Inclusive Spaces and Places

A collaborative approach to inclusive design

October, 2024

GROSVENOR

THE CROWN ESTATE

Contents

Please note that this document has been retained in a word format to assist those with screen readers or other accessibility needs.

Acknowledgements

There were many contributors to this research. We relied on input from a wide range of organisations, and stakeholders in the office, retail, and leisure industries. We are extremely grateful to those who helped to make this work possible, whether this be through advising, participating directly, or putting us in touch with other people.

In particular, thank you to Volterra and Motionspot for their involvement in the creation of this report and several of the associated tools.

We would like to thank the following organisations from the Industry Steering Group for their peer review and feedback as well as providing case studies from their organisations (see Appendix A):

We would also like to thank the people who provided a critical review and made valuable contributions to this report:

Amanprit Arnold, Greater London Authority

Sinéad Burke, Tilting the Lens

Tanvi Vyas, Freelance Accessibility Consultant

Shani Dhanda, Innovating Inclusion

Tricia Smikle, Royal National Institute for the Blind

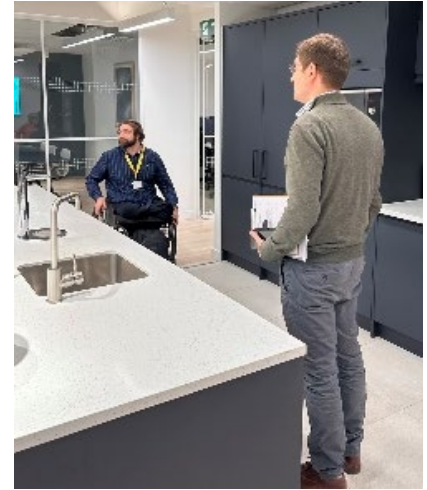Amy Francis-Smith, Pinnegar Hayward Design LLP

Jean Hewitt, Buro Happold

Mike Adams, Purple

…

Finally, we would like to thank all that participated in the lived experience workshops, interviews and surveys which contributed to this report. The below photographs show several of those workshops in action.

1. Introduction

Purpose of this report

Across the built environment, the design, construction and operation of buildings and places often unintentionally excludes many people, making their experiences within these spaces challenging and isolating. A lack of focus on inclusive design by property owners and developers means that those with diverse needs can feel overlooked or discriminated against.

For example, people with physical and / or sensory impairments navigate through spaces filled with obstacles, while those with sensory conditions or neurodivergence endure discomfort in environments that bear no consideration of their needs. This reality extends beyond inconvenience and highlights a systemic failure which deprives people of their agency and dignity. Existing minimum building regulations do not go far enough to ensure that the built environment is welcoming to and usable by everyone irrespective of disabilities, ethnicities, gender identities, sexual orientations, faiths, neurodiversity, age, and background.

Moreover, the economic impacts are significant, with businesses losing potential customers, staff, suppliers and partners due to exclusionary design. Each inaccessible doorway, cramped corridor, lack of baby changing or gender neutral bathroom can represent a tangible loss in revenue.

This report is intended to amplify the case for change across the industry, and accelerate understanding and employment of inclusive design approaches industry-wide. It builds on a period of extensive research and analysis undertaken by The Crown Estate and Grosvenor on the need for inclusive design within their own portfolios and presents the case for heightened standards to achieve better and more consistent inclusive design in the built environment.

It also offers practical solutions for property owners to begin addressing inclusive design within their own portfolio, alongside a set of open-source tools and calls to action for the wider sector to engage with.

It's time for the built environment to become truly welcoming to all.

Who this report is for

This report is for anyone looking to:

- Evidence the types of inclusivity and accessibility barriers people face in the built environment.
- Understand the measures needed to deliver inclusive design improvements.
- Demonstrate the impact on people's everyday experiences that can come from omitting inclusive design.
- Evidence the benefits of improving inclusivity and accessibility in the built environment.
- Understand the challenges that prevent developers, property owners and tenants from delivering inclusive design improvements.

Methodology

The conclusions of this report have been informed by:

- Best practice research and guidance on inclusive design.
- The collective knowledge of a group of 22 industry representatives and decision-makers in the built environment, to whom we are thankful for their input.
- Focus groups with more than 50 people with the lived experience of disability and a range of protected characteristics to understand the challenges they find in the built environment and how these can be overcome.
- Case studies on the reality of delivering inclusive design from The Crown Estate and Grosvenor.
- A panel of 10 inclusive design experts from a range of backgrounds.
- Knowledge and expertise from accessibility and inclusive design specialists Motionspot and Mobility Mojo.

2. What is inclusive design?

"Inclusive design seeks to create buildings and environments that welcome everyone, regardless of their characteristics or identity. Inclusive design aims to remove the barriers that create effort and separation, and enables everyone to participate equally, confidently, and independently in everyday activities." – The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), 2023. Inclusive Design Overlay to the RIBA Plan of Work

In the built environment, inclusive design is the process through which buildings and environments are made accessible, usable, inclusive and welcoming to as many people as possible.

Inclusive design puts people at the heart of the design process, acknowledges diversity and difference, highlights choice where design decisions cannot accommodate everyone, and provides flexibility in use. Taking this approach results in the creation of spaces that are both accessible and inclusive; ensuring that everyone can access workplaces, hospitality, retail, facilities, places of worship, leisure and wider public spaces.

Inclusive design aims to deliver spaces that are:

- **Accessible** – without barriers to their function, easily usable and navigable by all people regardless of their ability or disability.
- **Inclusive** – accommodating to everyone, accounting for the diverse range of needs, characteristics and lived experiences.

The report refers to inclusive design as the overarching concept that incorporates accessibility and inclusivity alongside other considerations to develop welcoming spaces.

The Equality Act 2010

There is growing recognition of the importance of accessibility and inclusivity, reflected in changing legislation and government guidance. In the UK, the Equality Act (2010) outlines the legal basis for preventing discrimination based on protected characteristics. The Act sets out the nine characteristics legally protected against discrimination:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex; and
- sexual orientation.

In the built environment, however, this legislation fails to implement a legal obligation for planners, designers, and occupiers to ensure that buildings and spaces are inclusively designed. The Equality Act (2010) is the minimum legal requirement for creating inclusive and accessible processes, interactions and environments in the UK.

Since 2010, there has been a variety of guidance published ranging from new British Standards for Neurodiversity to the recent RIBA inclusive design overlay. Whilst these documents build on the requirements outlined in the Equality Act, we believe these still don't go far enough in addressing the needs of many people, particularly those with often misunderstood experiences such as mental health issues, hidden disabilities, intersectional conditions and complex disabilities and needs. (See appendix C for a list of current legislation, policies and standards.)

