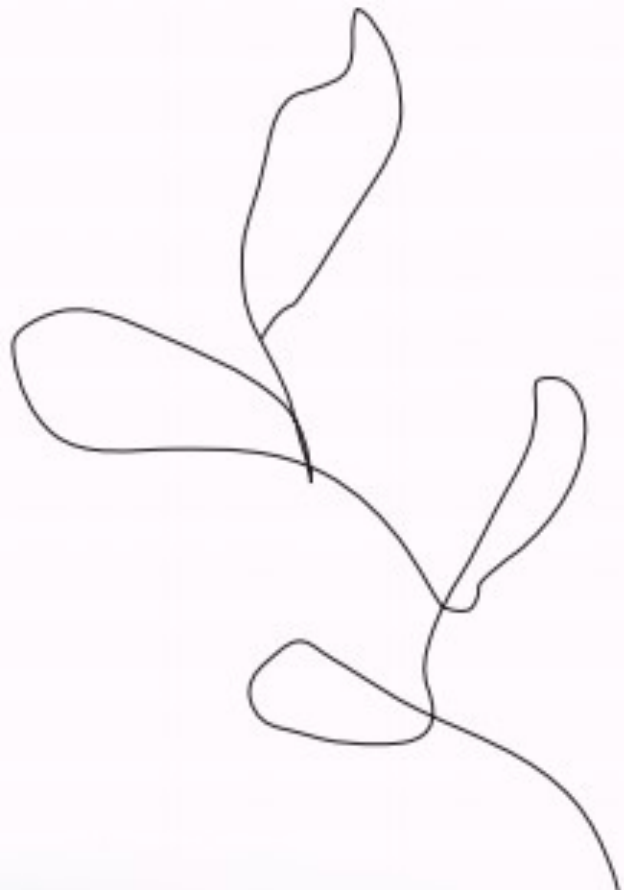


ID304

Personal Exploratory Design Project:

*Utopia*



*Kate Terrett*

## My Critical Position

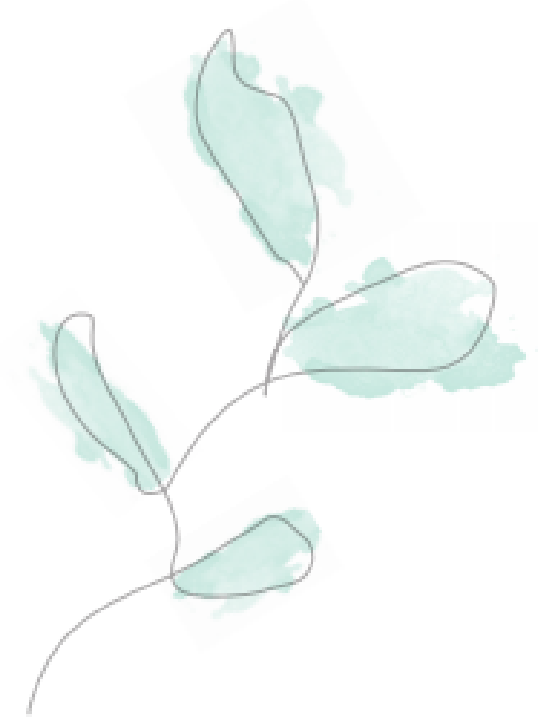
When thinking about my critical position as a designer, it was easy to think about what I am passionate about, and how that always finds a way of coming through in my design projects.

I believe strongly in compassion and respect for everything around; for an individual, for the community, and for the planet, and all that our planet is home to.

This encompasses aspects of appreciation and wonderment of the natural world, the importance of people's mental happiness and wellbeing, living mindfully, and lastly the necessity of caring for our planet.

These are all ideas and concepts which I automatically consider in my design project, and feel are important to consider in all of my future projects.

