

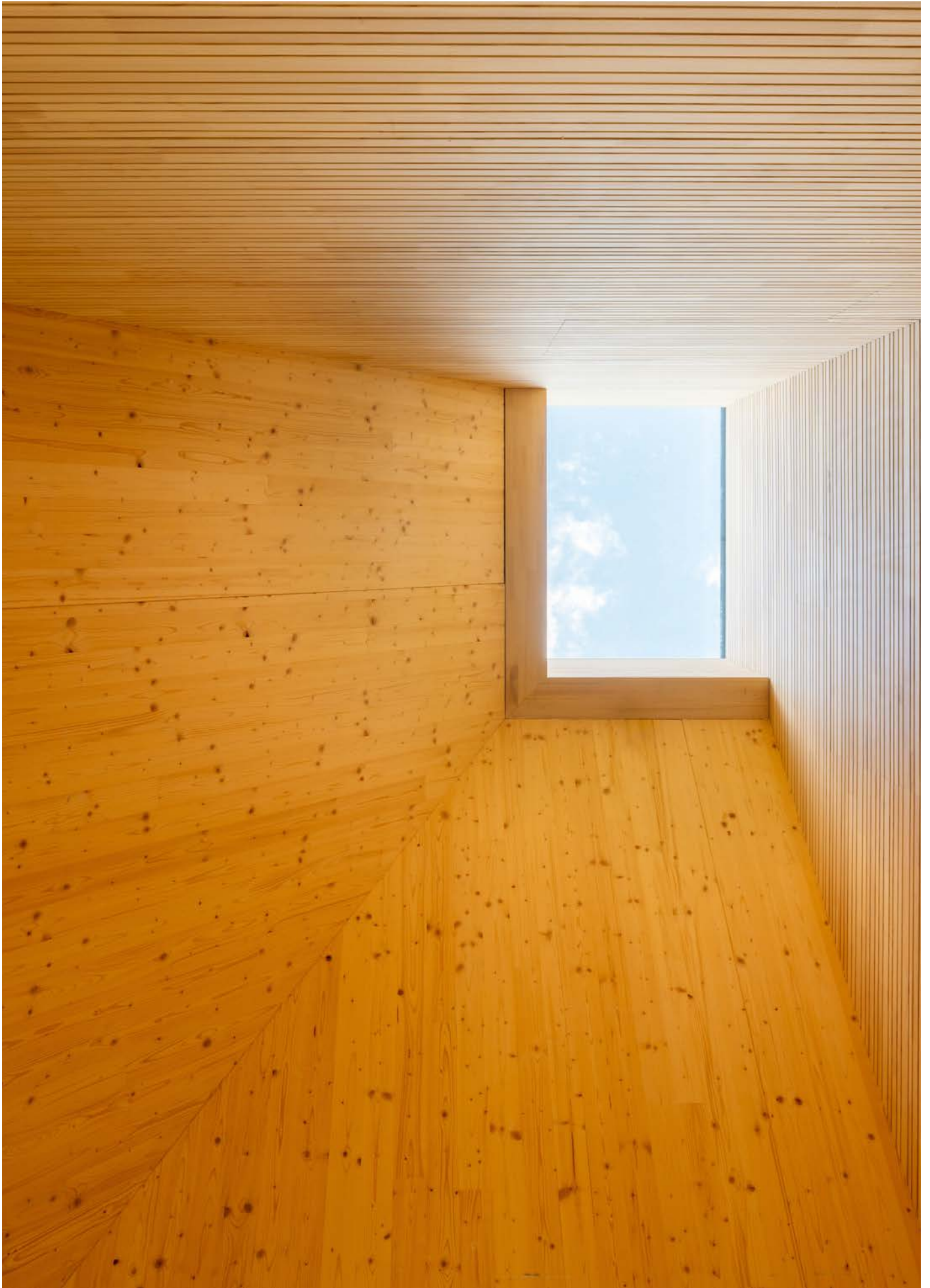
# Hope Street

## A Trauma Informed Design Case Study



**Hope Street**  
one small thing

**snug**





**Mike Worthington RIBA**  
Director of Snug Architects

## INTRODUCTION

Hope Street is a pioneering residential community for women and their children who have experienced trauma and are in the justice system. This guide is a case study covering our experience at Snug Architects of working with One Small Thing on their pilot project in Hampshire since 2019 to completion in Summer 2023.

It looks to explain what we learnt and how we applied a Trauma Informed Design approach to the project, highlighting the thinking embedded within the architectural moves. Whilst it covers some of the theory for context and reference, the purpose is to explain the practical application of trauma informed design principles at Hope Street. The resultant project design is a collaboration with One Small Thing and the consultant design team.

**by Mike Worthington RIBA**  
Photo Credits 'Fotohaus'

# Trauma Informed Design



## WHAT IS TRAUMA INFORMED DESIGN?

***‘Trauma-informed design is about integrating the principles of trauma-informed care into design with the goal of creating physical spaces that promote safety, well-being and healing. This requires realizing how the physical environment affects identity, worth and dignity, and how it promotes empowerment.’***

Neha Gill, Forbes Nonprofit Council, Dec 2019

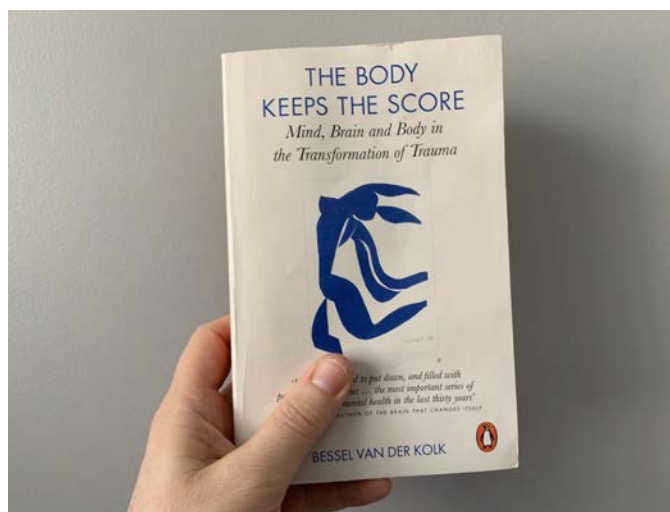
Since at least the Roman architect Vitruvius, and his third attribute ‘venustas’ there has been the idea that architecture and one’s surroundings and outlook will have an effect on an occupant’s mood. Trauma Informed Design stretches further into the effect that design has beyond appreciation or distaste, but how it engages the subconscious body and mind’s reactions laid down by significant previous experiences.

Trauma informed design starts with recognising that all buildings have an effect on people and communicate all the time. They communicate what is considered important, how people should be treated, who is in power, how you should behave and if people can be trusted, amongst many other things. What is particularly significant with trauma informed design, is that those who have suffered trauma are more susceptible to picking up on these cues and will have triggers that take them back to past traumas.

## THE EFFECT OF TRAUMA - HOW DOES THE BODY AND MIND REACT TO TRAUMA?

Bessel van der Kolk is a prominent psychiatrist and researcher who has studied and treated those who have experienced substantial trauma for many years. In his book 'The Body Keeps the Score' he explains that those who have experienced trauma react, and are triggered differently, to events and environments compared to those that haven't.

The Amygdala is an area of the brain that can be likened to a smoke detector. It reacts very quickly and triggers a fight or flight response to perceived stressful situations. It picks up actual and perceived threats and puts the mind and body on high alert in order to cope with the situation, raising adrenaline levels.



The medial pre-frontal cortex (MPFC) is like a watchtower, providing objectivity and allows the Executive Brain to regulate the immediate impulses of the Emotional Brain. In those that have experienced trauma, or with PTSD, the balance shifts to the emotional, where the triaging function of being startled and the executive brain being able to calm the body down by over-ruling the initial messaging is disabled.

This leaves those that have experienced trauma on high alert in an anxious state of over stimulation. It is known that prolonged distress turns off the prefrontal cortex in the brain preventing critical thinking and rationality. This keeps people in survival mode reducing concentration and their ability to engage with healing from past traumas.

*'Trauma occurs when an external event overwhelms a person's physical and psychological coping mechanisms or strategies.'*

Van der Kolk, 1989



## APPROACHING TRAUMA - HOW TO TACKLE THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

One aspect of trauma is that the triggering of memory or association with a past traumatic event takes a sufferer back to the original traumatic event. This is experienced not just as an unpleasant memory but as a powerful reliving of the original event as seen in medical studies of brain activity. It explains in part a common avoidance of wanting to talk about past traumatic events and seeking to numb out the memory.

This means that architecture must be concerned with what might be the triggering situations and environments that will take a person back to past traumas. Though each individual's experience of trauma will be highly personal, some experiences may be shared and so design can attempt to avoid those common triggers.

