

Welcome



Please scan our QR code to sign up to our mailing list so we can keep you up to date with the project and announcements for future planned engagement days

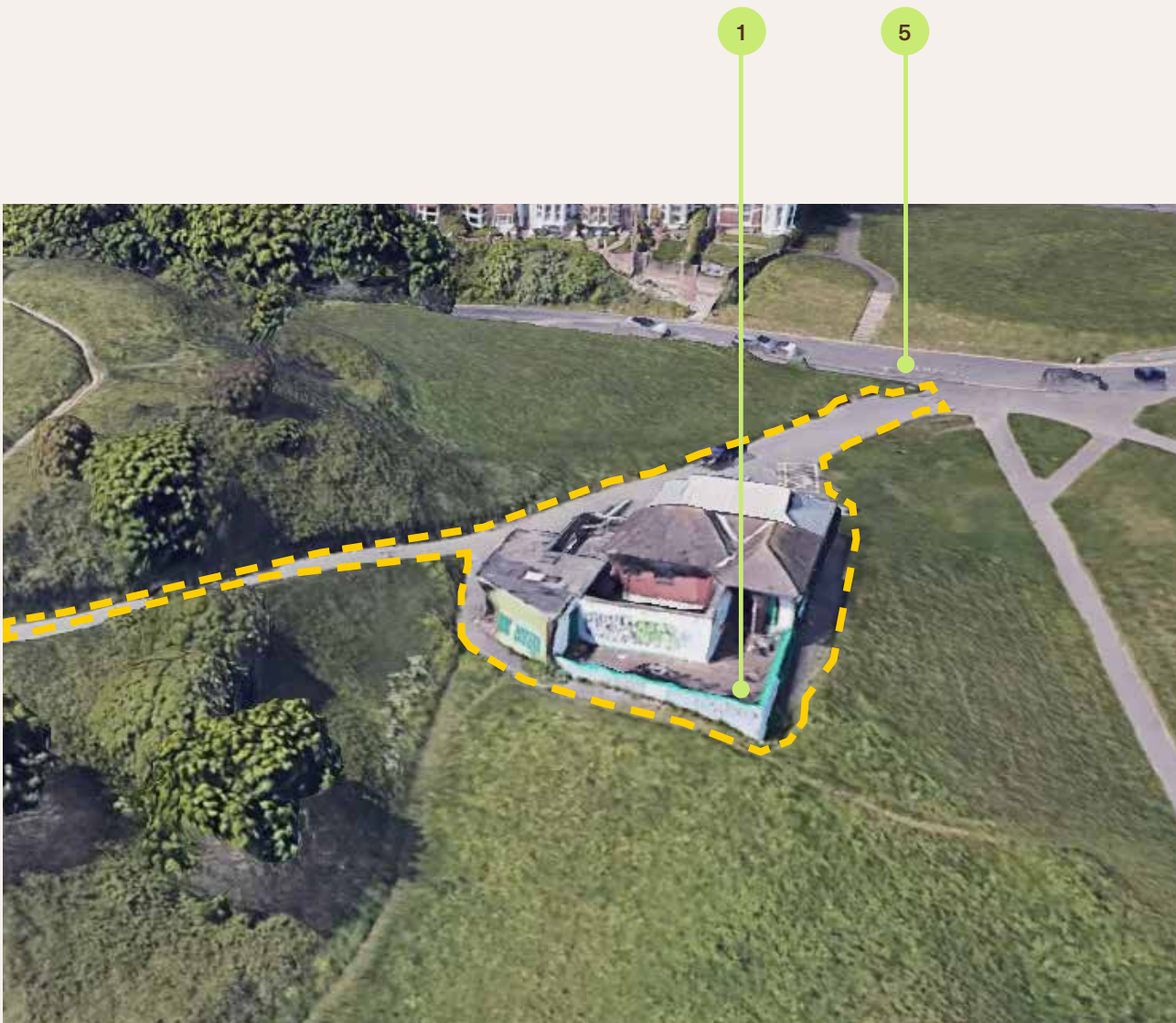
This exhibition presents our vision to transform the Hastings Castle site on West Hill, creating a new cafe/restaurant and visitor centre. You can explore our ideas in detail on the display boards.

Since the last public engagement event, we have received detailed feedback on our initial plans from Hastings Borough Council Planning Department and Historic England as part of the pre app process.

This, alongside community feedback, has informed the amended building design proposed on the following boards. We have also been developing our ideas around interpretation within the Castle grounds, at the new visitor centre and across the wider site.

Please share your thoughts with the team, on the sticky notes provided or by email at hello@westhillproject.com.

We'd also encourage you to leave your email or sign up to our newsletter via the QR code so we can keep you updated on proposals, and future engagement events. You can opt out at any time.



- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Existing West Hill Cafe | 6 Hastings Castle |
| 2 Entrance ramp to/from Funicular | 7 Key view from West Hill |
| 3 Ladies Parlour | 8 Key view from East Hill |
| 4 West Hill Residents | 9 Key view from Harbour/Seafront |
| 5 Castle Hill Road | 10 Key view from Ladies Parlour |

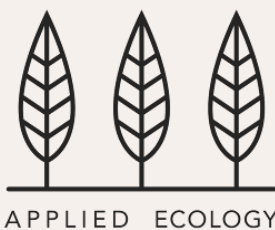
TROIKA

poroban

realSTUDIOS

Integration

LD&A DESIGN Inverse



PURCELL

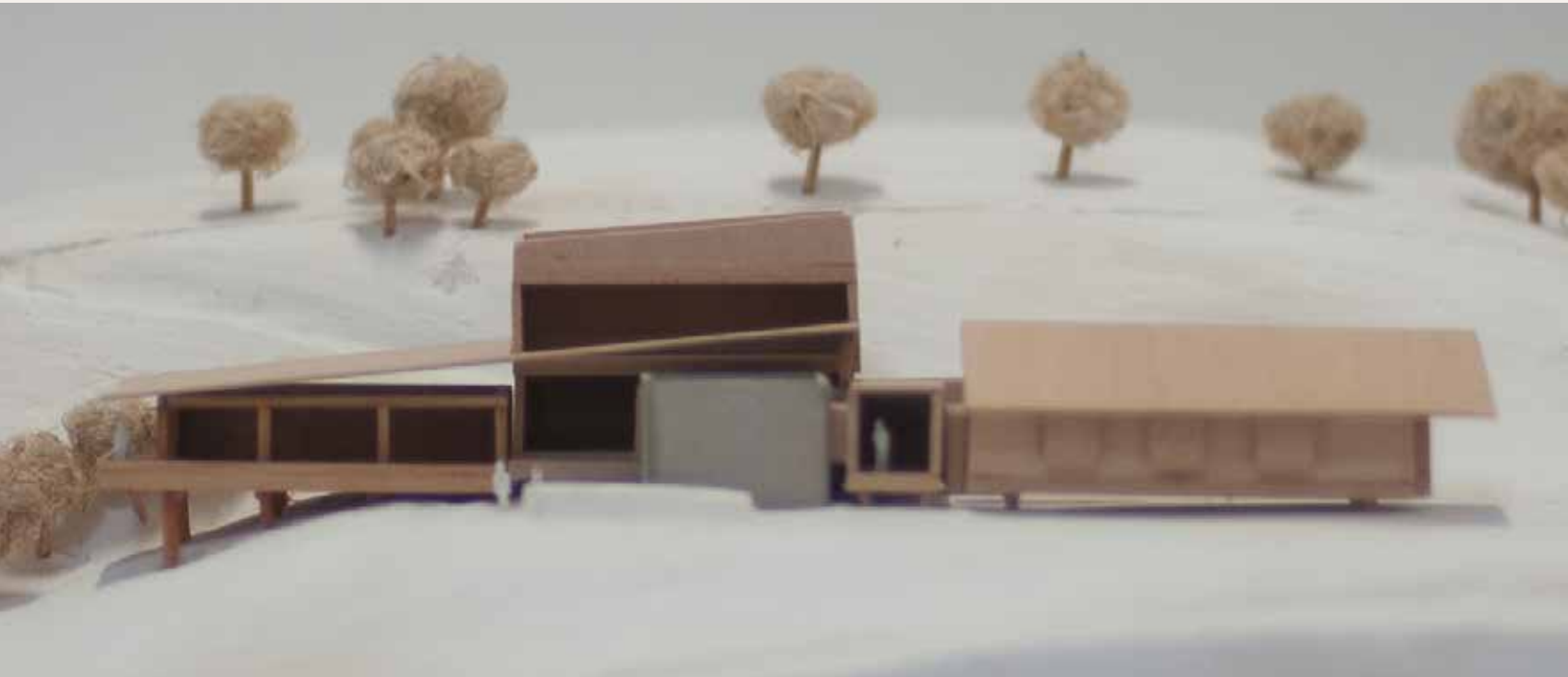


Hastings
Town Deal



Hastings Borough Council’s Planning Department, Historic England and East Sussex County Highways

Following our June pre-application submission, we met with Hastings Borough Council’s Planning Department and Historic England for detailed feedback sessions. The summary below outlines key feedback that has shaped the latest proposals shown on the following boards:



Original proposed Building Design

Heritage Landscape Sensitivity

- The site is within a Scheduled Monument and Conservation Area, making heritage impact a critical concern.
- The original design is seen as too bold and landmark-like, not sufficiently responsive to the organic topography and historic context.
- Suggestions include:
- Lowering the building height
- Using green roofs to soften the building within the heritage context
- Following the natural contours of the hill
- Avoiding protruding terraces and stark architectural forms

Design & Massing

- The building’s form and massing are questioned, especially the first-floor community space and restaurant terrace.
- Ideas explored:
- Absorbing the community space into the ground floor
- Reducing the restaurant footprint
- Reconfiguring the layout to better integrate with the landscape
- Making the north elevation more active to connect with the lift and pathways

Functionality vs. Heritage

- The building must serve multiple functions: visitor centre, restaurant, community space.
- There’s tension between operational needs (e.g., seating capacity, weather protection) and heritage preservation.
- Multi-functional spaces and temporary structures (e.g., tents) are suggested to reduce permanent impact.