I believe that this has mainly been influenced by where I have lived in my life. I was born and lived for a while in Dubai, the very epitome of an urban environment, before I moved to the little Devonshire village of Whimple. They couldn't be more different. But moving to the country side felt like coming home. I have always had an instinctive connection with nature and my experience of Dubai taught me to value the natural world as well as the importance of mental wellbeing and living mindfully.



# What Is 'Utopia' In Interior Design?

## Brief

Addressing the question of 'What is Utopia' and how can 'Utopia' be found? Utopia is most commonly associated with a reconnection to nature, but many people have their own ideas of what a 'Utopia' would be to them, especially in terms of a work place.

Design a co-working space for young creatives that offer them the opportunity to work within their own 'Utopia'.

## Function:

### Co-Working Space

Experts predict that co-working spaces are the future. There are many benefits of this type of workspace. It reduces loneliness (a chronic problem amongst today's young adults) and creates more motivated and successful workers.

## User:

### New Graduates

This space is designed for young adults (65% of New Graduates are under 40 years old), specifically those in the creative industries, as this tailors the project to the nearest universities (Plymouth and Falmouth) and what the graduates from there will have studied.

Freelancers and Start-ups are the largest demographic of co-workers.



# Site Analysis

## Old Custom House

The Barbican, Plymouth, PL1 2JP

Size: approx. 1000 sqm (+courtyard space)

Floors: 3

Listing: Grade II\* (exterior)

Built: 1820, Georgian Building

Aspect: South Facing (Specifically SSE [South-South-East] Facing)

The buildings original purpose was as a Customs House, that supervised the taxes paid on imported goods coming in at the port in Plymouth. The buildings current use is as a healthy eating restaurant and a wedding and events venue.



0.9 miles to Train Station  
(18 min walk)

0.6 miles to Bus Station  
(16 min walk)

0.3 miles to Bus Stop  
(7 min walk)

