

Reimagining 15 Westferry Circus: Museum of Canary Wharf

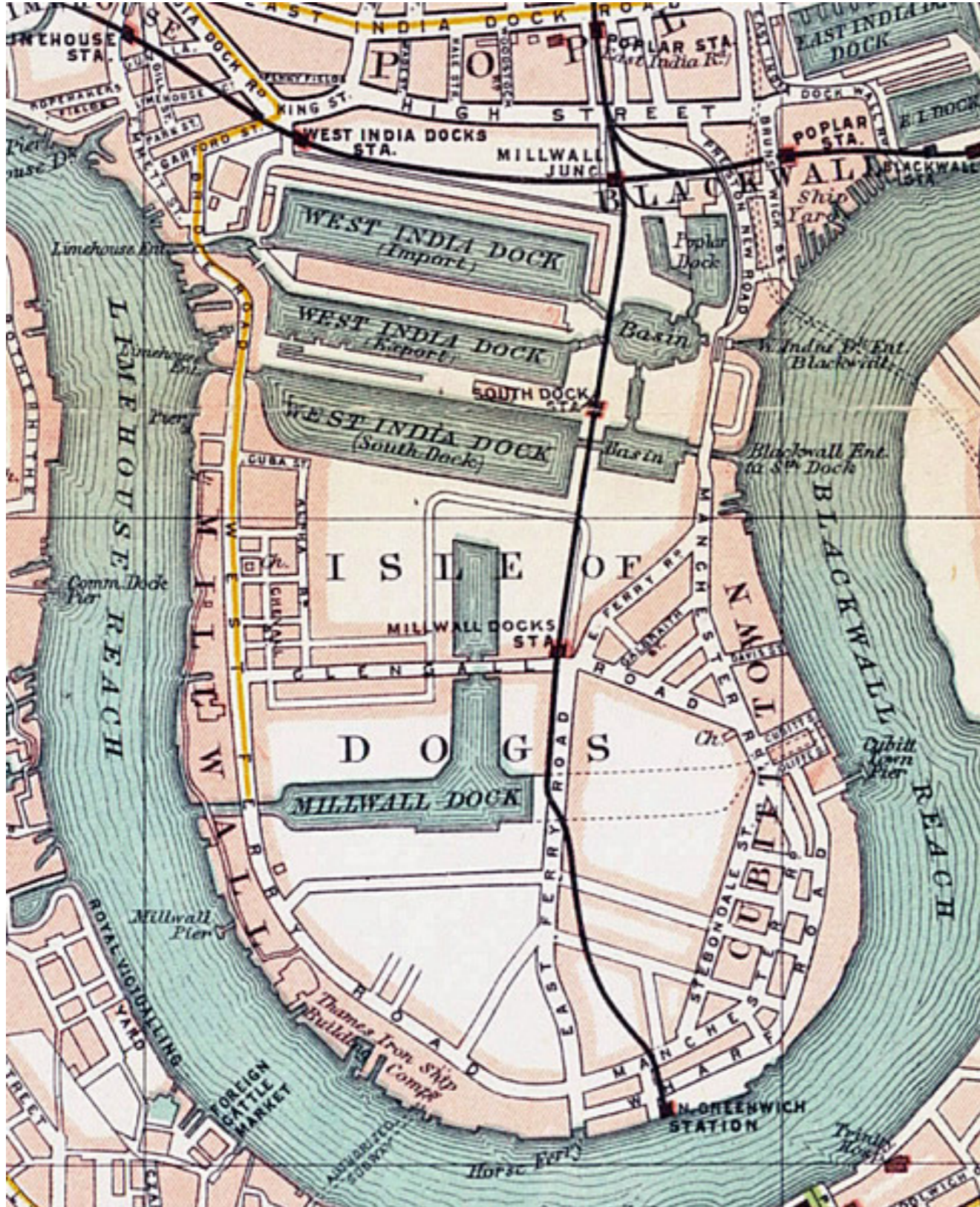
MA Interior Design - Final Thesis (Term 3)
Tanvi Sankhe - July 2025



Render view of Ground floor- main entrance

The Canary Wharf Museum transforms an existing commercial tower into a vertical timeline that guides visitors through the district's industrial past, financial present, and VISIONARY future. In a place shaped by Short-lived and transaction, drawn to the idea of creating something permanent- a space that gives Canary Wharf a moment to remember its past, reflect on its present, and imagine what comes next.

HISTORIC LAYERS OF CANARY WHARF – FROM DOCKS TO DISTRICT



Victorian-Era Map of the Isle of Dogs



Victorian-Era Map of the Isle of Dogs



1980s Regeneration Billboard



One Canada Square Under Construction, 1990s



Cranes & Towers – Canary Wharf's Dual Identity

The radical transformation of Canary Wharf across three centuries. The historical map on the left reveals the dense industrial fabric of the 1800s, when the docks powered London's global trade. To the right, a sequence of images captures the site's evolution - from bustling maritime activity, to post-industrial decay and corporate renewal. The provocative 1980s billboard marked the turning point, replaced in the following decade by towers like One Canada Square. Together, these images tell a story of urban reinvention, ambition, and shifting identity.

CANARY WHARF: A LANDSCAPE IN TRANSFORMATION

1600s

Once tidal marshland on the Isle of Dogs, the area lay quiet along the Thames, far from the bustle of central London.

1800s

With the opening of the West India Docks in 1802, Canary Wharf became a global trade hub- buzzing with ships, warehouses, and goods from across the empire.

1900s

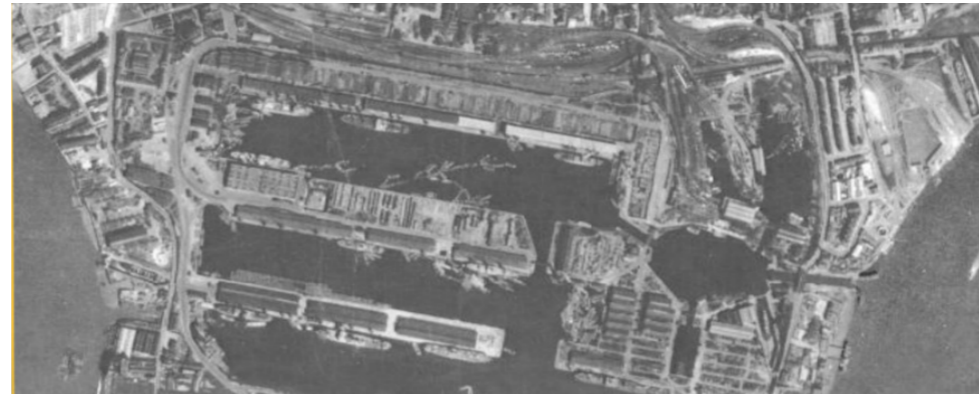
The docks thrived until mid-century, then fell into decline due to wartime damage and modern shipping methods. By the 1970s, the area was abandoned and derelict.

1980s–1990s

A bold redevelopment plan turned ruins into opportunity. The rise of One Canada Square marked the beginning of a new financial district- ambitious, vertical, and global.

2000s–Today

Now a modern skyline of glass and steel, Canary Wharf continues to evolve. Offices share space with homes, gardens, and galleries- shifting from a symbol of commerce to a vision of future urban living.



Google Earth view of Canary Wharf, 1945 – Docklands Era



Google Earth view of Canary Wharf, 1985 – Between Decline and Renewal



Google Earth view of Canary Wharf, 1995 – The Rise of a New Skyline

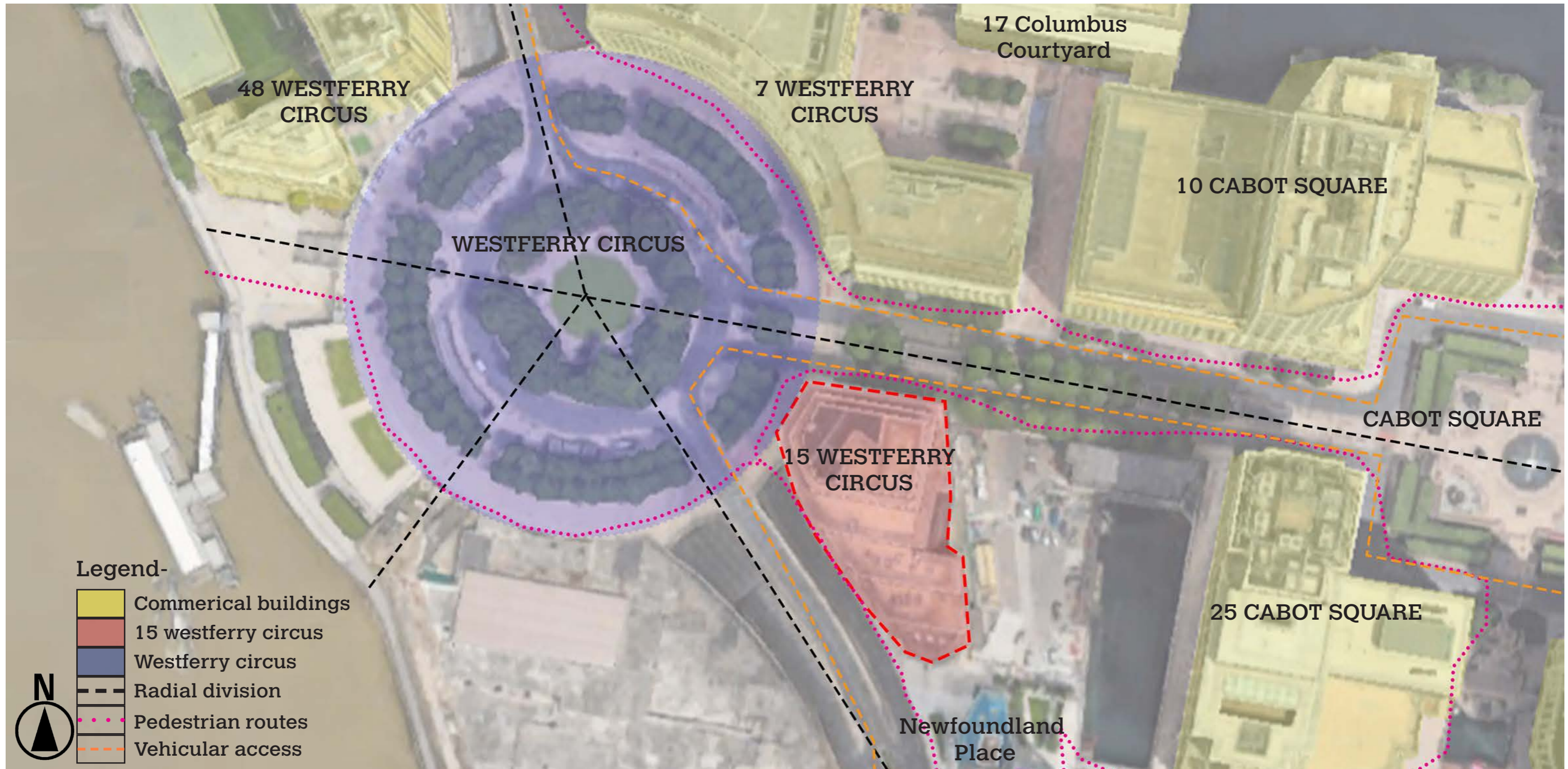


Google Earth view of Canary Wharf, 2015 – A Vertical City Realised



Google Earth view of Canary Wharf, 2025 – Where Towers Meet Community

SITE ANALYSIS- SITE AND SURROUNDING



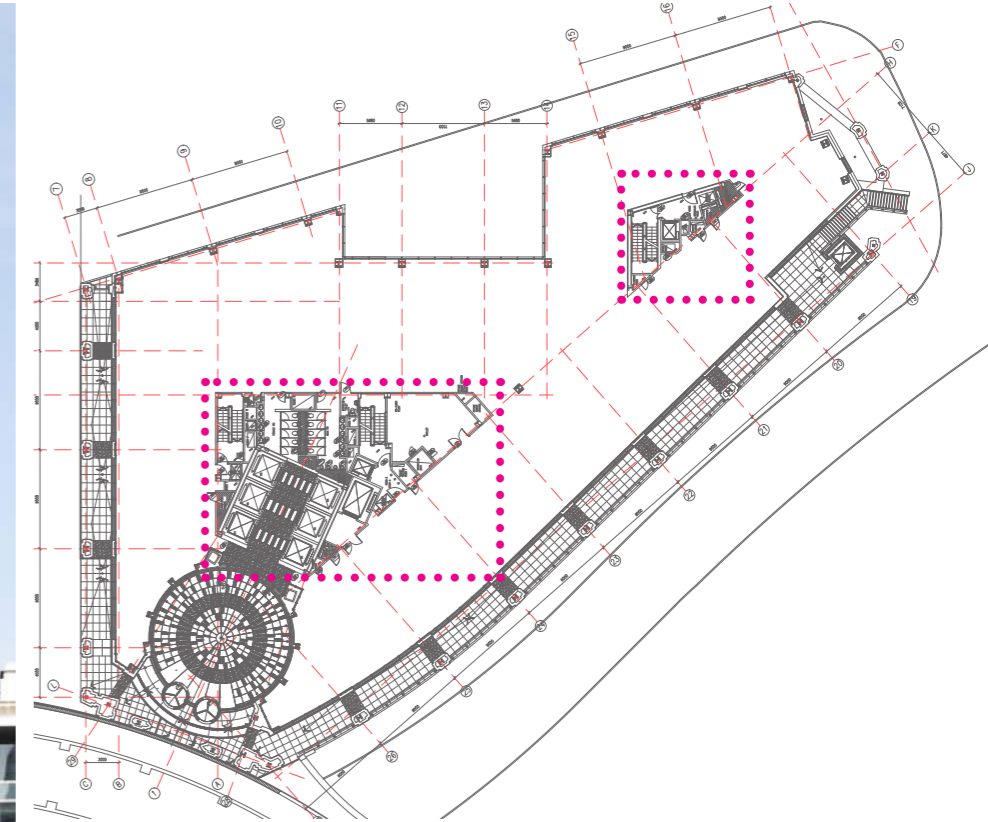
Site Mapping – Movement, Use, and Urban Form at Westferry Circus

This diagram maps the spatial logic surrounding 15 Westferry Circus (highlighted in red), revealing its strategic placement at the threshold of Canary Wharf's circular civic node and linear commercial grid. Yellow blocks denote commercial buildings, while pink blocks identify residential towers, underscoring the area's emerging mixed-use character. The black dashed radial lines reflect the formal planning geometry of Westferry Circus, a rare soft break in an otherwise orthogonal cityscape. Pedestrian routes (pink dotted lines) circulate along the riverfront and urban green spaces, while vehicular access (orange dashed lines) wraps around the core- framing the site as both visually central and functionally accessible. This layered condition positions the site as a key moment of pause, convergence, and potential activation.

