

SAINT ANDREWS C.R.A.P CENTER

DEVELOPMENT BRIEF



DEVP0002: Transforming Local Areas: Urban Design for Development
Msc Building & Urban Design in Development, Bartlett University, UCL
March 2021, Candidate no. KZZH2

LIST OF CONTENTS

01	Executive Summary	04
02	Background Analysis	06
	2.1 The Context	08
	2.2 Notwithstanding	16
	2.3 Practices	18
	2.4 Relevant Actors + S.W.O.T Analysis	24
03	Design Strategy	26
	3.1 Logic Framework	28
04	Interventions	30
	4.1 Suspended Meal Kits (Ignition Project)	32
	4.2 Collective Cellars (St. Andrews' Scale)	34
	4.3 C.R.A.P Center Bow (Bromley-by-Bow Scale)	36
05	References	38

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The present document was elaborated within the context of the MsC Building and Urban Design in Development of the Development Planning Unit at University College London. It was developed during the second part of Term 2 of the core module Transforming Local Areas. The objective of this academic exercise was to present a Development Brief based on the real urban context of the St. Andrews residential development and its broader context of Bromley-by-Bow, an urban area in London under the administration of the local government of Tower Hamlets. The whole work was developed by distance, due to COVID-19 restrictions.

LENS OF INQUIRY

The entire research was developed to build upon local care practices and infrastructures. In this regard, I am convinced that a lens on care may offer unique possibilities to approach the quandaries of contemporary urbanism as well as the ones of neoliberalism in a way that can possibly outline alternative imaginaries for the urban space. The challenges that such a framework suggests, indeed, are essentially two. At first to emancipate the definition of citizen from its tendency of being fixed. Identity is a performative relation. In second place, to reinforce non-commodified capitals and to build spaces that may represent it.

DESIGN APPROACH

Michel Foucault one said: "I think that [design] can and does produce positive effects when the liberating intentions of the architect coincide with the real practice of people in the exercise of their freedom." (Foucault, 1982). In this wake the project acknowledges that not all the potential problems in the Bromley-by-Bow can be solved by design only. At the same time, the few selected by the project should be solved by taking into account valuable solutions that already proved to work at the community level. According to this general rational, this brief's aim is to single out, develop and work upon care practices and infrastructures that currently exists and manage to respond local needs, even if partially and occasionally.

DESIGN OUTCOMES

This development brief is meant to draw and illustrate some possible trajectories for the relational and physical implementation of care infrastructures in the urban areas of St. Andrews and Bromley-by-Bow.

The design outcomes will include the definition of three different intervention steps, starting from some mob-oriented proposals aimed to ignit the process and concluding with an architectural draft plan for the allocation of innovative recycling infrastructures in Bow, passing by a prototyping phase which is supposed to test new sharing facilities and services among neighbours at the middle scale of the residential blocks of St. Andrews.

BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

02

BACK GROUND ANALYSIS

THE CONTEXT: Bromley-by-Bow

A CARING AND DIVERSE NEIGHBORHOOD

Bromley-by-Bow is a district in East London, located in the Lower Lea Valley and under the administration of the local government of Tower Hamlets. Bow has a relatively young population, characterized by ethnic diversity and high growth prospects. Indeed, as an official statistic study reported, the total population has doubled from the 14.480 units of the 2011 census to the approssimatively 27.000 of today.

As underlined by the same study, in Bromley-by-Bow white british people represented in 2011 only the 21,5% of the whole population, which is mainly of Bangladeshi origins.

In this context, previous analysis on the care infrastructures in the ward demonstrated that the area is well serviced from a large plethora of activities. The Bromley-by-Bow centre in particular proves to be a key point for the provision of care services that may exceed the medical and pshychological sphere and include activities and projects fostering socialization and cultural exchange.

Local residents complaints mainly refer to crime (42%), lack of jobs (31%), dirt in streets (24%) and lack of affordable housing (21%), all problems that have been confirmed by qualitative analysis at the smaller scale of the St. Andrew residential development.

Resources: Bromley by Bow Ward profile 2011

EXPLORING THE INTERVENTION AREA



FIG. 0: Satellitar view of Bromley-by-Bow South

EXPLORING THE INTERVENTION AREA



FIG.1: Computer workshops for elders, Bromley-by-Bow Centre



FIG.2: Cemetery Park, Google Maps



FIG.3: Spaces for children and families provided by the Bromley-by-Bow Centre



FIG.4: Bangladesh Islamic Centre Bow, Google Maps



FIG.6: Old Palace Primary School



FIG.5: The Connection Zone of Bromley-by-Bow Centre

BACK GROUND ANALYSIS

THE CONTEXT: St. Andrews

A FAMILY FRIENDLY DEVELOPMENT

St. Andrews is a residential development built in the southern area of Bromley-by-Bow. The area is composed by three main blocks, two towers and a good variety of public and semi-public spaces, most of which are green ones. The qualitative feedbacks provided through time by local residents on the platform HomeViews are quite positive.

Most of them define the development as a quite and peaceful area designed with children and young families in mind.

