Golden Lane Estate

A pioneer of the Urban Village

Geoffry Powell, winning drawing of Golden Lane estate

Golden Lane Estate stands as one of Britain's earliest and most influential urban villages—where architecture, community and wellbeing were brought together to shape a new model of city living.

From Post-War Ruin to New Urban Living

Golden Lane Estate was built on a site devastated by wartime bombing, at a time when the City of London faced an urgent need to reintroduce housing and rebuild community life. Constructed between 1952 and 1962, the estate formed part of a wider ambition to bring residents back into the Square Mile.
This was not simply housing provision—it was an early vision for a new way of living in the city.

A Vision for the "Urban Village"

Designed by Chamberlin, Powell & Bon, Golden Lane Estate is one of the earliest realised examples of the "urban village" in the UK.
The concept brought together daily life within a compact, walkable neighbourhood, combining:
→ Homes
→ Leisure and health facilities
→ Landscaped open spaces
→ Community amenities
This integrated approach created a self-contained and sociable environment, where living, wellbeing and community were designed as a single system.

Architectural Innovation and Legacy

Golden Lane represents a key moment in post-war architectural thinking.
Early example of modernist housing design in Britain
→ Carefully composed mix of building types and heights, from maisonettes to residential towers
→ Strong relationship between architecture and landscape, including podiums, courtyards and green spaces
→ A precursor to the later Barbican Estate, developed by the same architects
Today, the estate is Grade II listed, recognising its national architectural and historic significance.

Designed for Community and Wellbeing

The estate was conceived to support everyday life and social interaction.
Emphasis on shared spaces and walkable routes
→ Facilities designed to promote health, recreation and social connection
→ A diverse residential community, including key workers and City employees
→ Integration of amenities within easy reach of all residents
This holistic approach placed wellbeing and community at the centre of its design.

Early 40s — Late 40s — 1951-52 — 1952-57 — 1957-62 — Leisure Centre opens 1960 — 1962

The Blitz
Large areas of the City of London, including the Golden Lane site, are devastated by bombing, leaving extensive damage and vacant land.

Reconstruction Planning
The City of London begins planning for post-war recovery, with a focus on reintroducing residential communities into the Square Mile.

1951-52
Design Competition & Appointment - Chamberlin, Powell & Bon won the competition to design a new housing scheme-envisioned as a self-contained urban neighbourhood.

Early Construction
Initial phases of the estate are built, establishing the layout, housing blocks and landscape framework.

Completion of the Phases
Development continues with taller buildings, including Great Arthur House, and the integration of community and leisure facilities

1962
Estate completed

View south towards Cullum Welch House

View of Clubrooms

Sunken Playground

View through to the north east court

CITY OF LONDON

AllianceLeisure

Golden Lane Estate Today

Golden Lane Estate remains a highly distinctive post-war neighbourhood, where heritage, landscape and community life are closely intertwined. Its inward-looking courts, layered spaces and integrated leisure facilities continue to support a strong sense of identity and everyday social life in the City.

An Enduring Urban Neighbourhood

Golden Lane Estate remains a distinctive part of the City of London, where architecture, landscape and community life continue to operate as one.
At its heart, the Grade II listed leisure centre anchors daily activity, reflecting the estate's original ambition to support life beyond housing.

A Coherent Architectural Ensemble

The estate retains a strong architectural identity:
→ Mix of maisonettes and landmark towers
→ A modernist language expressed through structure and material
→ From light curtain walling to robust concrete forms. Landmark buildings including Crescent House (Grade II*)

A Landscape-Led Structure

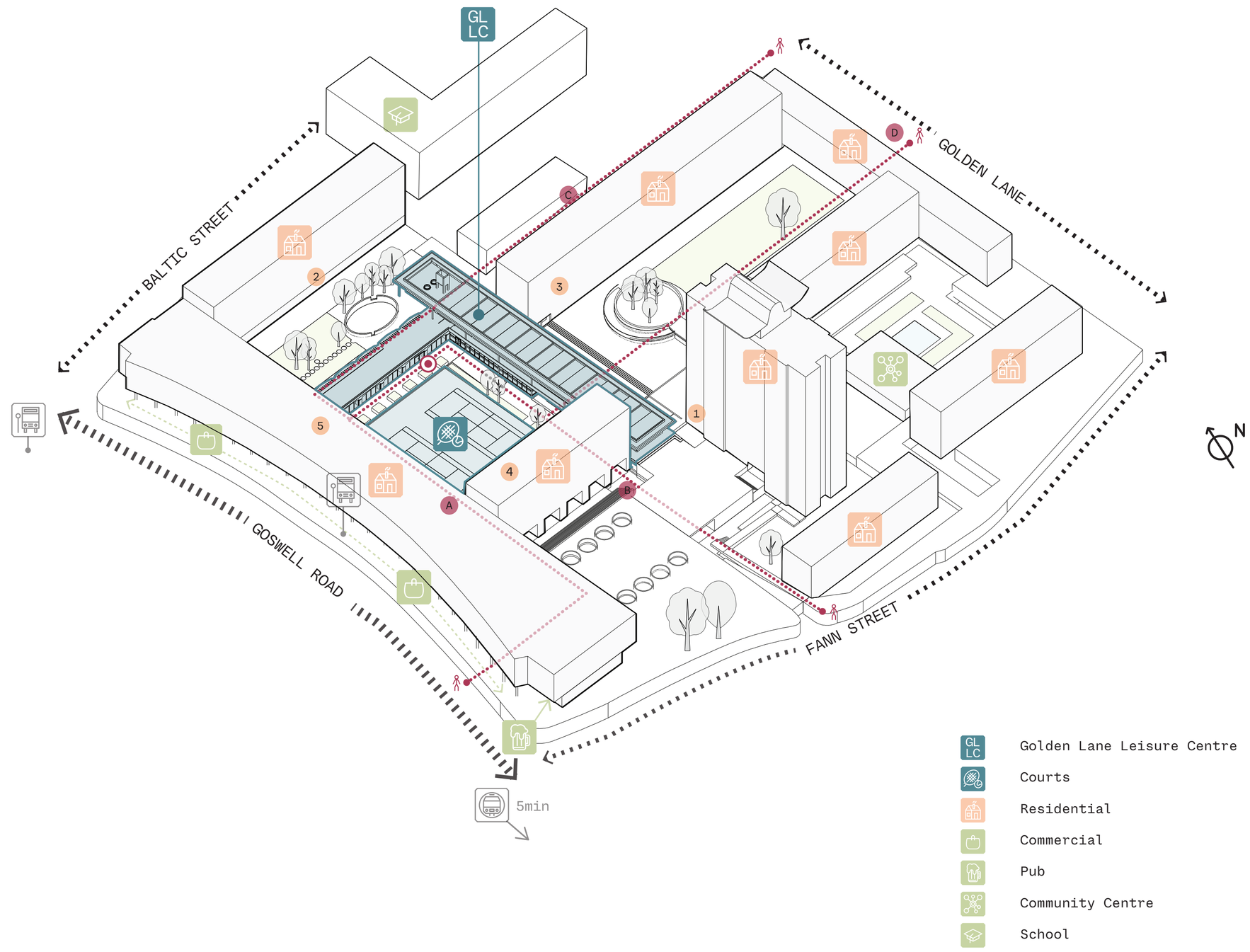
The estate is defined by its inward-looking composition:
→ More than half of the site is given over to shared landscape
→ Interconnected courts and sunken gardens
→ Buildings arranged to frame views and define space
→ A calm environment within a dense city setting

A Designed Community

Spatial planning continues to support everyday life:
→ Clear distinction between public and communal spaces
→ Integrated leisure and community facilities
→ Pedestrian-focused movement, with service routes below
→ Spaces that encourage interaction and shared use