Finally, new guidance is being published more frequently in recent years. This demonstrates a growing focus on inclusive design by regulators and industry bodies.
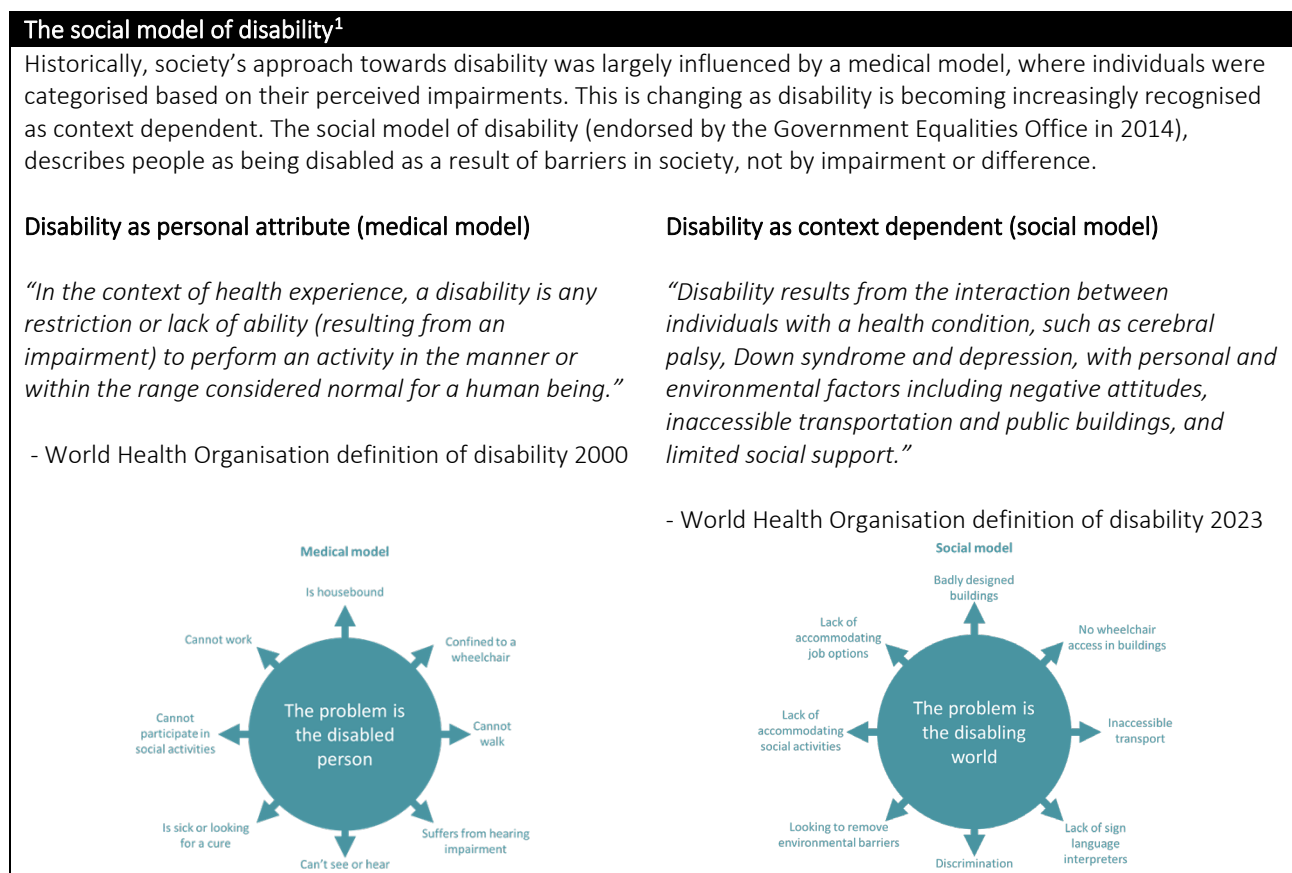
3. Why is inclusive design needed?

Same place, different experience

The quality of our environment influences the quality of our lives. Decisions about the design, planning, construction and management of spaces can significantly impact the places we visit, work and live, as well as many decisions in our everyday lives. When the spaces we use are appropriately designed to be inclusive and accessible, this can create a more equitable, inclusive and cohesive society.

The barriers people face in accessing the built environment are not caused by individual characteristics, beliefs, genders, age, faith, ethnicity, ability or disability or any other aspect of identity. They are caused by the way buildings and spaces have been designed.

When we think about designing inclusively, many people think about reducing access barriers for disabled people. Indeed, this is one of the considerations of inclusive design where data and evidence of the scale of the barriers faced is most readily available. The current social model of disability (see below) recognises it as the interaction of environments and barriers placed by spaces on disabled people

The social model of disability[1]

Historically, society's approach towards disability was largely influenced by a medical model, where individuals were categorised based on their perceived impairments. This is changing as disability is becoming increasingly recognised as context dependent. The social model of disability (endorsed by the Government Equalities Office in 2014), describes people as being disabled as a result of barriers in society, not by impairment or difference.

Disability as personal attribute (medical model)

"In the context of health experience, a disability is any restriction or lack of ability (resulting from an impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being."

- World Health Organisation definition of disability 2000

Disability as context dependent (social model)

"Disability results from the interaction between individuals with a health condition, such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and depression, with personal and environmental factors including negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social support."

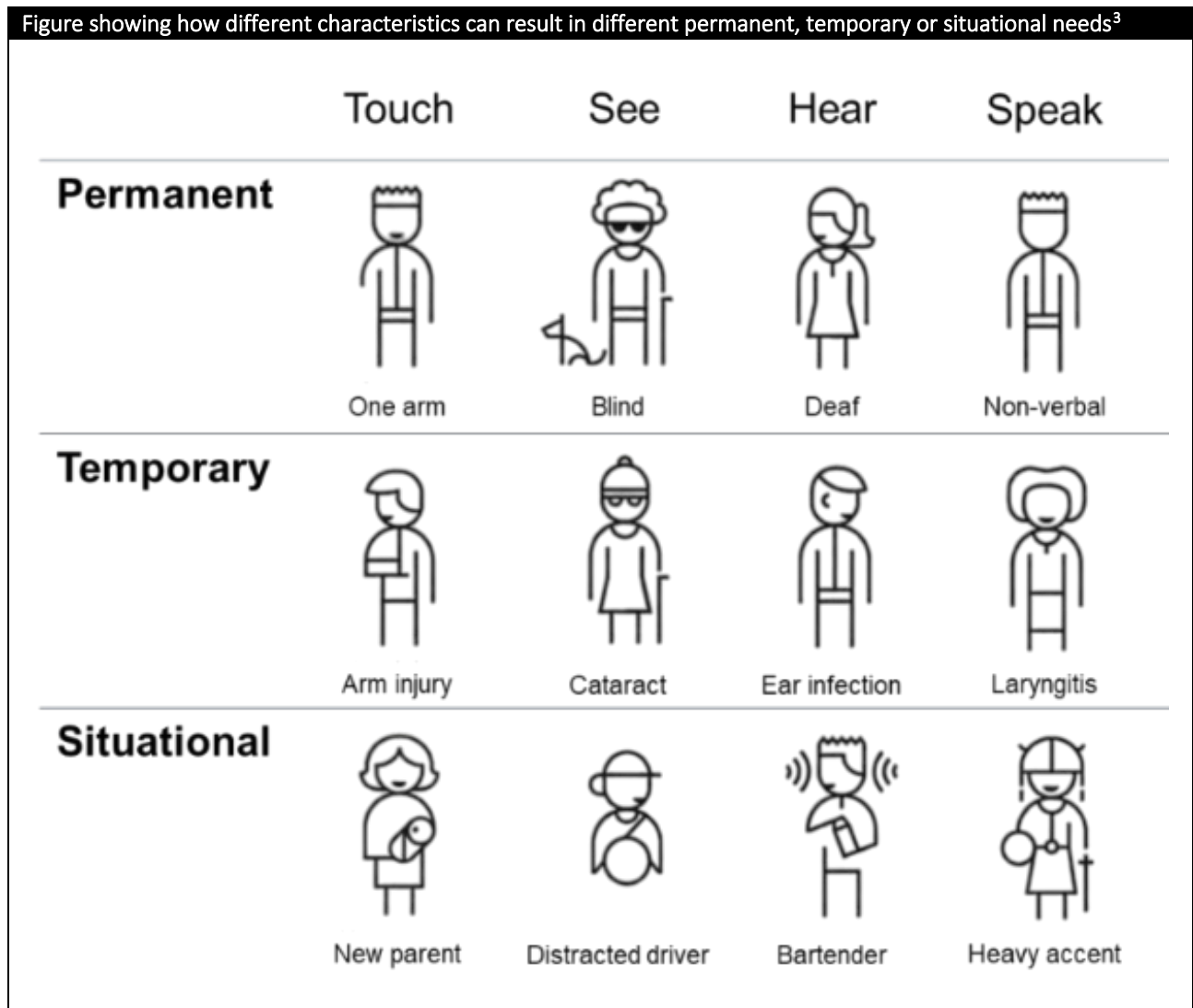- World Health Organisation definition of disability 2023

