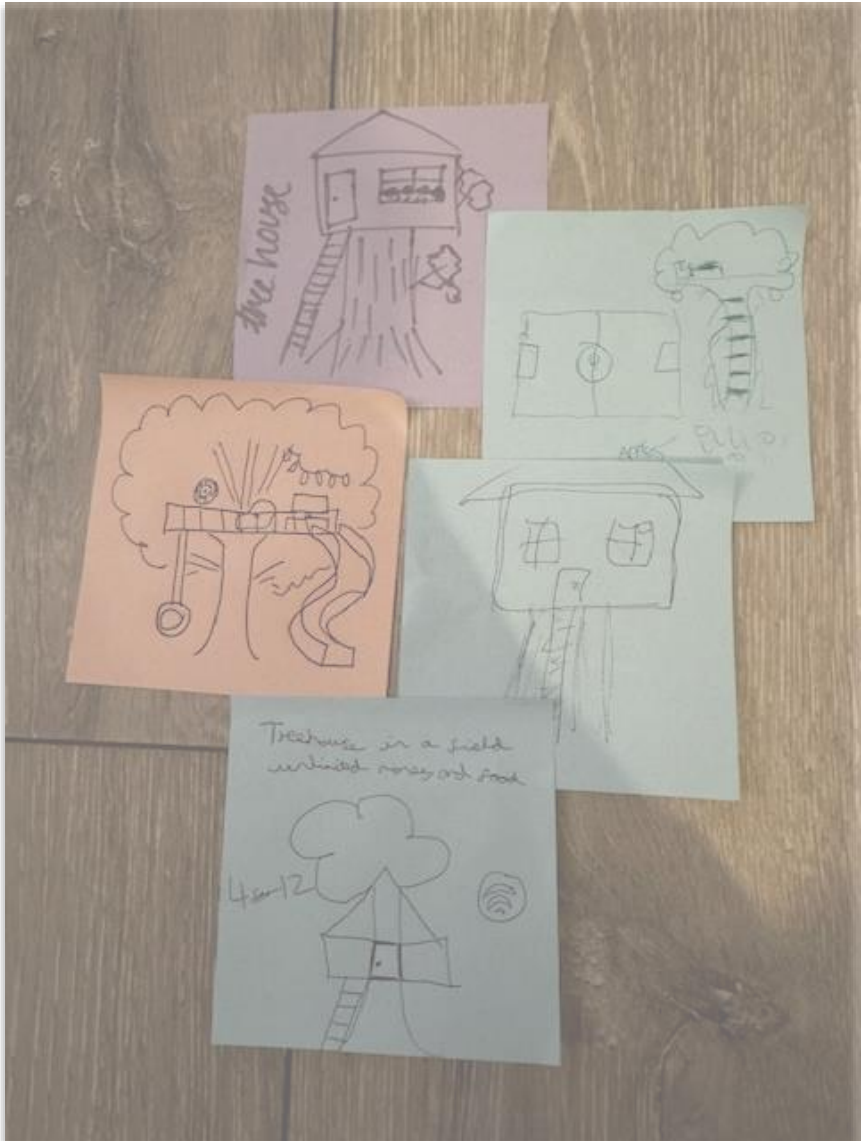




# ***THE TREEHOUSE***



## Safe Space: The Treehouse

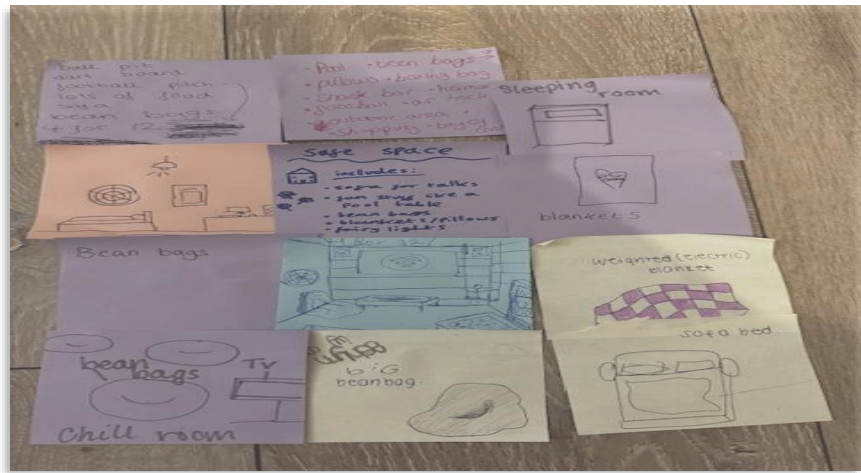
A treehouse as a metaphor for a safe space, suggests a desire for elevation and escape, a place removed from the everyday world but still connected to it.