This perceived goal is coherent with the nature of the care services provided by the Bromley-by-Bow centre, at a broader scale. In the area is available a concierge service, which is meant to provide assistance for everyday problems and issues of the whole residential population. Once again, qualitative feedbacks about this service are mostly positive and suggest that it could provide key actors for the development or management of further initiatives.

As a side note, it has to be mentioned that the residential blocks have a variety of facilities spaces at the groundfloor, that are meant to allocate collective services for the residents (bike storage point, garbage collection point). Notwithstanding there is no presence of private spaces like, namely, cellars. This could be a problem for large families, which are many.

EXPLORING THE INTERVENTION AREA



FIG. 7 Satellitar view of St. Andrews

EXPLORING THE INTERVENTION AREA

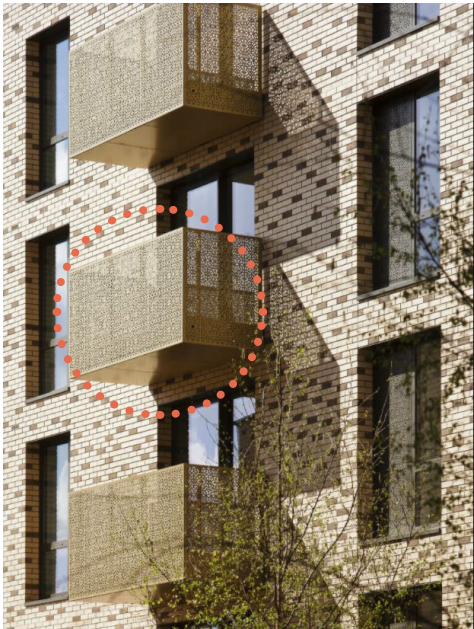


FIG.13: Balconies in St. Andrews

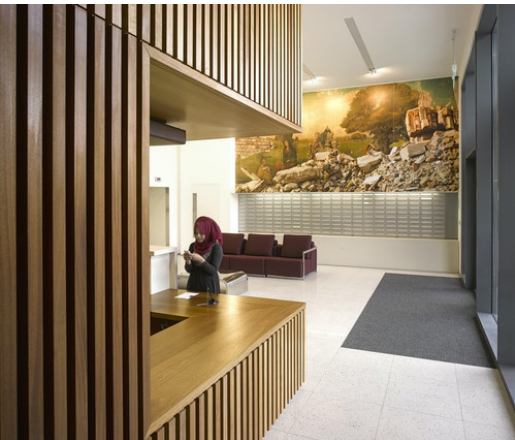


FIG.8: The Concierge Service



FIG.9: Gated access to the semi-public courtyards



FIG.10: Bow Community Hub in St. Andrews



FIG.12: Inside a courtyard in St. Andrews

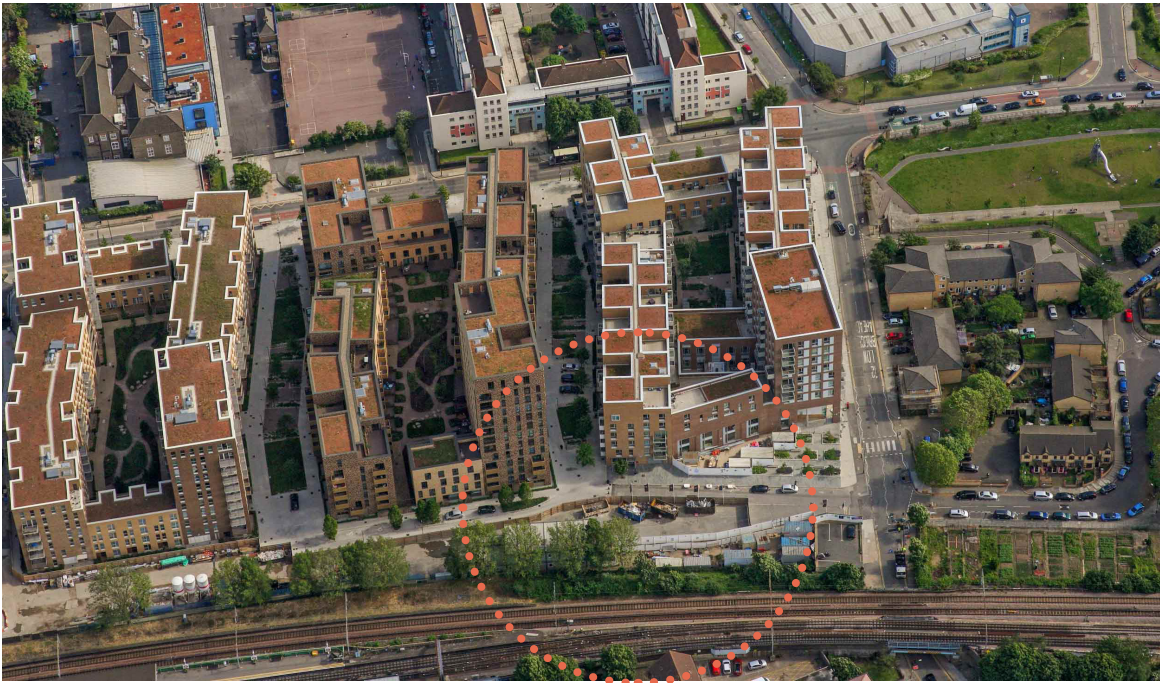


FIG.11: St. Andrews development under construction and the herbs garden

BACK GROUND ANALYSIS NOTWITHSTANDING

LOCAL PROBLEMS AND COMPLAINTS

As already described, the qualitative feedbacks of local residents living in the area are quite positive. Notwithstanding there are several issues that did not pass unnoticed and that increasingly collect the complaints of the inhabitants. In parallel with the trends outlined for Bromley-by-Bow, some of the most common complaints regard small criminality, the lack of job opportunities and unemployment, as well the increasing rent prices. Moreover, some people are concerned about the use and condition of common spaces, that sometimes are under-used or dirty. Train noise is equally perceived as really annoying. It is my personal opinion that, beside these issues, some more lacks can be identified and considered.

Firstly, the presence of spaces, both public (the herbs gardens) and semi-public (inside the blocks), that have been over dimensioned for their current use. These ones then can be considered as key points for spatial interventions in the future.

Second that, despite the cultural diversity of the neighbourhood, the majority of initiatives do not explicitly have cultural exchange at their core. Third that, it seems as lacking a space in which this diversity can be relationally performed, since most of them are target oriented for homogeneous users. (kids, youths)

EXPLORING THE INTERVENTION AREA



BACK GROUND ANALYSIS PRACTICES: Recycling

DIGITAL RECYCLING SPACES

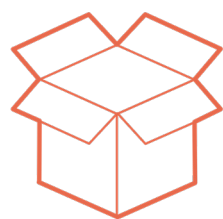