Public Benefit & Funding

- To gain Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC), the project must demonstrate clear public benefit to the castle.
- This includes:
- Enhancing visitor experience
- Supporting long-term conservation
- Ensuring the building is a gateway, not a standalone attraction

Taking into consideration the findings from the recently conducted parking survey (August 2025) and the feedback received during the pre-application meeting with the East Sussex County Council Highways Team (ESCC) on 23 September 2025, the following strategy and action plan have been agreed upon for inclusion within the full planning application:

- Review local and national policy relevant to the proposals
- Review sustainable travel options to the site for all users including pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. Accessibility of the site will be assessed using Geographic Information System (GIS).
- Identify key local facilities in the vicinity of the site and indicate walking distances from the proposed development
- Summary of the development proposals
- Set out the proposed trip generation of the development based on agreed trip rates from scoping note
- Set out the proposed access strategy including layout drawings. This will include consideration of pedestrian and cycle access, as well as access for deliveries and swept path analysis so delivery vehicles can enter and exit the loading area in a forward gear
- Review of parking availability in local area based on existing controlled parking zones and parking survey data
- Impact assessment (no off site mitigation measures are anticipated)

Based on experience of similar planning applications, it is envisaged that a Framework Travel Plan will be required as part of the planning application validation. This will be prepared in accordance with usual guidance, to include:

- The planning and policy background of the site
- The review of baseline conditions
- A non-motorised user audit
- The setting of objectives and targets
- Measures and initiatives for users to promote sustainable travel modes
- Marketing and communication strategy for travel plan
- Monitoring and review strategy
- Action and implementation plan

Narrative Response:



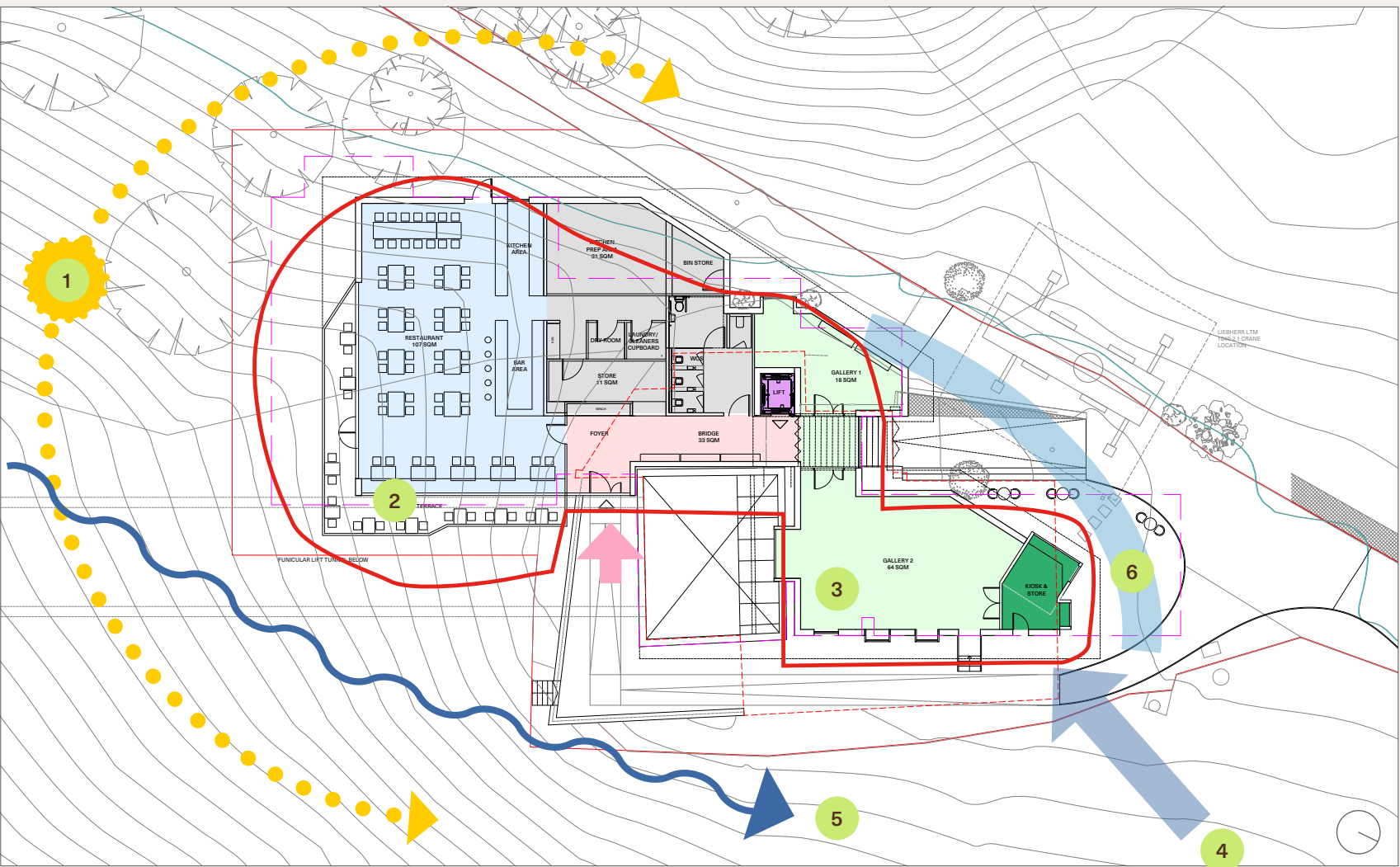
The four windmills of West Hill, as written about by Historian Steve Peak, are taken as references towards articulating the site with new structures, each as vessels – like the windmills themselves. The vessels become navigational pieces and each has its own validity and relationship to the site.

Similarly the Castle and surrounding structural remains can be perceived as navigational elements, or vessels, in their own right. The location of the new visitor centre therefore positions itself between the symbiotic relationship of the castle site and the historic memories of West Hill, creating connected meaning across the wider landscape.

Massing development:



Environmental Response:



- ↑

Main Entrance
- Maximum building extent to avoid major cut and fill works and risk to heritage assets below ground
- - - - -

Existing Cafe Footprint
- 1

Sun path
- 2

South light – preferred for restaurant
- 3

North and east light – preferred for gallery
- 4

North light
- 5

Prevailing wind direction
- 6

Sheltered zone – preferred for kiosk and outdoor seating

Massing & Roof development:



PREFERRED

Option 1 – First floor community space omitted and absorbed into Gallery spaces/across site. Two massing (building) blocks articulated like 'vessels'. Cascading roof form responding to topography with Gallery roof linked to funicular void to reduce impact of massing from the east elevation.

Benefits:

- Low profile roof form blends massing into landscape and wider setting
- Simple structure and cost benefit
- Minimal cut and fill
- Presents a wide variety of experiences and framed views around the site

Option 2 – Rectangular restaurant block aligned with landscape contours with single plane roof connecting each massing block.

Concerns:

- Discordant roof in order to tie differently angled spaces
- Higher cost of complicated structure
- More cut and fill and retaining walls to west elevation
- Entrance to north elevation is not prominent and increases footprint of single gallery
- Maintenance concern on large extent of green roofs

Option 3 – Roof form and skewed restaurant block aligned with landscape contours with a single roof connecting each massing block but pitched along upward sloping terrain. Main Gallery to north elevation rotated 90 degrees to reduce projection into the welcome garden.

Concerns:

- Discordant, and highly angular roof that restricts freedom of internal layout
- Roof level at highest point (west elevation) over provides on internal height requirements
- Internal free flow is restricted due to splayed footprint
- Angled footprint pushes restaurant towards trees in south west

Narrative Response:



1 View into Welcome Garden looking towards Funicular Entrance



2 View from Ladies Parlour looking towards West Hill



3 View to Main Entrance and Restaurant



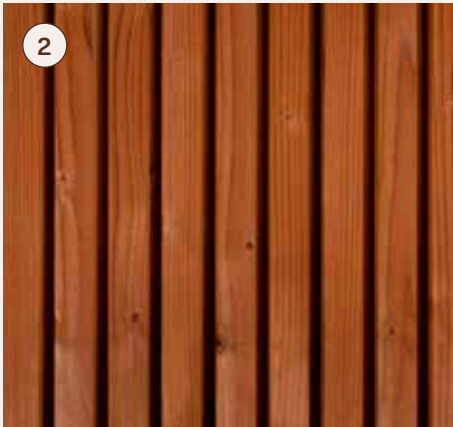
4 View from West Hill towards Gallery and Kiosk



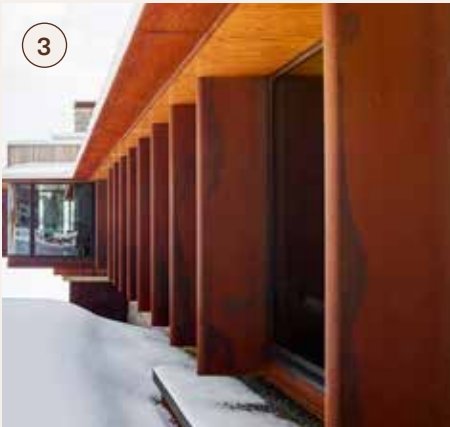
Material Approach



Bronze coloured roofing laid as standing seam profiles with varied widths. e.g Roofinox Dura-Matte Bronze



Natural timber cladding to facade, terrace and vertical cladding to roof and undercroft enclosure – allowed to weather in time