*Kate Terrett*

Central location in the city

'Interesting' building

By the harbour = attractive views

South facing

Central courtyard area

Contains a variety of spaces

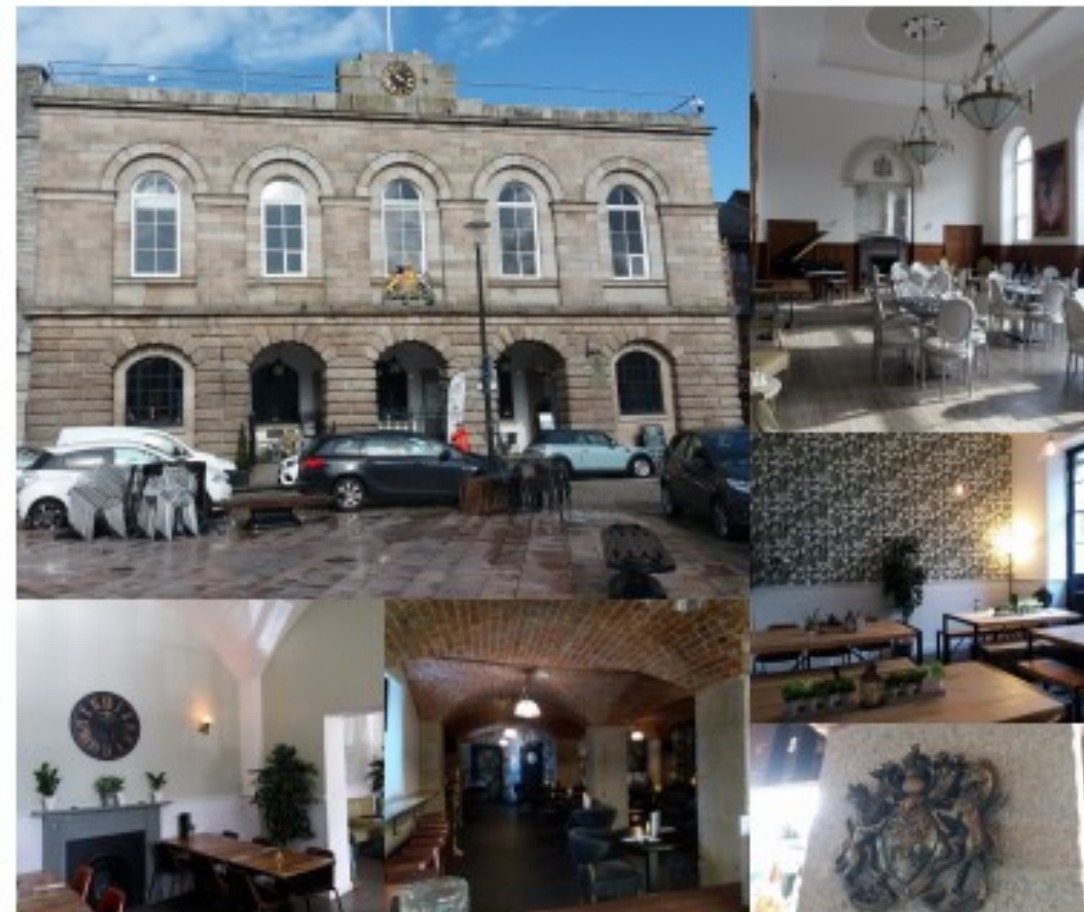
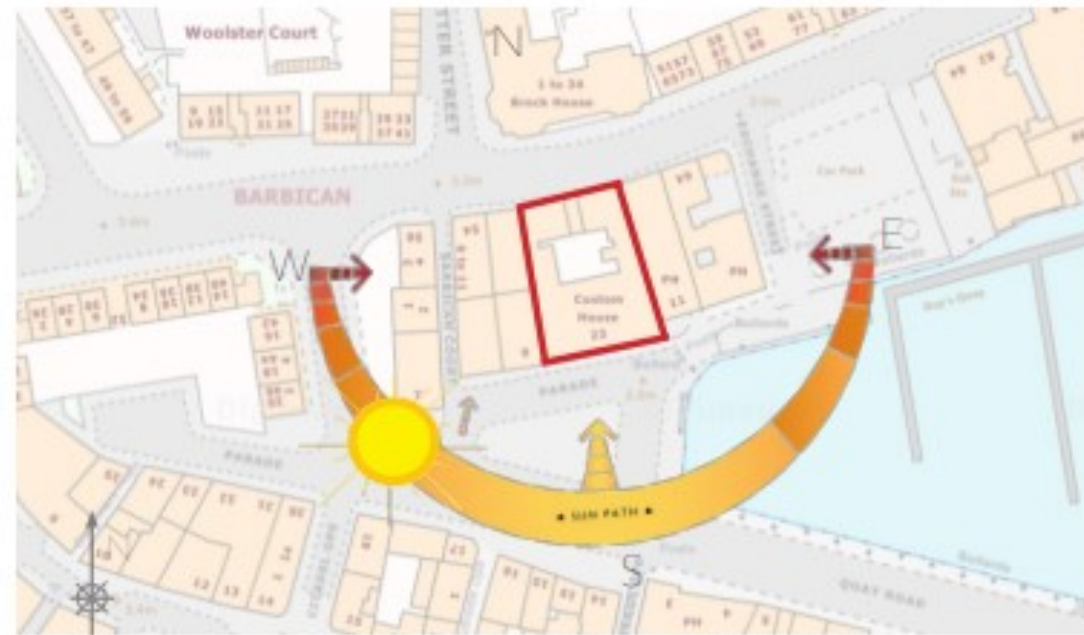
Very cellular in plan