Expanding the analysis from physical spaces to digital ones, it emerged that local residents have created their own platforms for helping, meeting and knowing each other, in a very independent way. Most of these platforms are based on Facebook, like "Living in Bow" and "CRAP: Bow"; others probably took place in the social media "NextDoor", in which was not possible for me to enter. In some cases these platforms are meant just to share information, stories, opinions with the broad community of the ward. In other cases, such for the one of "CRAP Bow", instead, these spaces have been organized to promote and manage sharing and recycling practices among residents. Far from being just a platform to sell objects and other stuff, this Facebook group in particular is meant to be a non commodified space in which things are always exchanged for free. It is my opinion that this space can be considered a key one for several reasons: for newcomers to socialize, for families to find cheaper toys or clothes for their children, and so on. Considering the economic background of the area, the increment of rent prices and the potential this community proves to have, this brief hence considers the possibility of expanding these practices and gather them around new care infrastructures.

EXPLORING THE INTERVENTION AREA

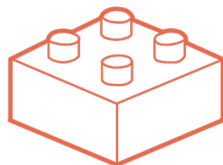


BACK GROUND ANALYSIS

PRACTICES: What is Recycled?



Cardboards
●●●●●●



Toys
●●●●●●



Heavy Furniture
●●●●●○



Light Furniture
●●●●●●



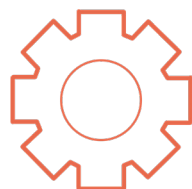
Kids Facilities
●●●●●○



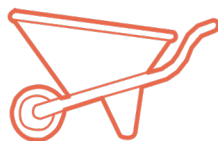
Clothes, Accessories
●●●●●●



Books
●●●●●○



Spare Parts
●●●●○○



Technic Tools
●●●●○○



Plants
●○○○○○



Kitchen Tools
●●●●○○



Fitness Equipment
●●●●○○



Food
●○○○○○



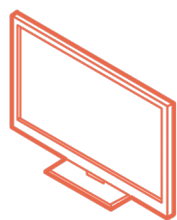
Holiday Items
●●○○○○



Raw Materials
●○○○○○



Bikes
●●○○○○



Technology
●●○○○○



Art, Decor
●●○○○○



Pet Facilities
●●●●○○



Home Facilities
●●●●○○



Domestic Appliances
●●●●○○



DVD
●●●●○○



Sport Items
●●○○○○



Music Instruments
●○○○○○

BACK GROUND ANALYSIS

PRACTICES: Profiling



"I recently moved"
Bow is a relatively young area, with a great level of mobility. Sharing platforms are interesting for people who recently moved or who are planning to do it. They provide opportunities to find cheap furnitures or to get rid off the ones that you don't want at your new place.



"I don't have space"
In Saint Andrews in particular, housing units did not come with cellars or other similar private spaces. This means that the local residents have few possibilities to storage more than what they actually need.



"I don't need it"
It is not unusual to own things that we actually do not use, maybe something that has been inherited or bought to be used only once. Sharing platforms help people to rationalize their properties and to get rid of those that they do not need.



"I have to save"
Bow is actually populated by residents who are not always employed or who have few economic capacities. In addition, rents are increasingly high. Sharing platforms allow them to save money and to spend their resources for other priorities.



"My child has grown"
The area is inhabited by a large number of young and large families. As a consequence there may be a lot of interest in sharing objects, toys and other children facilities that get quickly become obsoleted for them and other may need.



