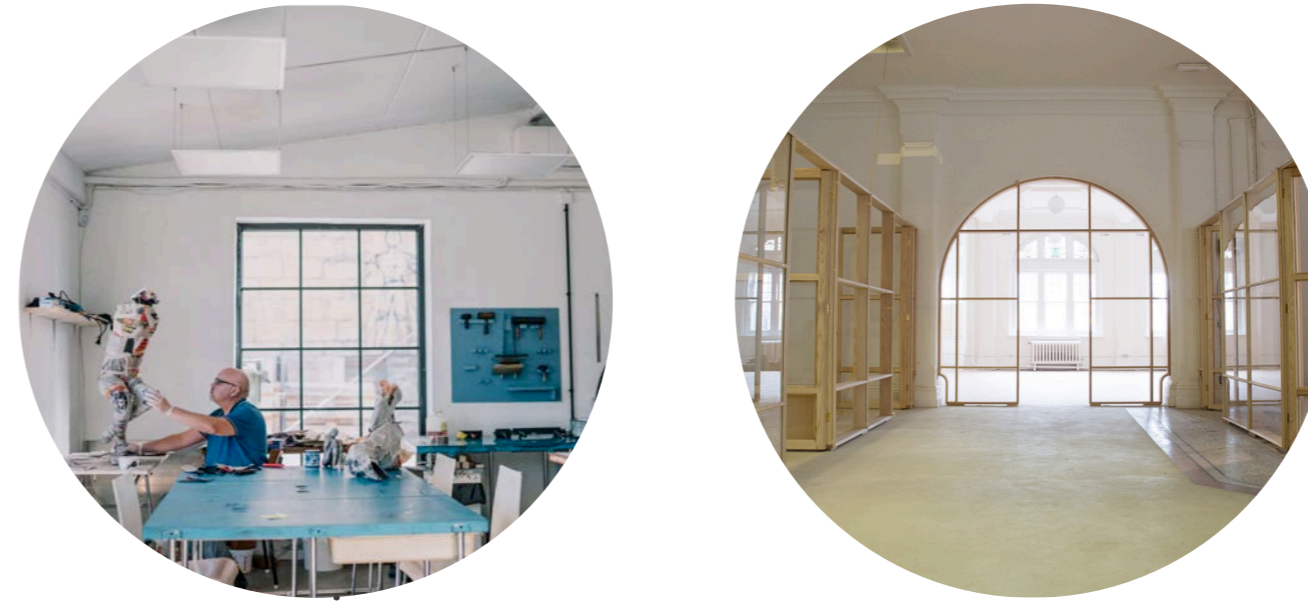
The diagram below shows the proposal of how the new uses are arranged on the site.

1 - The Creative Work + Learning Spaces are positioned in the refurbished part of the building the is accessed from George Street.

2 - The Visitor Bunkhouse Accommodation is in the new building that will be formed along Church Street. This will have its own entrance.

3 - The Activities space with climbing will be on the other side of the shared courtyard.

A central sheltered courtyard with seating and activity space will connect these uses together. A zone for services (such as bins and heating equipment) will be on the south of the site.



## GROUND FLOOR PLAN

The building will be spread over 3 storeys.  
The floor plans here show the distribution of the uses across the upper floors.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