Other interpretations:

- **Separation without isolation:** a treehouse is above the ground but not completely detached, it offers perspective and solitude without total disconnection
- **Childhood and nostalgia:** representing innocence, play and freedom, representing a return to a simpler, safer time
- **Control over entry:** you choose who comes in, often by pulling up the ladder, symbolising autonomy over one's personal space
- **Integration with nature:** a treehouse is built into a living thing, suggesting harmony with the environment, which can feel grounding and protective
- **Creativity and self-expression:** unlike standardised spaces, treehouses are often DIY, reflecting a uniqueness and personal identity

## Reflection:

Young people gravitated towards the concept of a treehouse as their safe space, as it offers both a refuge and a vantage point, its safe but not stagnant.



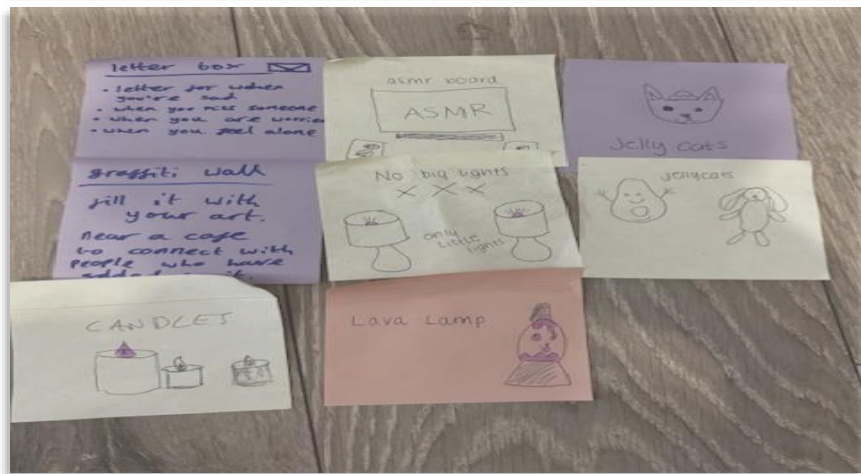
## Inside the Treehouse

Its not just about the treehouse as a structure, but the feeling inside it. Young people detail, blankets, bean bags, soft lights, movies, music and arcade games.

These all point to a desire for warmth and personal expression.

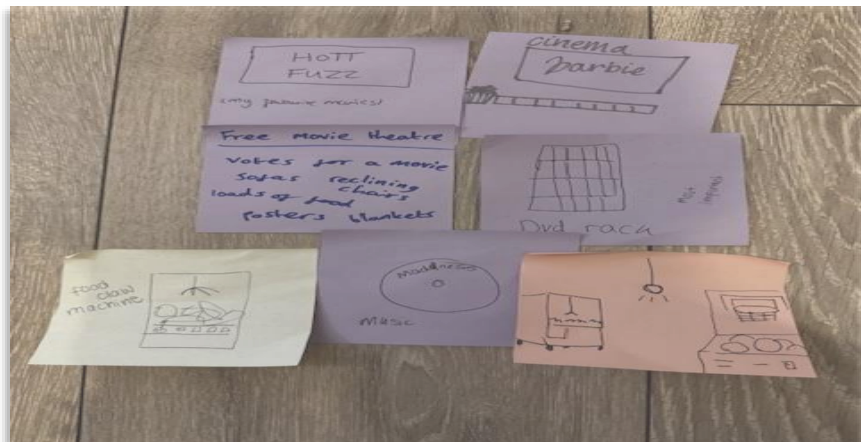
They want to design a safe space that is:

