

# Welcome

The University Centre is in need of vital upgrades to ensure safety, security, accessibility, and sustainability. Parts of the building are currently underutilised. Given the prime city centre location, there is a great opportunity to re-imagine the use of the building and create an asset in the heart of the city which all members of the University community can enjoy.

## Feasibility study

The University of Cambridge has commissioned a feasibility study to assess how best to upgrade the University Centre and guarantee its future.

## Our study will align with the principles of Reshaping our Estate

- Create high quality spaces that support staff and students to carry out their best work.
- Develop a smaller estate with more shared spaces.
- Consider how to make the most of existing spaces before building new ones.
- Support teams across the University to adopt new ways of working.
- Develop a financially and environmentally sustainable estate.
- Protect and promote our built and cultural heritage.

## At this exhibition

You can learn more about the building, the vital upgrades it needs, and the future uses that are being explored.

We will be hosting two drop-in events and a webinar. This information can also be found online:

<https://www.em.admin.cam.ac.uk/university-centre-consultation>

## Consultation

We are engaging with the statutory members of the University Centre alongside key stakeholders and current building occupants to collect views on the future of the University Centre at this early stage.

Please share your thoughts on our survey.

Results of the survey will be fed into our future design work and captured in a report with recommendations to the University Council. As the proposal progresses there will be further opportunities for you to engage.



You can find our survey here



# University Centre

The University Centre, fondly known as the 'Grad Pad', was built in 1967 to provide recreational, social, and dining facilities for people in the University community who did not have access to College amenities.

## Founding principles

The University Centre was funded by the Wolfson Foundation board and served members of the Regent House, University officers, Fellows of Colleges, and postgraduate registered students. Membership is still protected by the Ordinance for the University Centre.

## What did it provide?

When it opened in 1967, it housed a large central dining hall, small formal dining rooms, several common rooms, a roof terrace and a ground floor bar. A large central kitchen and servery supported on-site catering. Recreational facilities included billiards and table tennis.

## How was it used?

Over the next decades it served as a focus for the social life of the University as distinct from its Colleges. Beyond the daily functions of dining, meeting and socialising, it hosted a broad range of events from boxing matches to breastfeeding groups, discotheques to exams and everything in between.

## Recent changes

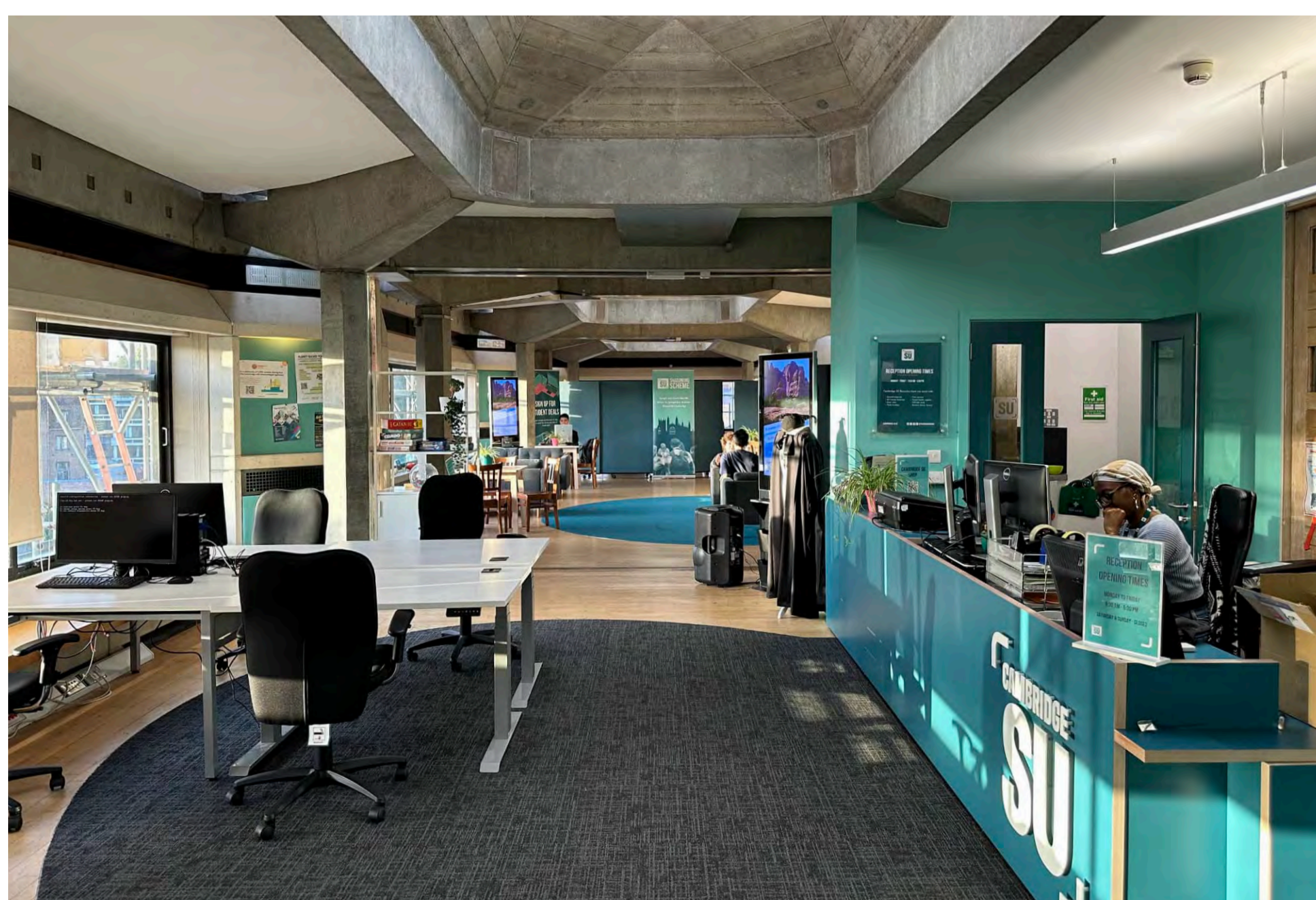
When the West Hub was opened, the central catering kitchen was relocated there and the University Centre restaurant, servery and cafe were closed. A medium term strategy was endorsed for internal refurbishments to provide more teaching space and accommodate the Students' Union and the University Messenger Service. The closure for this refurbishment coincided with closures during the pandemic, but the building has since re-opened.

## And now...

The University Centre continues to serve many different users. It provides overflow teaching and exam spaces, a home for the Students' Union, clubs and societies, the University Messenger Service, and the organisation Newcomers and Visiting Scholars, who host frequent social and learning events throughout the year. However, the principal use of the building as a social and dining hub has been discontinued and some of these spaces are now vacant or underutilised.



Located on the Cambridge riverfront, coinciding with one end of the river punting route.



Top floor of the University Centre is currently home to the Students' Union.