Mix of UK grown stained hardwood/softwoods for projecting bay window reveals



UK grown laminated sweet chestnut window frames



Buff reclaimed sandstone gabion walls to perimeter plinth of building

View from Ladies Parlour looking towards East Hill

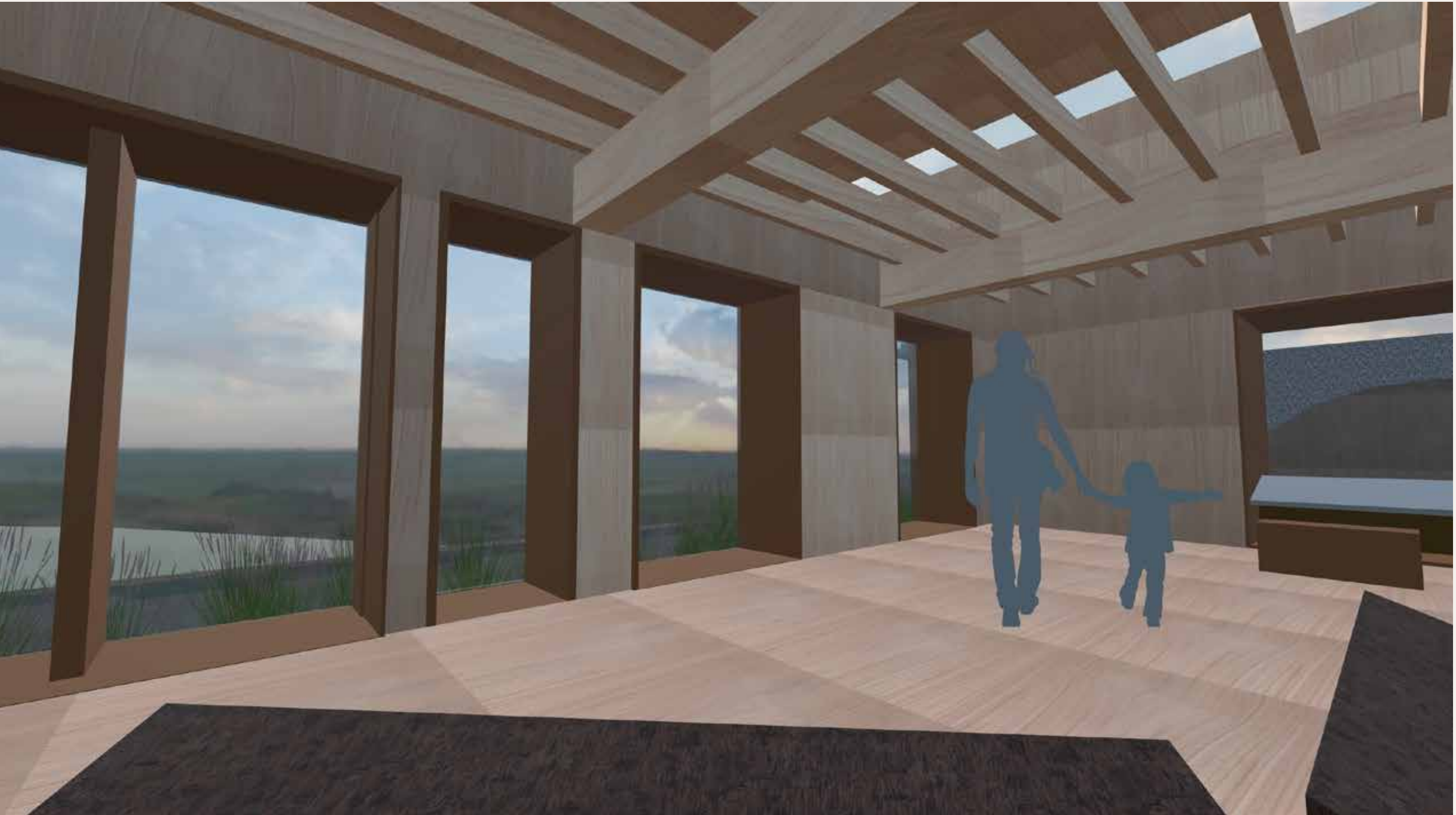


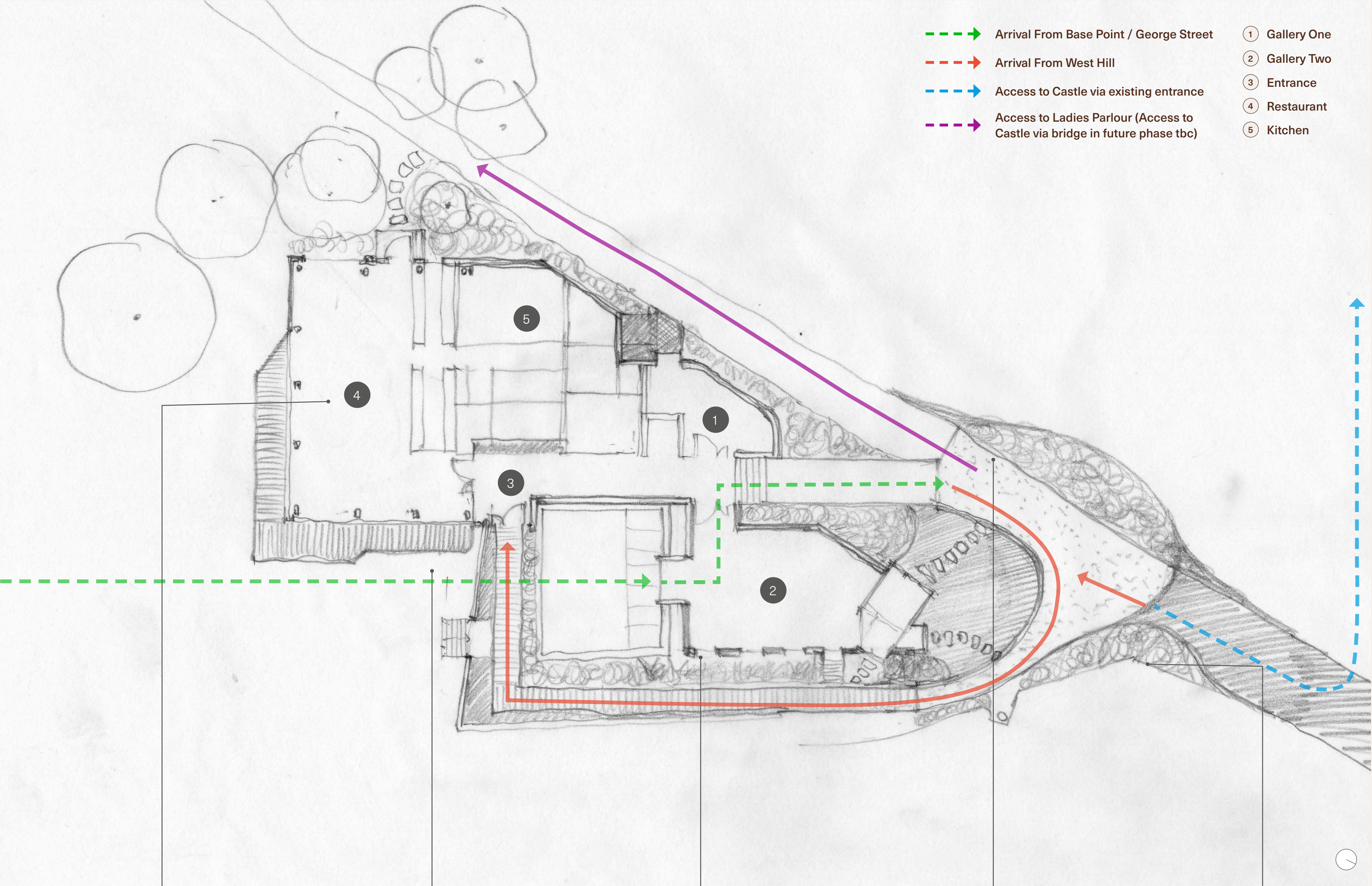
Internal View



View from within Restaurant looking towards Hastings town and seafront

View from within Gallery 1 looking towards East Hill and seafront





Vignette Gardens



Productive Garden as part of undercroft



Board walk and Cafe Garden

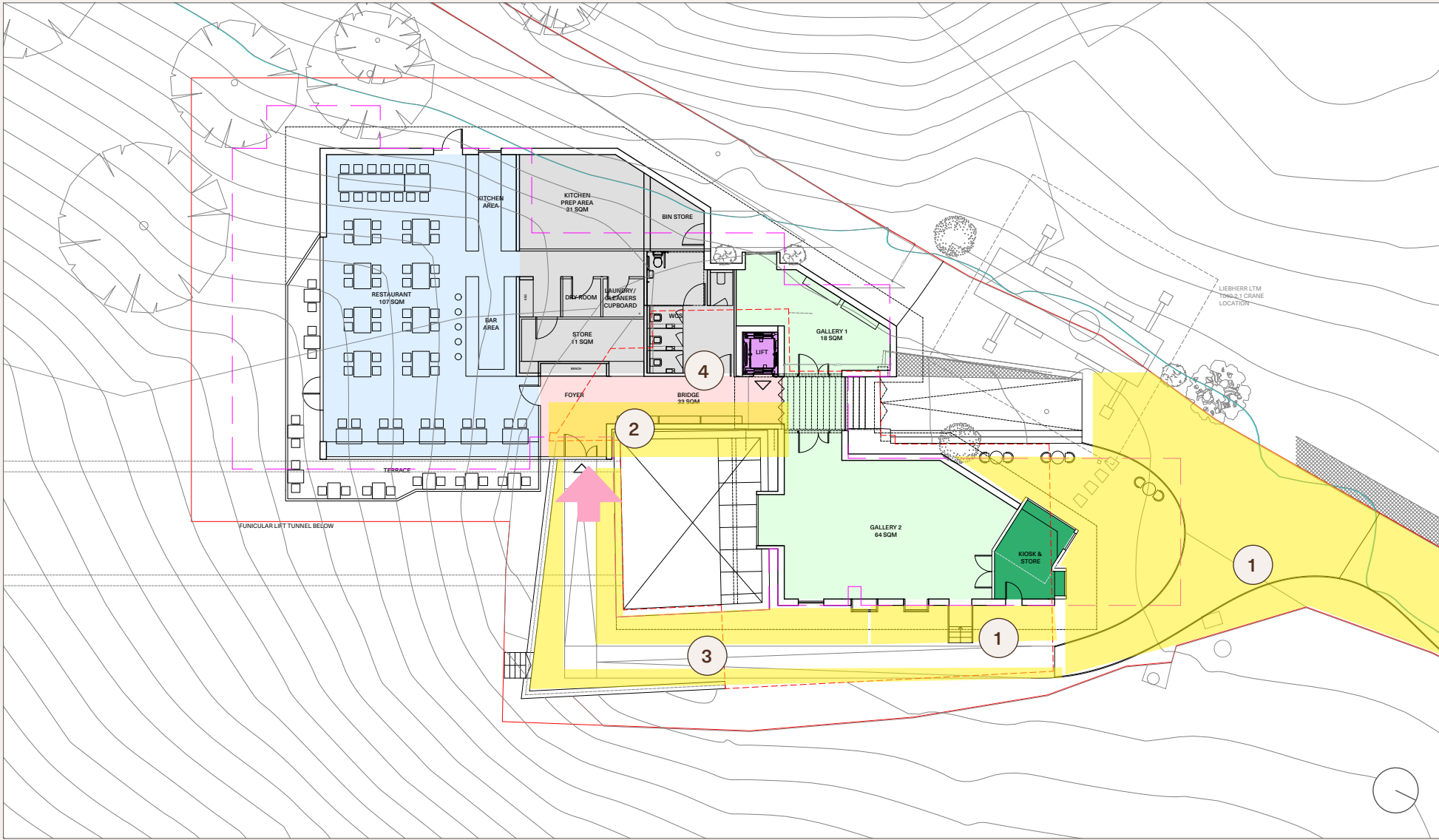


Seating for Kiosk

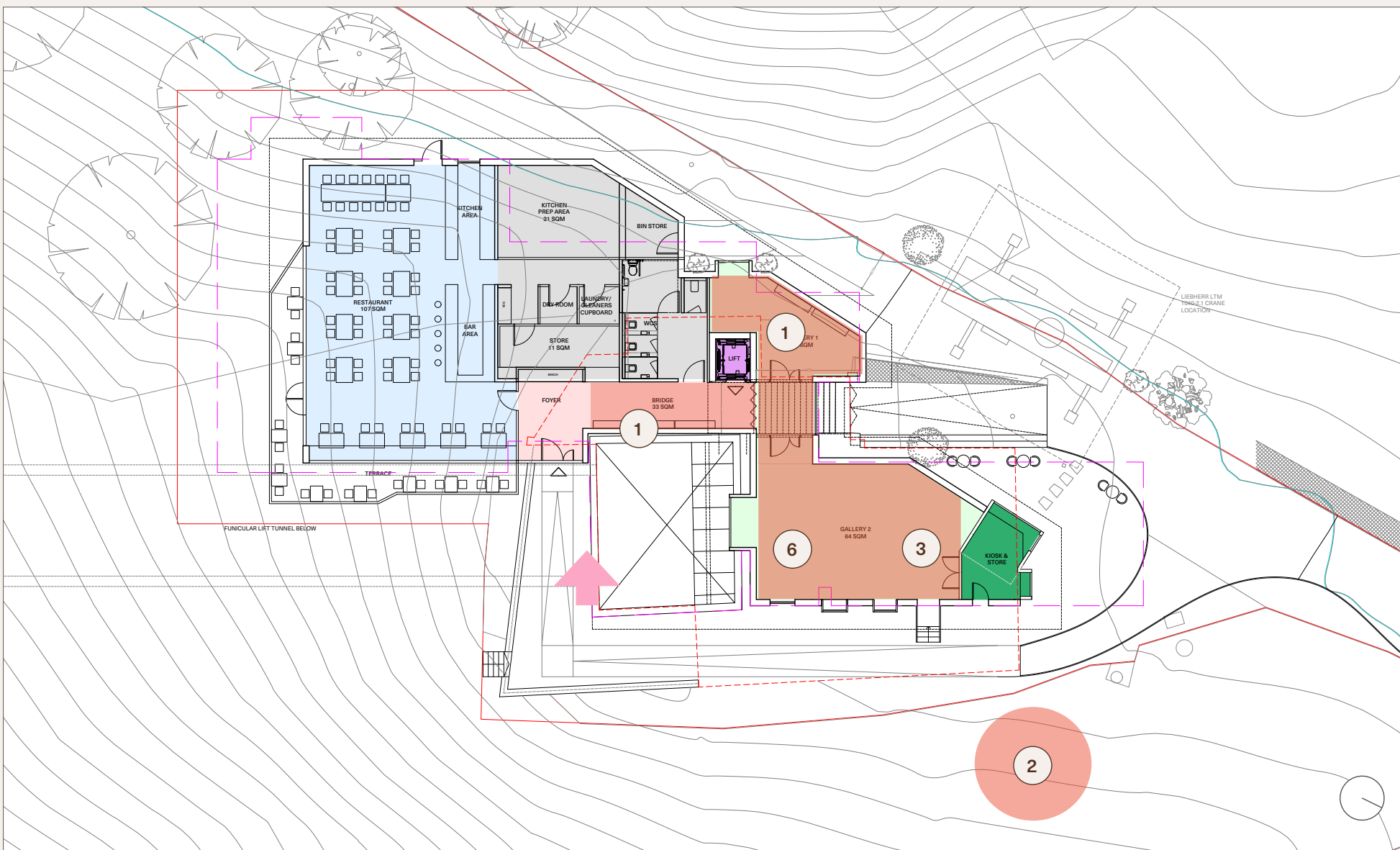


Welcome garden

Spaces for Community & Gathering:



Spaces for Learning



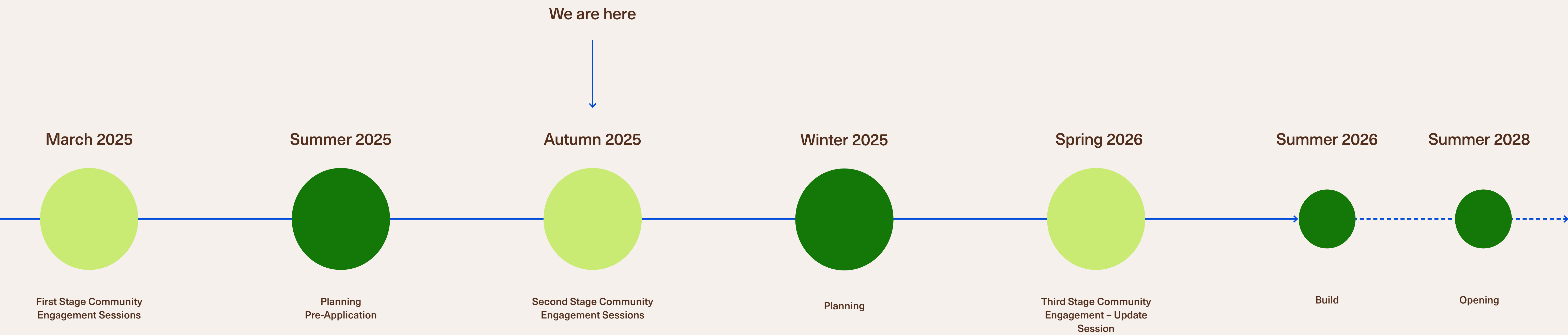
Next Steps

Thank you for taking the time to review our proposals.

We greatly value your feedback and will carefully consider all comments as we continue to develop our plans for the site.

Please share your thoughts using the sticky notes provided, or contact us at any time via email at hello@westhillproject.com.

Following the review of your feedback and the pre-application input, we intend to submit a planning application to Hastings Borough Council. Once this has been completed, we will hold a further consultation event in the new year to provide an update on the planning process.



Introduction

Hastings Castle & Visitor Centre: Interpretation Planning

Aims & objectives

New interpretation at Hastings Castle aims to:

