

View to the west

(photo: VHS)

Mýrdalssandur desert

Vík, village 50 km W.



Mýrdalsjökull, with the volcano Katla.



View to the north

(photo: VHS)

Valley allowing access into the highlands
by car

The mountains guarding the highlands



Öræfajökull, with Iceland's highest mountain.



Synthesis

The location of the hotel is in Eldhraun lavafield on the south coast of Iceland. The size, expression and beauty of the nature in the lavafield leaves no one untouched. In addition to the great part the lava played in the history of Iceland, as well as the world, it is located close to many of the most sought after pearls of Iceland. The options for those seeking to explore the Icelandic nature or make use of the endless possibilities for recreation in this part of Iceland the hotel will be the optimal choice of accommodation.

The hotel will have 20 rooms that each contribute to the guests experience while staying in the hotel. The rooms will sleep 2-5. It is a hotel on a high standard with a different target group from other accommodation providers in the area, aiming for those looking for more comfort and willing to pay more to get more. It is also the perfect place for companies to hold conferences or big groups to gather for special occasions.

The main emphasis in the design will be allowing the guests to experience the dramatic nature of the lavafield as well as this material, lava, in close contact and in comfort. To learn how it acts from the point when it's a dangerous and relentless burning hot liquid, destroying everything that gets in its way to the time when it is a peaceful and dramatic lavafield, the keeper of a part of the Icelandic sagas and folkstories. To learn about its journey from the eruption in the highlands down to the lowlands where it stopped, became solid and will stay for millions of years to come. By doing so, the hotel will be more than an accommodation, it becomes an experience in its own. In addition to this the flora in the area adds to the experience with its ever changing appearance and colors with the changing seasons. And the wildlife in the area is not used to people and does not always recognize man as being a threat. Therefore it can be observed directly from the rooms or during walks in the lavafield.

The building's architecture will not only contribute to the comfort of the guests, but be of high quality creating an interplay between the manmade and nature. The buildings orientation should make use of the sun in as many ways as possible, placing the rooms and functions in relation to the movement of the sun. The building should also be oriented with the wind and natural ventilation in mind.

Vision

The vision for this project is to...

...create an accommodation of architectural quality that allows its guests to experience a close contact with the Icelandic nature

...work with nature, not against it

...create a way to use nature in a positive way in order to support the economy in a contrast to large scale industrialized construction.

3 concept

An aerial photograph of a mountainous landscape. The terrain is covered in patches of snow and green vegetation, likely tundra or alpine plants. The word "development" is overlaid in a large, white, sans-serif font across the center of the image. The lighting suggests a bright day, with shadows cast by the snow and vegetation.