It also means the act of counselling and therapy is likely to generate substantial emotion and discomfort itself, as it places the person back into the traumatic past. Therefore, counselling spaces are a particular focus of trauma informed design and how they support the associated emotions and experience contained within them.

To regulate the Amygdala in those who have experienced trauma there are two groups of techniques, top-down and bottom-up.

- Top-down therapies engage the MPFC and assists the Executive Brain in rationalising the flight or fight response. This will include counselling and talking therapy.
- Bottom-up therapies engage the Reptilian Brain allowing the body and physical methods to balance the activity of the mind. This will include breathing techniques, movement and touch of textures.

Therefore, architectural responses for trauma informed environments should consider how the design of buildings can reduce triggering factors and support the healing and regulation of traumatic responses. Our goal has been to design Hope Street mindful of the effects of trauma to better support and serve OST's work with traumatised women.

As Zach Mortice puts it in his article '*Buildings that can heal in the wake of trauma*' (Bloomberg, April 2023), for architects engaged in trauma informed design, buildings are seen as '*the first line of therapy*'.

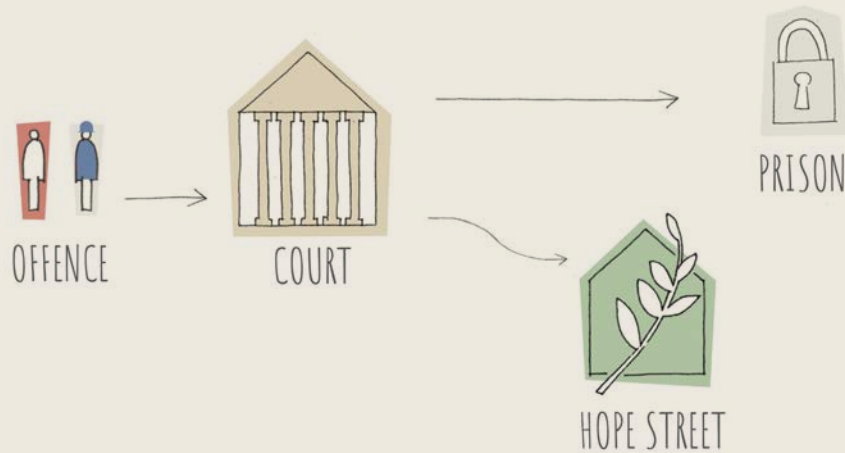
Those who are involved in trauma informed design place an importance on understanding it's effects, recognising that one traumatic experience or context is not the same as another, listening to the lived experience of end users and occupants, and applying this TID lens to both the strategic conceptual design decisions as well as specific details.

### *Five core values of a trauma-informed approach*

1. **Safety:** *ensuring physical and emotional safety*
2. **Trustworthiness:** *creating respectful environments where personal boundaries are maintained*
3. **Choice:** *creating environments where individuals have choice and control*
4. **Collaboration:** *making decisions with the individual and sharing power*
5. **Empowerment:** *prioritising empowerment and skill building*

*Harris and Fallot, 2016*

# The Briefing & Design Process



## ONE SMALL THING

One Small Thing's vision is a justice system that can recognise, understand, and respond to trauma. Their mission is to redesign the justice system for women and their children. They facilitate trauma-informed and gender-responsive programmes for the justice and community sectors.



## HOPE STREET

One Small Thing's commitment to systemic change for women and their children in the justice system, has inspired them to build Hope Street as a pilot project.

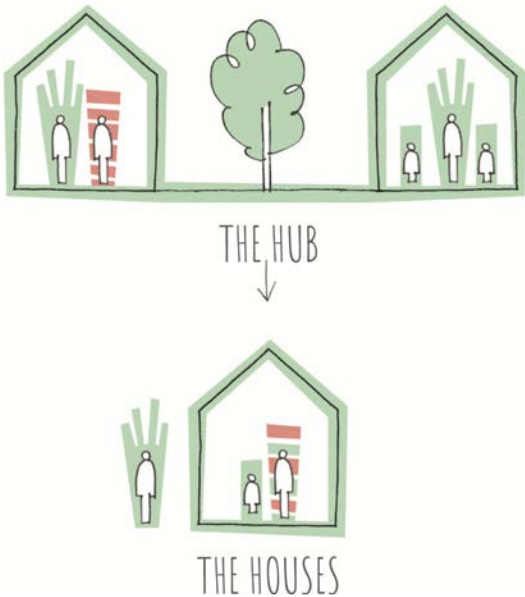
From within a healing, trauma-informed, residential environment, women and children will have access to a range of specialist support. By taking a positive and compassionate approach, the aim is to create a blueprint for change that can be replicated across the country and achieve better outcomes for women, their children and society.



## HOPE STREET DESIGN GUIDE

As a pilot project offering revolution within the justice sector, not evolution of existing approaches and facilities, a new blue print was required.

One Small Thing worked with Heatherwick Studio initially to develop a design guide that describes not only what the building needed to accommodate, but how it would feel and how it could be experienced. This was an important and enlightening piece of work in setting the level of ambition for the project and opening up the conversation for the role of the building in meeting the strategic objectives.



*Hope Street Hubs should feel like that of a village composed of a group of buildings coming together to form a safe environment, rather than one singular building.*

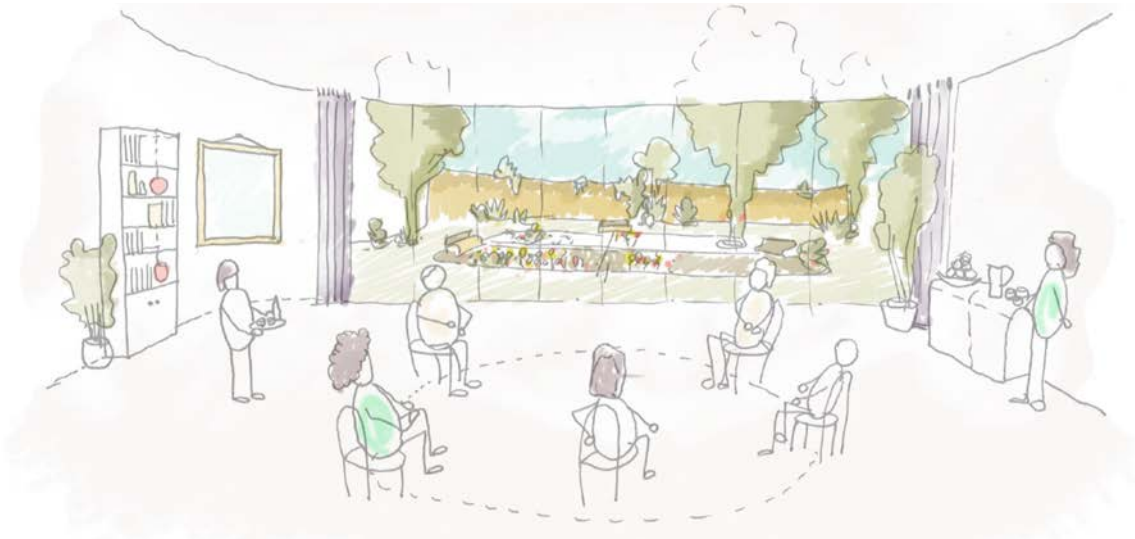
*Each building would have its differences, but together they would work and flow as a whole; where movement between buildings is treated as an opportunity for people to connect with nature and awaken the senses.*

*Our hubs should feel natural and sustainable, humble and warm, healing and welcoming. Care and attention will be paid to the materials used to avoid known triggers and promote healing. Materials that offer texture and richness without adding too much visual noise. Inclusive and accessible, with a deep sensitivity for how spaces relate to one another.*

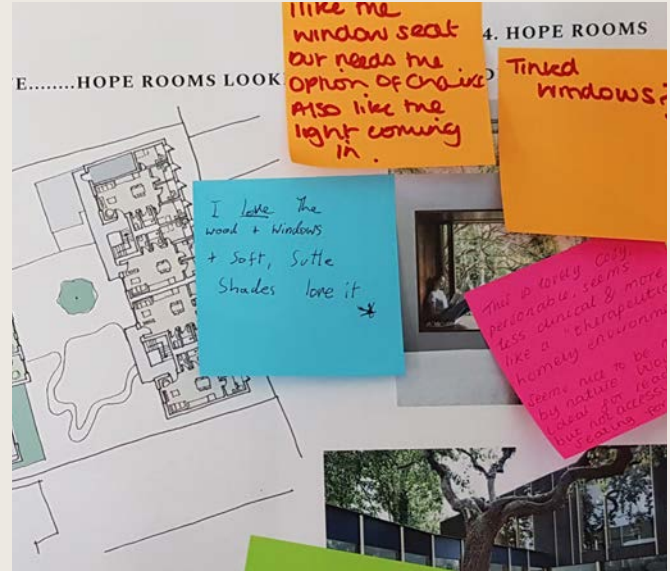
*Planting will be fundamental to create a healing environment, with beautiful and playful outdoor spaces that connect and surround the buildings, raising the spirits. The landscape should feel informal and natural, not forced or orderly.*

***'Our aspiration is that they will leave Hope Street feeling stronger and empowered'***

Hope Street Design Guide



# The Briefing & Design Process



## INITIAL RESPONSE

Our initial response to the Hope Street brief and design guide at interview was:

- **Build Trust** - How could the architecture of Hope Street build trust with women residents in order for them to choose to engage with the healing trauma course and the opportunity to rebuild their lives?
- **Place Value** - How could the architecture place value on the women and children without alienating?
- **Restorative Environment** - How could Hope Street be a restorative environment offering both sanctuary and community?