- Share compelling stories from Hastings Castle and West Hill across time, highlighting the role and impact of the Castle and the people associated with it in the history of Hastings.
- Amplify the site's unique sense of place, building trust and connections with the local community and nearby heritage sites, for a distinctively 'Hastings' experience.
- Tread lightly at this scheduled ancient monument, a place of beauty and biodiversity, that is both archaeologically and environmentally sensitive.
- Provide an accessible experience on a site that is physically challenging to many and exposed to extremes of weather throughout the year.
- Attract more tourists to Hastings, with the castle providing a vital connection between the town and the battle of Hastings.
- Generate income to sustain and maintain Hastings Castle into the future, showing value for money and meeting or exceeding expectations to drive repeat visits and recommendations.

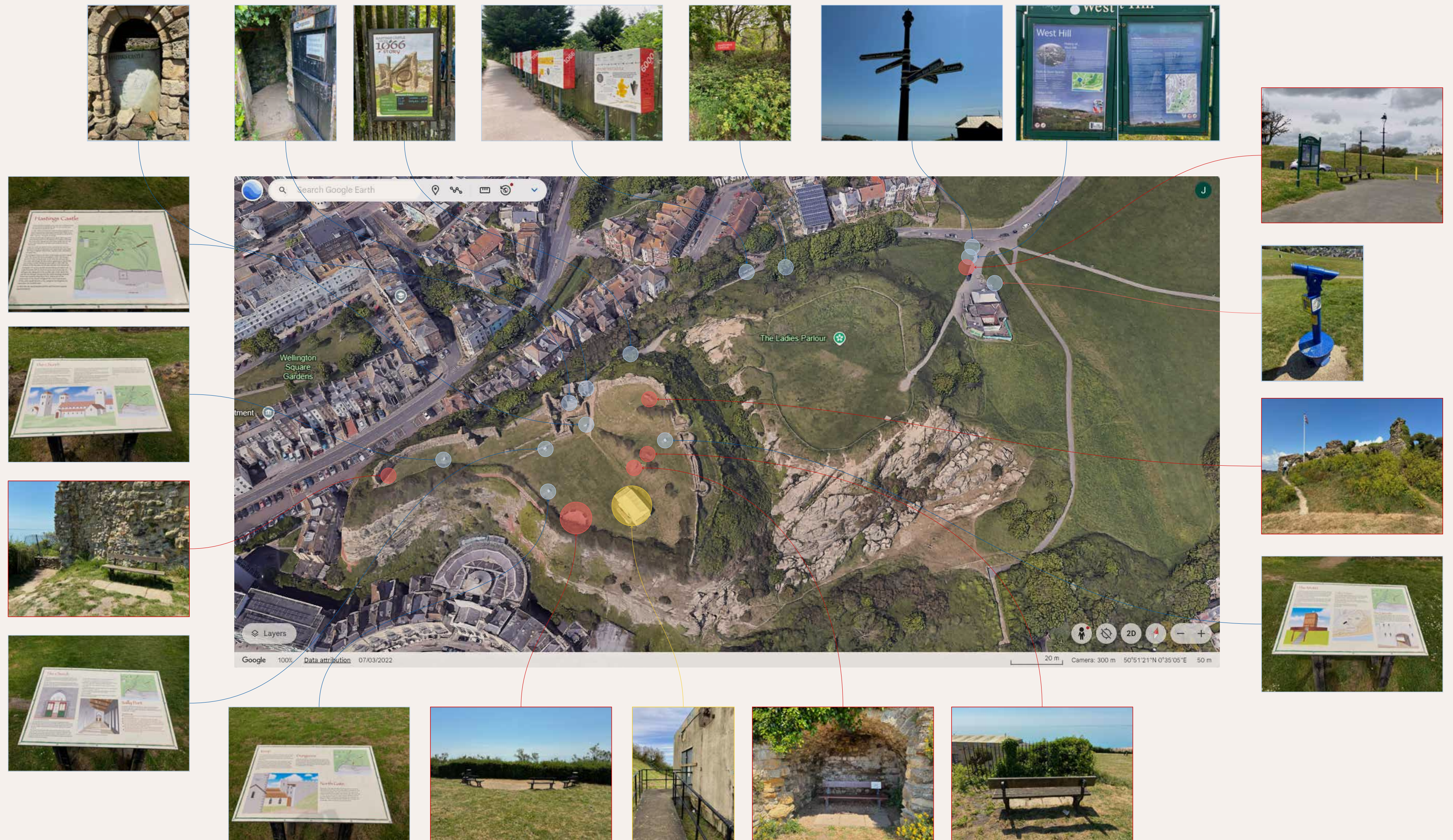
Narrative Approach

Town and Castle: Intertwined Narrative

Hastings Castle and the town's intertwined narrative, sit at the centre of our story. We will reveal how a picturesque ruin — the first Norman castle in England and an ever- changing place of conflict, refuge, natural beauty and inspiration — shaped and was shaped by the people of Hastings. It will create a bridge between the events of the battle of 1066, of which the Castle is a key part, and the wider narrative of Hastings, connecting through time into present day.