BUILDING ANALYSIS – 15 WESTFERRY CIRCUS



Front Façade – Postmodern 15 westferry circus Office Identity



Typical floor plan of 15 westferry circus



Material Palette & Detailing

Typology & Structure

- Mid-rise commercial office (8–10 storeys)
- Steel frame with glazed curtain wall
- Rectilinear form within circular urban node

Access & Circulation

- Dual entrances: Westferry Circus & dockside
- Existing vertical core (stairs/lifts) retained
- Rear service access for loading and support

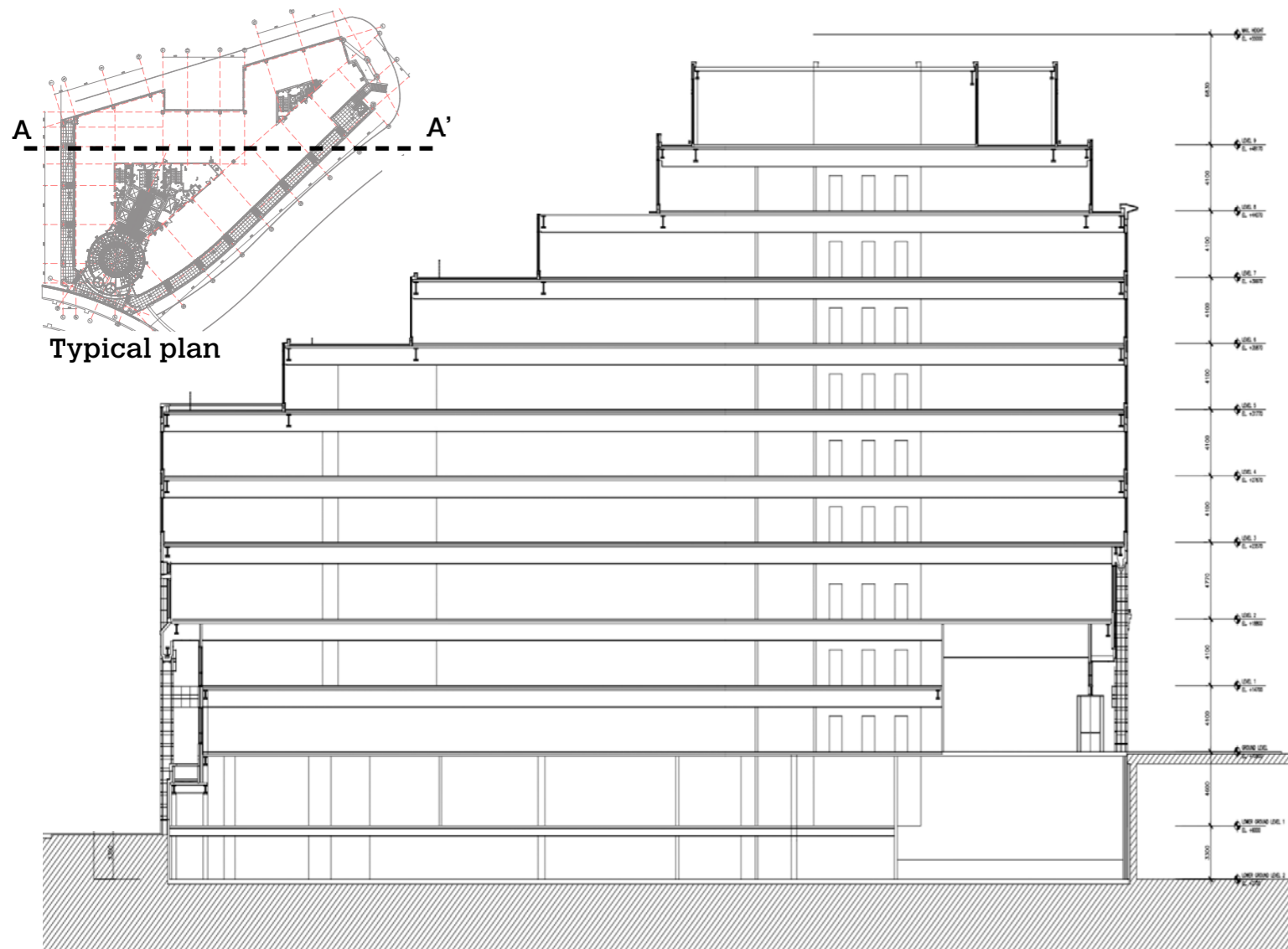
Façade & Envelope

- Reflective glass façade, minimal detailing
- Opportunity for reinterpretation (screening/projection)
- Strong visual presence but lacks porosity

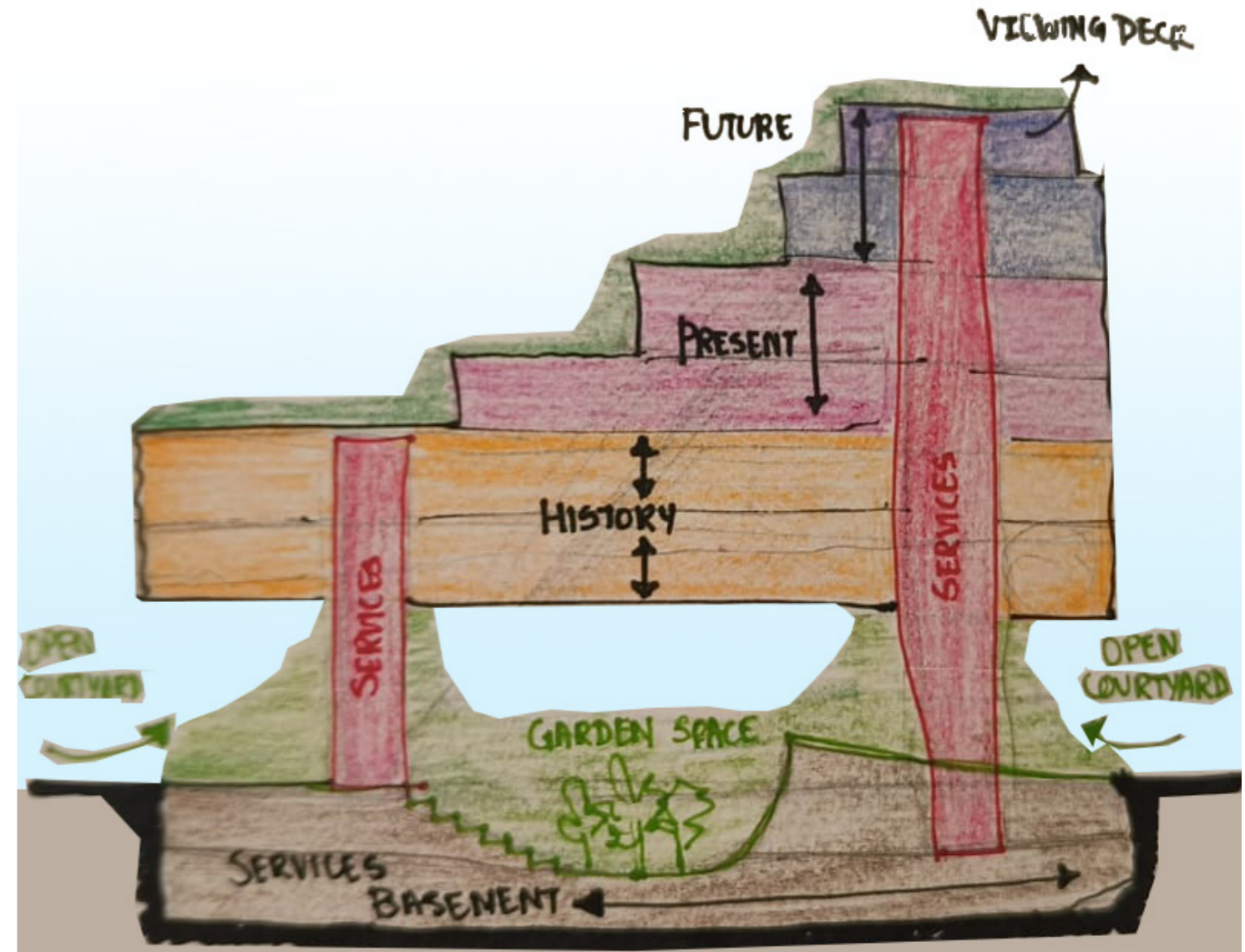
Reuse Potential

- Robust frame supports adaptive reuse
- River views + civic plaza = rich public interface
- Ideal for museum, gallery, or cultural programming

CONCEPT – PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE AS NARRATIVE ARCHITECTURE



Existing Section – 15 Westferry Circus



Sectional Sketch – Reimagining 15 Westferry Circus as a Narrative Museum

The hand sketches explore why narrative architecture is central to the reimagining of 15 Westferry Circus. Instead of a static museum, the building becomes a spatial timeline- allowing visitors to move through history, rather than just observe it.

By vertically layering the museum into Past (basement & ground), Present (middle floors), and Future (top levels), the architecture physically manifests the evolution of Canary Wharf. Each layer reflects not only a different moment in time, but also a different mode of experience:

- The Past invites reflection- quiet, grounded, archival
- The Present encourages critique- corporate, controlled, familiar
- The Future opens possibility- imaginative, soft, civic

This structure transforms the building into a narrative device- one that connects the site's industrial roots to its speculative potential. Visitors engage with time not as chronology, but as architecture.

It invites reflection, dialogue, and imagination- turning the museum into a space of both memory and possibility.

SPATIAL MOVE – A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

P
A
S
T



Underground Discharge Channel – Saitama, Japan



Tate Modern Tanks – London



Museum of the Future Past – Rome



The Weather Project – Olafur Eliasson



Temporary museum shipping container -tunisian



Roman Ruins in London

This mood board illustrates the conceptual approach for the basement + ground, third and fourth floor levels of the museum- spaces where the narrative of “Past” begins. Referencing projects like the Saitama Underground Discharge Channel, Tate Modern Tanks, and Museum of the Future Past, these precedents evoke a sense of immersion, monumentality, and introspection through raw materials and spatial depth.

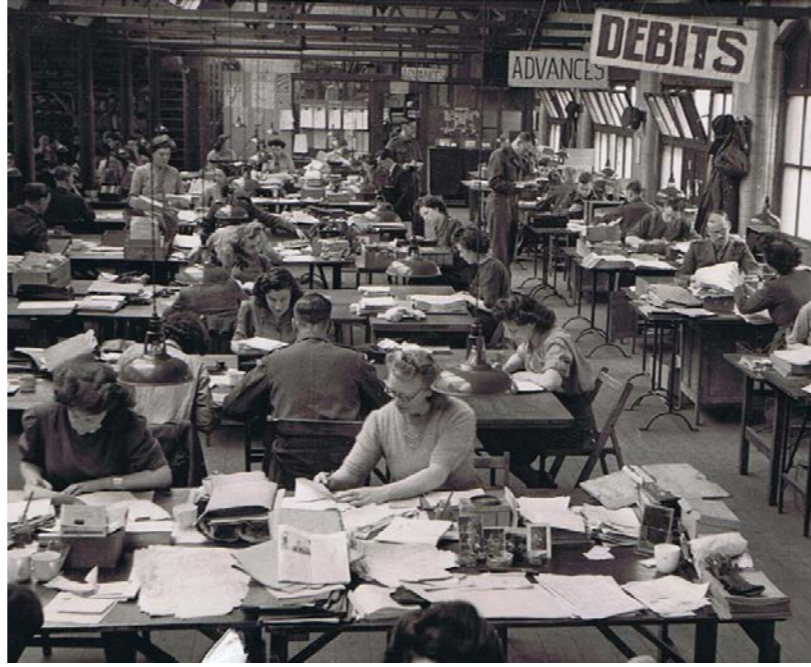
On the ground third and fourth floor, works like Olafur Eliasson’s Weather Project, Temporary container architecture, and Roman Ruins in London introduce themes of reuse, transition, and public engagement. Together, these examples inform how visitors physically and emotionally move through time, setting the tone for an architecture that blends memory, material, and movement.

They shape the beginning of a spatial story- where history is not displayed, but walked through.

