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INCLUSIVE ACCESS STATEMENT

SITE: Unit 11, High Cross Centre, Fountayne Road, N15 4QL

PROPOSAL: Intensification of employment use through the addition of a first-floor height extension and a new second-floor level to enable the creation of a multi-unit business hub with communal amenity space.

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DATE: 20th February 2026

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1. PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE DESIGN

1.1 Universal Design Philosophy

The development is predicated on the "Universal Design" philosophy, ensuring that the physical environment can be navigated and used by everyone—regardless of age, mobility, or cognitive ability—with ease and dignity.

In accordance with Haringey Local Plan Policy DM1 and the London Plan, the design moves beyond mere compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations, seeking to eliminate physical barriers that often characterise older industrial estates in the High Cross Centre.

1.2 Embedding Inclusivity in Intensification

By intensifying the site from a single-tenancy warehouse into a managed hub of 14+ independent business units, inclusivity is no longer an ancillary feature but a core component of the building's circulation and communal infrastructure. The design ensures that small-business owners, employees, and visitors with disabilities have equal access to every level of the building, including the premium communal garden spaces.

1.3 Key Objectives of the Inclusive Access Strategy:

- **Ease of Use:** Providing a clear, logical, and legible layout that is easy to understand for all users, including those with neurodivergent needs or sensory impairments.
- **Freedom of Movement:** Ensuring that all internal corridors, doorways, and vertical circulation points exceed the minimum width requirements to accommodate wheelchair users and those handling goods.
- **Safety and Dignity:** Designing entrances and exits that allow people to enter and leave the building safely and independently, without the need for separate "disabled-only" routes.

1.4 Vertical Accessibility & Inclusive Amenity

- **The Goods/Passenger Lift:** Central to the inclusive strategy is a high-capacity, fully accessible lift serving all floors. This ensures that the 241sqm of Communal Gardens on the first and second floors are not "exclusive" spaces but are accessible to every tenant, regardless of physical mobility.
- **Thresholds and Surfaces:** Every entrance to the building, including the transitions from the internal workspace to the external garden terraces, features level thresholds. External surfaces in the communal gardens have been selected for their slip-resistance and stability, facilitating ease of movement for those using mobility aids.

1.5 Policy and Legislative Compliance

This statement demonstrates compliance with:

- **The Equality Act 2010:** Ensuring no person is discriminated against due to a protected characteristic in the provision of the physical workspace.

Link: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

- **Approved Document M (Volume 2):** Meeting the rigorous standards for "Access to and use of buildings other than dwellings."

Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-and-use-of-buildings-approved-document-m>

- **BS 8300-2:2018:** Adopting best practices for the design of an accessible and inclusive built environment in a commercial context.

Link:

<https://knowledge.bsigroup.com/products/design-of-an-accessible-and-inclusive-built-environment-buildings-code-of-practice/standard>

2. SITE ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

Policy Compliance:

London Plan Policy D5 & Approved Document M

In line with London Plan Policy D5, which requires developments to achieve the highest standards of accessible and inclusive design, the proposal ensures that the journey from the public realm to the individual business units is seamless.

The circulation strategy is designed to accommodate the increased footfall of a 14-unit hub while maintaining clear, unobstructed routes for users with varying physical abilities.

2.1 Level Access and Thresholds

- **Entrance Strategy:** The primary entrance to the building from the High Cross Centre courtyard is designed with a level threshold. This eliminates the need for ramps or steps, providing a dignified and unified point of entry for wheelchair users, people with limited mobility, and those transporting light goods.
- **Surface Materials:** The external approach and internal foyer utilise non-slip, high-tonal-contrast materials to assist users with visual impairments in identifying the transition from the courtyard to the building interior.

2.2 Vertical Circulation (The Inclusive Core)

- **Passenger & Goods Lift:** A high-specification, fully accessible 8-person (or equivalent goods-rated) lift is the central feature of the building's circulation core. This lift serves the Ground, First, and Second floors, ensuring that every one of the 14 business units is accessible.
- **Access to Amenities:** Crucially, the lift provides direct access to the 123sqm First Floor and 118sqm Second Floor communal gardens. This ensures that the environmental and well-being benefits of the "Blue/Green" roofs are inclusive and available to all tenants and visitors, regardless of their ability to use stairs.
- **Emergency Egress:** The lift lobby and stairwells are designed to include designated "Refuge Areas" in accordance with fire safety standards, providing safe waiting zones for mobility-impaired users during an evacuation.

2.3 Internal Corridors and Wayfinding

- **Corridor Widths:** All internal corridors exceed the minimum widths mandated by Part M of the Building Regulations. This facilitates comfortable two-way movement and provides ample space for wheelchair turning circles (minimum 1500mm x 1500mm) at key junctions and unit entrances.
- **Door Specifications:** All unit entrance doors will feature clear opening widths of at least 800mm-850mm, with low-resistance opening mechanisms and handles located at an accessible height (900mm-1100mm).
- **Logical Wayfinding:** To assist users with cognitive or visual impairments, the building utilises a "logical legibility" approach. This includes high-contrast signage, consistent lighting levels across all 14 units, and clearly marked floor levels to ensure ease of navigation through the intensified workspace.