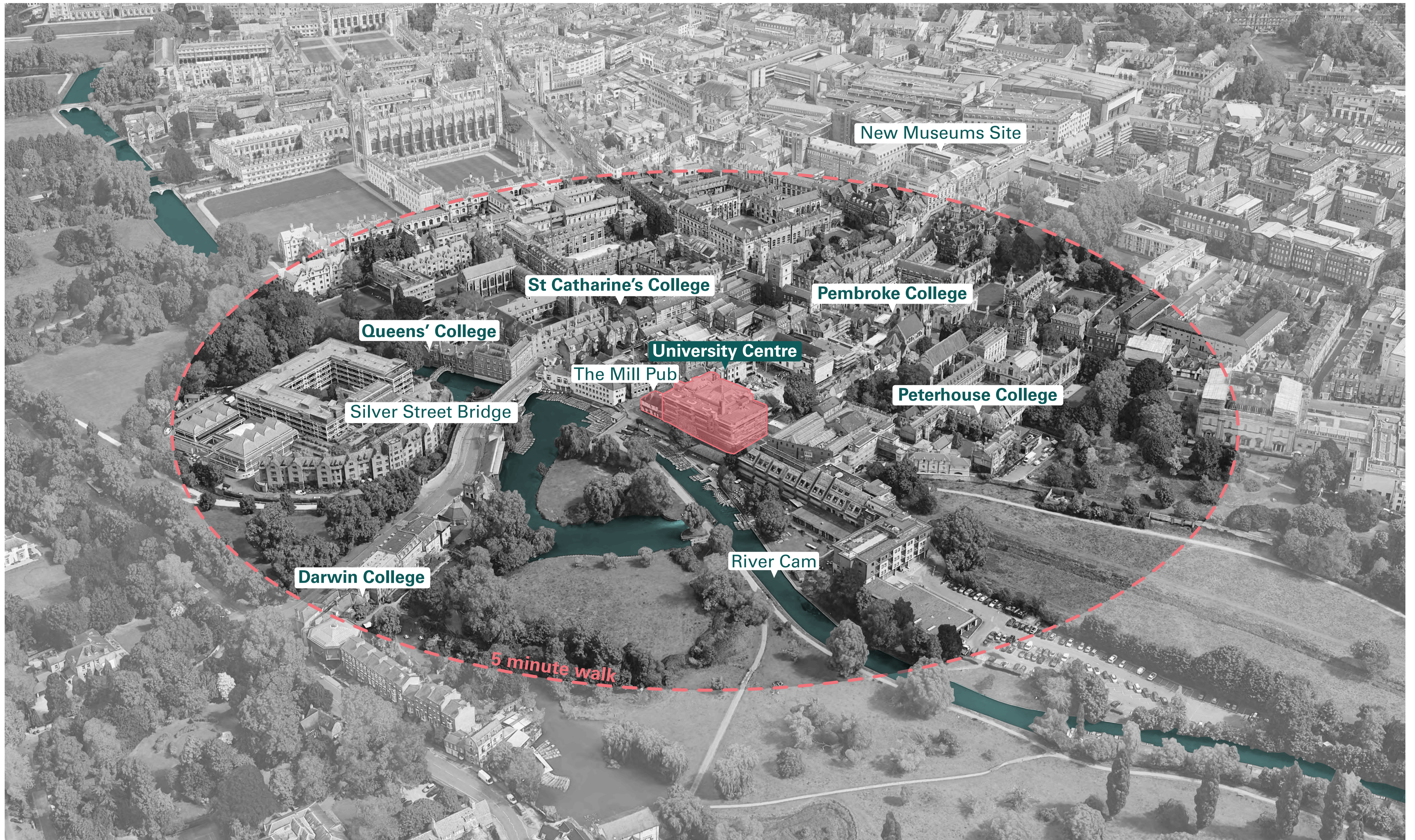
The University Centre has hosted a broad range of social and learning events.



Frequent Newcomers and Visiting Scholars events held in the main hall.



# Granta Place



Aerial view of University Centre and environs.

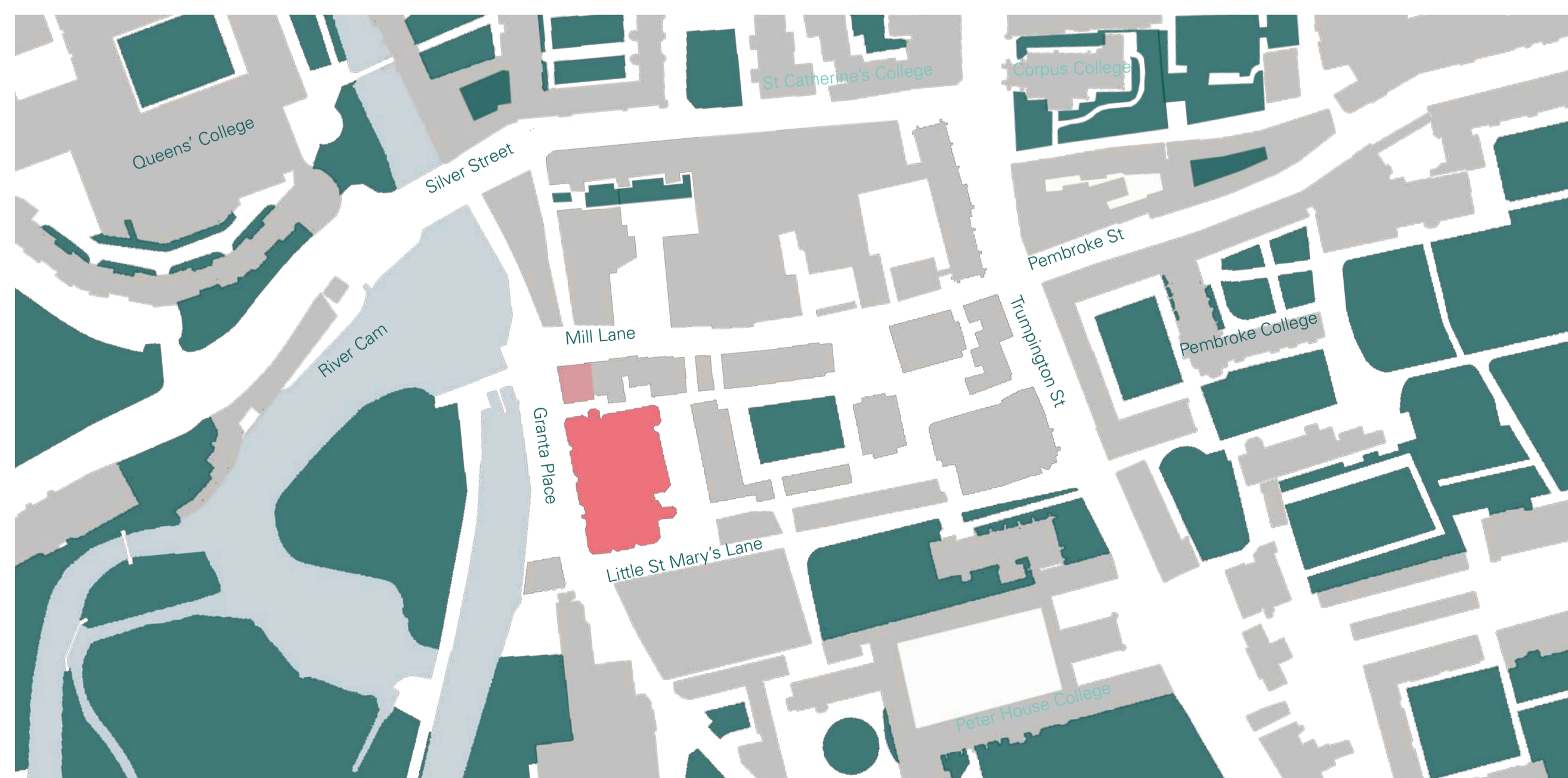
## Where is it?

The University Centre at Granta Place is centrally located on the Cambridge riverfront. The area is a much visited tourist destination, situated at one end of the river route, next door to the popular pub, The Mill, overlooking Laundry Green. The upper floors and roof enjoy spectacular views of the surrounding city, countryside and river.

It is surrounded by colleges and centrally located between New Museums, Downing and Sidgwick sites. However, it is not within a 5-minute walking distance to these, which impacts its potential for teaching use.

Just east of the site, Pembroke College is redeveloping the former site of Miller's Yard and the Mill Lane Lecture Block to provide new student residences. The loss of the Mill Lane Lecture Block has resulted in more dispersed teaching space.

Although The Mill sits within the boundary of the site, no changes have been proposed for the pub as it provides active public food and leisure on the riverfront and it is operated under a long-term lease.



University Centre context plan.



Mill Lane punting station, Silver Street and Mathematical Bridge as seen from University Centre roof terrace.

