

# Denizens to Citizens through Commoning

Could “Commoning be the solution to housing in Dublin City?



Rebecca Carolan

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would like to acknowledge my family and friends for supporting me and putting up with many breakdowns the last six years.

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# THESIS

## Introduction

For what feels like the last few years Ireland has been in the midst of a 'Housing Crisis' with house and rent prices increasing exponentially since 2014 (Hearnes, 2022, p. 68). A homeless population of 9,800 people a 23% increase from last year (Sherlock, 2022), which is blatant to see as you walk down the streets of Dublin. In response to the Housing Crisis, particularly Dublin has witnessed a significant surge in the construction of private apartment developments over the past few years. The precarious state Dublin housing is in, is not due to a lack of supply, rather a housing system that does not belong to the community living in Dublin but "institutional investors" taking over, buying 44% of all new purchases of homes in 2019 with the purpose of making profits, not providing homes (Hearne, 2022). Dublin is considered a rent pressure zone as 54.2% of new tenants registered in quarter two of 2022 were in Dublin city or the greater Dublin area (Residential Tenancies Board, 2022). This means there will always be a need for housing in Dublin City but housing is in a state of crisis where the feeling among many is there is plenty of houses, plenty of land, plenty of space but no access, no sharing, no ownership



# THESIS

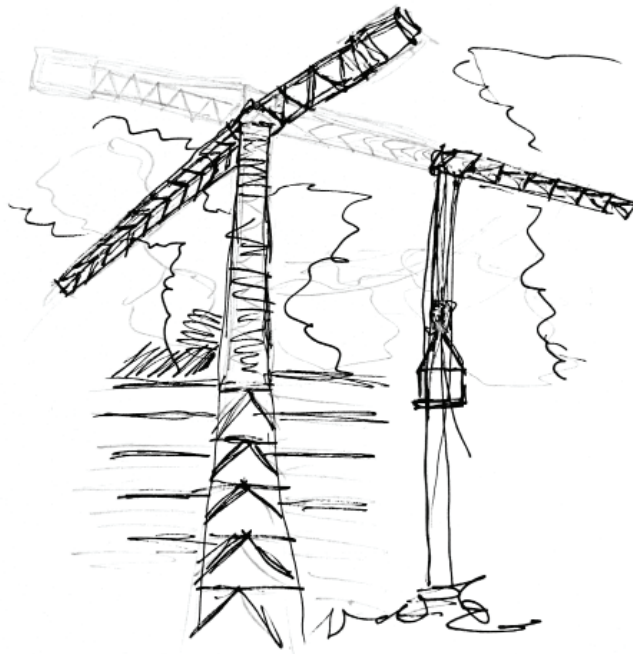
## Initial Response



My interest in the amount of housing development began last year at my first attempt at 5th year when my initial site was on the North side of the Dublin Docklands. My initial impression was the massive amount of construction taking place all across the North side of the River Liffey East of the Royal Canal of these large-scale apartment blocks funded by Real Estate Investment Funds.



# THESIS





# THESIS

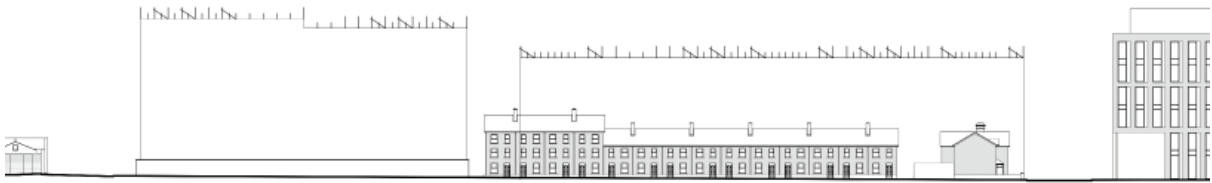
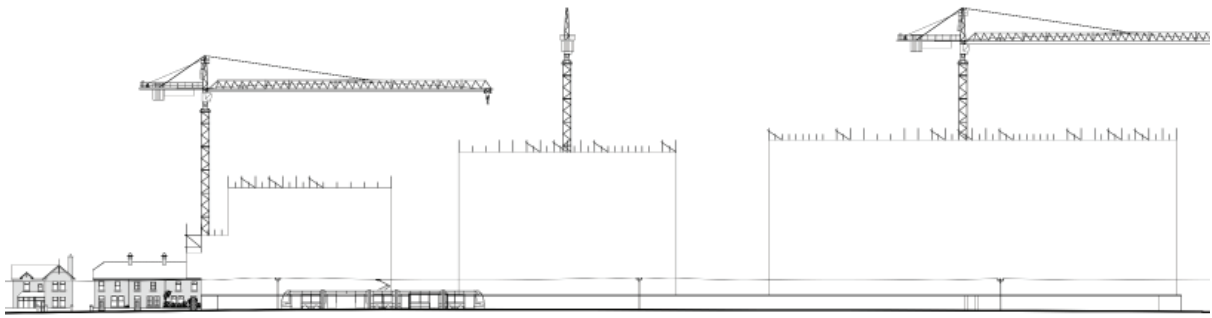
In the face of extensive construction throughout the site, I managed to discover small pockets of personal ownership of the residents' private houses, creating a sense of home that stood against the impending apartment blocks.



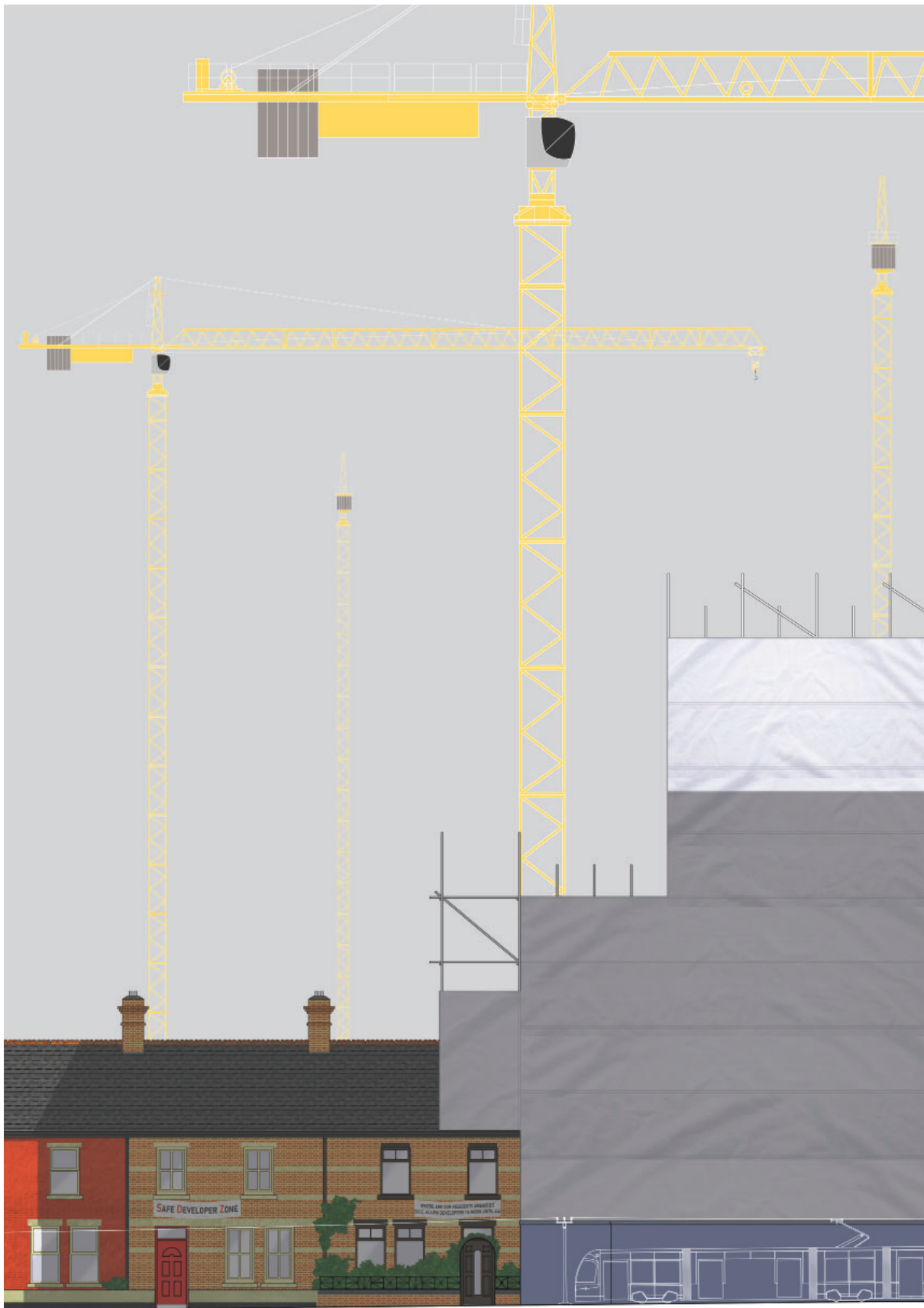




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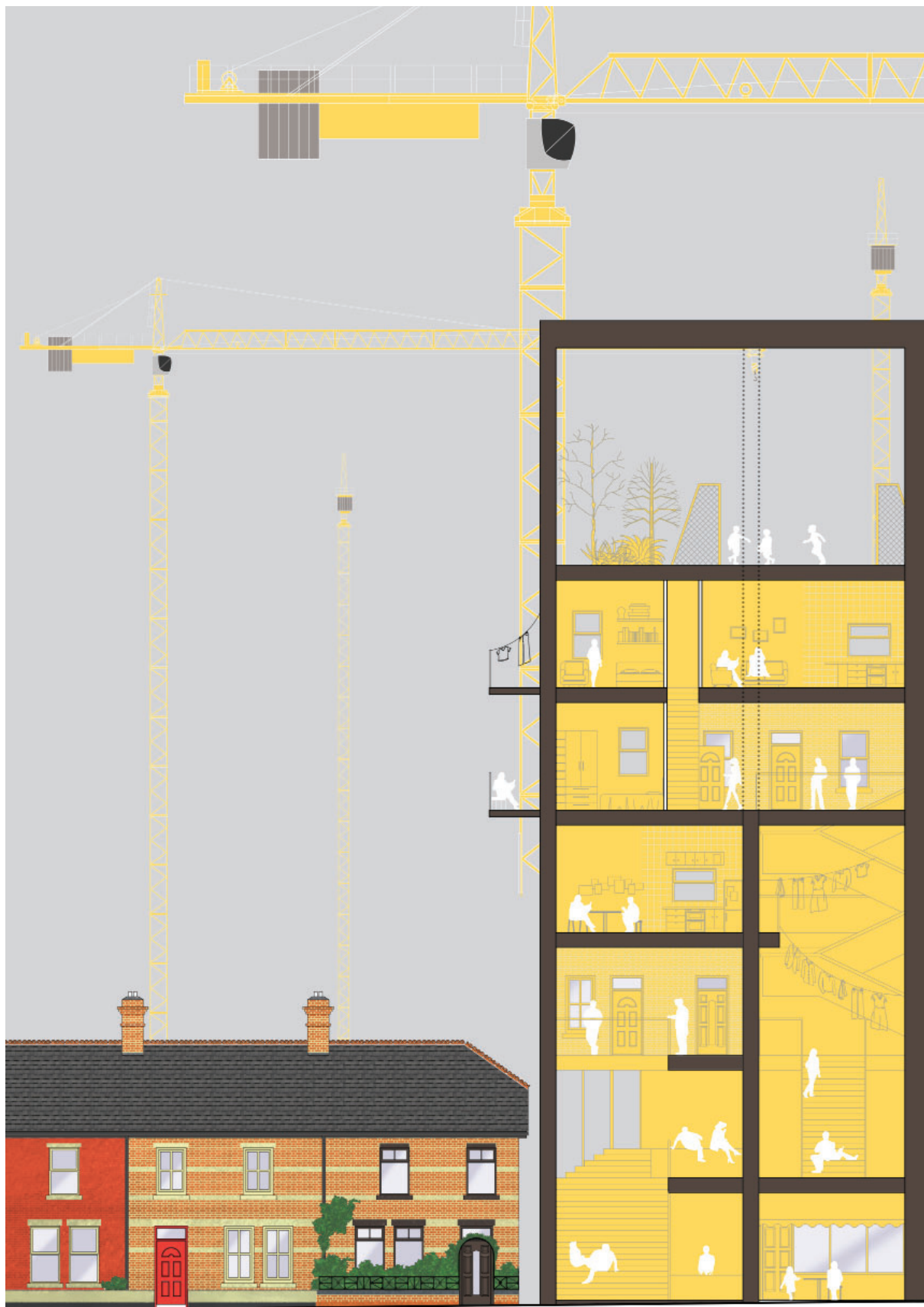


# THESIS





# THESIS



# THESIS

## Denizens, Citizens and Commoning

### Commoning

Before understanding the act of ‘commoning’, we have to understand what ‘the commons’ are. “‘Common’ stems from early English ‘commune’, signifying something that is general, universal, or shared” (Standing, 2019, p. 27). Commons could be understood as an environment or space a group occupy and share its resources (Standing, 2019). Thus, the commons require a shared responsibility and care to manage, delegate, and maintain it. The commons can be seen then as a communal resource for the use of the ‘commoners’; a broad definition of a commoner is a common person, someone who has the right to access any public street, square, or green (Standing, 2019). With this understanding, it means that everyone is a commoner in some way but desire to be a commoner on a deeper level. You have access to public streets, but you do not feel a sense of ownership. You feel a responsibility not to litter and use the public street bins, but you do not feel responsible for planting greenery along the street or in the park or even clearing up someone else’s litter.