'It is the rich coastal environment of Hastings, with its distinctive layering of historical periods that include Norman, Medieval, Regent and Victorian histories, that can extend the reach of the Castle's narrative trajectory. This narrative will be linked to other heritage sites and historical sources locally, regionally and even internationally, to provide visitors with an integrated experience. Our re-telling of the 1066 story envisages the Castle as part of the town's wider historical European development.'

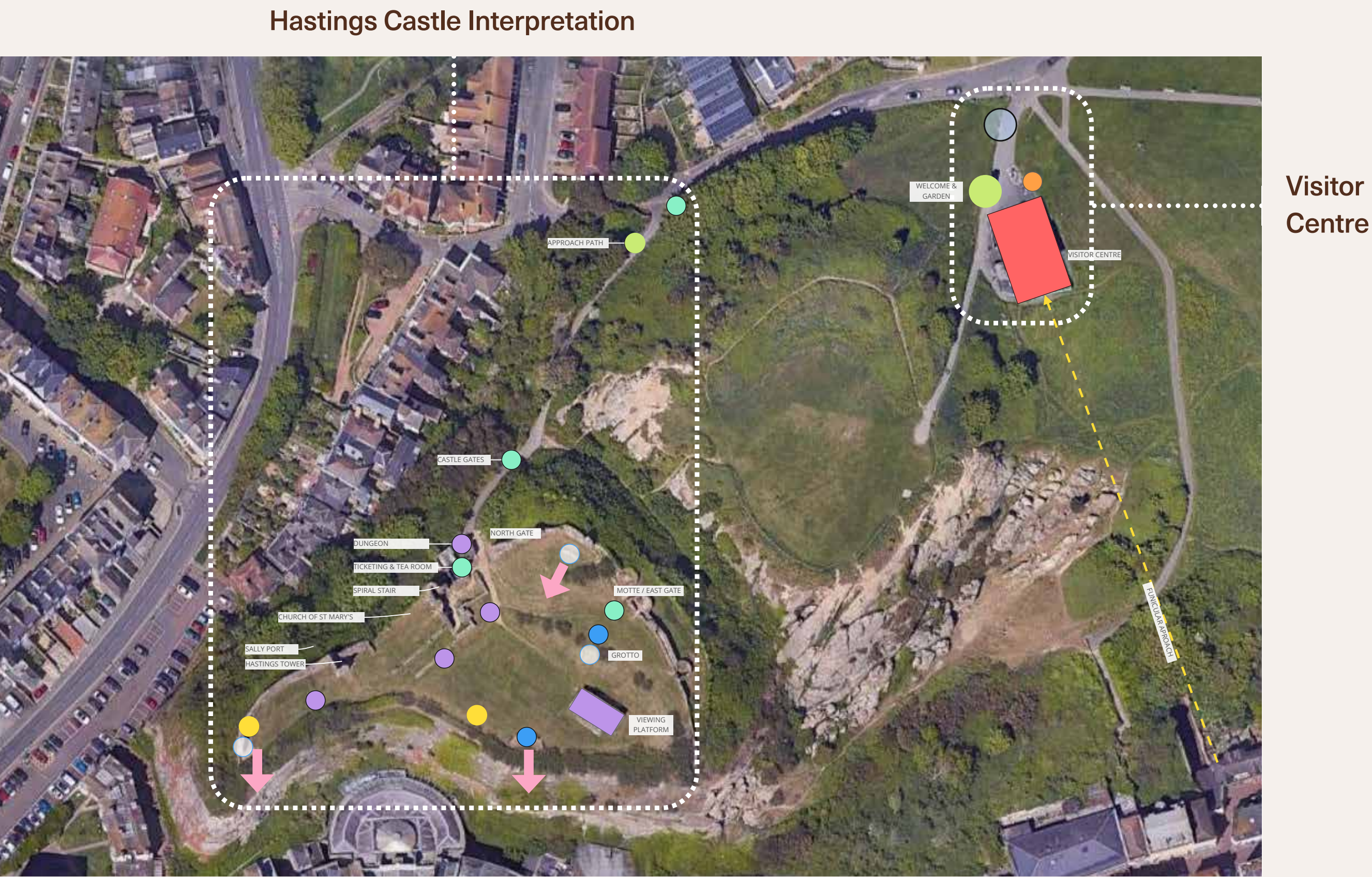
Hastings Castle Scoping Report 2015 – 2016, University of Brighton



Existing Site Wide Interpretation

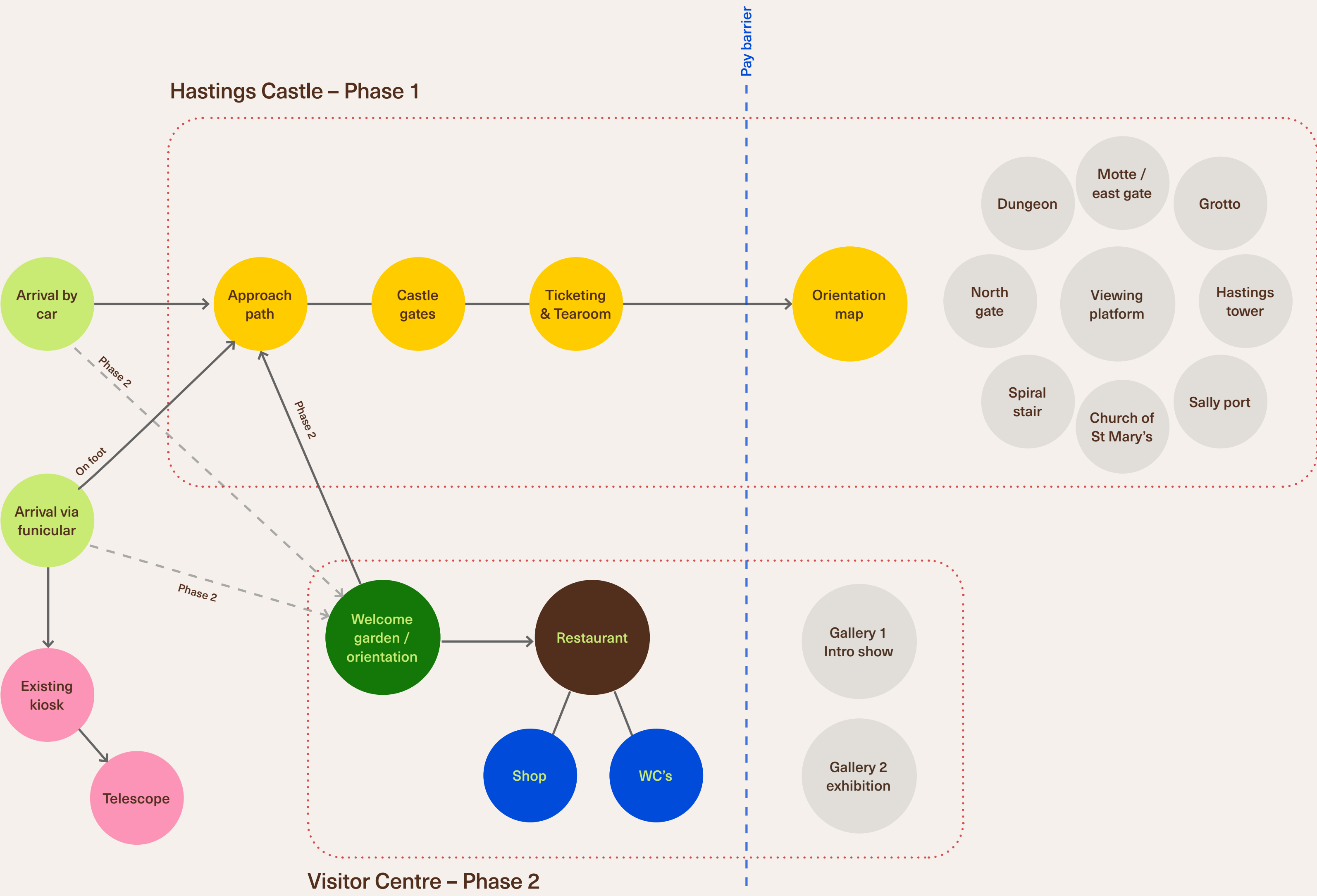
Scope of Work

New and Refreshed Site Wide Interpretation



- New 2D interpretation
- Existing interpretation to be removed, and replaced with new
- New information signage
- New 3D interpretation
- Existing benches (as they are)
- New seating (to replace existing)
- Key views

Interconnected Interpretation across the Castle and Visitor Centre Spaces



Visitor Centre – Overview Plan



Galleries 1 & 2
Overall Themes

Four themes run through like threads through the interpretation, shaping the narrative.

History: How the first Norman castle built in England shaped Hastings as we know it. [This theme will be particularly relevant to the school curriculum for UK and overseas students]

Heritage: Traces through time reveal adaptation and change.

Geology & Ecology: How the dramatic sandstone cliffs with their wildlife- rich grassland habitats have been shaped by people and the elements.

Community: Much loved landmark and symbol of local pride, sparking memory and creativity.



