

ESALA 2025

Master of Architecture

DOING ENOUGH WITH LESS

INTERVIEW

Kieran Hawkins
Darren Park



NO
DOG
FOULING

Cables Wynd House

Shuyan Zhang



This catalogue is part of a collection published by the Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (ESALA), Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh. It documents student design work produced in the Master of Architecture (MArch) programme in 2024-25. Each catalogue describes one of the following design studios in the MArch programme. The full collection is available to view online at issuu.com/eca.march.

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Doing Enough with Less: Leith

Moving Water: Ebsbjerg

Radical Harvest: Earth/Care/Reuse, Vol. 2

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ESALA 2025

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Children playing in a park in Henderson Gardens, Leith during the 1980s. Cables Wynd House can be seen in the background.

DOING ENOUGH WITH LESS

The Unit is interested in making humane interventions in complex urban sites. Our approach is to accept the city for its messiness.

We left aside grand plans and instead, applied subtle energy to re-configure, layer, and extend what is already there. In the search for continuity, we approached what we found with empathy, care and generosity.

Our research focussed on combinations of carefully chosen materials with differing life cycles to construct civic space, homes, and wild city gardens – doing a lot with relatively little. We took clear-eyed responsibility for how we choose to build, looking to minimise fossil fuels and energy use while contributing to regenerative systems and resources.

In our first project, the Unit worked together on live-build constructions before developing this research into detailed building designs in our second project. To paraphrase Herman Czech – we looked to make buildings that stand there quietly and do nothing. Architecture is background. Life is foreground. We were interested in an architecture of the everyday, the infra-ordinary. Thinking as gardeners, these proposals are intended as generous frameworks to be developed through the imaginations and inhabitations of others.

In an urgent context of climate crises and social inequality, we proposed architectural strategies that were thoughtful, nuanced, useful and maybe beautiful.

The work conducted by this first cohort of ‘Doing Enough with Less’ is considered as a single body of research. The two projects allowed for differing scales of focus. In Project 1, we worked in teams to make structures in the grounds of Cables Wynd House in Leith. We engaged closely with residents of the buildings to develop the brief. Some elements were temporary and demountable. Others are permanent.

In Project 2, we looked at dense social housing projects around Leith. We developed our knowledge of low carbon construction to design three scales of spaces – small interiors, larger halls and urban gardens. Ideas developed during the live builds were explored individually by each student, while simultaneously layering in ideas around circularity and flexibility. The empathy built for residents in Project 1 was fundamental to proposals made in Project 2.

A theoretical and practical framework informed our approach to the design of homes and public space. A ‘Reader’ collated key essays by the likes of Florian Beigel, Robin Evans, and Peter Märkli. A series of workshops by colleagues and friends such as Judith Lösing and Nora Walters helped us to develop attitudes toward observing and making.

Thank you to all contributors, residents, reviewers, workshop staff and of course, to the students for your hard work, empathy, and rigour.

Kieran Hawkins
Darren Park



CABLES WYND HOUSE

Maya Nagayasu



Edinburgh site plan indicating the location of Cables Wynd House

PROJECT ONE: LIVE-BUILD

The live-build project aspired to make a series of structures in dialogue with a group of residents from Cables Wynd House in Leith. These structures, located on the grounds of the social housing block, were intended to be useful, collaborative and inspiring.

Cables Wynd House is currently undergoing a long-term major renovation of the building and surrounding landscape. Students worked in groups to design both permanent and temporary elements to sit within the grounds as they are now, and in the future. The structures and their functions were developed through conversations with residents.

The Unit also took part in consultation with children from the local YMCA group. The children drew firstly on paper and then on concrete slabs with chalk. These drawings were translated onto timber with paintbrushes and chisels with the help of the children.

The live-builds were achieved through an economy of means. Most of the materials used in the timber constructions were waste and surplus materials kindly donated by BE-ST and Napier University.

The assembly processes and materials for each structure were documented with drawings and photographs in a Construction Manual. The Construction Manuals are intended as a generous legacy, an open resource for residents to interpret and develop their own proposals in the future.





KIEFAN HAWKINS AND DARREN PARK GOING ENOUGH WITH LESS: PROJECT 1

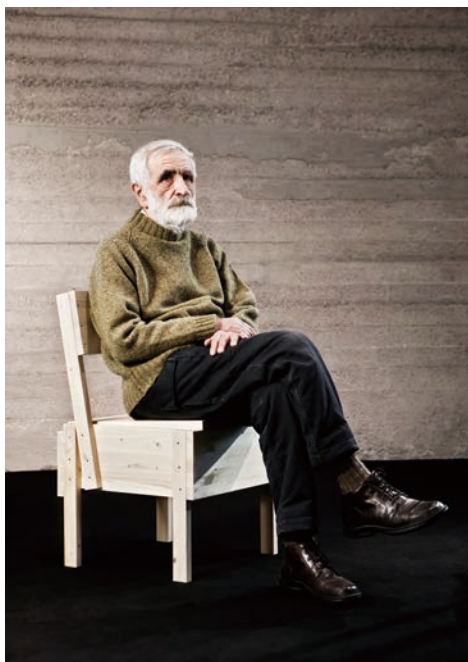
PREFABRICATION

Maya Nagayasu

PRECEDENT STUDY

One of the most iconic contributions of designer Enzo Mari (1932 - 2020) was the Autoprogettazione project, unveiled in 1974. This radical collection of furniture was designed to be built by anyone, using only basic tools and inexpensive, readily available materials like raw pine boards and nails. The name Autoprogettazione roughly translates to “self-design,” emphasizing Mari’s belief that individuals should reclaim agency in creating their own environments. Each piece was accompanied by open-source plans, not as a finished product, but as an invitation: build it yourself, learn by doing, and understand the value of design through making.

The first group project served as an introduction to construction, with the furniture placed on the grounds of Cables Wynd House to gauge how residents would engage with them. Their reactions provided valuable insight into how a future live-build project might be received.



Enzo Mari photographed sitting on his Autoprogettazione chair in 2010. (left)

An interpretation of Mari's Sedia Duo chair (top right)

A reconstruction of Mari's table finished with a chalk board surface (middle right)

An interpretation of Mari's Sedia Uno chair coloured using beetroot dye. (bottom right)





ENZO MARI PRECEDENT STUDY

Joshua Howard



01

PROJECT 599

BETWEEN TWO TREES

INKA EISMAR
TERRY FENG
XINNING HUANG
MAYA NAGAYASU
MHAIRI WELSH
LIBING ZHU

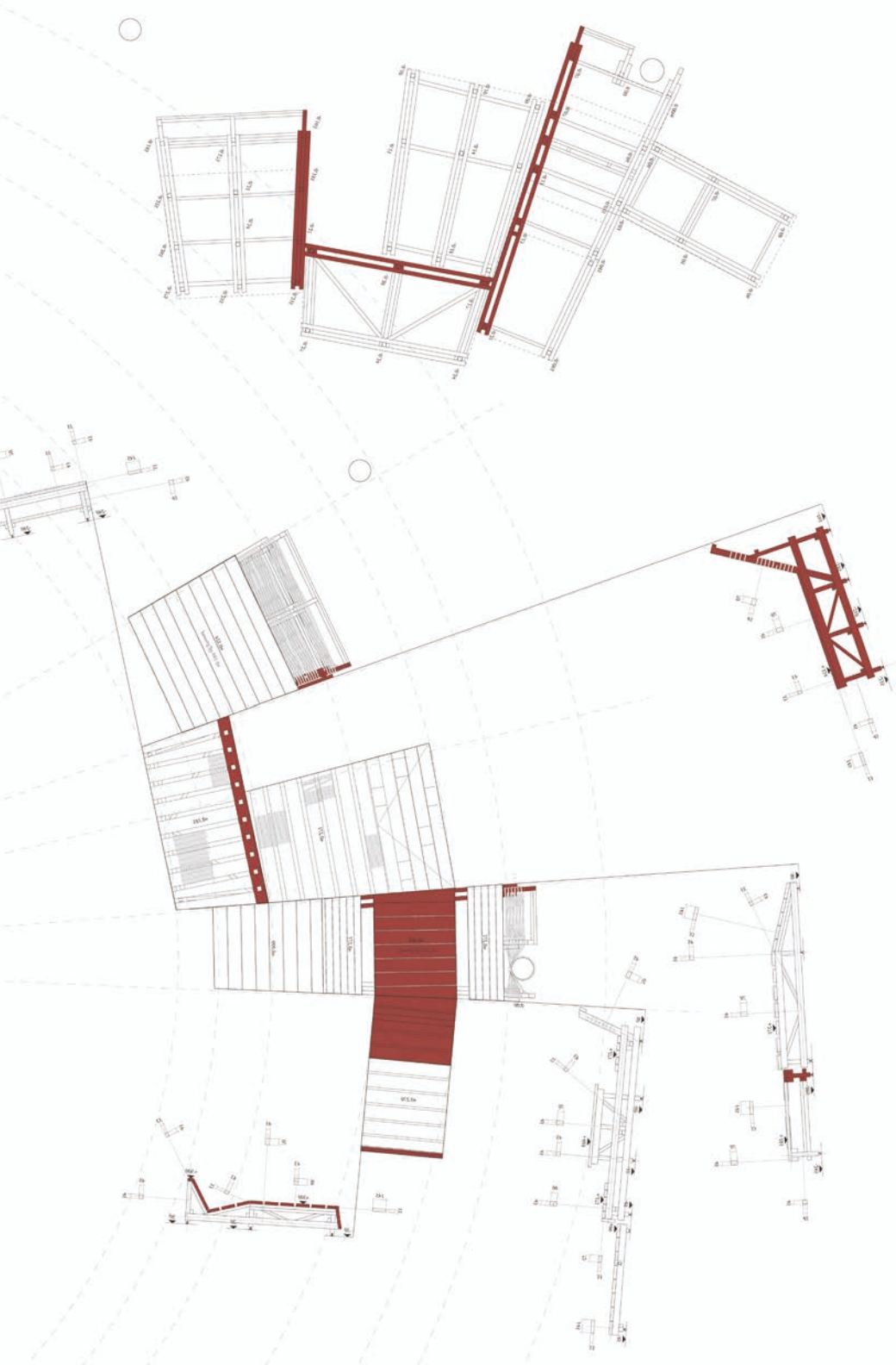
Project 599 is a community-designed seating structure located at the south end of Cables Wynd House, nestled between two trees on a leafy square overlooking the basketball court.

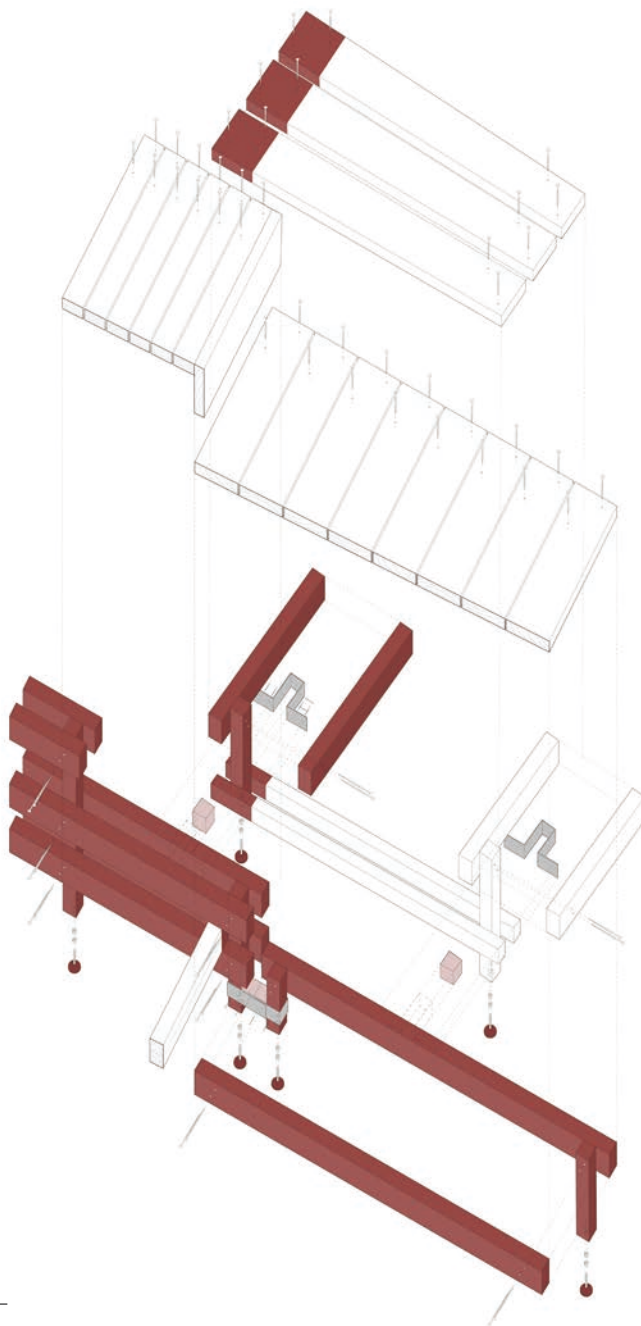
Developed in collaboration with local residents, the project transforms a previously underused corner of the square into a vibrant gathering space. A series of stepped timber platforms – designed for both play and rest – offer varied seating options tailored to people of all ages, from young children to parents and teenagers. Each platform takes the form of a trapezoidal module, arranged in a radial layout inspired by the curve of the adjacent fence, itself a subtle echo of the iconic ‘banana flats’ footprint.

The platforms follow the arc of the fence, creating framed views toward Cables Wynd House and down to the Shore. Constructed from prefabricated timber, the platforms are supported by posts with adjustable feet, allowing them to sit level on the uneven cobbled surface. Reclaimed climbing rope is intricately woven around the structures to form seats and backrests, and extends into the surrounding trees and fences to emphasize key sightlines and pathways.

The name of the project is a nod to the core design constraint: a reference to the 600mm threshold in Scottish and English building regulations, above which a handrail becomes a legal requirement.