In the design of Hope Street, it was important to define not just the opposite or negative of what we were trying to avoid - 'architecture and triggers of institutional and prison environments', but also the positive identity of what Hope Street should be.

This is where we started with the idea that Hope Street would 'feel like home'. We developed the 'a home not an institution' filter that we were able to pass all design decisions through from the scale, form and massing to the materiality, lighting and furniture.

## CONSULTATIONS

An appreciation of trauma informed design and the accumulated experience and expertise of One Small Thing formed the backbone of the design brief. Yet it was important to approach the design project with lived experience of justice involved women.

As part of the design process we held four workshops with women in Southampton and Portsmouth that drew out thoughts on architecture, landscape and interiors. The first round of consultations asked open questions using associations with images to gather what generated positive and negative responses. The second round of consultations then followed up with early design proposals that had incorporated initial consultation feedback and allowed us to receive specific feedback on initial designs.

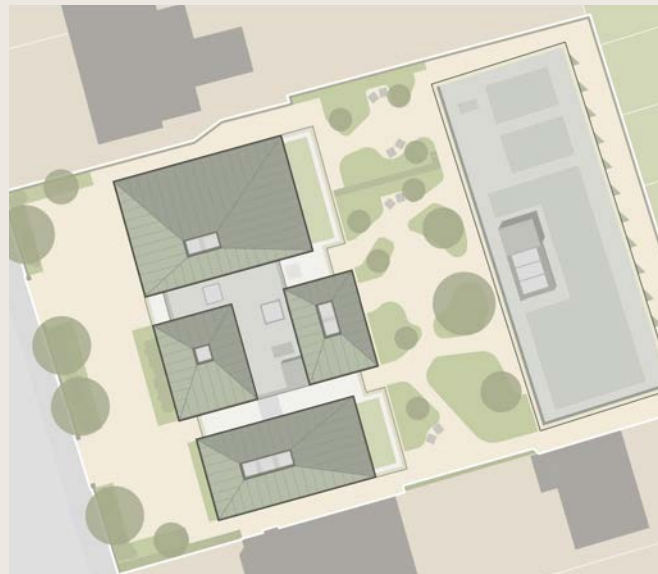
These consultations enabled the design response to have a genuine trauma and gender responsive perspective to the project. Examples of direct input came in the organisation of layout, the avoidance of conflict in sharing living spaces and material and colour preferences. For example, we expected that pastel colours would have a relaxing association and preferred, but had not expected them to come with institutional associations of prisons and hospitals and therefore were viewed much more negatively.

Even at this early design stage of asking open questions and sharing early design responses, we could see that the shared experiences of the women in the consultations were of very poor quality environments and that there was an opportunity to try provide a significantly different environment.

Another significant concern of the women consulted was whether there would be continuity of relationship with case and social workers. Whilst not directly related to architecture it underlined the understanding that the environment created is secondary to the human relationships it plays host to. This led to a perspective that the role of the architecture to support, encourage and positively colour relationships was paramount rather than an expectation that architecture is an end or solution in and of itself.



# Hope Street Case Study



Hope Street is physically comprised of two primary buildings working together to form a residential community for women who have experienced trauma and are involved in the justice system. It is located in Southampton, just outside the city centre, within walking distance of the courts, in a residential context, but on a prominent and leafy route into the city. The location of the site prior to the design of the buildings already demonstrates the intention by OST that Hope Street is to be within a residential context in a local community, rather than a remote location removed from society.

The front building contains a public coffee shop, consultation rooms, a therapy suite, offices and communal living spaces. The rear building contains 8 shared flats that allow women and their children to live on site. Between the two buildings is the therapeutic garden and adjacent to the site with direct access from the therapeutic garden is the Kitchen Garden, Crèche and Play Garden.

The overall design moves to embed trauma informed design into the architecture formed 3 wider objectives:

**1. Provide a home not an institution**

#home #welcome #family

**2. Provide sanctuary and community**

#healing #community #skills

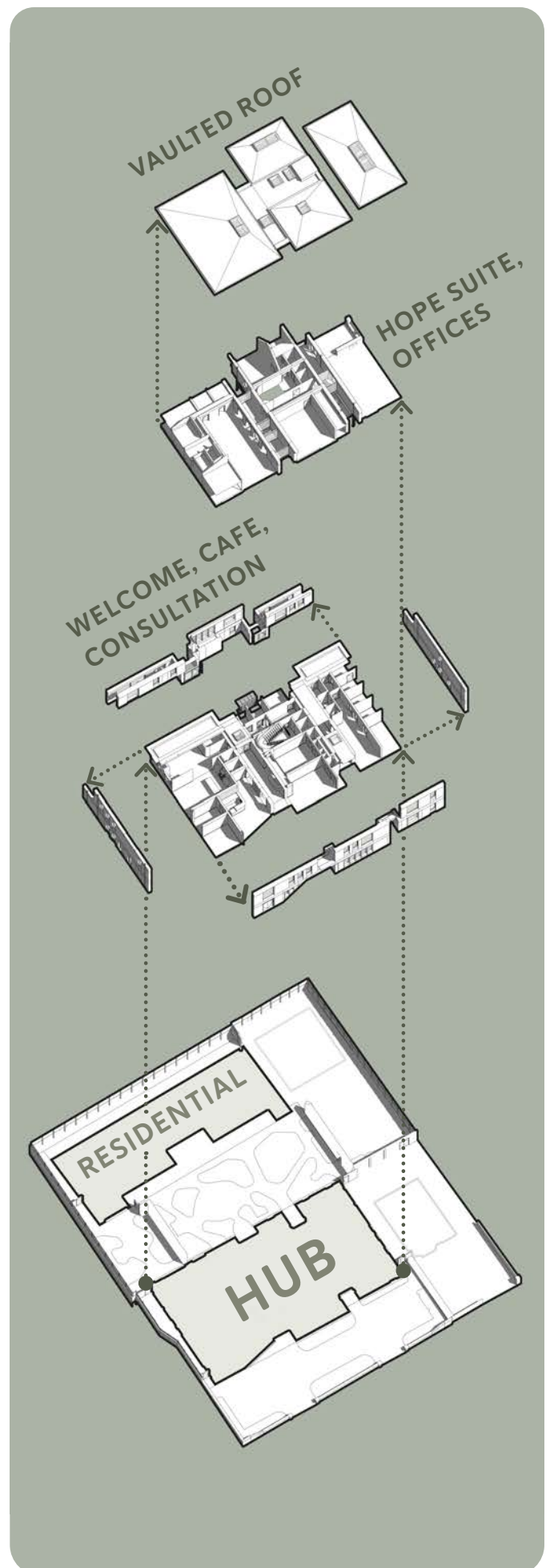
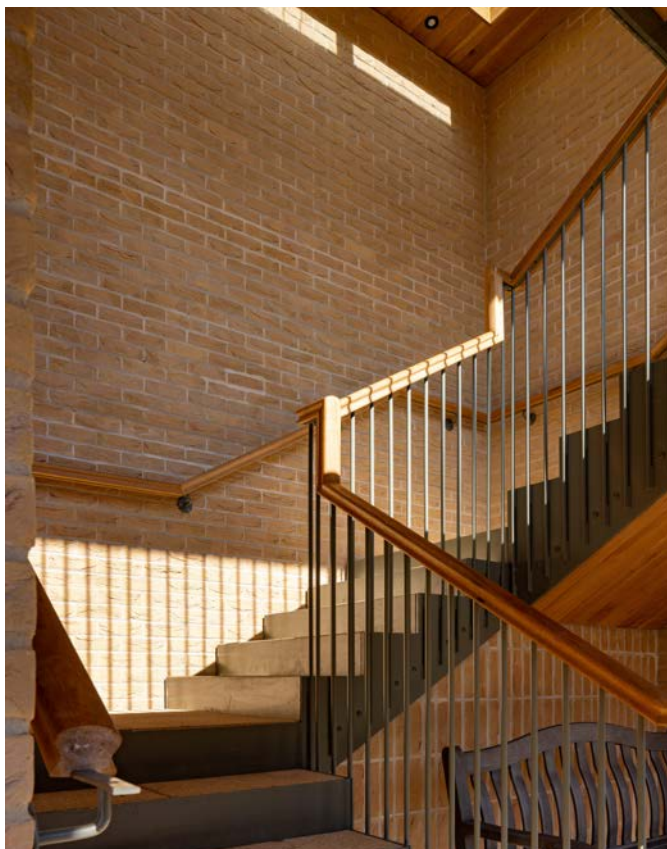
**3. Provide safety and dignity**