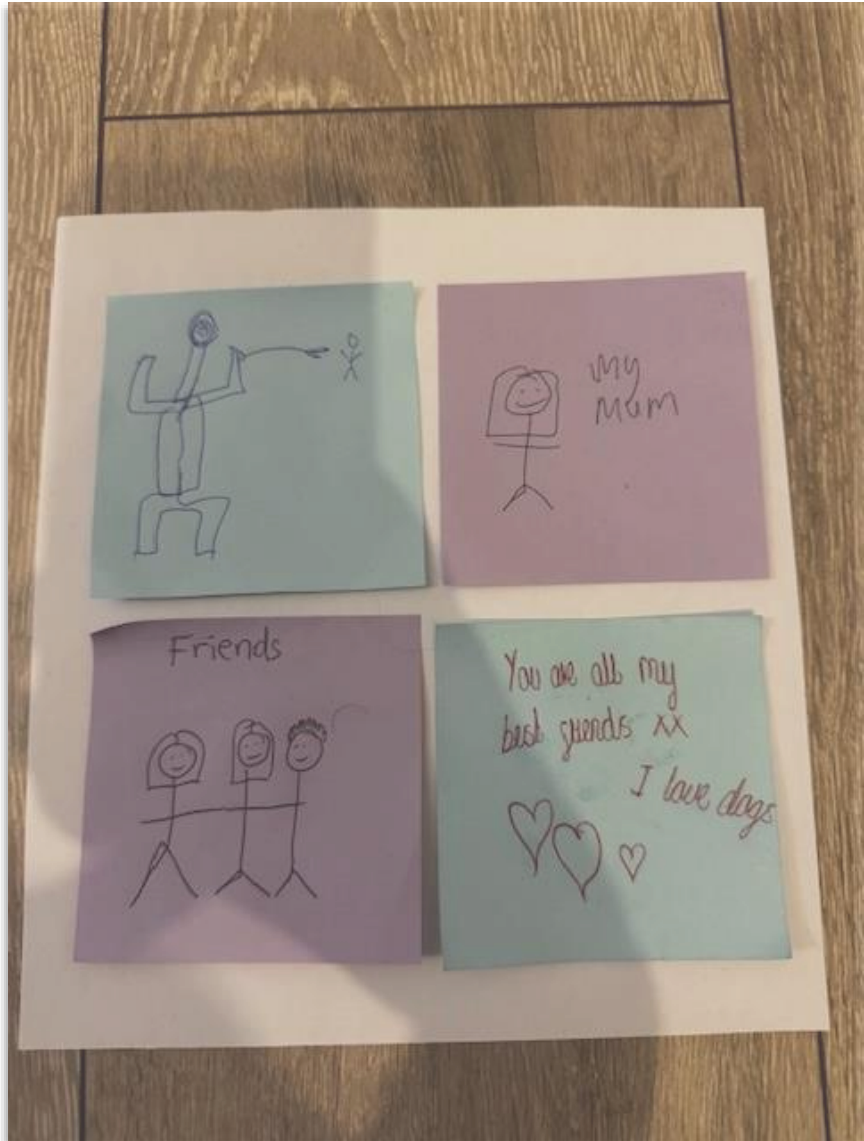
- **Cocoon-like**; with blankets, bean bags and soft lighting, creating a nest-like atmosphere, reinforcing safety and cosiness.
- **Sensory friendly**; with the combination of light, sound and texture, suggests a need for a space that feels good on multiple levels
- **A retreat, but not lonely**; the presence of entertainment with movies, music and arcade games, suggests they want solitude, but not isolation. The Treehouse is a place where they can relax but still engage with the things they love
- **Customisable and personal**; unlike a school or a public space, The Treehouse/bedroom hybrid is **theirs**, shaped by their tastes and their mood.



## Reflection:

This highlights that safety isn't just about physical security, its about emotional and sensory comfort too.