Some interior spaces quite dark

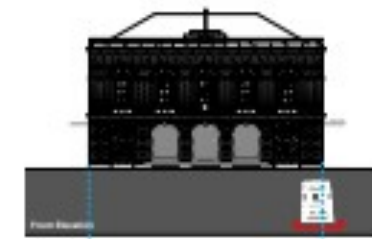
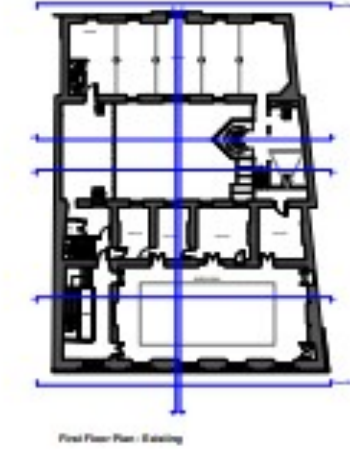
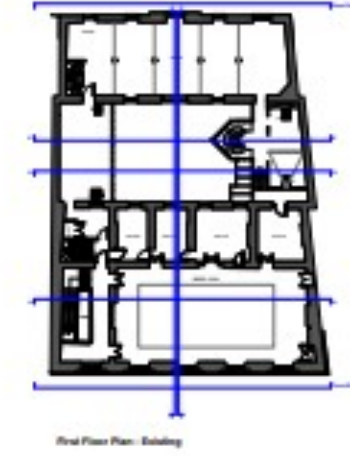
'Awkward' rooms and spaces within the building

Central courtyard space very enclosed

'Ugly' 1970's extension in courtyard



# Original Building Drawings



NOT TO SCALE

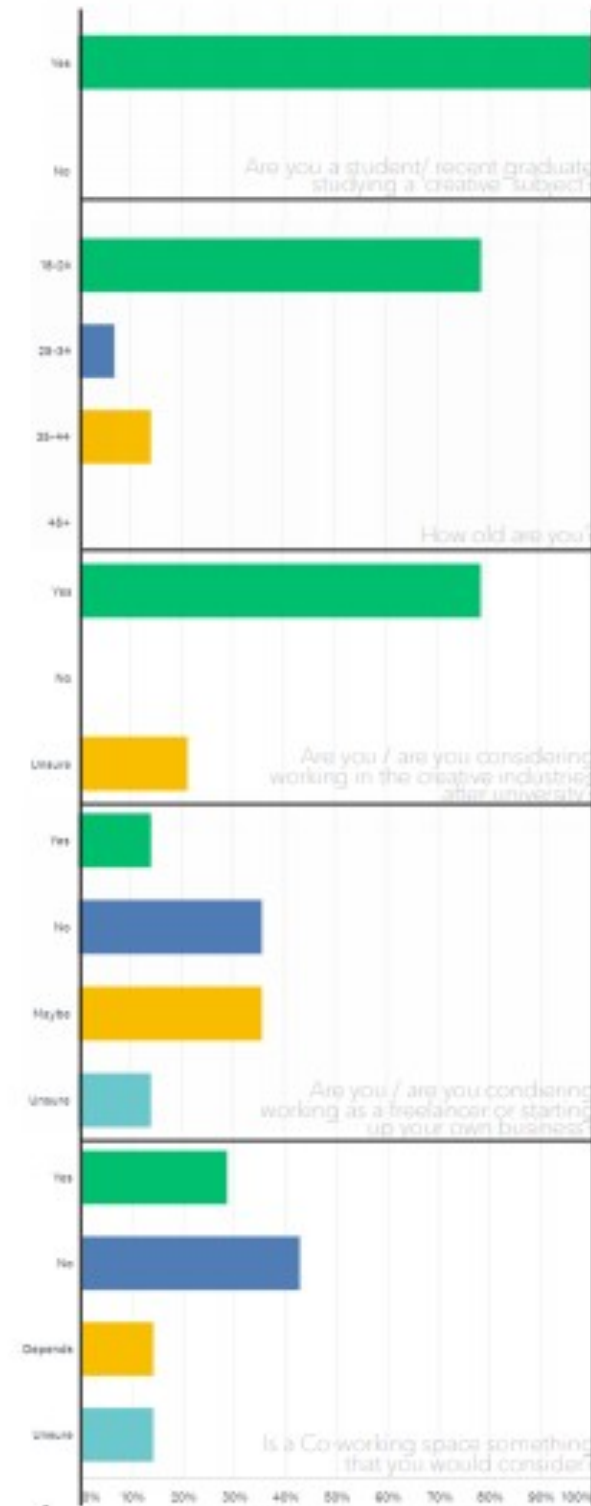


# User

**New Graduates**  
from Plymouth & Falmouth Universities  
=Creative Graduates

## Questionnaire Results:

wrote a questionnaire which I sent to creative university students to collect information on my user and their thoughts on their personal ideas of 'utopia'.