History



Heritage



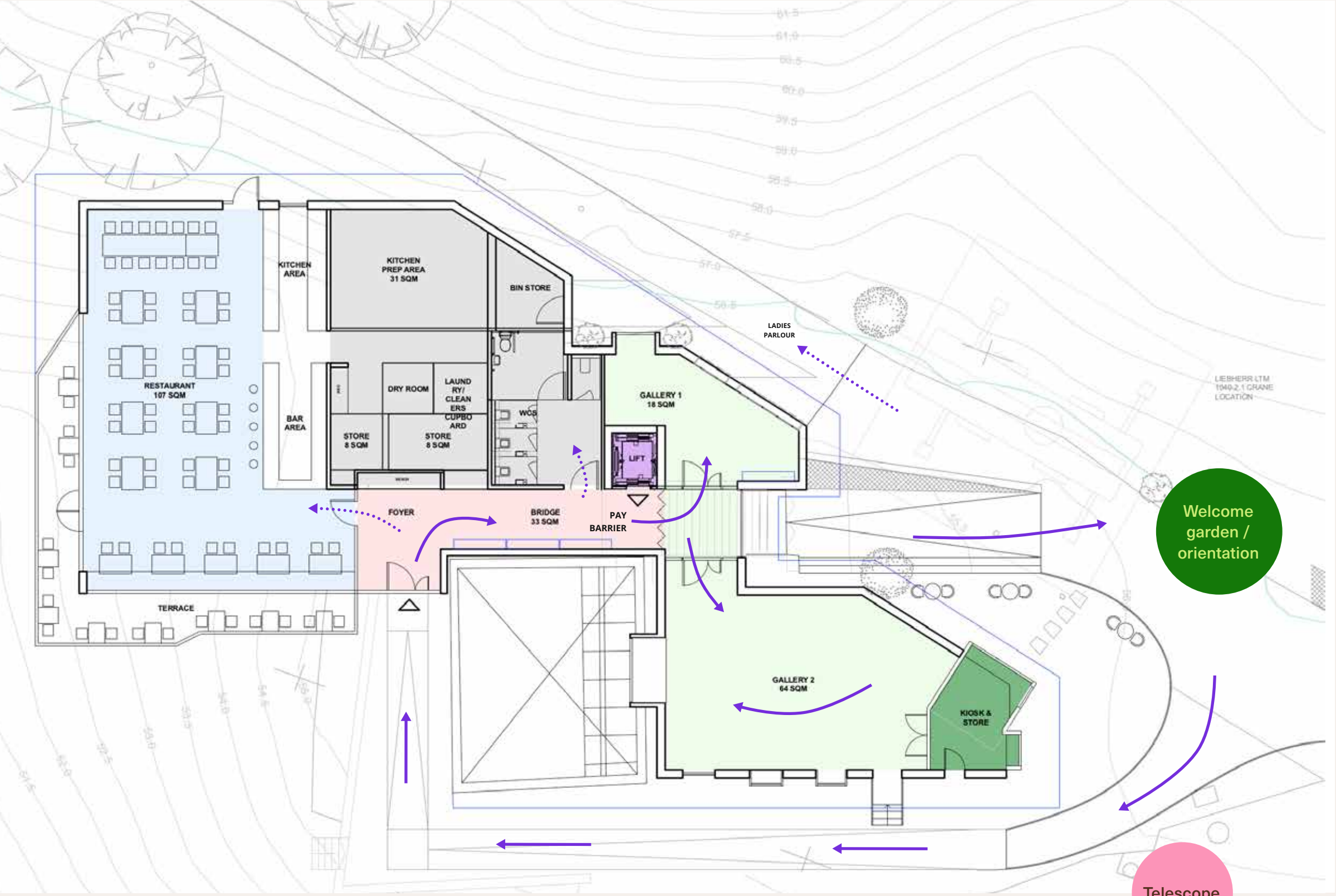
Community



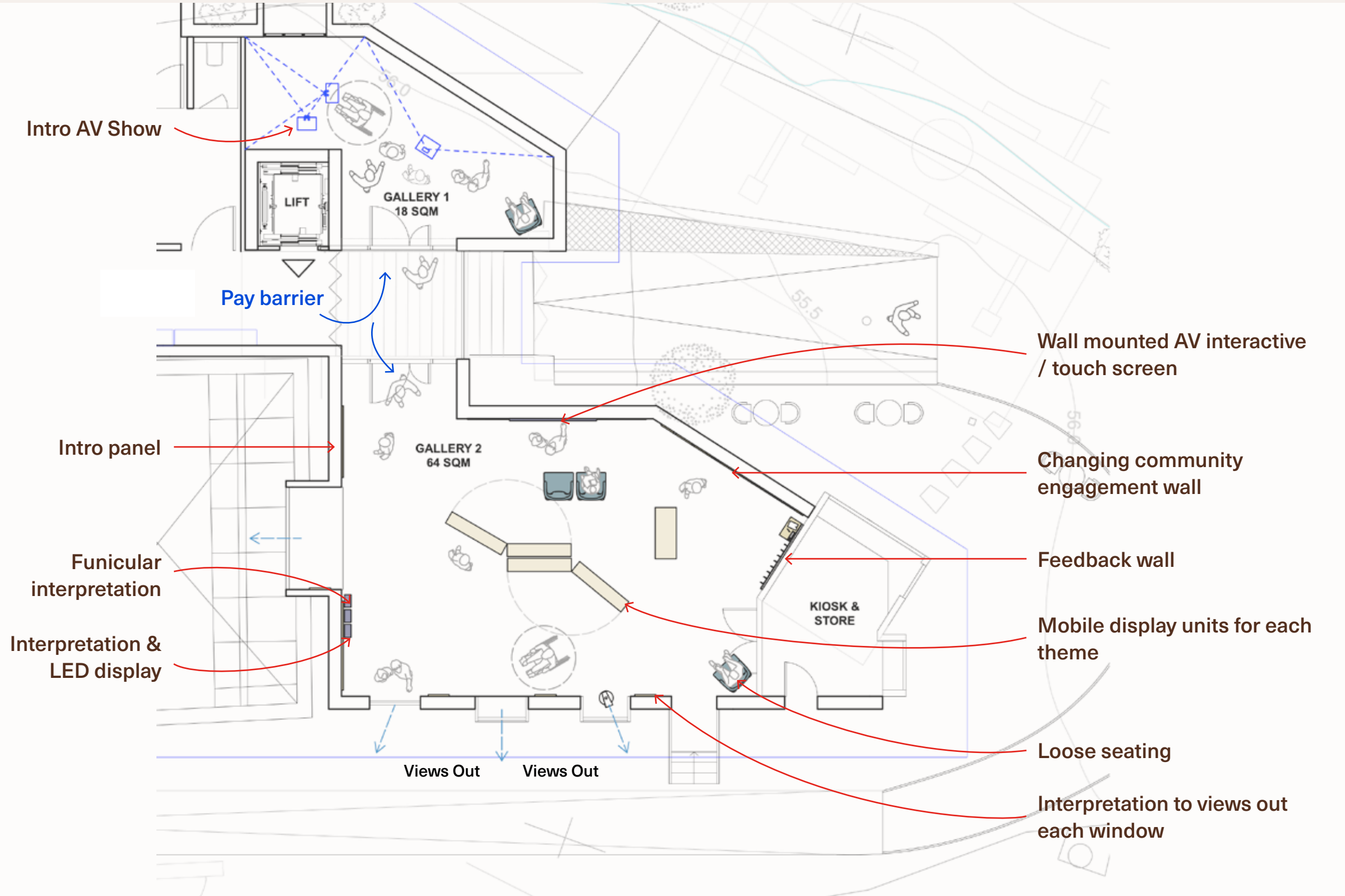
Geology & Ecology



Visitor flow



Galleries 1 & 2
Plan



Gallery 1

Outline Content & Approach to Interpretation

Intent: flexible and accessible space that meets year- round needs of visitors, enabling those who wouldn't otherwise be able to experience the raw and breathtaking beauty of the cliff top ruins in a fully immersive suite.

Key messages:
Hastings Castle site is a unique and breathtaking site with internationally significant heritage.

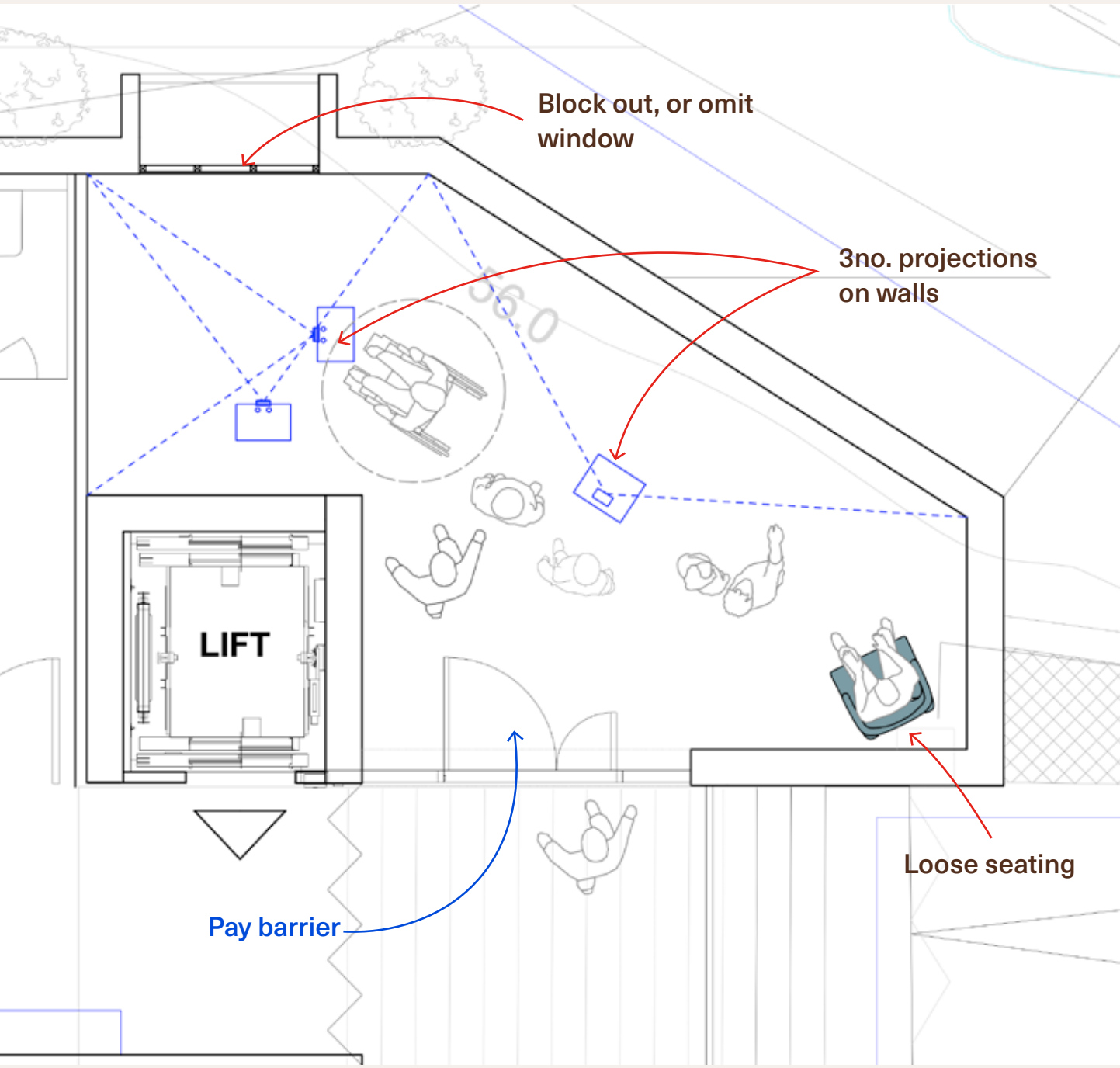
AV SHOW

Default mode: a filmic journey around the site, an accessible alternative for those that are not able to visit the site itself:

- Showing the main heritage features of the site, including the Castle, Church and Ladies Parlour, reaching the least accessible parts including the highest ground, the view from the top of the spiral staircase and deep inside the caves.
- Featuring unexpected views that visitors can't usually get, such as a bird or bees- eye view, a celebratory event (such as celebrations marking 1000 years since William the Conqueror's birth), or even Victorian paintings or photographs of the ruins (of which there are many).
- Amplifying the spiritual qualities of the site, with an evocative sound scape (e.g. crashing waves, bird song or even distant prayers) and filmed through the seasons and from sunrise to sunset.
- This mode would presumably be heavily used during the winter if the site is closed.