The commons should not be considered a resource to be divided equally among each participating commoner to deplete their own portion as they see fit but requires the act of ‘commoning’. ‘Commoning’ relates to the collective work done by the people, the commoners, taking care of the commons for their own good so that they can benefit from access to it (Standing, 2019). Commoners share the responsibility of managing, delegating, and maintaining their commons. This collective work builds a community between people; we are given resources and do our part to hand them over to someone else, leaving them as good as we received them. The commons do not refer to a collective property owned by a group of commoners, and it is supposed to be inherently anti-market and anti-capitalist (Standing, 2019). It is not a matter of pooling together money to buy land, commoning only what you have on site but appropriating and maintaining resources found in your community. A stream may be on private property, but in return for the right to take some water, you contribute to the maintenance of the stream or do not exceed your own personal water allocation. An example of this is in the 8th century Islamic settlers in Sierra Nevada, Spain, called the ‘Moors’ built acequias, a system of water management, sourced from melting snow on top of the mountains and guided to a series of settlements using sluice gates (Con Jamón Spain, 2013). At present each citizen can access the water every week or two that comes to their property for an allotted time, they can take as much as they need until the gates are closed and the water passes onto the next settlement (Con Jamón Spain, 2013). It is important to think of the act of commoning as a verb rather than a noun “in order to mark the continuous making and re-making of the commons through shared labour and capacities” (Urban Commons Research Collective, 2022, p. 19). Commoning strengthens a community’s relationships with each other and is what builds the relationship between them and their resources. Commoners can become more aware of their roles and responsibilities to resources, nature, and society.

# THESIS

## Denizens and Citizens

A denizen is someone who lacks a home, “a term applied in the Middle Ages to someone, an outsider, who entered a town and wished to ply a trade” (Standing, 2019, p. 130). They would come into towns and were allowed to stay but were not given the same access to the commons and its benefits and would always have a status of an outsider, despite living among the community. The opposite was the citizen, someone who belonged.

Today in Dublin the private homeowners are the citizens, while renters and homeless people are treated as the denizens without common access but still make up a majority of the population in Dublin, again, with Dublin being considered a rent pressure zone as 54.2% of new tenants registered in quarter two of 2022 were in Dublin city or the greater Dublin area (Residential Tenancies Board, 2022).

Today Dublin has become a city of denizens as the private rental market has become so large that most people are subjected to other peoples’ (their landlords’) rules. They have no ownership or substantial benefits earned for the cost they put in, just the bare minimum of shelter, while the landlord reaps maximum benefits of the cost of their rent. “For me home means freedom - to own a pet, to hang up a painting, to repaint the walls or change the wallpaper. But also freedom to listen to whatever music I like, to wear pyjamas all day, to cook anything I want without negotiating with a room-mate or parents” (Hearnes, 2022, p. 114). The right to a home should encompass more than just the right to have a place of shelter but also the right to a sustainable sense of belonging ownership regardless if your home is privately owned, “owning your own home does not necessarily make you happier, and renters can be as happy with their home if they feel in control of their home” (Hearnes, 2022, p. 115).

Commoning unites the denizens by pooling the common resources needed, creating a community that uses and reproduces these resources, and shares them equitably among the community. Commoning is a possible model for living which prioritises the community’s sense of belonging. Commoning builds a community that is bound together by a common interest and goal. The community has to play an essential role in addressing the needs and wants of the commoners.





# SITE

## Site Change



View from Ashtown Station



Tolka Valley Aerial View



View from Tolka Valley Park

## SITE



### Ashtown

Beginning Semester 2, in 2023 I had to change sites to the Tolka Valley, still in Dublin. Further west up the Royal Canal the same situation was taking place in Ashtown. A massive amount of housing and apartment developments under construction, a possible solution to the housing crisis, despite the feeling among many that there is plenty of houses, plenty of land and plenty of space and just an inability to access. The apartment development that caught my attention was the '8th Lock Royal Canal Park' a project developed by Ballymore Group an Irish based property investment company which has since been sold to a German investor 'Union Investment' (Gleeson, 2021).

The development was in a prime location just west of the Dublin Industrial Estate, south of the Tolka Valley Park, North of the Royal Canal Way adjacent to the 8th Lock and walking distances from Pelletstown Train Station and The Broombridge Luas Depot. I went to Dublin City Council to investigate the planning application drawings that had been approved. Investigating the scheme, I found the programme was made up entirely of 435 1-2 bedroom apartments. The limited size of these apartments had me questioning the adaptability of the space denizens moving into Dublin would have.

The population in Ireland has increased to more than 5 million people, its highest rate since 1851 (Central Statistics Office, 2022). More than 28% of that population live in the county of Dublin and 40% of them live in Dublin City. The majority of people living globally live in urban areas and this number is expected to increase to two-thirds of the population by the year



## SITE

2050 (Pelsmakers & Warwick, 2022). In Dublin City, the majority of housing available is urban apartment blocks developed or owned by foreign Real Estate Investment Trusts, apartment blocks that the residents did not design themselves, with tighter space standards and specific room types that cannot be used for anything else but the function they were designed for (Hearnes, 2022; Pelsmakers & Warwick, 2022). When the structure, size, and purpose are fixed it reduces the diversity of a housing block as certain dimensions can only suit a certain demographic for a period of time (Pelsmakers & Warwick, 2022). The need for adaptability in housing is important to the lifespan of the home, the home needs to adapt to the changing lifestyles and demographics of the inhabitants who first move in, so it can remain their home for their lifetime.





# SITE



Dublin City Council- Proposed Site Plan



Dublin City Council- Proposed Hamilton View Elevation



Dublin City Council- Proposed Ratoath Road Elevation



# SITE



My original idea was to use this site to almost redesign these apartments how I would see fit, a housing scheme incorporating commoning and adaptability. But this plan was unrealistic as the developers' plans were already built and construction was taking place at a rapid pace.

- 1 Bed - 2 Person Apartment
- 2 Bed - 4 Person Apartment (dumbbell unit)
- 2 Bed - 4 Person Apartment (corner unit)
- 2 Bed - 4 Person Apartment (Knuckle unit)

# SITE



Google aerial view of the site taken January 2023



Google birds' eye view of the site taken January 2023



Google street view of the site taken January 2023 (image taken 2018)



# SITE



Google aerial view of the site taken March 2023



Google birds' eye view of the site taken March 2023



Google street view of the site taken March 2023

# SITE

## The Site

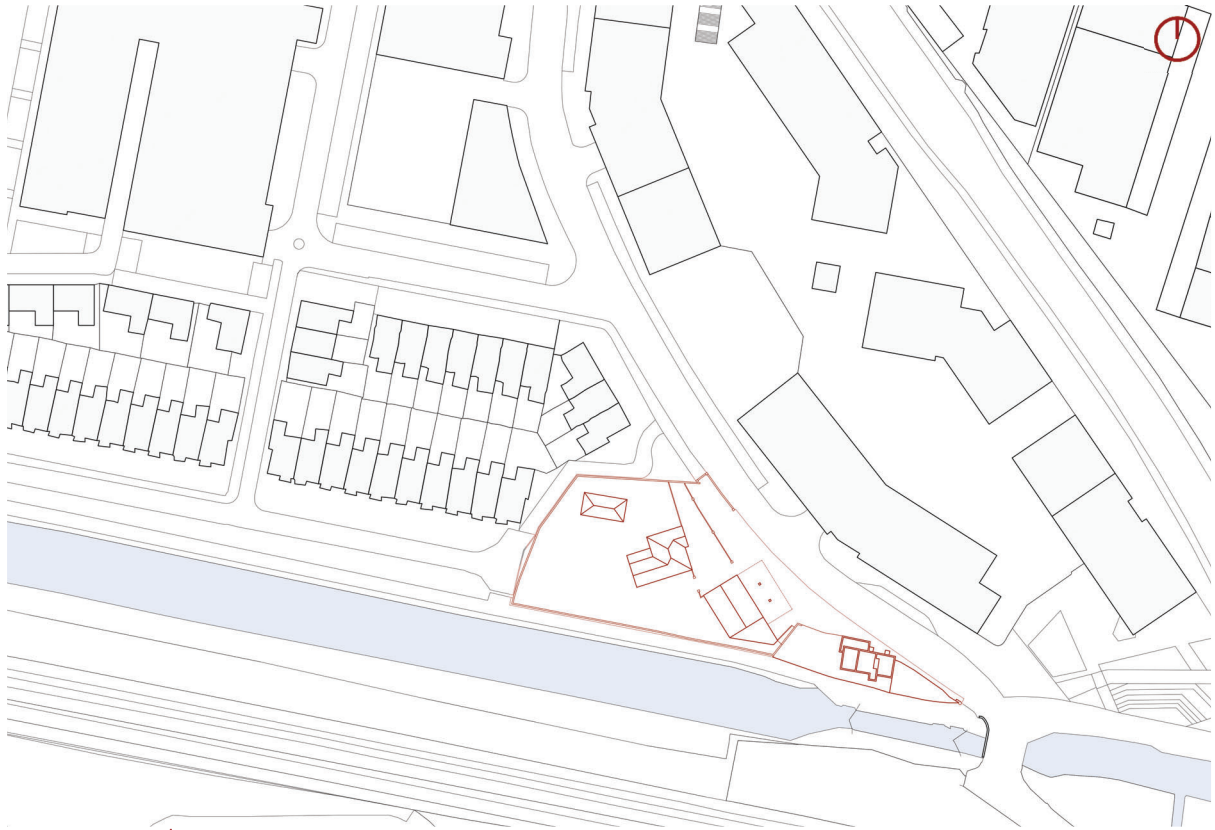


My original idea was to use this site to almost redesign these apartments how I would see fit, a housing scheme incorporating communing and adaptability. But this plan was unrealistic as the developers' plans were already built and construction was taking place at a rapid pace. South-west of the development I was able to discover yet another small pocket of personal ownership. A triangular 2,324m<sup>2</sup> site which contains a privately owned house and tyre garage, a dilapidated mews, and building equipment belonging to the 8th Lock development. The owner of the house and garage has maintained their status as a citizen through private ownership and refusing to sell their property to developers designing for the incoming denizens.

My idea for a programme was to hypothetically imagine the site was available to create a housing development meant to prioritise communing, adaptability, and a sense of ownership to build a community, turning the residents into citizens.