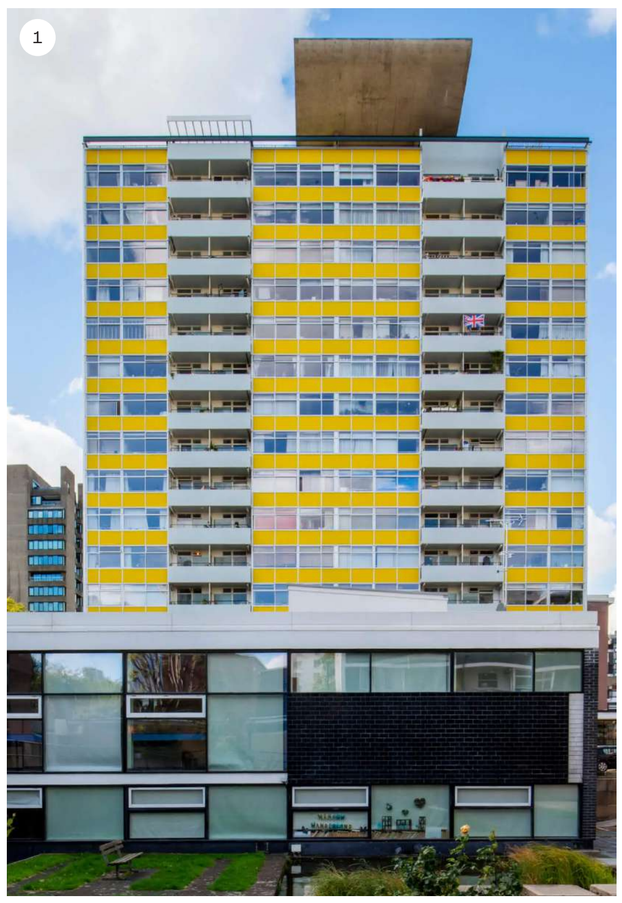
Connected and Relevant Today

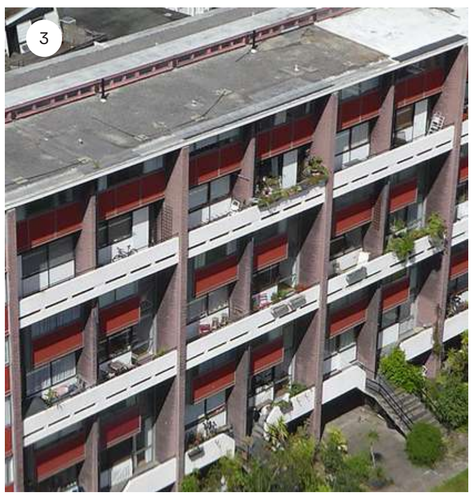
Golden Lane Estate remains:
→ A heritage asset of national significance
→ A vibrant residential community



An enduring example of how thoughtful design can bring together architecture, landscape and community in the heart of the city.

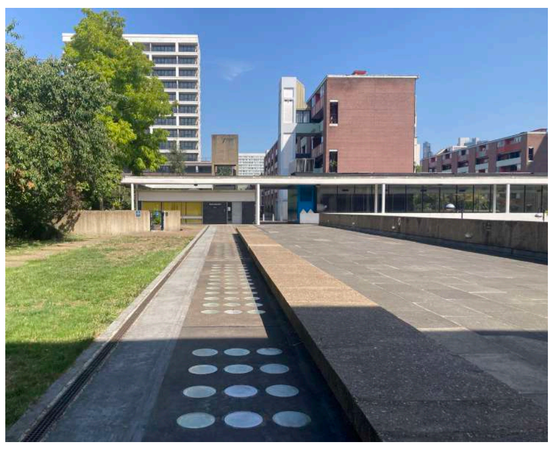
Neighbourhood Buildings





Access

Golden Lane Leisure Centre



Golden Lane Leisure Centre

The evolution of the building

1962 - The original Golden Lane Leisure Centre

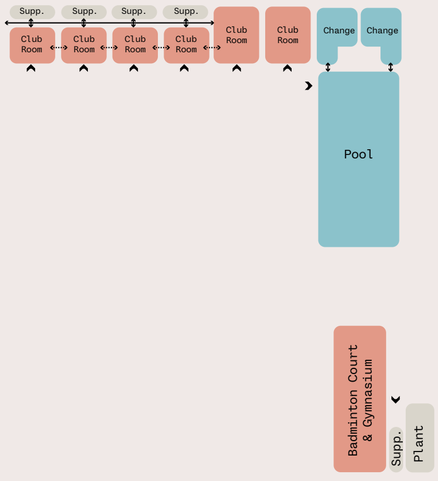
Originally, the Leisure Centre comprised three separate, unconnected elements:

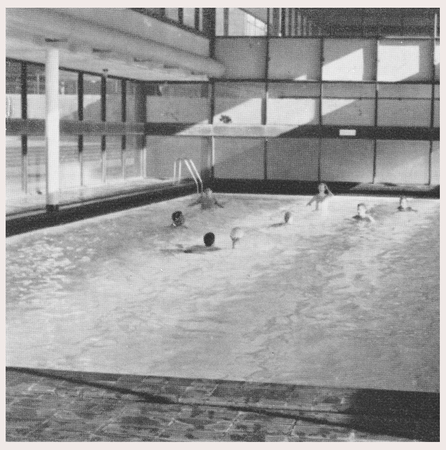
→ A 20m swimming pool with external access and poolside changing rooms

→ A badminton court and gymnasium

→ A single-storey block of flexible club rooms with individual entrances

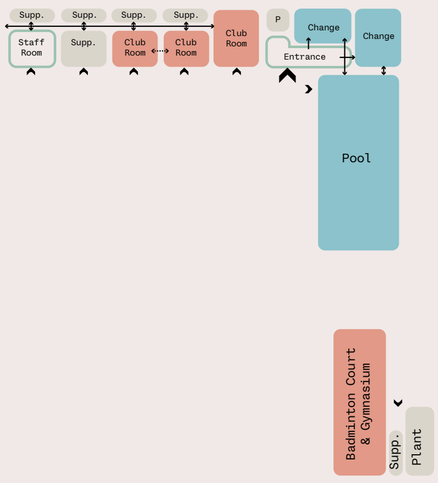
At first-floor above the club rooms, a nursery with a sunken playground was provided.

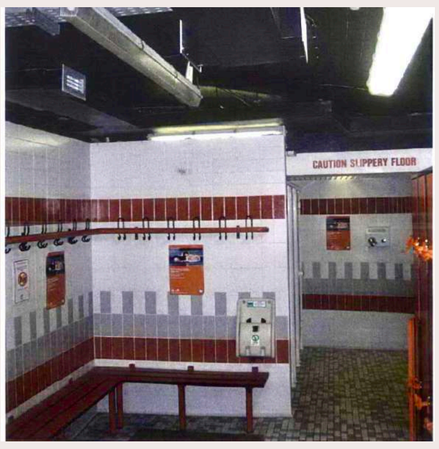




1980s onwards

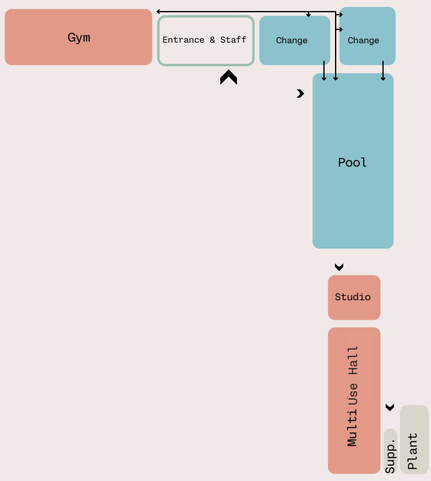
From the 1980s, incremental alterations reduced spatial clarity, with internal reconfiguration and the loss of flexible connections. A new entrance to the pool changing rooms was formed in 1992 from part of the club rooms, improving access but leaving the remaining spaces disconnected.

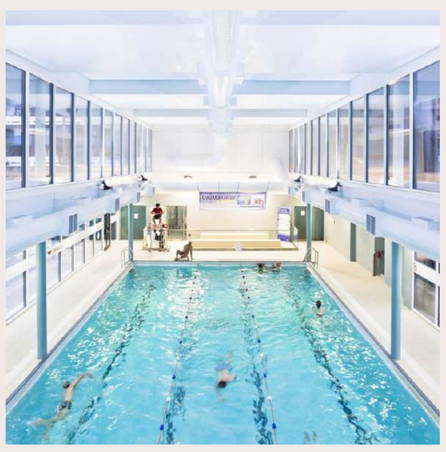




2012 Refurbishment

The 2012 refurbishment represented the most comprehensive upgrade since the building's original construction. The works focused on reorganising the layout of the facility, introducing a new entrance and staff areas, upgraded changing facilities, a gym, an extended studio, and an improved multi-use hall.