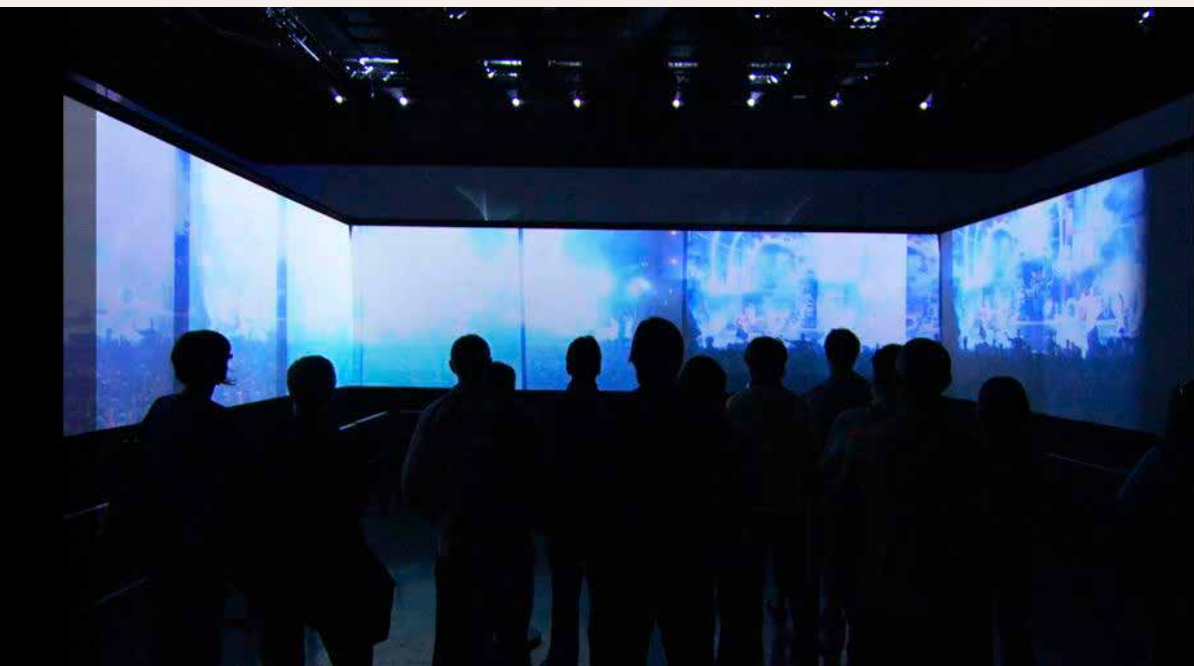
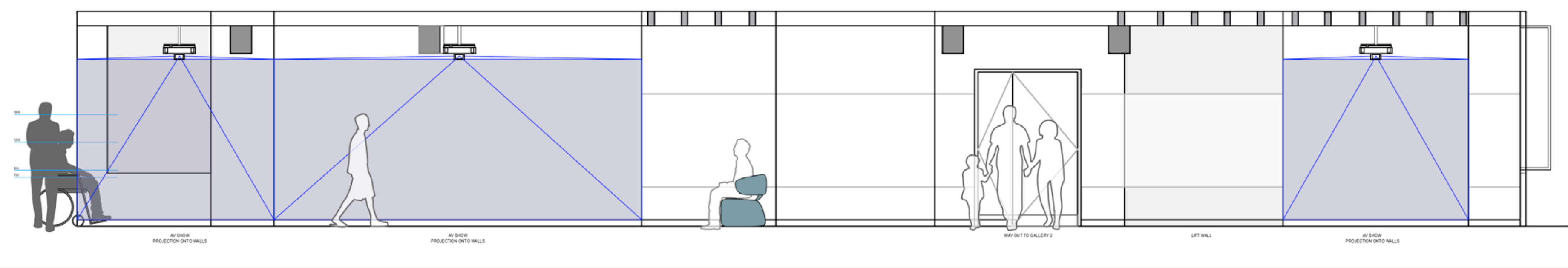
Events mode: using the space to host community creative responses.

- This might be more relevant to the summer time when there might be performances or art installations on site.