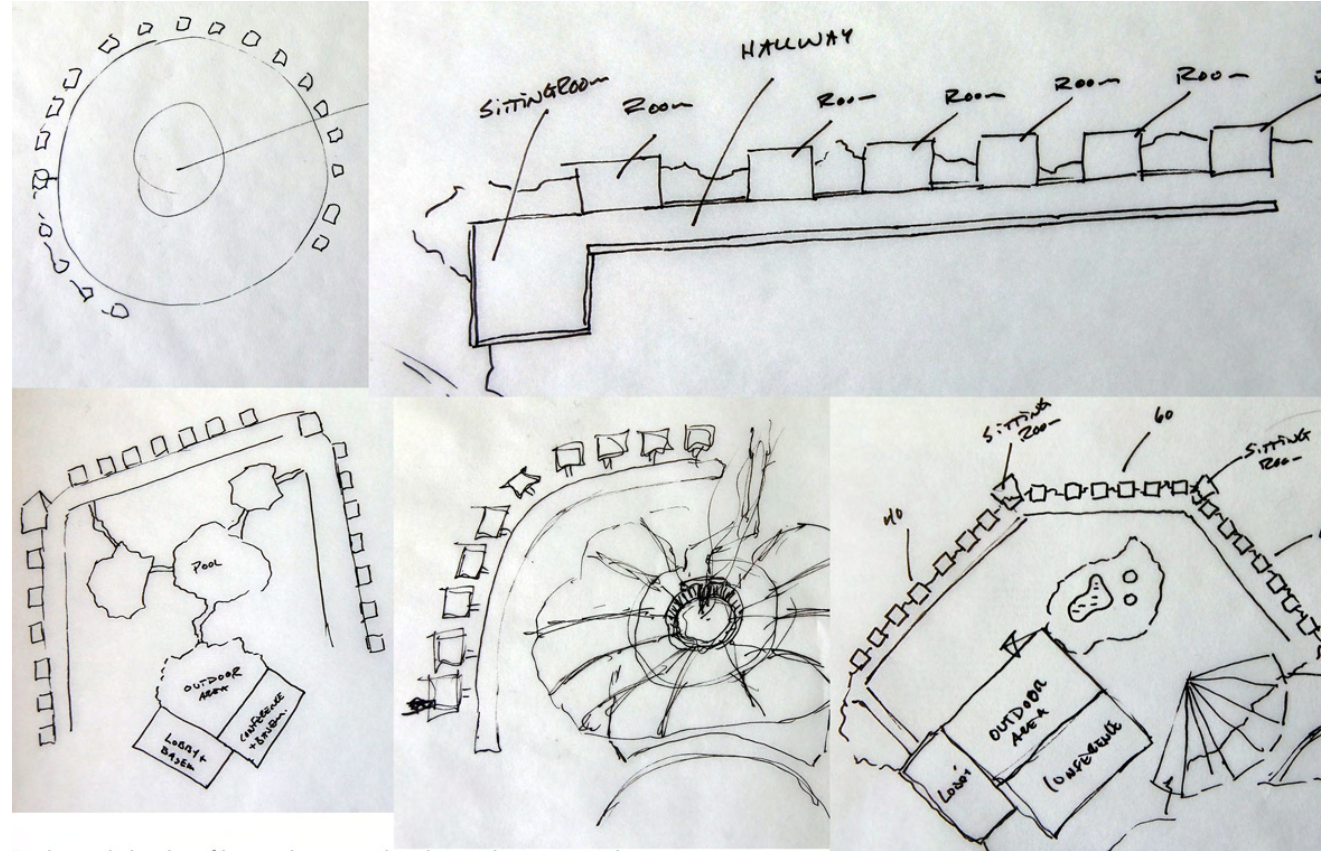
development

Phase one

The first step in the design phase is developing the overall concept. During this phase different ideas are sketched with an open mind trying out different things.

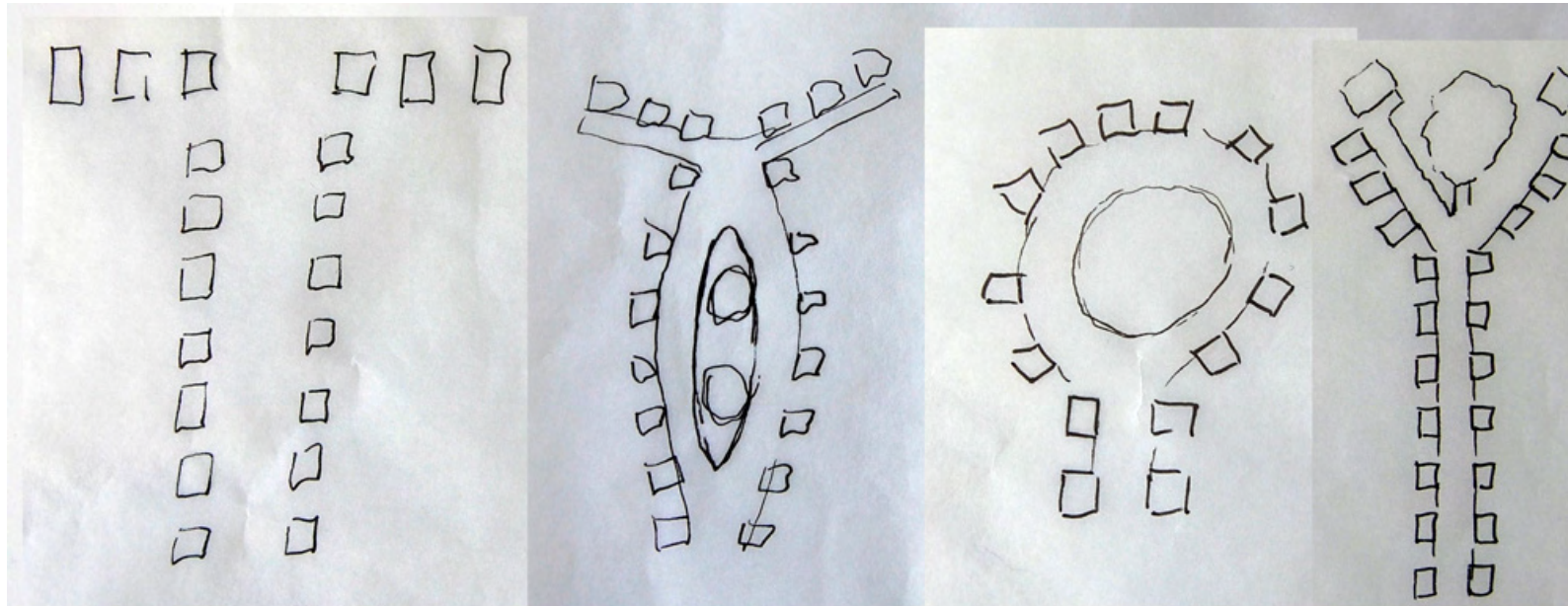
In the first proposals in this phase the idea is to have the individual rooms as individual elements placed either randomly or in some order here and there within the rugged lava. These ideas however demand complicated corridor systems to connect the rooms to the building with the main functions. Another problem is the fact that the lavafield is not flat and therefore it can prove difficult to place the rooms in roughly the same height without manipulating the lava underneath them or using even longer corridors.