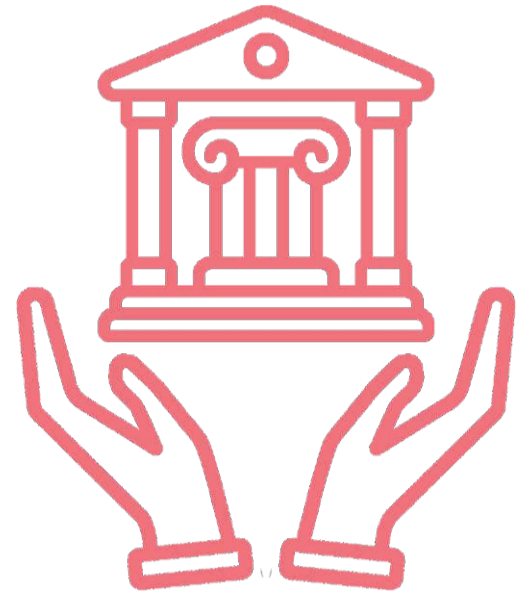


# Vital Upgrades

Since its completion almost 60 years ago there has been no significant refurbishment of the University Centre. Extensive refurbishment and upgrades are needed to give the building another 60 years of life. Upgrades will also help us meet our decarbonisation commitments.

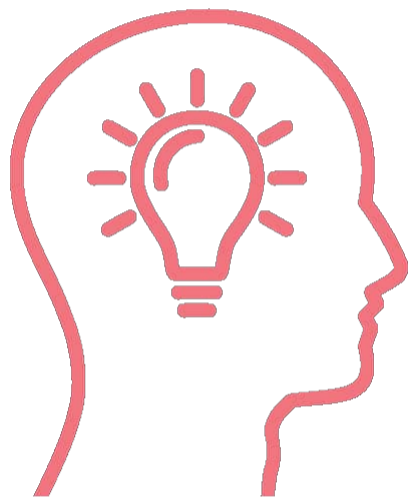
Following the Coronavirus pandemic the University Centre has no longer been used as a social and dining hub, with the central kitchen moving to the West Hub. The building is under-used and our aim is to establish how best to guarantee its long-term future.

## Conserve



In 2013, the building was listed as Grade II by Historic England, which means that it is "of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve it". All upgrades will work to preserve the aesthetics and key features of the architectural heritage.

## Re-imagine



Given the prime city centre location and the underutilised spaces, now is the time to re-imagine how this building can best serve the needs of the University community. All upgrades will maintain the flexibility of future use.

## Decarbonise



The University has committed to targeting Zero Carbon by 2048 with aspirations to achieve this by 2038 if possible.

Fully occupied, the University Centre is estimated to generate approximately 320 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year using current carbon factors. It is one of our more carbon intensive buildings.

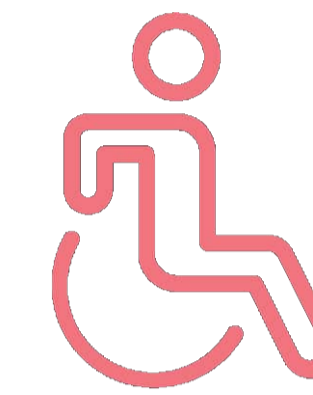
Full refurbishment with both energy efficient measures and low carbon technologies could reduce the building's whole life carbon emissions by 80% over the next 60 years.

Refurbishing the building instead of building a new one could save 50-60% of whole life carbon emissions during the same period.

## Improve



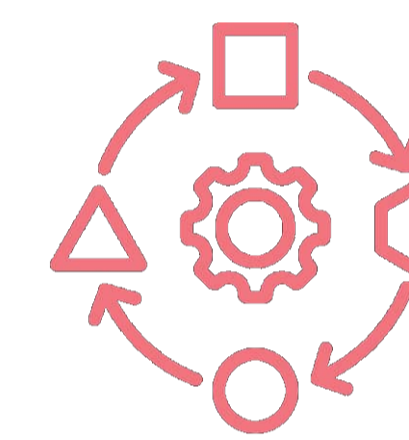
**Safety**  
New evacuation lifts and fire safety systems are needed to ensure safe operation in the long term.



**Accessibility**  
Circulation, toilets and other provisions must be re-evaluated to provide access for people of all abilities.

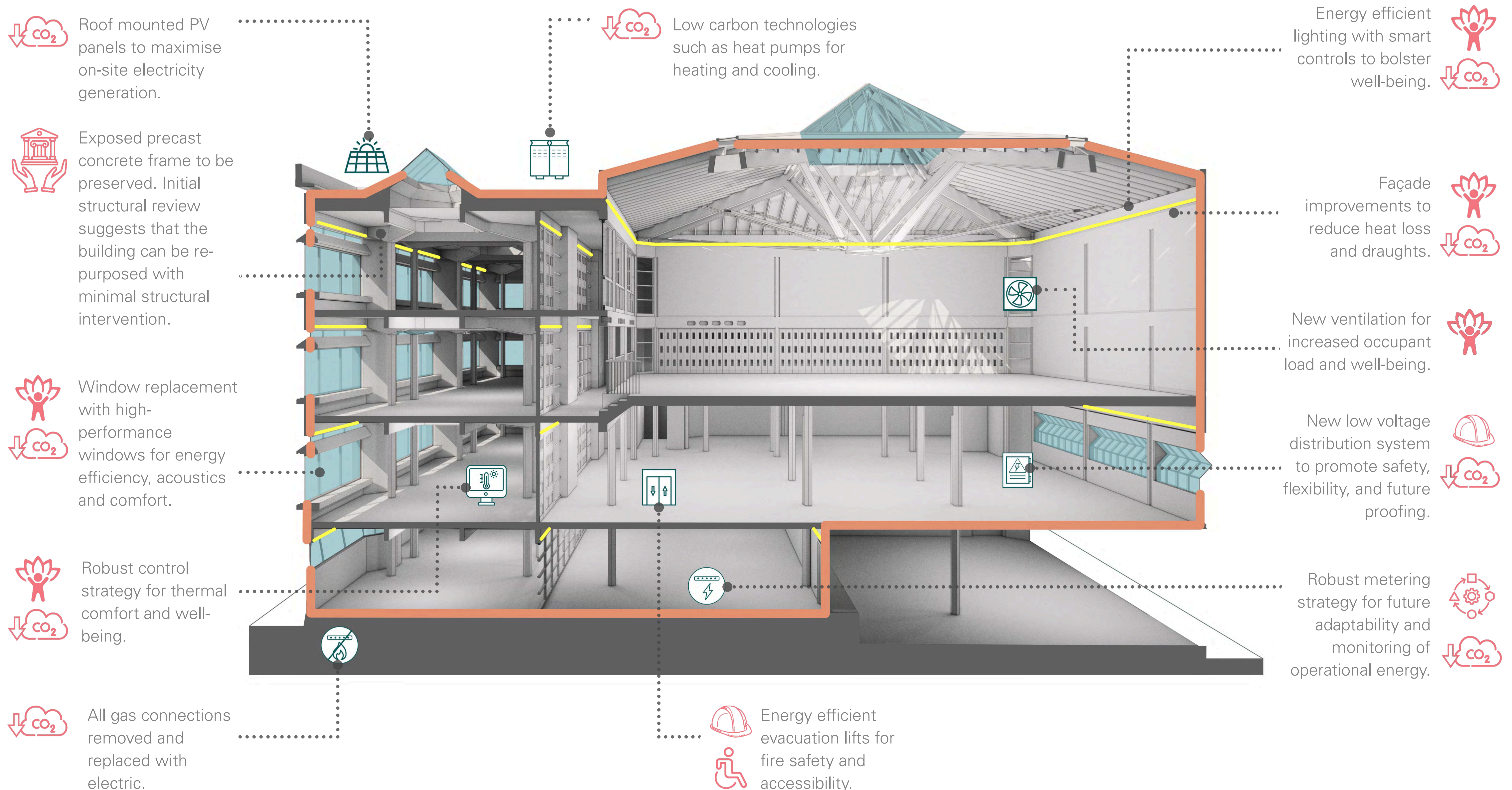


**Health and wellbeing**  
Upgrades will provide fresh air, thermal comfort, and better lighting for occupants.



**Adaptability**  
All upgrades will support flexible use so the building can adapt to the changing needs of the University in the long term.

## Potential upgrades include:





# Multi-Purpose Hub



A dynamic communal place for working, learning, dining, and connecting with friends and colleagues.

