INTRODUCTION

“Welcoming ... porous... a warehouse of ideas.” (Shelley McNamara, Grafton Architects, RIBA Gold Medal lecture 2020) “The best place to lay your laptop?” (Rowan Moore, The Guardian, 25 January 2020)

Words and phrases used to describe Kingston University’s new Town House building which challenges preconceptions of what the future of libraries might look like. Designed to incorporate library and archives storage, study and research space alongside dance studios, performance and event spaces, the Town House offers a different model for an academic library.

ASPIRATION

To create a porous building
To create a civic building
To remove the barrier between university & town

DELIVERY

Definition and configuration of spaces
Management of spaces, events and teaching

BEFORE AND AFTER

Perceptions of new visitors to the space (students, staff, public), captured via handout or whiteboard in the answers to the following:

What one word describes what you expected Town House to be before you visited for the first time?

The Truly Unexpected

How do you manage an open and welcoming building during a pandemic when no one can be less than 2 metres apart?