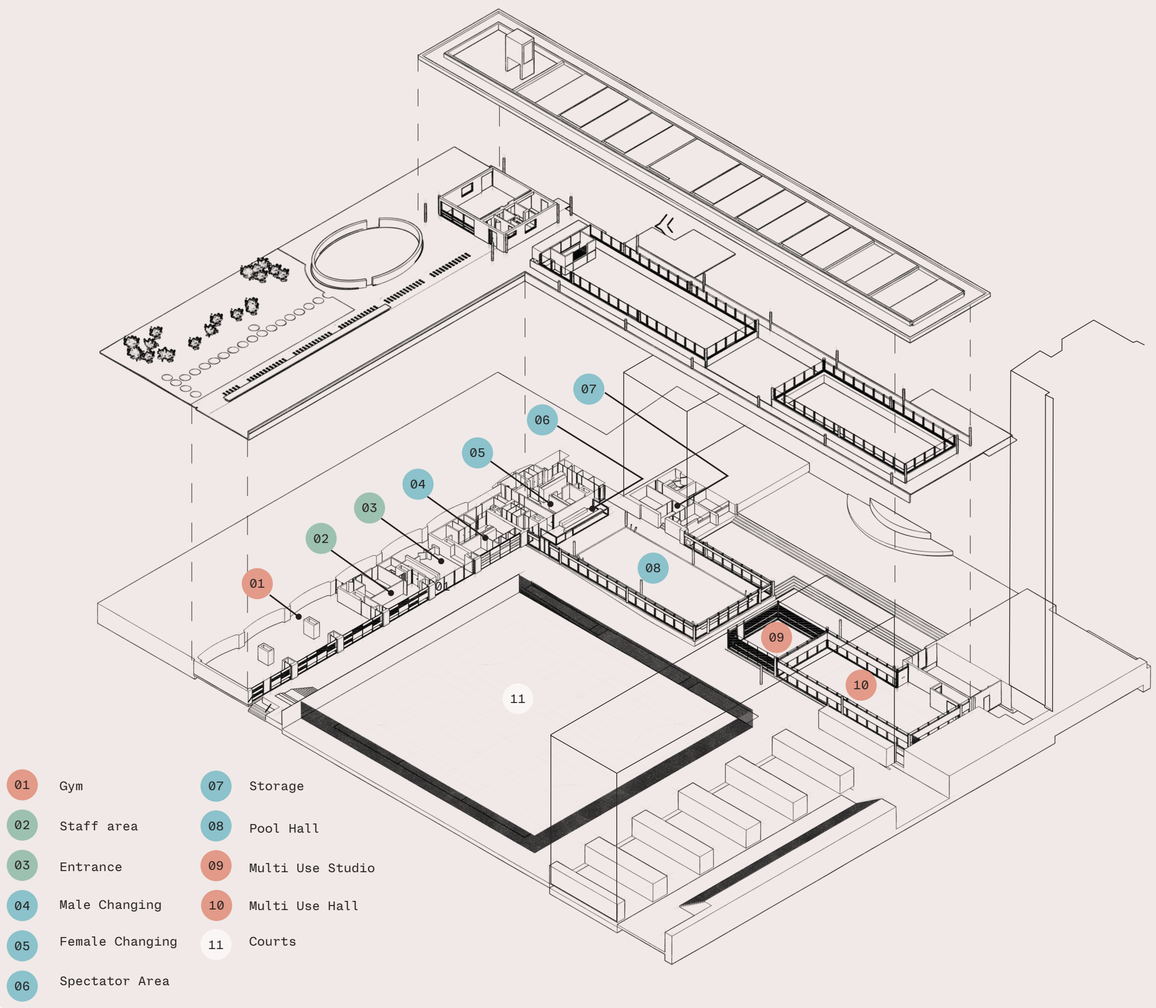


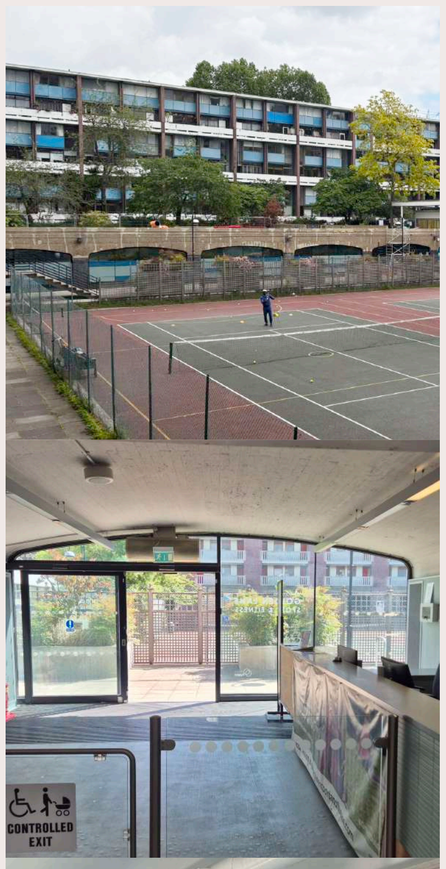


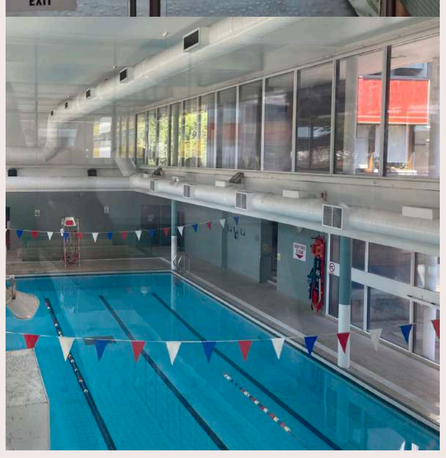
Today

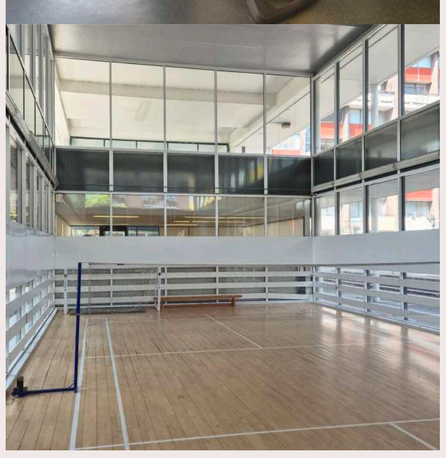
The condition of the Golden Lane Leisure Centre has declined since its 2012 refurbishment, with evidence of damp, ageing services and general wear affecting the quality and performance of the spaces.

Although in use until recently, utilisation fell after the pandemic. This refurbishment presents an opportunity to restore its role at the heart of the community.









Golden Lane Leisure Centre

Securing the future

New Facility

The refurbishment seeks to conserve, repair and enhance the architectural and historic significance of the Leisure Centre while ensuring its continued use as a high-quality, inclusive and sustainable facility.

The project aims to improve the existing leisure offer, address longstanding fabric and environmental issues, and modernise facilities in a manner that is sensitive to the listed building, its setting, and its role within the wider estate. The overarching objective is to secure the long-term viability of this important heritage asset for the benefit of the Golden Lane Estate residents, users and the wider City community.

The development includes:

- Refurbished entrance with breakout area
- Refurbished changing facilities
- Refurbished exiting pool
- Refurbished & enhanced health & fitness facilities
- Resurfacing of courts and replacement of fence
- Enhancement of the wellness offer
- Introduction of a new glazed facade to the existing arches
- Building fabric repairs
- MEP infrastructure renewal