PRESENT



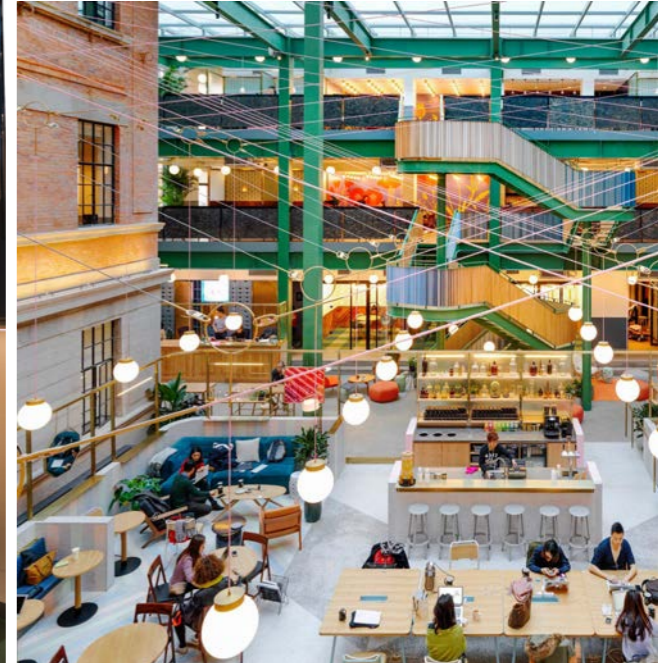
Google Office Cubicles – 1980's



Vintage Office- 1990's



Dreyer's Arkitektur- 2000's



Factory Berlin – 2010's

FUTURE



Alain Ducasse Restaurant, Paris – Jouin Manku



National Museum of Qatar



Switchable Australian Curved Glass

This visual timeline explores the transformation of work and cultural environments from the structured corporate spaces of the past to immersive, adaptive futures. The top row reflects the present and recent past, from the rigid cubicles of the 1980s and communal desk halls of the 1990s, to modular experimental installations like WE Architecture at Dreyer's Arkitektur Galleri and dynamic hybrid coworking spaces such as Factory Berlin- signaling a shift toward collaboration, flexibility, and lifestyle-driven design.

The bottom row envisions the future: from the sensorial richness of Alain Ducasse's Paris restaurant and the immersive digital storytelling of the National Museum of Qatar, to innovations like switchable curved glass that blur the lines between physical and digital, public and private. These references inform the design of the 5th and top floors of the museum, where speculative futures are staged not just through content- but through space itself.

MATERIAL & LIGHT STRATEGY + COLOUR CODING



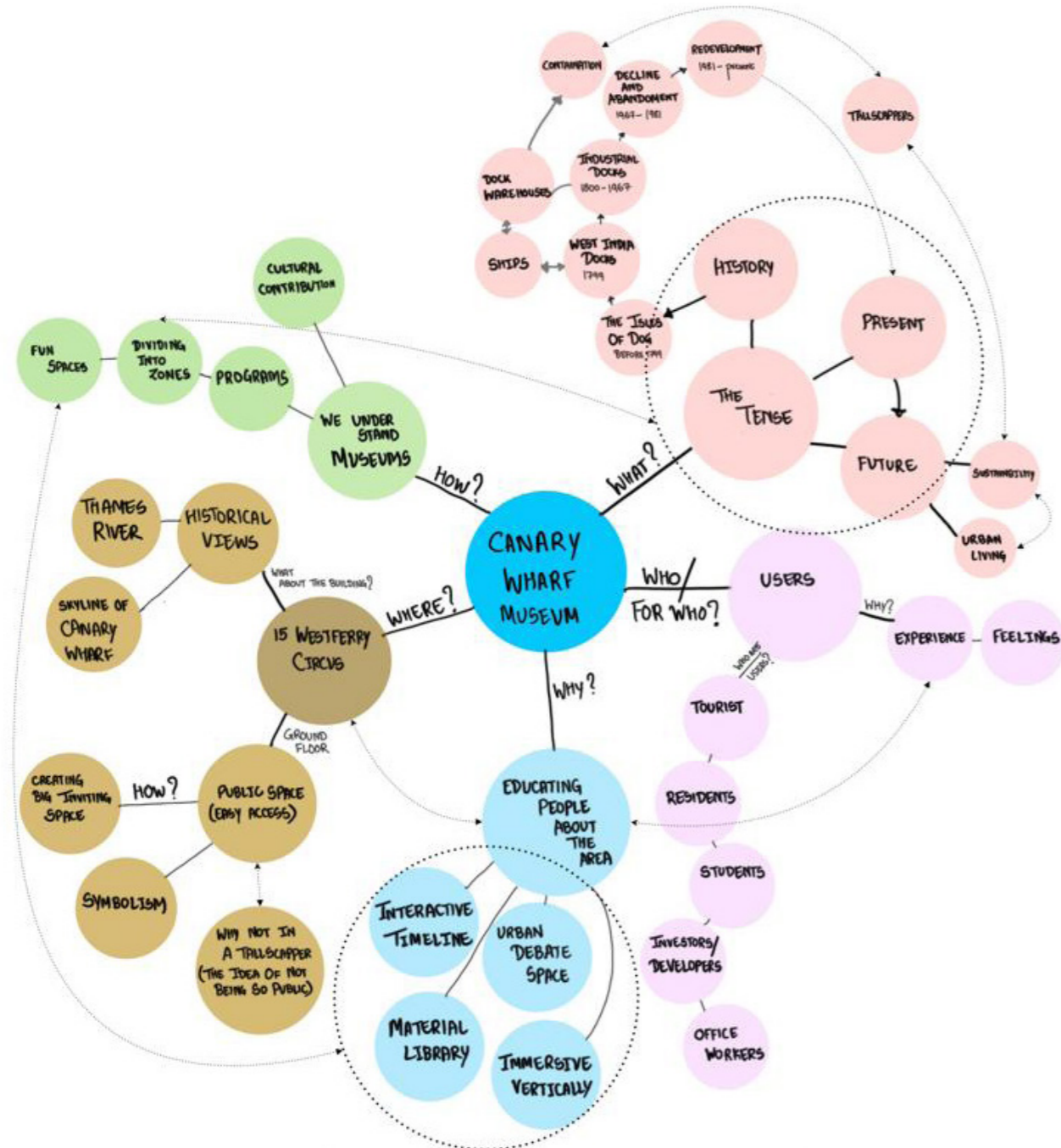
Material Palette – Textures across Time



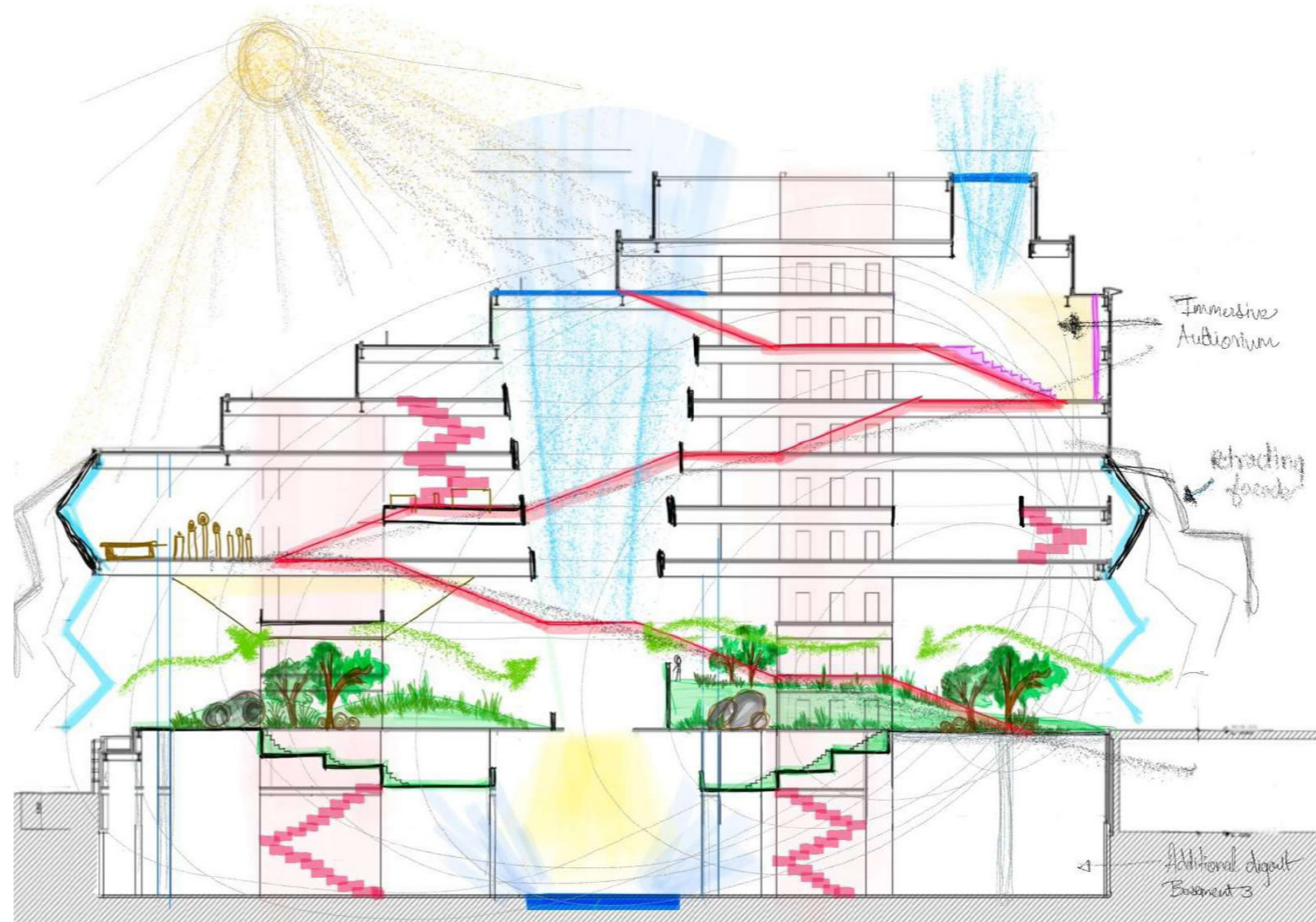
Time Layer	Color	HEX Code	Meaning & Mood
Past (Industrial)	Rusted Red-Brown	#8B4E2E	Evokes brick, rusted metal, industrial memory, warmth, weight
Present (Financial)	Deep Charcoal Grey / Graphite	#3A3A3A	Strong, formal, neutral which evokes corporate sharpness, suits, steel, and glass
Future (Speculative)	Soft Moss Green	#6DA980	Signals sustainability, growth, lightness, and openness

Outlighting how material, light, and colour support the museum's narrative architecture-
 The palette shifts from rusted and heavy in the Past, to neutral and corporate in the Present, to soft and adaptive in the Future.
 Lighting transitions from focused and dim to open and natural, while colour coding reinforces a journey through time- visually and emotionally.

NARRATIVE MAPPING & EMOTIONAL SECTION –DESIGNING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE



Emotional Section – Spatial Flow Through Time



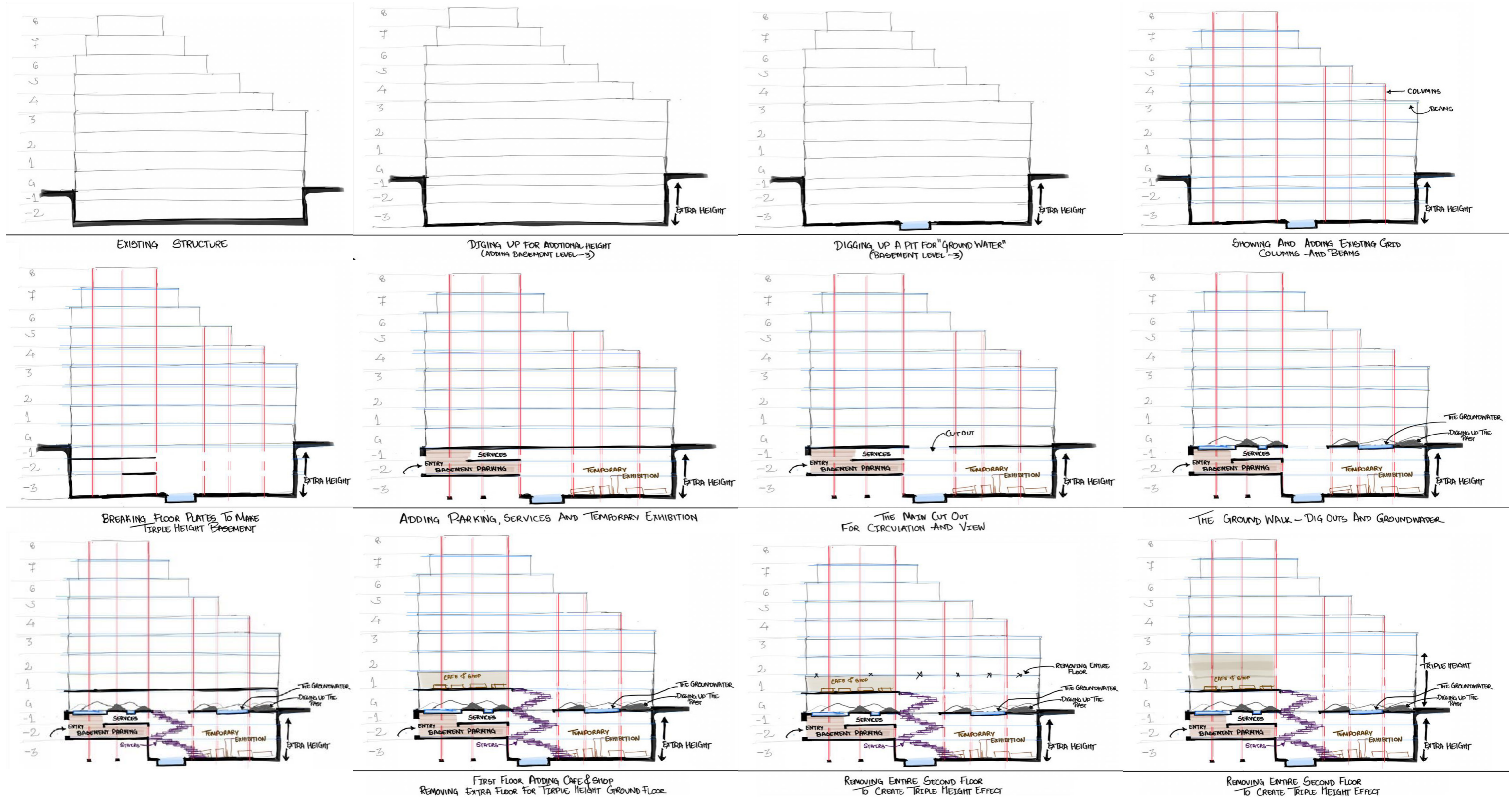
Narrative Concept Map – Canary Wharf Museum

This illustrates the conceptual and emotional core of the Canary Wharf Museum. The narrative map (left) lays out key themes- past, present, future- and links them to users, feelings, and contextual anchors like the Thames and Westferry Circus. It frames the museum as a space of reflection, connection, and public memory.