"I like socializing"
Digital sharing spaces are, first of all, social spaces. It is not to be excluded that some users simply have pleasure in joining and using them even if they do not necessarily find themselves in the need of doing it.



"I don't want to buy"
Many things that we buy end with being used only once or twice every 10 years and they usually take a lot of space. Recycling platforms offer an unlimited access to these goods without having to pay for them or to find them a place in the house.



Recycling platforms and spaces are perfect incubators of social relationships. Due to their nature of gathering a very diverse spectrum of people, they offer the possibility of meeting people who we would not meet elsewhere or whom we have no social reasons to meet.

BACK GROUND ANALYSIS

RELEVANT ACTORS

1. Bromley-by-Bow Centre

The Bromley by Bow Centre is a pioneering charity that combines an extensive neighbourhood hub with a medical practice and a community research project. Historically grounded in the area the BBB Centre can be considered as one of the most suitable actors for promoting and managing at the Bow scale innovative sharing services between the local inhabitants.

2. Tower Hamlets Local Government

3. C.R.A.P Bow: Community Re-Use and Recycling among people of Bow

C.R.A.P Bow is a non-commodified digital spaces where residents may find home for the 'craps' they no longer want and cannot bear to see thrown away. In here all items are for free and no charges can be applied. As they clearly state in the group description: "ry selling stuff on here and you will be leaving the group". (C.R.A.P Bow, 2021)

4. Living in Bow + NextDoor Groups

Living in Bow is a Facebook group for people with links to Bow both past and present managed by Roman Road LDN, a not-for-profit publishing company specialising in community journalism. The purpose of the group is to help each one connect to hir neighbours, remember old times, and to get the best out of your local area now. Far from being just a space for story-telling, this group is equally a platform for mutual aid and support between neighbours. (Living in Bow, 2021)

Nextdoor, instead, is a digital platform that connects neighbors to each other — and to everything nearby. As emerging from

Facebook groups conversation, this platform has proved to be utilized by some residents and could be a good vehicle to share initiatives and ideas.

6. Library of Things London

The Library of Things is a startup and service that fosters recycling and sharing practices among local communities, currently operating in South London, but planning to launch more spaces around the city.

6. Concierge Service St. Andrews

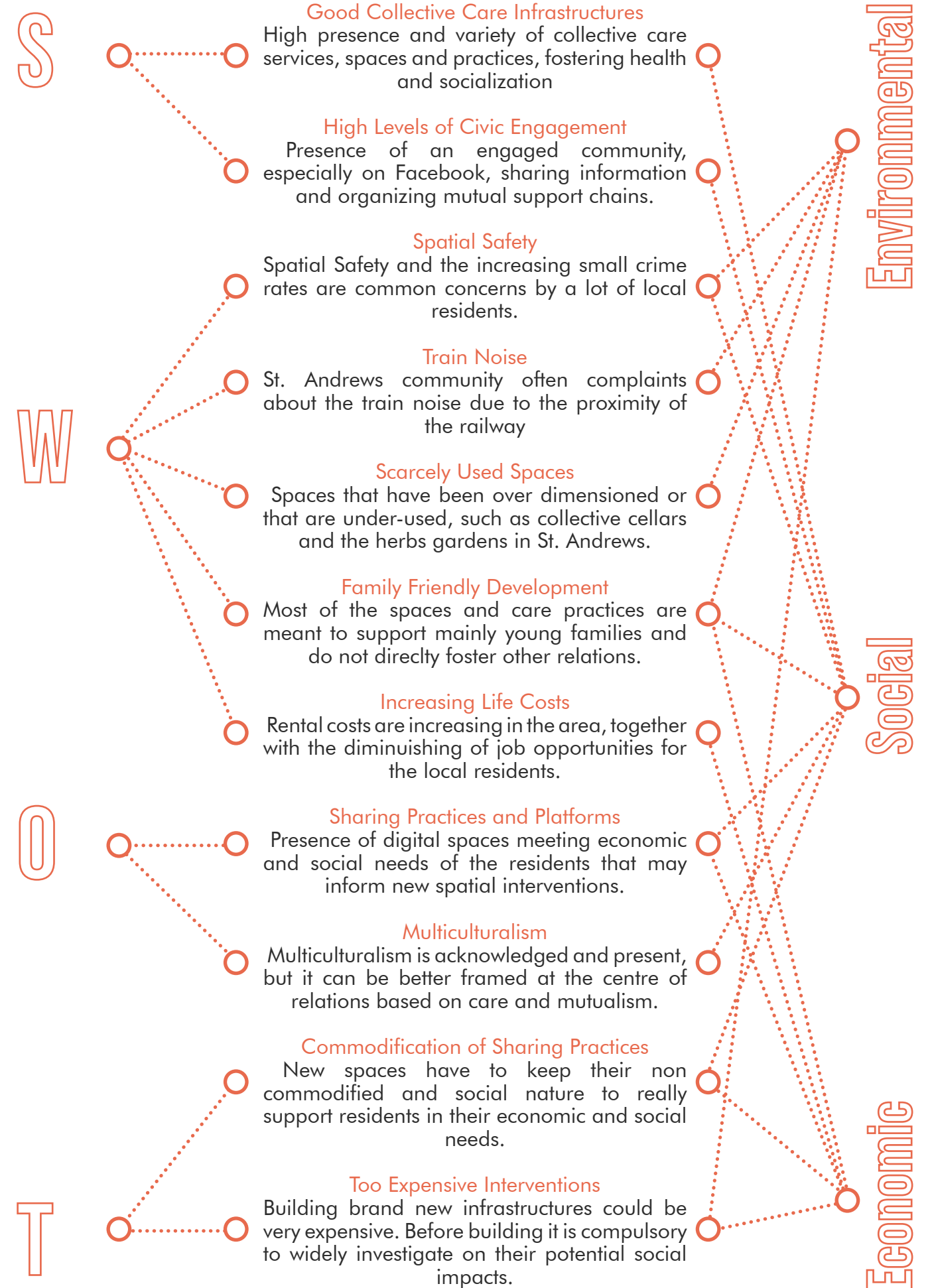
St. Andrews Development benefits from the presence of a local concierge service that helps residents in their everyday problems and issues. It may be tactically used as a sort of administration local hub for the management of innovative sharing economy services.