If you could describe your own personal idea of a 'Utopia', what would it be?

"My own home surrounded by my loved ones. No more domestic tasks!"

"Surrounded by greenery and fun colours, something that would keep me entertained everyday"

"Living in a cosy cottage right by the sea with a small but buzzing town with all my friends and family, doing what I love for work."

"Comfortable"

"Entering a new undiscovered island that's fresh and untouched"

"Comfy and warm."

"Green spaces, lots of light, colourful, comfortable, music."

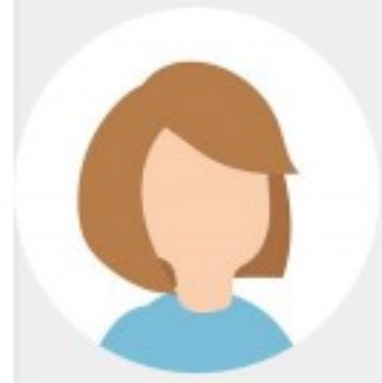
"Lots of nature, low pressure from any sort of duties / have, full of friends and family."

**Summary:**

>Many stated they would be interested in working as a freelancer / starting their own business after graduating -the most common users of Co-Working spaces

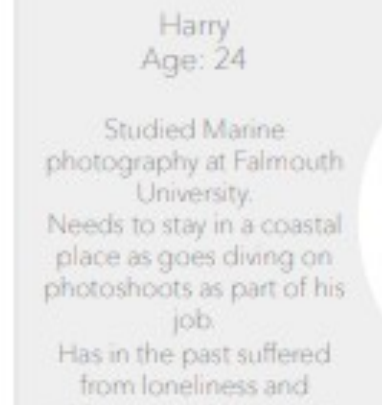
>65% of Co-Working space users are under 40, which fits the demographic of 'New Graduates' well.

>"Utopia" answers from my questionnaire included; Green spaces, comfortable, cheerful, social and supportive, peaceful, by the ocean ('sea side cottage'), stress free.



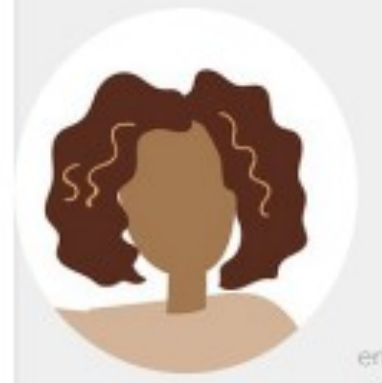
Laura  
Age: 22

Studied Graphic Design at Plymouth university.  
Always lived in Plymouth and wants to still live there.  
Has got a job with a company that allows her to work from home.  
Wishes to use a Co-Working space rather than work at her flat.



Harry  
Age: 24

Studied Marine photography at Falmouth University.  
Needs to stay in a coastal place as goes diving on photoshoots as part of his job.  
Has in the past suffered from loneliness and wishes to work in a social environment.



Ella  
Age: 23

Studied English with Creative Writing at Falmouth University.  
Her dream is to write and illustrate her own children's books.  
Needs a good environment to work from as her shared flat isn't a suitable space.



Maisy  
Age: 29

Studied Game Arts and Design at Plymouth University.  
Has set up a small business with 4 of her peers from her degree course.  
Her new 'buisness' needs an affordable base/ office where they can all work together.

# Key Research

**Utopia:** An imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect

Research of 'Utopia' all comes down to the notion of a perfect environment and situation -this includes atmosphere as well as achieving good well-being, and being in a state of mind that is content and free of severe stress or anxiety.