- Would bring new life to the original purpose of the building.
- Serve all members of the University community.
- Building on the success of the West Hub, this would provide space for interdisciplinary connections and collaborations.
- Flexible spaces could be open year round.
- Provision of event spaces would relieve the pressures on purpose built teaching and exam rooms.
- Would continue to provide a suitable location for the Students' Union and Newcomers and Visiting Scholars, as well as meeting space for other clubs and societies.



Learn

+

Connect

=

Hub

15%



Meetings / Seminars  
Bookable rooms

15%



Open study

10%



Cafe + bar

40%

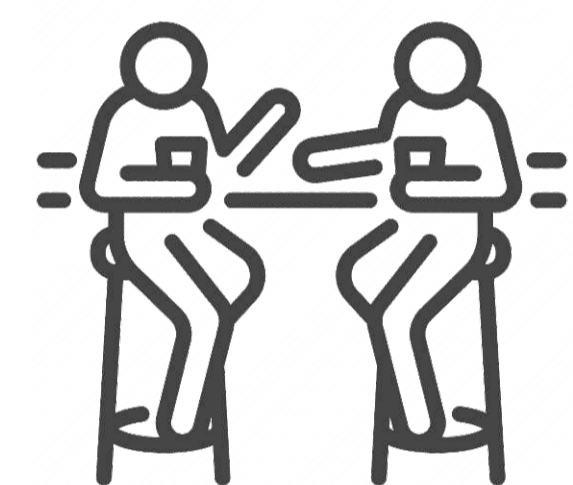


Entrance foyer  
Students' Union  
Touch down space

20%

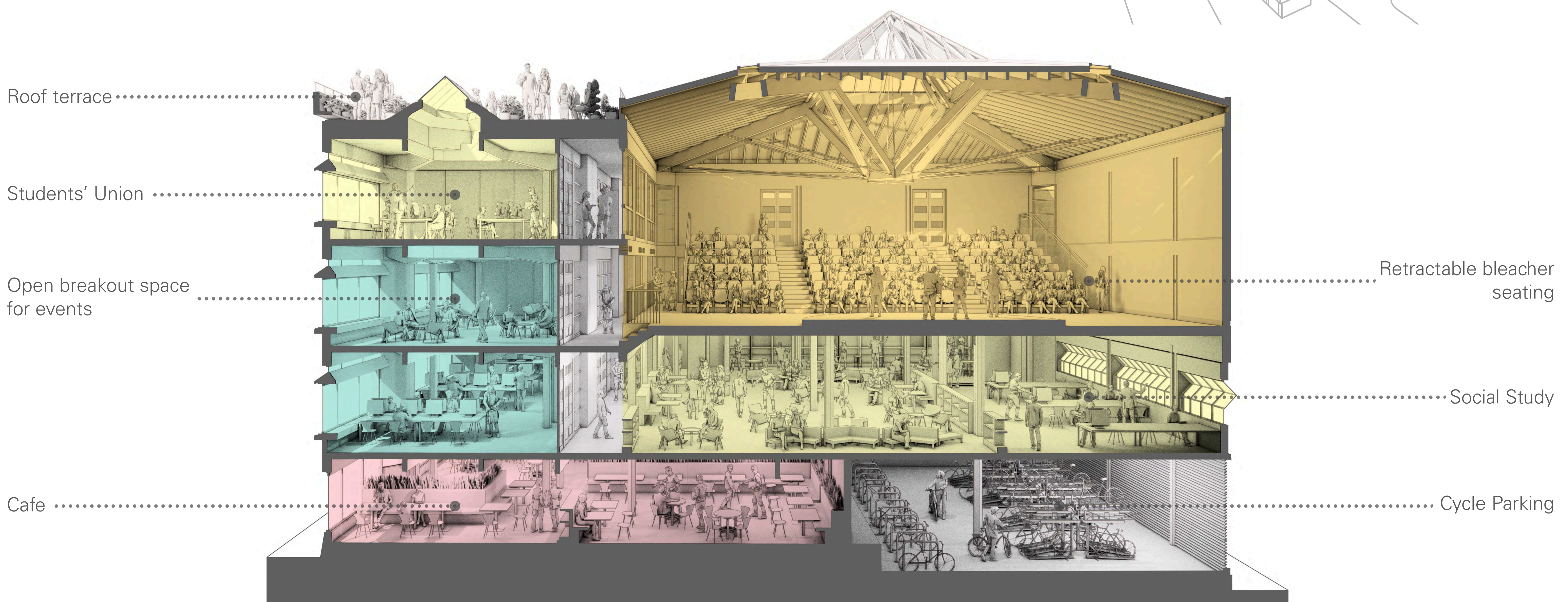
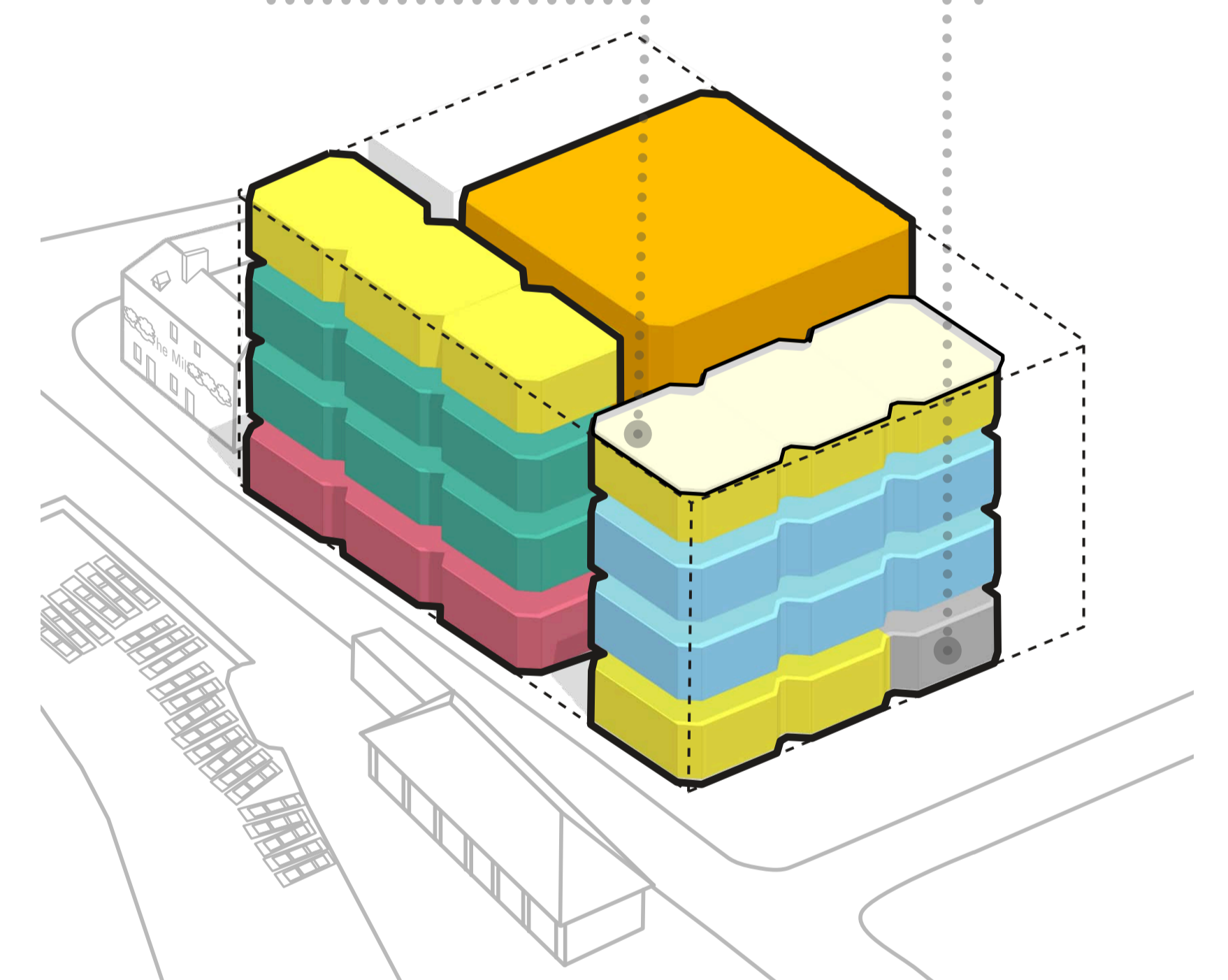
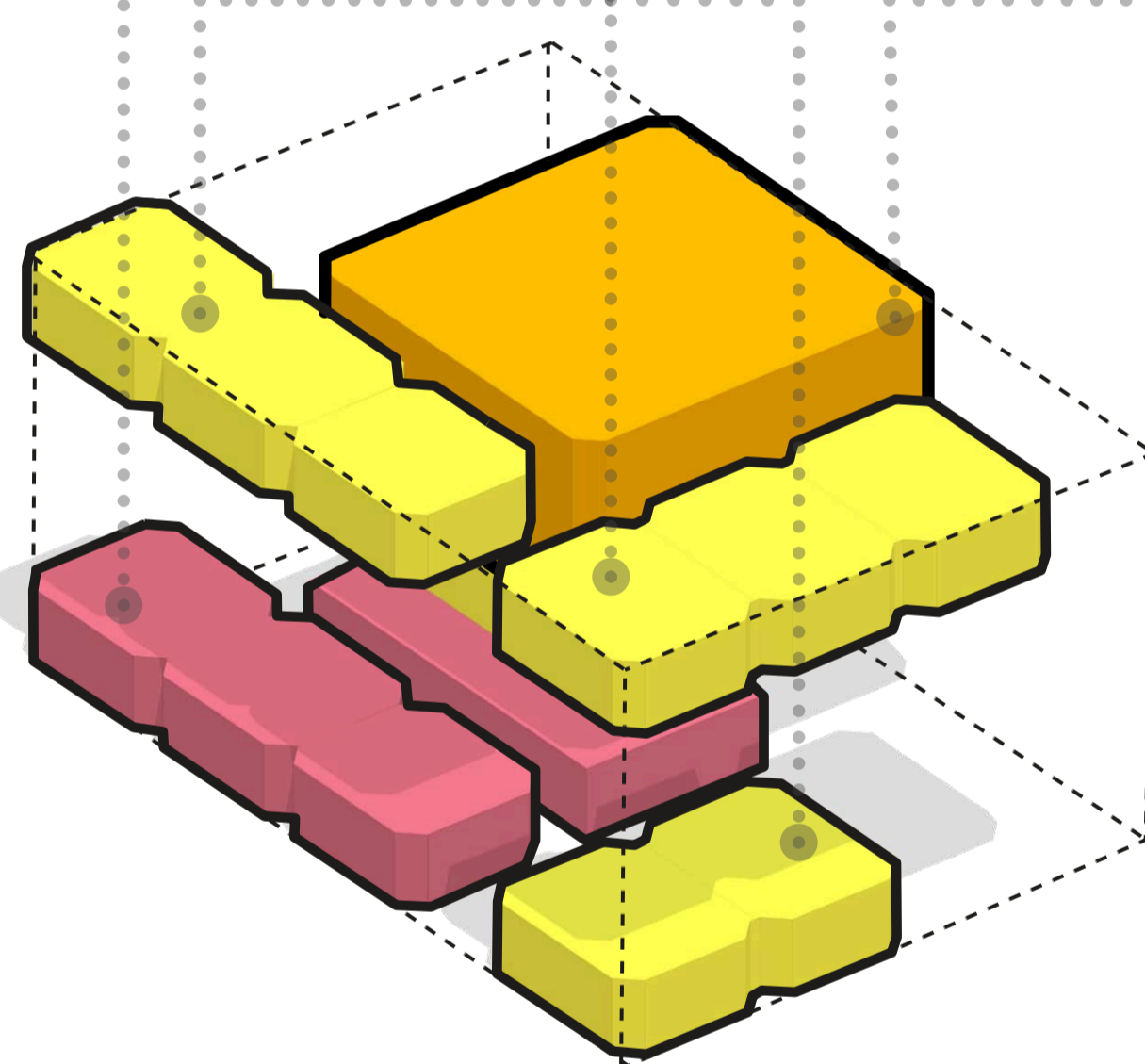