#safety #dignity #agency

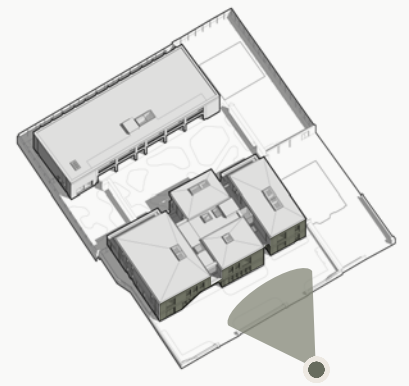
The outworking of these objectives in the detailed design of Hope Street are described in this section. This is organised through a tour around Hope Street breaking the building and landscape into 12 physical areas to explain the rationale behind design decisions.

## THE 12 AREAS

1. FIRST IMPRESSIONS
2. ENTRANCE & ARRIVAL
3. COFFEE SHOP
4. ACTIVITY ROOM
5. WELCOME LOUNGE
6. CONSULTATION & RECOVERY
7. THERAPEUTIC GARDEN
8. RESIDENTIAL BUILDING
9. HOPE ROOM
10. RESIDENTS LOUNGE & VISITOR GARDEN
11. CRÈCHE & KITCHEN GARDEN
12. STAFF OFFICES



# 01 First Impressions



## DOMESTIC FORM

From the road side the Hope Street Hub building is conceived as three domestically proportioned buildings giving the impression of three houses rather than one large institution. Each house has a different elevational composition with varying symmetrical and asymmetrical pitched roofs that reinforce a childlike informality rather than an ordered authority. The intent is to communicate from first impressions that this is not an authoritarian environment but a home.

The site sits within a conservation area where the building's contribution must respect the rhythm, proportions, established building lines and materiality of its predominant generous Victorian Villa context. This fell into alignment with Hope Street being conceived in a domestic form. The proportions of the windows and attention to detail are a modern but a contextual reflection of the Victorian Villa context.



## MATERIALITY

The architectural material palette is a buff brick, green zinc and vertical oak. The buff brick is a close approximation of the original Beaulieu brick ensuring the building sits and belongs in its immediate context. This both reflects the residential character but also that the resident women belong within, and not removed, from the context of society.

The grey/green zinc is a modern interpretation of the dominant slate roof character of the street but reflects the landscaped character of the trees opposite the building and the Biophilic approach taken across the scheme. The aluminium windows and rain water goods are matched to the muted green colour of the zinc to maintain a restrained and quiet palette.

The vertical oak timber is used to soften the architecture and to articulate key features and places of close contact. Brick, timber and green zinc work to reinforce the idea of a home rather than the adoption of a commercial or institutional cladding system.



## FRONT GARDEN

The Hub building is set back from the pavement in the established building line of the road. This provides the opportunity for a landscaped front garden setting with cloud hedging and flowering cherry trees that line the frontage and provide a changing activity during the seasons with some limited screening at higher level. These sit behind a coordinating brick wall that curves down to a lower height in the middle section to open the site to the street scene. The wall is capped with a resin bound stone that matches the resin stone cills and architectural details.

The driveway is a shared surface that allows pedestrians to mix with access for the four visitor car park spaces that facilitate operation of the service. Car park spaces are kept to the edge of the front garden and the entrance and exit openings are without gates to retain an open and domestic front garden feel. A small sign recessed into the wall indicates the address without alien commercial signage or branding.



# 02 Entrance & Arrival



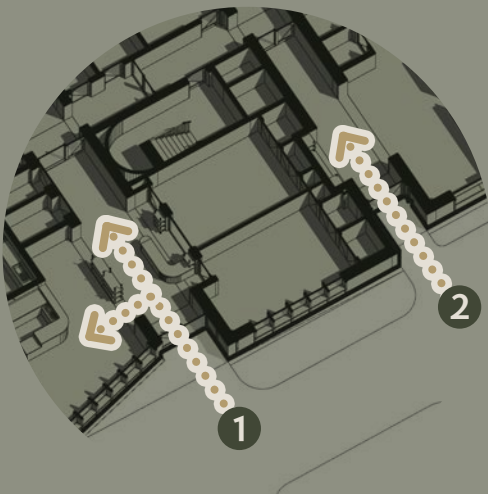
There are two building entrances that sit between the three volumes or 'houses' that are treated differently from each other to differentiate a primary front door to the public entrance and a discrete private door for the women residents.

## INVITING ENTRANCE

The main entrance is more generous in width and is articulated as the primary entrance through recessing the front door to provide a covered porch that is lined in oak with a splayed wall to give a warm welcome.

The window openings either side of the main entrance grouped with the oak surround for the coffee shop and activity rooms are wide and generous as the publicly accessible spaces. Visibility into the publicly accessible spaces makes them more approachable and less security orientated.

The primary front door is similarly glazed to give a sense of openness with a tactile timber door handle and manifestations to the glazing in an undulating Biophilic pattern.



### Key

- 1 Public Approach and Entrance
- 2 Private Approach and Entrance



## SECURITY AS RELATIONSHIP AND NATURAL SURVEILLANCE

Behind the front door is a host giving a human reception. The team debated at length whether a home should have a reception, but an articulation was sought that provided an appropriate workspace for a host that could receive visitors positively. The aim was to provide natural surveillance to the entrance in order to safely manage the public entrance with adequate security for all concerned without resorting to locks and check points.

The reception host is able to view all visitors arriving through the main door, activity within the coffee shop, those passing through (or attempting to pass through) to the private areas, WCs and movement in and out of the activity rooms from a single surveillance position.

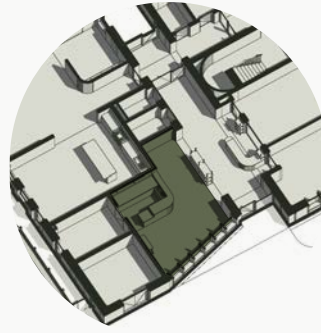
The reception area sits within a double height space topped with an openable rooflight that gives natural light into the heart of the plan, assists in purge ventilation and anchors the reception as an arrival hall to the Hub.

The external walls between each of the three brick volumes wrap inside to form brick walls to the primary corridors. This gives legibility to the corridors to assist understanding the layout, a key feature of trauma informed buildings, but also reinforces the articulation of three domestic volumes rather than one large institution.

The corridors have a patterned terrazzo tiled floor and are softened with an acoustic battened timber ceiling that reduces the acoustic reverberation and maintains the natural and Biophilic material palette.



# 03 Coffee Shop



## ‘IN THE COMMUNITY’

The coffee shop serves several functions. Most importantly it roots Hope Street and the women who are resident there, in and as part of the community, instead of removing them from society as the prison alternative does.

It also provides a space for women to carry out community service and to acquire working skills in the hospitality sector. It is a relatively small and intimate coffee shop with a variety of seating rather than a large cafe. As a public space, materials are slightly different to other areas through the use of the earthy clayworks plaster, an aqua tiled coffee shop servery with white cork tiles and an acoustic ceiling.



## RECYCLED FURNITURE

The coffee shop is separated from the reception hall by shelving made from recycled scaffold boards. The shelving maintains the intimacy of the coffee shop whilst giving plenty of space for inhabitation of both spaces, with plants and opportunities to decorate and occupy the space as a home.

The recycled scaffold board shelving, reception desk and coffee shop tables speaks of the refurbishment and restoration of materials, the essence of which is at the heart of what Hope Street is about in the lives of the women residents. The rustic nature of the scaffold board also prevents the interior from being 'perfect' and allows women and guests to relax into the space.

Consideration throughout Hope Street has been given to how the investment in quality of space and environment can convey value on those resident. Early in the design process it was acknowledged and established that risking some damage to the home to underpin a culture that the women residents can be trusted with nice things. If you have been trusted you are more likely to trust.

This has been balanced with the need for spaces to be relatable and domestic. A five star hotel lobby becomes unrelatable and prevents the women being able to relax at Hope Street as their home during their stay. Investing in quality relatable spaces communicates trust and value supporting the relationships that create engagement.