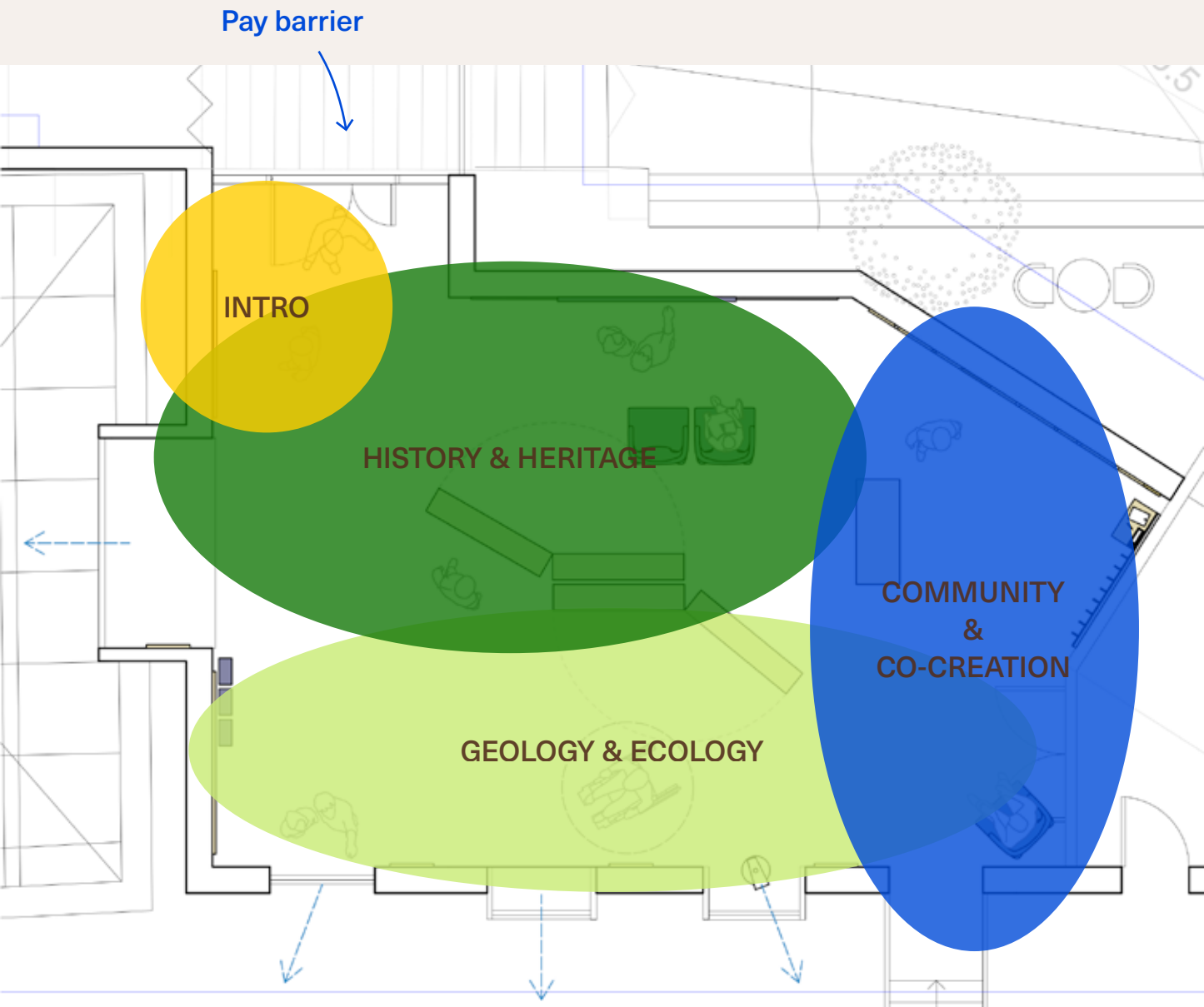
Gallery 1 – Intro AV Show Plan

Option 2 – Elevation



Gallery 2

Overview

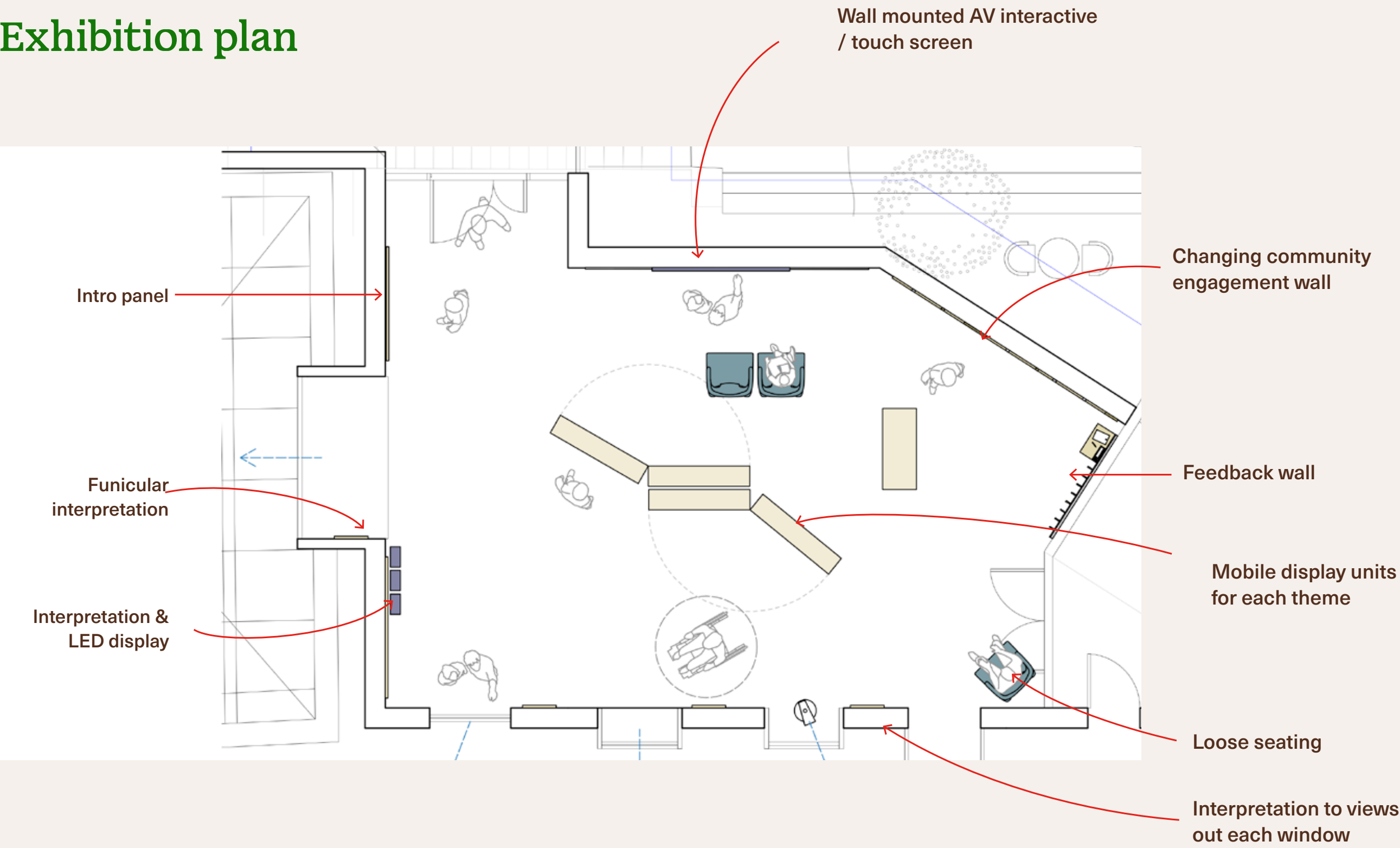


History & Heritage: The opportunity to take 'deeper dives' into interesting historical stories, as represented by reproductions/ imprints of artefacts from Hastings Museum & Art Gallery. These objects (e.g. flints, coins, iron cannon balls and Victorian souvenirs) will give voice to people from the past, from Iron Age settlers to Norman kings and Victorian excavators.

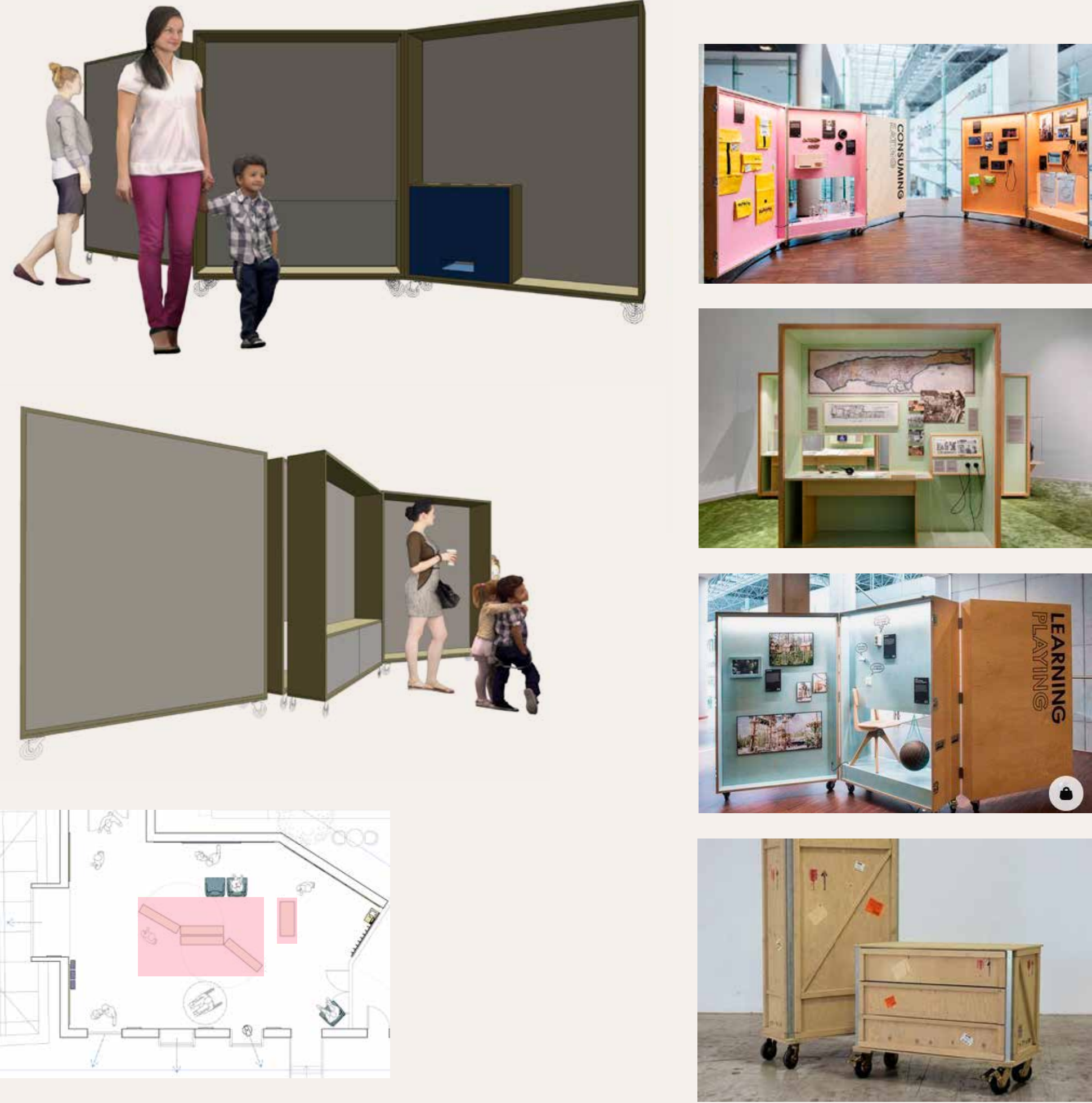
Geology & Ecology: One side to focus on ecology and connections to the land, the other looking at coastal erosion.

Community: A flexible display case for displays by and about local people connected to the Castle, created in partnership with schools or creative/ cultural/ heritage organisations, making visible collaborations and connections between town and castle.

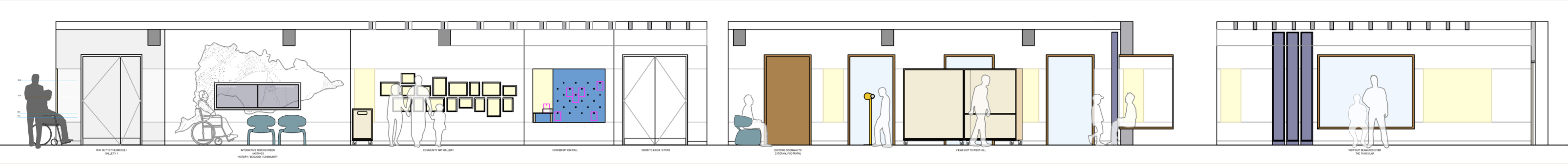
Exhibition plan



Mobile Display Cabinets



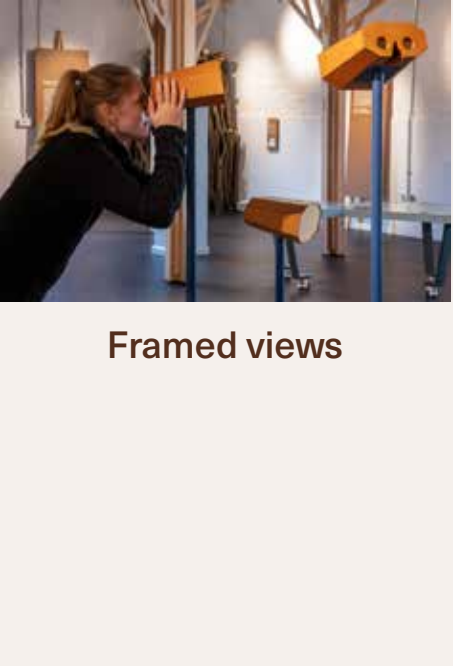
Wall Elevation



Interactive touchscreens



Community led installation



Framed views



LED tidal display

External Interpretation Phase 1 Work



Lower Pathway ●

Lower pathway interpretation

Character panels or interpretation embedded into the pathways, highlighting some of the many people whose footsteps you now walk in:

- William Rufus (Norman king and son of William the Conqueror) who wintered at the Castle in 1094, waiting for the winds to allow him to cross the channel.
- Pilgrims who followed a well- trodden path to the altar of the Church of St Mary, a famous centre for pilgrimage.
- Medieval troops brought in to defend the town against French raids during the 100 Years War (13th century).
- Victorian tourists, visiting to take in the air or to admire the picturesque view from the ruins.
- Mary Churchill (daughter of Prime Minister Winston Churchill), stationed on West Hill during World War II.
- Volunteer from a local wildlife group, looking for bees at the Ladies Parlour.



Platform Interpretation ●●●➔

Looking back at the ruins, engaging the imagination to complete the picture at different points in time.

Interpretation could include:

- Frames that fill in the missing picture from different points in time (using archaeological/historic reconstructions based on evidence).
- Picturesque paintings of the ruins from the 18th and 19th centuries, as inspiration for those that might wish to sketch or paint the scene in front of them.
- Space for creative response by artists.



Orientation Map ●●

Tactile maps for orientation and interpretation would be durable and accessible.



Framed Views ●●

Devices to frame views and deliver interpretation.



Audio Points ●●●

Audio posts that work using solar panels, or hand cranks, can also be built into panels and benches.

Audio immersion: Could feature different voices from across time — from Castle guards, storing items in the caves, to geologists talking about the soft sandstone, and WW II gun operators taking shelter.



General Info Signage ●●

Information points

At key threshold moments — the lower entrance to the pathway, castle gates and ticketing booth, leading visitors to and from the Castle site, providing information as they need it:

- Pathway entrance: accessibility information and opening times, as well as information on where to buy tickets, so that visitors can make an informed decision on whether or not to continue their journey up the sloped pathway.
- Castle gates: welcome message reminding visitors about the significance and sensitivity of the site. Up-datable notice board with information about upcoming events.
- Ticketing booth: pricing information.



Seating ●○●

Playful / sculptural group seating, where visitors can lie back and look up to the sky and be in awe of their surroundings.

New benches that incorporate interpretation, about the flora and fauna around them, or even audio points.

Existing benches can be given a new coat of paint.