# SITE



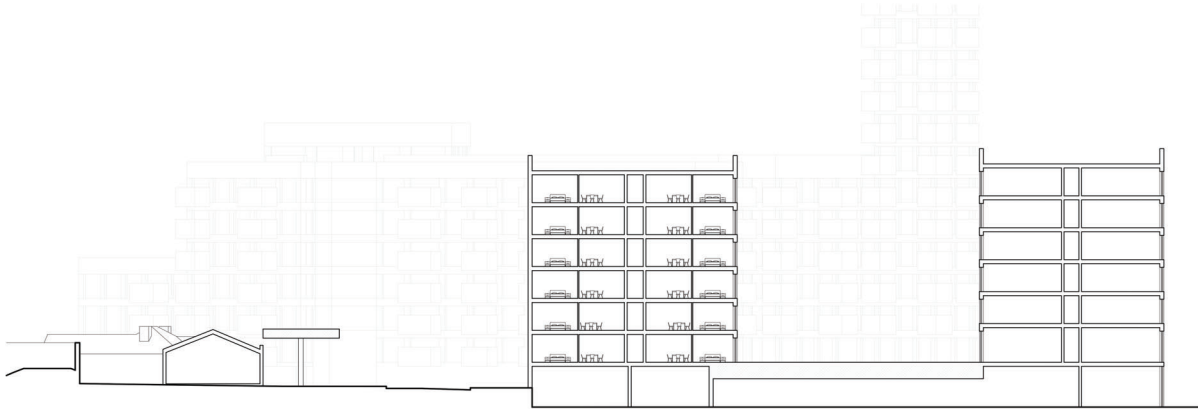
Existing Site Plan 1:500



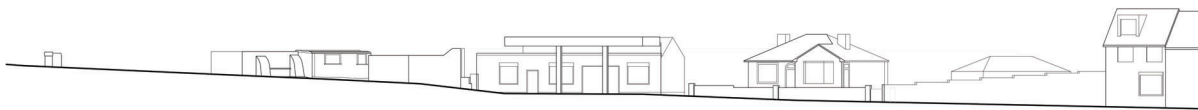
Existing Site Plan 1:200



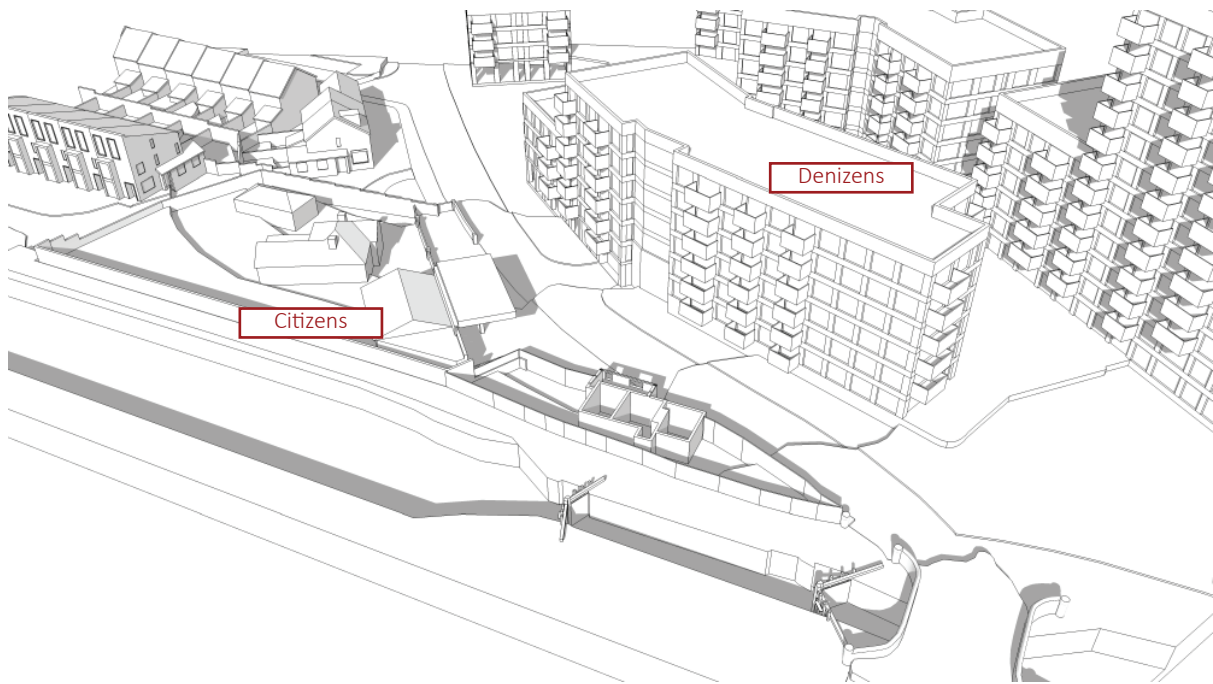
# SITE



Existing Site Section 1:200



Existing Site Elevation Hamilton View 1:200



3D Birds' Eye View

# SITE



Views around the site

# SITE



Mews and the construction equipment



# SITE



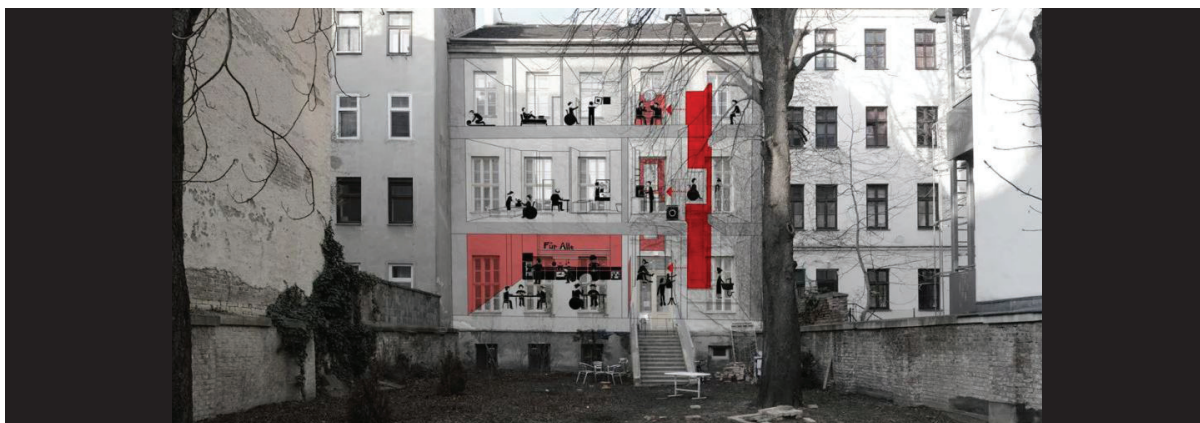
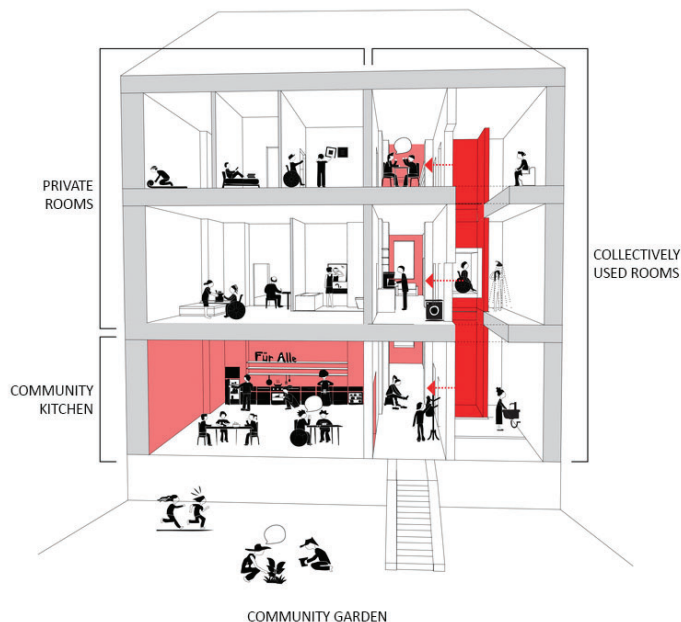
Royal Canal Walkway adjacent to site

# PROGRAMME

## Precedents

### Intersektionales Stadthaus

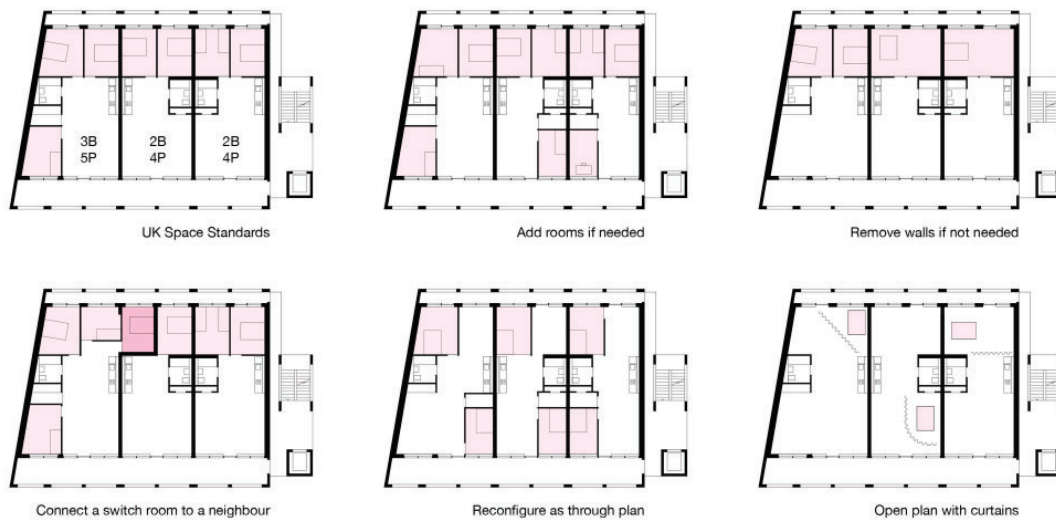
A project that looks at building a community through commoning and housing is the Intersektionales Stadthaus in Vienna, Austria designed by GABU Heidl Architecture. The community developed was the 'Association for Accessibility in Art, in Everyday Life, in Minds' which started to form in 1989 with the introduction of intersectional feminism to Vienna (Urban Commons Research Collective, 2022). The community formed from a sense of companionship through shared interests in art and challenging discrimination. In the summer of 2015, The Association's initiative became a realised housing project; the Intersektionales Stadthaus also named the 'Barrier-Free House' (Urban Commons Research Collective, 2022). The Association uses their intersecting identities to break down the barriers in housing and practice commoning. Heidl quoted a founding member of The Association saying - "There are many 'wes', a 'we' may form between those who share the same language, who share the same (lack of) privileges, who have passed through the same difficulties. But sometimes members of different 'wes' intersect. They find that they themselves can conceive of their own 'we'. And in this moment of recognition, the compartments of 'wes' begin to dissolve, like the walls that separated our now shared - collective living space" (Urban Commons Research Collective, 2022, p. 132-133). Within the project there is a balance between shared community and private space, the shared space includes a one-kitchen model which challenges the idea that cooking is something someone does in their own dwelling, but can take place outside the private space, Heidl says "sharing the kitchen everyone could afford somebody to cook for them from time to time. This means luxury by supporting each other" (Urban Commons Research Collective, 2022, p. 138). This creates a community willing to support one another and practice commoning. 159m<sup>2</sup> is dedicated to private space (Urban Commons Research Collective, 2022).





# PROGRAMME

## House for Artists



In 2021 architecture firm, Apparata Architects, completed a community-orientated housing scheme in Barking East London, the scheme consists of 12 apartments, three to a floor, fit for 12 artists and their families (Parkes, 2022). Each unit gains a generous amount of spaciousness as they remove internal circulation giving an extra 7-8m<sup>2</sup> to additional living space. All internal walls are non-structural and can be removed or more built to create or remove extra rooms (Pelsmakers & Warwick, 2022). This allows each unit to mould to the individual needs of the people inhabiting whether or not its five-person family that needs multiple bedrooms or people who work from home who need a study. Party walls are also non-structural so rooms within a unit can have their access switched to a neighbour instead if they require the room. Two floors have three interconnected units with openings in the party walls allowing co habitation of a shared living or workspace between residents (Pelsmakers & Warwick, 2022). The ground floor is a large open space designed to act as workshops for the artists living above, with ground floor windows acting as shop fronts (Pelsmakers & Warwick, 2022). This is a space for further co-habitation and manipulation, that is a hybrid of a public and domestic space allowing multi-use adaptability in the scheme beyond housing.





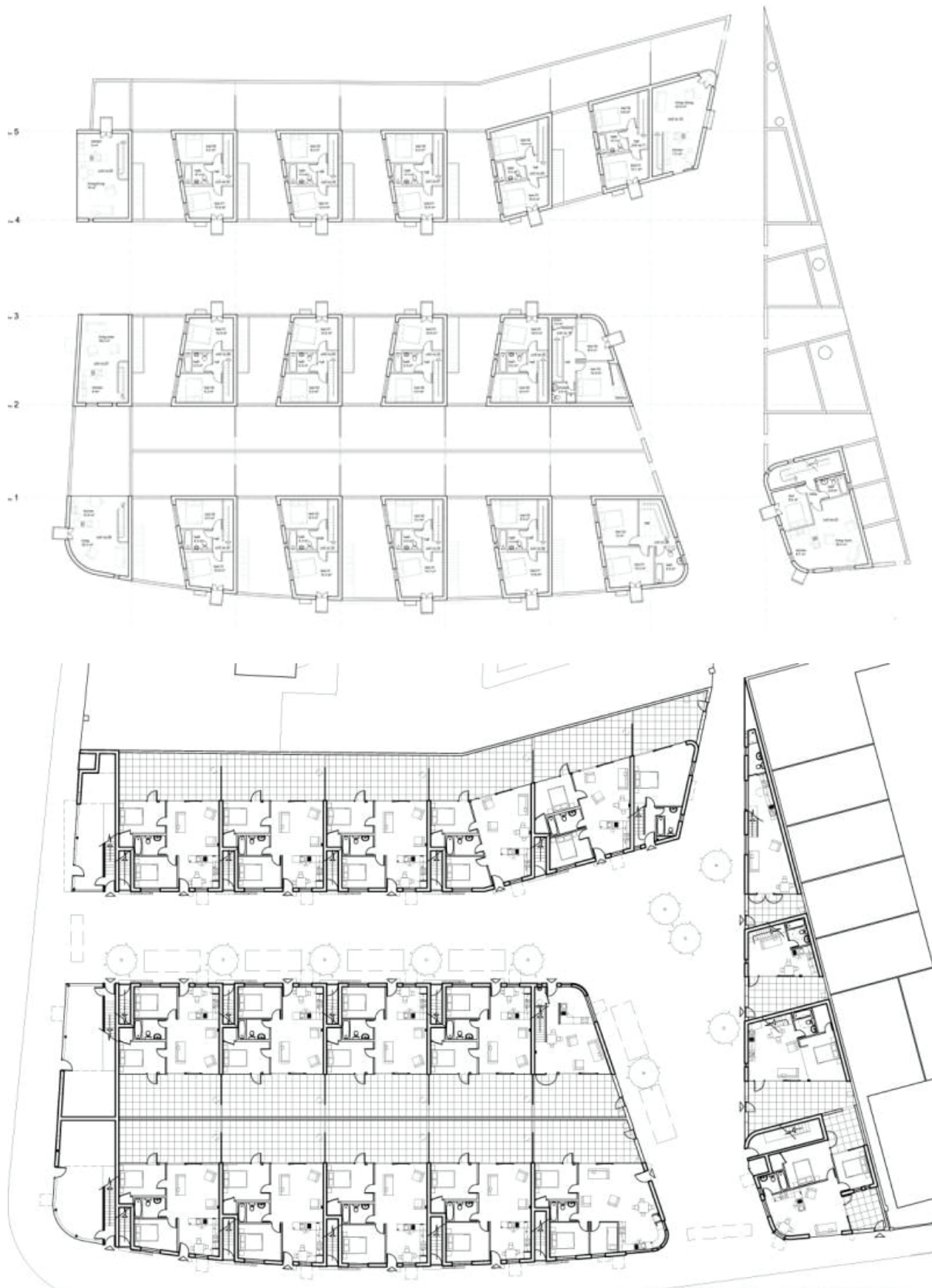
# PROGRAMME



Donnybrook Quarter

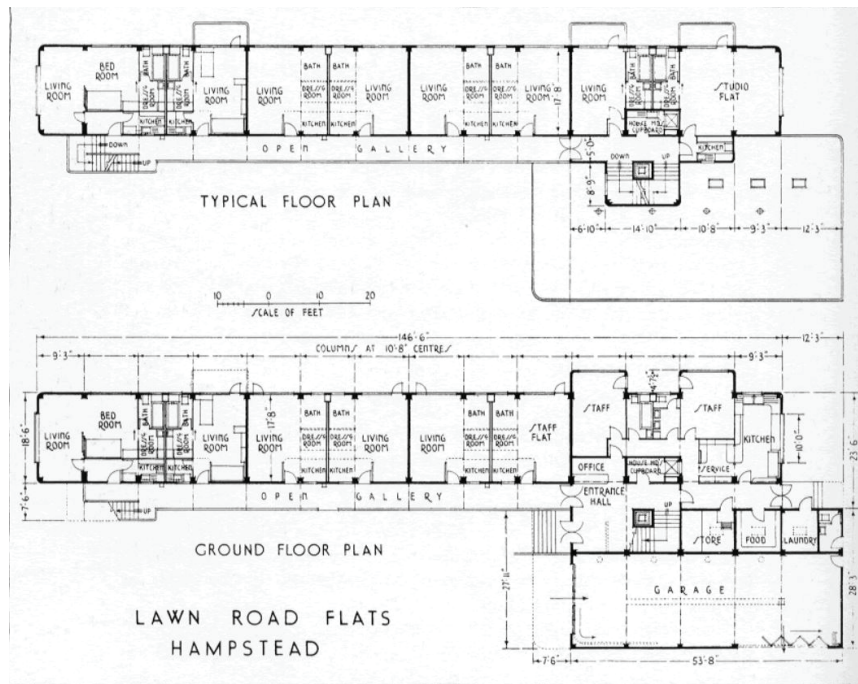
The project I found the most integral to my thesis idea was the Donnybrook Quarter by Peter Barber set on a prominent corner in the East End of London. A high-rise, low density, mixed-use scheme, with 130 people inhabiting the 40 housing units (University of Westminster, 2008). While the project features many different varieties of apartment and housing types all on one site the “strapline” Barber gave this scheme in his Soane Medal Lecture was, “celebration of the public social line of street” (Barber, 2022). The heart of this scheme is an intimate scale street running north to south with overhanging balconies, front doors, and bay windows. It is common for houses on a street to have the defensible space of a front garden, but Barber argued for the pavement to come right up to the front door, “I showed the intimate relationship the people can have between the street and their home, when people take control of the front” (Barber, 2022). As stated previously on a public street you may feel a responsibility not to litter, but you do not feel a responsibility beyond that. Intimate streets are a perfect opportunity of multiple people commoning an area and building that sense of community. And in a scheme like Barber’s with a wide mix of housing types enables co-existence and condenses different people together in a single community. This can highlight the difficulties of living together but can also provide a space for potential negotiation.