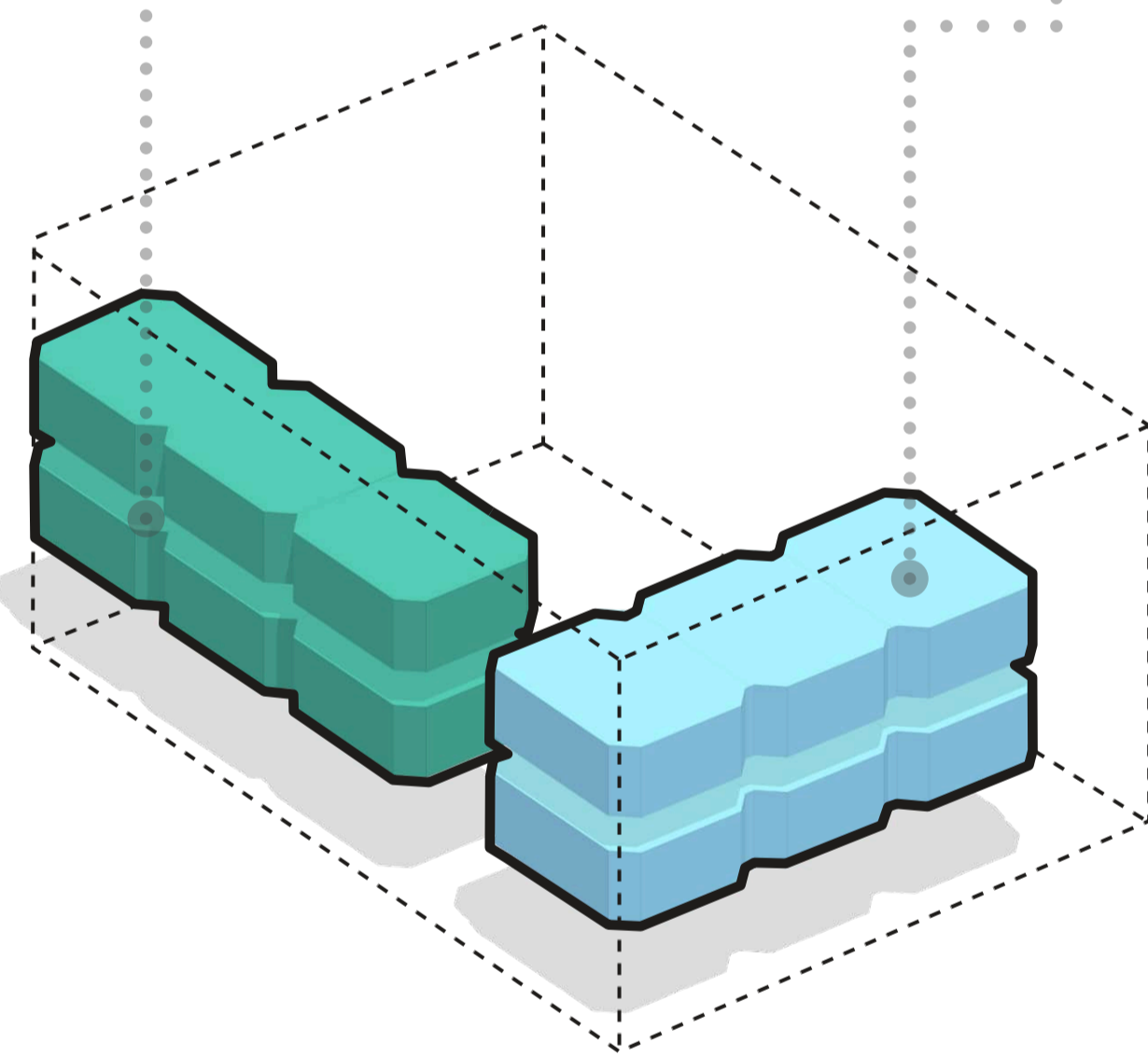


Multi-purpose  
hall for events



Roof terrace

Cycle parking



Speculative vision of Multi-Purpose Hub in use





# Mixed Workplace



**A workplace shared between university administration and entrepreneurs to promote local innovation and generate income for the University.**

- Would provide a mix of cellular and open plan offices and meeting spaces for university staff.
- Would support collaborative partnerships between the University and industry.
- Would provide flexible shared spaces for the use of the University and commercial tenants.
- Could provide an income stream for the University though letting of parts of the building.
- May be able to continue to accommodate the Students' Union, clubs and societies, University Messenger Service and Newcomers and Visiting Scholars.
- Commercial feasibility would need to be evaluated.