The section drawing (right) translates that vision into spatial experience. Visitors move from sunken garden levels tied to the past, through structured exhibition floors of the present, and upward into light-filled, open future spaces. The red circulation path maps an emotional progression- from introspection to imagination- making the museum not just a timeline, but a journey through time. As light increases and walls dissolve, so does the boundary between visitor and vision.

The architecture becomes a vessel for memory, critique, and speculation- designed to leave a lasting emotional imprint.

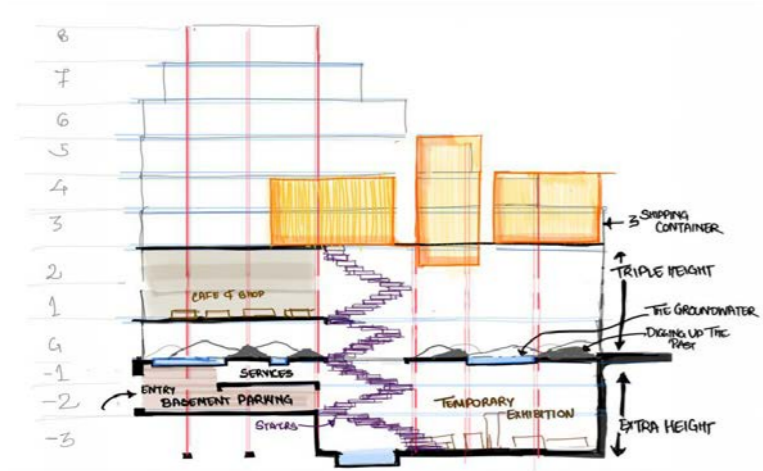
DESIGN PROCESS – FROM EXISTING STRUCTURE TO SPATIAL TRANSFORMATION



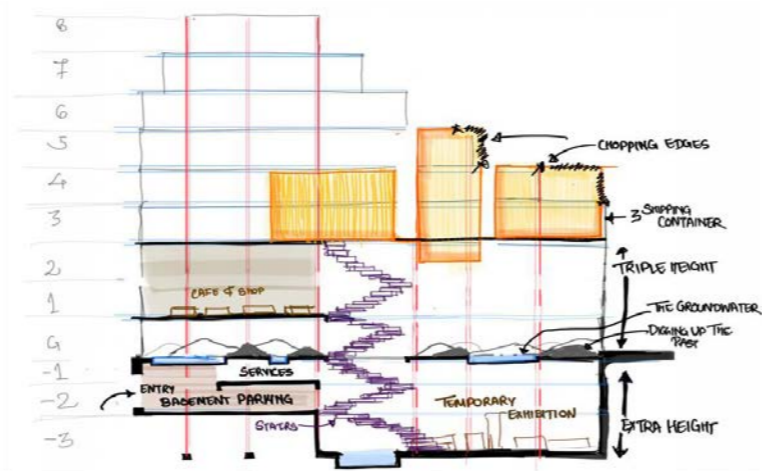
This series of section sketches maps the early transformation of 15 Westferry Circus, focusing on subterranean excavation and structural interventions that lay the foundation for the museum’s narrative journey. It begins with digging below the existing building to introduce triple-height basement levels, followed by structural exposure, reinforcement of existing columns, and insertion of services, parking, and a temporary exhibition zone.

Floor plates are removed to open key visual and circulation moments, introducing a sense of scale, porosity, and movement. These initial moves carve out the “Past” zone of the project-grounded in weight, memory, and material excavation.

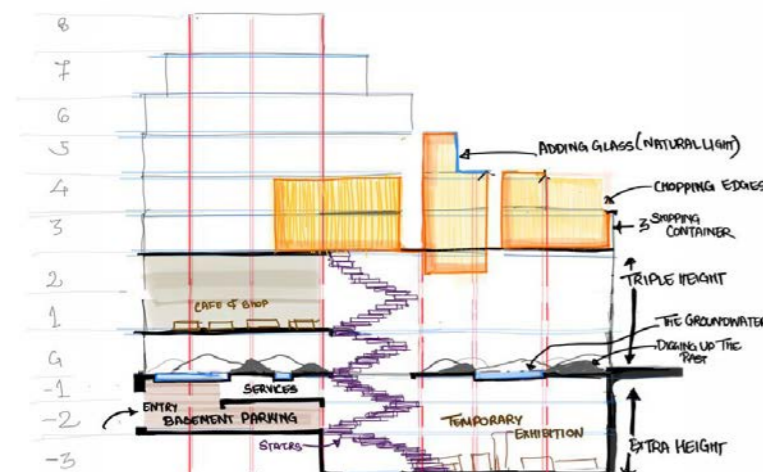
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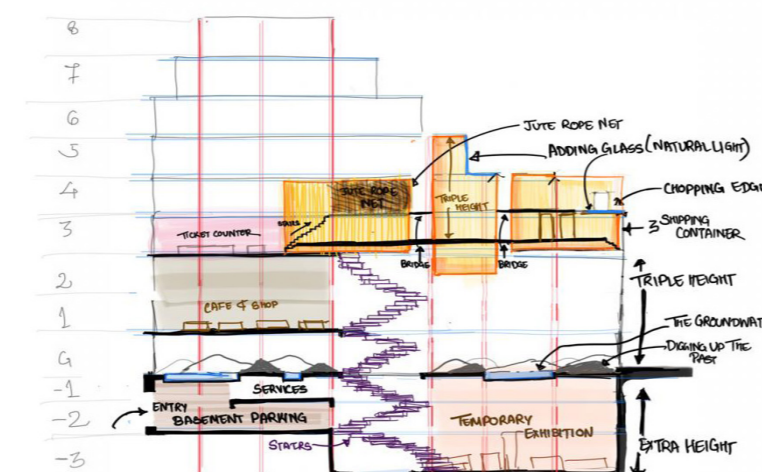
PLACING THREE CONTAINERS



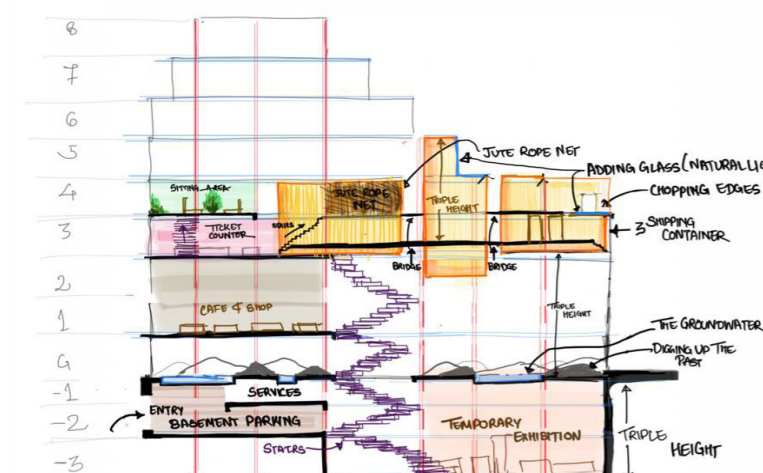
PLACING THREE CONTAINERS



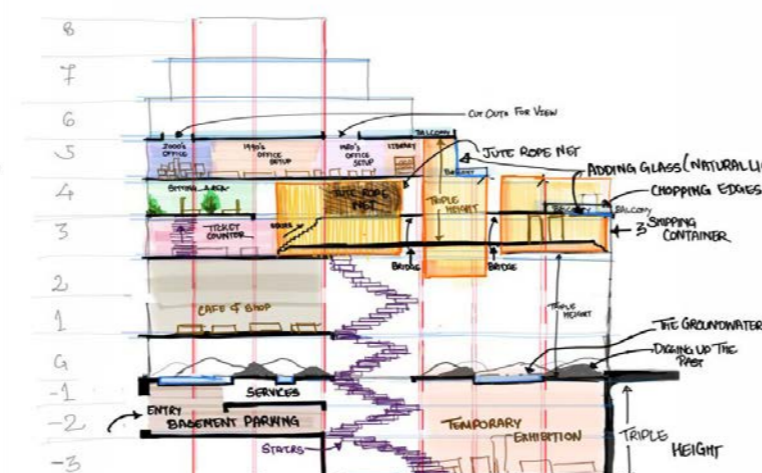
PLACING THREE CONTAINERS AND EXPERIMENTING



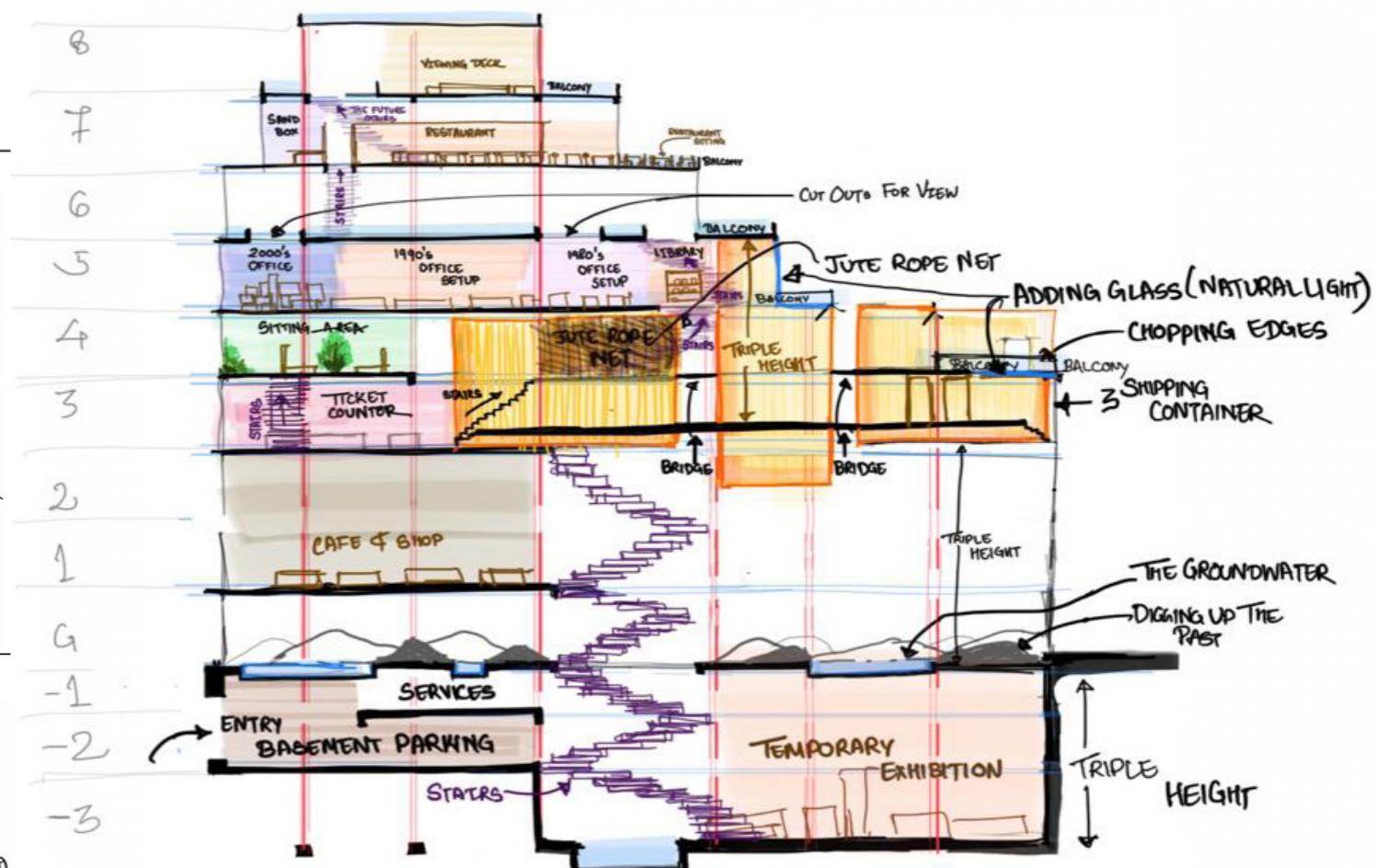
ADDING TICKET COUNTER AND MEZZAINE LEVELS