Therefore in the next proposals an attempt is made to cluster the rooms together in some order but still keep them as individual units.

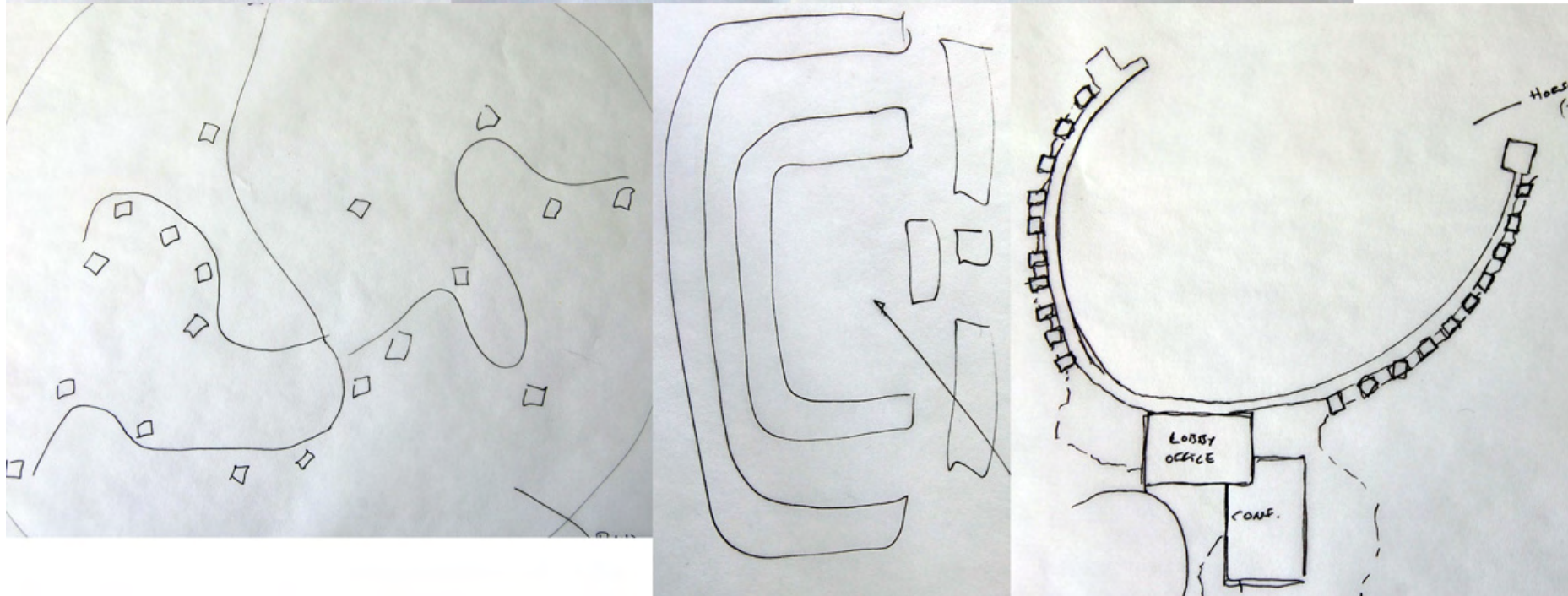


Sketches showing a few of the first proposals where the rooms are clustered in one way or another. The way this is done is still random and therefore a system is needed in order to get closer to turning this into the first stage of an overall concept.

In the proposals different concept ideas are suggested. These ideas are then put into a matrix containing some design parameters. This makes it possible to compare the different ideas in order to get closer to finding the optimal one to take to the next design stage..