# PROGRAMME





# PROGRAMME



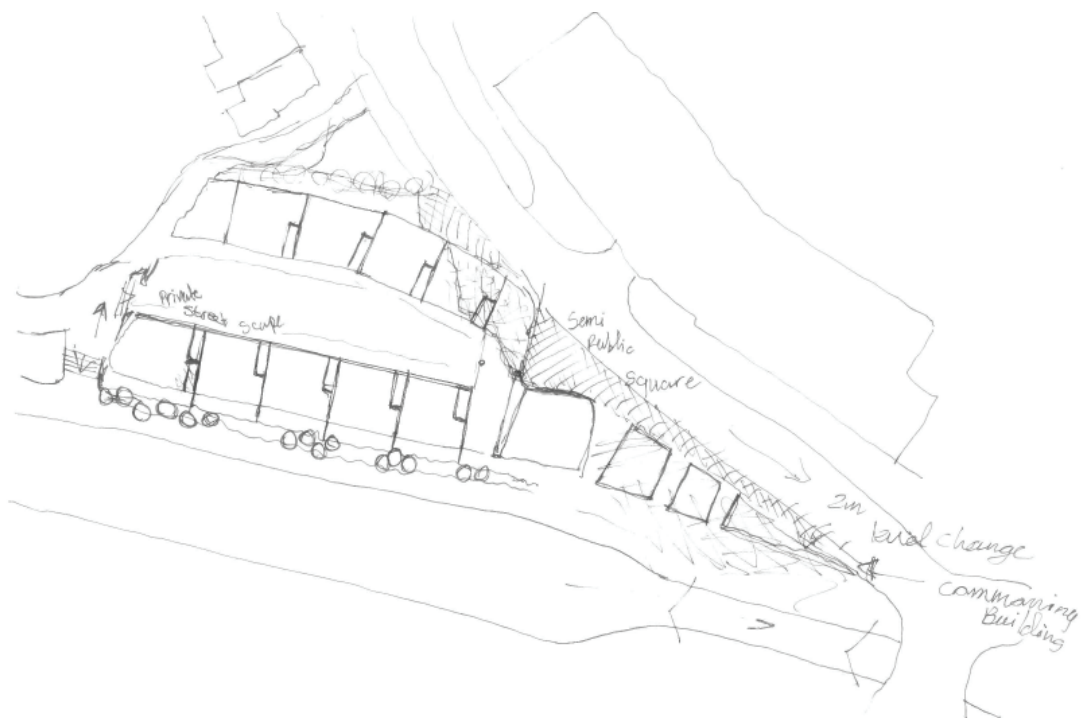
Isokon

The Lawn Road Flats, “the Isokon”, in North London are an example of a co-housing project that’s values communing and strives for that sense of community. Isokon was built by Jack and Molly Pritchard and architect Wells Coates. The plan consists of 4 floors of 36 single room apartments with a shared communal space to the end of the open gallery circulation and a communal roof terrace. The scheme attracted and fostered a creative community with residents like Bauhaus members; Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer or László Maholy-Nagy or authors like Agatha Christie, “There was an element of Jack only offering flats to interesting people, but also that characters who agreed with his views gravitated towards it” (Ker, 2016). The Isokon was restored in 2004 with a garage that instead was commandeered as a public gallery with public exhibits taking place celebrating design and former residents of the apartments, while still continuing to have the 36 single room apartments, “At the same time, there are more single households than ever who need small but well-designed spaces with a creative, living community – exactly what the Isokon provided” (Ker, 2016).



# PROGRAMME

## Sketch Stage

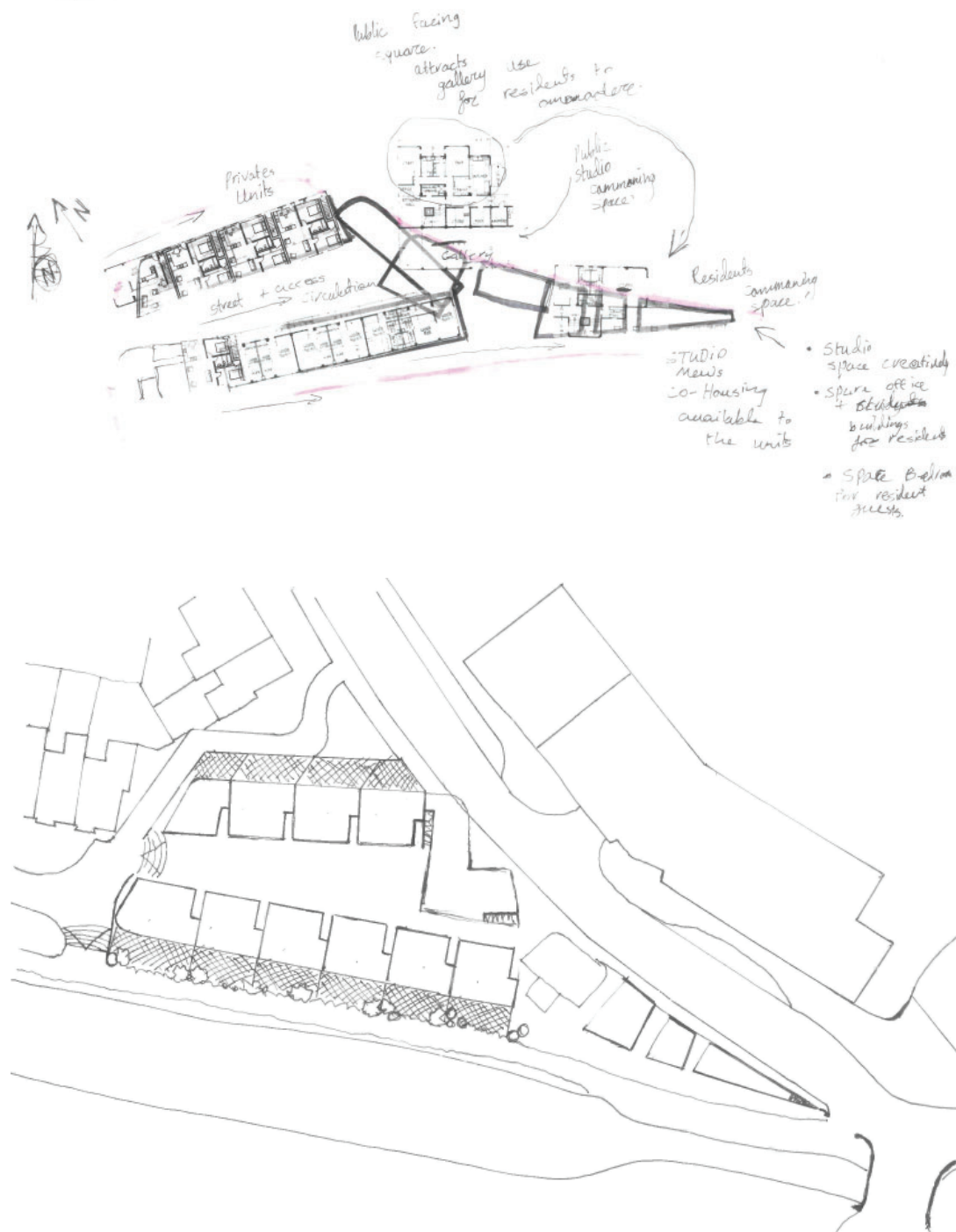




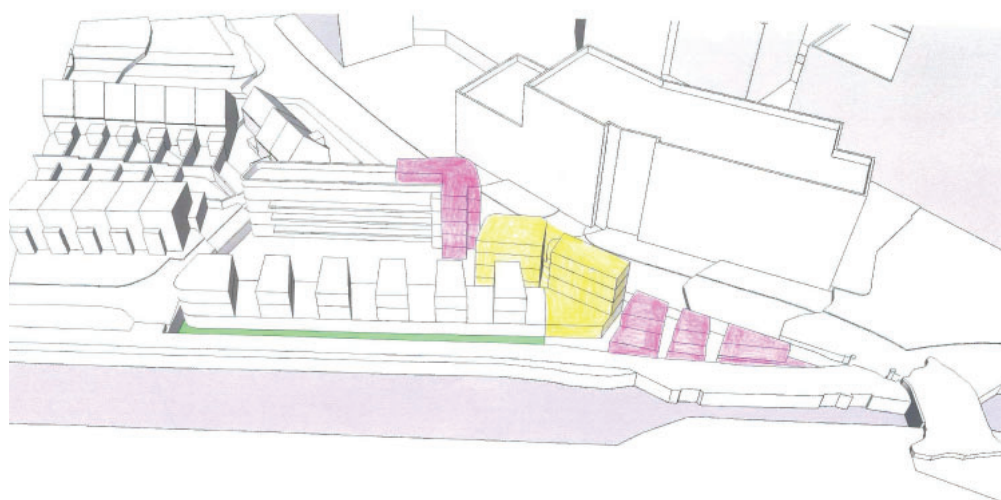
# PROGRAMME

My initial idea for the programme was to have a long east-west path with housing units lining each side. The idea of this potential community having a street to common among themselves. The ground floor units having private garden spaces to the rear.

Then along the Hamilton View Road have buildings dedicated to the commandeering of the residents. Similar to gallery space in the Isokon, not to mention the wide-open gallery space acting as workshops for residents with ground floor windows acting as shop fronts like in the House for Artists.



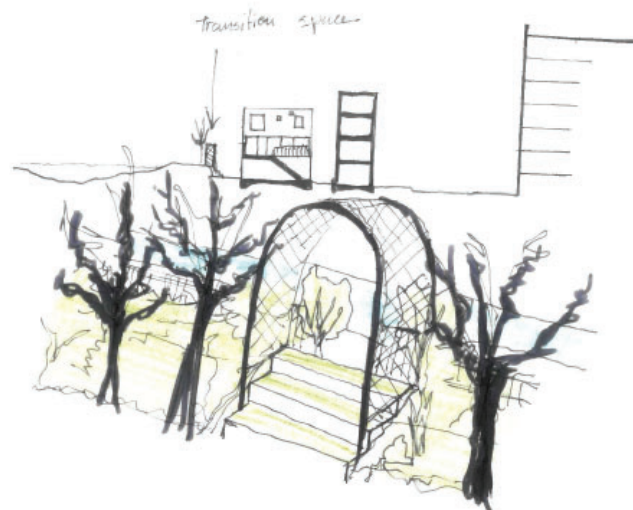
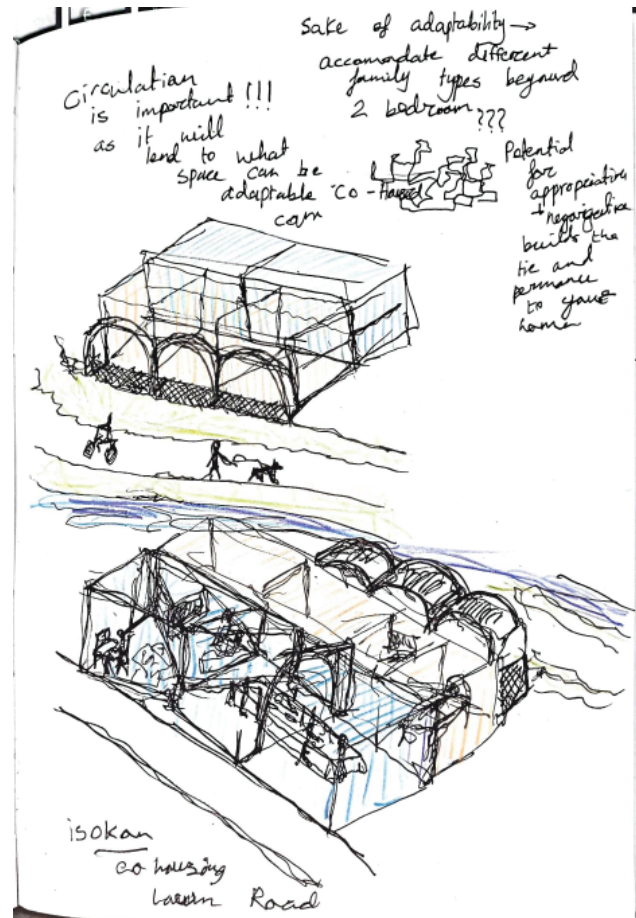
# PROGRAMME



I wanted to add a small bar of co-housing like the Isokon to add variety of housing types which incorporate adaptability.