# 04

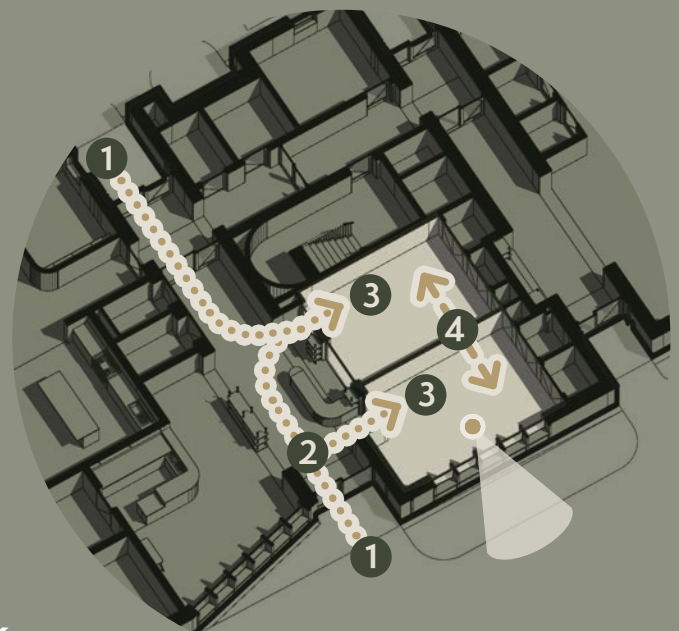
# Activity Room



## LIFESKILLS

The activity room sits behind reception with views out to the front providing a large space for a variety of activities from art and craft, to parenting sessions, practical therapeutic sessions, life skills and yoga to help the women live in society.

The space can be divided in two with a sliding and folding partition to act as two smaller rooms or removed to be used as a larger space. Life skills are further supported with the opportunity to develop gardening skills in the Kitchen Garden adjacent to the primary Therapeutic Garden.



### Key

- 1 Approach
- 2 Reception
- 3 Activity Room/s
- 4 Sliding Partition

## NATURAL LIGHT AND PRIVACY

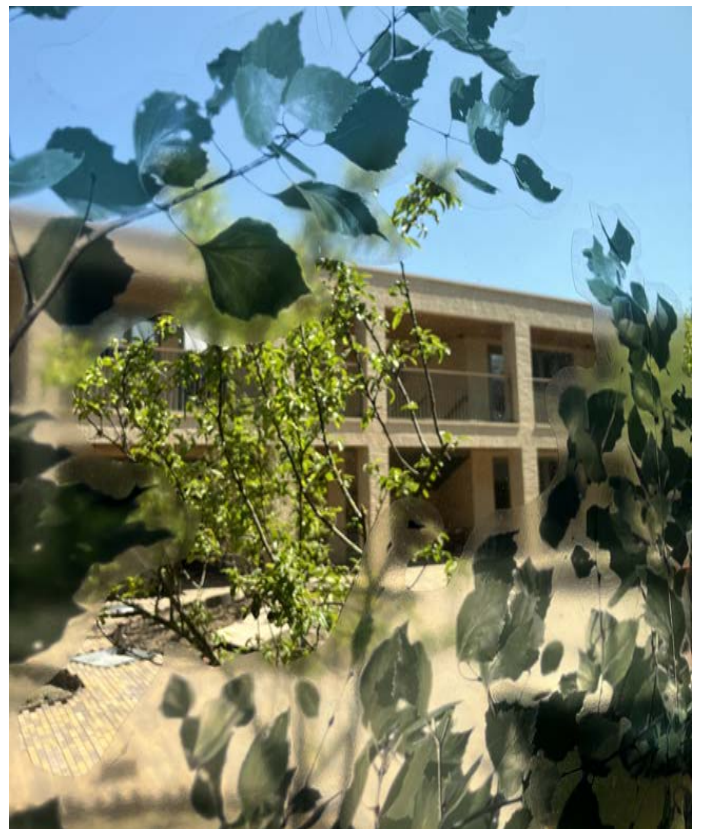
Consultation feedback, well-being and good design meant that large openings, roof lights and glazed doors were prioritised within the design to maintain high levels of daylighting. The pursuit of this led to glazed doors and screens that also provide a sense of openness to the architecture. Typical commercial doors with their small glazed panels that prevent knocking into others on the other side of the door, are synonymous with institutional buildings rather than homes and were therefore avoided. Instead doors with large glazed panels were preferred. Similarly, brushed stainless steel ironmongery with its commercial associations were dispensed with in favour of bronzed door handles and ironmongery.

Whilst establishing high levels of natural light and transparency, this created the requirement to manage privacy in some locations and also to prevent impact from those with limited visibility with large glazed panes of glass in others.

## BIOPHILIC MANIFESTATIONS

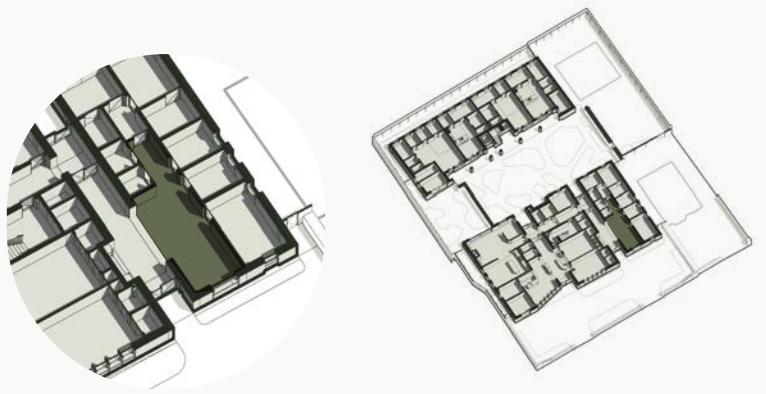
Rather than using frosted films and corporate logos, privacy and glazed manifestations were introduced with a photo-realistic biophilic pattern. This was based on the central River Birch tree in the therapeutic garden, selected as a symbol of Hope, drawing the landscape design into the interiors with a liberally used natural pattern.

The large glazed window and doors behind the reception that bring light into the activity room are prominent examples of the biophilic pattern setting a natural tone to the interior, giving privacy for activities on offer from the public entrance.



# 05

## Welcome Lounge



### DIGNIFIED ARRIVAL

The second entrance of the Hub between the second and third 'houses' provides a more discrete entrance to Hope Street. It does not carry the oak clad fanfare of the primary public entrance between the first and second 'houses', is narrower in width and is recessed back from the building line. Without being a side or back door, it gives a private entrance for the women living at Hope Street to be able to avoid the public entrance to their home.

This is most critical at first arrival where many of the women will arrive from court and they are provided the dignity of arriving without public spectacle and shaming. This is such an important first impression and will form the basis of if the women feel they are welcomed or processed, given dignity or paraded. It also facilitates an entrance that women with children can arrive without feeling their parenting is 'on show' for the days where parenting is not going well!



## DOMESTIC ARRIVAL

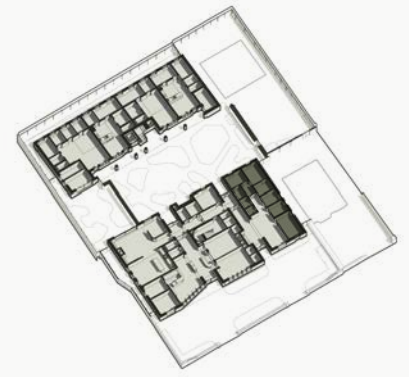
The second private entrance gives way to the Welcome Lounge where women are greeted in a lounge environment. There are no triage desks with high screens but a recessed bench with recycled scaffold shelving containing plants and domestic decorations. Women arrive in a naturally lit lounge that affords views out to the tall trees over windows with biophilic manifestations that provide privacy from the street.

The decor is of a lounge with an oak timber floor. Pendant and wall lamps which all strengthen the domestic feel of the space with lounge seating.