Combined plan and sectional drawing of proposed modules (previous)

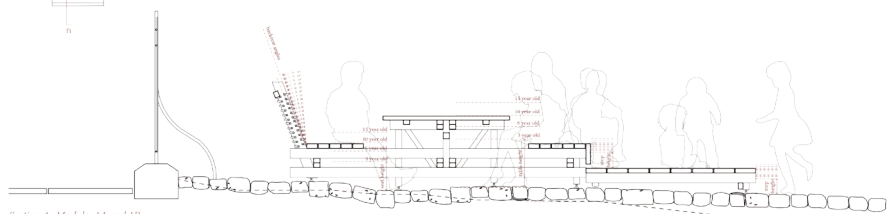
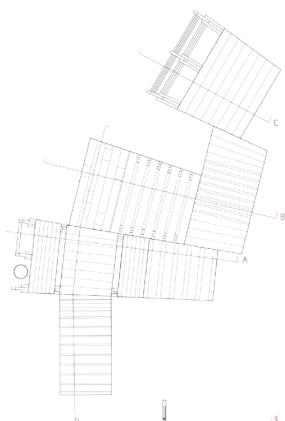
Module joining detail drawing (top)

Prefabrication of modules (above right)

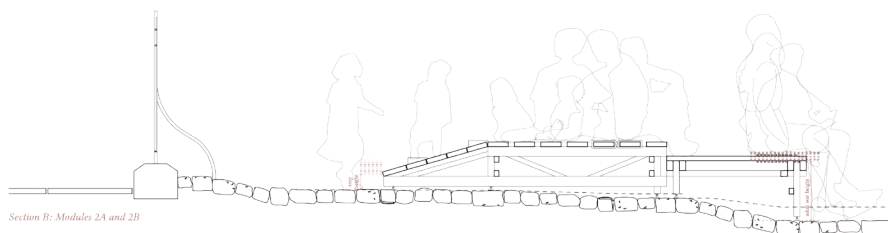
On-site weaving of the reclaimed climbing rope seat backing (below right)



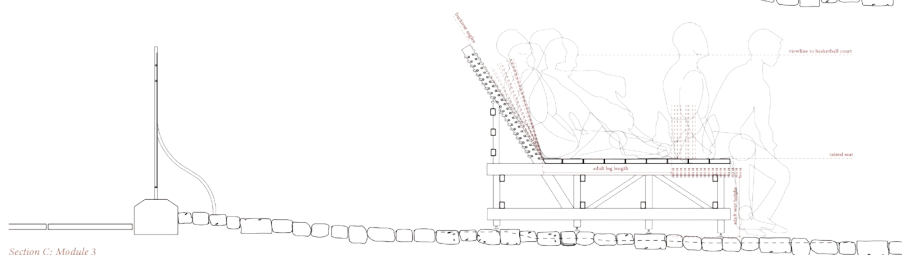




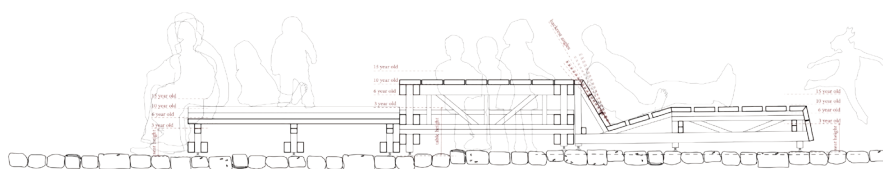
Section A: Modules 1A and 1B



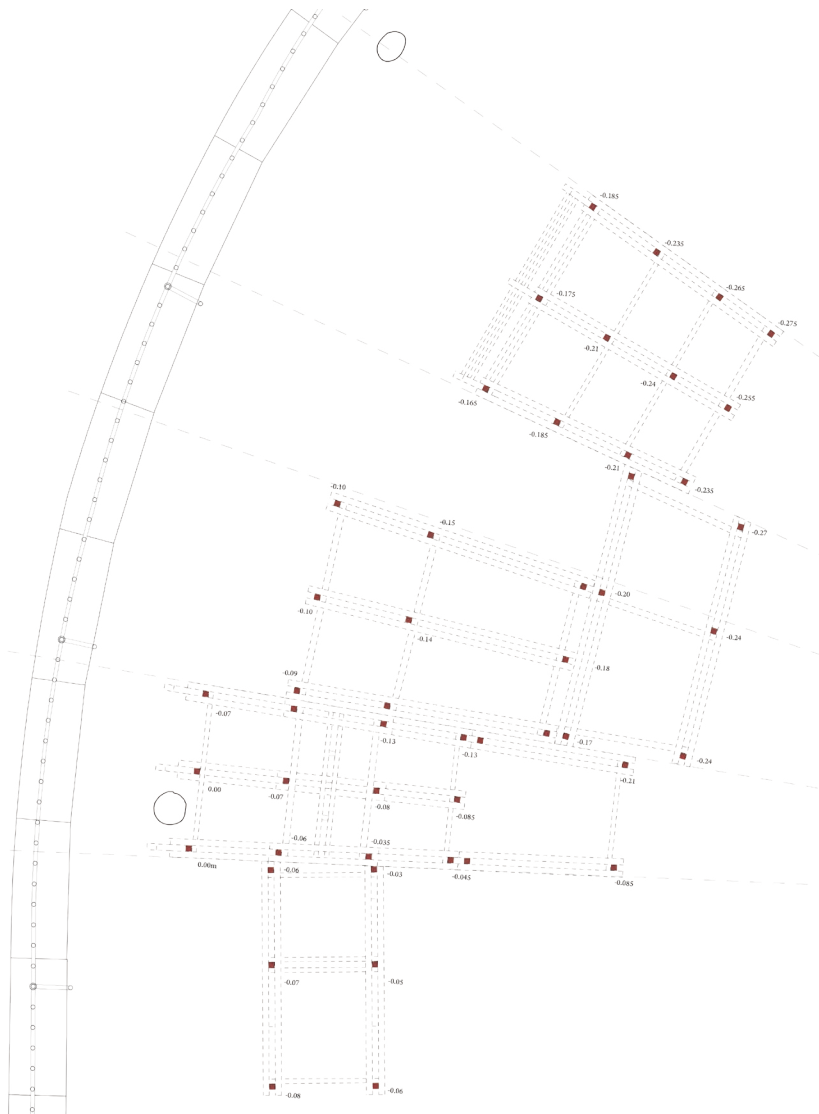
Section B: Modules 2A and 2B



Section C: Module 3



Section D: Modules 0, 1A and 2A



Module O positioned to overlook Henderson Gardens Park (previous left)
 Visualizing biometric test results to determine optimal seatback angles (previous right)
 Foundation plan indicating position of feet (above)
 Local children pictured engaging with the live-build (right)





02

CABLES WYNDBREAK

COLL DRURY
EVIE HALL
LEVINE MOTAMEDI
CELIA OPERA
MARIA PEREZ CABALLER BAEZA
JOSHUA ROCHE
JUNZHE ZHANG

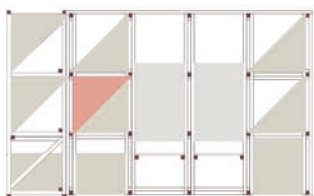
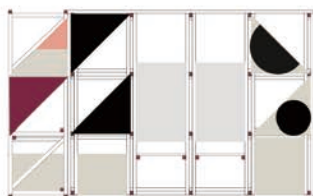
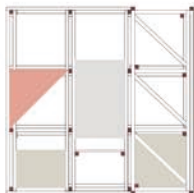
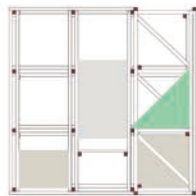
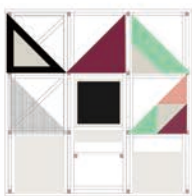
Cables Wyndbreak is a timber windbreak and seating installation at Cables Wynd House in Leith, Edinburgh, designed to provide shelter and improve comfort for residents waiting near a taxi pick-up point. Initially proposed as a large canopy, the structure was reimagined as a more grounded windbreak in response to safety, scale, and site limitations.

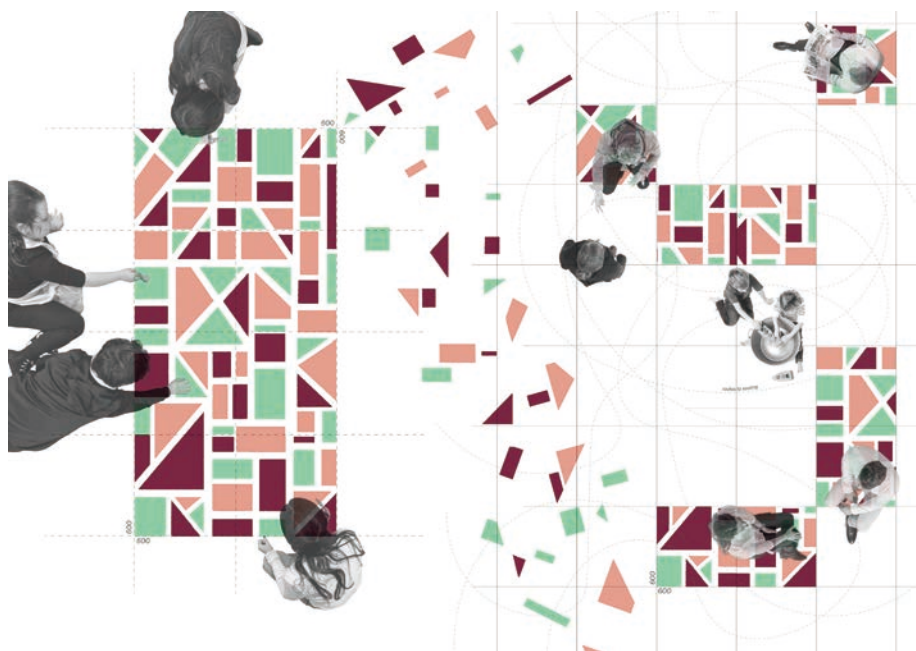
The final design features a repeated timber truss system clad in anti-climb triangular panels and accompanied by modular cube seating. These cubes match the 600x600mm grid of the site's existing paving and can be moved and rearranged by users, encouraging playful and flexible interaction. Some surfaces are painted with chalkboard paint, allowing residents - especially children - to personalise and reimagine the space over time.

A vibrant, geometric paint design - co-created with children from the local YMCA - extends across both the seating and the ground, visually linking two key areas of the site and creating a sense of continuity and identity. Prefabrication of the structure off-site ensured safe, efficient assembly.

Cables Wyndbreak exemplifies how modest, community-responsive design can activate public space. Through durable materials, modularity, and participatory artwork, the project invites ongoing engagement and enriches everyday life for residents of this iconic housing block.

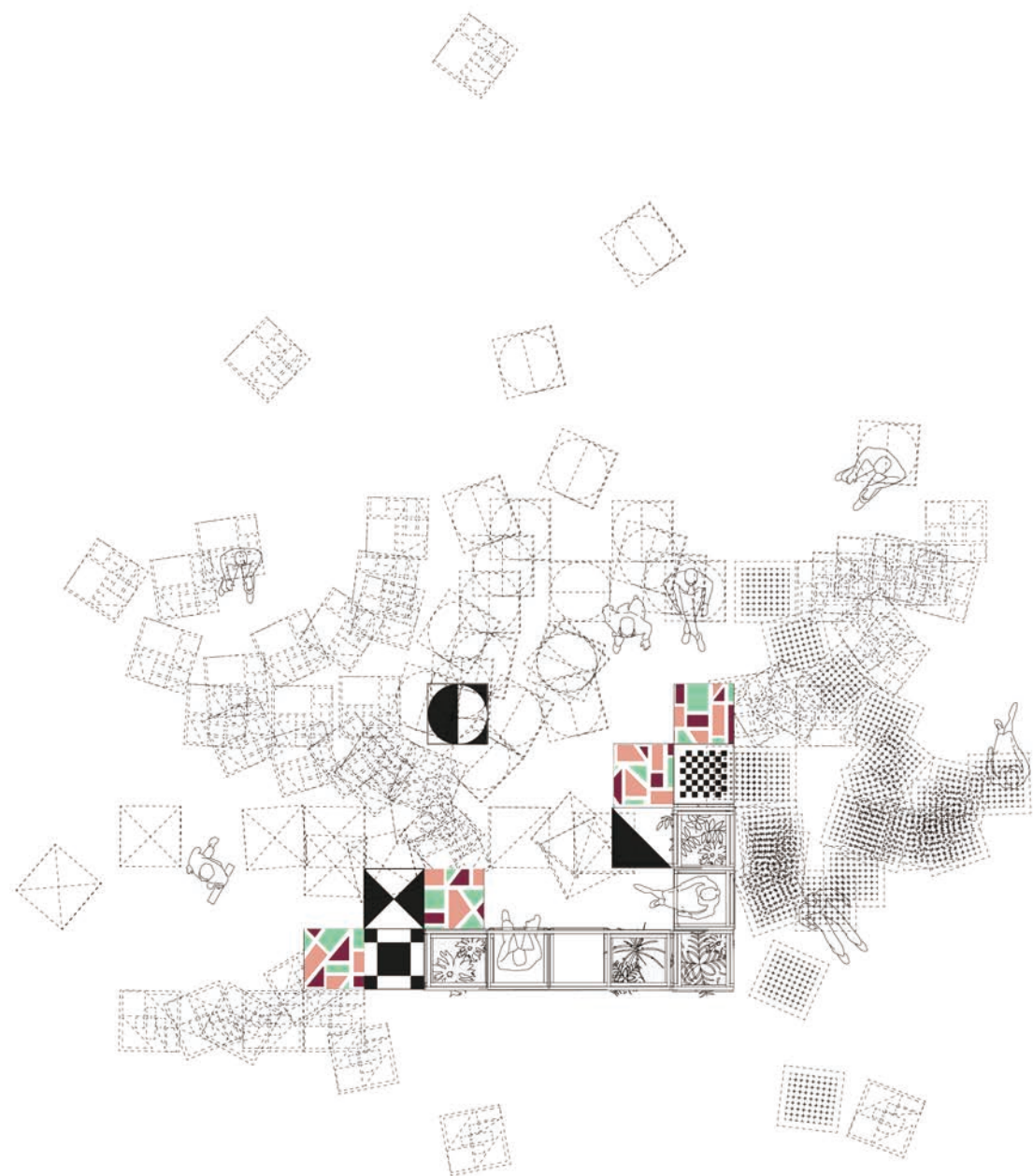














Painting activities with children from YMCA (top)