**Work**

**+**

**Connect**

**=**

**Workplace**

15%



Open plan workplace

10%



Meeting space

25%



Offices

10%



Cafe

25%



Touch down space  
Entrance Foyer

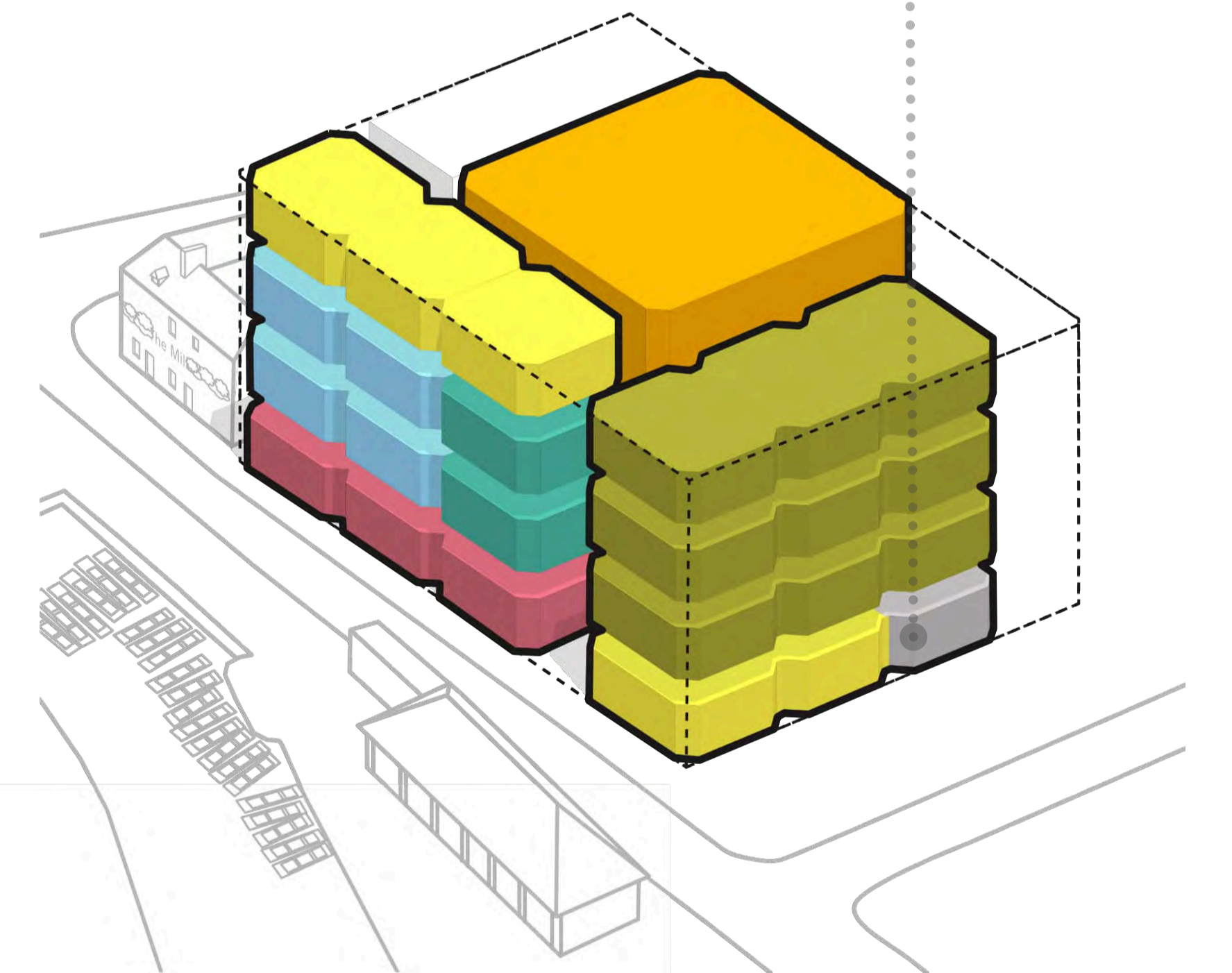
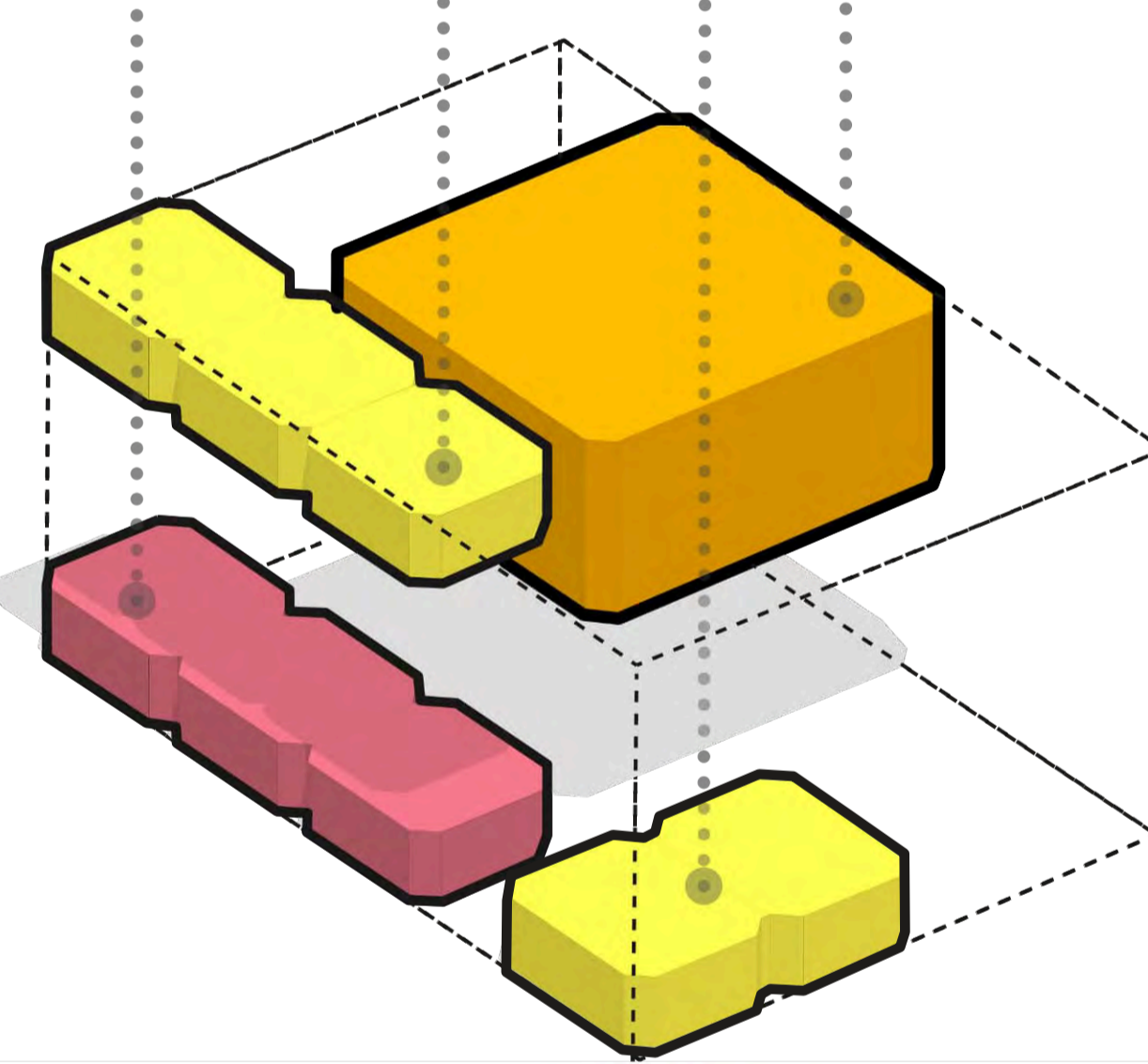
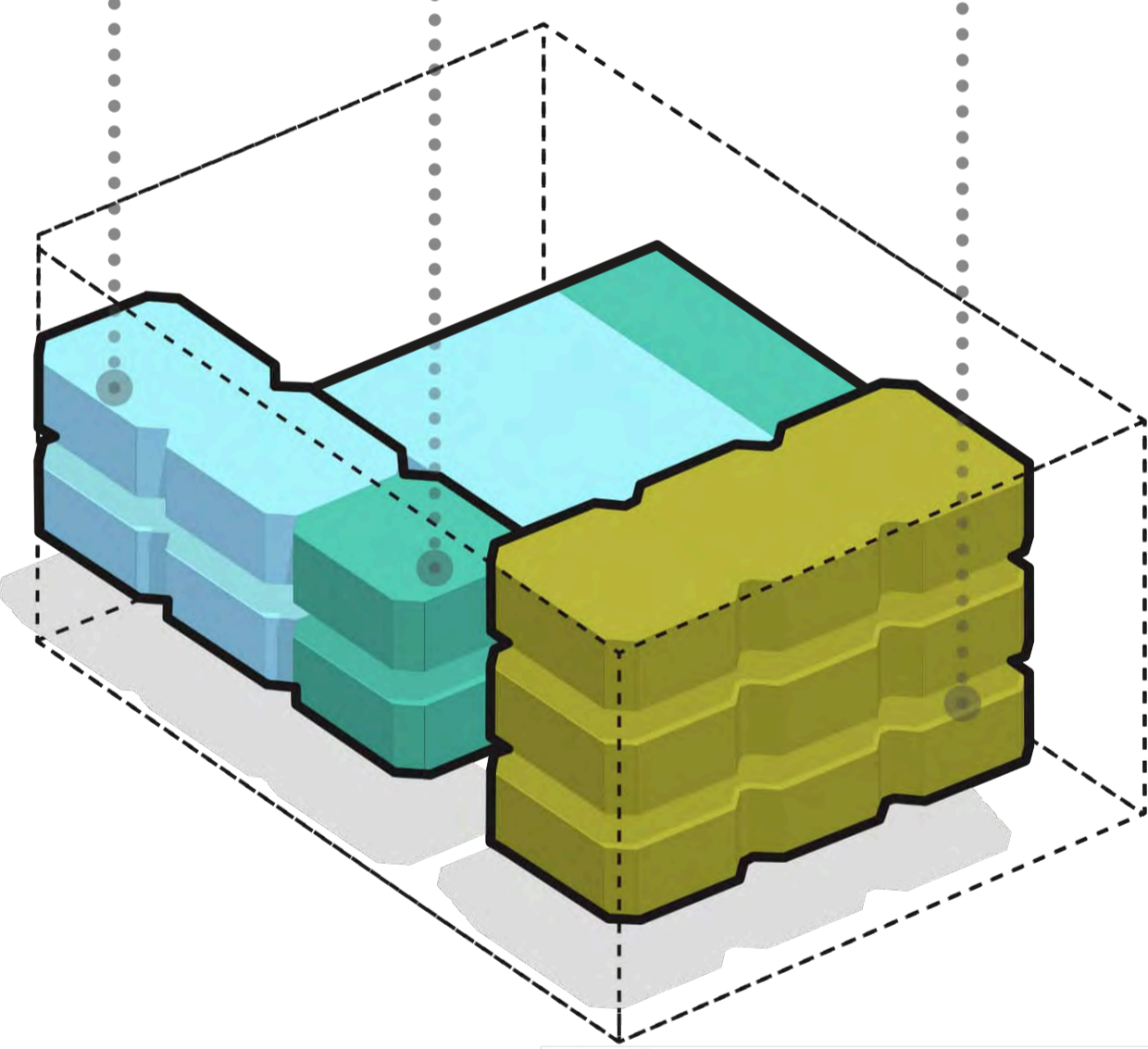
15%