# 06

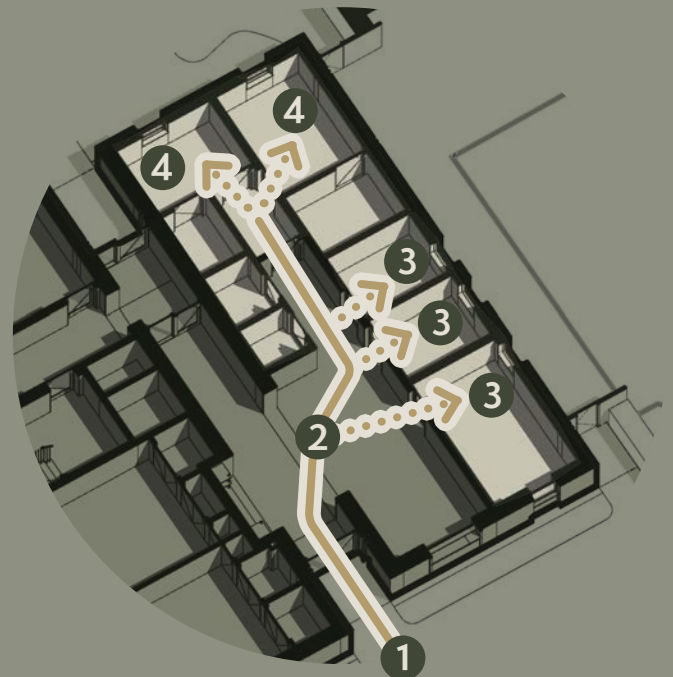
# Consultation & Recovery



## SMALL LOUNGES

There are three consultation rooms adjacent to the Welcome Lounge where women can be inducted at Hope Street and can meet with case officers, social workers or make remote court appearances during their stay. Two of the consultation rooms are smaller with a larger consultation room that might accommodate a woman's children within it. The welcome lounge also facilitates space for children or others to wait outside of the consultation rooms.

The consultation rooms are again conceived as small lounges rather than interview rooms. Strip lighting and demountable ceiling grids are set aside in favour of plastered ceilings, pendant lights, wall lamps and carpet floor finishes. Biophilic manifestations allow a sense of transparency and natural light and avoid institutional glazed small panel doors but still offer privacy within.



### Key

- 1 Private Approach
- 2 Welcome Lounge
- 3 Consultation Rooms
- 4 Recovery Suite

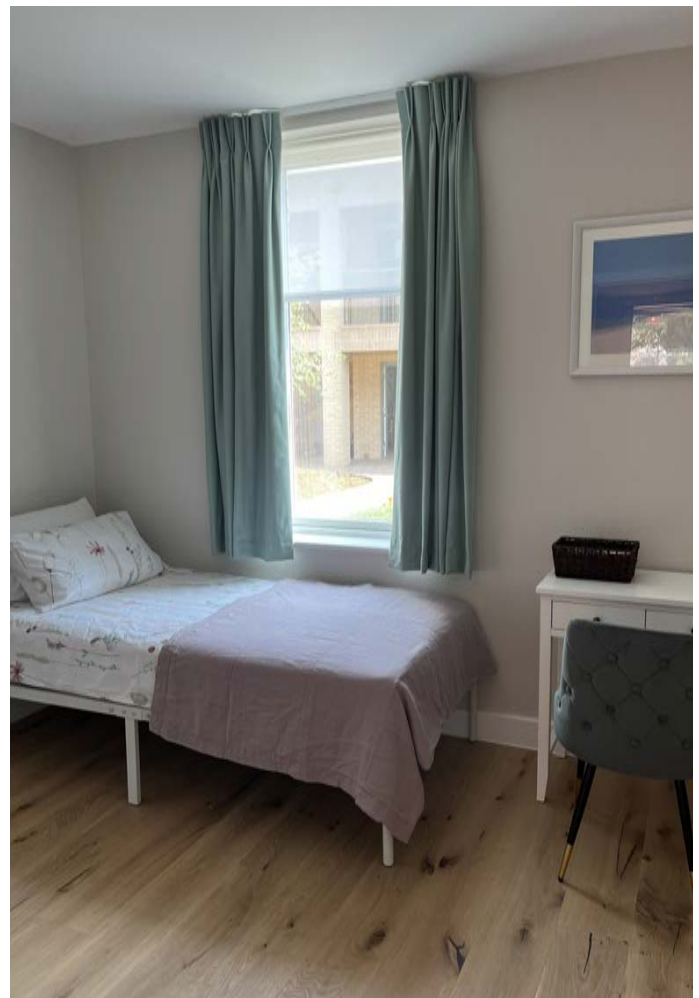


## RECOVERY SUITE

At the rear of the Welcome Lounge is a recovery suite that contains two ensuite bedrooms, one that includes an accessible shower room. Women arriving at Hope Street may have substance use issues or may be particularly vulnerable and require closer monitoring or assistance before they are ready to be placed in one of the shared flats in the residential block. The recovery suite provides for this need without disrupting the autonomy of the majority living independently in the residential block.

The decision of whether to provide an anti-ligature environment within the recovery suite was considered. With anti-ligature there is no halfway house. A bedroom is either fully anti-ligature, or it is not, and it was felt alongside service provision considerations, that the implications of the measures for providing an anti-ligature suite was so at odds with the environment created at Hope Street, that it was decided this would not be provided on site. This will be managed through a risk assessment, and appropriate provision put in place when required.

Both of the bedrooms have rear facing bedrooms that look out on to the therapeutic garden providing a natural and tranquil aspect.



# 07 Therapeutic Garden



The therapeutic gardens design by Harris Bugg Studio form a central and natural heart to Hope Street sat between the Hub building at the front and the residential building to the rear. Early appointment of landscape architecture was sought along with the interior designer in order for a close working relationship and coordinated design to emerge between architecture, landscape and interiors.

## RIVER BIRCH

The landscape design is based around an abstraction of a birch tree that is a symbol of hope in many cultures. A multi stem River Birch tree is situated within the centre of the therapeutic garden visible from the Hope Room. The layout of the garden paths and beds are an abstraction of the birch tree cell structure creating an interconnected series of curved organic paths.

## GARDEN BENCH

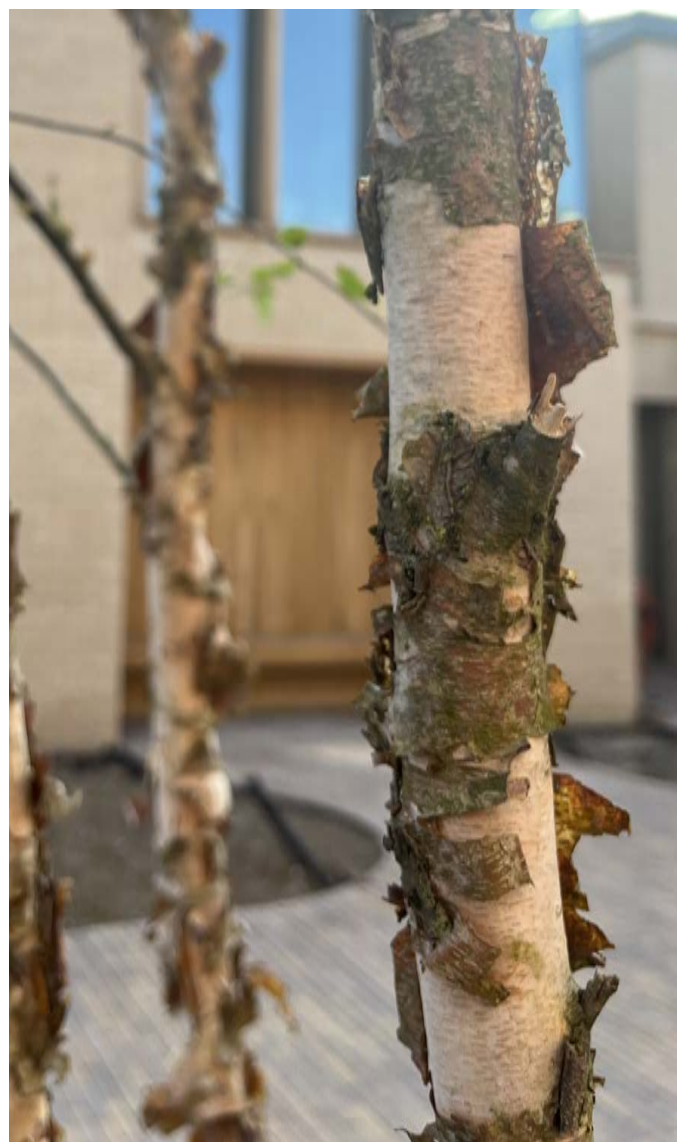
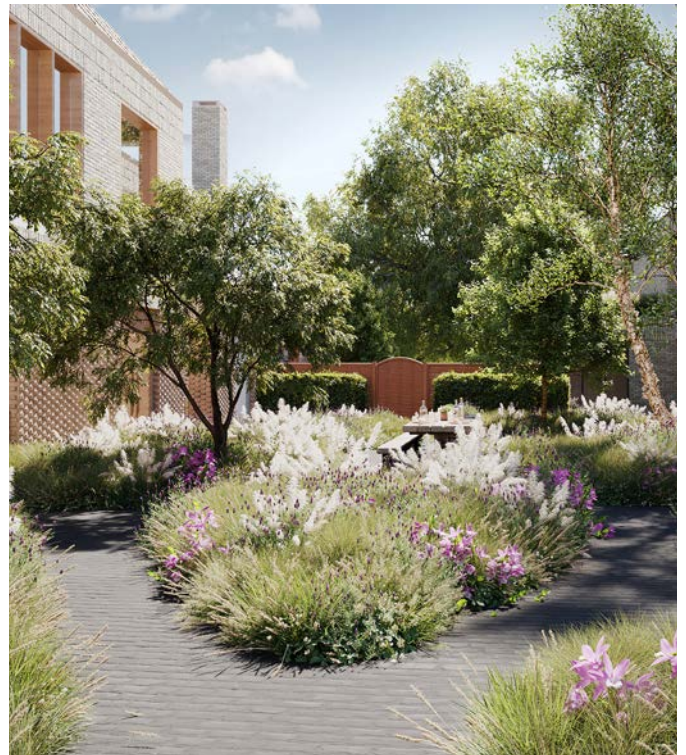
The gardens provide space for individual reflection and sanctuary through secluded spaces for solitude and processing. These are spaces where women can view the comings and goings of Hope Street witnessing how others are treated and this provides the opportunity to build trust by observing other relationships. One such space is the recessed bench at the rear of the Hub and beneath the Hope Suite. Prior to the relocation of the kitchen garden this space contained garden equipment but was reutilised as a sheltered space for reflection to enjoy the gardens and prolong the appreciation through inclement weather and wetter seasons. It is wide enough that it creates an ideal location for two to sit in company without losing individual space. This bench is made of oak joists with a warm oak backing creating a soft textured enclosure.