However, inclusive design stretches beyond disability. Inclusive design involves considering how we experience environments differently and creating places and spaces to accommodate our differences, characteristics and identity traits.

Designing the built environment to be inclusive requires an understanding of individuals' needs. Designing for inclusively benefits everyone, whether this is provision to safely access shops, lighting to allow people to work, or clear directions to enable people to travel in unfamiliar environments. This is reflected in a wide range of guidance for designing the built environment, including The Mayor of London's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy, which states "*development in London should always create inclusive, barrier-free environments by the principles of inclusive design at the heart of the planning process*".[2] These principles are:

- Inclusive design places people at the heart of the design process.
- Inclusive design acknowledges diversity and difference.
- Inclusive design offers choice where a single design solution cannot accommodate all users.
- Inclusive design provides for flexibility in use.
- Inclusive design provides buildings and environments that are convenient and enjoyable to use for everyone.

Different individuals' needs may be temporary or situational and are dependent on the interaction between the environment and their own social characteristics. For example, someone with temporary injuries may only experience the built environment differently until those injuries are healed; someone responsible for a baby with a pram may experience the built environment differently because of their specific situation.

Figure showing how different characteristics can result in different permanent, temporary or situational needs[3]

	Touch	See	Hear	Speak
Permanent	One arm	Blind	Deaf	Non-verbal
Temporary	Arm injury	Cataract	Ear infection	Laryngitis
Situational	New parent	Distracted driver	Bartender	Heavy accent

We also experience spaces differently because of how other people make us feel when we're using them, as well as due to their design. Inclusive design is therefore not only relevant for the design of buildings and spaces but for the way they are operated and our journey to access them.

Who benefits from inclusive design?

Inclusive design benefits everyone – not just the people who experience challenges in the built environment. Every human being is unique, experiencing the world in our own way. However, the built environment should not make these differences a barrier to experiencing our environment equally or in accessing social and economic opportunities. Inclusive design in the built environment is about ensuring that spaces and places are welcoming, accessible and usable for all.

As of 2021, there are more people with a physical or non-physical impairment in the UK than the populations of London, Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds combined. Most UK households include someone from a population group that disproportionately experiences barriers to accessing the built environment. Of the 67m UK population:

- 1 in 4 are disabled.
- 1.5 million people experience learning difficulties.
- 1.5 million people experience memory problems.[4]
- 1 in 5 are over 65.
- 1 in 5 are from ethnic minority backgrounds .
- 1 in 30 people identify as LGBTQ+.[5]

These numbers are forecast to continue to grow in future years. The number of disabled people has grown by approximately 50% over the past 20 years,[6] and is estimated to continue to grow significantly faster than the whole population at more than 2% each year.[7] The proportion of the population from ethnic minority backgrounds in the UK has increased from 12% in 2001 to 18% in 2021.[8]

Many of these personal characteristics are interconnected and some people face a number of linked challenges within the built environment as a result. Within London alone:[9]

- Disabled people are more likely to be older (44% of disabled people are also over 65, compared to 12% of the London population overall) and are more likely to be on a low income (61% of disabled people are also on low income, compared to 34% of the London population overall).[10]
- People on low incomes are also more likely to be older people (24% of those on low income are also over 65, compared to 12% of the London population overall).

Spending power

Despite the rise in e-commerce, many businesses still rely on customers entering their buildings and therefore lose out significantly by not considering needs of their diverse customers. The Purple Pound report estimates that the spending power of households with at least one disabled person totals £300bn each year.[11] The Black Pound report estimates that spending power of the ethnic minority population in the UK is £5bn annually.[12] Finally, the Pink Pound report estimates this figure is £6bn for the LGBTQ+ community.[13]

Poor design creates environments where people feel unwelcome. This can force people to change the way they work, travel, live and visit places. Issues such as unsuitable lighting, toilet facilities, or excessive noise levels can lead to people exiting these spaces prematurely or avoiding them altogether. For example, businesses lose approximately £2 billion a month by ignoring the needs of disabled people.

"There is a difference between managing to find your way around a space or building and being confident using the space." – Quote from an attendee of lived experience workshop.

While it is challenging to fully measure the impact of poorly designed environments on the people that use them, the data available paints a telling picture: 43% of disabled individuals have reported abandoning a recent shopping trip due to barriers encountered[14] and 75-80% of customer experiences are deemed to be a failure by disabled people[15]. This figure likely only begins to show the full picture. Many more might avoid visiting restaurants, offices, or other spaces where they anticipate a lack of inclusivity or find themselves forced to leave places that fail to accommodate their needs.

The next section aims to encapsulate the breadth of this issue, summarising insights and experiences shared by people who meet these challenges every day.

Human consequences

When asked how a lack of inclusive design makes them feel, and the impact on their lives, attendees of lived experience workshops said:

Feelings of exclusion	Lack of confidence	Forcing people to change
"Lack of access or inappropriate design makes me feel unwanted and part of 'the other'." *"My father struggles to walk. Last week we went to a restaurant where the disabled toilet was downstairs. It was suggested for him to use the service entrance. This does not help to make people feel included."* *"At some point in life everyone will be affected by disabilities, whether it is you, your friends or family. People that aren't yet affected don't realise how badly places are designed."*	*"Many people have to plan their day around where toilets are. They cannot visit places that they do not know have a toilet."* *"There is a difference between managing to find your way around a space or building and being confident using the space."* *"The signage in many places is currently terrible. It stops many people from visiting areas they have not been before."*	*"If someone needs to ask for help, it is a failure of the design of the building."* *"There is no such thing as a perfect building for accessibility, but the ideal environment is one you don't have to plan for or react to."* *"Disabled people adapt to the world rather than the world adapting to them… they often don't have a voice, and this results in them being isolated from the built environment"*

4. The case for inclusive design

Property owners and developers play a pivotal role in shaping people's lived experiences, and there are clear opportunities and risks that compel us to act now and act together.