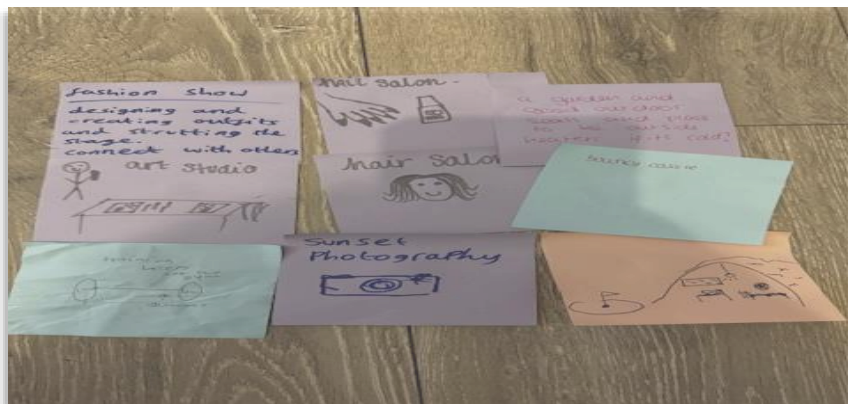
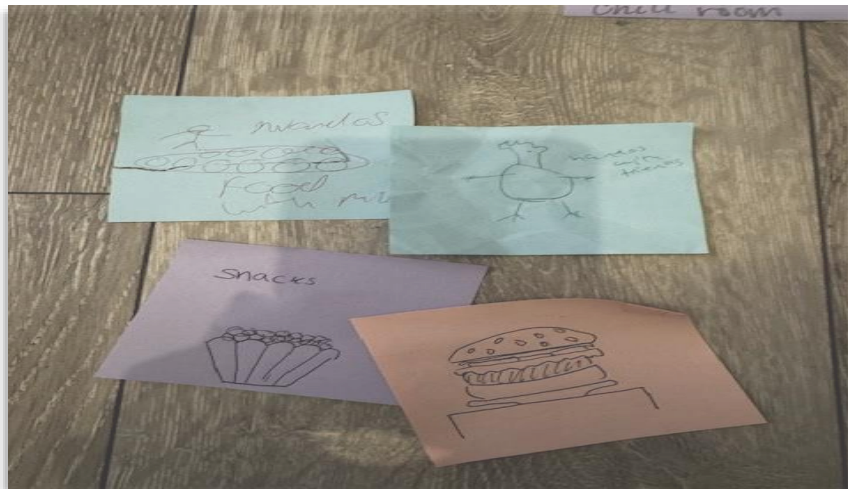
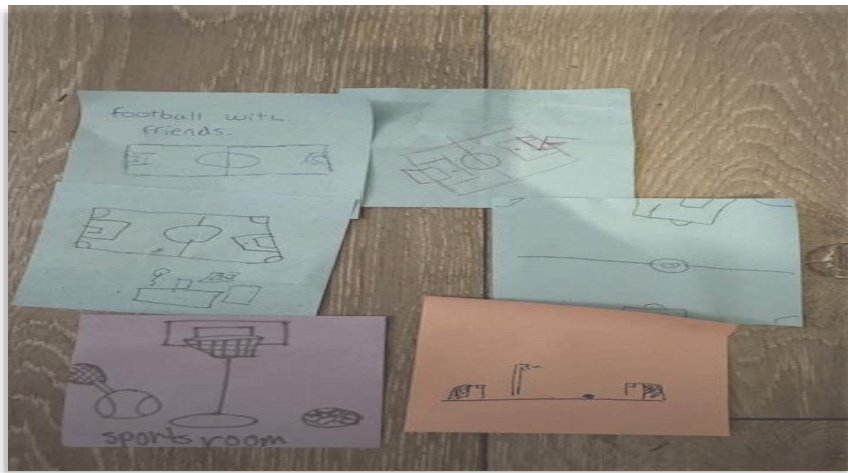
The young designers desired this not to be a solitary space, but a place of **shared safety**, a space where they can be themselves with their closest people, away from **judgement and pressure**.

**This represents:**

- **A sanctuary for belonging:** The Treehouse isn't just a personal retreat, it's a place for chosen community, where they feel accepted
- **Controlled social space:** Different from school or home, they decide who's there, creating a sense of agency over their interactions
- **Balancing comfort and fun:** The mix of soft elements (i.e., blankets and lights), and entertainment (i.e., movies and arcade games), suggests a desire for both relaxation and shared joy.