ADDING PAUSE POINTS



ADDING DIFFERENT TYPE OF OFFICES AND VIEWING DECK

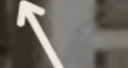


ADDING RESTAURANT, FUTURE FLOOR & VIEWING DECK

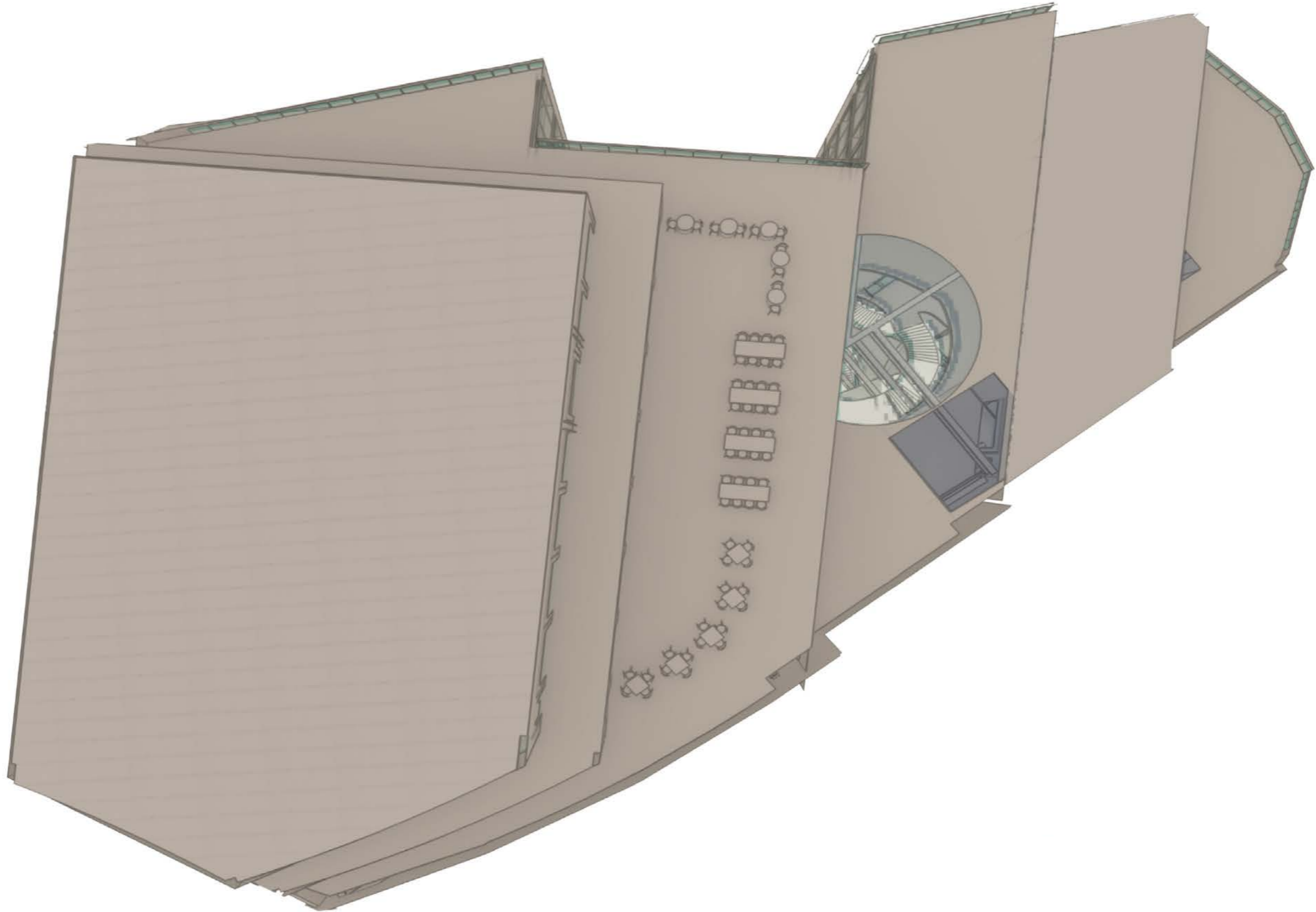
This captures the final spatial evolution of 15 Westferry Circus, focusing on the addition of the future floor, viewing deck, and restaurant. Shipping containers are inserted into the upper levels to house new programs- bridging past infrastructure with speculative futures. Mezzanines, ticket counters, and suspended walkways activate the core, while light wells, chopped edges, and glazed surfaces bring in natural light and open visual connections across floors.

The topmost level introduces civic spaces like a rooftop café, soft lounges, and a public viewing deck, completing the narrative arc. These interventions turn the building into a layered, future-facing public place- inviting exploration, reflection, and shared experience.

Level	Program Zone	Functions
Level 8	Viewing Deck & Terrace	Skyline Observation Platform, Outdoor Seating, Reflection Zone
Level 7	Speculative Future	Restaurant, Future Urbanism Exhibits, Sustainability Displays, AR/VR Interactive Installations, Changing Exhibitions
Levels 5-6	Present: Financial District	Corporate History Galleries, Canary Wharf Urban Evolution, Business Culture Exhibits, Architectural Models, Multimedia Presentations
Levels 3-4	Industrial Past	Ticketing Counter, Docklands History Exhibits, Archival Displays, Material Memory Gallery, Interactive Installations, Audio-Visual Rooms
Level 1	Public Realm Extension	Bookstore, Gift Shop, Café
Ground Floor	Arrival & Public Realm	Public Courtyard, Main Lobby, Cloakroom
Basement	Building Services & Temporary Exhibitions	Temporary Exhibition Space, Staff Offices, Technical Rooms, Storage, Toilets, Parking, Services

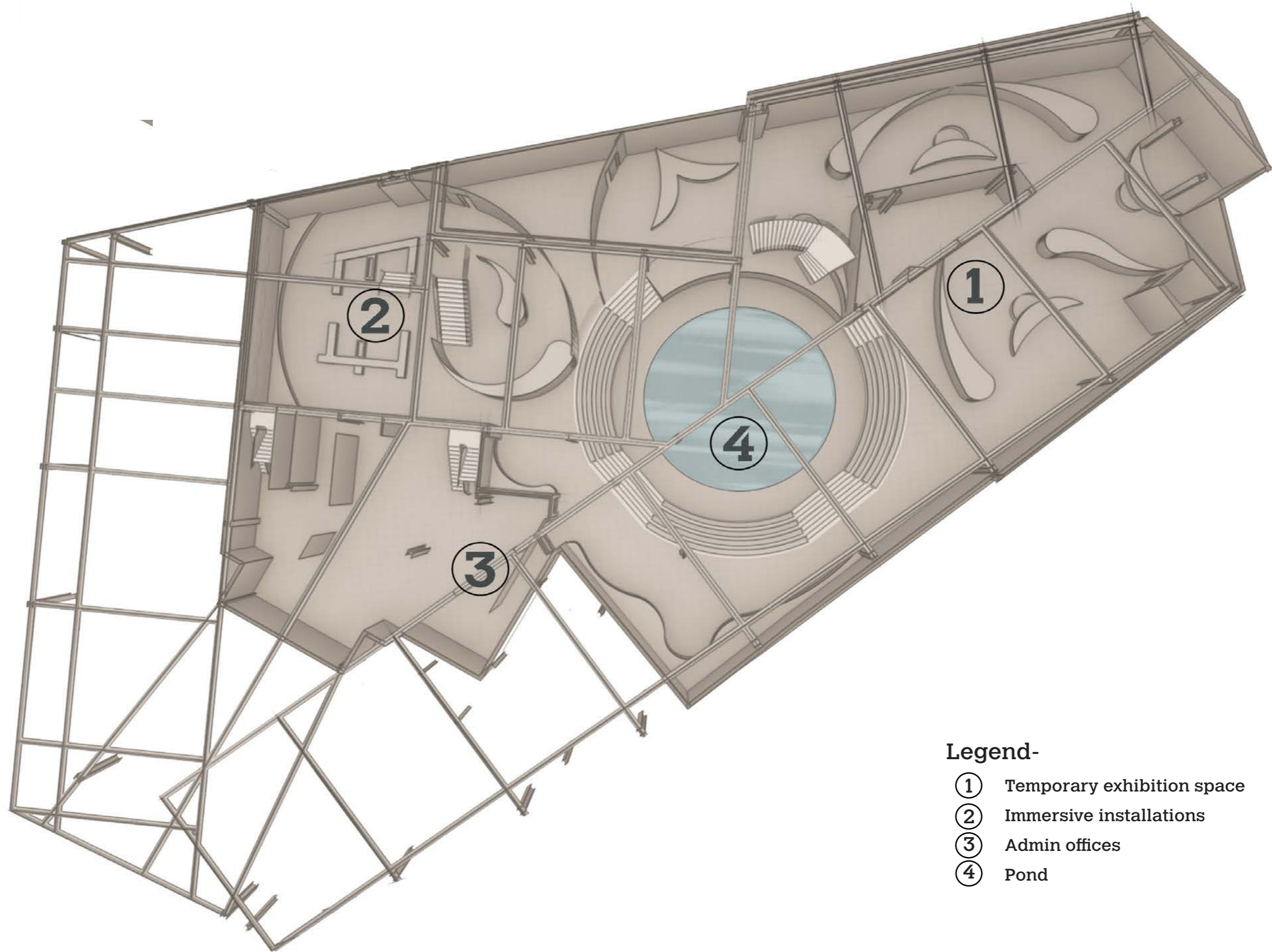


SPATIAL PLANS – ALL FLOORS: A VERTICAL NARRATIVE



Roof Plan – Canary Wharf Museum
Scale 1:250



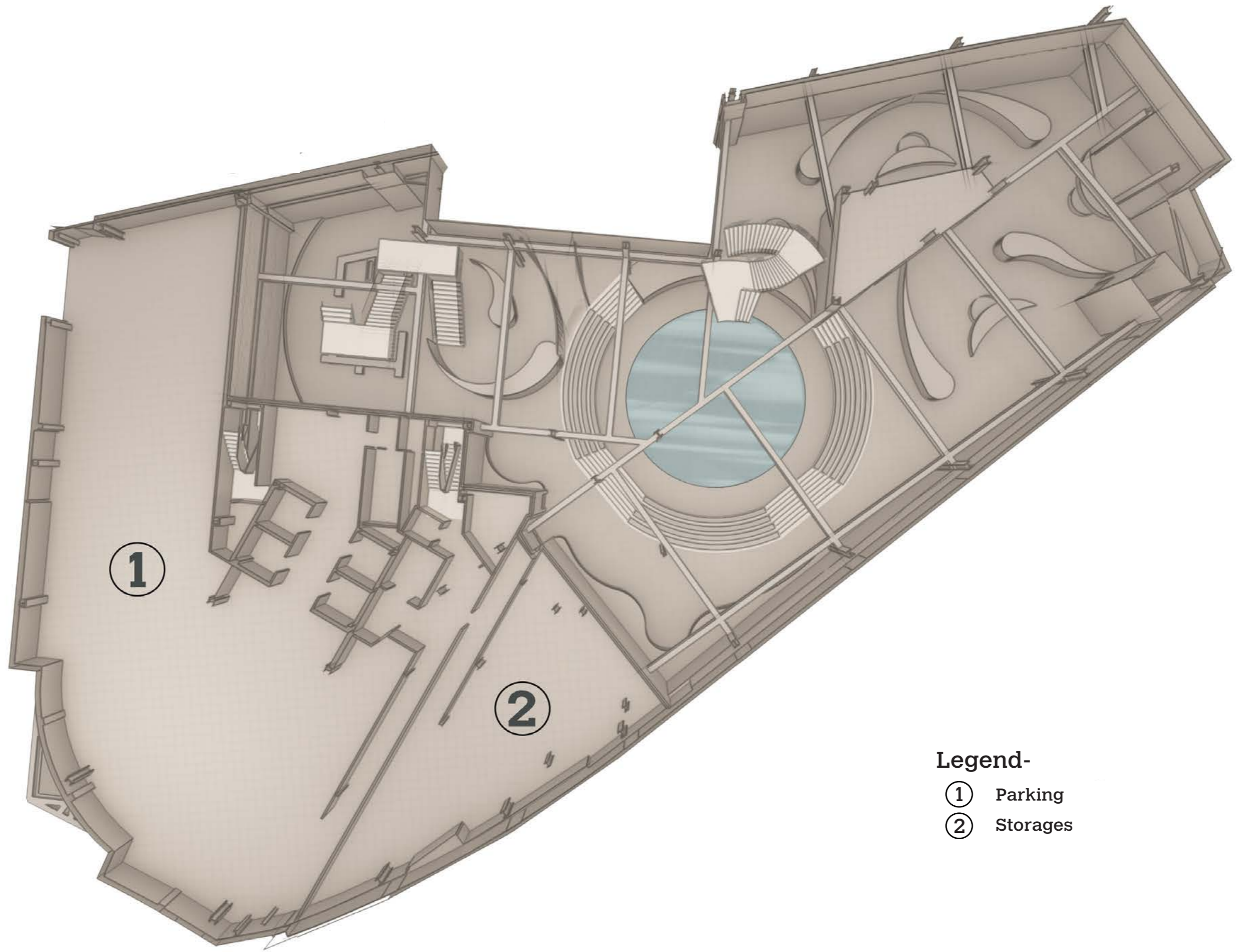


Legend-

- ① Temporary exhibition space
- ② Immersive installations
- ③ Admin offices
- ④ Pond