03

POINTS OF PAUSE

BOLLARD BENCHES | CIRCULAR BENCHES

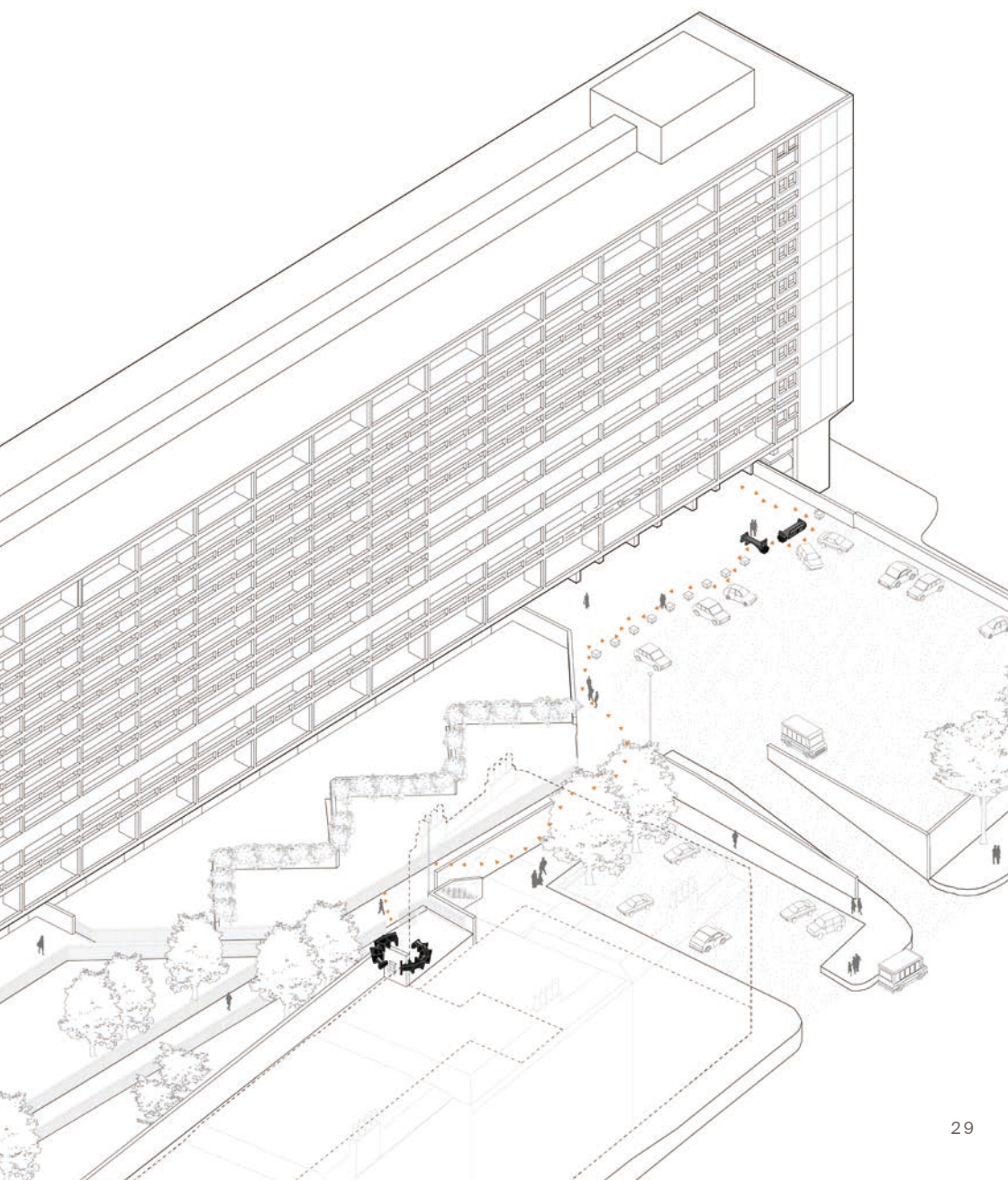
JOSHUA HOWARD
BINGZHI LI
LUKE PEARCE
RUOXIN TAN
SHUYAN ZHANG
SHIYU ZHANG

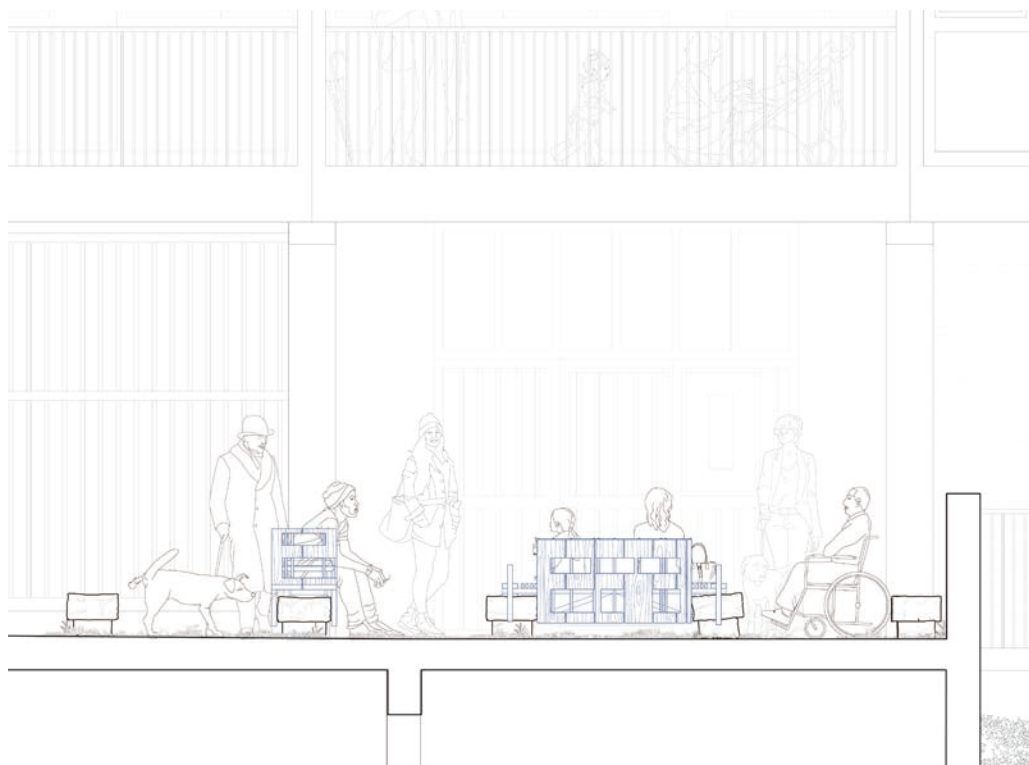
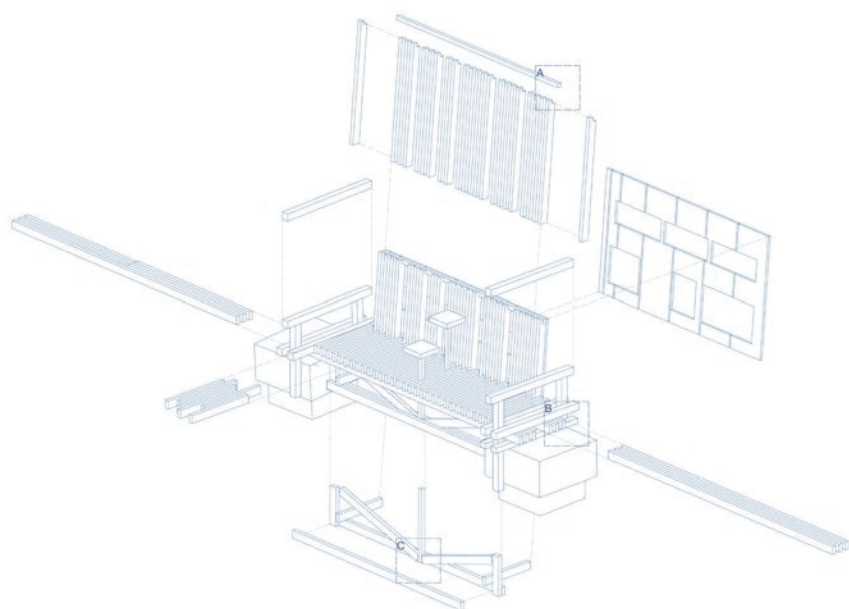
Points of Pause is a community-driven furniture project comprising two distinct bench installations, developed in close collaboration with local residents of the Cables Wynd House in Leith, Edinburgh. Positioned in previously overlooked corners of the site - one near the car park at the back entrance gate, and the other within the disused community garden - the project reimagines these spaces as points for rest and interaction.

The Bollard Benches, located between the car park and the back entrance, serve as a waiting area while also creating a clear spatial buffer between vehicles and pedestrians. Utilising the existing concrete bollards as anchoring points, the timber-framed seating structure was installed above, transforming a functional necessity into a layered, communal threshold that improves community and accessibility.

The Circular Benches occupy the site of a once-active community garden that featured a small free library but had since fallen into disuse. This intervention aims to reactivate the space through integrated planting and seating, inviting residents to linger and reconnect. Constructed with solid CLT panels, the design offers a strong and grounded presence, establishing a new focal point of mass and warmth within the surrounding landscape.

Together, the two benches provides new possibilities for the community - providing both convenience and connection to the neighbourhood.

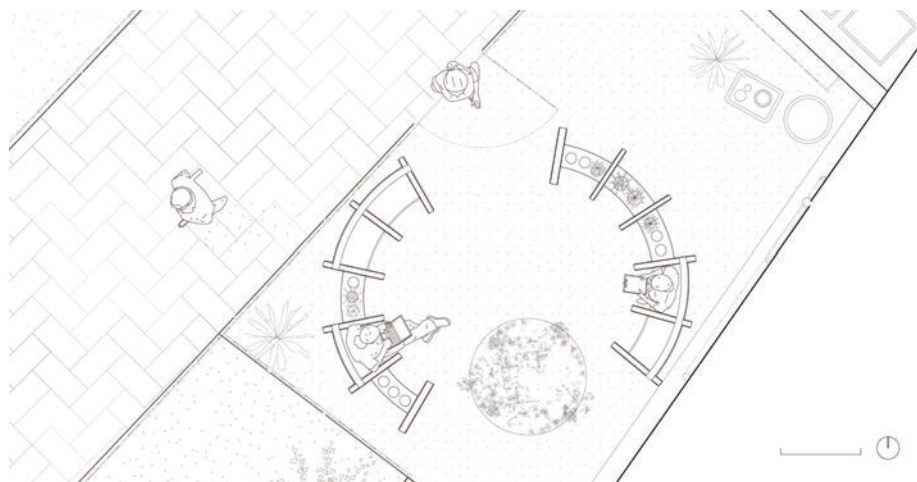
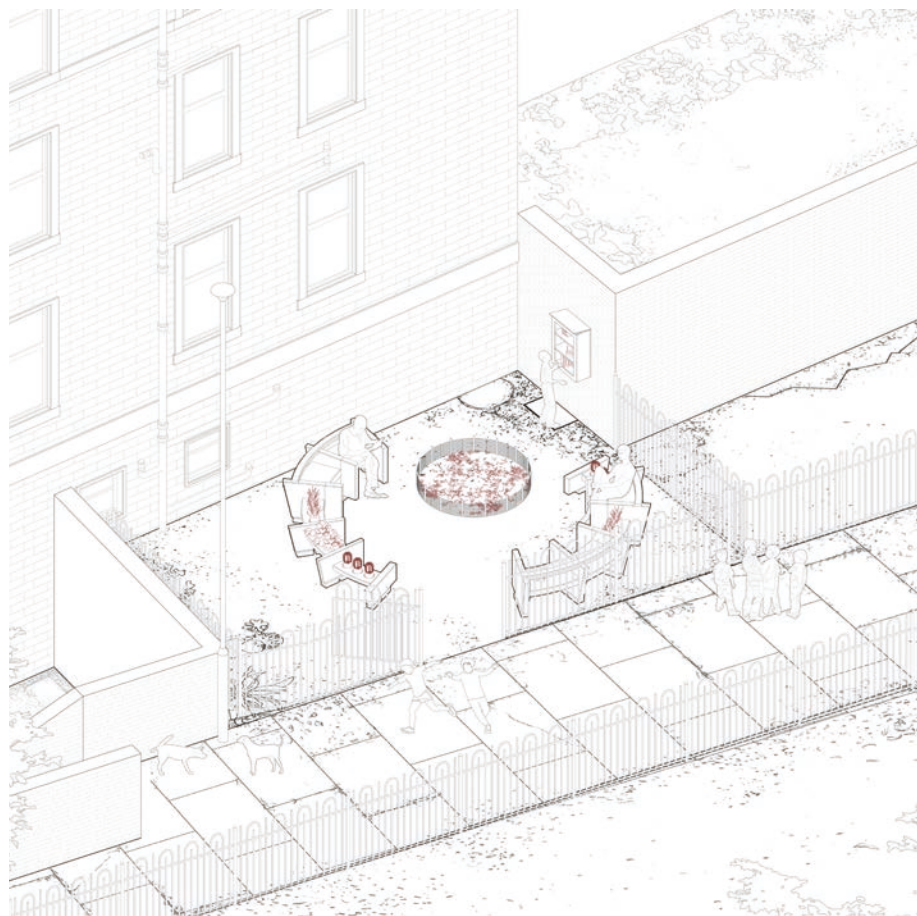








CIRCULAR BENCH
Fredrik Frendin









Siedlung Ried, Niederwangen by Atelier 5 (1990)

PROJECT TWO: PROPOSALS FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

In Project 2, we looked to apply the lessons learned in Project 1 to the design of housing, industrial spaces, and gardens on sites in Leith. Three brownfield sites were selected which are vacant or have low density industrial uses.

The main aim of the design project was to develop imaginative and aspirational streets, spaces and buildings that sensitively and willingly engage with their context and situation. These proposals would form a new backdrop to civic life.

These projects were not definitive or presumptive. The proposals documented in this catalogue created generous frameworks designed for an unknown future. In a time of constant change, the projects were considered as a series of layers with their own temporal dimensions. These intelligent buildings were adaptable, re-usable, and open to re-configuration. Load-bearing structures were designed as frames and stages, anticipating long-term flexibility and adaptability. Loose-fit layers were demountable from structures for insulating, weatherproofing, servicing, and functional needs.

In the first half of the semester, the Unit developed parallel research strands: Construction, Client, Typology, Context and Texts. Six key housing references from c20 and c21 were instrumental in developing a quietly radical approach to what it means to live today.

In the second half of the semester, we focussed on the design of individual student projects. We iterated proposals through a combination of hand drawings, physical models, digital modelling and image making.

The final projects developed by the students are rigorous and credible. They offer another approach to social housing and industry in the city, one that values empathy, generosity and people.

An architectural site plan of the Pitt Street area in Leith. The plan shows various building footprints, some with internal room divisions. A street labeled 'PITT STREET' runs horizontally across the middle. To the right, a street labeled 'GRANTON ROAD' runs vertically. A street labeled 'WARRIOR LINE' is visible at the top. A row of trees is depicted along the bottom edge of the main building area. The overall style is a technical line drawing with some areas shaded in light grey.

01

PITT STREET

INKA EISMAR
TERRY FENG
XINNING HUANG
MAYA NAGAYASU
MHAIRI WELSH
LIBING ZHU

Pitt Street was once home to the vibrant Pitt Street Market, a community-driven street food and events space that brought life and activity to this post-industrial corner of Leith. The market served as a temporary and creative reactivation of the site, drawing on Leith's grassroots culture and history of trade and gathering. However, the market has since relocated to Granton, leaving behind a site that is now characterised by a mix of disused and deteriorating industrial buildings. These structures, remnants of Leith's industrial past, stand as physical markers of a once-thriving economic zone that has struggled to find new purpose.

Today, Pitt Street sits at a crossroads, caught between its historical significance, recent cultural re-use, and an uncertain future, making it a compelling site for architectural intervention that considers both its layered history and its potential for reinvention.



Existing site plan (left)

The derelict warehouses on Pitt Street, captured in their current state of disuse (top)

The collapse of the street front along Pitt Street (bottom left)

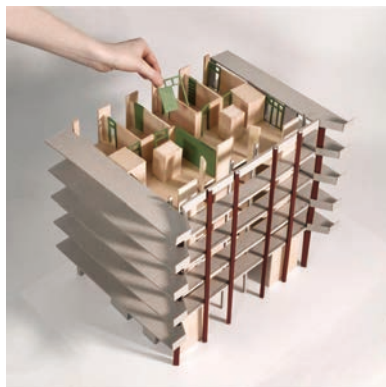
The Pitt Street - South Fort Street junction (bottom right)

Site: Pitt Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

01A

ROOM TO GROW

INKA EISMAR

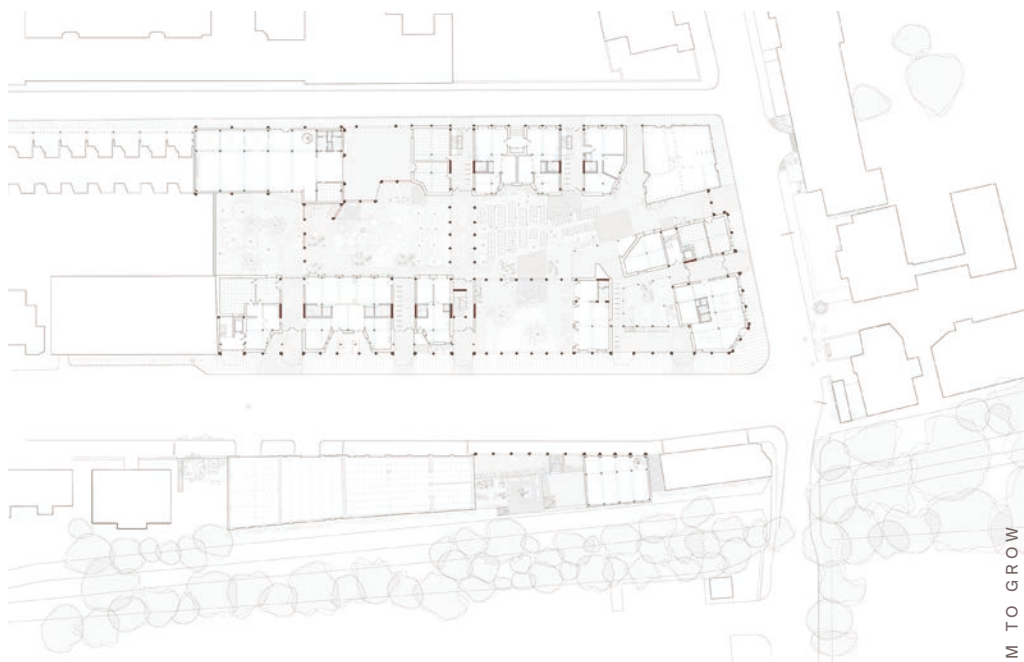


Room to Grow is a layered social housing, industrial and garden scheme, along a former railway corridor near the Water of Leith, on a site marked by semi-abandoned industrial remnants. The proposal introduces three new residential blocks along with a timber workshop and studio, extending the site's industrial legacy. Together, the buildings define a sequence of garden spaces traversing the site, creating a porous edge that establishes a pedestrian link to the city centre via the adjacent cycle path.