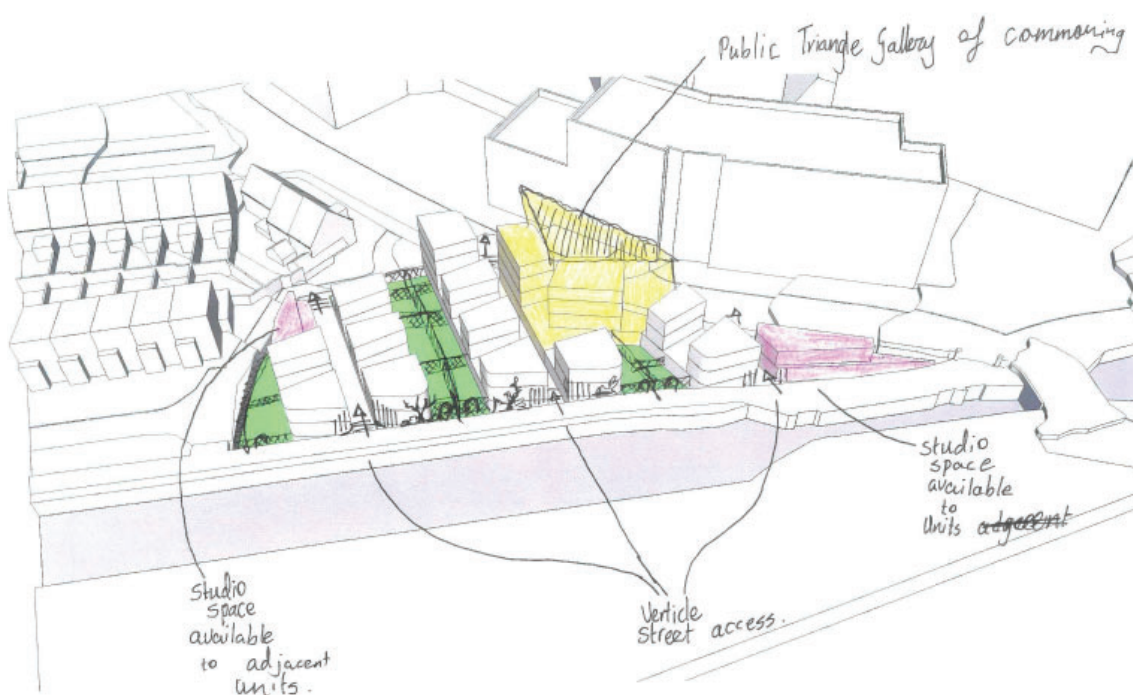
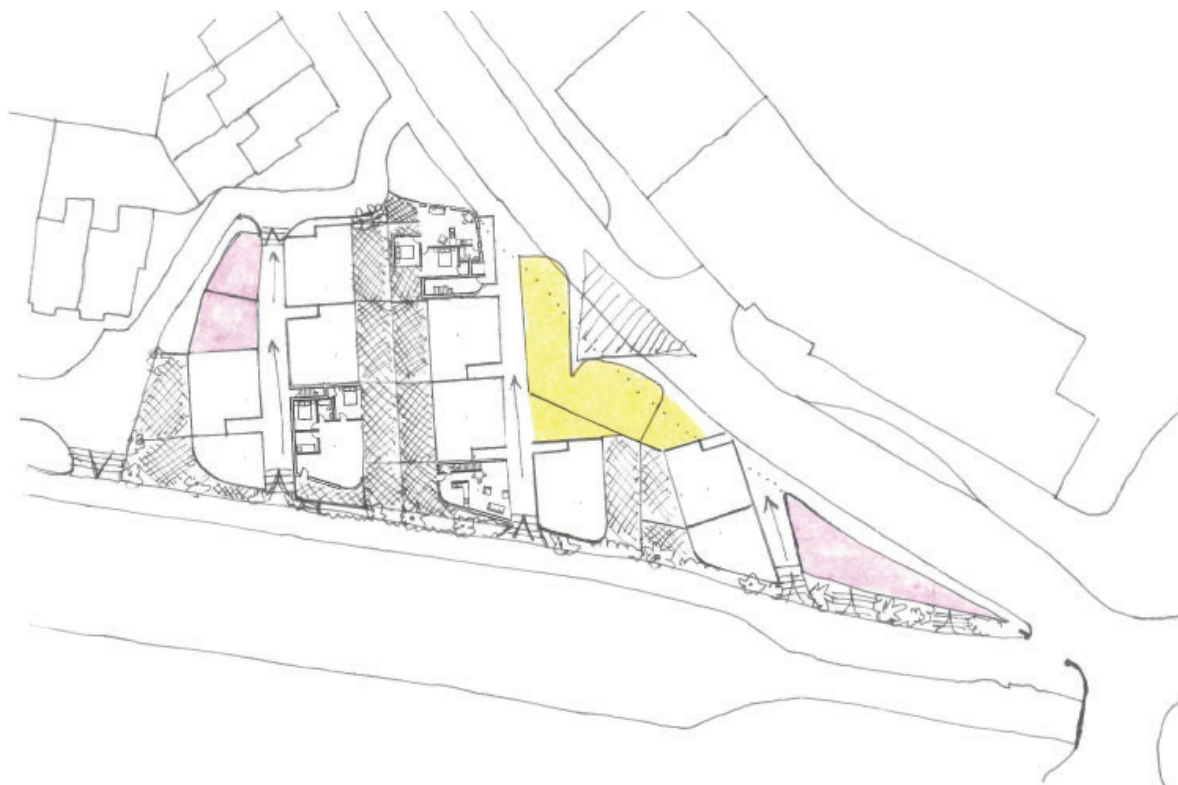


# PROGRAMME



An idea which was very important to me was to have the private gardens facing onto the Royal Canal Walkway. Growing up my Nana's house had a rear garden facing onto the canal line. Instead of a hard wall barrier a boundary was created by a steep slope and the camouflage of trees lining the canal. The soft barrier allowed my cousins and I to create a step-up entrance to the canal line from my Nana's garden essentially expanding our play area and commoning a space together. I wanted the Royal Canal Walkway facing gardens to have a steep step up and a camouflaged edge, negotiating what is the boundary of your private garden.

# PROGRAMME

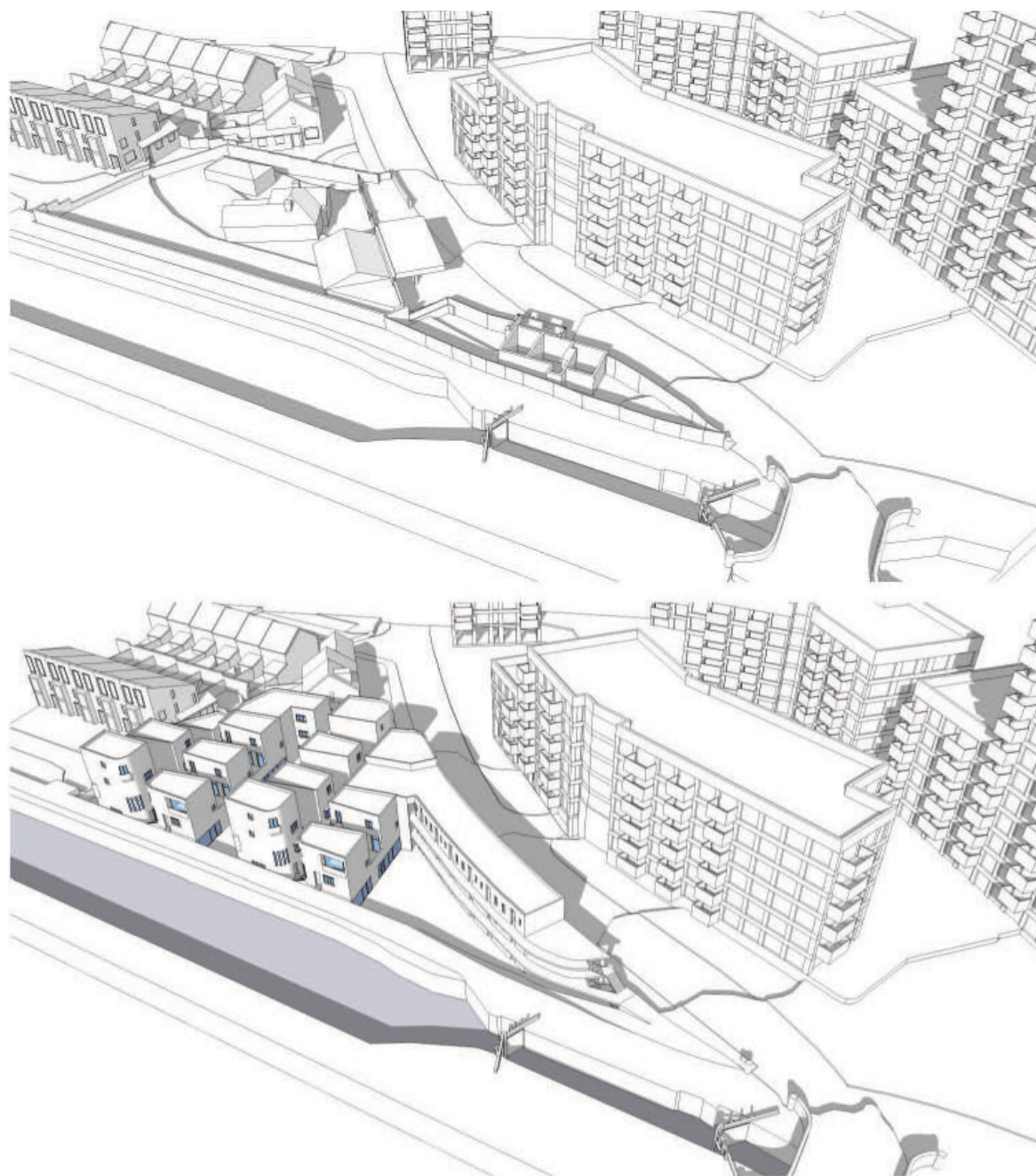


Rotating the axis of the streets from east-west to north-south created even smaller and intimate now all the private ground floor gardens are south facing. Duplexes on top of the apartments accessed from the street could also be supplied with east and west light.



# PROGRAMME

Stage 4 Design



# PROGRAMME

The first housing programme I designed was made up of two free interior spaces intended for workshops/gallery spaces, facing Hamilton View and the 8th Lock Royal Canal Park. Then the north-south streets with front door entrances into the ground floor apartments and stairs up to terraces entering the duplexes. The ground floor private rear gardens have a soft boundary connecting them and a slope up to the canal. The east of the site along Hamilton View contains 18 single room units accessible via a ramp entrance next to the canal bridge with gallery deck circulation and a shared communal space at the end.

In total there are 42 units resulting in 180 units per hectare and a maximum of 121 people able to live on site, however the co-housing units greatly inflate the number.