Sketches from the first part of phase one.



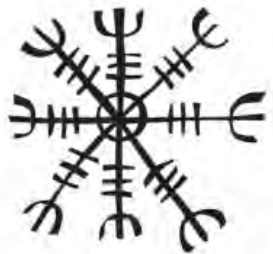
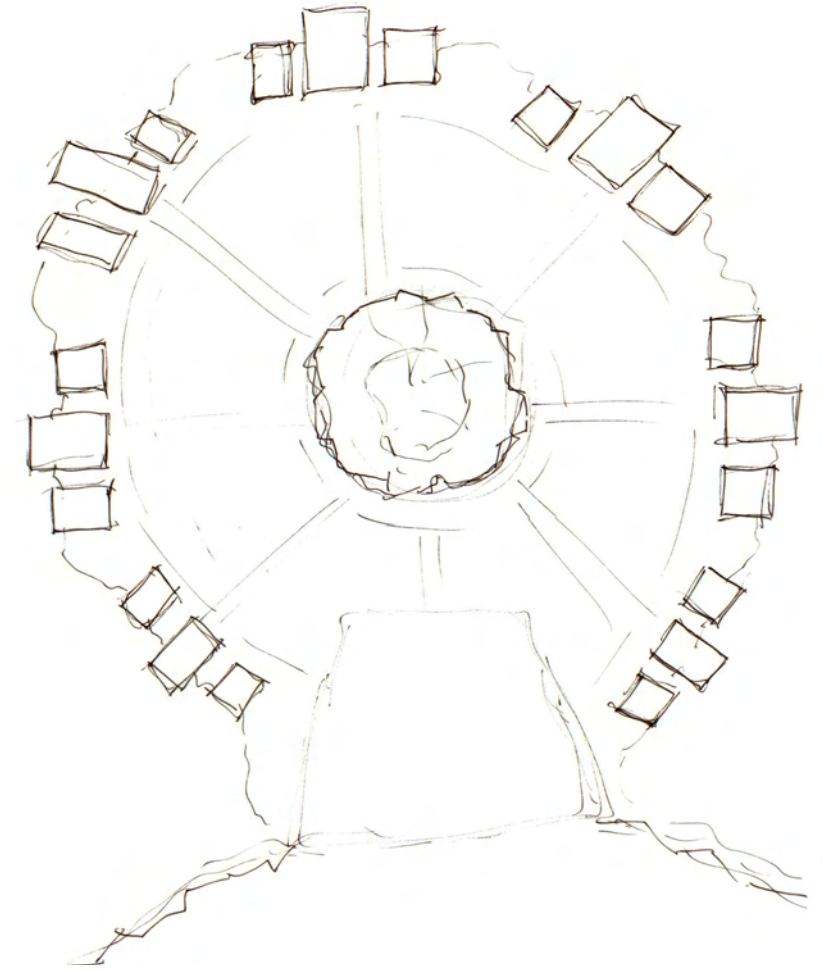
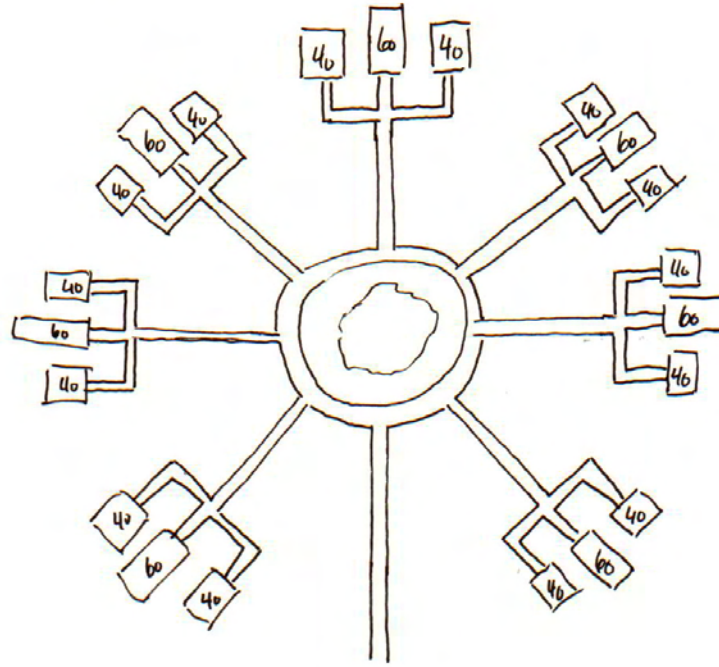
Ægishjálmur (helmet of the god Aegir)

An old magical symbol that the first settlers in Iceland brought with them. These symbols were quite many, all of them having a different meaning. Ægishjálmur was the symbol for safety. It kept people out of harms way and protected them from the tyranny of kings and rulers.