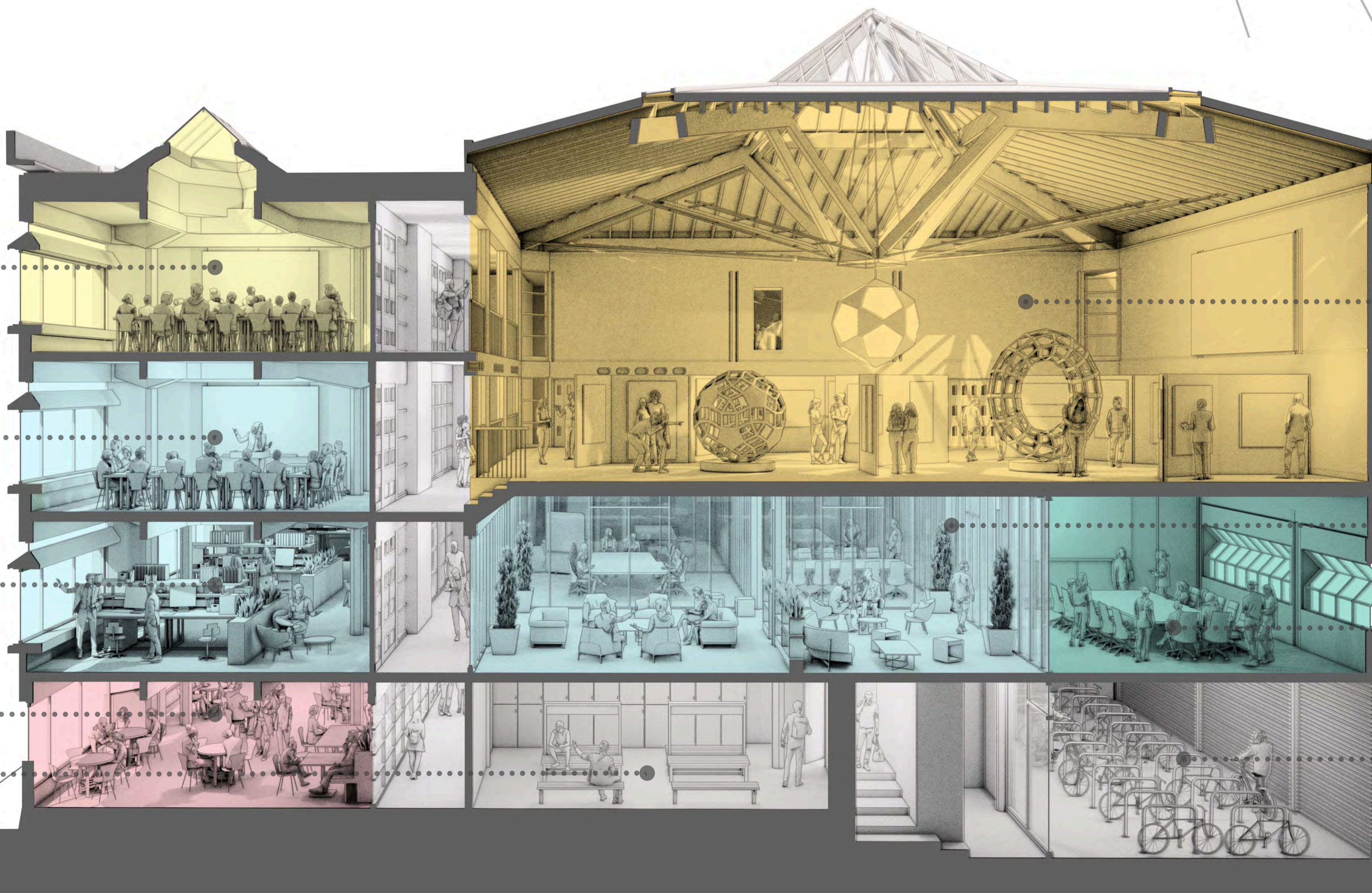
Exhibition + events



Cycle parking



Students' Union



Central Event and Exhibition Space (Art/Science/Tech)