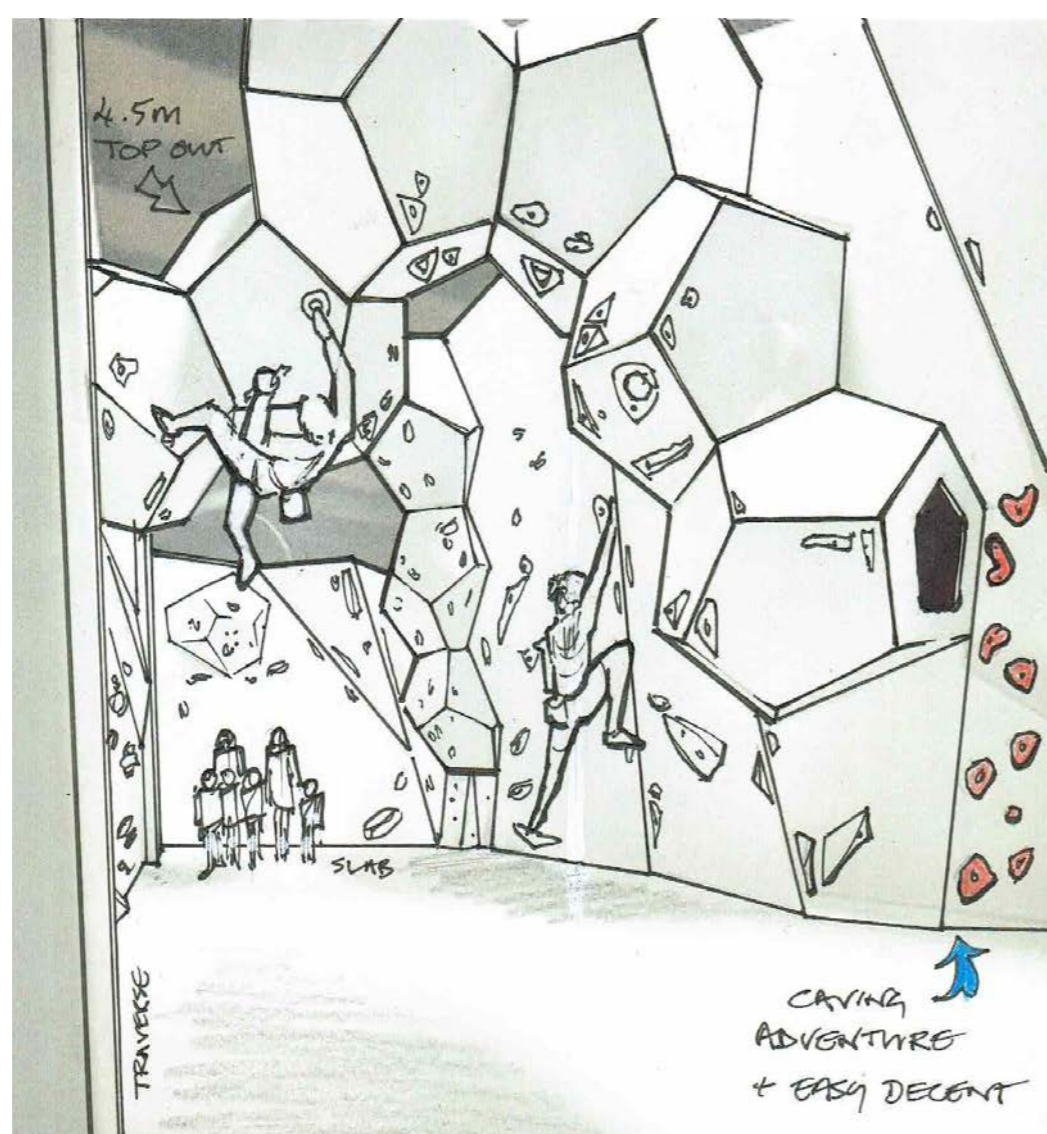
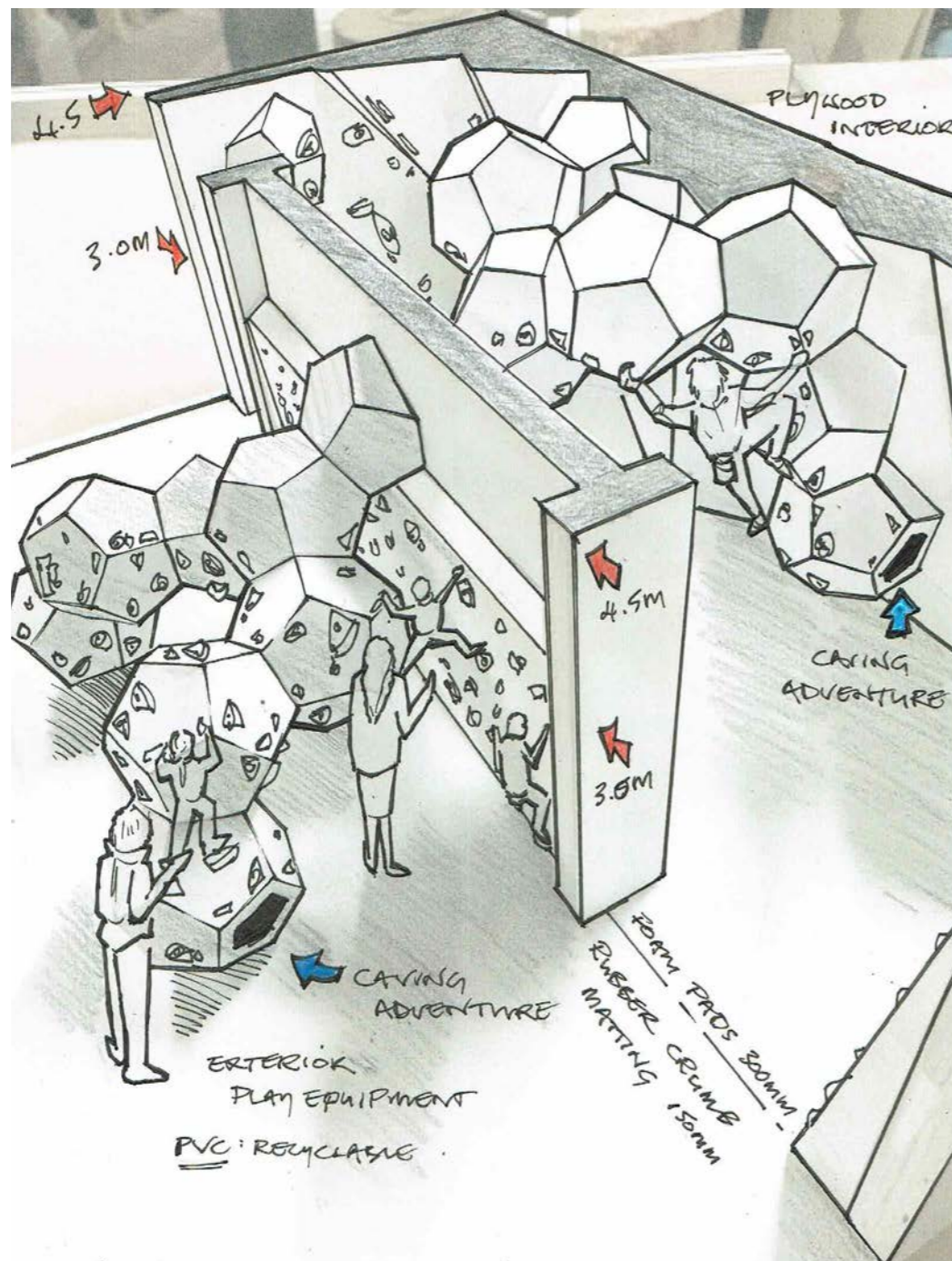
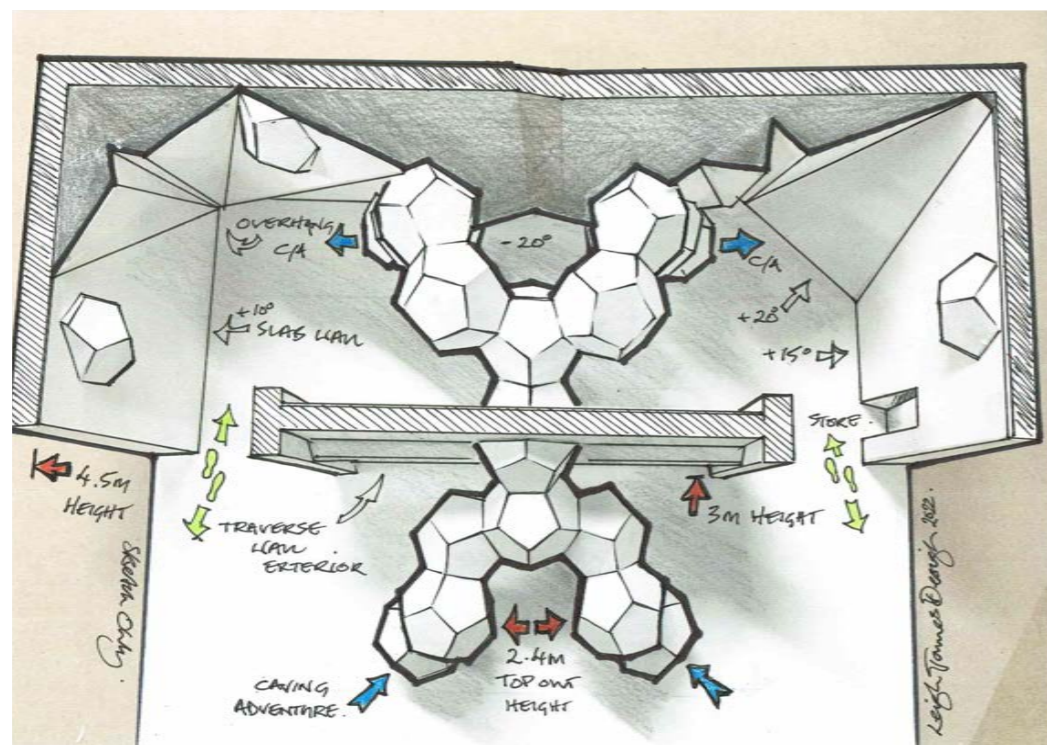