The Ægishjálmur has been drawn in many different versions but the structure of it is always the same. A circular form with eight lines extended from the middle. Each of these lines ends in a fork with three spikes.

Ægishjálmur is used in the first proposal for the over all concept in this project. Seven of the eight lines each connect three rooms to the centre where an outdoor area is placed. The eighth line is connected to the other functions, lobby, dining, kitchen ect.

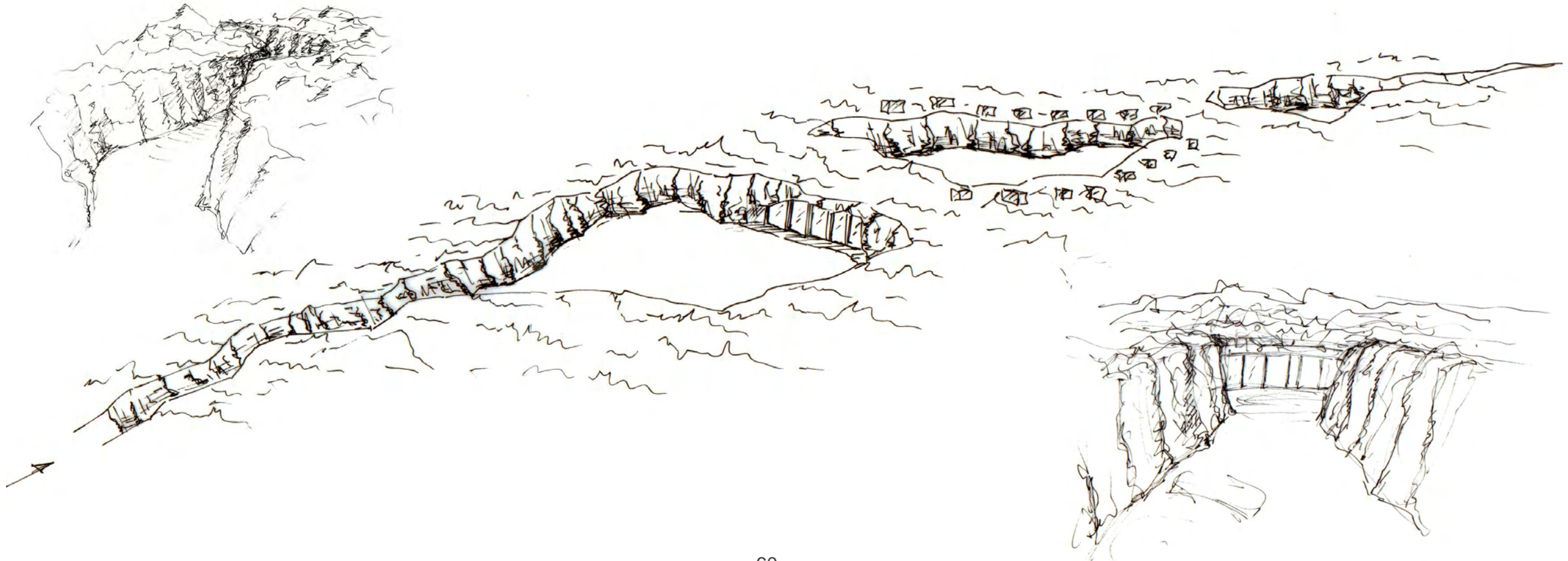
Here the rooms are still individual elements. Even though there are three rooms at the end of each corridor they are not connected physically. This is done to keep the focus on privacy for the guests. It is also not possible to see another room from the windows of the rooms.



The Rift.

The access to the hotel is via a (manmade) rift. The entrance and lobby are underneath the lava. An inverted open area is placed in the rift with the rooms placed close to the edge of the rift. Functions such as dining hall and conference room can be partly underneath the lava and partly in the open area in the rift.

The rooms stand on top of the lava so they are higher than the other functions. Playing with the difference between high and low, open vs closed, bright vs dark. The rooms are individual units and placed rather randomly on the edge of the rift.