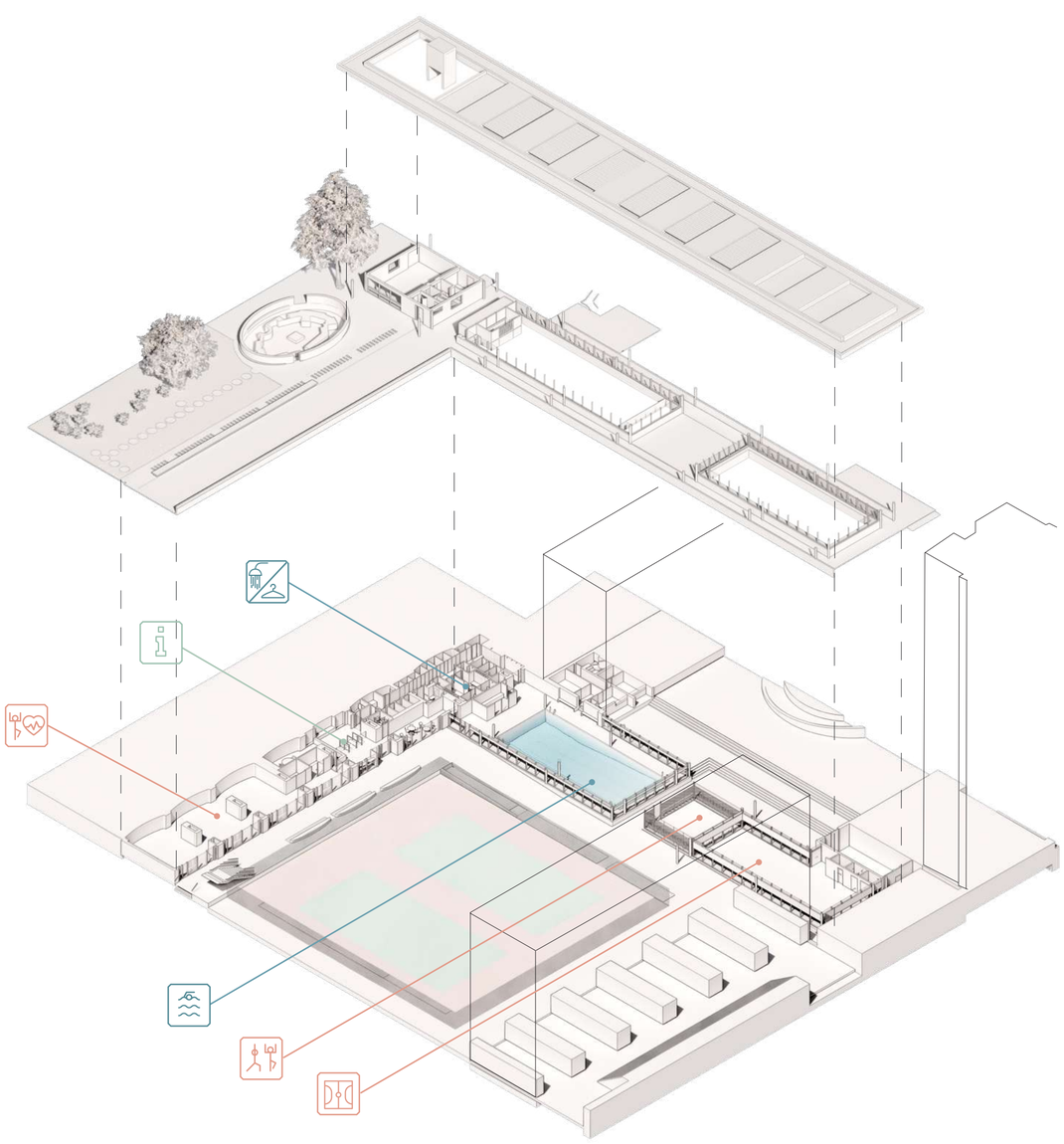
Have Your Say

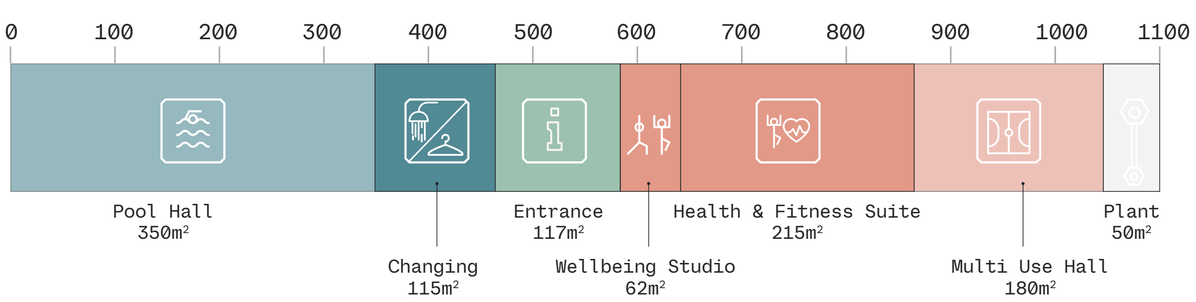
Your feedback will help shape the preferred option and guide the future of the leisure centre.

Design Options

The Design Team has undertaken a comprehensive review of the existing building, assessing current uses and exploring opportunities for improvement, rationalisation, and potential new functions. This process has informed the development of a series of distinct options, each representing a different level of intervention and change. From this wider set, two options have been selected as the most appropriate to take forward, offering a considered balance between intervention, heritage sensitivity, and future use.

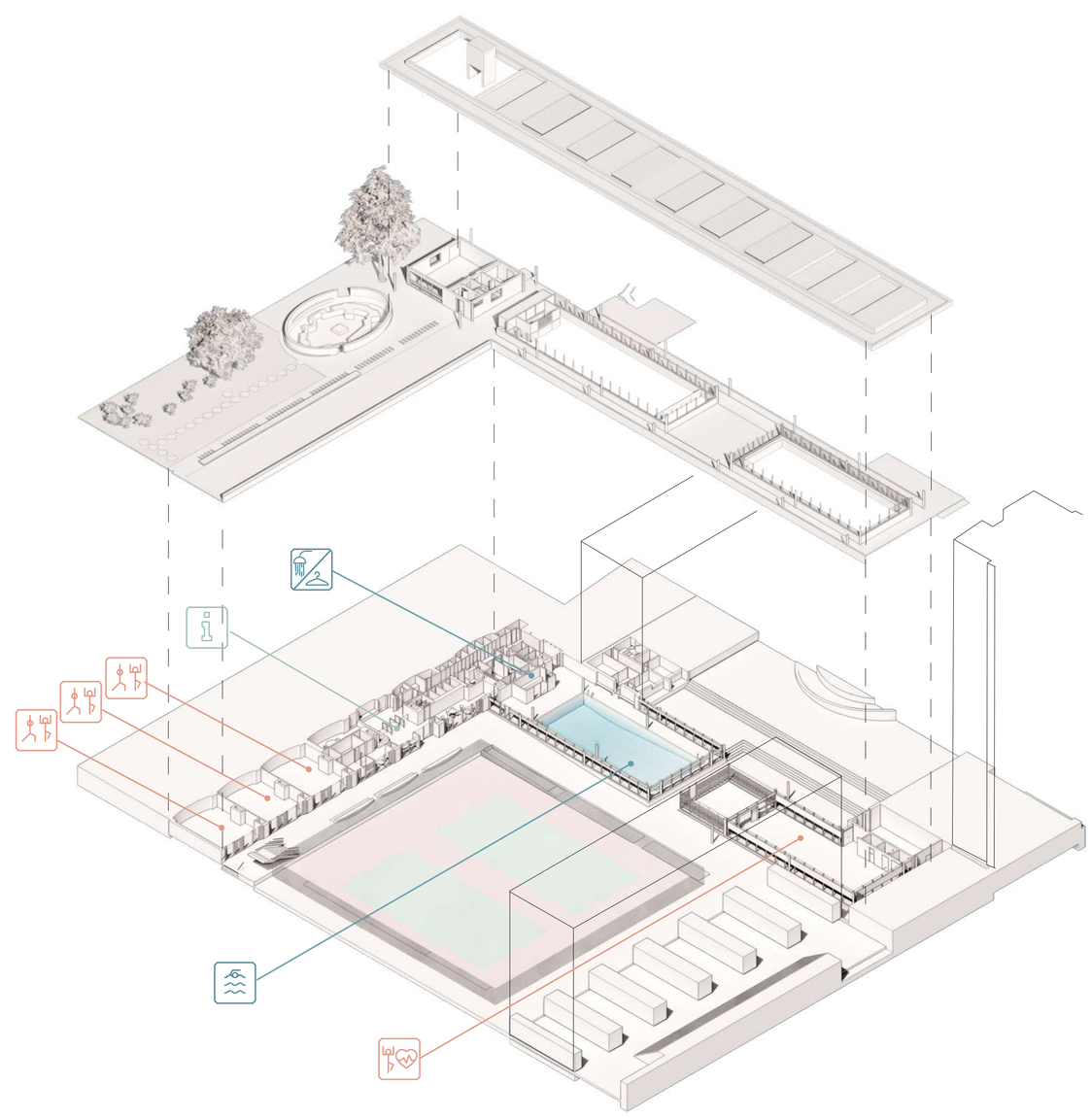
Refurbishment

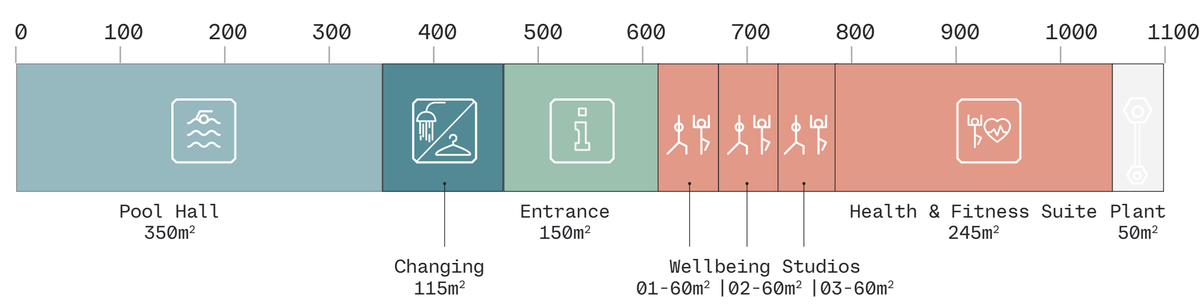




Facilities provided:
- → Entrance
- → Reception
- → Staff area
- → Break-out area
- → Health & Fitness Suite
- → Changing Village
- → Pool Hall with enhanced wellness and storage area
- → Wellbeing Studio
- → Multi Use Hall with WC and changing provision