Ground Floor Plan 1:200



# PROGRAMME



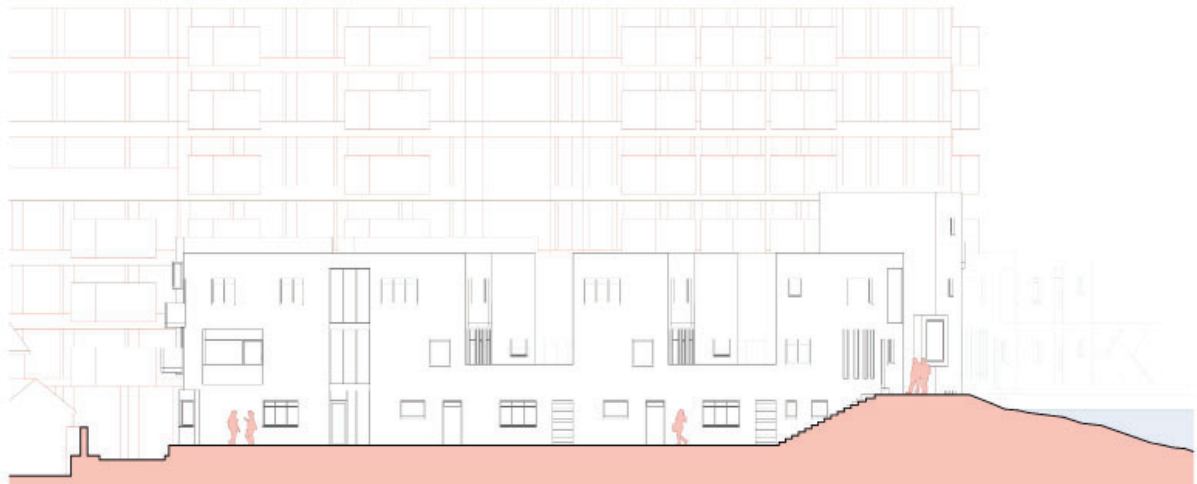
First Floor Plan 1:200



Second Floor Plan 1:200

# PROGRAMME

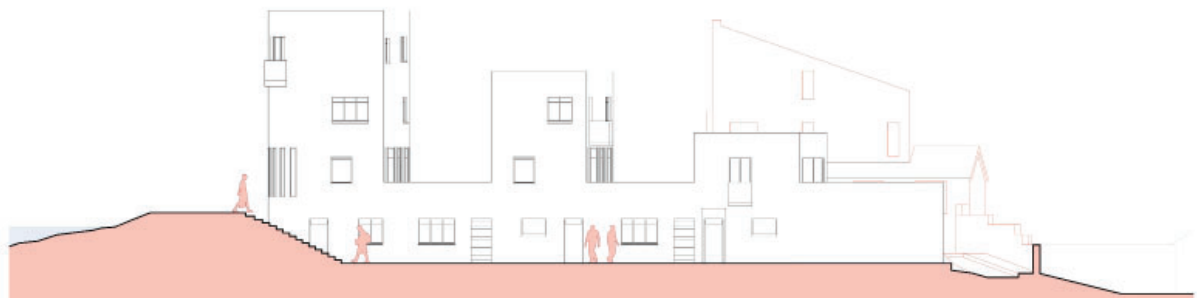
## Street Elevations



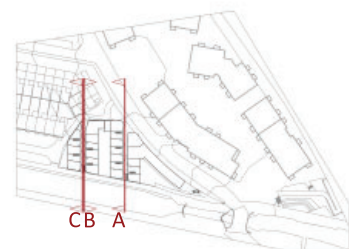
Elevation A 1:200



Elevation B 1:200



Elevation C 1:200



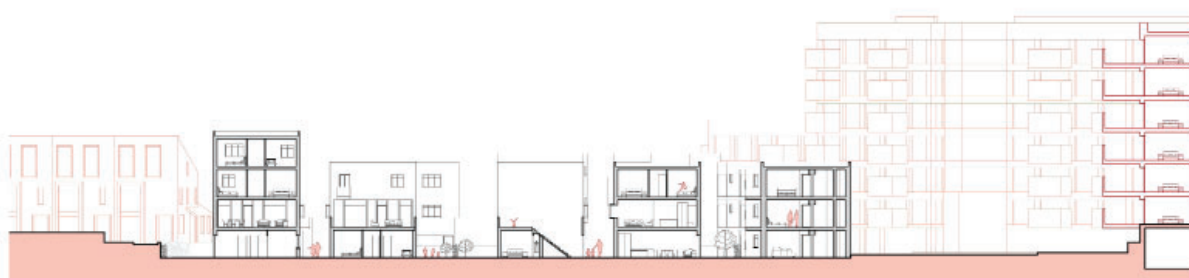


# PROGRAMME

## Elevations and Sections



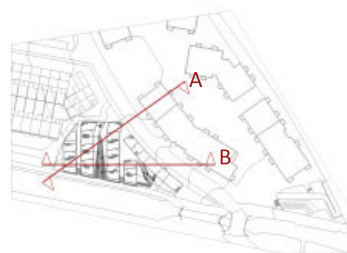
Elevation A 1:200



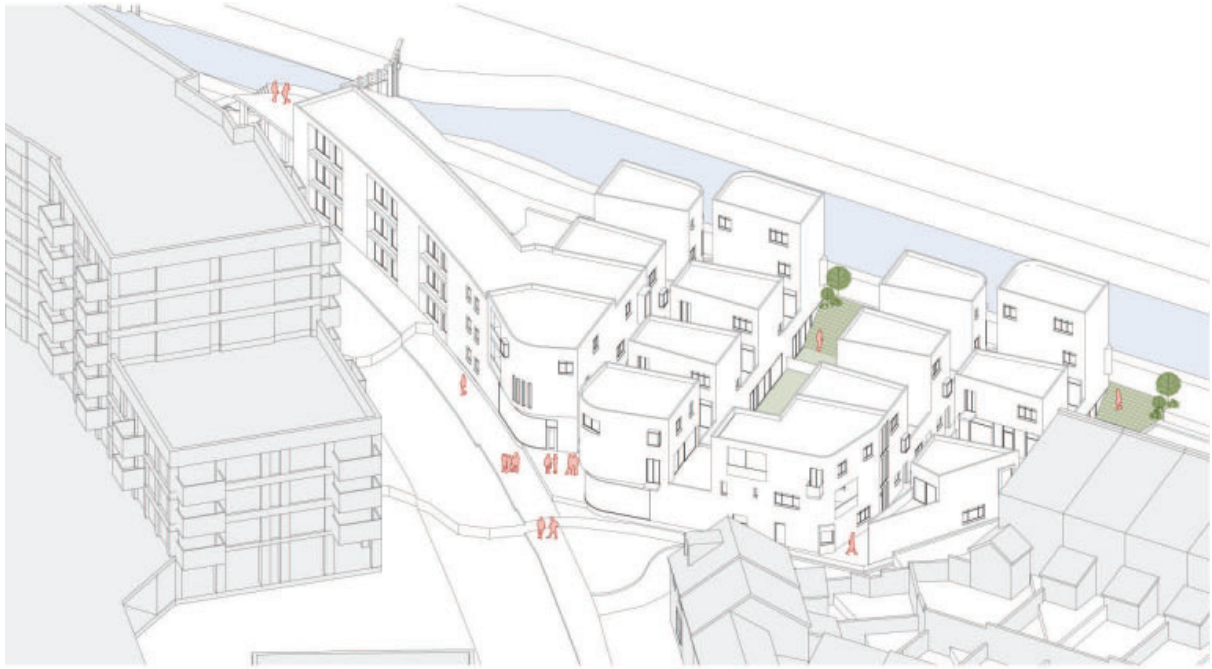
Section B 1:200



Section C 1:200



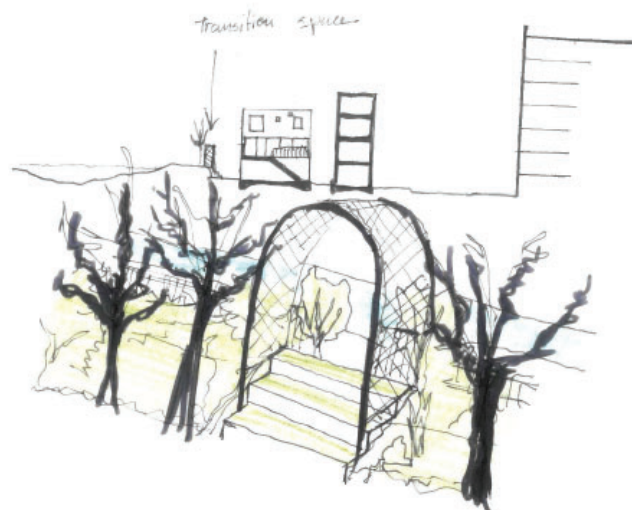
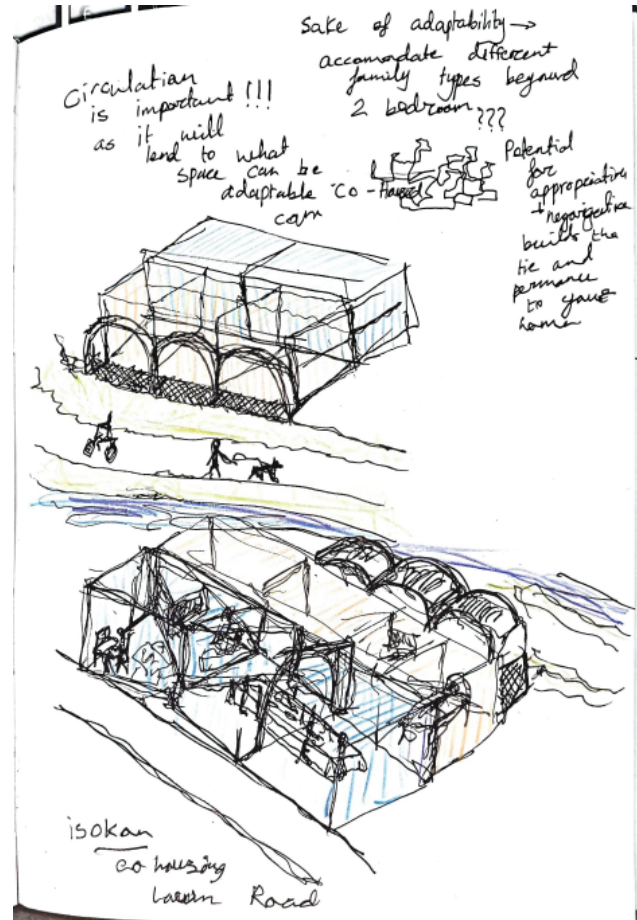
# PROGRAMME





# PROGRAMME

## Stage 5 Refine Design



After stage 4 I shifted my focus back to the initial biggest inspiration I had for the site and that was the connection to the Royal Canal Walkway. I wanted there to be a clear running access from north to south connecting all the rear gardens to the canal.

The soft boundary and running circulation blurs the boundaries of the private gardens. The boundaries are open for negotiation, the negotiating of these boundaries is commoning.

# PROGRAMME

I also axed the co-housing units along Hamilton View and instead focused my attention on creating a wider variety of apartment types. I initially wanted the co-housing units to incorporate the need for adaptability have the boundary walls be up for negotiation. The need for adaptability in housing is important to the lifespan of the home, the home needs to adapt to the changing lifestyles and demographics of the inhabitants who first move in, so it can remain their home for their lifetime. For example, a change in the inhabitant's working practices, an ageing inhabitant or an expanding family (Pelsmakers & Warwick, 2022). Yet rather than provide a large number of single room units, I wanted to provide less units on site with more bedrooms and room for growth within the home. More bedrooms can accommodate growing and shrinking families and living situations. As your situation changes you may not be able to remain in your unit you live in but you can remain among the community you have built ties with.

In total there are 24 units resulting in 103 units per hectare, a much more appropriate housing density, and a maximum of 99 people able to live on site.



Ground Floor Plan 1:200



# PROGRAMME



First Floor Plan 1:200



Second Floor Plan 1:200

# PROGRAMME



Third Floor Plan 1:200

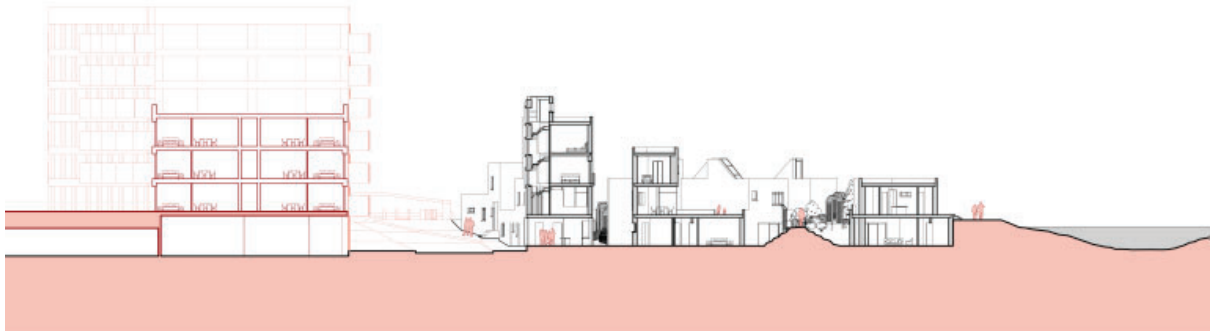


Forth Floor Plan 1:200



# PROGRAMME

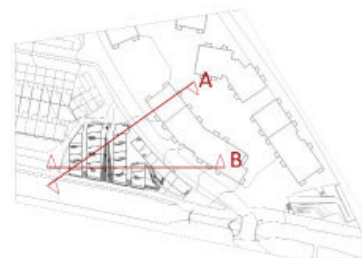
## Sections



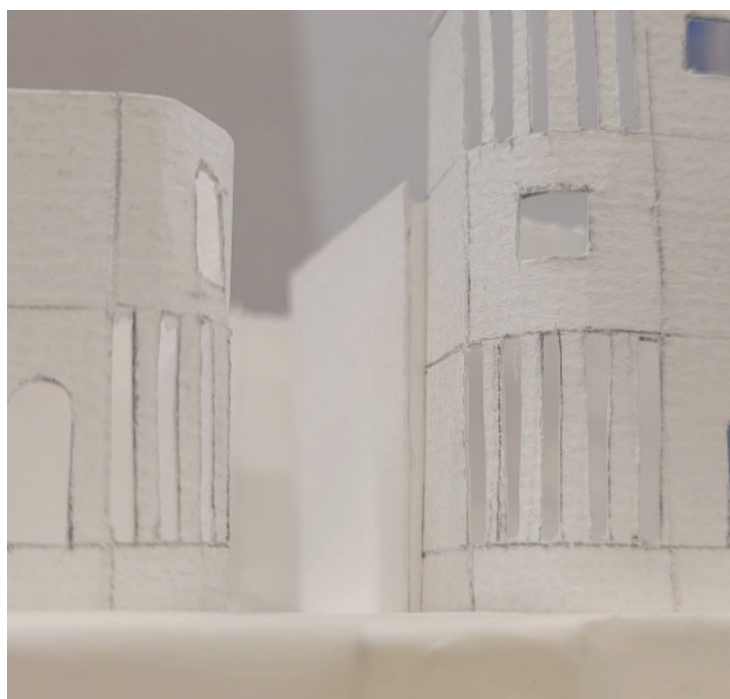
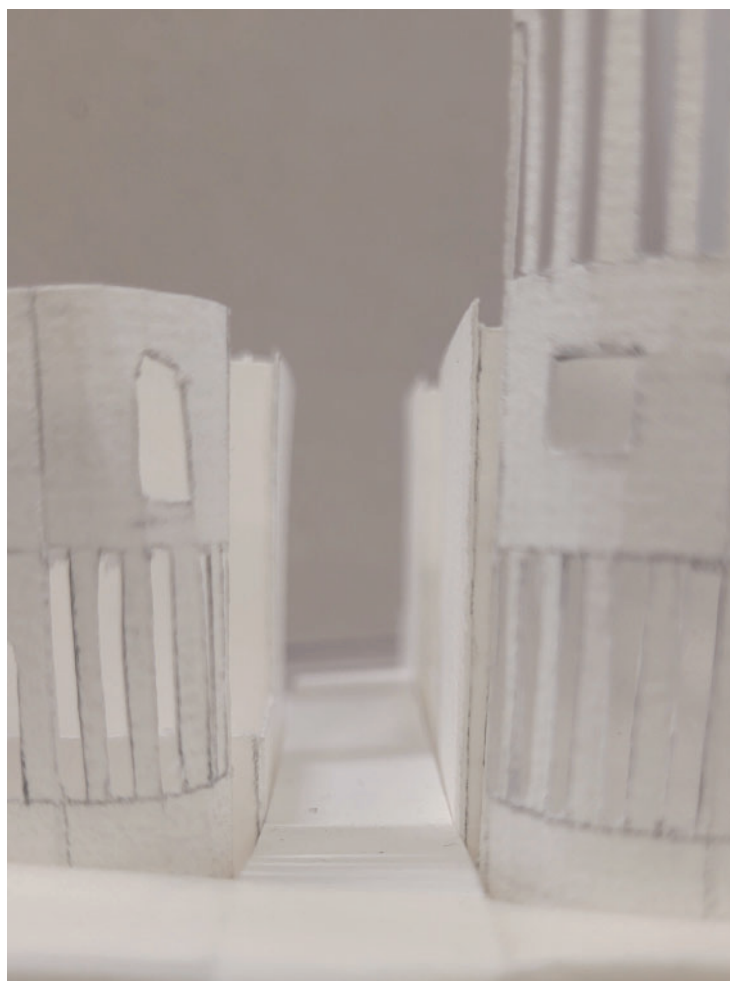
Section A 1:200



Section B 1:200



# PROGRAMME



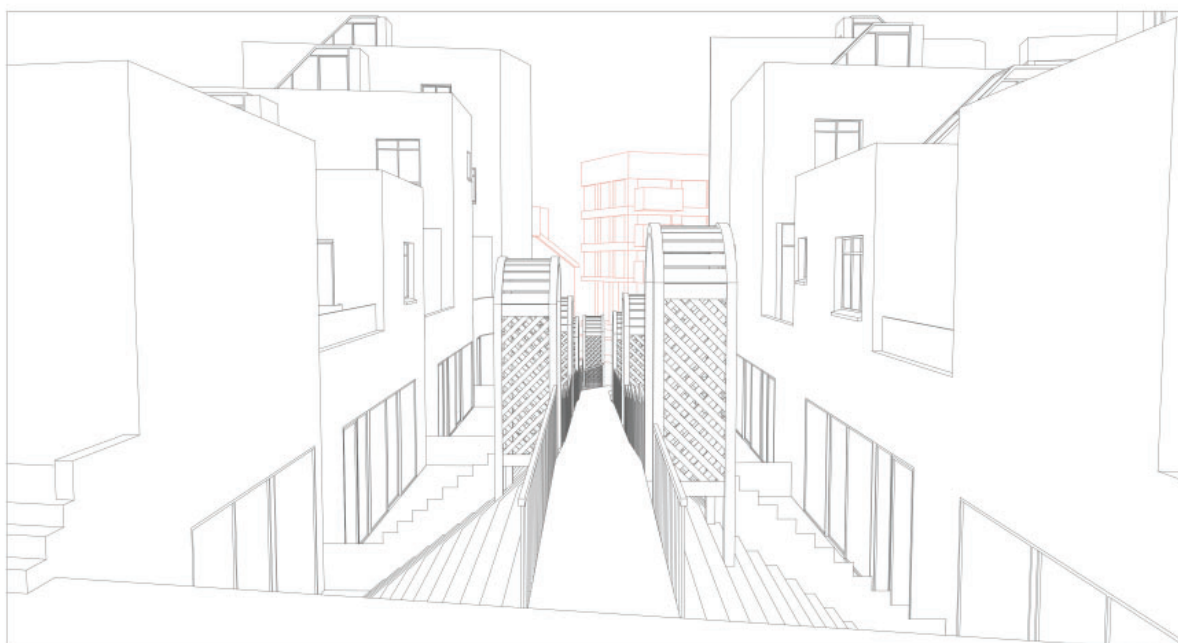
Sketch models of canal laneway entrance



# PROGRAMME



# PROGRAMME



“Boundaries are open for negotiation, the negotiation of these boundaries is commoning.”