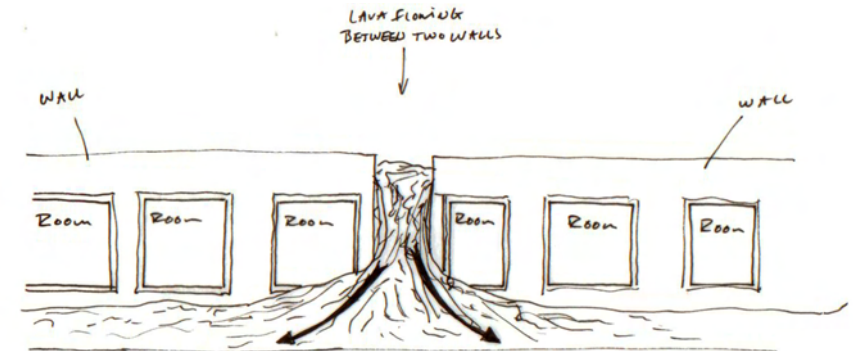
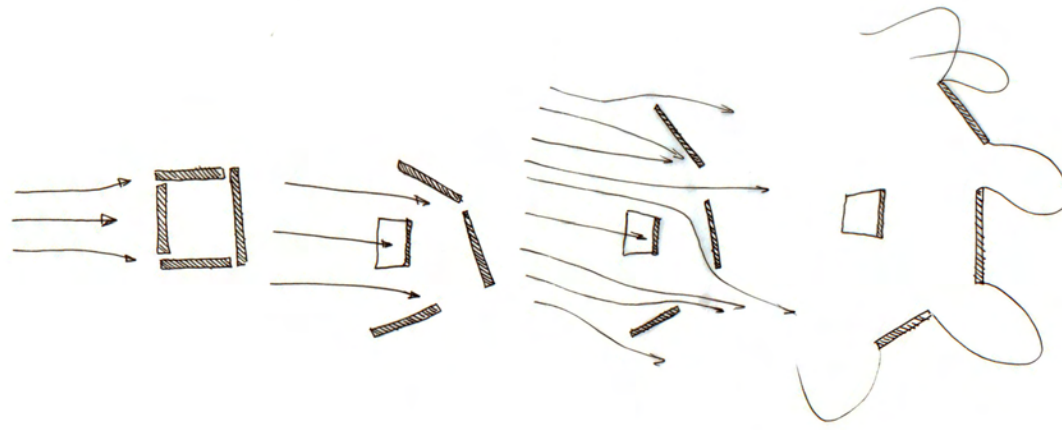
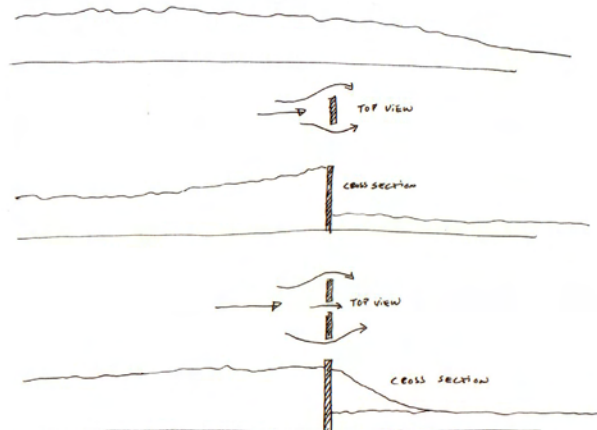
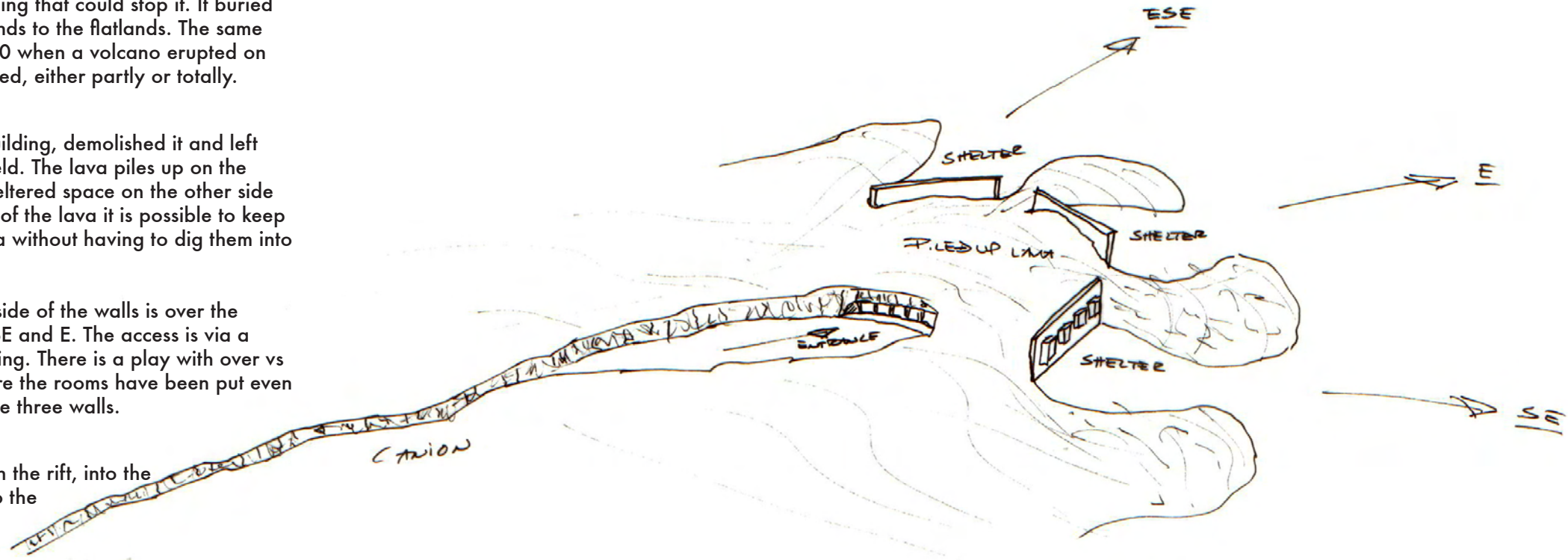
The Flow.