3. ACCESSIBLE AMENITIES

Policy Compliance: Haringey Policy DM1 & London Plan Policy G5

The provision of amenities at Unit 11 is governed by the principle of "Equitable Access."

In accordance with Haringey Policy DM1, which requires all new developments to provide high-quality, inclusive environments, the proposal ensures that the building's most innovative features—its multi-level gardens and social hubs—are fully accessible. This ensures that the environmental benefits of the "Blue/Green" roofs and the social benefits of the SME hub are not restricted by a user's physical ability.

3.1 Inclusive Communal Gardens (Levels 1 & 2)

The 241sqm of outdoor amenity space has been designed as a series of "Inclusive Landscapes."

- **Level Thresholds:** Access from the internal workspace to the 123sqm First Floor and 118sqm Second Floor gardens is via level thresholds. This ensures a seamless transition for wheelchair users and those with mobility aids, without the need for ramps or manual intervention.
- **Manoeuvring Space:** The layout of the integrated planters and seating zones has been strictly modelled to maintain clear 1500mm turning circles. This allows wheelchair users to navigate the gardens independently and participate fully in outdoor breakout meetings or rest periods.
- **Sensory Considerations:** The planting palette has been selected to provide visual and tactile interest, creating a restorative environment that supports neurodiversity and mental well-being for all 14 units.

3.2 Specialised Sanitary Facilities

- **Universal Provision:** Dedicated, fully compliant accessible WCs are located on every floor of the building. These are positioned in central locations to minimise the travel distance for users with limited mobility.
- **Fit-Out Standards:** Each accessible WC is equipped with high-contrast grab rails, outward-opening doors, and emergency assistance pull cords that are linked to the Building Manager's station.
- **Tactile Signage:** All sanitary facilities feature Braille and tactile signage at a consistent height (1400mm–1600mm) to assist users with visual impairments.

3.3 Ground Floor Social Hub and Workshop

- **Canteen Accessibility:** The 22sqm ground-floor canteen is designed with an open-plan layout. Furniture is movable to allow for flexible configurations that accommodate wheelchair users, ensuring the social "heart" of the building is inclusive.
- **Inclusive Workshop:** The on-site workshop—intended for light industrial use and cycle maintenance—features low-level benches and wide access routes. This ensures that the "maker" economy of the High Cross Centre is accessible to entrepreneurs and staff with disabilities, providing them with the same functional facilities as all other tenants.
- **Acoustic Environment:** In line with the Sustainability Statement, the internal finishes in these social areas are selected to manage reverberation, creating a more comfortable acoustic environment for users with hearing impairments or sensory processing sensitivities.

4. EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Policy Compliance: London Plan Policy D5 & Policy D12 (Fire Safety)

In accordance with the safety required by the London Plan, the inclusive design of Unit 11 extends to emergency scenarios.

The evacuation strategy is designed to ensure that the 14-unit intensification does not compromise the safety of users with disabilities.

As detailed in the separate Fire Statement, the building employs a "Total Managed Evacuation" strategy, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their physical ability, can exit the building or reach a point of safety with dignity and speed.

4.1 Integrated Refuge Areas

- **Safe Waiting Zones:** Recognising that the passenger lift may not be available during a fire alarm, each upper-floor stairwell is designed to include a designated Refuge Area.
- **Specifications:** These areas provide sufficient space for a wheelchair user (minimum 1400mm x 900mm) without obstructing the clear exit width required by other evacuees.
- **Communication:** Each refuge area is equipped with an Emergency Voice Communication (EVC) system (hands-free intercom), allowing mobility-impaired users to communicate directly with the Building Manager or emergency services.

4.2 Clearly Marked & Accessible Escape Routes

- **Legible Egress:** All escape routes from the 14 business units are designed with level thresholds and consistent lighting levels. In accordance with BS 8300, high-contrast floor finishes and tactile directional indicators are used to guide users toward the primary protected stairwell.
- **Exit Signage:** All emergency exit signs are illuminated and positioned at heights that are visible from a seated position, ensuring clarity for wheelchair users.
- **Door Hardware:** Fire doors on escape routes are fitted with panic bars or low-resistance opening mechanisms, ensuring they can be operated by users with limited manual dexterity.

4.3 Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs)

- **Management Protocol:** As a managed business hub, the Building Manager will be responsible for coordinating with each of the 14 tenants to identify staff or regular visitors who may require assistance.
- **Tailored Safety:** Where necessary, bespoke PEEPs (Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan) will be developed, ensuring that designated evacuation buddies are assigned and that the location of the Evac-Chairs (stored in the central core) is known to all relevant parties.

4.4 Visual and Audible Alarms

- **Sensory Inclusion:** To ensure the safety of users with hearing impairments, the building is fitted with an integrated fire alarm system that includes both audible sirens and high-visibility flashing beacons (visual alarms) in all communal areas, WCs, and within the 14 individual business units.