Central touch down space

Premium workplace for university admin

(Business) Meeting Rooms

'River Cafe'  
Changing and showers for users

Cycle Parking

Speculative vision of Mixed Workplace in use



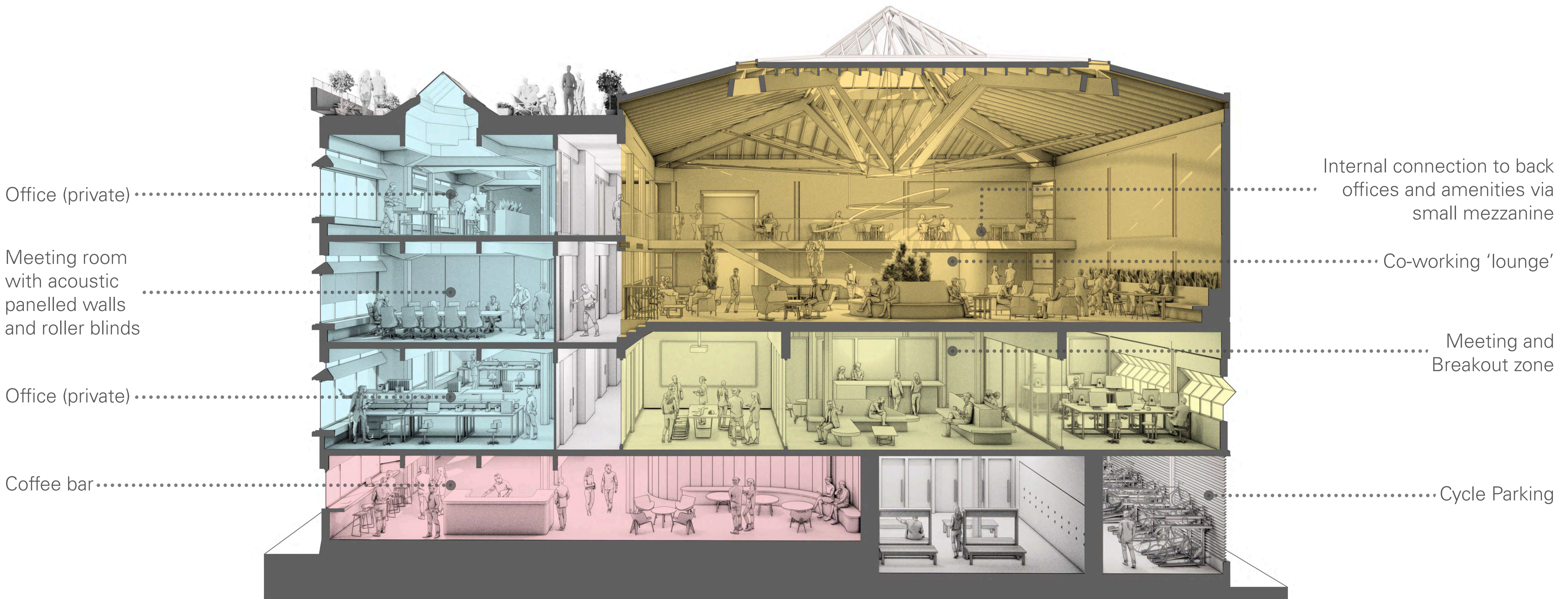
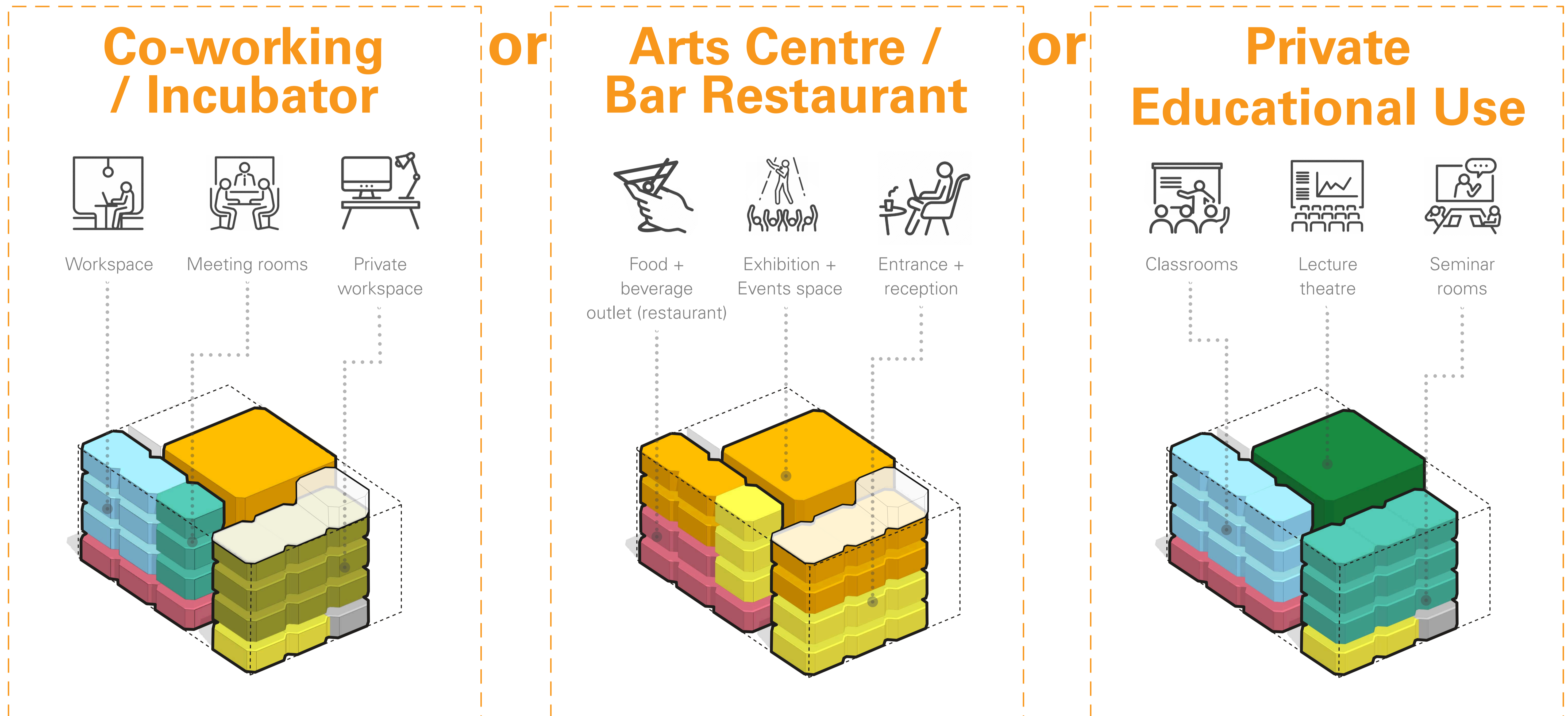


# Commercial Use



**A facility for a range of commercial tenants which would generate income for the University, with reduced capital outlay and maintenance.**

- Could be developed either by the University or by the future tenant.
- Would provide an income stream for the University by letting out the building in its entirety.
- Would require relocating the Students' Union, clubs and societies, University Messenger Service and Newcomers and Visiting Scholars to a more compatible site.
- There is a broad range of commercial uses that could be viable, and commercial feasibility would need to be evaluated further, as well as planning permission for change of use.
- Elements from the previous options can equally be considered within this commercial context.



Speculative vision of Co-working/Incubator in use



# Thank you



Thank you for taking the time to engage with us on the future of the University Centre. If you have thoughts on what you've seen please share them.



**Have your say!**