When the lava was flowing there was nothing that could stop it. It buried about 20 farms on its way from the highlands to the flatlands. The same happened in the Vestman Islands in the '70 when a volcano erupted on one of the islands. Many houses were buried, either partly or totally.

Here the flowing lava has intercepted a building, demolished it and left three separate walls standing in the lavafield. The lava piles up on the upwards side of the walls but there is a sheltered space on the other side of them. Using the difference in the height of the lava it is possible to keep parts of the functions buried under the lava without having to dig them into the ground.

The view from the rooms on the sheltered side of the walls is over the lavafield towards the mountains to the S, SE and E. The access is via a manmade canyon to the north of the building. There is a play with over vs under, bright vs dark, open vs closed. Here the rooms have been put even closer together and all rooms are within the three walls.




The guests follow the flow of the lava down the rift, into the hotel, towards the walls/obstruction and to the rooms where the guest and the lava stop.



Phase one evaluation

Various important aspects based on the nature of the lava hotel are parameters for the evaluation of the design proposals. They are based on the basic idea for the hotel, the desired feeling, expression, functionality and initiative that should be included in the design. The three proposals are compared to find the one best suited to take to the next phase for further development.

To make this phase easy to read and understand, all the proposals either get a + or - in the evaluation. The one with the highest number of + is the one that will be taken to the next level.

	Access	Access for disabled	Fits into context	Privacy for guests	Outdoor space	360° view to mountains from rooms	Preserving nature	Interacting with nature	In touch with lava	Rooms on different levels	Creating an experience
Ægishjalmur 	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	+
The Rift 	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+
TheFlow 	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+

Phase one sum up

Ægishjalmur gets the worst result from this evaluation. It lacks a connection to the site, it is a very enclosed and restricting form to work with and it causes considerable destruction of nature.