The fundamental reason for investing in inclusive design is the ethical case. It is simply the right thing to do to make the built environment accessible to as many people as possible. Inclusive design enables everyone to have access to economic and social opportunities, wellbeing and promoting wider social cohesion. Denying access to goods and services due to someone's physical, neurological or situational 'difference' not only excludes them from societal interaction but also negatively impacts their wellbeing. Every person and organisation should support inclusive design to ensure that everyone can participate in society.

In a retail and leisure context, investing in inclusive design can also **unlock greater commercial success for our customers** by helping them create more positive experiences for a wider array of customers and visitors. Additionally, Purple estimate that businesses lose £2bn a month by ignoring the needs of disabled people.[16] In supporting business to thrive, **voids are minimised and resilience of property portfolios is improved.**Error! Bookmark not defined.

> In Australia investment in inclusive retail spaces has been estimated to **increase revenues by AU$4 billion annually.**

Larger brands are actively seeking accessible and inclusive buildings as they recognise how inaccessibility increasingly impacts their bottom line. This was particularly evident in the fashion sector where occupiers spoke about their requirements for buildings with step free access and other accessibility considerations.

> **43%** of disabled people have reported abandoning a recent shopping trip due to barriers encountered.

The **demand from occupiers further strengthens the need to act** as businesses are placing a growing emphasis on their ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) standards. The development of Diversity, Equality & Inclusion strategies and social impact commitments translates to a greater awareness and demand for the buildings businesses occupy to reflect their values of inclusion and accessibility.

Commercial occupiers are also becoming more aware of how the **quality and inclusive design of their office space is seen by employees as more important than pay for job satisfaction**. One survey by WeWork and Reuters found that more than 50% of respondents cited better work areas as more important than higher pay when asked what would make them more satisfied with their job.

> **93% of executives** surveyed say that their DE&I policy is more important to their company now than at the beginning of 2020.

Inclusive design also has the potential for not only enhancing the reputation of property owners but also safeguarding their long-term licence to operate. Changing social attitudes mean that awareness of inclusivity and inclusive design has grown significantly across potential occupiers as well as a host of key stakeholders within the built environment such as the GLA, who are embedding inclusive design at the heart of their new London Plan, and RIBA, with their new Inclusive Design Overlay for development projects.

> **46%** of surveyed consumers say that they would pay more for brands that they trust.

"More and more, the social and environmental position of brands requires inclusivity. Even setting aside social considerations, the bottom line for businesses is that there is a reward for being an inclusive brand, whether that be through actions to improve accessibility, wellbeing, or something else. It's getting increasingly high on the radar of businesses." – Taken from interview with leasing manager of commercial property.

Finally, by not investing in the inclusive design of current and future buildings, property owners and developers are exposing themselves to growing risks associated with stranded assets and costly retrofits. From a policy perspective, the European Accessibility Act is an example of the ongoing evolution of standards and legislation on the need to consider inclusive design for products and services. This Act mandates accessibility requirements for a broad range of products and services within the EU market, including digital devices, e-commerce, and transportation services, among others. Its implementation signifies a major step towards ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their abilities, can access and benefit from the same services and products.

By setting a precedent for accessibility, the Act not only reflects the growing societal demand for inclusivity but also emphasises the importance of proactively incorporating accessible design principles from the outset. With societal

attitudes towards inclusivity changing rapidly, current legislation on inclusivity may quickly become outdated: another reason for this heightened industry investment in our buildings and places to future standards.

In practical terms, applying acute focus on inclusive design early on in project design **can prevent expensive retrofits and possibly even legal challenges later on** as policy evolves and expectations of building standards increase.[17]

The risk of stranded assets (i.e. properties that cannot be leased)

The introduction of minimum energy performance regulations in 2018 rendered 1 in 8 commercial units in England legally unlettable. A significantly larger share of property has been 'stranded' as a result of businesses increasingly choosing more sustainable property.

Engagement with industry leaders has shown clear potential for a similar stranding of assets as a result of poor accessibility and inclusivity.

Future changes in building regulations encourage the development of more accessible environments and risk stranded assets if businesses do not consider inclusive design as part of their refurbishments and new builds today. Businesses also risk falling behind other organisations taking advantage of the changing social attitudes.

To make the case for change, it's useful to ask what insights the industry could have gained a decade ago as the climate crisis emerged, before committing to the complex, interconnected and often costly solutions that have shaped our current path to net zero.

There are similarities in how both are driven by a sense of responsibility to market demand, legislative changes, and the future generations who would benefit from our actions today. Waking up to what has the hallmarks of an equally significant shift required in the sector, and engaging in the accessibility and inclusivity conversation early will **set the industry up for continued commercial success while working towards a more equitable society.**

"What is universal, however, is that occupiers are seeking a step-change in the quality of space occupied to drive up utilisation. This serves to balance the needs of the business and employee. It represents a stronger return on investment for the CFO, whilst allowing the CEO to bring greater strategic alignment between workplace and workstyle, culture and connectivity, inclusion, and impact." - **Knight Frank, What's next for occupier demand? Feb 2023**

*"We think the opportunity is in green buildings, with ESG [*Environment, Social and Governance] *credentials, amenities and accessibility."* - **M&G Investments Apr 2023**

"There was a point where sustainability became the top priority for businesses in commercial space decisions overnight. Is accessibility in that place now? No. But I think there is strong potential for it to become so in the next few years" – **Taken from interview with leasing manager of commercial property at Grosvenor.**

"There has been a change between sustainability becoming a cost and now being a benefit in commercial property, mainly because consumers are now willing to pay for sustainability. Consumers are starting to pay more attention to inclusivity, and businesses will respond to those changes." – **Taken from interview with leasing manager of events space at The Crown Estate.**

Case study: the business case for sustainability in commercial property

Historically, investment in sustainability in the built environment was seen as a cost to be incurred by property owners and tenants, requiring time and space that could have otherwise supported trading or other productive business endeavours. Early arguments highlighting the case for sustainability in commercial property naturally emphasised the moral importance of the issue as a result.

In London today, however, sustainable commercial property is attracting a growing 'green premium', with demand for the most sustainable buildings and spaces exceeding supply. Higher rents reflect the need for organisations to achieve their own internal targets and also support the social objectives and values of their consumers and employees.

Current evidence is clear that sustainable features in buildings are no longer seen by tenants as necessary costs to be born, but are instead actively valued and attract higher rents and valuations. Indeed, a recent ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) survey by CBRE reveals that over 60% of European investors and occupiers have already paid more for building features that reduce carbon footprints and improve the health and wellbeing of employees.

Recent evidence of this green premium has been found by:

- JLL, who find that for central London office property in 2023 a one-step increase in EPC ratings delivers an additional 4.2% in rents, and that having a form of BREEAM certification for office space adds an average of 11.6% to rental rates.
- Knight Frank, who find that across London, having a BREEAM certification ranging from 'very good' to 'excellent' increases office rental rates by 3.7% to 12.3%.
- UBS, who find that commercial property in London with a BREEAM or LEED certification has on average a 19% higher sale price per square foot than property without these certifications. This figure is also higher in other markets internationally.

Current evidence on the impact of investment in inclusivity in the built environment from case studies and from engagement with industry insiders suggests that it is in a similar position now as the concept of sustainability was previously. There is evidence of growing social values and attitudes towards inclusivity, including consumers starting to reward brands with a reputation for inclusivity. However, the investment of space and time required by tenants is currently seen as a cost rather than a benefit, as was the previously the case for sustainability.