Basement 3 Plan – Canary Wharf Museum
Scale 1:250



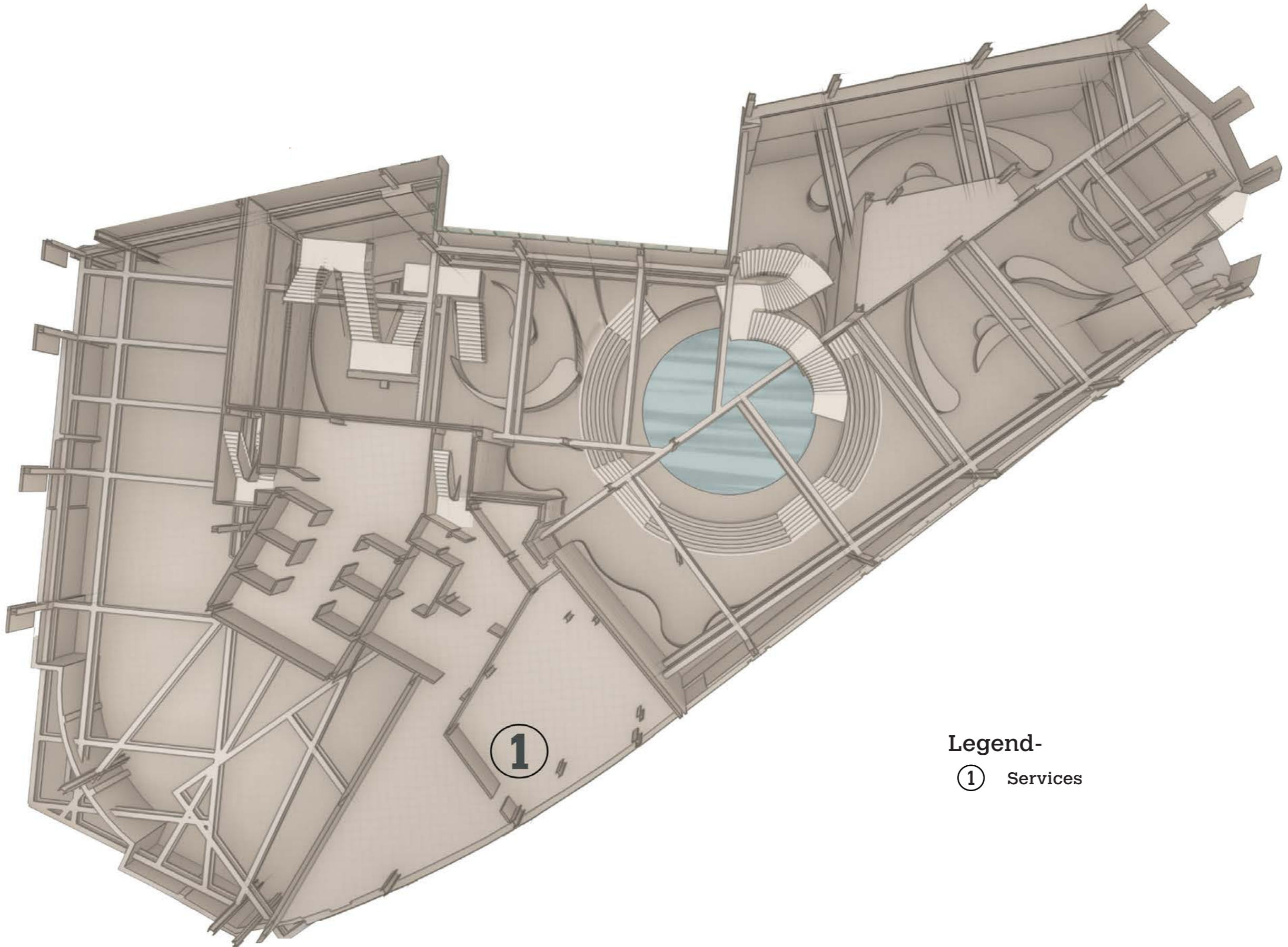


Legend-

- ① Parking
- ② Storages

Basement 2 plan- Canary Wharf Museum
Scale 1:250

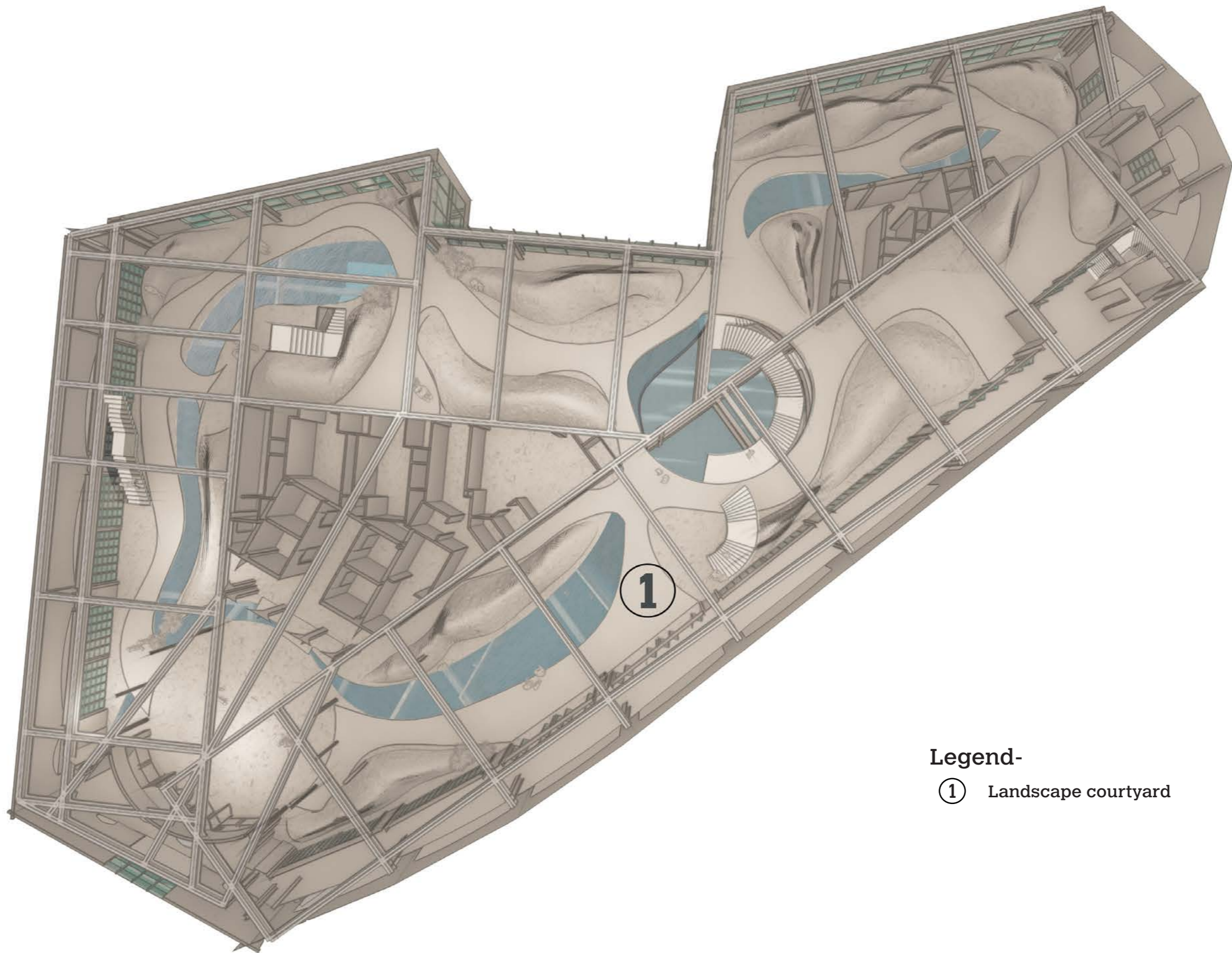




Legend-
① Services

Basement 1 plan- Canary Wharf Museum
Scale 1:250



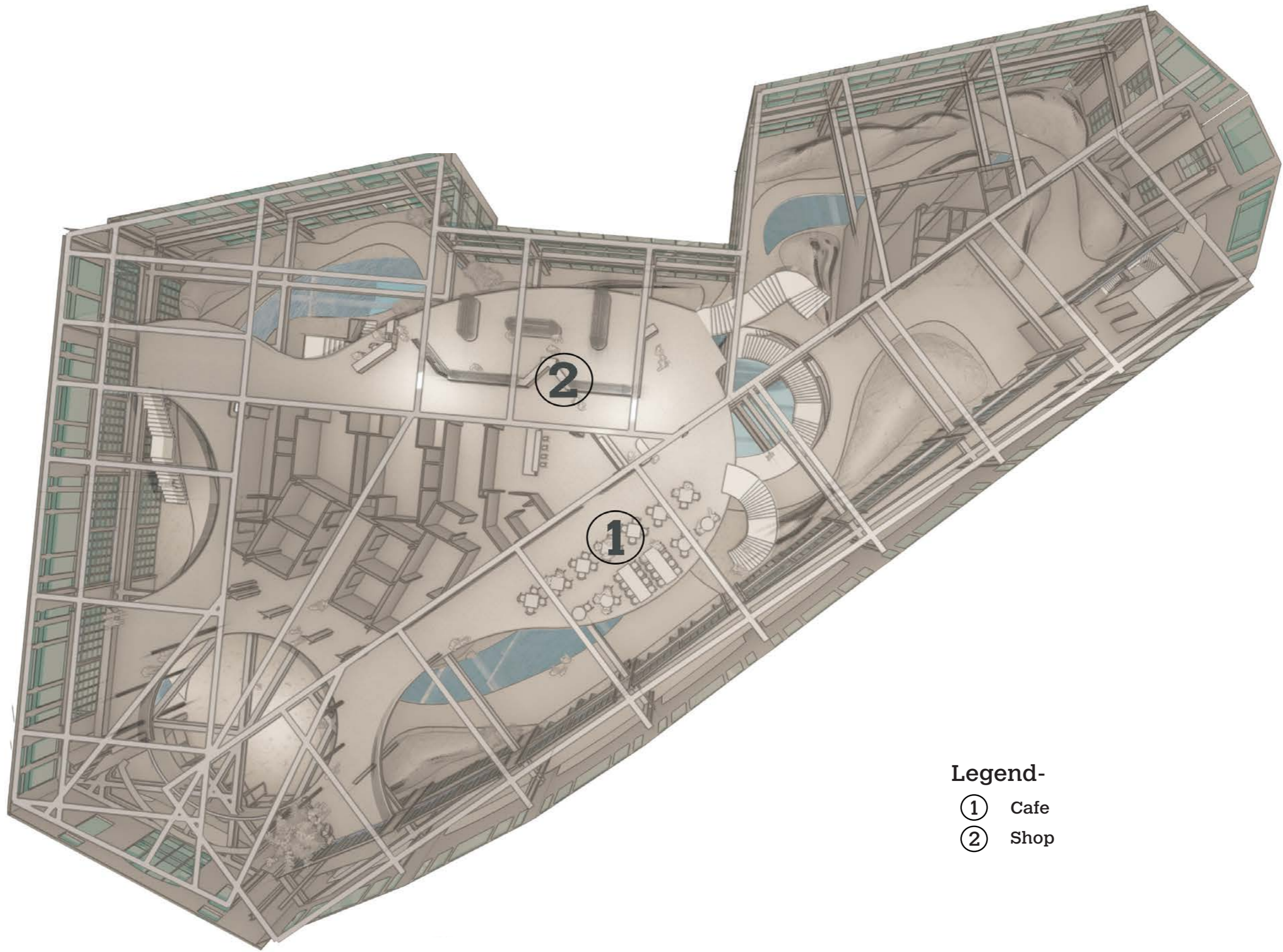


Ground floor plan– Canary Wharf Museum
Scale 1:250

Legend-

- ① Landscape courtyard





- Legend-**
- ① Cafe
 - ② Shop

First floor plan– Canary Wharf Museum
Scale 1:250



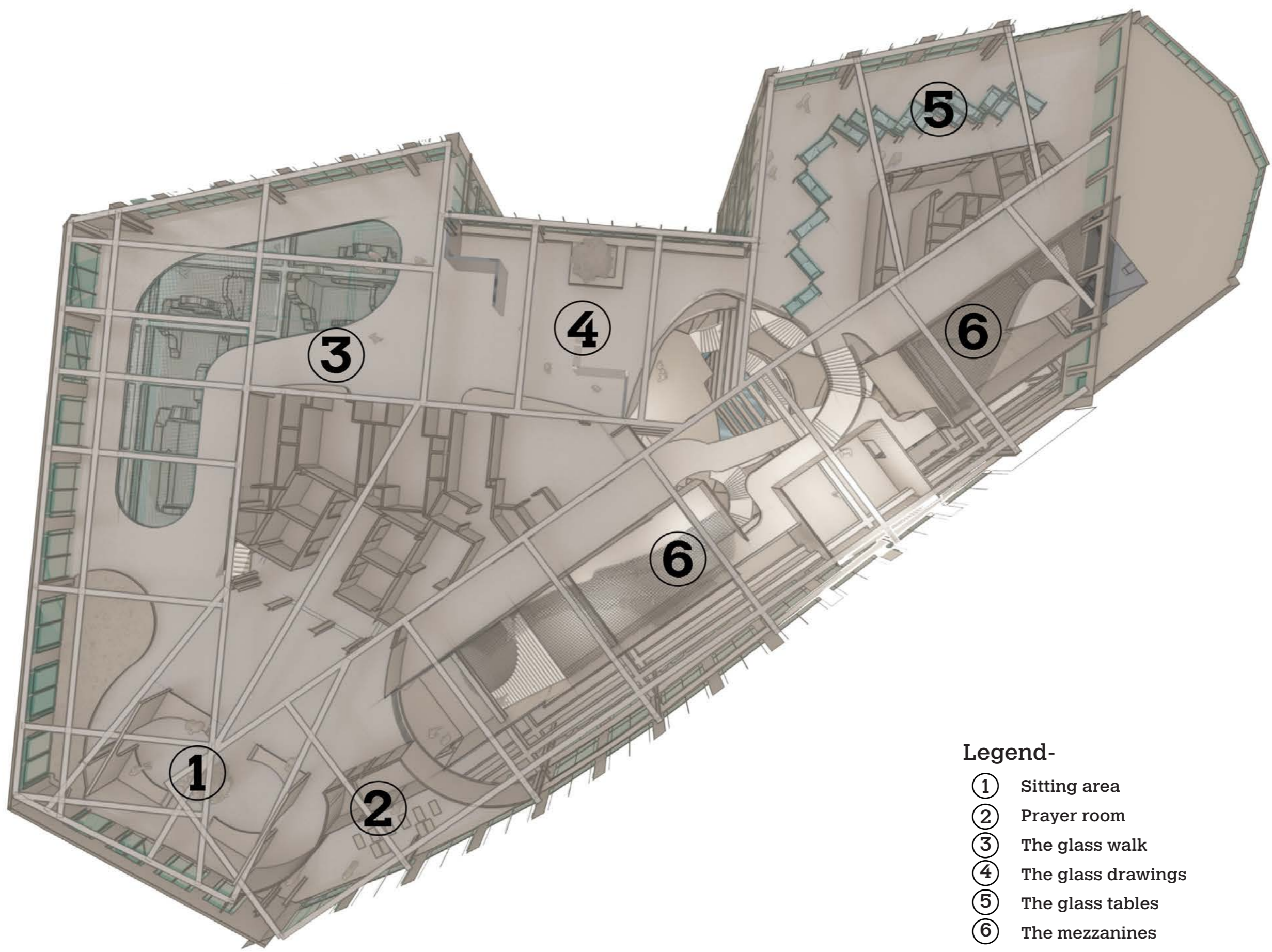


Legend-

- ① Ticket counter
- ② Shipping containers
- ③ The walls
- ④ The columns
- ⑤ The ruins