7. Bangladesh Islamic Centre + Coventry Cross Mosque

The Bow area is rich in diverse cultural centres. These communities could be involved in order to deepen the cultural meaning of care and sharing infrastructures, by fostering the exchange of different traditions and knowledge.

9. Local Schools

In the area of Bow there are a lot of schools that covered mostly the whole demand for the residents. These have to be considered key actors in connecting children and families to the neighbourhood and for the organization of educational activities that value recycling and sharing practices.



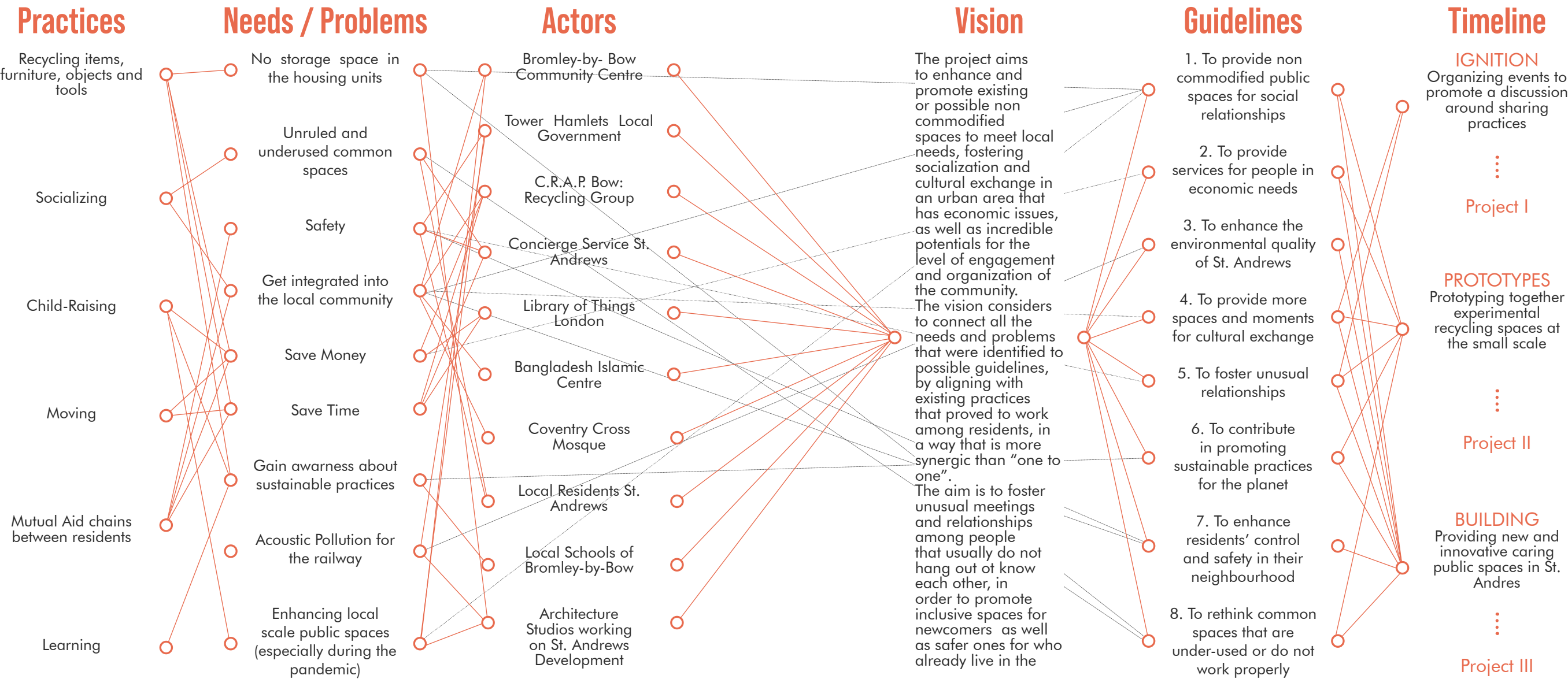
DESIGN STRATEGY

03

DESIGN STRATEGY LOGIC FRAMEWORK

FROM THE ANALYSIS ...