Predicting social attitudes, which drive changing demand from tenants and legislation from government, is always going to be uncertain. Previously, it was not always obvious that investment in sustainability in the built environment would not only deliver positive commercial returns, but would actively be necessary in order for property owners to continue to let buildings. The pace of change of the need for sustainability in commercial spaces demonstrates that early action can actively benefit industry leaders at the forefront of investment. There is clearly potential as well as precedence for this to be the case for inclusive design.

5. Barriers to change

Given the significant case for investing in and improving accessibility and inclusive design of the built environment, the natural next question is 'what is stopping organisations from delivering these improvements?'

Through review of existing policy and guidance, and engagement with industry experts, this section summarises the key barriers which are preventing organisations from delivering these improvements. These barriers have been split into two categories:

- **Knowledge gaps** – reflecting areas in which the organisations themselves do not have the knowledge or skills to deliver improvements.
- **Wider barriers** – reflecting other issues that result from constraints in buildings and spaces, and in a lack of alignment with organisational decision-making.

Knowledge gaps

Lack of understanding of the benefits and value case

"Many businesses currently see inclusive design as a social good, rather than thinking that they are missing out on a customer base" – Taken from interview with designer of retail stores.

A greater understanding of the benefits of investing in inclusive design will help change these misperceptions. To turn this corner, the industry must improve its collective understanding of the need for investment and the benefits to be enjoyed by businesses and organisations – not to mention its people.

The lack of awareness of the benefits of investment does not just apply to the property owners and custodians of the built environment. End-tenants and occupiers have a significant impact on how spaces are used in practice, and experienced by the public. This means that alongside delivering inclusive design for the built environment itself, there is also a need to ensure tenants understand the benefits of using spaces appropriately. This means for example, maintaining accessways and wayfinding measures, and ensuring that staff are well trained.

Lack of awareness of what to invest in

Even where organisations are starting to understand the benefits of inclusive design, some are prevented from delivering improvements because they don't know how to do so within their buildings and spaces.

To develop this understanding, organisations need to consult design experts, and people with a wide range of lived experiences. Crucially, this consultation needs to move from being an afterthought to being an intrinsic part of early feasibility and concept design.

"Having some sort of framework [for the accessibility measures required], would be helpful for brands because it gives them a plan. Most businesses' intentions for accessibility are good and they want to be better, they just don't know what to do or how to go about it." – Taken from interview with leasing manager of commercial property at Grosvenor.

Lack of awareness of how to involve inclusivity in projects

Organisations also fail to recognise the importance of considering inclusive design throughout the project's delivery. If inclusivity is considered throughout project design, it can save significant costs of upgrading and retrofitting builds to meet the demands of changing legislation. Future loos of revenue can be avoided with prior knowledge of the barriers that individuals face in the built environment.

Wider barriers

Heritage and difficulties repurposing buildings

Balancing heritage preservation with the need for inclusive design is a challenging task for the sector to solve. Heritage buildings, especially those with listed status and in conservation areas, are valuable cultural and historical assets. In London, over 19,000 buildings have listed status as of 2023.[18] These structures often come with stringent regulations to preserve their architectural integrity and these pose challenges for retrofitting and inclusive design.

The real challenge is less a physical one, however, and more about shifting the widely held perception that heritage preservation and inclusive design are conflicting goals, to understanding them as complementary. Heritage buildings by their very nature are a testament to history and culture, but if these buildings are not accessible to a diverse range of people, they risk losing attractiveness for occupiers and becoming obsolete.

Industry stakeholders highlighted during engagement that heritage is sometimes used as an excuse to not deliver on the benefits of inclusive design. Sometimes decision-makers are aware that the heritage status of buildings can limit the extent of investment in inclusive design and this reduces the willingness to invest. To overcome this challenge, there needs to be a stronger advocacy for the adaptation of heritage buildings to make them more inclusive.

"Historic Buildings, landscapes and places exist for the enjoyment and appreciation of everybody. Too many people think of the historic environment as being inaccessible. Historic England knows that this need not be the case. On the contrary, we know that good quality access can enhance our understanding of the historic environment and ensure its sustainability" – Historic England, 2015. Easy Access to Historic Buildings

Lack of a consistent approach for measurement

Design choices that make people feel welcomed can deliver immediate financial benefit, in addition to wider advantages including boosting the reputation of the organisation and improving diversity. However, measuring the impact of investments in inclusive design poses a significant challenge for organisations and the decision-makers choosing whether to invest.

"Inclusion programmes can prove difficult to measure. Measuring inclusive design can be challenging, as characteristics such as values, beliefs, knowledge and skills can be hard to define. Also, when analysing data on inclusive design, it is not always clear what the appropriate level of diversity should be." - S. Thompson, 2017. Defining and measuring inclusion within an organisation.

To address this, businesses need a comprehensive framework which combines qualitative and data-led, quantitative metrics, allowing them to evaluate the impact of inclusivity initiatives on people's lives. Incorporating inclusive design into a company's ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) goals can also help structure and prioritise these efforts. By adopting such frameworks, businesses can more effectively measure, understand, and communicate the value of inclusive design, aligning it with broader organisational objectives, and ensuring accountability in business management.

6. Recommendations for change

This report presents the case for investment in inclusive design, alongside the barriers to implementation and reasons why this investment has not yet happened on a large scale. Data evidence and engagement undertaken for this report show that a large number of users are effectively prevented from accessing areas of the built environment, and that the potential benefits from investment in inclusive design for businesses and organisations are substantial.

The case for delivering change and investment in inclusive design is growing as social attitudes and the needs of consumers, workers – and all of us using the built environment – are changing. Investing in inclusive design now will enable organisations to get ahead of these changes to be at the forefront of not just a growing market, but a force for social good.

However, there are a number of barriers faced by decision-makers that prevent investment in inclusive design. Engagement has highlighted that a lack of knowledge of what to deliver and how to do so is preventing inclusive design from being delivered in practice.

This report concludes with five recommendations for how to deliver inclusive design within the built environment and urges the real estate sector to support and implement these as a priority:

Listen to and involve lived experience: understand and engage with current and future users of buildings and spaces who have lived experience across a range of characteristics.

Measure: measure and understand the level of accessibility for existing buildings and spaces to inform key interventions across your portfolio.

Communicate: provide better information on the level of accessibility of existing buildings and spaces so people can feel more confident using them.

Exceed: go beyond building regulations by introducing an inclusive design brief, developed with people with diverse lived experiences, to create more rigorous standards for developments of all sizes.

Collaborate and educate:. work with industry partners in a community of practice to ensure accessibility and inclusive design are integrated into new and existing buildings and public realm.

It is the responsibility of the whole built environment industry to address the barriers which prevent people from using and enjoying buildings and the spaces around them. These recommendations form a call to action for other individuals and organisations looking to support inclusion.

Actionable tools for delivering inclusive design

Call to action	Rationale	The Crown Estate and Grosvenor's commitment (DRAFT)	Key tools
Listen to and involve lived experience: understand and engage with current and future users of buildings and spaces who have lived experience across a range of characteristics.	"Nothing about us without us" underscores the importance of effective engagement and design reviews involving those who experience barriers to inclusion. Without considering people's needs and lived experiences, there is no way of ensuring that an environment will create a positive and equitable experience for everyone.	The Crown Estate and Grosvenor have set up an inclusive design panel of people with lived experience to support projects throughout the duration of the development from design through to delivery.