Refurbishment + Reconfiguration





Facilities provided:
- → Entrance
- → Reception
- → Staff
- → Break-out area
- → Health consultation area
- → Health & Fitness Suite
- → Changing Village
- → Pool Hall with enhanced wellness and storage area
- → Wellbeing Studio 01
- → Wellbeing Studio 02
- → Wellbeing Studio 03

CITY OF LONDON

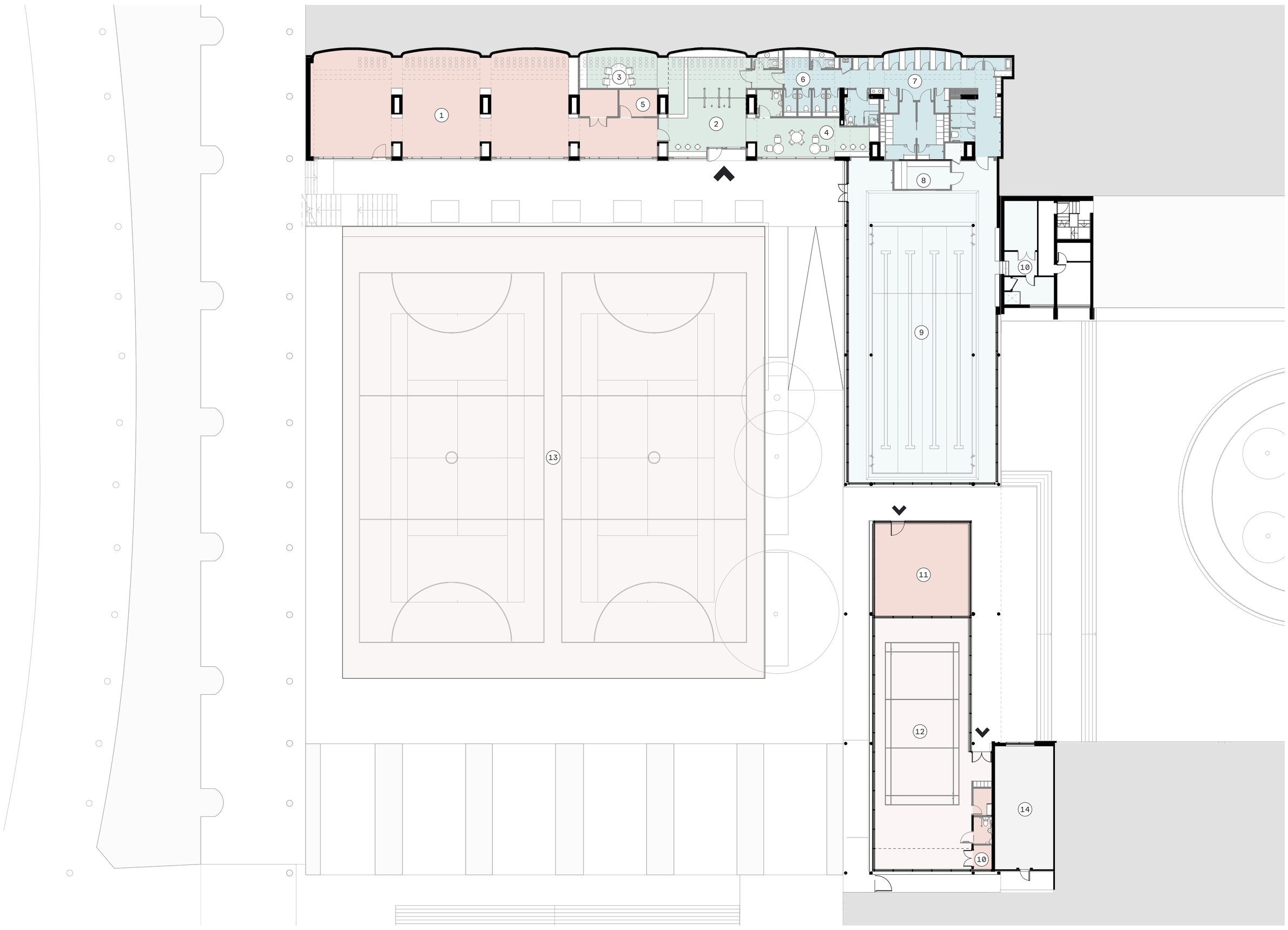
AllianceLeisure

Refurbishment

Refurbishment (Enhancement of Existing Arrangement)

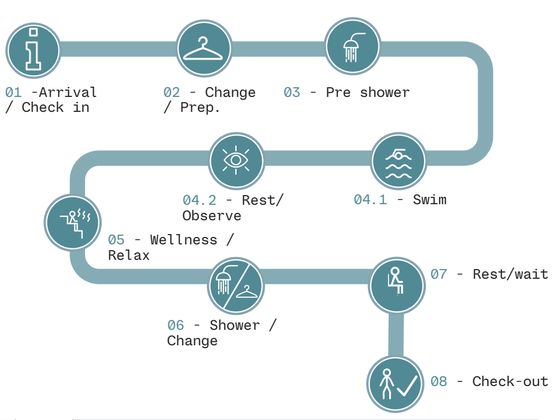
This option focuses on the refurbishment and enhancement of the existing facility, maintaining the current spatial arrangement and uses. By retaining familiar layouts, this approach supports a sense of continuity, security, and attachment for existing users, while improving quality, accessibility, and performance across the building.

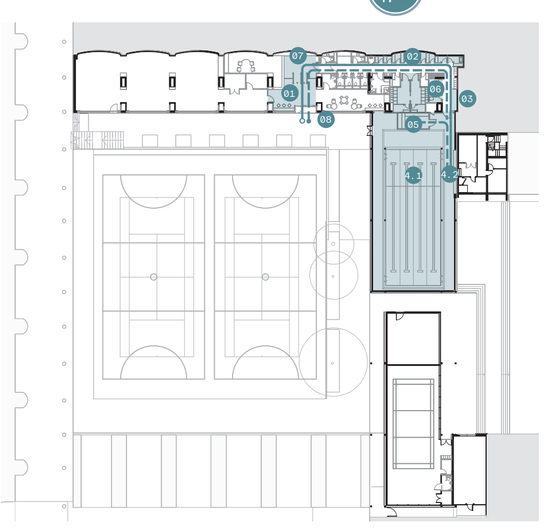
1. Health and Fitness Suite
2. Entrance
3. Staff area
4. Break out area
5. Flexible consultation space
6. WC Area
7. Changing Village
8. Sauna/Steam Room
9. Pool Hall
10. Storage
11. Wellbeing Studio
12. Multi Use Hall
13. Tennis Courts
14. Plant