Third floor plan- Canary Wharf Museum
Scale 1:250

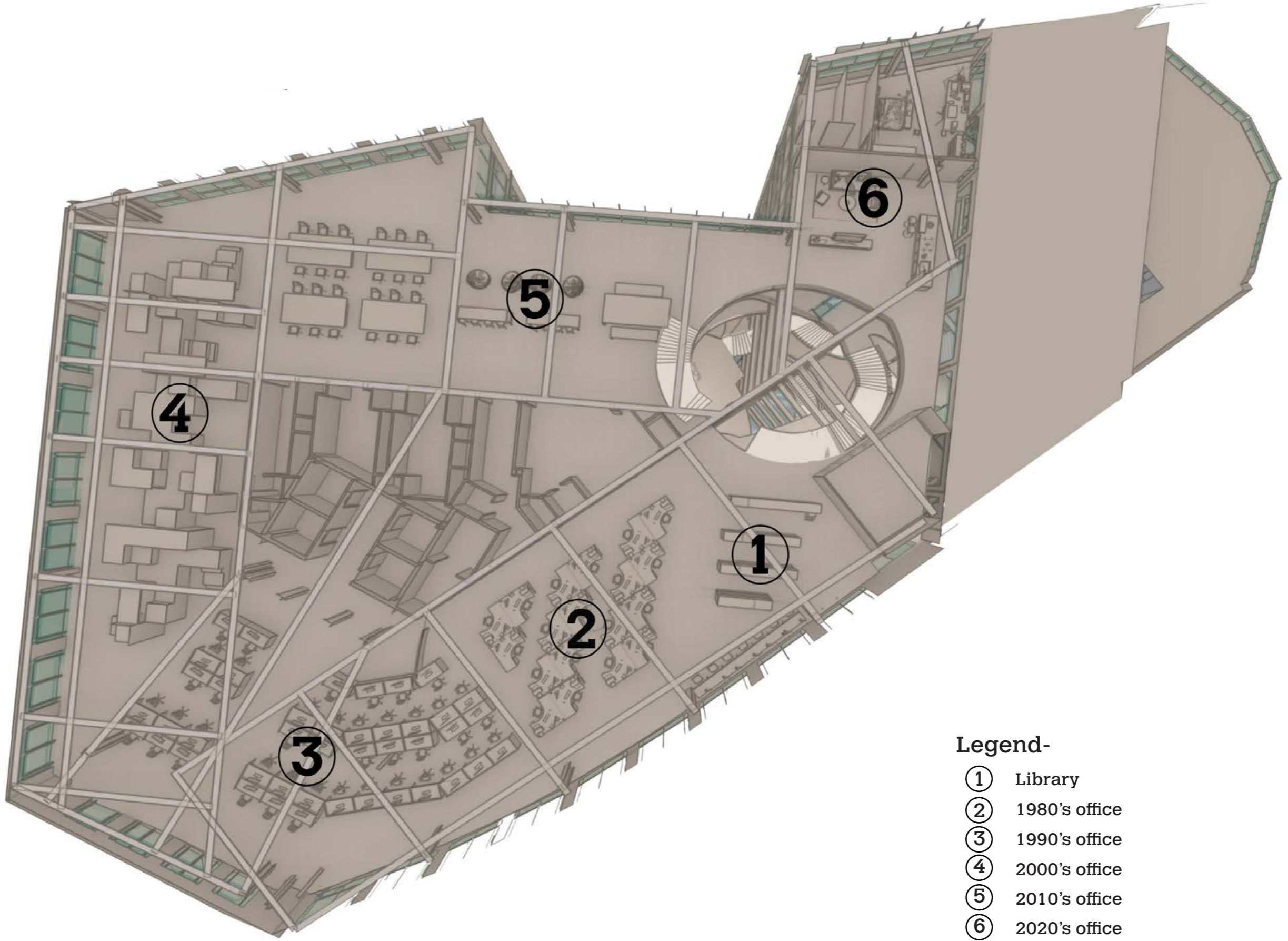




Fourth floor plan– Canary Wharf Museum
Scale 1:250

- Legend-**
- ① Sitting area
 - ② Prayer room
 - ③ The glass walk
 - ④ The glass drawings
 - ⑤ The glass tables
 - ⑥ The mezzanines

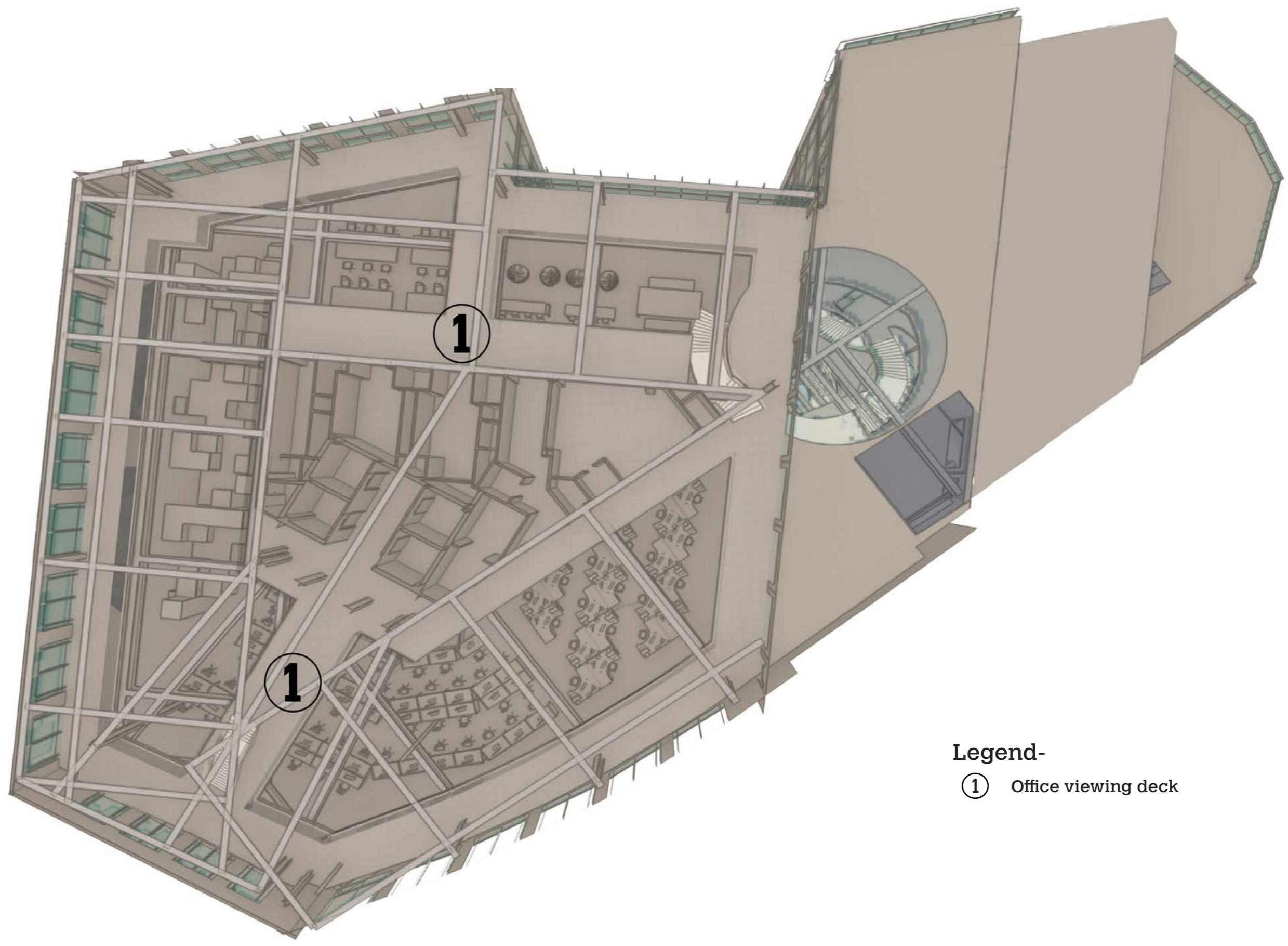




- Legend-**
- ① Library
 - ② 1980's office
 - ③ 1990's office
 - ④ 2000's office
 - ⑤ 2010's office
 - ⑥ 2020's office