This panel will also be used to consult on works to existing buildings and changes required across our portfolios. | **Guidance document for creating a panel of lived experience:** to support other property owners in creating a panel of people with lived experience, The Crown Estate and Grosvenor have developed a draft governance document that others can adapt for their own organisation to support a fair, inclusive and productive discussion, and a better project outcome. |
Measure: measure and understand the level of accessibility for existing buildings and spaces to inform key interventions across your portfolio.	A considerable obstacle to advancing inclusive design is the lack of clarity on investment priorities and performance metrics. Organisations often struggle to start or prioritise improvements due to this uncertainty, even as they recognise the benefits.	The Crown Estate and Grosvenor commit to championing a consistent approach to auditing their commercial portfolios to understand existing levels of accessibility. They will share learnings on the tools and methodologies that can support this to encourage more consistent industry take up.	**Measurement approach to evaluate current levels of accessibility:** The Crown Estate and Grosvenor have pioneered an online tool with Mobility Mojo to trial how property owners could measure inclusive design across retail, food & beverage (F&B), office and public realm subsectors to provide a consistent assessment with clear recommendations for how to improve existing buildings and spaces.
Communicate: provide better information on the level of accessibility of existing buildings and spaces so people can feel more confident using them.	One of the greatest barriers for people using spaces is a lack of available information on its level of accessibility for them. To overcome this, better information needs to be provided about commercial spaces to empower and help people understand whether or not they can access a space.	The Crown Estate and Grosvenor commit to continue improving the availability of information about their commercial buildings and spaces through appropriate tools.	**Digital information tools:** The Crown Estate and Grosvenor have worked with AccessAble and the Sociability App to provide pre-arrival information across all their core retail streets to ensure people with accessibility and inclusivity requirements know what to expect when visiting these locations.
Exceed: go beyond building regulations by introducing an inclusive design brief, developed	Best-practice inclusive design should address diverse needs beyond physical accessibility and disability, focusing on all protected	The Crown Estate and Grosvenor commit to following the guidance outlined in the RIBA Inclusive Design Overlay and complying with	**Inclusive Design Brief:** The Crown Estate and Grosvenor have created an Inclusive Design Brief, in collaboration with Motionspot, for

Call to action	Rationale	The Crown Estate and Grosvenor's commitment (DRAFT)	Key tools
with people with diverse lived experiences, to create more rigorous standards for developments of all sizes.	characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. It involves engaging with those who have lived experience and goes beyond current regulations to ensure buildings are future-ready.	an Inclusive Design Brief that goes beyond existing regulation and standards to ensure their buildings are as welcoming as possible for everyone. They commit to open-source a high-level version of the Inclusive Design Brief document to support others in the industry on this journey.	their new developments. This includes prompts for design teams to use throughout a development project's timeline and includes a list of recommendations which go beyond minimum standards. **RIBA design overlay:** this overlay provides guidance on implementing inclusive design through each RIBA Plan of Work stage to enable informed decision-making at the right time and in the right order, to enabling the best ways to embrace and excel within inclusion practices.
Collaborate and educate: work with industry partners in a community of practice to ensure accessibility and inclusive design are integrated into new and existing buildings and public realm	The only way to deliver genuine change across the built environment is through sharing lessons learnt and collaboration between property owners, developers, architects, contractors and consultants.	The Crown Estate and Grosvenor commit to sharing lessons learnt on our projects and working with other real estate companies to champion inclusive design across the built environment.	**Industry working group and community of practice:** to drive collaboration, education and ultimately transformation across the sector The Crown Estate and Grosvenor have set up an industry working group (Accessible and Inclusive Places Industry Group). This group is open to other property owners, developers, architects, contractors and consultants.

7. What next?

This report serves as a foundational step towards creating an industry which prioritises accessibility and inclusion within buildings and public spaces. While it marks progress, it also underscores the considerable journey ahead.

The dissemination of inclusive design principles and the calls to action outlined in this report are vital to mobilise property owners, developers, contractors, and architects towards collective action. Only through widespread engagement and advocacy can we instigate systemic change across the built environment, fostering spaces that are truly inclusive and accessible to as many people as possible.

The next phase demands a **comprehensive examination of policy frameworks and their integration with inclusive design principles.** This entails examining current planning policy, both national and local, as well as engaging key political stakeholders in this agenda.

There are also further areas of inclusion that need to be explored.

- **Construction:** We need to delve deeper into the construction process, including the creation of temporary environments stemming from these projects.
- **Occupiers:** Attention must be directed towards how buildings are operated and outfitted by occupiers, recognising that inclusivity extends beyond physical structures to encompass usage and functionality.
- **Transport:** Further work is required to improve the accessibility of our buildings and public spaces from a transport and highways perspective helping people get to and from our buildings and public spaces

While this report highlights these areas for further exploration, we acknowledge that much of this work may fall to others in the sector. Our goal is to set the stage for a broader conversation and encourage proactive efforts in these domains. By fostering collaboration and sharing knowledge, we aim to drive systemic change and create environments that are accessible and inclusive for all.

Appendix A - Case studies incorporating inclusive design

Grimaldi Building, Royal National Institute for the Blind

Innovative sensory interventions

In 2023, the RNIB relocated from its London hub to the Grimaldi Building in Pentonville Road, Islington. The Hub accommodates RNIB's low vision centre, user lab, heritage area, products for life store, radio booth for RNIB's Connect Radio, recording studios for producing Talking Books, alongside offices and amenity spaces.

Accessibility was a key driver in selecting the location and the subsequent extensive refurbishment of the Grimaldi Building. It is widely believed to be the first building in the UK to meet PAS6463 Design for the Mind – Neurodiversity and the Built Environment – considering people with sensory differences as well as incorporating innovations for people living with sight loss.

Image shows the front desk of the RNIB offices.

The use of visual contrast has always been an important measure to achieve a safer environment for people with a range of visual impairments, helping to provide distinction between adjacent surfaces, equipment and other features by introducing tonal differences which are measured by Light Reflectance Values (LRV). Although visual contrast has been in building regulations for decades, it is often not applied correctly despite it being effective for more than 80% of people with sight loss conditions. RNIB employed a number of other measures to assist their building users which go beyond current best practice, including:

- a clear, **tactile wayfinding and signage system** with all signs having Braille and embossed text and symbols;

- a carefully developed muted **colour-coding scheme** throughout the building, taking into account and acknowledging RNIB's strong corporate brand colours;

- **An embossed vinyl flare path** indicating the main circulation around each open plan floor including offices, to aid wayfinding and navigation. This distinct circuit makes it easier for people with sight loss to quickly identify emergency exits and tea points on each floor.

- **A pioneering approach to lighting** with fully controllable, adaptive lighting for both intensity and colour temperature on each bank of desks and in meeting rooms, giving adjustability over the lighting to suit individual and/or group preferences. This is a unique approach that has allowed people with sight loss conditions to flourish in their new environment.

- **Kitchens with innovative tactile and visual cues** inside cupboards, contrasting marine edge worktops to prevent spills, and zip taps with Braille, visual contrast and easy grip operation that improve user safety and convenience.

- Innovative **indicators on staircase handrails** to help users with sight loss identify number of steps remaining of the staircase.

- Introduction of **a multi faith space** for staff and visitors; so people of different faiths can spend time in prayer.