... TO THE PROJECT(S)



INTERVENTIONS

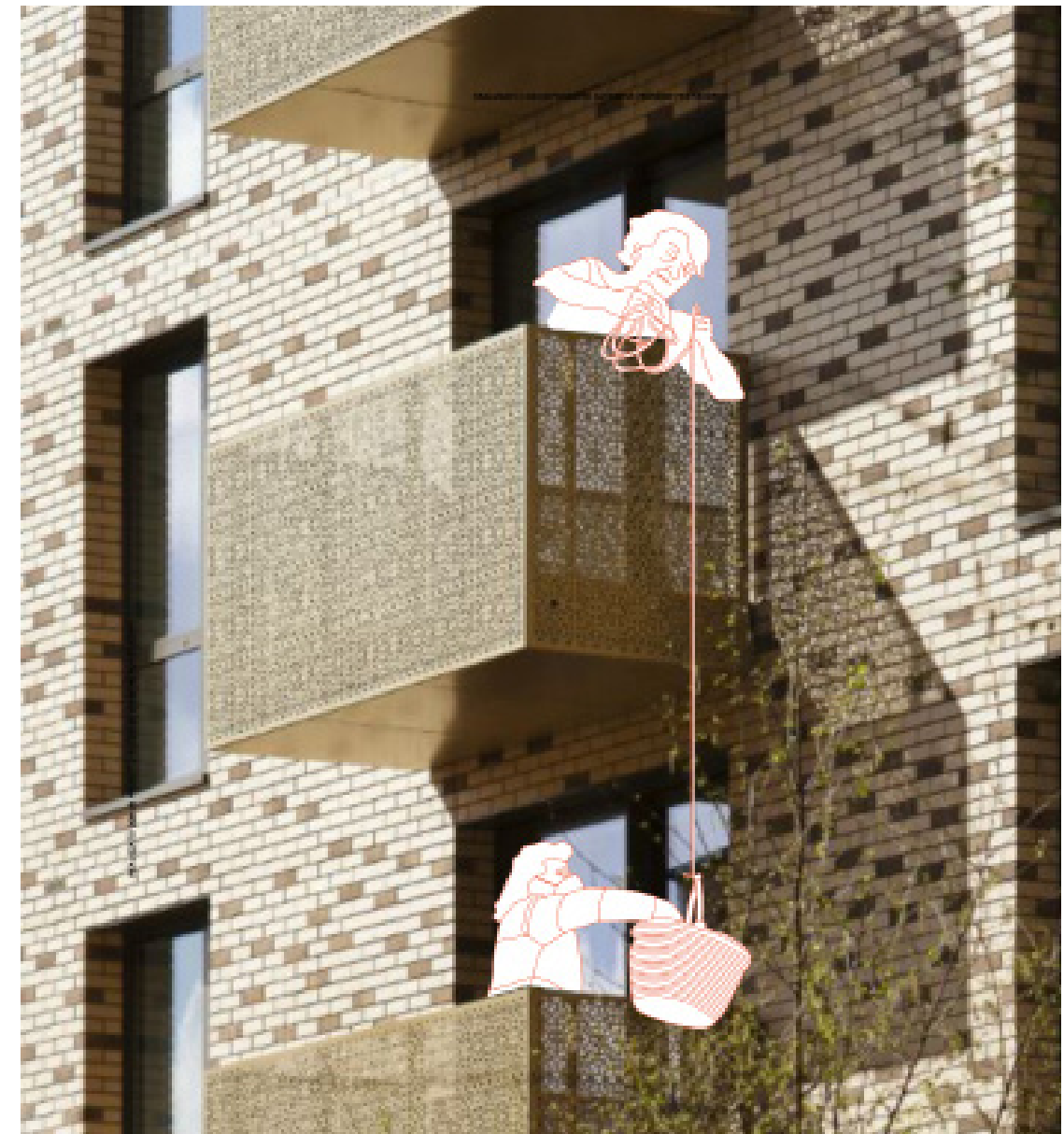
INTERVENTIONS

IGNITION: Project I

SUSPENDED MEAL KITS

The so-called "Ignition Phase" is meant to foster a public conversation on the values of recycling and sharing practices in shaping a sociable, safe and caring environments in St. Andrews and Bow. For this step it could be organized a sort of event, or flash mob, to engage local residents, with the collaboration of their digital communities and other actors in the area, such as the conciergerie and the Bromley-by-Bow centre. The aim of this initiatives is to put different residents in contact during the pandemic, proposing them to share traditional recipes of their countries of origin, including required ingredients and tools to prepare them. The flash mob could be more efficient if integrated with digital events taking place on social media.