- biophilia • connecting with nature • simplicity • Hygge • mindfulness • wellbeing •

Hygge: a Danish concept of the "key" to happiness. Is all about warmth and comfort.

## Conde de Casal, Utopicus



- unconventional • colourful • cheerful • casual • comfortable •

## Ancient Tree Pavillion, Christ & Gantenbein



- organic • abstract • unusual • undulating • gnarled •



# Project Journey

The notion of 'Utopia' grew out of the idea of designing for wellbeing and the thought of reconnecting with nature.

The benefits of nature's effects on wellbeing is enormous and also widely viewed as a desirable thing.

My research showed that the psychology behind the notion of reconnecting to nature being a desirable thing and living in a general state of happiness (good well-being) all links to visions of Utopia. Not only this but it is all grounded in scientific evidence of nature and biophilia's benefits on well-being (amongst other things, such as mindfulness, catering for personality types and individuals etc.).

I explored ideas of designing for well-being and about creating people's most desirable, 'perfect' environment, which gave me the question:

"What is Utopia in Interior design?"



Initially a residential and community building.



Specified 'New Graduates' as target user; building became a co live/ work space.



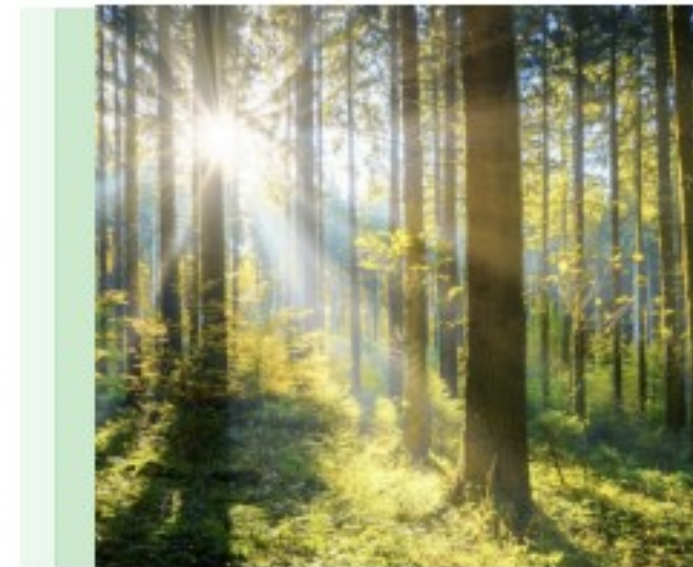
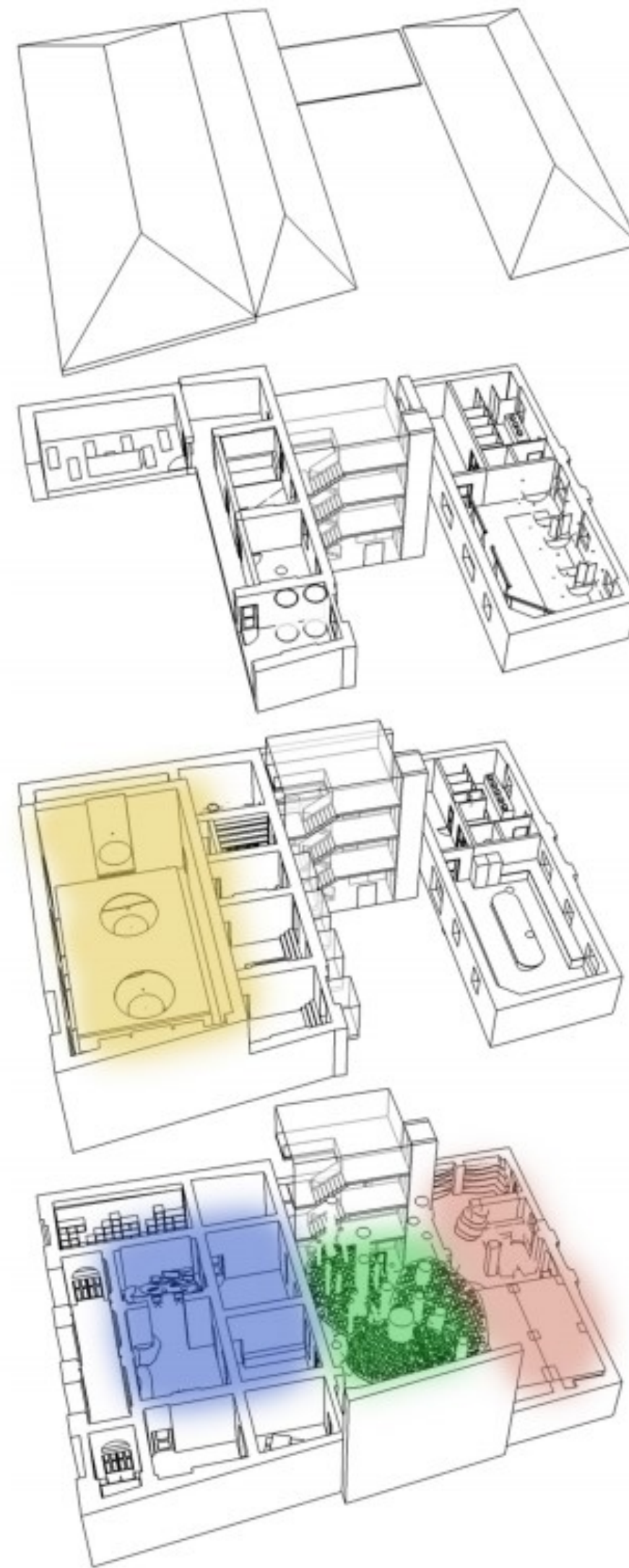
Refined to just co-working, with different 'Utopia' zones.