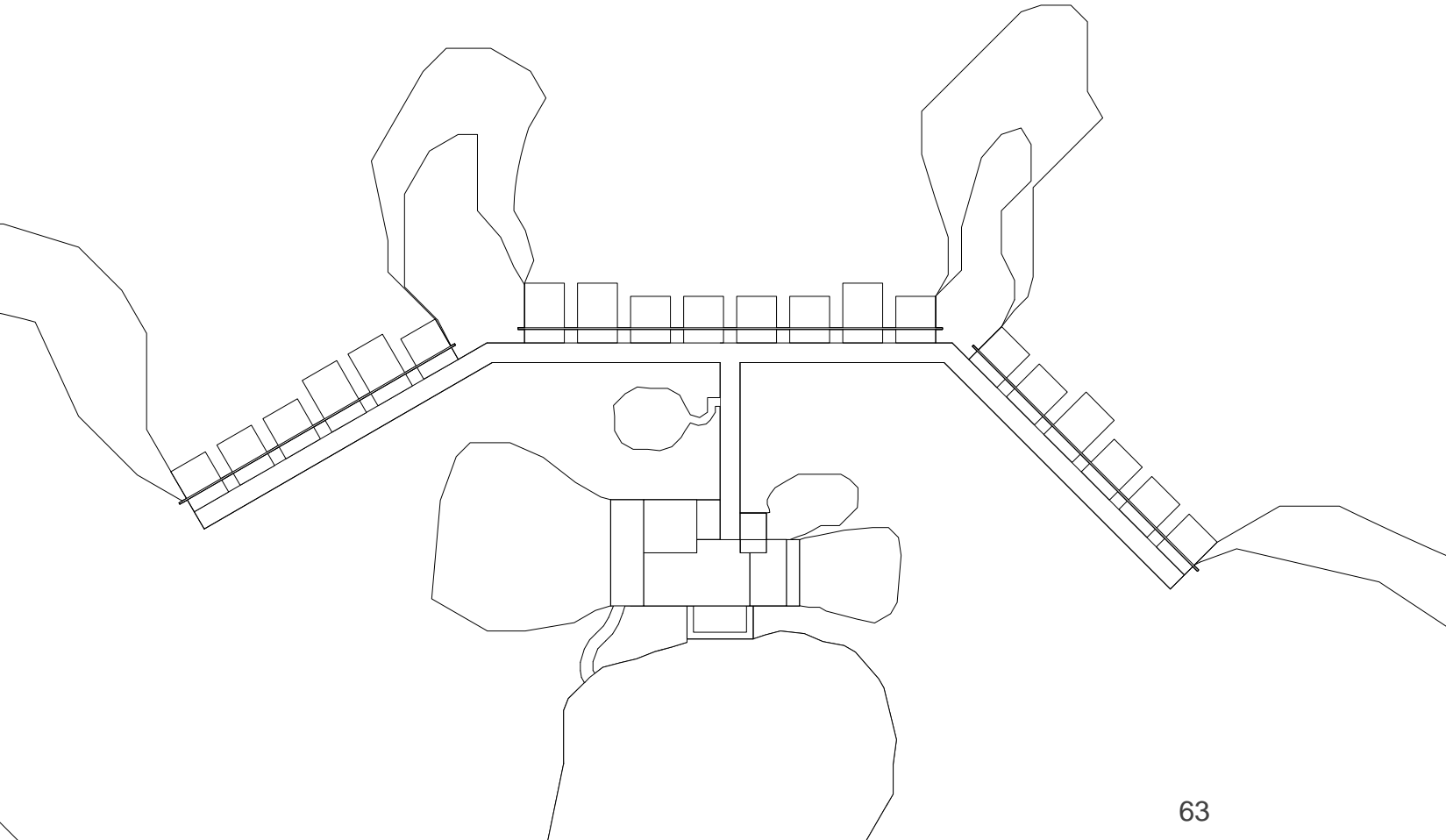
There is not much difference between the outcome for The Rift and The Flow. The Rift gets a minus in access for disabled due to the fact that the rooms stand considerably higher than the floor of the rift and a minus where it comes to preserving nature since alot of lava has to be dug up and moved to a different location.

The Flow only has a 180° view to the mountains from the rooms. However this can be compensated for by placing the other functions of the hotel, such as the dining area, with the view towards the other directions. This can create a play with the different views and light in different areas of the hotel. The Flow also has the strongest connection to the context and the history of the area.

The Flow is the proposal that is taken to the next design phase.

Phase two

During the first step of phase two the precise location of the hotel within the lavafield has not been chosen. The main idea in proposals 1 and 2 is that the digout from the manmade rift and the digout from the foundations for the buildings is used to create a semi artificial hill. This hill covers the parts of the buildings that are underground. Due to the flatness of the lavafield this is necessary in order to create the landscape needed.



Proposal no 1.

The three walls are placed rather symmetrically to the E, SE and S of the main building, creating an arch around it. The rooms are placed on or in the walls overlooking the sheltered areas towards the mountains. The main building and the room elements are connected by corridors underground.



Proposal no 2.

The walls have been divided into six smaller sections allowing for a more random distribution and overall expression of the plan. There are fewer rooms on each wall element creating more privacy. This plan demands long and rather complicated corridors to connect the individual parts of the hotel.

The majority of the rooms are facing E with a view towards the Öraefajökull glacier while a few rooms face W overlooking the lavafield towards Mýrdalsjökull glacier. (see map bottom center)