- Creation of the **Serenity Room**, a restorative space for people with a variety of needs – whether that's a calming space for someone experiencing stress and anxiety, re-setting themselves from overstimulation or a new parent breastfeeding and expressing.

This project was driven by intensive stakeholder consultation and co-designed with RNIB's blind and partially sighted staff, volunteers and patients, led by RNIB's project manager and client-side external advisers, comprising specialists in architecture, inclusive design, lighting, acoustics and asset/MEP consulting.

Visits were undertaken to the building before and during the fit out works by members of staff to ensure the requirements were met and continue to take place regularly.

Fivefields Flexible Workspace, Grosvenor

Inclusive design within an office environment

In collaboration with the Westminster Foundation, x+why and Barr Gazetas, Grosvenor redeveloped the 8-10 Grosvenor Gardens in 2023, placing inclusive design at the heart of the building. Fivefields aims to provide an accessible and inclusive office space that creates a community feel.

The listed building façade restricted potential options for alteration, but the redevelopment aims to overcome this constraint through a range of creative inclusive design measures. Key features include:

Image shows the reception the Fivefield's workspace

- **All gender toilets**

- Step-free access to building through **platform lift in listed façade**

- **Well-ventilated spaces** with good indoor air quality and lighting

- Similar and **replicated layouts to improve wayfinding** and maintain consistency

- **Height adjustable tables** within meeting rooms and a variety of table heights on Level 2 office space for members

- **Acoustic dampening elements** and natural materials where possible to reduce echo and improve sensory environment

- **Artwork "tested"** by people with lived experience of neurodiversity with the result of four pieces of art being swapped out to suit needs

- **Staff training** has been arranged for the operation and management team to support the experience of using the building for anyone visually impaired
- A **nominated safeguarding lead for all members** who are made known to building operators so they have a direct contact.
- **Calming paint palette** chosen with neurodivergence in mind (e.g. pastel colours)

The project aims to capture the key principles of inclusive design by integrating accessibility, usability, and aesthetic considerations into every aspect of the workspace.

By aiming to surpass existing legislation and standards, this initiative not only cultivates a welcoming and diverse community but also positions the business for significant commercial advantages. Emphasizing inclusive design translates into a broader user base, enhanced customer satisfaction, and increased loyalty, all of which contribute to a strong return on investment. This approach underscores the dual benefits of inclusive design: while the primary and current goal of the project may appear to be social, the resulting commercial gains for businesses are substantial and integral to the project's rationale

1 St James's Market, The Crown Estate

Improving the office experience through inclusive design

The Crown Estate have undergone a programme to refurbish our office space at 1 St James's Market. The plans for the newly refurbished space have taken into account feedback from different voices across the business. They will ensure the new space is supportive of our cultural evolution and will enable new and improved ways of working, in alignment with our purpose and representative of The Crown Estate's values.

Image shows the communal office space at St James' Market

Key inclusive design features include:

- New and **improved wayfinding** with the introduction of Braille. An automated email will be sent to all guests ahead of their visit to include wayfinding from local tube or bus stops, guidance for taxi drop-offs, information on the arrival experience and what to expect along with the ability to communicate any accessibility requirements in advance.

- All seating booths will have **tables with chamfered edges and inset legs**, enabling wheelchair users access to the booth.

- The **creation of a physiology lounge**, recognising the needs of those who may be pregnant, post or pre-menopausal or people with a long-term condition. This comfortable and safe

space will provide various seating options to support where, due to a physical need, a desk is not the appropriate seating.

- The floorplate has been arranged from loud to quiet with **the introduction of a fully accessible phone/video booth.** This provides transition free access, multiple lighting options and an accessible, sit-stand table to serve a variety of physical needs and neurodiversity.

- The reception has been reconfigured and includes a lower, **one-height reception desk** to ensure an equitable experience for all visitors. The lectern has been replaced with a **sit-stand lectern** to support the needs of all event speakers.

- The project team engaged with the Race and Ethnicity Network **to design a multi-faith room** and understand the needs of those who may wish to use this space. It has been designed ensuring it is not aligned to any specific religion, provides suitable storage for different faiths including space to store the Quran at non-foot level, a marker to identify the direction of prayer, and manifestations on the door to provide suitable and considerate privacy.

- The **tea points have been reconfigured** to include accessible height counters along with new seating and tables to enhance social connections.

- **Training has been provided** for all catering, security and front of house team-members. This includes revised fire safety protocols for employees, visitors and those hosting an event. A nominated fire-buddy will be identified for any visitor who may need extra assistance in leaving the building in the event of a fire or emergency. This training has been implemented in all serviced offices and amenity spaces across the estate.

Inclusive Design in the public realm, Lendlease

Inclusive Design in the public realm

When delivering large scale urban regeneration projects, the neighbourhoods we deliver are designed as inclusive, safe environments that are welcoming to all. With neurodiversity in mind, considerations are made to remove points of stress throughout the experience – including thermal, auditory, visual, navigation, touch, smell and orchestration of activity. If we want to create a prototype for inclusive design, considerable testing and community engagement is required. Over the duration of our developments a variety of meanwhile uses have been embedded in the

Image of the accessible public realm at Elephant Springs

neighbourhoods to activate the streets, test future uses, integrate local community and create an inclusive, active and safe environment. One example of our engagement programs to drive inclusive design, was the Loneliness Lab, which Lendlease co-founded and ran from 2018-2021 (www.lonelinesslab.org).

Elephant Springs

Lendlease, in partnership with Southwark Council, have been delivering a transformation project in the heart of historic Elephant & Castle in Zone 1 London, over the past 10 years. The 9.7-hectare development is a vibrant new residential and retail area delivering more than 3,000 new homes, over 50 new shops, restaurants and cafés, around London's first new park in 70 years.

Elephant Park offers a new network of quality spaces to reflect a diverse inclusive neighbourhood. It creates a clear and legible street network with a hierarchy of scale and use, by designing streets and public realm that reflects the uses and movement around them. As an important new retail and leisure destination, we anticipate heavy footfall on these routes, generated by the adjacent uses. Many lessons have been learnt over the years of the delivery and many features were intrinsic to the design:

- **Elephant Springs and The Park:** These offer a variety of different scale spaces and atmospheres. The park has calm spots removed from high traffic areas, with smaller scale spaces allowing quieter zones and outdoor working. Many of the existing mature trees on site were retained, which offer shade and habitat alongside new dense greenery. A further 200 new trees have been planted on site and over 900 in surrounding streets, housing estates and parks.

- **Walkable streets:** Mostly car free and designed to prioritise pedestrians, including rest stops/meeting spaces at regular intervals. The public realm has been designed to be clutter free and as permeable as possible and to establish strong links through to surrounding areas and transport connections. There is pedestrian segregation at carriageways, with new pedestrian and cycle crossings delivered in key locations. There is a hierarchy of pedestrian paths across the park and all routes are open to cyclists though not as part of a signed network.

- **Cycle provision**: Designed to, by nature, neither encourage nor discourage cyclist through-traffic. Cycle parking is provided at regular intervals across the neighbourhood, with stands spaced to accommodate tricycles and carriers. Two combined pedestrian/cycle crossings along informal cycle routes, with vision to name cycle routes at project completion.