The idea is basically to propose to the residents to think about something that they would like to share of their tradition and to prepare a sort of meal kit that will be later hung to the balconies. This activities should take place at first in the semi-private courtyards of St. Andrews residential blocks, but can be promoted at the neighbourhood level as well. Together with the recipe and the ingredients, finally, these meal kits should contain a personal invitation for a public meeting in which other possible steps may be discussed.



INTERVENTIONS PROTOTYPING: Project II

COLLECTIVE CELLARS

In the residential development of Saint Andrews, all the housing blocks have several common facilities at the groundfloors. These include bike storage rooms, entry lobbies and garbage collection spots. Notwithstanding these spaces seem under-used and sometimes dirty.

The phase II of the project brief intends to use these spaces, even if temporarily, for testing and prototyping sharing services among residents of each block.

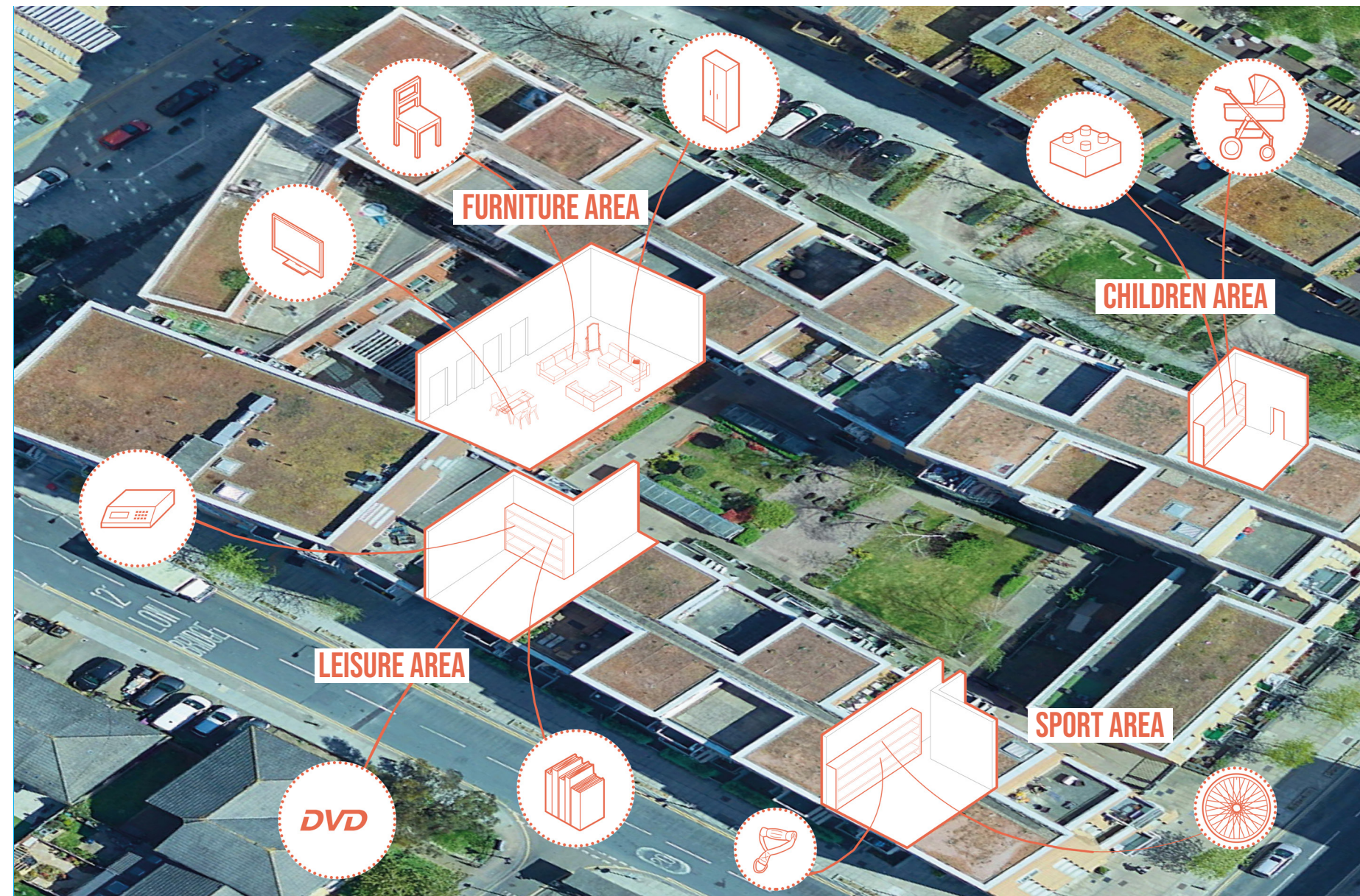
The semi-private nature of these spaces, indeed, allow to experiment new sharing practices without risking of attracting strangers inside the blocks and so under the complete control of local residents.

The management of this service can be followed up by the residents themselves with their smartphone or by the concierge service in St. Andrews.

Since most of these rooms then have secondary access to the street or the public space itself, they are key ones for testing in the middle term hybrid forms of use of the service which can be then gradually opened to the neighbourhood.

In the case of the opening up phase should be successful, it should be taken into account to involve the St. Andrews community and Bow residents into a meeting to discuss phase III.