The proposal centres questions of ownership and space standards in public housing, challenging conventional boundaries between public and private domains and complicating traditional notions of residential divisions and uses. Inspired by Dutch architect John Habraken's theory of adaptable mass housing, the proposal distinguishes between a long-lasting "support" structure and a mutable "infill" layer capable of evolving with residents' needs. The support layer organises communal infrastructure via circulation bands, articulated through a rhythm of red sandstone columns referencing adjacent tenements. The timber-framed infill structures dock into the support layer, accommodating residential and small-scale industrial functions. Each dwelling is accessed through a shared, semi-conditioned threshold space sitting within the support layer. The inclusion of this unprogrammed spare room encourages residents to claim space in accordance with current need, following a model that reframes ownership as a matter of agency rather than possession.







INKA EISMAR | ROOM TO GROW



Site: Pitt Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

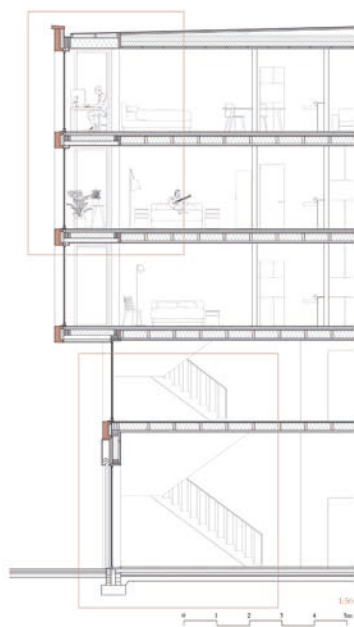
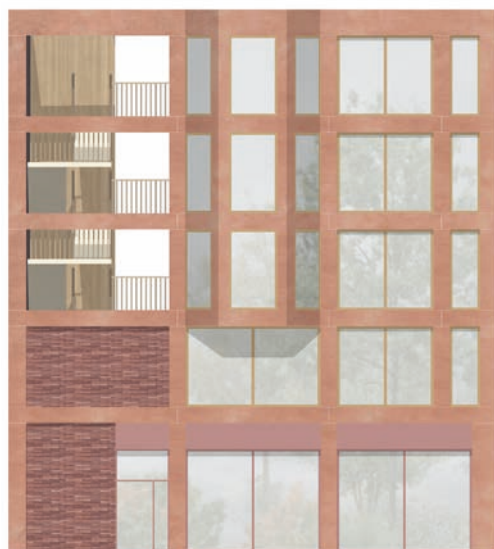
01B

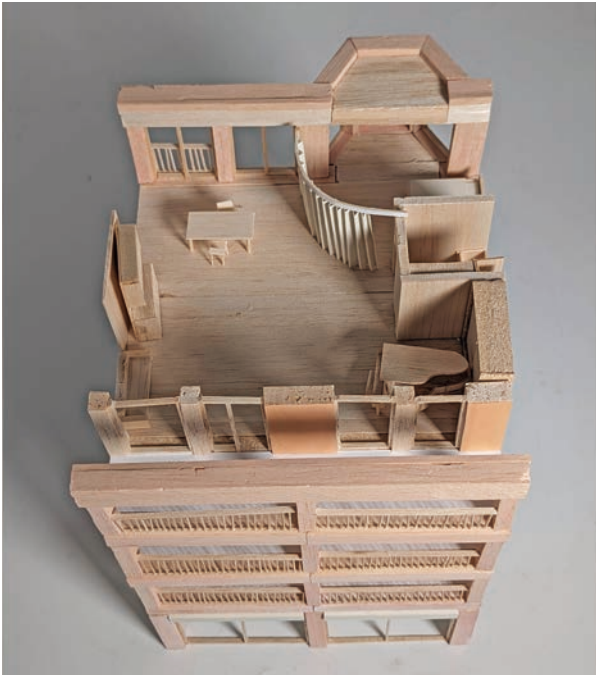
COMPLETING THE STREET

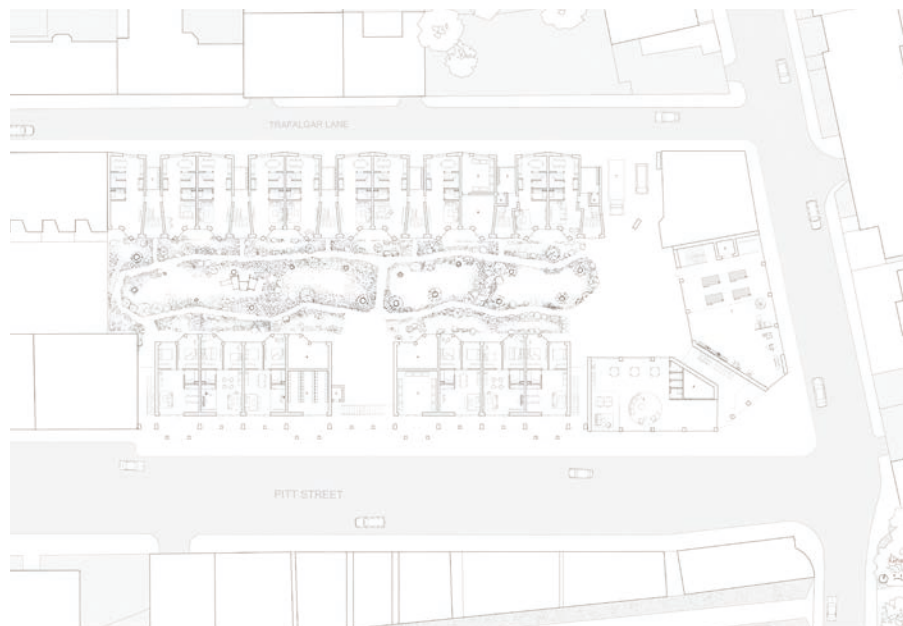
TERRY FENG

Located on Pitt Street in Leith, a neighbourhood shaped by Edinburgh's industrial past, the project draws from Neave Brown's ideas of urban continuity and cohesive street life. The design aims to reconnect residents with their neighbours and the street, restoring immediacy through street-facing entrances, raised walkway balcony, and public-facing workshop spaces that encourage both casual and meaningful interactions with the street. Housing blocks and a timber workshop are arranged around a central courtyard garden, with private balconies overlooking it, resembling a grande theatre whose stalls are surrounded by boxes facing inwards. Here, residents can step out to spend time on their balconies, to greet a neighbour, or to look after children playing in the garden.

Inspired by Peter Markli's belief that architects should not dictate how people live but create plain spoken space for personal interpretation, the residential units are designed as "open, flexible shells". The structure combines CLT for circulation cores with LVL for stud walls and floors. Aside from a built bathroom and kitchen services, the interiors are left undefined. Residents can shape their space using curtains or timber walls fabricated in the workshop below. Such approach gives a choice of privacy and spatial flexibility, enabling the building to evolve with its inhabitants over time.







Site: Pitt Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

01C

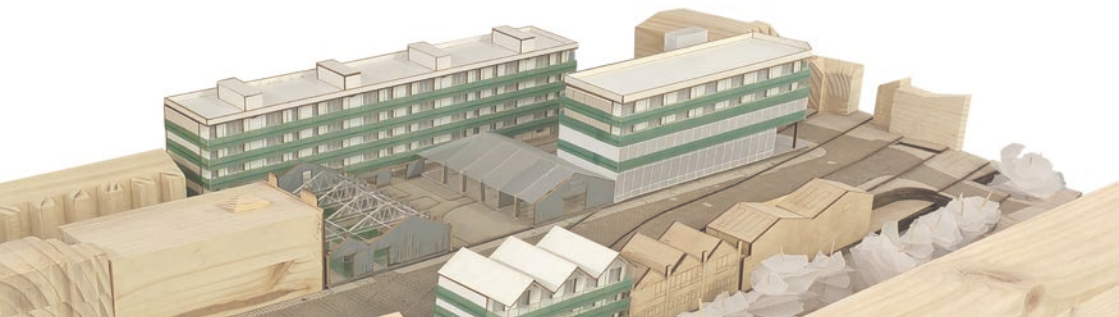
LIVING PALIMPSEST

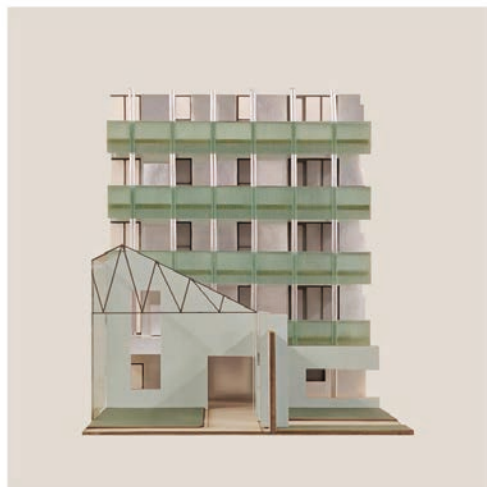
FROM INDUSTRIAL TRACES TO GARDEN HOUSING

XINNING HUANG

The historical memory of the site and the vision for its future inhabitation form a set of intertwined, at times contradictory, yet mutually reinforcing concepts. This project begins with the industrial character of the site and approaches it as a space constantly rewritten through the accumulation and re-emergence of past layers, seeking to reawaken historical fragments and grant them renewed presence through architectural intervention.

A series of gardens - wild, civic, and sheltered - emerge as the primary spatial framework of the design. These gardens are not only ecological devices but also act as social condensers, inviting residents to encounter and inhabit the site's diverse historical traces. The social housing is dispersed across the site, forming a backdrop to the gardens. Within a retained heritage structure, the previously disused pub is reanimated through the new microbrewery and its adjacency to a small public plaza. Children's curiosity towards informal spaces inspired the rewilding strategy of the former industrial warehouse and the introduction of porous boundaries.









Site: Pitt Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

01D

ROOM[S] TO MANOEUVRE

CHOREOGRAPHING THE DWELLSCAPE

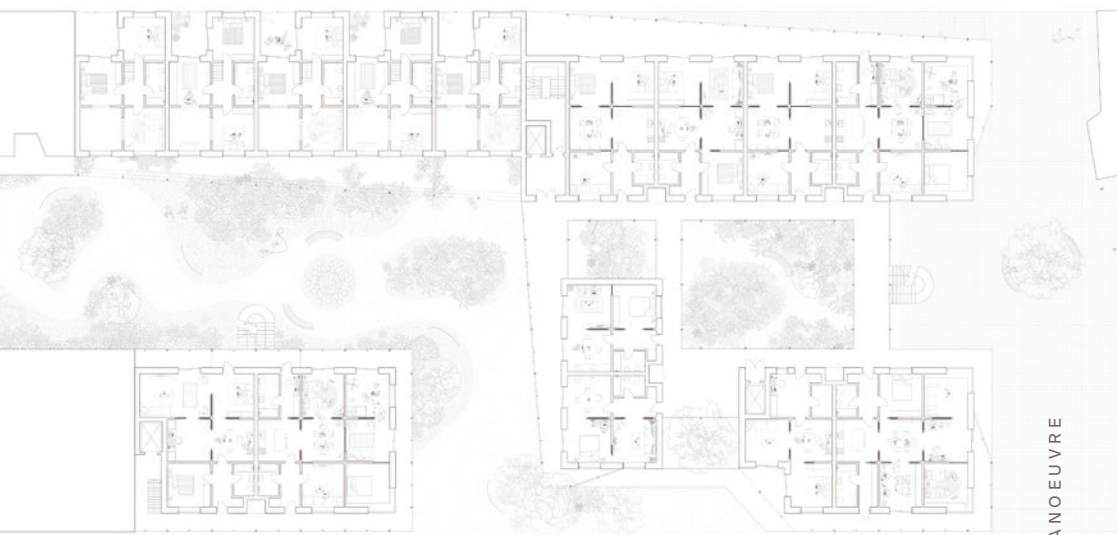
MAYA NAGAYASU

The thesis explores the concept of a ‘dwellscape’ – a continuous domestic landscape composed of equal-sized, indeterminate ‘places’ that support inhabitant appropriation in multiple ways, addressing the fertile potential of the in-between. The ambiguity, rooted in the homogeneity of rooms without a defined hierarchy, enables flexibility. This idea extends beyond the physical structure to consider patterns of living, movement, and social interaction. Movable partitions remove thresholds, forming an active interior that does not contain but continuously frames and reframes space to accommodate the residents’ ever-changing physical, mental, and emotional needs. This process of concealing and revealing uncovers spaces to the exterior, where generous balconies and walkways serve as front and back gardens. Acting as a secondary skin, the outer framework negotiates between the modularity of the interior and the inevitable irregularity of its surrounding context. It forms a layered spatial composition in which the façade becomes habitable, dissolving the indoor/outdoor threshold and mediating between the public and private realm.

The proposal challenges outdated spatial planning principles rooted in functionally predetermined, cellular spaces. Instead, it proposes a framework for social housing design – one that can be adopted and reimagined in other urban contexts to better serve contemporary dwellers and their evolving lifestyles.







Communal garden view (previous)

Internal view with sliding doors open (left)

First floor plan (above)

1:50 sectional models (below)

Site: Pitt Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

01E

HOUSING AS HABITAT

CULTIVATING SOCIAL HOUSING THAT TURTLES NATURE

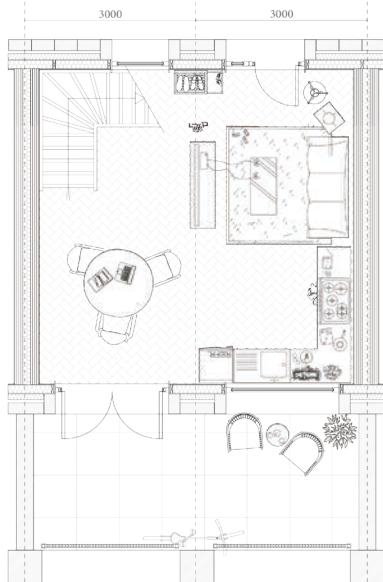
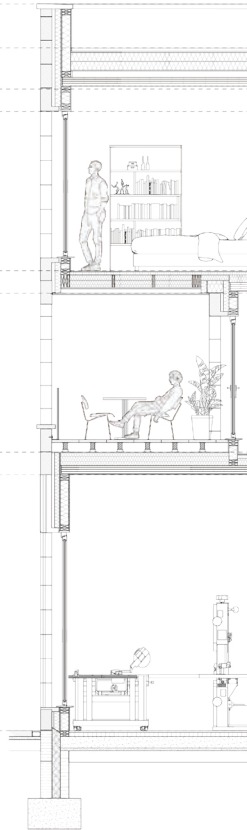
MHAIRI WELSH

This individual project focuses on flexibility and sustainable design within a social housing scheme. The proposal seeks to combine social interaction with a connection to nature through vast green and play spaces which sit between two residential streets and are populated with a selection of play structures designed in Semester 1. The proposal is situated between Pitt Street and Trafalgar Lane, north-west of the Cables Wynd House, following the route taken by the water of Leith. The site houses a series of unused warehouses and was once the home of 'The Pitt Market' - an outdoor food and drinks space frequented by locals. The following proposal seeks to emulate this place of social gathering and integrate an empathetic design approach developed through 'Project 599'.