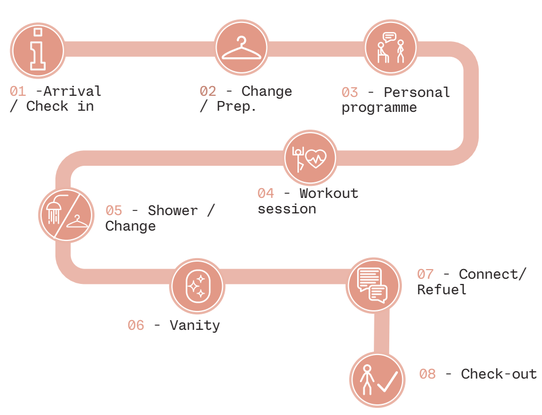
Level 00 Refurbishment

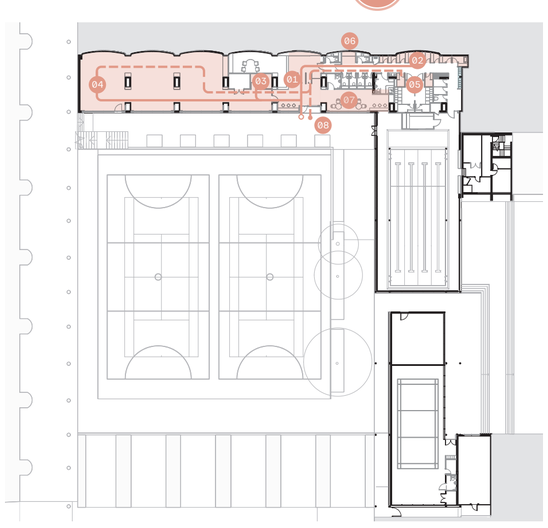
Day in the life
Swimming Pool User



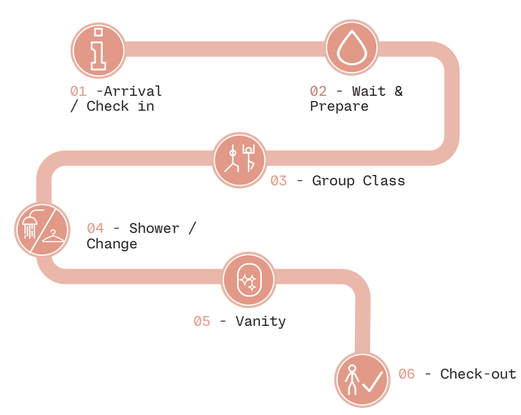


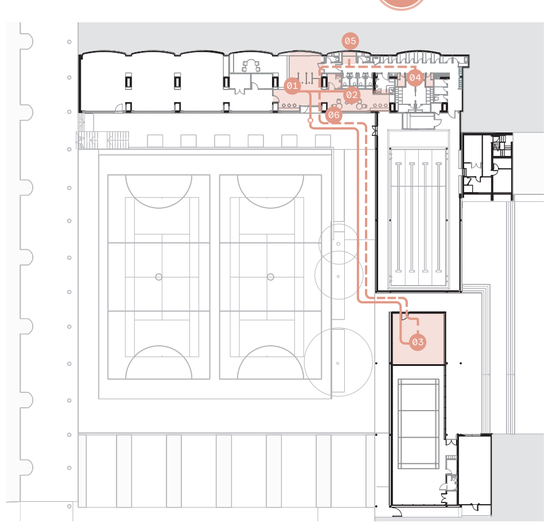
Day in the life
Health and Fitness Suite User



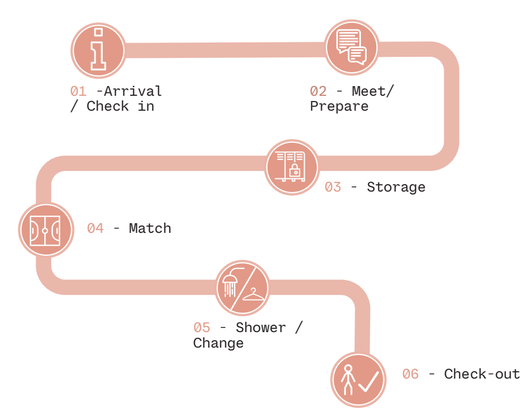


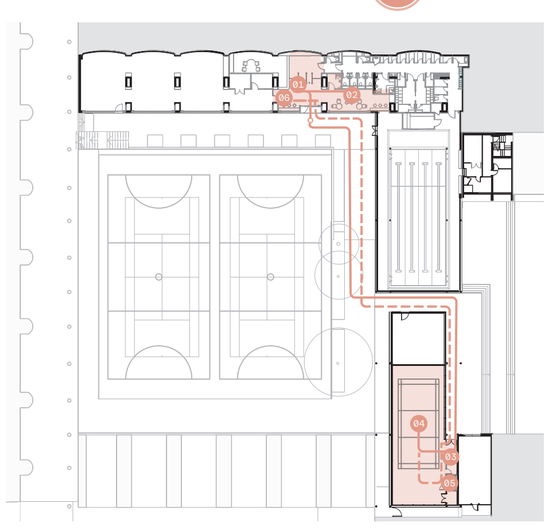
Day in the life
Wellbeing Studio User





Day in the life
Multi Use Hall User





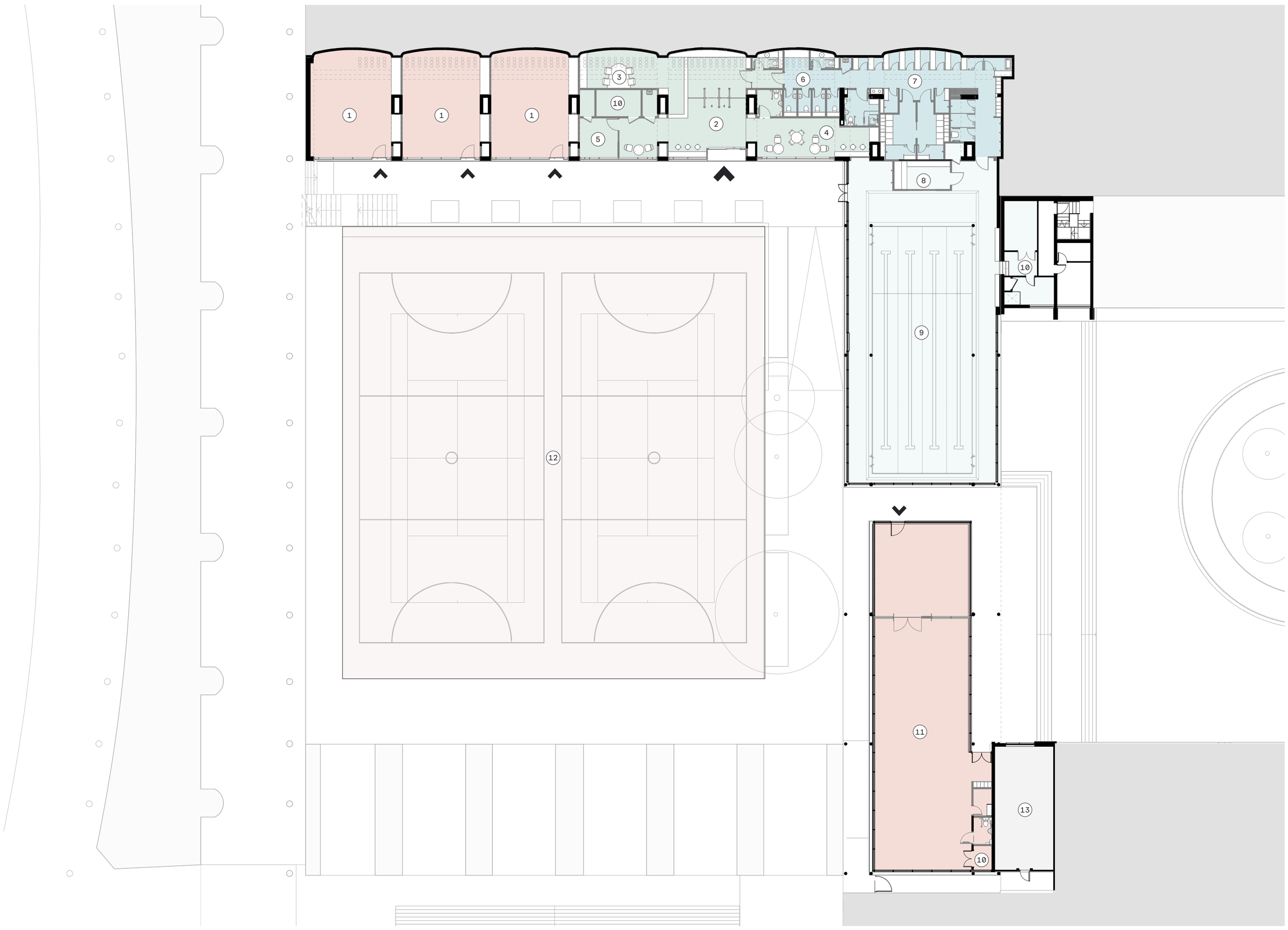
lllustrative diagrams showing possible uses and daily patterns. Actual use may vary.

Refurbishment + Reconfiguration

Refurbishment + Reconfiguration (Expanded Offer)

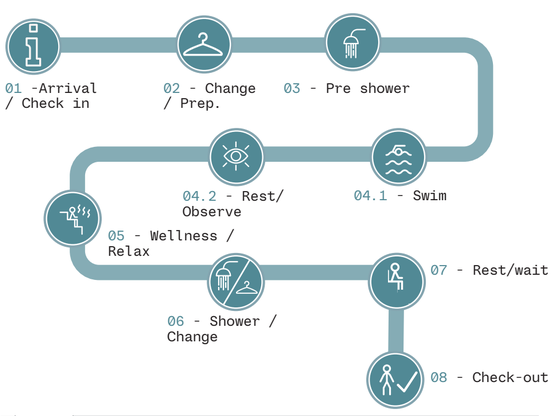
This option introduces a greater level of intervention, combining refurbishment with targeted reconfiguration to broaden the building's offer. This option re-establishes the original club rooms as a series of individual, wellbeing-focused spaces for group use, while relocating the health and fitness provision into the multi-use hall. As part of this approach, the existing double-height sports space is lost, allowing for a redistribution of space to support a more varied and flexible programme of activities.