4a. CORE COMPONENTS OF A PEEP

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)

A bespoke, written document tailored to an individual who may face difficulties evacuating a building independently during an emergency.

In the context of the 14-unit hub at Unit 11, the Building Manager is responsible for coordinating with tenants to ensure that the vertical nature of the intensification does not create a safety risk for anyone with a disability.

- **Individual Assessment:** Identifies the specific needs of the person (e.g., mobility impairment, visual or hearing impairment, or neurodivergent conditions that may cause distress during alarms).
- **Designated Assistance:** Assigns specific "Evacuation Buddies"—usually colleagues within their business unit—who are trained to assist them during an alarm.
- **Evacuation Routes:** Maps out the specific accessible route to the nearest Refuge Area or the designated accessible exit.
- **Specialised Equipment:** Details the use of specific aids, such as Evac-Chairs for stairways or vibrating pagers/visual beacons for those with hearing impairments.
- **Communication Protocol:** Outlines how the individual will communicate with the Building Manager or Emergency Services once they reach a safe Refuge Area (e.g., via the EVC intercom).

5. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

Policy Compliance:

London Plan Policy D5 & Haringey Policy DM1.

Inclusive design is an ongoing operational commitment. In accordance with London Plan Policy D5, which requires developments to be "managed and maintained" to ensure inclusive access for the lifetime of the building, the management strategy for Unit 11 identifies clear responsibilities for the upkeep of accessible infrastructure.

This ensures that the intensification to a multi-unit hub remains functional and welcoming for all tenants and visitors, preventing the accidental creation of barriers through poor maintenance or obstruction.

5.1 Responsibilities of the Building Manager

A designated Building Manager will be appointed to oversee the daily operations of the 14 business units. Their responsibilities regarding inclusive access include:

- **Route Maintenance:** Ensuring that all primary accessible routes, including the level-access foyer and internal corridors, are kept strictly free from obstructions such as delivery pallets, waste bins, or tenant storage.
- **Automated Systems:** Implementing a rigorous testing and maintenance schedule for all automated door systems and high-contrast lighting to ensure they remain fully functional for users with limited manual dexterity or visual impairments.
- **Wayfinding Integrity:** Regularly auditing internal signage and tactile indicators to ensure they have not been obscured or damaged, maintaining the "legibility" of the building for neurodivergent users.

5.2 Lift Reliability and Servicing

- **Technical Upkeep:** Given the reliance on the passenger/goods lift for accessing the 14 units and the upper-level communal gardens, a high-standard service contract will be maintained.
- **Communication:** In the event of scheduled maintenance or a rare mechanical fault, the Building Manager will provide advance digital notification to all tenants, allowing those with mobility needs to adjust their schedules or utilise the ground-floor social hub as a temporary workspace.

5.3 Landscape Management (Communal Gardens)

- **Surface Integrity:** The Building Manager will ensure that the specialised slip-resistant surfaces of the 123sqm First Floor and 118sqm Second Floor gardens are regularly cleaned and maintained.
- **Vegetation Control:** Planters will be managed to ensure that overhanging vegetation does not encroach upon the required 1500mm wheelchair turning circles or obstruct the level thresholds between the interior and exterior.

5.4 Ongoing Staff Training

- **Inclusive Service:** Any staff or security personnel employed at the High Cross Centre hub will undergo training in disability awareness and inclusive assistance. This ensures that the human element of the building management matches the high architectural standards of the physical design.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Strategic Inclusive Vision

The proposal for Unit 11 represents a benchmark for industrial intensification in South Tottenham, proving that high-density employment and universal accessibility are not mutually exclusive.

By embedding inclusivity into the architectural core—rather than treating it as a secondary bolt-on—the development ensures that the transformation of this former single-occupancy warehouse into a 14-unit business hub creates a workplace that is accessible to all, regardless of physical, sensory, or cognitive ability.

6.2 Delivering Equality and Wellbeing

The design goes beyond basic compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and Building Regulations Part M. By providing level access from the street, a high-specification inclusive lift, and dedicated accessible amenities, the scheme ensures that "maker" entrepreneurs and employees with disabilities have equal access to economic opportunities.

Furthermore, the inclusion of 241sqm of accessible communal gardens ensures that the mental health and well-being benefits of high-quality green space are equitably distributed across the entire tenant community.

6.3 Policy Alignment

This Inclusive Access Statement demonstrates that the proposal is in full accordance with:

- **The London Plan (2021) Policy D5:** Meeting the highest standards of accessible and inclusive design.
- **Haringey Local Plan Policy DM1:** Delivering a "user-friendly" environment that respects the diversity of the borough's workforce.
- **NPPF (2024):** Promoting healthy, inclusive, and safe places.

6.4 Formal Closing

The applicant is committed to the long-term inclusive management of the site, as outlined in the Maintenance and Management Plan.

It is respectfully submitted that the physical interventions and management protocols detailed in this statement remove the historical barriers found within the High Cross Centre, ensuring that this employment intensification is accessible to the widest possible range of local talent in Tottenham.