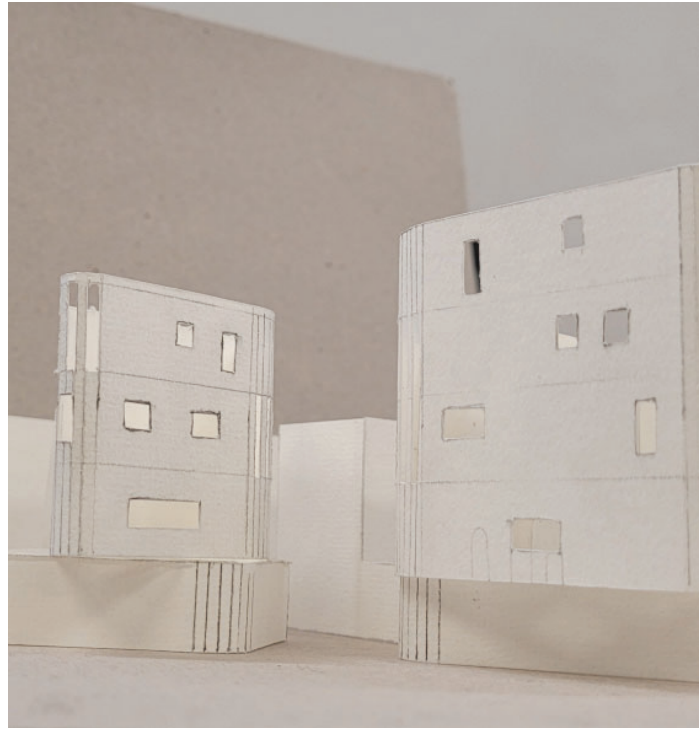
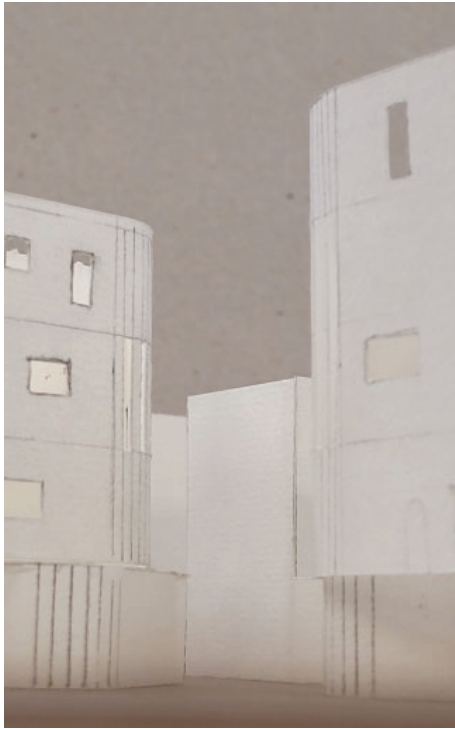


# PROGRAMME





# PROGRAMME

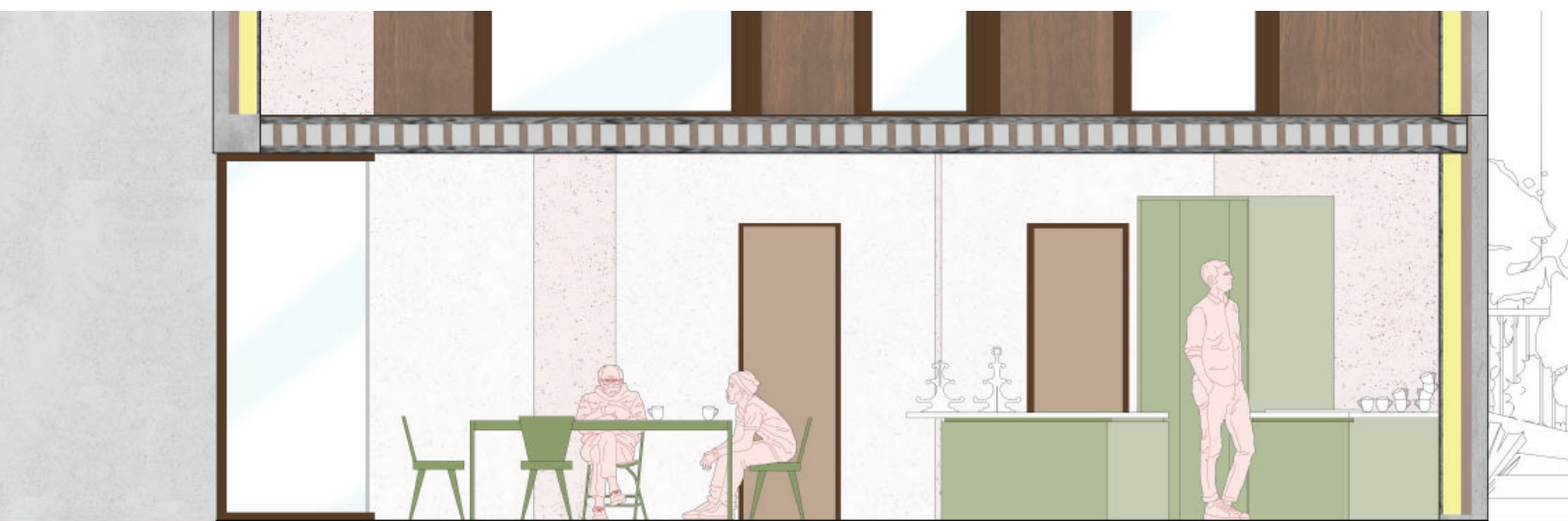


Sketch model of the entrance  
internal commoning areas



Imaginary section of internal commoning are being used as an art studio 1:20

# PROGRAMME



Imaginary section of internal commoning are being used as a shared coffee space 1:20

# PROGRAMME



North-south streets still contain front door entrances into the ground floor apartments and stairs up to terraces some which lead to the front door of duplexes while other are merely semi private spaces available for commoning by the owner of the adjacent duplex or for another reason.



Duplexes now have their own private roof gardens so they maintain the option between their semi public accessible terraces and their own private gardens. Similar to the ground floor apartments which have their street access available for commoning and their rear gardens with canal access.



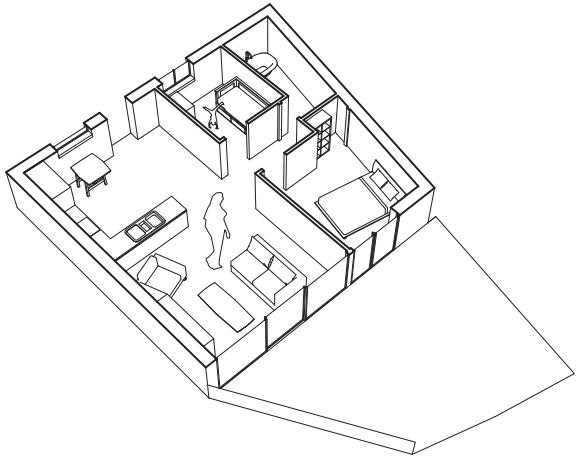
# PROGRAMME



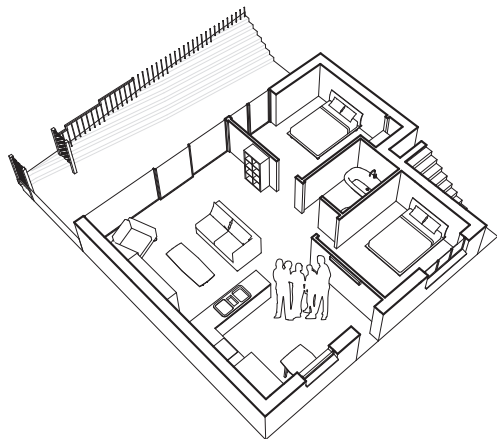
South light facing duplex private roof gardens

# PROGRAMME

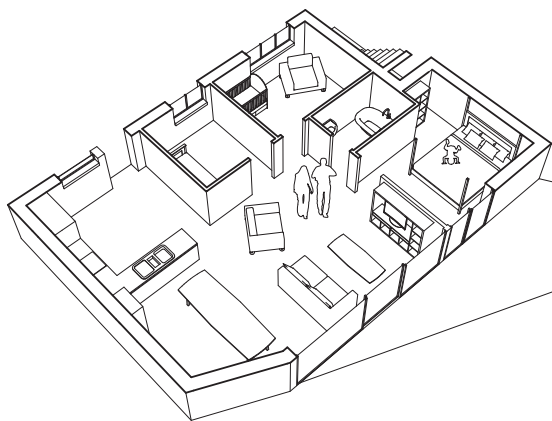
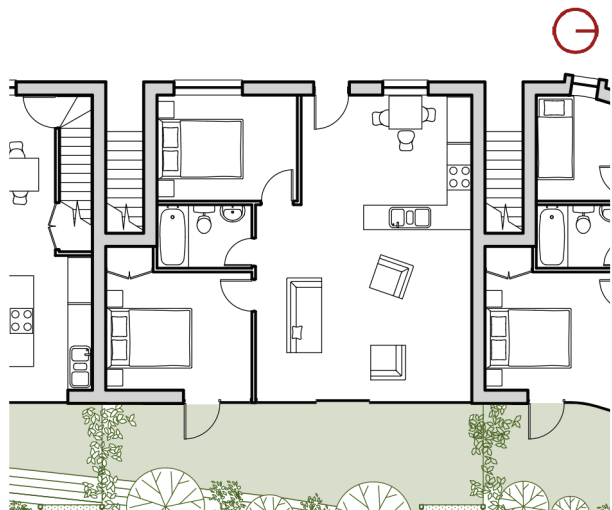
## Apartment Types



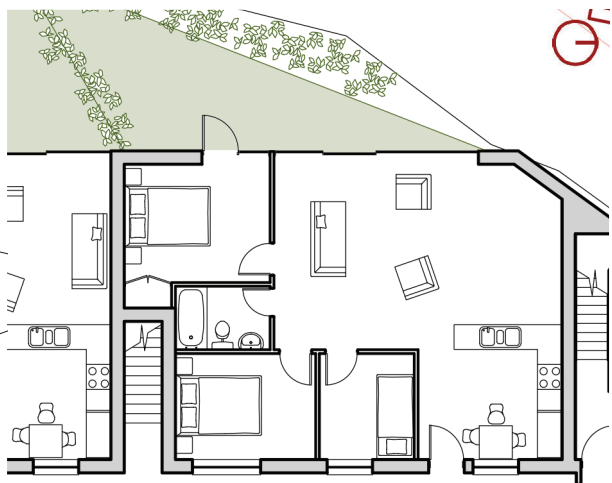
2 bedroom 3 person apartment



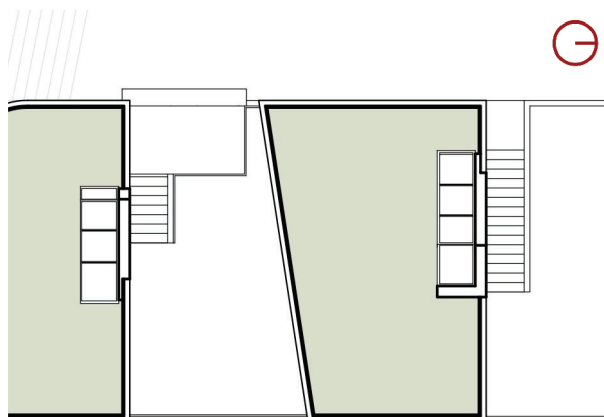
2 bedroom 4 person apartment



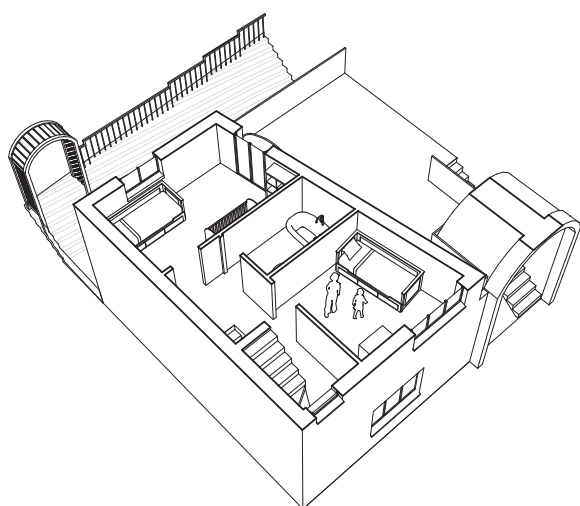
3 bedroom 5 person apartment



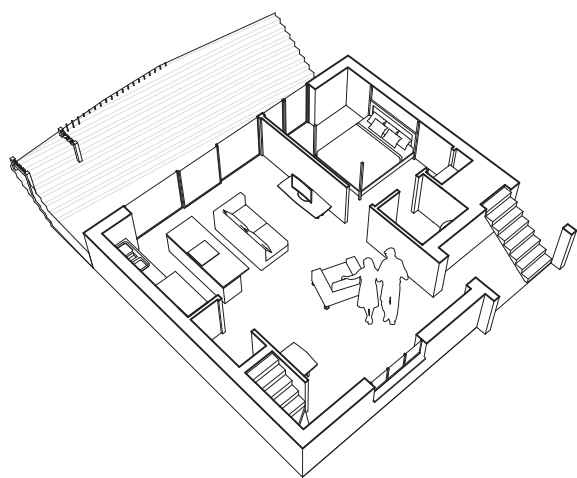
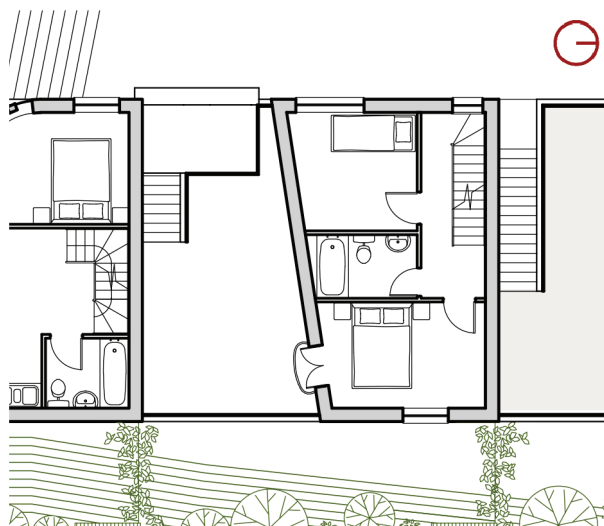
# PROGRAMME