# Concept Summary

## Final Concept:

A co-working space designed with a series of different 'zones', each offering a different idea of 'Utopia'. These zones will each host the same activity; be a space to both work and relax in, but will be decoratively and atmospherically very different so that people using the space will be able to decide which zone relates most closely to their own idea of 'Utopia' and spend time in that space. By spending time in a space like this which is your own little paradise, it will increase people's day-to-day happiness and thereby improve their wellbeing. It should make people enjoy their day at work. A co-working space is also a good way of improving well-being as it reduces loneliness and increases motivation.



What if... an office became a paradise?





# Ground Floor Plan

Vauxhall Street



## Key:

1. Entrance
2. 'Cloakroom' storage
3. Sci-Fi 'Utopia'
  - 3a. VR space
  - 3b. Computers & general work
4. Accessable W/C's
5. Lift
6. Stairs
7. Forest 'Utopia'
  - 7a. Seating
  - 7b. Water feature
8. Hygge 'Utopia'
  - 8a. Book shelves
  - 8b. Seating
  - 8c. Giant Inglenook
  - 8d. Fire-place
9. Back exit
10. Dog cresh



Old Custom House

Plan  
Ground Floor  
Scale 1:100 @ A2

Parade



# Sections



Old Custom House

Section BB  
Scale 1:100 @ A2



Old Custom House

Section CC  
Scale 1:100 @ A2



# Forest 'Utopia'

## Concept Narrative



Forest environment



Dappled light



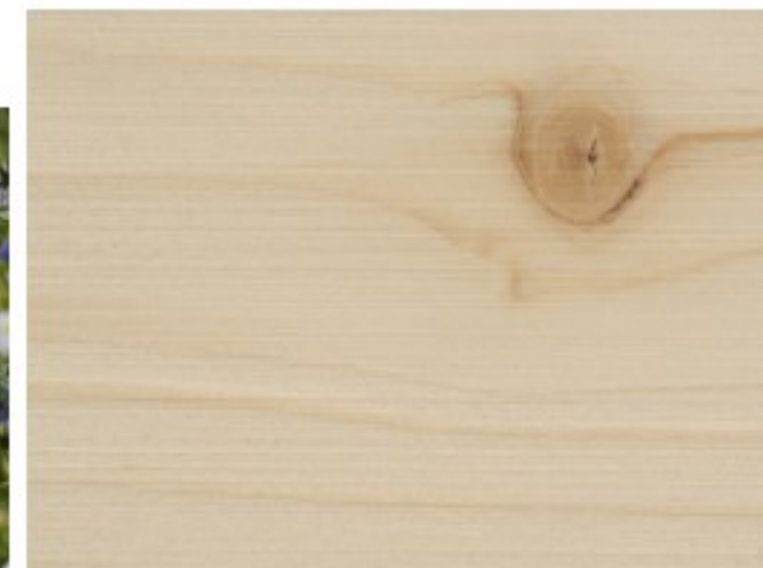
Urban garden



Weaving through trees



Connection to nature



Natural materials



# Materials Board

- 1 Grass floor
- 2 Original stone wall
- 3 Small water feature
- 4 Plywood columns + canopies
- 5 Hanging plants
- 6 Natural moss + plants
- 7 Laptop trays