The proposal utilises local building materials to implement a low-carbon approach to construction as well as a rigorous ground floor plan which aligns to a 3m x 3m grid. This grid subsequently informs a stepped section which provides outdoor balconies and improved daylight into the apartments, which incrementally reduce in size to encourage a variety of inhabitants. The proposed timber and CLT production workshops offer spaces for local craftsmen to work and teach construction and joinery skills to distribute the play structures found in the garden space and provide low-carbon construction materials. These spaces, whilst proposed as workshops, act as large-scale flexible spaces which offer the potential for a multitude of future uses.



Pitt Street facade render (above)



Part Plan, Section, Elevation

Location: Industry and Residential, Mixed Use Block (B)
Ground Floor: Timber Workshop
First & Second Floor: Duplex 2 Bedroom Apartment

Plan: First Floor Level

Scale: 1:50
0m 2m



Site: Pitt Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

01F

THE GREEN SPINE

LIBING ZHU

This project proposes a community-focused residential complex designed around a continuous decking system that connects a series of courtyards to enhance social interaction and spatial connectivity. The masterplan integrates two new housing blocks with two existing structures: a disused warehouse and a historic residential building. These are all linked by a corridor that runs through the complex in an S-shaped layout ranging from one to five stories, creating two distinct courtyards—a southern community garden and a northern industrial yard.

The disused warehouse will be transformed into a restaurant with an outdoor dining space facing the garden, while the historic residential building, whose ground floor once operated as a pub but is now closed, will be restored and reopened as a microbrewery. The front section of the complex provides resident facilities, and the overall circulation allows access from both the north and south, with fire escape staircases located at either end.

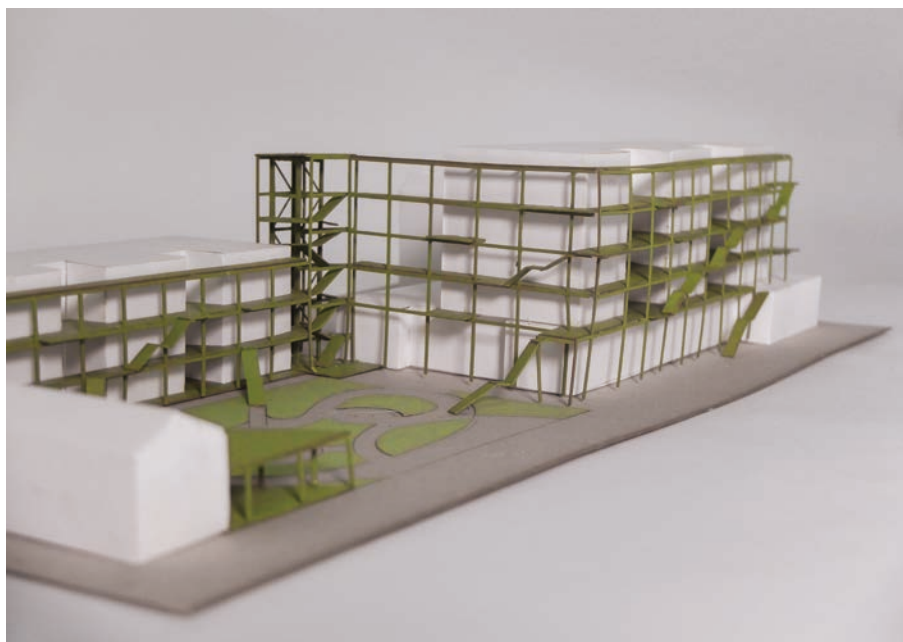
The garden continues the language of connectivity, featuring a looped path and two round communal areas—one quiet and shaded, the other open and activity-focused.







LIBING ZHU | THE GREEN SPINE



02

GRAHAM STREET

COLL DRURY
EVIE HALL
LEVINE MOTAMED
CELIA OPERA
MARIA PEREZ CABALLER BAEZA
JOSHUA ROCHE
JUNZHE ZHANG



Graham Street occupies a transitional zone between a new residential development and remnants of industrial infrastructure. It currently hosts a mixture of offices, industrial spaces, and vacant buildings, reflecting a broader shift in the area from production to reuse. Furthermore, it is situated within a network of cycle routes, schools, and housing, hinting at a wider community context with untapped potential.

Traces of its industrial past – retaining walls, uneven topography, and material remnants – anchor it in a narrative of transformation. It is a space caught between functional obsolescence and future opportunity. As such, this site invites an architectural response that engages both its physical constraints and its capacity for renewal, offering the chance to reimagine a piece of Leith's shifting post-industrial landscape.

*Uninhabited buildings photographed to highlight the topological variations across the site (top right)
A footpath dividing the new residential development on the left and the site on the right (middle right)
View of site from New Haven Road (bottom right)*



Site: Graham Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

02A

GRAHAM GREEN

COLL DRURY



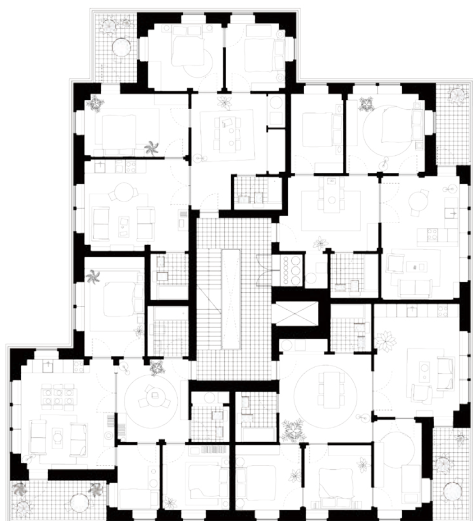
Graham Green is a proposal for dense social housing in Leith, composed of 78 social housing units, flexible community or retail spaces, a light timber workshop, and a large, sunken multi-use sports hall that connects to the cycle route along the site's northern edge.

The design features two housing typologies that respond to different boundary conditions. On the southern side, an Urban Villa typology comprises clusters of four flats arranged around an internal circulation core. These flats are designed as connected, flexible living spaces without dead hallway space, with a central internal room providing access to all other rooms. The ground floors of these villas link to a shared orchid house that runs along the southern boundary, providing a bright communal space and forming a buffer with the neighbouring warehouses. To the north, a longer perimeter block defines the edge of the site, featuring deeper flats with external circulation decks on both the north and south façades. This inversion of traditional internal lobbies allows for more flexible internal layouts and direct fire escape access from every room. At ground level, a robust, double-height industrial unit at the western edge opens onto Graham Street, envisioned as a potential timber workshop. The double height sunken hall space sits adjacent to this, connecting through to the lower cycle path north of the site.

The proposal seeks to create a highly dense form of housing whilst leaving generous sunny spaces for residents and the wider public to enjoy.







Site: Graham Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

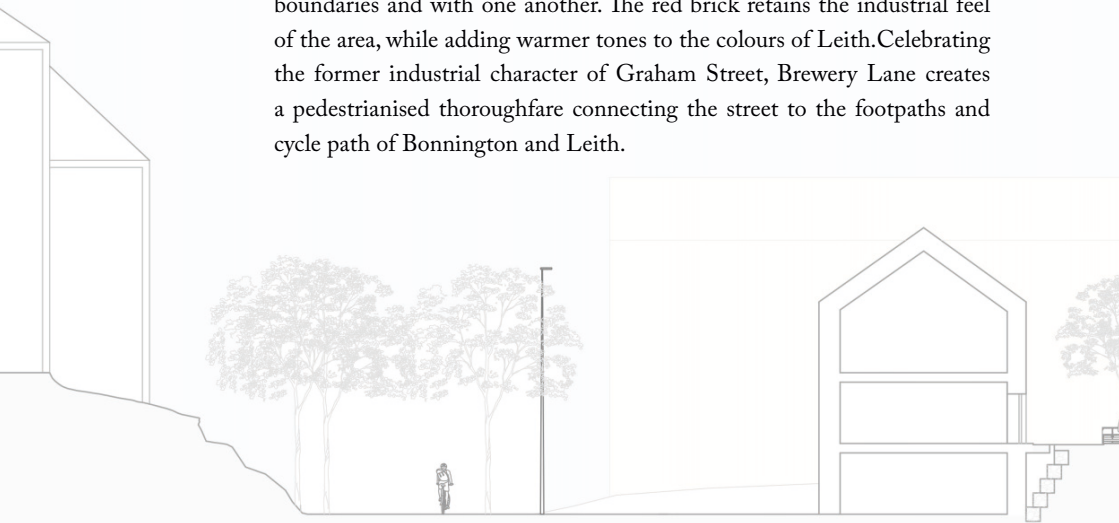
02B

BREWERY LANE

EVIE HALL



Celebrating the former industrial character of Graham Street, Brewery Lane creates a pedestrianised thoroughfare connecting the street to the footpaths and cycle path of Bonnington and Leith. Moving the existing brewery and distillery to the north of the site creates interaction with the surroundings and anchors the community shared spaces, allowing for the rows of peaceful flats along the southern boundary. Inspired by the clusters of pitched roofs in the area, the flats rise from the south to north, maximising the south sunlight received and providing a total of 40 flats in the development. Each of the four blocks are unique, responding to their positioning against the boundaries and with one another. The red brick retains the industrial feel of the area, while adding warmer tones to the colours of Leith. Celebrating the former industrial character of Graham Street, Brewery Lane creates a pedestrianised thoroughfare connecting the street to the footpaths and cycle path of Bonnington and Leith.









EVIE HALL / BREWERY LANE

Site: Graham Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

02C

TOWARDS HOME

LEVINE MOTAMED I

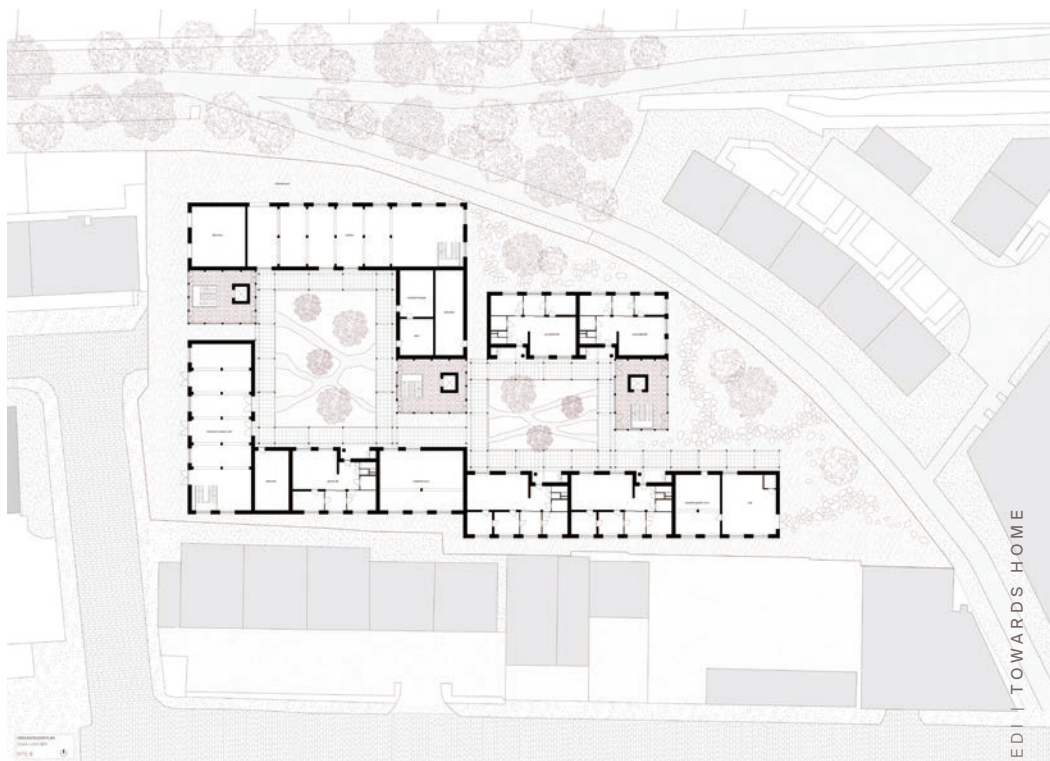
Towards Home is a speculative design project situated in Leith, Edinburgh, focusing on long term adaptability, community resilience, and spatial generosity. The proposal aims to create architecture that is adaptable, sought after, cared for and continuously used, adapting to the changing needs of the community. Designed to foster a sense of care, continuity, and ownership, the project rejects static typologies in favor of spaces that can be easily modified or reconfigured over time.

At the heart of the scheme is a modular layout organised around a central courtyard typology shaped by three distinct garden spaces, a large shared entrance garden, a medium courtyard, and a smaller park-like area, creating a spatial journey across the site, each offering unique communal value.

The scheme integrates flexible industrial and community-use spaces, including a timber workshop, incubator units, and rentable areas, enabling economic and social purpose. The architectural language is intentionally restrained, serving as a neutral canvas for residents to shape over time. Towards Home presents a vision of social housing as a generous, flexible framework for everyday living, one that prioritises responsiveness and quiet transformation. Avoiding rigid programming and embracing adaptable spatial arrangements, the project supports continual change and evolving needs. Ultimately, architecture should not resist transformation. The future is unpredictable, and so must be the architecture that supports it.







LEVINE MOTAMED | TOWARDS HOME



Courtyard render (left)

Ground floor plan (top right)

Interior render (bottom right)

Site: Graham Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

02D

PARKSIDE COMMONS

CELIA OPERA



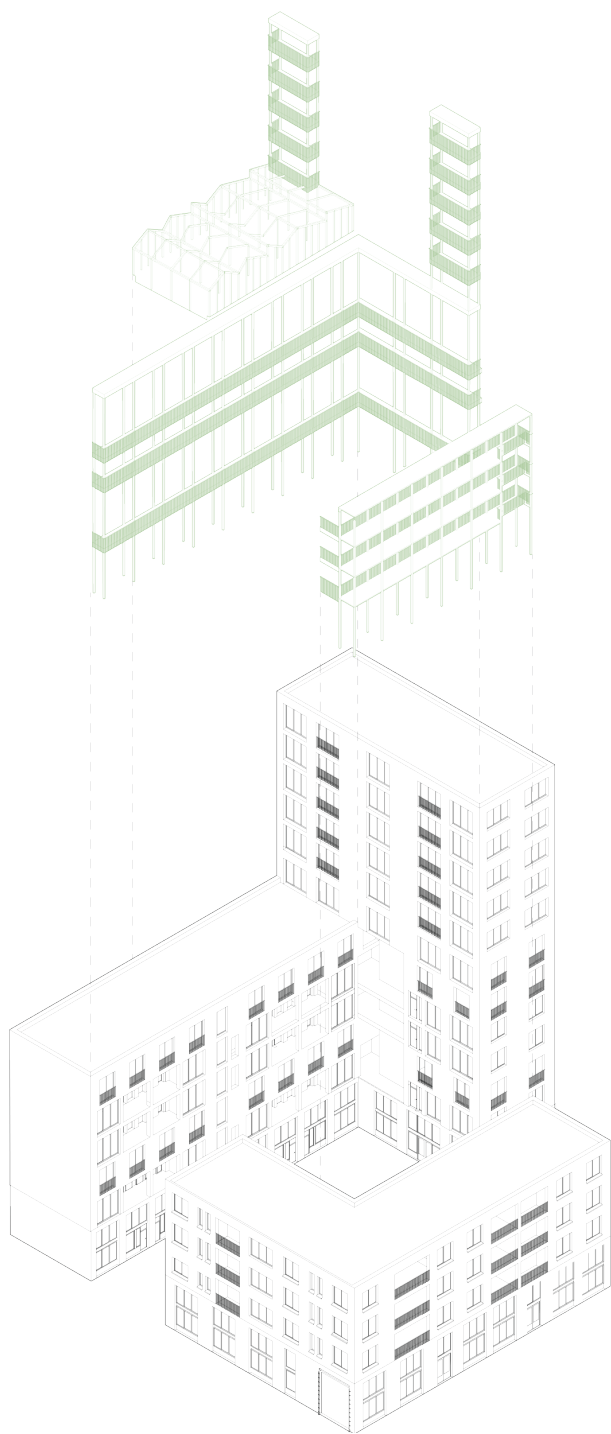
Set in Leith, Edinburgh, this social housing project integrates living, working, and green space on a previously underutilised site. Two linear residential blocks and a tower define a central courtyard while freeing up the other half of the site as a new public park. This park, forming the “garden” component of the brief, includes three landscaped play areas for children of different ages and a café that activates the site’s edge, establishing it as a shared civic resource.