There are also spaces within the garden to gather as a small group to enjoy the gardens in community, strengthening ties and relationships with others, including paved seating areas and a small lawn area to sit down in the landscape.

## LABYRINTH

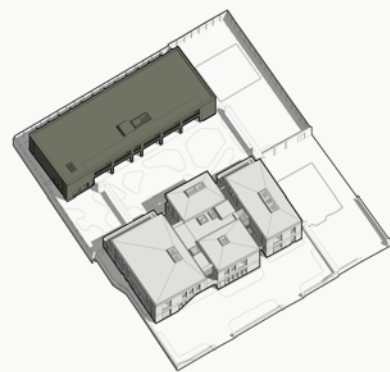
A labyrinth has been designed within the heart of the garden to provide a place of self-regulation through engagement of the Reptilian Brain by following the changing movements of a non-direct path laid into the paved surface. This is a key tool in arming trauma sufferers with the ability to regulate themselves with 'bottom up' techniques alongside the talking therapy 'top down' methods.

The gardens are a resource in themselves but also provide the aspect for both the shared residential flats and the rear facing Hub spaces. There are no publicly accessible spaces that have an aspect to the gardens ensuring this is a private and safe amenity space dedicated only to the women residents and their families. Neither is the garden overlooked by neighbouring properties.



# 08

# Residential Building



## NO PLACE LIKE HOME

The residential building at the rear of the site is the end of the progression from the public facing spaces like the coffee shop at the front of the site through the communal focused shared spaces, to private residential accommodation and ultimately the individual bedrooms.

Each of the flat doors at Hope Street are operated with physical keys giving individual control and symbolic agency to women with access to their own home. This emphasises that the women are not controlled as in prison but have the freedom to come and go from their home, within any restrictions that may be imposed by a community order.

There are four ground floor flats and four flats accessed by a first floor deck that overlooks the therapeutic garden. Deck access means that all of the circulation to the residential flats is visible to residents and from the Hub. Facilitating natural surveillance for the security of all the residents

feels inherently safer, as there are no concealed blind spots and it reduces the requirement for CCTV which communicates a lack of trust.

The external staircase is covered with a rooflight that means what can be a dark or dank space is bright, dry and a delightful approach to your front door. The first floor deck also provides some amenity space for the residents to stand or sit out and enjoy the garden from above. Simple lanterns give a domestic styled light for each front door.

Each flat is equipped with a kitchen, small dining area and lounge for the women to live independently in the same way as they would in the community. The flats are modest but relatable and decorated in a homely way. A bathroom and a separate WC is included in each flat to avoid any potential conflict between residents over the sharing of a bathroom to ease the experience and help build community.

## ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

Within the residential provision are two ground floor flats that have been designed to be wheelchair accessible with wider doors, larger bedrooms and accessible bathrooms and kitchens for those with accessibility needs.

There is also a lift to the first floor deck access which makes accessing the first floor bedrooms possible with a wheelchair, but also easier for those women who may have children in a pram or pushchair and shopping with them.

The flexibility of the 2, 3 or 4 bedroom flats facilities groups of 3 women, or women sharing with their children or a woman with a larger number of their children. Each flat has a slightly larger bedroom that can facilitate the addition of a cot or pull out bed so that the women can have small children in their rooms with them.

Ensuring that accommodation facilitates women maintaining their family unit, and preventing the breaking up of families unnecessarily, is one of the goals of navigating through trauma and avoiding generational consequences.

## PRIVATE SANCTUARY

Modestly sized single bedrooms are arranged overlooking the rear of the site at the back of each of the eight flats. This provides an individual space the women can call their own that is not overlooked by other space at Hope Street and the Hub offices. At the rear of the site with the triple glazed windows these bedrooms become sanctuary spaces which may be the first time some women have had their own individual space. To prevent significant security risks of unauthorised access and blind spots, the rear facing bedroom windows are on restricted openings.

The ground floor bedroom aspect out to the rear strip of garden at the boundary is of a planted boundary. At first floor oriel windows orientate the aspect along the boundary to improve the privacy of residents and neighbouring properties, with the primary view restricted with a frosted biophilic print of a birch tree. The effect is a safe sanctuary which gives privacy rather than confinement. The oriel windows are sized to offer a space to curl up and occupy.



# 09 Hope Room



- 1 Approach Stair
- 2 Hope Lounge
- 3 Hope Room



The Hope Room is the central space at Hope Street and is a therapy room used only for One Small Thing's Healing Trauma Course. One of the characteristics of addressing previous trauma through therapy is that the experience can transport you back to the visceral emotions of the original event and be traumatic itself.

## LOCATION AND HIERARCHY

It has been described as the 'Church' of Hope Street and its specific architectural choices have reinforced its importance in the service and place of trauma therapy at Hope Street.

Its prominent central location in the middle of the Hub rear elevation at first floor places the women's therapy space in the place of authority rather than the staff room or director's office. This hierarchy communicates that Hope Street belongs to the women rather than they are under authoritative control and is inherently more domestic than institutional.

The placement of the Hope Room above the garden rather than within it was a direct design response from consultation feedback with women who had justice experience.

## HYGIENE AND PROCESSION

The Hope Room is the only place in the Hub at first floor that the women will go to during their stay at Hope Street, as the remaining spaces are offices of One Small Thing or collaboration space for other partners and services.

This means that the walking to and up the stairs become a preparation and decompression to and from the trauma focused group work. It is a space physically removed from the everyday activities of being 'at home' giving spatial hygiene between group work and home. As a dedicated space it means that the emotive activity of processing trauma does not impact other activities.

## HOPE SUITE

The Hope Room is part of a suite with a lobby with a WC. These two spaces are a cul-de-sac off the staircase meaning that those arriving at the Hope Room can come into the lobby and away from the staircase circulation, but that no office workers and visitors are passing through the room so that it can function without disruption. Those arriving via the staircase and lift for the offices turn right and need not enter the Hope Suite.

## FORM AND INTERIOR

The form of the Hope Suite is of a tall vaulted room with a spine wall dividing the Hope Room from the lobby and WC. It a dramatic environment without losing a sense of human scale that is intentionally different to any of the other more domestically styled spaces.

Its walls and pitched ceiling are the exposed cross laminated timber finish of the superstructure creating a timber cocoon, and together with timber spine wall and natural jute carpet, provides a very biophilic environment.



## ACOUSTICS AND DISTRACTIONS

The spine wall that divides the Hope Room and the lobby is clad on both sides with acoustic slatted timber battens. This removes reverberation and you can feel the change within the space and a sense of peace and quietness supported by triple glazed windows.

Acoustic transmission across Hope Street has been paid close attention, but is especially important within the Hope Room. Having the privacy to reveal your most traumatic experiences without concerns of being overheard was drawn out of the consultation sessions and is critical for feeling safe and engaging with the Healing Trauma course.

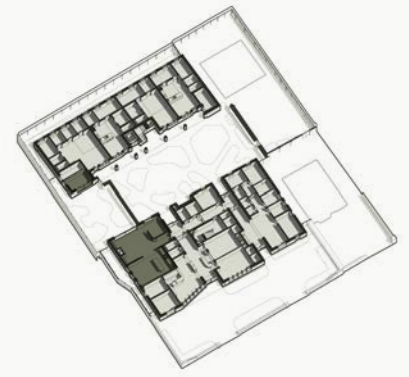
Whilst being free from disruption during sessions is important, managing the intensity of reliving trauma and remaining engaged is important. To this end the room is sufficiently sized that a comfortable distance between individuals in group sessions is achievable whilst also the ability to look beyond and focus on something else. That led to the rooflight with views of the sky and large windows, that were a direct response to an image from the consultation sessions and a connection with nature and view of the therapeutic garden.