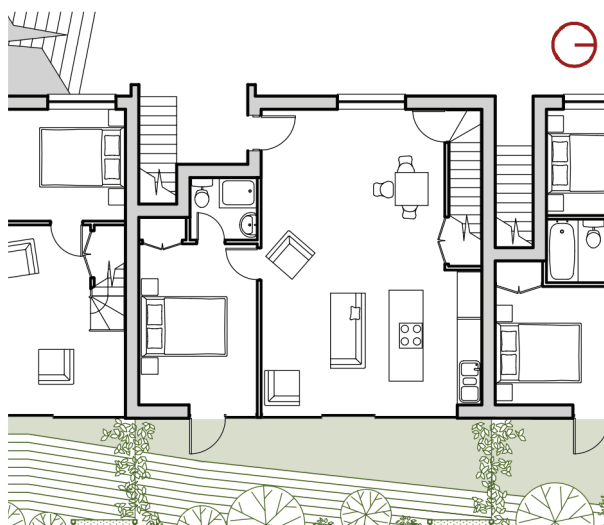
Roof garden



2 bedroom 4 person duplex \_ first floor

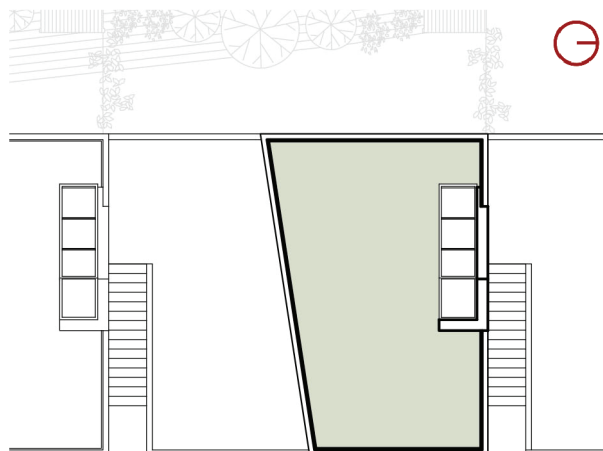


3 bedroom 5 person duplex \_ ground floor

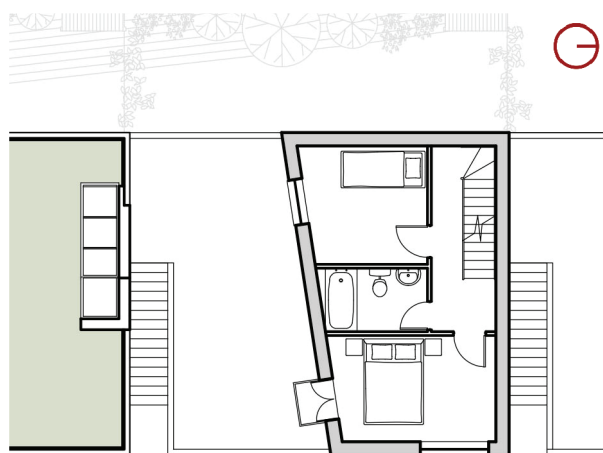




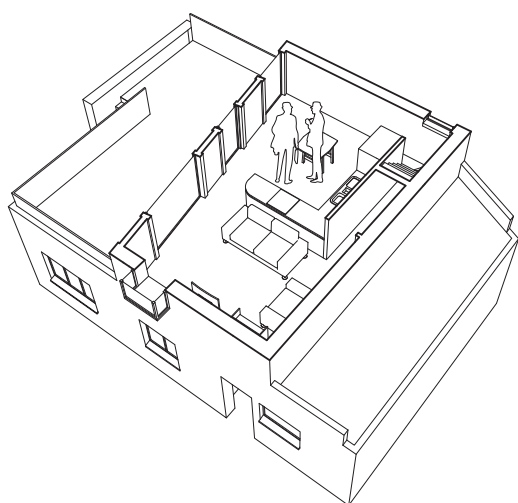
# PROGRAMME



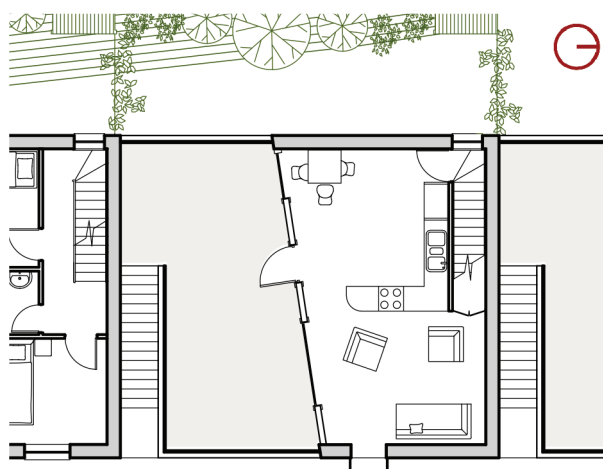
Roof garden



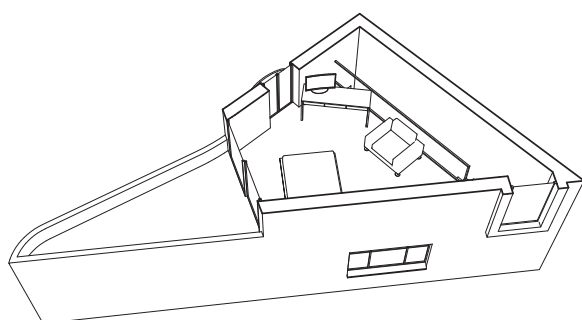
2 bedroom 4 person duplex \_ second floor



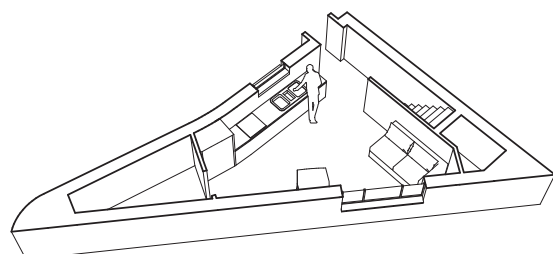
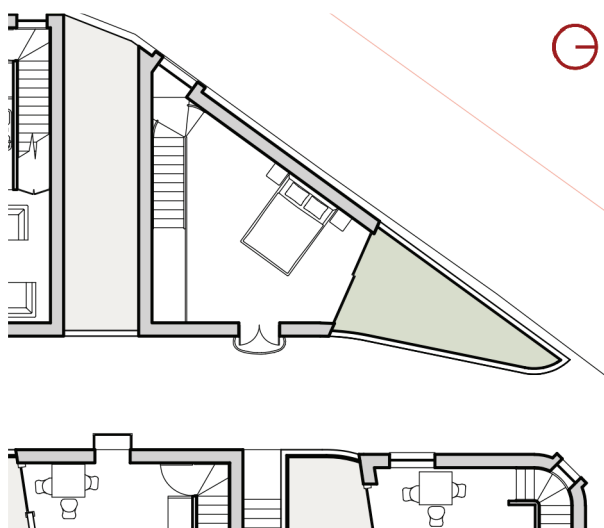
2 bedroom 4 person duplex \_ first floor



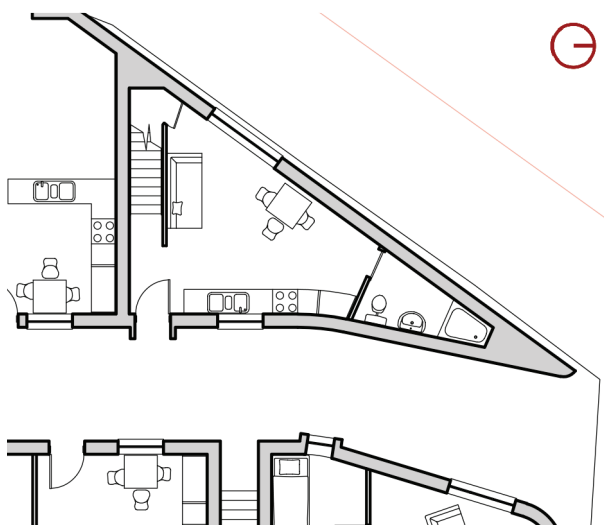
# PROGRAMME



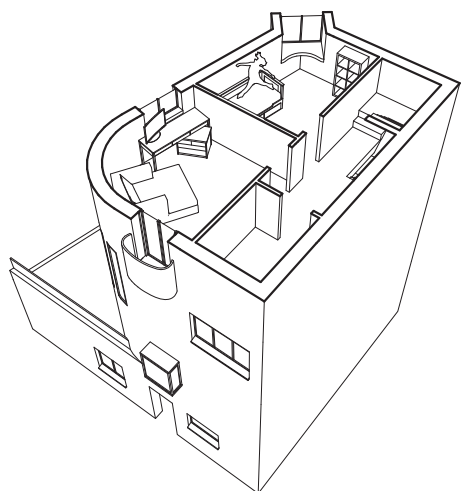
Studio duplex \_ first floor



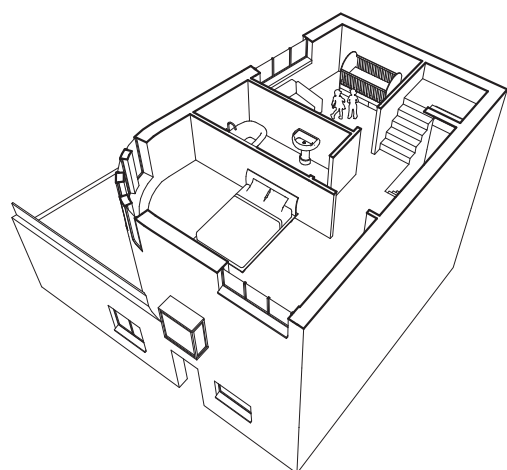
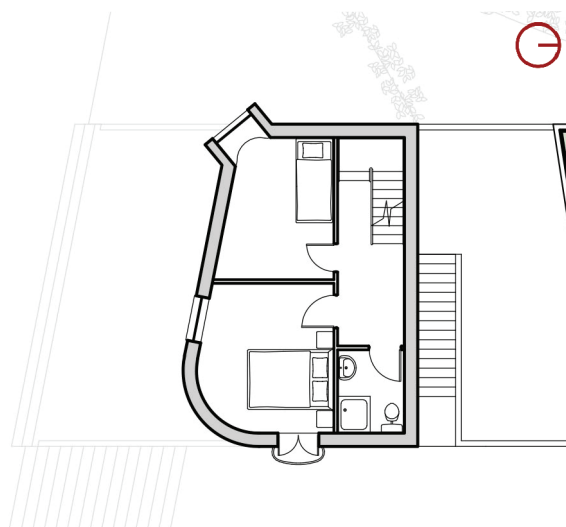
Studio duplex \_ ground floor



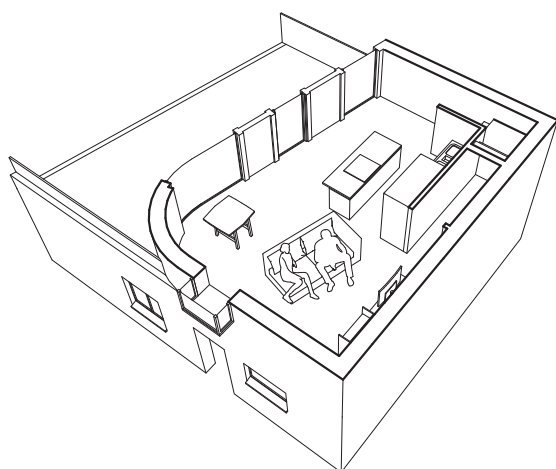
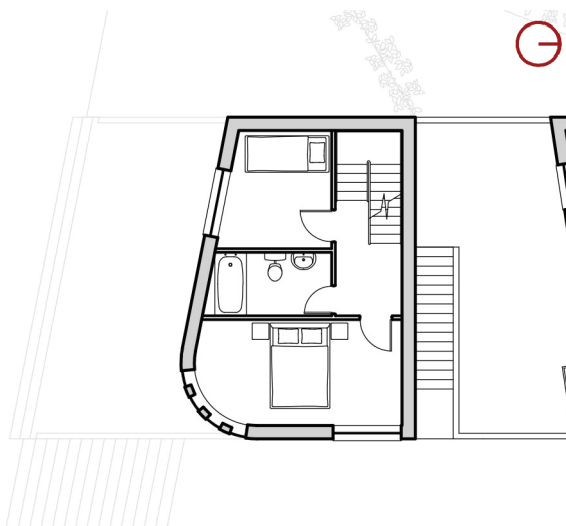
# PROGRAMME



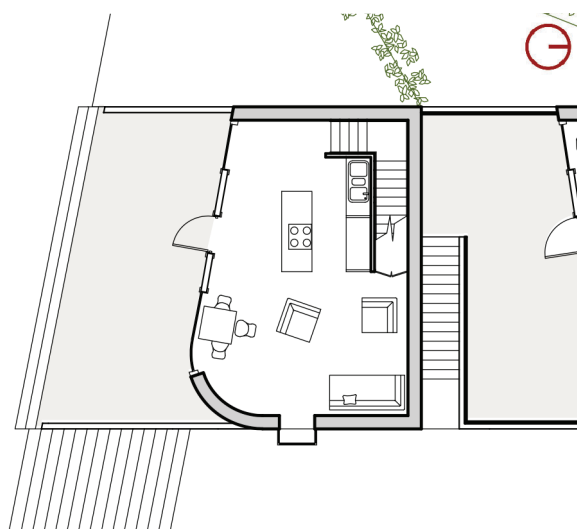
4 bedroom 6 person duplex \_ third floor



4 bedroom 6 person duplex \_ second floor



4 bedroom 6 person duplex \_ first floor





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