RESIDENTIAL BLOCK A SAMPLE

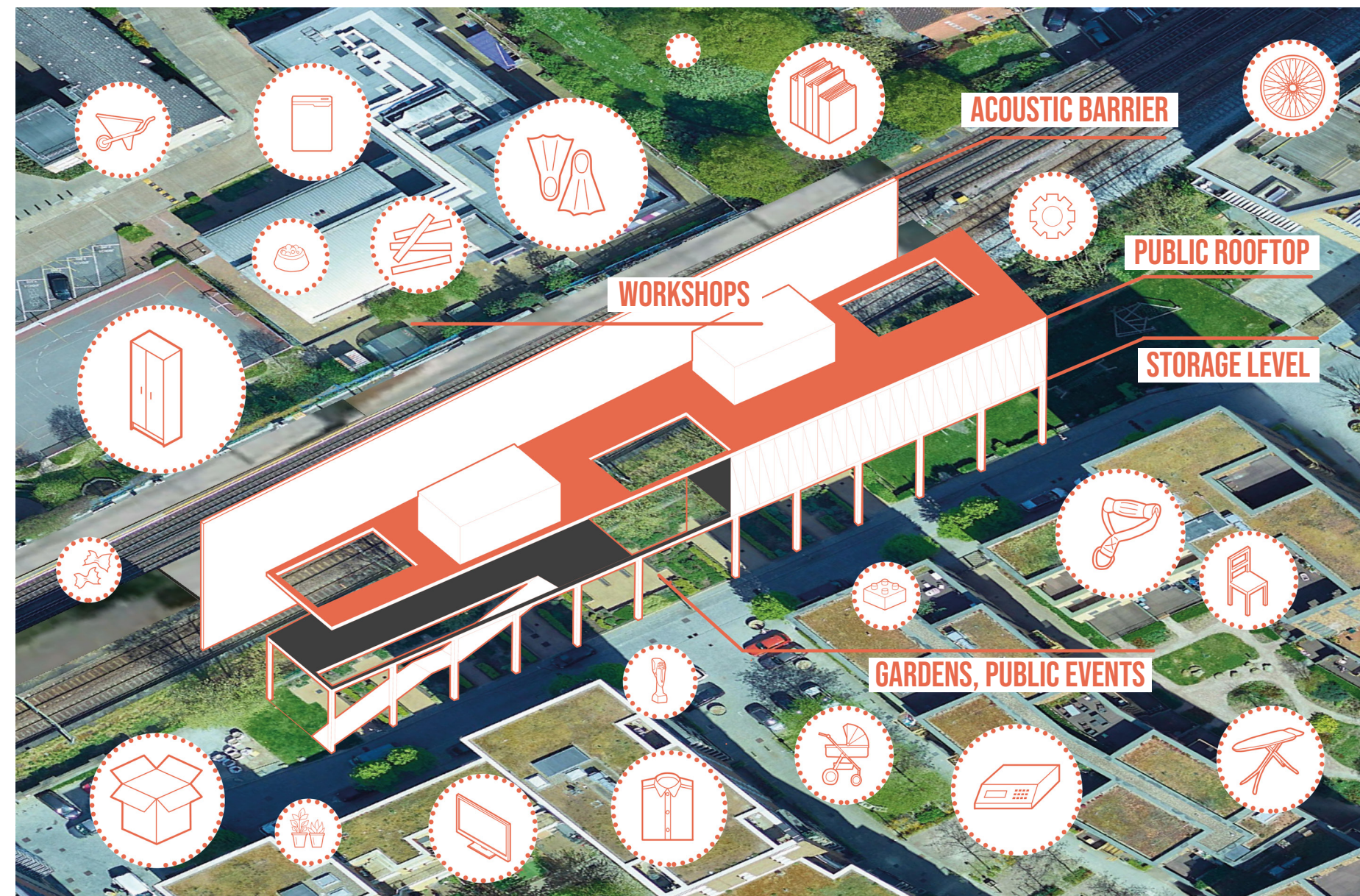


INTERVENTIONS BUILDING: Project III

ST. ANDREWS C.R.A.P. CENTRE

Phase III of the project identifies in the Herb Gardens in the northern part of St. Andrews development a key site for the possible building of new public spaces and infrastructures. Situated among the railway and the residential blocks of Saint Andrews, indeed, this under-used area may possibly host a new public sharing infrastructure serving the whole area of Bromley-by-Bow.

The two storeys building should be designed to create an acoustic barrier and to host the most bulky pieces of furniture that local residents may want to share, get rid of or take, without having to enter someone else's house or buying them at expensive prices. If the groundfloor, in any case, will remain completely opened, to host public meetings and initiatives, the rooftop instead could be used for more intimate events among residents. Due to the variety of objects that this building may contain, it is also possible to think about specific events in relation to what is currently available in there (literary groups, gardening groups, tea meetings, training workshops, physical activities, cooking workshops and so on). Hence, to properly manage it, Bromley-by-Bow centre should be involved directly, as well as others startups in London providing similar services (namely, the aforementioned Library of Things).



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