# Sustainability Statement

Most importantly for this scheme, this co-working space addresses social sustainability as it is a wellbeing project. The focus is on helping people to achieve a state of good mental wellbeing by being in a desirable and comfortable environment for the mundane but essential task of 'work'. It is also socially sustainable due to its strong community emphasis; the function of the space is to create a friendly and supportive community within.

The location of the site is a convenient inner-city location that is very accessible via walking, cycling, bus or train, but not so accessible by car as there is little parking. This will encourage people to travel there in ways other than by car. There is also a small dog creche area in the scheme, so as to try and encourage people to walk to work with their dogs.

The materials used in the project are all considered on a sustainability factor. In lots of places in the building the existing materials (e.g. flooring) have been kept in place to remove the need for new materials. Other materials are either reclaimed (e.g. the bricks to create the inglenook), or an environmentally friendly option (e.g. formaldehyde free plywood -which will also be recycled at the end of its life).

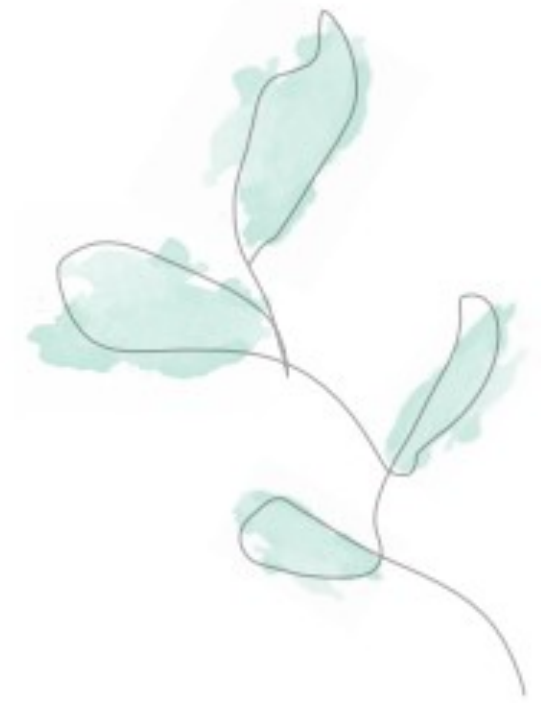
The project uses a fair amount of biophilia. This is for two purposes; the wellbeing aspect and environmental factor. There is a courtyard space in the centre of the building (the 'Forest' zone of the Utopia concept used in the building) which is designed to be a little pocket of nature in the middle of the city.

All lighting throughout the building uses LED bulbs set with a dimmer switch, so that only as much light as is needed is used. The courtyard in the centre of the building enables it to have windows in the 'middle' as well, to allow natural light into the 'middle' spaces which would otherwise not have natural sunlight reaching it.





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