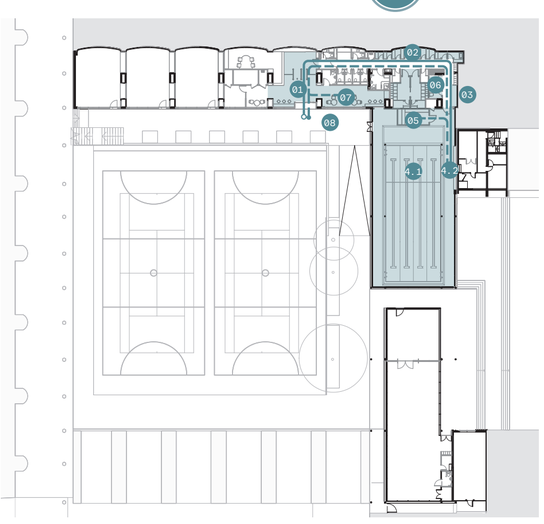
1. Wellbeing Studios
2. Entrance
3. Staff area
4. Break out area
5. Flexible consultation/treatment room
6. WC Area
7. Changing Village
8. Sauna/Steam Room
9. Pool Hall
10. Storage
11. Health and Fitness Suite
12. Tennis Courts
13. Plant



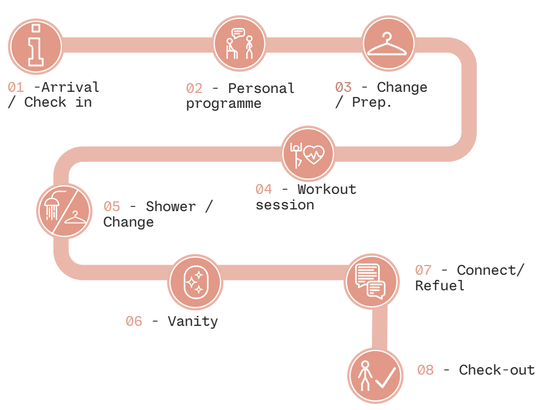
Level 00 Refubishment + Reconfiguration

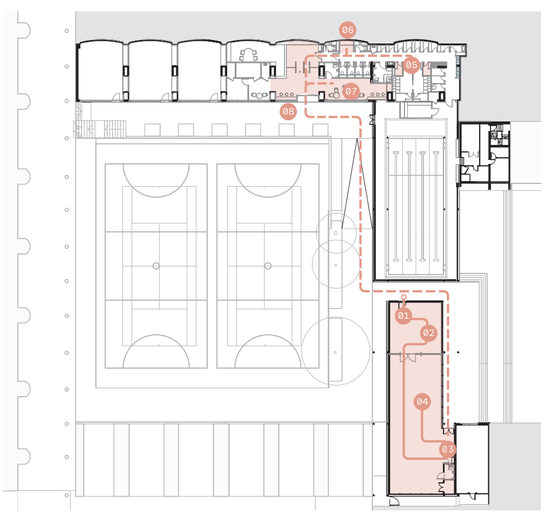
Day in the life
Swimming Pool User



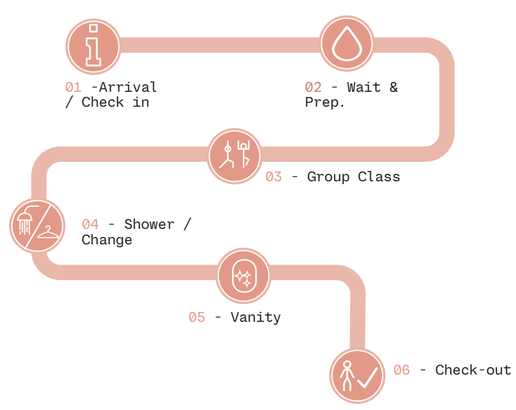


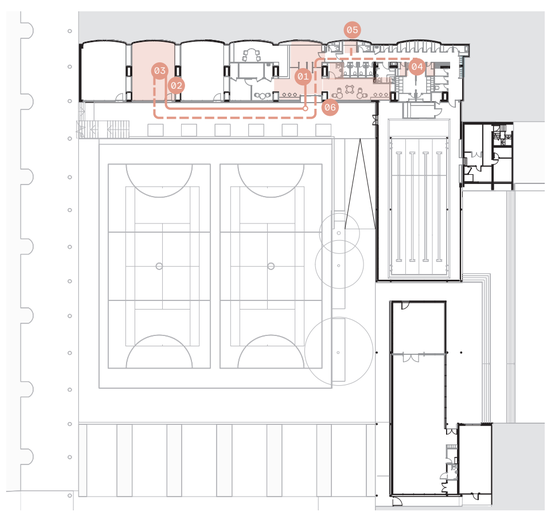
Day in the life
Health and Fitness Suite User



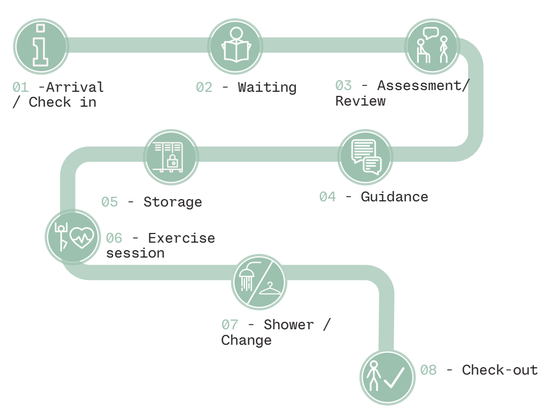


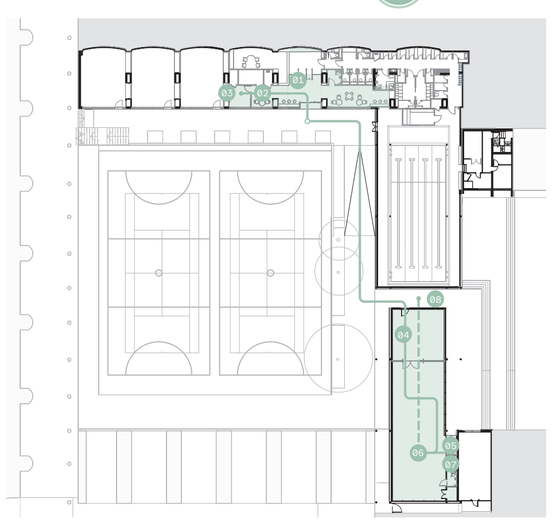
Day in the life
Wellbeing Studio User





Day in the life
Health Referral





lllustrative diagrams showing possible uses and daily patterns. Actual use may vary.