**Reflection:**

These young people are designing their ideal version of a '**third space**', not home, not school, but a place where they can just exist as themselves.



## Shared Experiences

Many young people visualised football, exercise and food, alongside the cozy treehouse vibe. This suggests movement and energy, which balances both the relaxed elements and activity.

Other interpretations could be a desire for:

- **Freedom to move and express:** Football and exercise are not just physical, they are social, expressive and sometimes even stress-relieving. The Treehouse can offer a space that **allows stillness** (soft lights and comfort) and **motion** (sports and games), reflecting different moods and needs.
- **Celebration and bonding:** Food (especially Nando's) is not just about eating, its about **shared rituals**. It brings a sense of home, culture and joy.
- **Adaptable space:** Instead of a rigid idea of a 'safe space', young people are collectively designing a **dynamic place** that shifts between **rest and play**, and **solitude and connection**.

There were also ideas that was not just about comfort and activity, but also **self-expression** and **self-care**.

Adding art, by painting their own wall, and beauty salons, all suggests they are thinking about a space where they can create, shape and take care of themselves on their own terms.

## Emerging key themes:

**Ownership and identity:** painting their own wall means making their mark, turning the space into something unique to them, it's a rejection of uniformity and more about personal expression

**Creative freedom:** Art is more about decoration, it's a form of release, reflection and joy. Suggesting they see creativity as a part of feeling safe

**Wellbeing and self-care:** beauty salons point to the importance of looking after themselves, but also the social aspect of self-care, getting ready with friends, experimenting and feeling good in their own skin.

## Reflection:

The Treehouse is designed to be a hybrid between a clubhouse, a studio, a gym and a cozy retreat. Its full of agency, choice and connection, where young people can build, play, rest, express and take care of themselves all in one place.



### Responding to real world stresses:

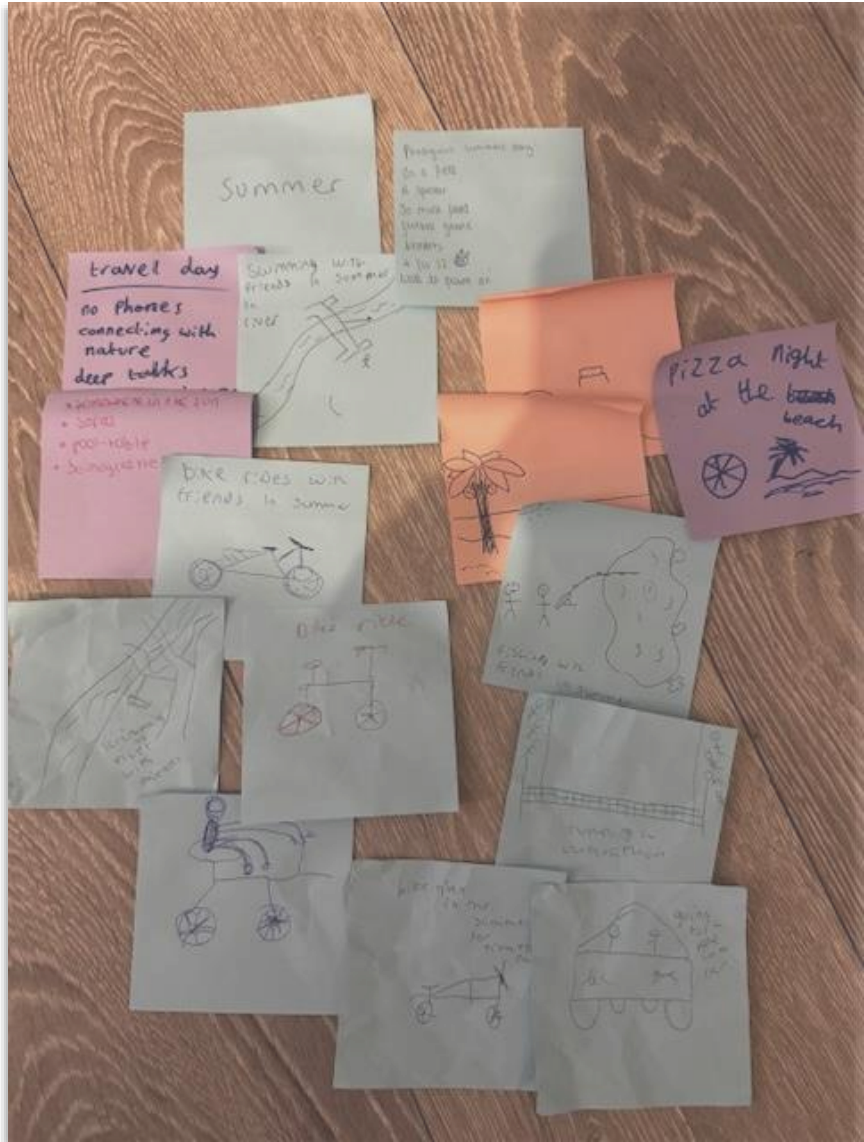
Part of the event was for young people to add their worries into a box. A strong theme was around GCSE, school and friendship worries.