## SNUG

On the ground floor is a small room that provides space for solitude, prayer, reflection and other therapy techniques. It has a bowl sink that will facilitate ritual washing for prayer as required, choice of lighting and textures that provide wider opportunities for using regulation techniques for those healing from trauma.

# 10

## Residents Lounge & Visitor Garden



Within the Hub building there is a communal resident's lounge, kitchen and dining room which forms a shared space to relax in a domestic environment. This is a key part of fostering community together alongside the spaces for individual sanctuary.

### LIVING ROOM NOT WAITING ROOM

The resident's lounge is located at the rear of the Hub building away from the public coffee shop. As part of the design moves to create a home environment, consideration was given to decoration and lighting that would communicate this. Specifically, furniture was chosen that was loose rather than fixed which also allows it to be rearranged by occupants. Furniture was also selected in the lounge to facilitate curling up on the sofa, which from the consultation conversations with women was an important aspect of being fully relaxed at home.

Central to the living room is a brick chimney with a realistic electric fire which is there to be enjoyed, but also to strongly communicate the space as a domestic environment rather than an institutional waiting room.



### Key

- 1 Residents Lounge
- 2 Visitor Garden
- 3 Garden Room



## DECORATION AND INHABITATION

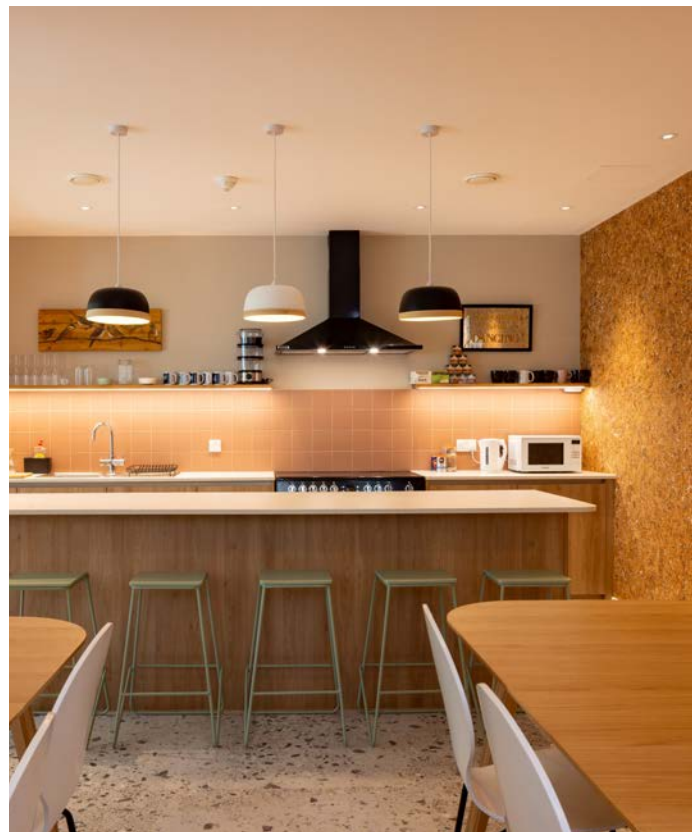
Within the kitchen dining room is an entire wall covered in cork that can be used as a giant pinboard. This provides the opportunity for the women to occupy 'their' communal space with the artwork and the activities from their time at Hope Street. Providing space that can be filled gives choice and control but also provides a method of peer-to-peer communication for new arrivals in to the community about its culture.



## VISITOR GARDEN AND GARDEN ROOM

The resident's lounge will also act as a space for the women to invite their friends and family during visiting hours to Hope Street. This becomes a domestic environment for the women to host their family in a semi-private environment. Similarly, within the lounge is a three-quarter height curved wall that encloses a play space for children or older teens to have more private space away from the shared lounge area.

The lounge opens up to a portioned off area of the garden providing a garden outlook through large sliding doors and an opportunity for interaction with the natural environment. A hedge maintains separation of the wider therapeutic garden for the privacy of those women who are not hosting visitors and enjoying the main garden. At the other end of the visitor garden is a garden room that is visible from the resident's lounge but provides more private space for the women to host their family on site.



# 11

## Crèche & Kitchen Garden



### CRÈCHE

Hope Street is 'a pioneering residential community for women and their children'. To this end and to facilitate women who have their children with them at Hope Street being able to engage in the support and group work, a crèche space is provided.

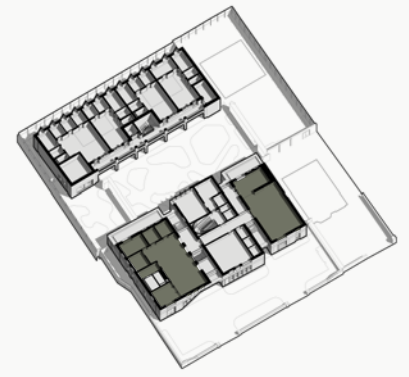
Initially this was squeezed into the residential building where the garden room is located but through later purchase of the adjacent site was able to be given its own space with a play garden. Having the crèche out of the primary space but easily available ensures convenient provision but gives space for all the gardens and space not to be characterised as children's play space. The architecture and landscape of the crèche are therefore intentionally different from the Hope Street buildings and gardens.

It is particularly helpful for women coming to terms with the trauma of having their children taken away whilst living in the residential context. This is balanced sensitively with children knowing they can also be 'at home'.

### KITCHEN GARDEN

Also 'off site' and making use of the purchase of the adjacent site to Hope Street, is a Kitchen Garden in front of the crèche building. This provides home grown produce at Hope Street but more significantly opportunities for the women to experience sustainable lifestyles connected with nature and picking up basic gardening skills. Being able to spend time in nature, growing and nurturing plants has been demonstrated widely to be therapeutic itself and good for stress and mental well-being.

# 12 Staff Offices



## OFFICES

Other than the Hope Suite, the first floor of the Hub building is given over to offices for the running of Hope Street by its staff and partners. This is a quality work space with individual offices, open plan working space and break out space to provide for the work of a collaborative team.

Whilst the office space is not the focus of the trauma informed design attention, the team have openly discussed how the building will speak both to the women residents but also to those working at Hope Street. A positive working environment that values its staff in a functional and desirable workspace is part of staff retention, but mostly about setting a tone of being valued that then is held as a culture for the whole community of staff and residents at Hope Street.

Large windows and roof lights give an open connection to the therapeutic garden behind and the trees opposite Hope Street to the front drawing upon the natural environment. Portrait windows and sympathetic warm coloured lighting are designed such that the offices do not detract from the residential appearance of the building at first floor.

A large seminar room sits in one of the vaulted volumes to provide space for training and to support Hope Street as the centre of a multidisciplinary team that is critical to delivering collaboration with other services and partners.

# Summary & Reflections



## AMBITION AND APPROACH

Hope Street has been designed collaboratively between One Small Thing and the consultant team having engaged in consultation with women who have a lived experience of the justice system. The intent has been to create a trauma informed environment that supports the pioneering work of One Small Thing in providing a new way to work with women and rebuild their lives.

A range of macro and detailed design moves have been employed to build trust, foster a sense of community and provide an environment that is functional and delightful.

The key moves have been to find an expression of architecture that identifies the women as individuals of value, providing a home for them to belong in rather than processed as a number through an institutional environment. The domestic filter has had a strong influence on design decisions along with answers to the requirements of a non-domestic building.

## OCCUPANCY REFLECTIONS

To continue to learn requires listening, trying and reflecting on what works. Before completion we had the opportunity to experience occupying our design by staying overnight. Appreciating the building by stopping to dwell in the spaces designed as you would if you lived there is an important exercise. Architecture is not just observed but experienced. A home is felt.

Initial comments have been very encouraging and we very much look forward to hearing reflections from those that make Hope Street their home during their stay.

## HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

The design of Hope Street has been an exciting exploration into trauma informed design and a consideration of architecture from first principles. The opening of Hope Street is even more exciting because it will host a new approach to working with women who have experienced trauma in the justice sector. This is strategically important but more critically will make differences to individual women.

*'The responses to the building carry on being overwhelmingly impressive and positive, often with people not quite believing it. What you have designed is truly wonderful.'*

Lady Edwina Grosvenor, founder of One Small Thing



**SNUG ARCHITECTS**

[www.snugarchitects.co.uk](http://www.snugarchitects.co.uk)

[info@snugarchitects.co.uk](mailto:info@snugarchitects.co.uk)

02382 029500