The housing is designed for families, with varied unit sizes, private balconies, and deck access facing inward to foster neighbourly interaction. The tower element increases residential density while preserving generous open space. The ground floors support mixed-use activity: one block houses a flexible light-industrial space, and the other offers live-work units to accommodate diverse patterns of making and living.

A shared rooftop greenhouse provides a communal space for growing, gathering, or simply retreating—promoting ecological awareness and collective care. Scattered throughout the scheme are unprogrammed spaces designed for community use, adaptable to changing needs over time. The project offers a layered response to the contemporary housing crisis, proposing a dense yet generous urban fabric rooted in flexibility, shared infrastructure, and social sustainability.







Site: Graham Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

O2E

LIVING GRIDS

ADAPTING URBAN LIFE

MARIA PEREZ CABALLER BAEZA



Living Grids is a speculative architectural proposal that reimagines the integration of social housing, light industry, and urban gardens within a flexible and modular framework. Located in Leith, Edinburgh, the project responds to the housing crisis and the climate emergency by proposing a low-carbon, high-density model for future urban living.

At the core of the design is a system of modularity and spatial flexibility that allows for varied housing typologies, adaptable industrial spaces, and layered public green areas. The proposal avoids rigid zoning, instead interweaving programs to promote permeability, walkability, and social interaction. Housing blocks are treated as urban villas, offering light, ventilation, and shared spaces while maintaining a sense of individuality and human scale.

The industrial component, a reimagined brewery, anchors the site and includes a publicly accessible pub, reinforcing the civic and productive identity of the area. Landscape design is guided by pedestrian movement and seasonal planting strategies, drawing inspiration from naturalistic precedents. Using timber and steel construction and guided by net zero guidelines, the project demonstrates how modular architecture can foster ecological resilience, community cohesion, and architectural clarity in the face of ongoing social and environmental challenges.

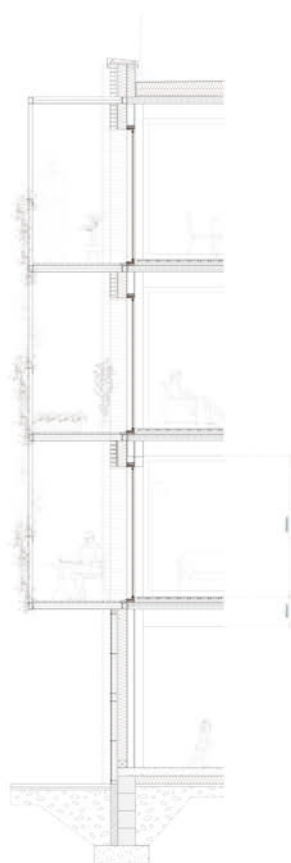
Part Elevation/Section/Plan

Scale 1:50

0 1m



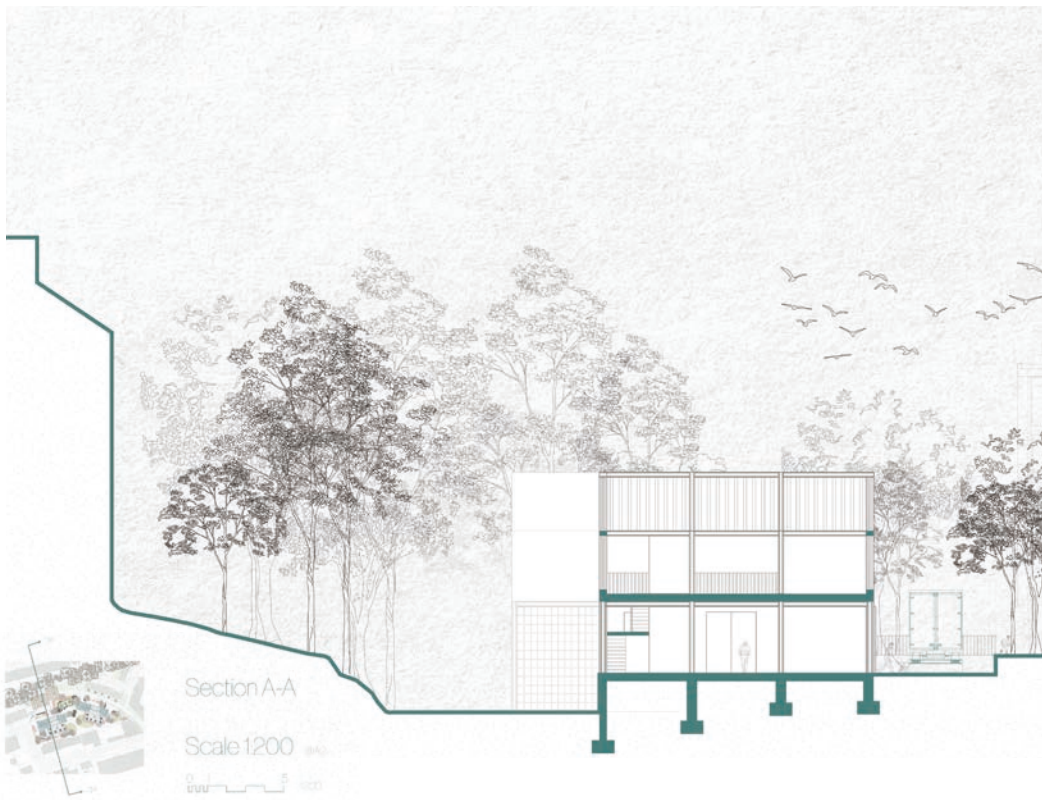
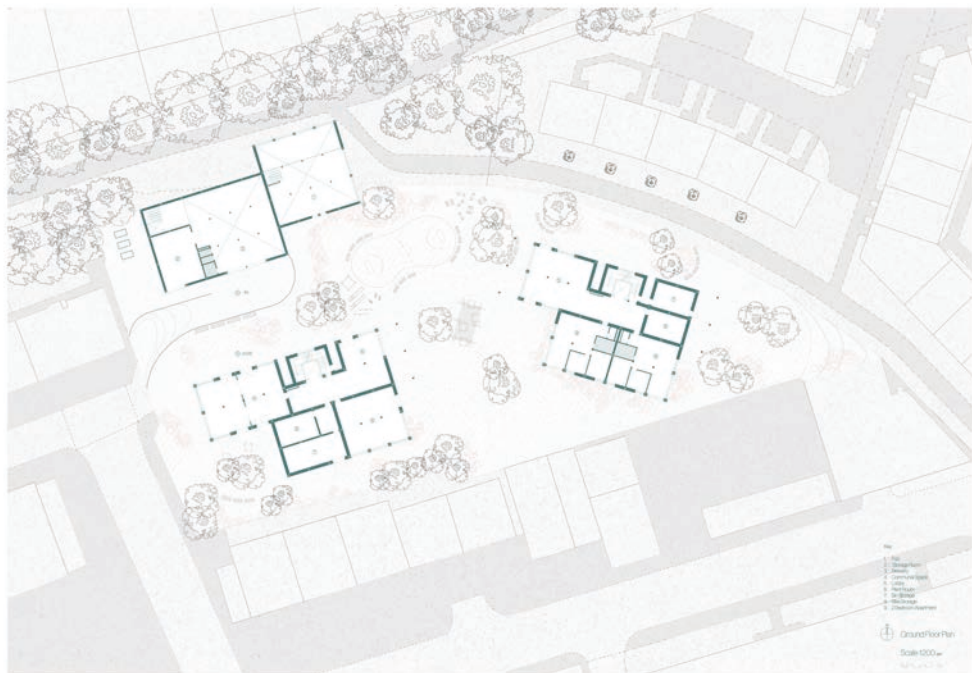
Elevation

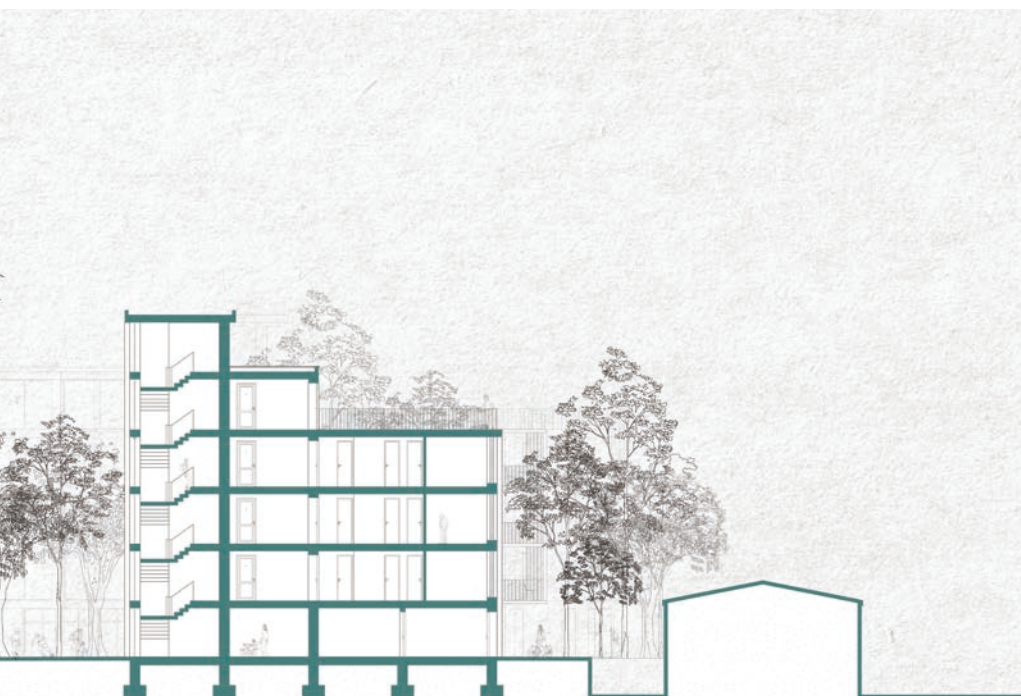
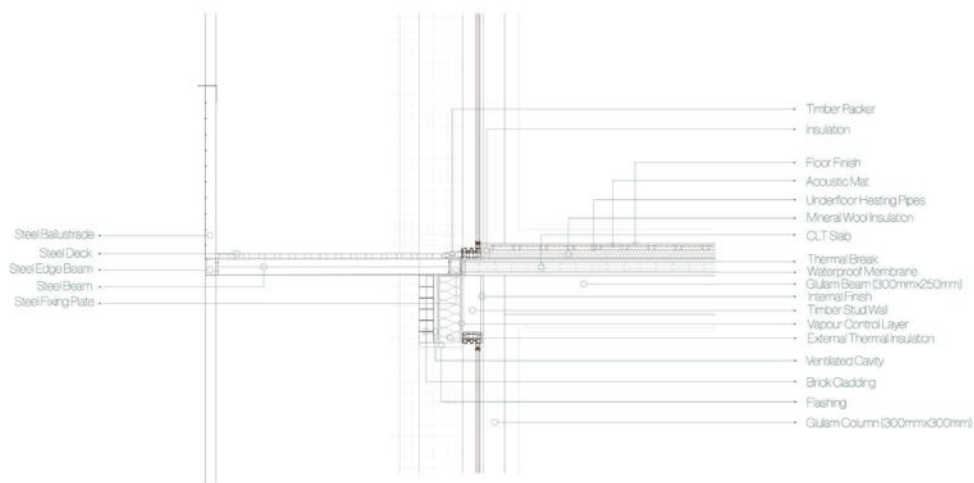


Section



Plan





Site: Graham Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

02F

STONES AGAINST THE MACHINE

A HUMAN URBANISM

JOSHUA ROCHE



In a time of rationalist monotony—of universally deployable systems, sterile enclosures within urban deserts—this project represents a break from our trans human trajectory: a ground-up rebellion against the sterility of the machine.

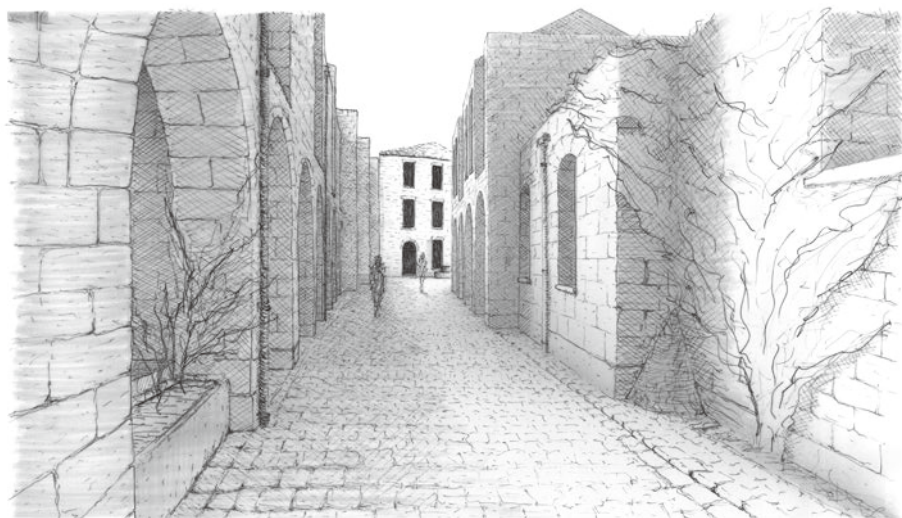
It draws from a pre-rational age, a time that valued other things. Here, we see the return of hierarchy, variety, squares, and nooks, quiet moments, civic dignity—streets owned by people, not by cars.

This project chooses meaning over efficiency, character over perfection. To celebrate the idiosyncrasies that give a place identity, character, and soul.