SECOND FLOOR PLAN



ELEVATIONS

ROOF PLAN

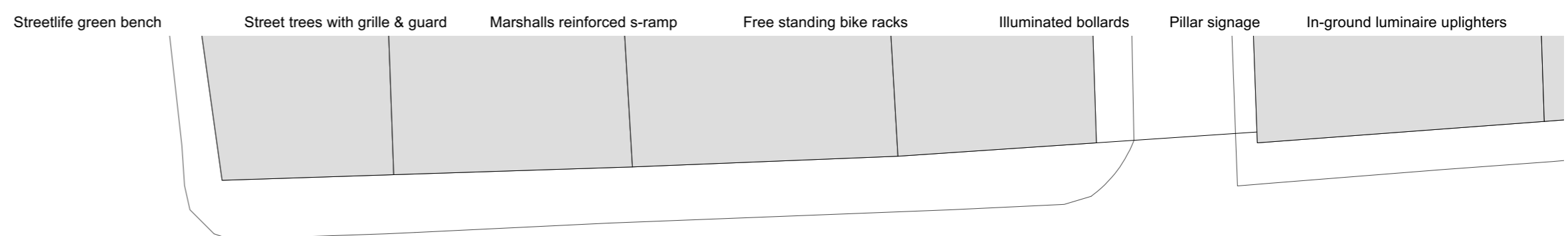


Bouldering centre concept sketches by Leigh James Design



Sketch view from George Street

Precedent Streetscape Examples



Site Context Plan



Sketch view into the main entrance gallery and shop space



Sketch view into the courtyard