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Fire Safety Strategy

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

Proposal: Vertical extension and intensification of Use Class E(g)/B8 to create a managed multi-unit business hub. Apex Height: 15.6m

Date: 25th February 2026

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1. Legal Compliance and Planning Requirement

This Fire Safety Strategy is submitted as a mandatory legal requirement for the planning application under the London Plan Policy D12. Its primary purpose is to provide a robust framework confirming that the proposed vertical extension and intensification of Unit 11 complies with all current fire safety regulations and Building Regulations (Approved Document B).

The statement addresses critical safety pillars: fire risk assessments, passive and active protection, escape routes, and firefighting equipment. The applicant acknowledges that a comprehensive fire statement is essential; failure to provide this level of detail can result in the delay or rejection of the planning application. This document ensures that safety is "designed in" from the outset.

2. Fire Hazards, Risks, and Occupant Load

A core component of this strategy is the identification and mitigation of hazards associated with transitioning from a single-occupancy warehouse to a 14-unit business hub.

- **Identification of Hazards:** Potential hazards include increased electrical loads and potential faults from multiple independent business units, the storage of diverse materials within the ground-floor workshop, and the presence of high-density equipment.
- **Occupant Load:** The building is designed for an estimated peak occupancy of 60 - 80 persons, based on the 14 units on the first floor and additional workspace on the second floor.
- **Ongoing Risk Assessment:** A comprehensive fire risk assessment (FRA) has been integrated into the design phase. Fire safety is treated as an ongoing process; therefore, a qualified professional will conduct regular assessments post-occupation to account for any changes in unit layouts, tenant machinery, or occupancy density.

3. Passive Fire Protection Measures

Passive measures are the building's first line of defense, designed to contain fire at its source.

- **Compartmentation:** The building is subdivided into fire-resisting compartments. Each of the 14 business units is separated by fire-rated partitions with a minimum 60-minute fire resistance. This prevents the lateral and vertical spread of fire and smoke between units.
- **Material Specification:** The external vertical extension utilizes a high-specification metal "camouflage" cladding system. All external wall materials are designed to be non-combustible or of limited combustibility, ensuring the building envelope meets the highest safety standards.
- **Structural Integrity:** The clear-span structural approach on the upper floors utilises fire-protected steelwork. This ensures the building maintains its structural stability for the required period during an emergency, protecting both occupants and fire personnel.

4. Active Fire Systems

Active systems provide immediate detection and suppression capabilities.

- **Detection and Alarms:** A category L2/L3 automatic fire detection and alarm system will be installed throughout the hub. This includes optical smoke and heat detectors in all private units, communal corridors, the ground-floor canteen, and the workshop.
- **Emergency Voice Communication (EVC):** A hands-free EVC intercom system will be provided at all designated refuge areas. This allows direct, two-way communication between vulnerable occupants and the Building Manager or Fire and Rescue Services.
- **Suppression:** While the building height (under 18m) does not strictly mandate sprinklers, the feasibility of a localised suppression system will be reviewed during the detailed design stage to enhance long-term resilience and asset protection.

5. Evacuation Strategy and Management

A clear evacuation plan is critical for a multi-unit environment.

- **Simultaneous Evacuation:** Given the shared communal gardens and the multi-tenant nature of the site, a "Simultaneous Evacuation" strategy is adopted. Upon alarm activation, all occupants will immediately exit the building.
- **Building Management Role:** A dedicated Building Manager will act as the Fire Warden, coordinating the evacuation, ensuring all units are cleared, and meeting the Fire and Rescue Services upon arrival with the necessary site information.
- **Signage:** All escape routes will be clearly marked with high-visibility, photoluminescent exit signage and well-lit with emergency lighting to ensure visibility even in the event of power failure.

6. Escape Routes and Protected Stair Cores

- **Dual-Staircase Strategy:** The building features two protected stair cores located at opposite ends of the structure. This provides alternative egress routes, ensuring that if one stairwell is compromised by fire or smoke, the other remains available. This design eliminates "dead-end" conditions.
- **Travel Distances:** Internal layouts have been meticulously planned to ensure that travel distances from the furthest point of any individual business unit to a protected stair core comply strictly with the maximum limits set out in Approved Document B.

7. Disabled Means of Escape and Inclusive Planning

Inclusivity is a priority, ensuring that fire safety accounts for all users regardless of mobility.

- **Refuge Areas:** Each upper-floor stairwell includes a designated refuge area (minimum 1400mm x 900mm). These are safe zones for wheelchair users that do not obstruct the flow of other evacuating occupants.
- **PEEPs and Evacuation Buddies:** The Building Manager will work with tenants to create Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs). These identify "Evacuation Buddies" for staff with sensory or mobility impairments, ensuring no one is left behind.

8. Firefighting Equipment, Maintenance, and Training

- **Provision of Equipment:** The building will be equipped with appropriate fire extinguishers (CO2, Foam, and Water) and smoke ventilation systems within the stair cores to keep escape routes clear of toxic gases.
- **Mandatory Maintenance:** All fire safety equipment—including alarms, emergency lighting, and extinguishers—will be kept in good working order via a mandatory maintenance schedule overseen by the Building Manager.
- **Training:** All tenants and staff will receive fire safety inductions and regular training on how to use equipment and follow established emergency procedures. Regular fire drills will be conducted to ensure the evacuation plan is effective.

9. Access and Facilities for Fire & Rescue Services

- **Vehicle Access:** Fire appliances can access the site directly via the existing High Cross Centre courtyard from Fountayne Road, providing sufficient hardstanding and clearance.
- **Water Supply:** The development will utilise existing external hydrants within the High Cross Centre, ensuring a reliable water supply for firefighting operations.
- **Firefighting Lift Strategy:** Although the 15.6m height is below the 18m threshold for a mandatory firefighting lift, the central high-capacity goods/passenger lift is positioned to assist the Fire Service in transporting heavy equipment to upper floors if required.

10. Gateway 1 Assessment Clause

Planning Gateway One: The applicant recognises that although the building's apex height of 15.6m is below the statutory 18m/7-storey threshold for mandatory Planning Gateway One submission, fire safety is of paramount importance. Consequently, the applicant hereby states that a formal Gate 1 Fire Statement and Assessment can be completed by a qualified fire engineer should the Local Authority (LA) require this to support the planning application further.

Conclusion: This Fire Safety Strategy confirms that Unit 11, High Cross Centre is designed to meet and exceed compliance standards, providing a safe and resilient environment for its occupants and the surrounding community.