Fifth floor plan- Canary Wharf Museum
Scale 1:250

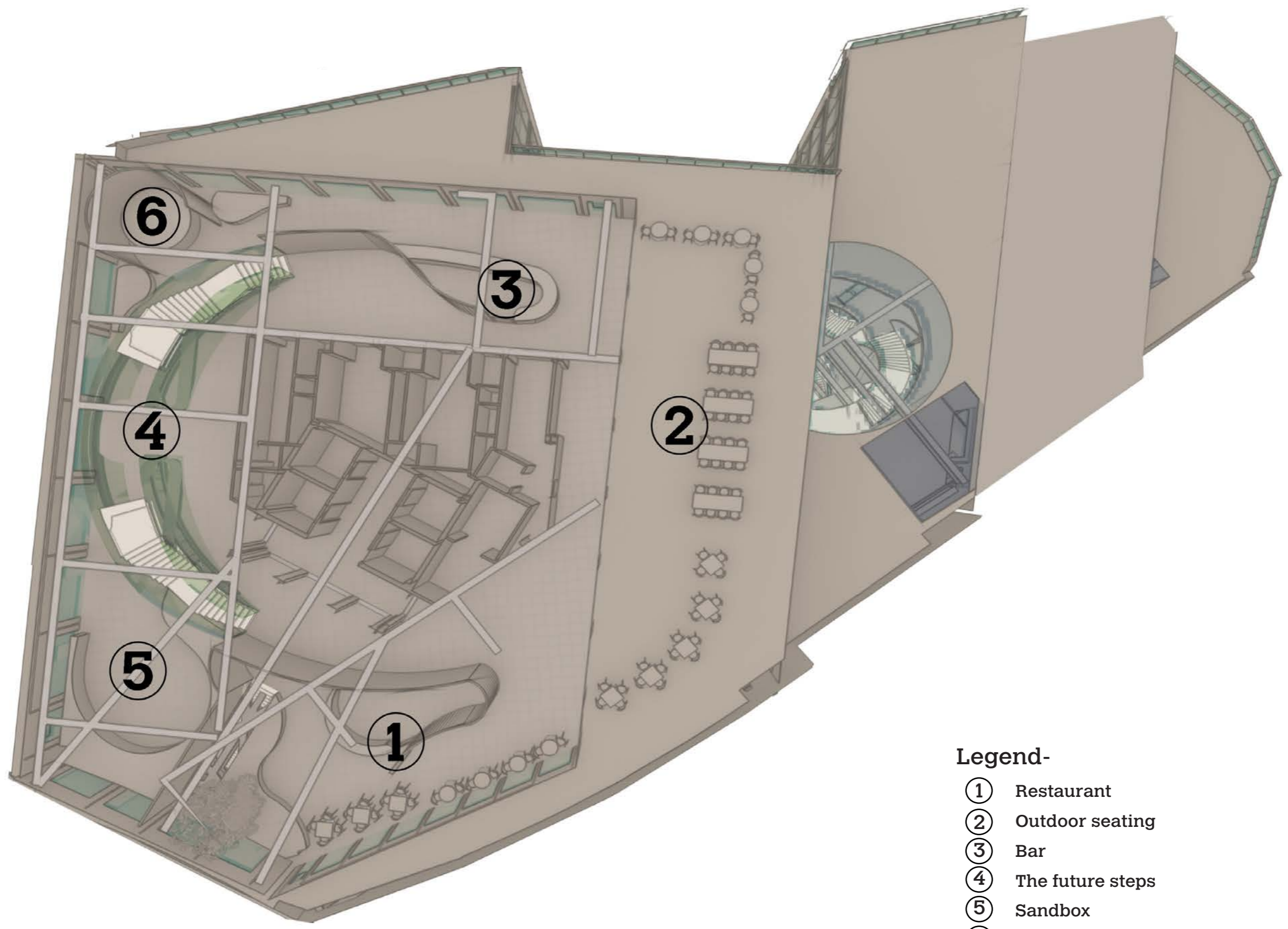




Legend-
① Office viewing deck

Sixth floor plan- Canary Wharf Museum
Scale 1:250

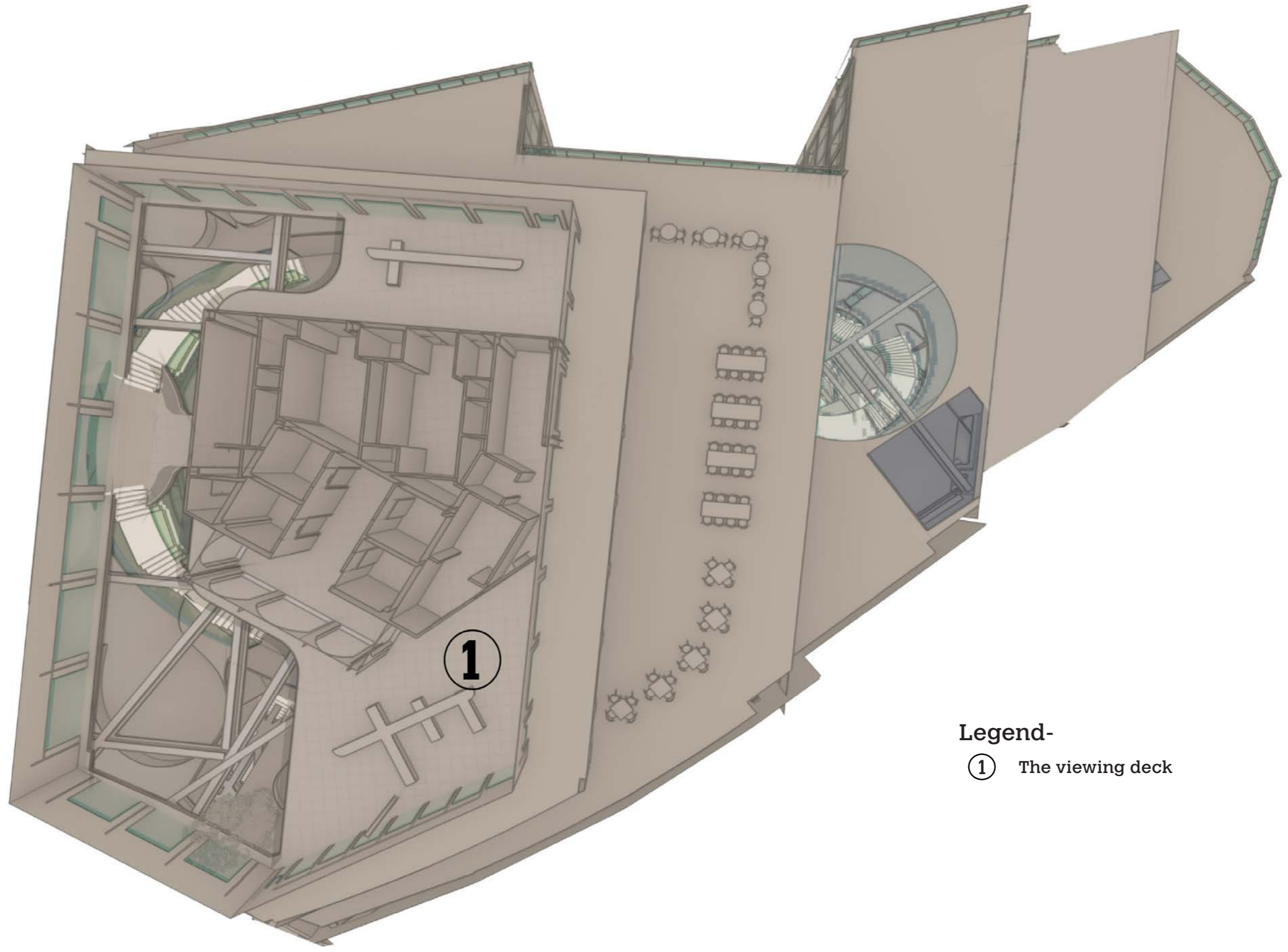




Seventh floor plan– Canary Wharf Museum
Scale 1:250

- Legend-**
- ① Restaurant
 - ② Outdoor seating
 - ③ Bar
 - ④ The future steps
 - ⑤ Sandbox
 - ⑥ Interactive area



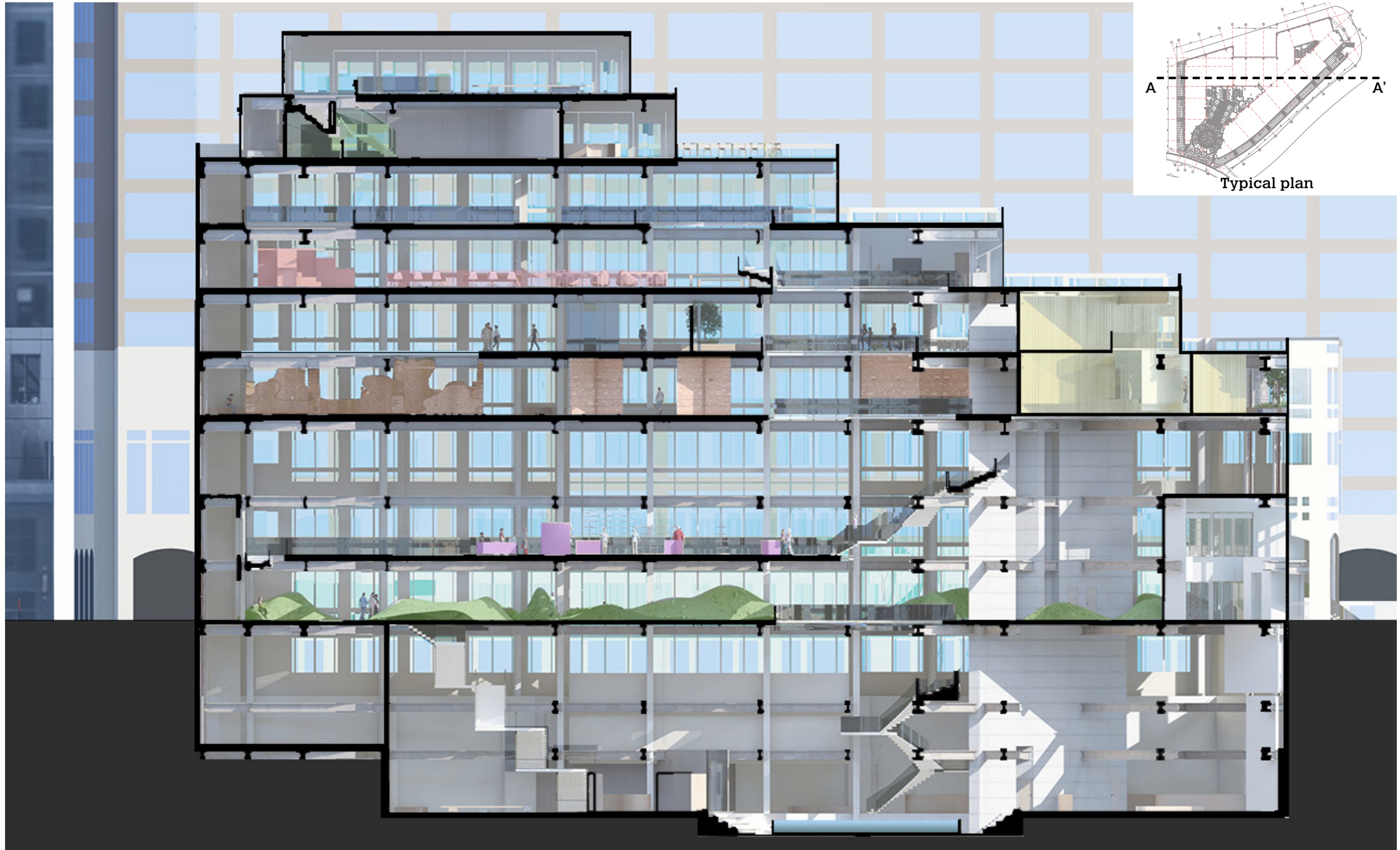


Legend-
① The viewing deck

Eighth floor plan- Canary Wharf Museum
Scale 1:250



SPATIAL PLANS – ALL FLOORS: A VERTICAL NARRATIVE



Section AA' – Canary Wharf Museum
Scale 1:250

THRESHOLDS & TRANSITIONS – ENTERING THE NARRATIVE



Render of Entrance Courtyard – Gathering at the Garden Threshold



Render of First Floor Landing – Revealing the Structure, Inviting Pause

This slide captures the opening moments of the visitor's journey through the Canary Wharf Museum- moments that are not just architectural, but emotional and narrative in intent. These two render views represent the first significant spatial transitions: from the exterior into the entrance courtyard, and from the ground level up to the first floor.

The first image, located at the sunken entry level, introduces a sensory courtyard where water, stone, and natural textures guide the visitor inward. The space is calm yet active- a softened terrain beneath an exposed concrete structure, framed by wide glazing and punctuated by light. This garden-like threshold operates as a decompression zone. Visitors are encouraged to pause, gather, and absorb their surroundings before moving vertically through time. The curvature of the path, the irregular stone floor, and the flowing water suggest erosion, sediment, and excavation- all metaphors for memory and the past. This is not a traditional museum lobby- it is a landscape of reflection, a prologue to what's to come.

The second render, taken from the first floor, reveals the underside of the museum's structural skeleton. The rusted steel beams and raw concrete columns are retained and exposed, creating a sense of honesty and continuity with the building's former life. Yet this is not a cold or industrial space- natural light filters through, and soft materials and greenery punctuate the rawness, creating balance. The transition from the reflective, earth-bound past begins here, as visitors move upward into the more structured and curated "present" zones. The architecture frames this movement with layered views, framed tree canopies, and double-height voids that offer moments of both vertical connection and physical pause.

Together, these two spaces establish the tone for the entire museum: one where movement is not just directional, but emotional. Transitions are not hidden- they're celebrated. Structure is not masked- it's revealed and reinterpreted. These early spatial moments convey that this is a museum of more than just objects- it's a museum of atmosphere, memory, and time.

INTERVENTIONS WITHIN THE PRESENT – LAYERS OF OCCUPATION



Render of Entrance Courtyard – Gathering at the Garden Threshold



Render of Office Archive – Present- Workspace on 5th Floors

These two renders represent architectural interventions within the Present layer of the museum- where the building's former use as a commercial office is neither erased nor preserved in nostalgia, but reoccupied with intention.

The left render shows a timeline gallery housed within a shipping container, inserted directly into the existing structure. This insertion acts as both spatial contrast and conceptual critique.

The raw industrial form of the container is softened through curation- warm lighting, artefacts, plants, and images that narrate the growth of Canary Wharf through time.

Visitors navigate through a space that feels enclosed and directional, echoing the rhythm of office corridors, but repurposed for slowness and reflection. The archway ahead invites progression into the next spatial chapter, while the seating along the wall offers a moment of pause.

The right render captures a typical present-day workspace occupying the 3rd to 6th floors of the museum.

This zone retains much of the original office configuration , open-plan workstations, mezzanine balconies, exposed concrete, and steel beams. However, the context is shifted: this office is now part of a museum exhibit. It acts as a living archive of Canary Wharf's corporate identity. Some visitors may observe it from a distance; others may inhabit it- blurring the boundaries between participation, reflection, and display. The upper-level walkway introduces visual layering, suggesting hierarchies within workplace design, while allowing sightlines across floors to remain open.

Together, these two scenes emphasize the tension and continuity between reuse and reinvention.

They form the core of the Present in your narrative architecture- spaces that neither deny their history nor freeze it, but actively reinterpret what it means to occupy, exhibit, and critique the now.ust objects- it's a museum of atmosphere, memory, and time.

SPECULATING THE FUTURE – LIGHT, LEISURE & TECHNOLOGY



Render of Future Floor Restaurant – A Garden Above the City



Render of Smart Glass Staircase – Projecting the Possible

These renders capture the final spatial and emotional chapter of the Canary Wharf Museum- its Future Floor, located at the top of the building.

This level offers not only expansive views and light-filled architecture, but also speculative environments designed to stimulate curiosity, comfort, and imagination.

In the first image, a restaurant space is imagined not as a traditional commercial amenity, but as a civic destination.

Set beneath exposed concrete beams and surrounded by planters, trees, and curved brick paving, the space evokes the feeling of a rooftop courtyard garden.

The soft, natural palette, circular seating forms, and open kitchen setup suggest a future rooted in community, ritual, and slowness. It's a celebration of gathering- offering visitors a chance to rest and reflect after their vertical journey through time.

Here, the museum becomes less about information and more about embodied experience.

The second render visualizes the speculative heart of the future floor: a smart glass staircase that acts as both a circulation device and an interactive installation.

Embedded with motion-activated projections, the staircase reflects real-time data, urban conditions, or speculative visualizations. Visitors ascend into a gallery space that imagines what Canary Wharf and urban life at large might become.

The glowing surface and fluid form of the staircase contrast with the weight of the past floors below, signaling a shift into lightness, possibility, and play.

Together, these spaces frame the Future not as an endpoint, but as a question inviting visitors to participate in what comes next.

PHYSICAL MODEL – VERTICAL NARRATIVE OF THE MUSEUM



Front elevation- Museum of Canary Wharf



Close shot- sitting area (4th floor)



Close shot- The Mezzanines (4th floor)



Close shot- The Pond (basement 3)

This handmade sectional model explores the vertical sequencing of the museum, revealing how time is layered spatially from the excavated “Past” below ground, through the reflective “Present,” and into the speculative “Future” above. The model captures the building’s transformation from sealed commercial block to open civic landmark showcasing circulation cuts, spatial layering, and moments of light and pause.

REFLECTION – WHAT I LEARNED FROM THE CANARY WHARF MUSEUM PROJECT

1. Narrative as Architecture

I learned how architecture can be more than form and function- it can be a medium for storytelling.

Designing this museum taught me to use space, light, and material to guide emotion and memory through time.

2. Working with Existing Structures

Engaging with a postmodern commercial building challenged me to work within constraints- preserving key structural elements while reimagining their purpose.

This deepened my understanding of adaptive reuse and contextual intervention.

3. Emotional Design

I explored how design can evoke feelings- groundedness, reflection, critique, and hope.

Each floor was treated not just as a programmatic zone but as an emotional landscape.

4. Designing Across Time

This project pushed me to think vertically and temporally- how space can move through history, respond to the present, and speculate on futures.

It taught me to choreograph an experience that unfolds like a narrative.

5. Integration of Public Life

By integrating gardens, cafes, walkable paths, and viewing decks, I learned the importance of designing for everyday civic life, not just exhibition or spectacle.

The museum becomes part of the city's social fabric.

This project taught me to design not just buildings- but journeys, emotions, and memory.

References:

Books & Historical Texts-

Peter Ackroyd, London: The Biography (2000)

John Ryan, The Isle of Dogs: Before the Big Money (2019)

Fiona Rule, London's Docklands: An Illustrated History (2009)

Simon Jenkins, A Short History of London: The Greatest City in the World (2019)

Iain Sinclair, Downriver (1991) – for psychogeographic influence

Nigel Coates, Narrative Architecture

Architectural Case Studies & Precedents-

Jewish Museum, Berlin – Daniel Libeskind

Tate Modern Tanks, London – Herzog & de Meuron

Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris – Frank Gehry

National Museum of Qatar, Doha – Jean Nouvel

Alain Ducasse Restaurant, Paris – Jouin Manku

Under Restaurant, Norway – Snøhetta

WeWork Offices & Factory Berlin – Contemporary coworking case studies

The Weather Project – Olafur Eliasson

Materials & Technology

Saint-Gobain PrivaLite Smart Glass

Switchable Curved Glass (DesignBoom)

Reclaimed Brick, Board-formed Concrete, CLT systems

Shipping Container Architecture – LOT-EK, Urban Rigger

Visual & Drawing Tools

Rhino, Enscape, Photoshop

Hand sketching and diagramming

Presentation style inspired by OMA / SANAA