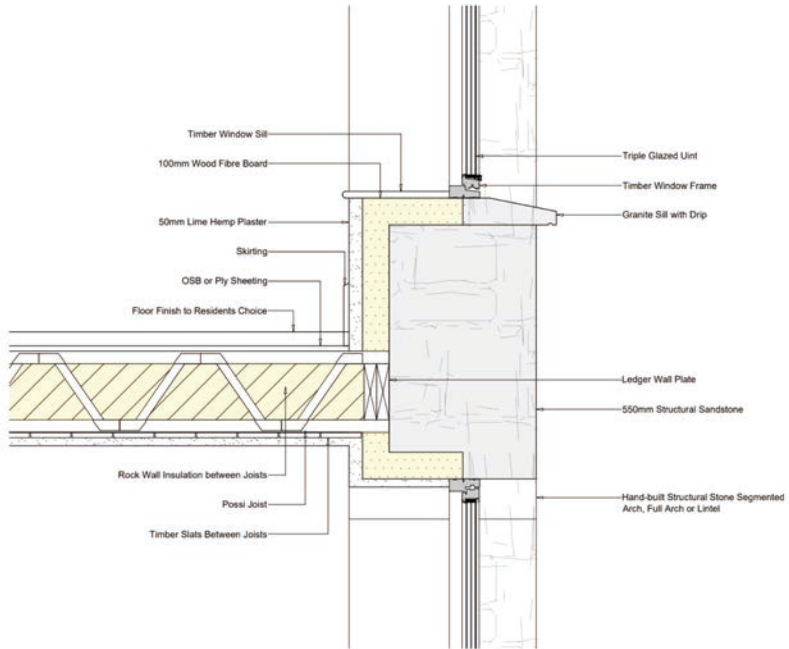
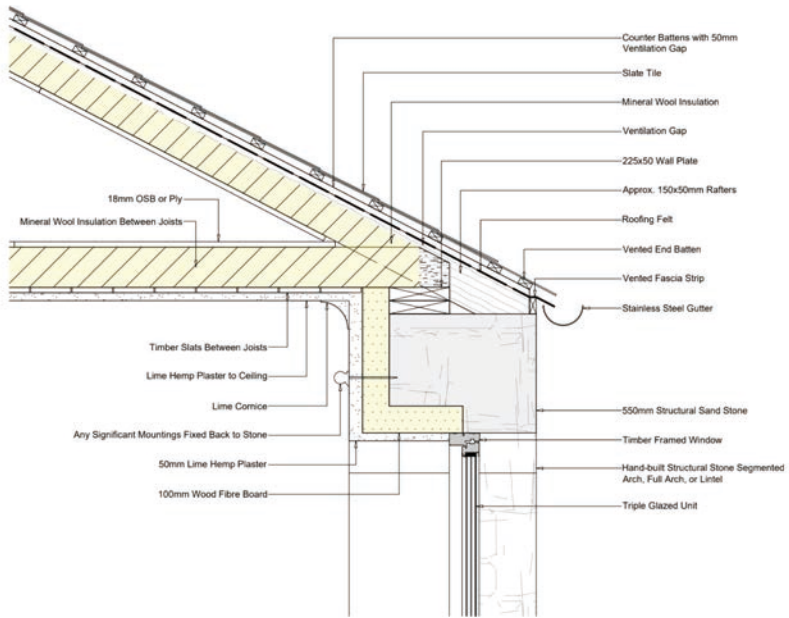
To craft, not assemble. To think in timespans not of fifty years, but five hundred. That means simplicity, repairability, a local stock – not only of materials, but of knowledge and skill: the manifestations of shared values, a common culture. To reclaim architecture – to make it human once more.

An architecture imbued with meaning, spirit, and time – not reliant on its occupants for animation, but etched with the hearts of those who built it. An architecture shaped by life, rather than life shaped by design. The imperfect over the perfect.

A human urbanism – against the architecture of the machine.







1:10 / 1:20

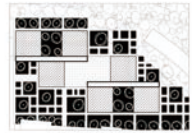
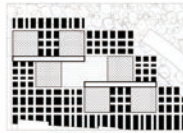
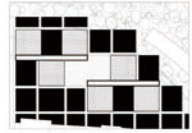
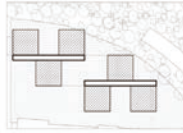
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Site: Graham Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

O2G

THE SQUARE

JUNZHE ZHANG

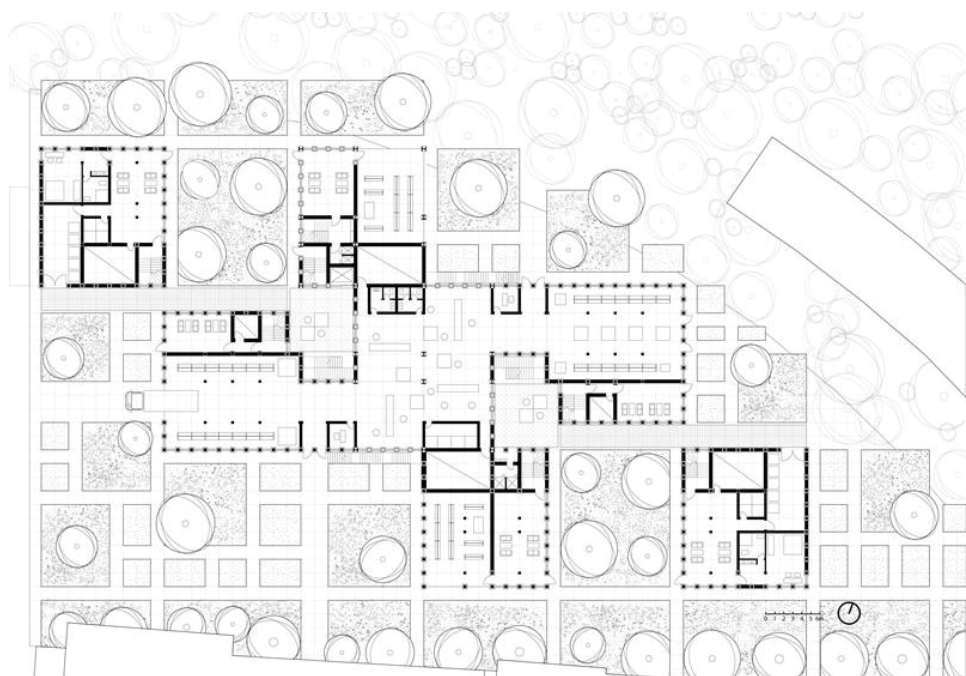
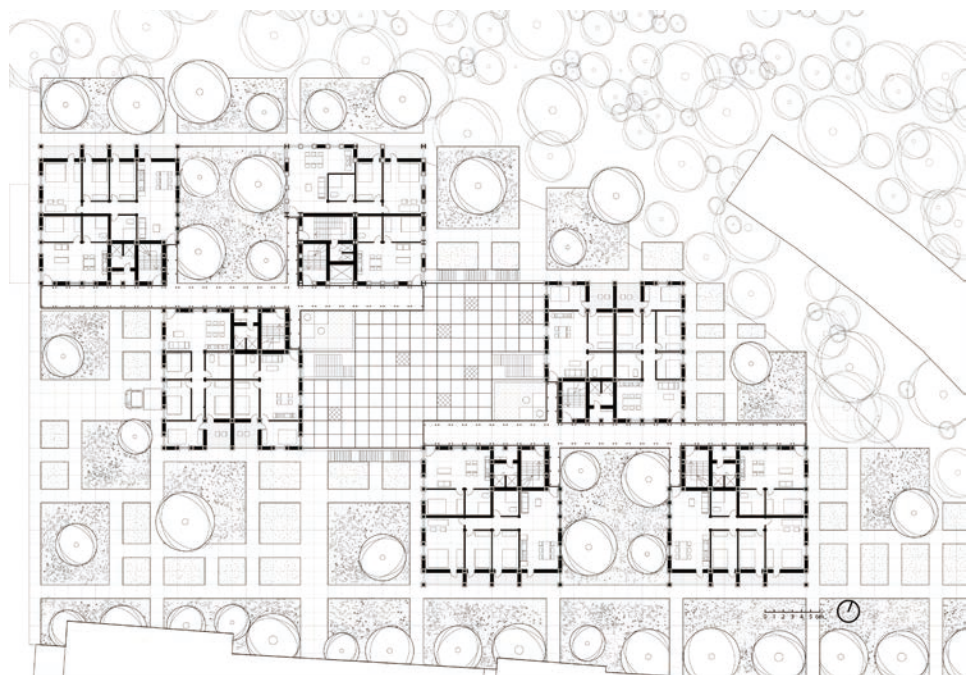


Edinburgh's tight housing resources have risen to a social level. This project is a response to the city's call to actively promote social housing in an attempt to solve the housing crisis.

The project is located in leith, an area far from the city center and relatively underdeveloped, which makes the social housing problem even more serious. The site is an irregular fan shape and the land is tight, so how to utilize this fan shape becomes the core issue of the design.

The main design method is to cut the fan into small orthogonal pieces, and then the small squares are freely combined to form courtyards, housing and corridors, etc., which are assembled to become a community complex focusing on the ecology and its own system, and to create a good living condition for the residents.

The materials chosen for the project are cheap and easy to obtain, and the modeling is simple and easy to construct, which greatly helps the production of social housing and creates as many possibilities as possible with limited resources.









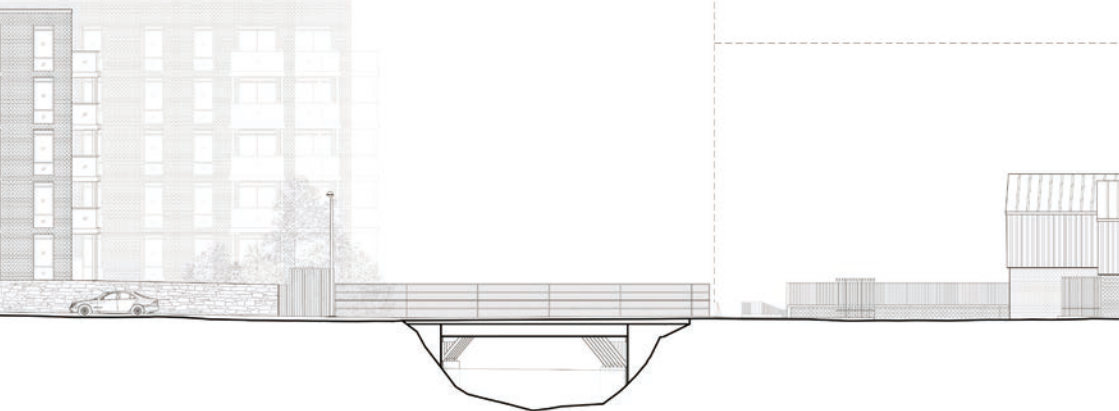
03

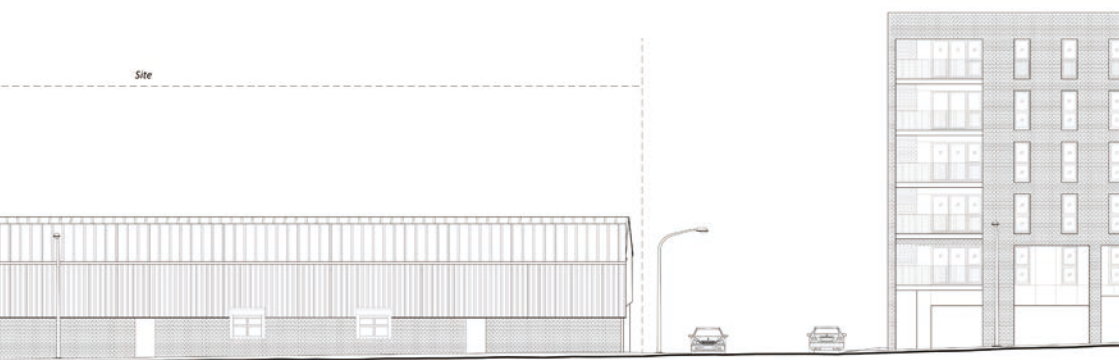
WEST BOWLING GREEN STREET

JOSHUA HOWARD
BINGZHI LI
LUKE PEARCE
RUOXIN TAN
SHIYU ZHANG
SHUYAN ZHANG

The site sits at the corner of West Bowling Green Street and Anderson Place, with its southern edge facing the Water of Leith. The West Bowling Street was a former industrial site in Leith, occupied by workshops and warehouse with around 1.5 storeys in height. The site is essentially levels with a gently slope towards the south-east.

Today, the site is situated within a densely populated area rich in maritime heritage and currently undergoing dynamic urban regeneration, with approximately 39% of households in the area are social rentals, highlighting a pressing need for high-quality, affordable housing.





Existing site plan (top left)

The Water of Leith (top right)

Existing site section (bottom)

Site: West Bowling Green Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

03A

HOMELY CORRIDORS

JOSHUA HOWARD

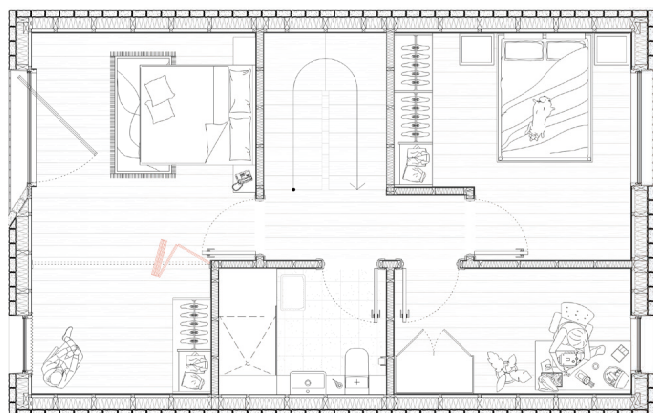
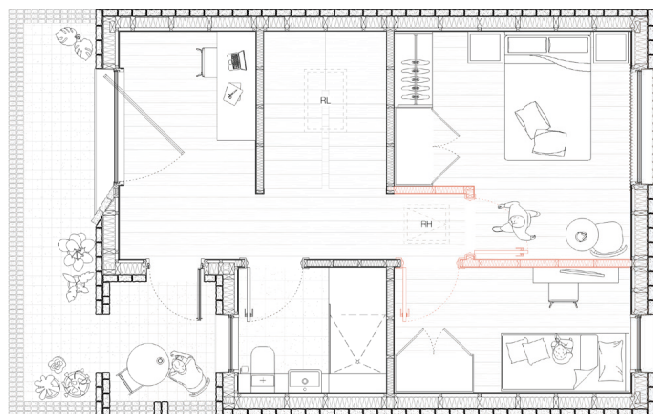
Nestled within an industrial estate along the Water of Leith, a 48 unit social housing development aims to create a link between the existing urban corridors in a homely fashion, allowing new public walkways and leisure spaces to interweave within the residential mass. In other words, the development aims to be an extension of the existing, aligning with existing residential and public geometry.

The site is a mixed development of townhouses for graduates or nuclear families and a planted courtyard adjoined with flats. The upper floors of the development are of a traditionally detailed masonry to compliment the surrounding industrial vernacular. This is juxtaposed with a pastel concrete frame, which aims to provide visual gaps within the structures to make them seem lighter and elegant.

As the site has an existing connection to the water of Leith, this feature is emphasised by stepping the structures down towards the water while providing a new paved area for public use, giving more purpose to the south of the site and allowing for the commercial units to interact with the outside environment. A colonnade on the eastern border of the site creates a link between the city and the development, allowing for enriched foot traffic as well as a direct access point into the site where the public can interact with the designated commercial units where local creatives, cafes, & stores can be installed.







Site: West Bowling Green Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

03B

RIVERSIDE REFRAME

BINGZHI LI

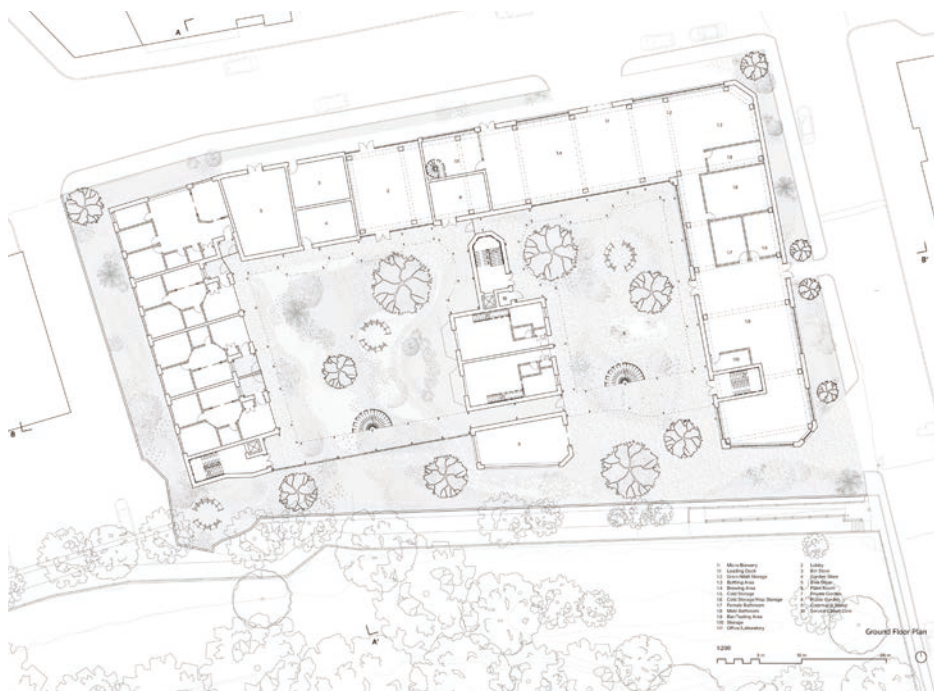
Set along the banks of the Water of Leith in a transitional zone between industrial heritage and ongoing urban redevelopment, this project proposes a mixed-use social housing development through adaptive reuse. Responding to Edinburgh's deepening housing crisis, the scheme transforms three existing warehouse buildings - currently occupied by offices - on West Bowling Green Street into an E-shaped structure combining 80 flats with a ground-floor micro brewery.