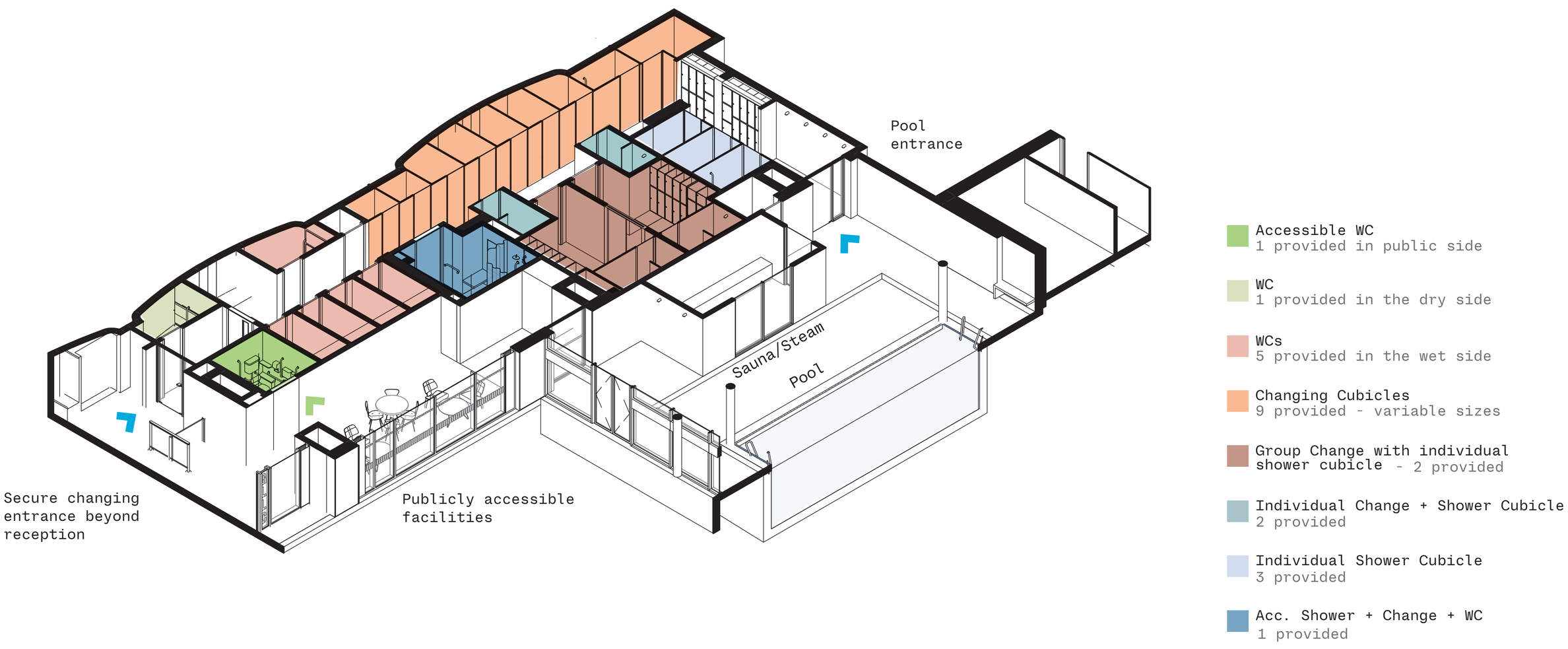
CITY OF LONDON

AllianceLeisure

Refurbished Pool + Changing Area

1. Enhanced user experience – introducing new wellness uses such as a sauna or steam room
2. Visual connection opportunity between reception and swimming pool
3. Integrated MEP systems – enabling a cleaner, more efficient and coordinated technical solution
4. Integrated blinds to lower level glazing - offering improved privacy and flexibility of use
5. New finishes to pool surround and walls
6. Integrated acoustic strategy – improving sound quality and comfort
7. Improved access provision to pool - encouraging a wider range of users
8. Poolside seating for pool users

Illustrative swimming pool view



Changing Village Axonometric

New Entrance

Own character

1. New entrance as a clear point of identity – strengthening character and intuitive wayfinding
2. Improved connection between internal and external spaces – enhancing visibility, access and flow
3. Integrated ventilation services - delivering for improved environmental air quality to internal spaces
4. Resurfaced courts and new fencing

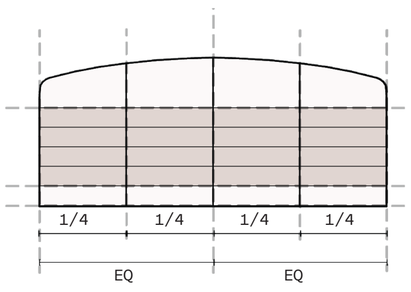
Proposed entrance to Golden Lane Leisure Centre – illustrative view. Seating areas are shown for illustrative purposes only.

The refurbishment intent is to retain and repair the existing façades wherever possible, preserving both the architectural character and the heritage integrity of the building.

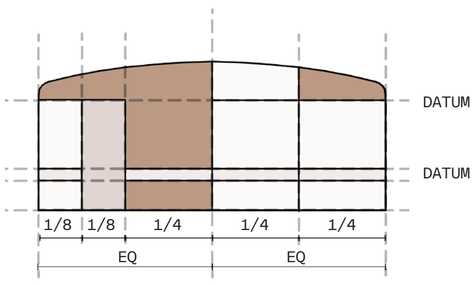
However, the glazed infills within the arches (from 2012 intervention) will require replacement to meet updated building services and performance requirements.

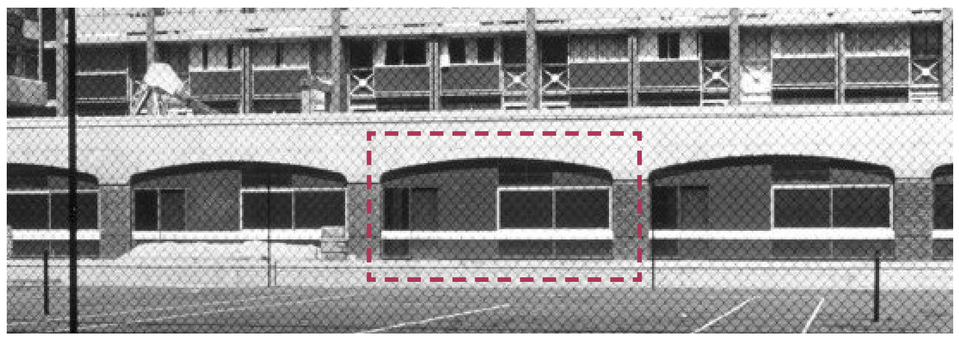
This intervention also presents an opportunity to deliver a façade treatment that is more closely aligned with the architectural language of the Golden Lane Estate and more faithful to the original design intent of the Club Rooms façade.

Existing Club Rooms Facade

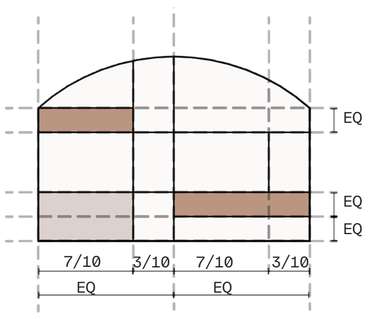


Original Club Room Facade



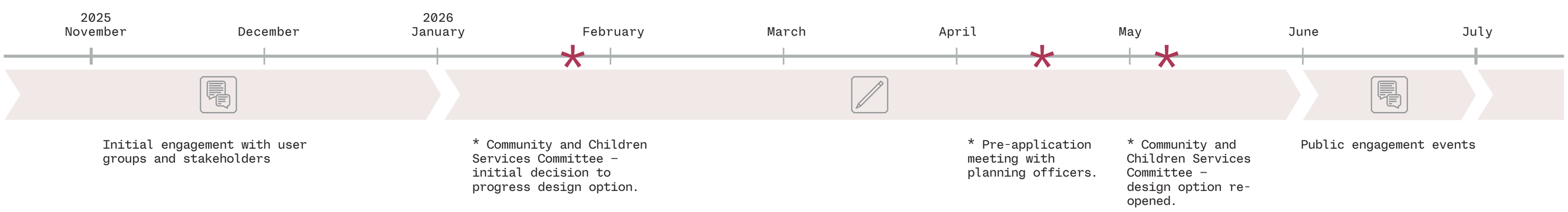


Context Facade - Crescent House

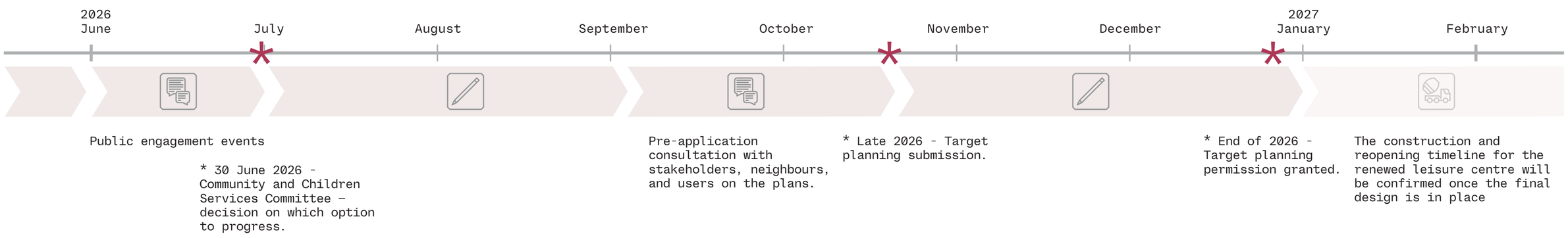


Project Timeline

To date



Next steps



Feedback

Have your say

Your feedback is important in helping shape the future of the Golden Lane Leisure Centre.

Please share your views using the online questionnaire:

If you prefer, **paper copies are available** – please ask a member of the team.

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to attend this engagement event and share your feedback.
Whether in person or through the questionnaire, your input will help shape the proposals and guide the next stage of design.