The Treehouse concept feels like a direct response to those stresses.

- **School = pressure, structure and expectations:** The Treehouse is their space for **freedom, creativity and choice** (i.e., painting their own walls, playing sports, chilling with friends)
- **GCSEs = stress, performance, future worries:** The Treehouse includes **comfort, fun** and ways to **release tension** (i.e., blankets, movies, arcade games, art, beauty and food)
- **Friendship worries = uncertainty, drama and fitting in:** The Treehouse is built around **trusted friends**, where they can be themselves **without judgement**.

### Reflection:

The Treehouse design could be perceived as a **counterbalance** to the things that make young people feel anxious. Instead of rigid expectations, they want flexibility, instead of stress, they want play and creativity, instead of social pressures, they want a space where they choose their people.



## Theme: Summer

Summer is a powerful theme, as it represents **freedom, adventure and connection**. The Treehouse is more than a physical place, but also a feeling tied to a season.

### What Summer Represents:

- **Freedom and escape:** no school, no rigid structure, just open time to explore, play and be outside
- **Movement and adventure:** bike rides, swimming, being in nature all suggests a desire for exploration, spontaneity and fun
- **Connection and presence:** unlike school or social media, summer is about real, in-the-moment experiences with friends. No pressure, just being together.
- **Sensory and emotional warmth:** the feeling of the sun, water and wind connects to comfort, joy and being fully alive.

### How this links to their safe space:

- The Treehouse is not just about a cozy retreat, its also about **movement, openness and natural beauty**
- Its social but unstructured, less about planned activities and more about **flowing through experiences** with people they trust
- Its **active, yet peaceful**, with sports and biking, but also chilling by the beach or under a tree

### Reflection:

Summer represents the version of life where young people feel most free, happy and connected. **Their safe space is not just about escaping stress, its about capturing that summer feeling all year round.**

## **Conclusion:**

Our young designers did not just come up with a concept about a place, they described a feeling of **freedom, warmth, belonging and joy**. Something so **pure and instinctive**, they are aware deep down what safety and happiness feels like, even if the world doesn't always give it to them.

The most beautiful aspect of their safe space is, it is not about hiding, its about **living fully**. Being outside, **moving, creating, sharing and laughing**. Its more than protection from stress, its about having the **space to breath, play and just be themselves**.

## **Digital Free:**

It was observed that digital devices were not mentioned in their design thinking. This suggests that their idea of a true safe space is not about screens, its about presence, connection and real-world experiences.