The brewery, constructed from in-situ concrete, forms a continuous plinth along the north and east sides of the structure. Above, the housing units - constructed from cross-laminated timber (CLT) - are arranged into three E-shaped strips containing a mix of one- to four-bedroom flats. Creased Brick Flemish is used as the cladding material, selected for its durability, compatibility with circular construction principles, and textured surface that reflects the industrial character of Leith.

Two courtyard gardens are formed by the E-shaped plan: one private for residents and one semi-public adjacent to the brewery. These spaces offer moments of green respite, planted with species that support urban biodiversity and attract birds and small animals. A freestanding steel-framed deck sits beside the riverside, creating a shared space for residents and visitors while also serving as a circulation route. From the deck, users can enjoy open views of the city and watch the sunset.





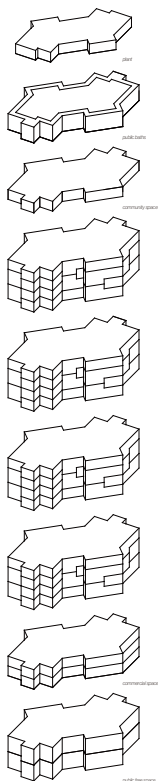


Site: West Bowling Green Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

03C

LEITH CAIRN

LUKE PEARCE



A proposal for two mixed-use structural stone towers will address the UK's social housing crisis. Following the principles of Team 10, the high-rise structure takes a humanistic approach to large-scale development, designing within the existing urban social and environmental landscape, not over it. High rises (30-100m) are an optimal solution for housing density in an urban setting and also have the lowest construction embodied carbon as a percentage of its 40-year total carbon usage. Above 30m, the street no longer interacts with the building, so once over this threshold, there is an argument to build 'infinitely' beyond this, or until structural impact outweighs gain in density.

It is an urban structure willing to grow and change through use with an open and adaptive free plan. A doughnut structural system of core and structural stone facade enables this. The residential floors adopt and expand the Markli principle of offering one particularly generous space per flat. This space is 1.5 storeys high in all apartments. This results in a tessellation of flats across levels, creating a variety of flat sizes floor to floor over the same footprint. Single-story living and a reduction in hallway space enhance the usable space of all flats. The ground-floor and first-floor mezzanine house public space that interacts with both the street and garden; adaptable office space is on the two subsequent floors. Two external vestibule spaces open out onto a larger southern-facing main garden, linked into the Water of Leith Walkway. The top of the towers houses shared residential space and a public spa – water grounds and caps the building.





1-50 Sectional model (top left)

Public Spa rendered (top right)

Residential interior rendered (bottom right)



Site: West Bowling Green Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

03D

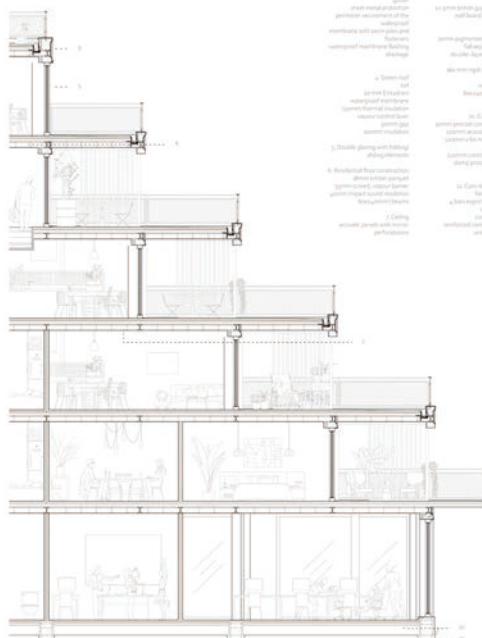
30 DWELLINGS

RUOXIN TAN



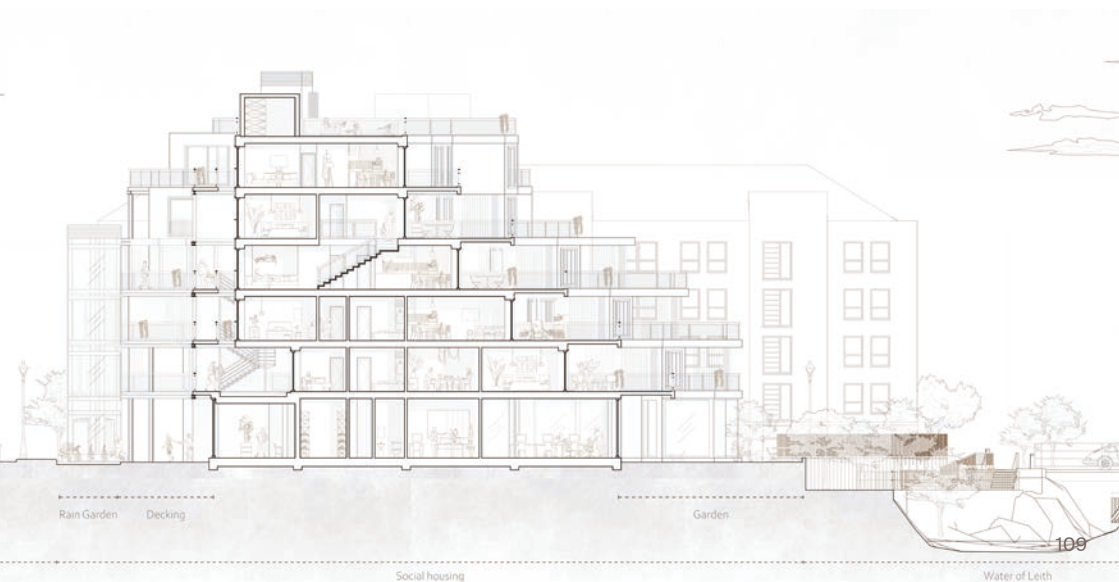
The project is located at Bowling Green Street and Anderson Place in Leith, adjacent to the Water of Leith. The design adopts Jo Coenen and Neave Brown's "green terraced medina" concept to reinterpret collective living spaces by integrating high-quality, appropriately scaled individual dwellings within a dense, flexible architectural framework. The ground floor is designated for office and communal use. The apartments are arranged in a high-density, low-rise configuration on the first and second floors and are designed as lofts across the third and fourth floors. Each floor accommodates a mix of one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and three-bedroom units. The arrangement ensures abundant natural light and private outdoor spaces for each unit while contributing to the urbanisation of the surrounding area. Meanwhile, the vertical alignment of each unit's MEP systems and bathrooms enhances energy efficiency.

Stepped residential terraces are articulated through lightweight decking and platforms, generating a dynamic spatial rhythm. Each unit benefits from a private terrace and a shared semi-open terrace on the south-facing façade, blurring the boundary between public and private realms and inviting spontaneous yet meaningful social interactions. This layout provides passive solar gain while establishing stepped gardens that reinforce the Medina-inspired language. Together with the Water of Leith walkway and the river, these gardens foster a richly layered interior and exterior world that celebrates diversity among residents.



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South facing detail section 1:50

- 1. Window frame installation system
- 2. External wall
- 3. Internal
- 4. Metal framing
- 5. Glass panel
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Rain Garden Decking

Garden

Social housing

Water of Leith





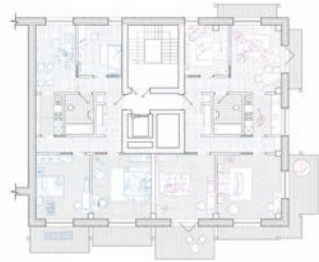
Site: West Bowling Green Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

03E

48 UNITS

LEITH SOCIAL HOUSING

SHIYU ZHANG

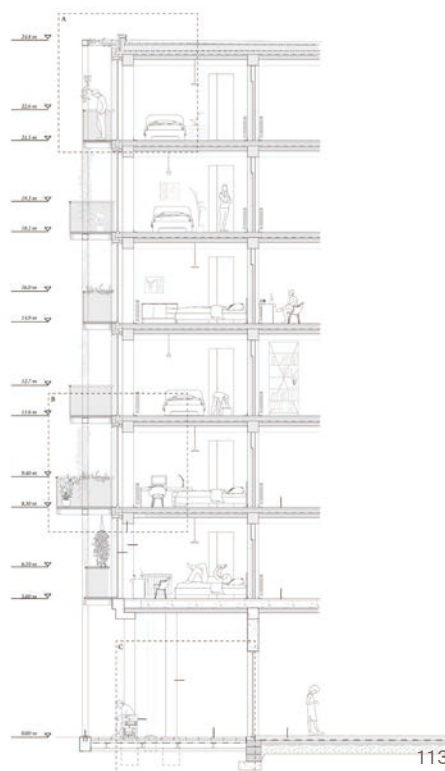
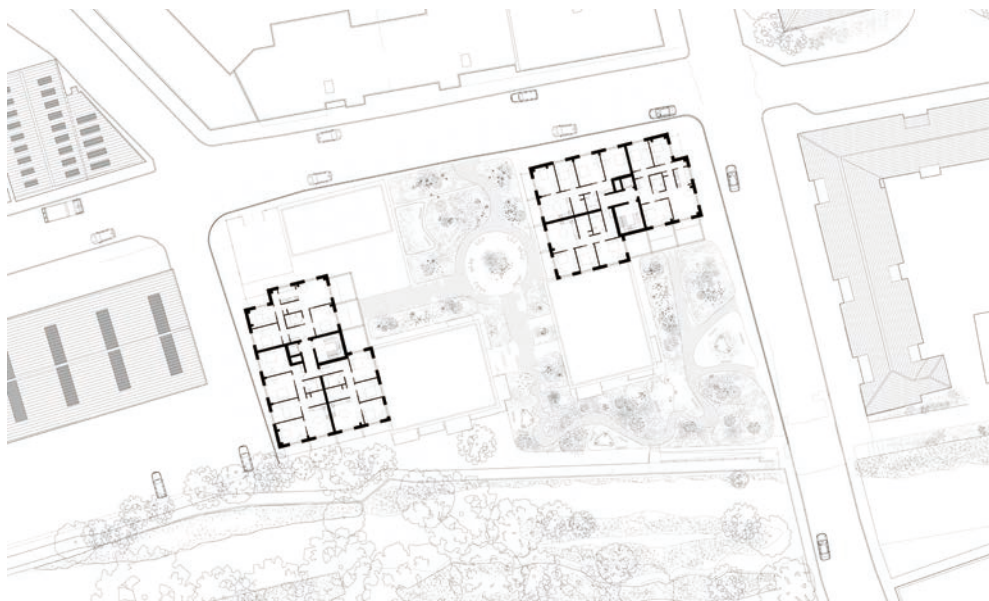


Edinburgh is facing a housing crisis, with demand outpacing supply and a severe shortage of social housing. In 2023, the City Council declared a housing emergency and introduced strategies to accelerate affordable housing delivery and improve allocation systems. This project responds by exploring how architectural design can support both housing provision and the creation of resilient, community-focused living environments.

Located in Leith, a lively, historically industrial district along the Water of Leith. The proposal provides 48 residential units above a ground floor containing shared community spaces and a timber workshop. This hub encourages street-level activity, craftsmanship, and social interaction, fostering a sense of shared ownership.

Informed by live-build work at Cable Wynd House, the design incorporates soft thresholds, layered access, and a communal garden that balances privacy with daily interaction. Curved paths connect the homes to both street and riverside walkway, encouraging engagement.

A hybrid structure combines a concrete ground floor with post-and-beam timber upper levels and a concrete core. Steel balconies extend outdoor living, while the adaptable internal layouts meet evolving needs. The design distinguishes between a robust infrastructural layer and a flexible inhabitation layer, offering an open framework for resident-led living.







SHIKU ZHANG | 48 UNITS: LEITH SOCIAL HOUSING

Site: West Bowling Green Street, Edinburgh
Programme: Social Housing, Industry, Gardens

03F

50 SOCIAL HOUSING

SHUYAN ZHANG

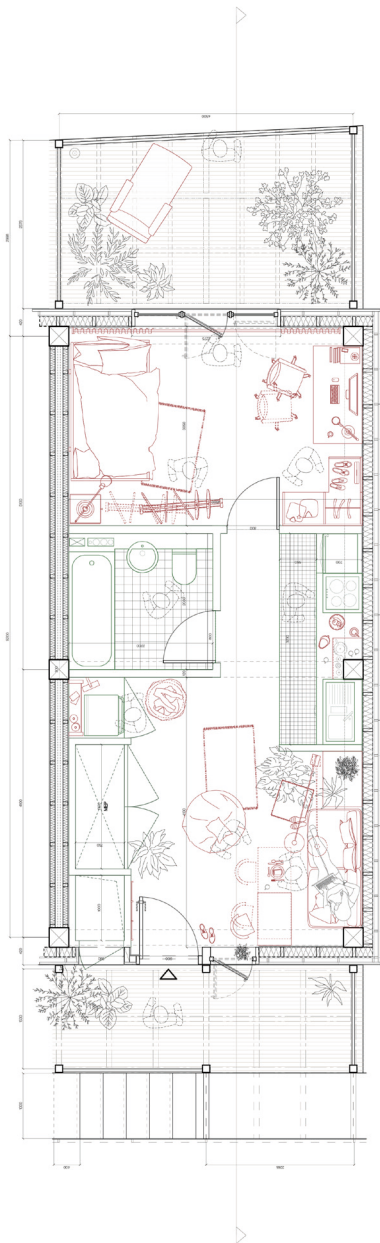


Located in Leith, Edinburgh, at the corner of West Bowling Green Street and Anderson Place, this project faces the Water of Leith to the south. Set within a densely populated area with strong maritime heritage and ongoing urban regeneration, where 39% of households are social rentals, the project addresses the urgent need for quality affordable housing by blending durable materials with community-focused design.

The structure employs a concrete ground floor for services like bin storage, bike rooms, and flexible communal spaces. Upper levels use a 4.5m Glulam (GLT) and CLT system, promoting sustainability and enabling fast construction through prefabrication. Comprising 50 housing units, the scheme also includes shared gardens, incubator offices, and several green spaces that activate corners and balconies, encouraging social connection. External steel balconies and staircases link the blocks, enhancing circulation and interaction.

Flats are arranged by privacy gradient: core services in the centre, living spaces opening to shared balconies, and bedrooms on the quieter side. South-facing units feature winter gardens, buffering bedrooms from the corridor while improving light and privacy. This high-density proposal combines sunspaces, gardens, and social infrastructure to support both residents and the broader community.







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Inside Front Spread

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- 8 Enzo Mari photographed sitting on his Autoprogettazione chair (2010), Jouko Lehtola, Artek
- 37 Siedlung Ried, Niederwangen by Atelier 5 (1990), Jouko Lehtola, Artek.

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