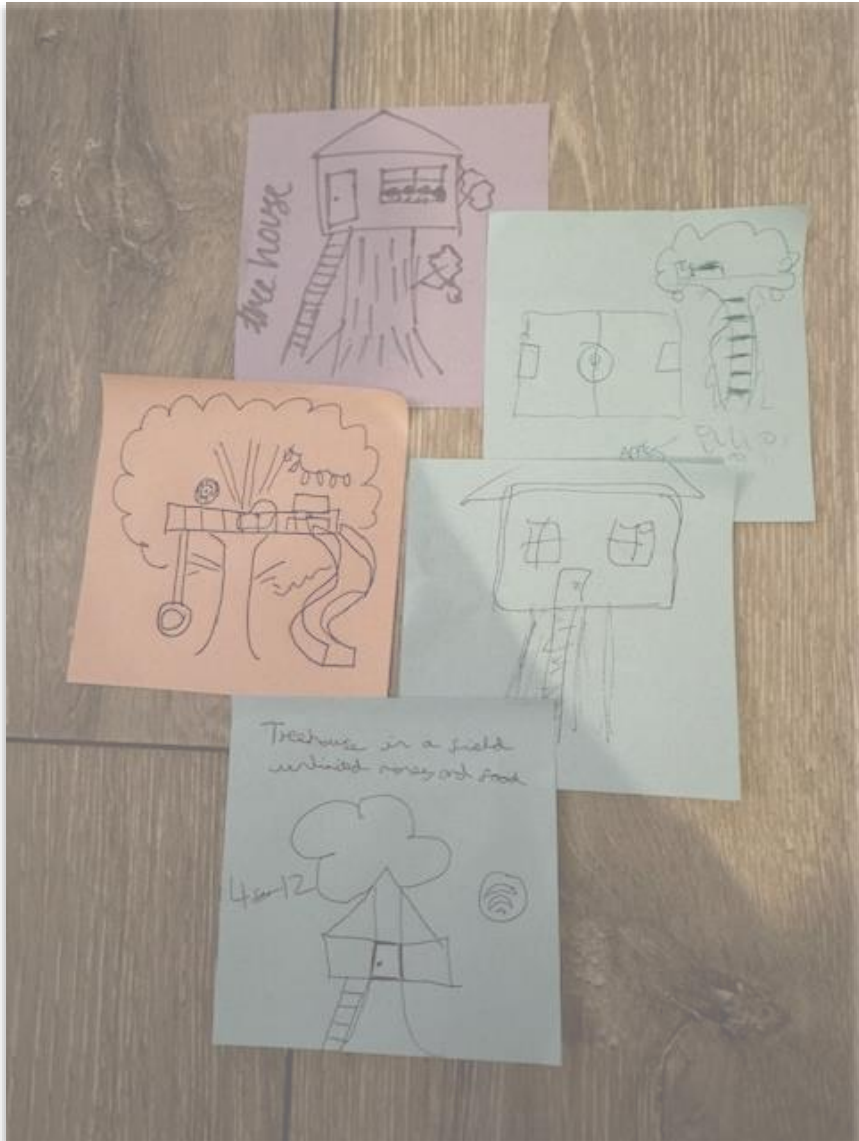
Young people are craving:

**Physical movement over passive scrolling:** i.e., bike rides, football, swimming and nature suggest a desire to feel alive in their bodies, not just consumed by a screen.

**In-person connection over digital interaction:** instead of social media or gaming, their safe space is built around real friendships, shared meals together, and deep presence.

**Sensory richness over virtual spaces:** they describe warmth, textures, sounds movement, things that engage the whole self, not just their eyes and thumbs.

Perhaps our young people are instinctively pushing back against digital overstimulation, school stress, and social pressures. Instead of escape into screen, they are imagining escape into something more real, immersive and freeing.



### The Treehouse is a place for:

- **Freedom over structure;** no schedules, no expectations just movement and flow
- **Nature over screens;** feeling the sun, touching the water, painting walls, these are real, tangible experiences
- **Deep connection over surface-level interaction;** laughing with friends, sharing food and playing together in person, not just through a screen.

The Treehouse may be a **symbol of returning** to that kind of immersive, free and connected play. It's more than a structure, it's a physical manifestation of freedom, creativity and real-world connection.

The Treehouse with its mix of comfort, nature and social energy is a way of reclaiming something genuine and unfiltered. It's a space where young people can still feel that sense of adventure and autonomy without the pressure or distractions of digital life.

It's about stepping away from the screens, rejecting the overly connected and overly scheduled world, and remembering to be **present in the moment**