- **Seating**: a variety of seating opportunities are offered providing flexibility and choice. There are ergonomic timber benches and a range a seating positions at The Tree House, whilst more conventional seating with arms rests are provided along all major thoroughfares. Timber has been selected for warmth and visual appearance and benches have also been positioned opposite each other to allow social engagement. Following observations and feedback, we have incorporated dedicated spaces in the benches for wheelchairs and buggies to avoid the possibility of exclusion.

- **Transition to retail areas**: external retail terraces provide a transitional space to acclimatise potential customers and are identifiable using alternative floor surfaces. All of these spaces are level with step free access and provide wayfinding via physical signage and design cues without obstructing the main footways.

- **A central hub** and **meeting point:** This central hub acts as a method to navigate through the public realm. It has a viewing platform and seating area at canopy level called The Tree House providing segregation from the park and is accessible by stairs or lift. The cafe and

community space below is open and for anyone to use, providing a quiet space, a meeting point or a covered space for remote working. It is also bookable for events by anyone. An accessible public toilet is also available in the Tree House without needing to request a key.

- **Play areas**: designed for a range of ages and abilities, the play areas include double slides, accessible tree platforms and an informal climbing trail provided across site. The introduction of sand and water provides a further sensory experience and a number of opportunities for children to be challenged using their hands and feet. In acknowledgment that Elephant Springs are an impediment to some, accessible areas have been included to allow enable anyone to access sand, water and to engage with others. During quieter times of the day/year the springs are a point of relaxation.

- **Click this link to read more about Elephant Park**: https://www.elephantpark.co.uk/

Stratford Cross

- **Walkable streets:** Car free and smoke free, Stratford Cross is the gateway to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. The main walkway to London Stadium runs through Endeavour Square at Stratford Cross, which often sees up to 70 thousand people walking through to attend events. Purposeful mobile greening of the space is designed to create smaller intimate environments in a large landscape which occasionally needs to transform to support high footfall.
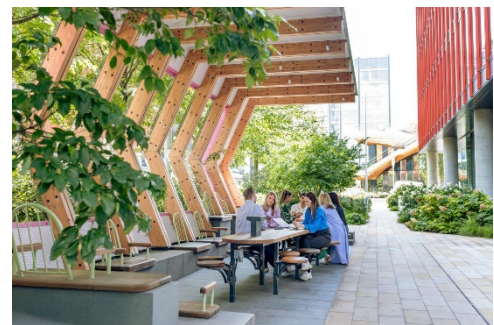

Image shows people sitting at a table at Stratford Cross

- **Central hub and meeting point - The Pavilion Building** is a visibly recognisable timber structure at the centre of the Neighbourhood, on a high traffic walkway designed to accommodate 70 thousand people walking to events at London Stadium. The anchor occupier is Gordon Ramsay's Bread Street Kitchen which spans across 3 levels including a rooftop bar with expansive views across the Park.

- **The Information Centre** for the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is homed in the Pavilion Building ground floor.

- **Public toilets** are accessible in the Pavilion Building.

- **Shared /Third spaces** – Stratford Cross public realm is designed to offer a network of spaces where people can work outdoors in nature. The spaces include:

  o **'The Living Room'** is a multi-use, publicly accessible, sheltered timber structure, intended for multiple individuals or groups to use together. It has ergonomic surfaces and accessible seating, with power to plug in and work.

  o **Royal Entomological Society 'Insect Garden'** – a new teaching garden, and long-term opportunity for urban insect study, and can be used and enjoyed by all. The award-winning garden was unveiled at RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2023 and now lives permanently in its new home at Stratford Cross.

  o **Pavilion rooftop** - is publicly accessible, offering seating, solar powered USB and wireless phone chargers.

- **Ground floor accessible to the community – The Turing Building lobby** is designed with accessible sliding drum doors, a reception and speed-gates that are visible but discreet, so as to not overpower the space creating a perception of exclusivity. Activated with a local coffee provider and comfortable seating for people to meet and work.

- **Meanwhile use, Play areas, Street art and urban greening –** Water fountains designed to create interest have attracted children to linger and play. Stratford Cross offers optical illusion artworks, and runs projects to showcase local talent, such as the recent Yarn Bombing by East London based Black Girl Knit Club, a textile installation inspired by the techniques used in Black women's hair styling. **The Orchards** – Movable fruit trees in containers, act as a meanwhile use adding greenery until they find their forever location in the final phase of Stratford Cross. The movable container offers seating. **The Vertical Meadow** Cladding at Redman Place offers additional green spaces onsite, allowing native wildflowers to grow from seed in place and bringing life and nature to the estate.

- **Click this link to read more about Stafford Cross:** https://www.stratfordcross.co.uk/

Queen Mother Sports Centre, Westminster City Council

Westminster City Council understands the importance of ensuring that our operational assets are inclusive for all users within the communities we serve. With this in mind, we are implementing works across our operational assets to improve the services we offer and help meet the accessibility needs of all our residents, visitors and staff.

The Queen Mother Sports Centre based in Pimlico has recently seen a number of accessibility improvements, including the installation of a Changing Places Toilet facility as part of our programme of works. Changing Places toilets are designed for people who cannot use a standard accessible toilet. They should be provided in addition to single or gender-neutral toilets, standard accessible toilets and baby change facilities. CP toilets are designed for people who need additional space, equipment and a carer which is not possible within the space of a standard accessible toilet.

Westminster City Council secured funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to install a Changing Places Toilet facility at, not only the Queen Mother Sports Centre, but also within an additional two sites across the property portfolio.

Please see the key accessibility features which have been implemented at the sports centre below:

- ➢ **New Changing Places Toilet Facility** - including hoist, adult-sized changing bench, privacy screen and height-adjustable sink.

- ➢ **New Accessible Pool Changing Room**

- ➢ **WelcoMe Software Platform** - a solution which enables businesses to manage, understand and assist disabled customers, before they visit the site. This key software will help to reduce anxiety experienced by individuals when planning a visit, whilst instilling confidence that the Council will deliver a high-quality level of customer service. WelcoMe (wel-co.me)

- ➢ **Sociability** - The Council has recently engaged with Sociability, an organisation who are empowering disabled people to explore their communities with confidence, ease and peace of mind by collecting and sharing detailed, reliable and accurate accessibility information about venues across London and the UK. Knowing the accessibility of a venue in advance makes a world of difference. With the right planning, obstacles can be overcome, stress can be avoided, and everyone can be included. [Sociability](#)

Were any key challenges identified as part of this work?

The main challenge for the Council was spreading the word about the new Changing Places Toilet facility, ensuring that potential visitors of the sports centre knew that it was there. We also wanted to make people aware that the toilet could be used by visitors to the area and not just users of the gym and swimming pool.

It was decided that we needed to communicate the news about the new installation through various channels, while at the same time publicise the use of the Welcome app. With this in mind, the Council held a launch event through an inclusive open day at the sports centre. We took the opportunity to showcase the WelcoMe app to the centre users and our residents, in order to obtain feedback and opinions about the platform.

Next Steps

It is imperative that we continue to promote the accessible facilities which are now available within our buildings. We want these toilets to be used by those who really need them, providing the freedom for everyone to explore our wonderful city, in the knowledge that these facilities offer a safe and much needed place to stop.

We will continue to listen to all stakeholders about their experiences of using the new installations, as we want to be sure that what we have delivered is meeting the needs of all individuals and providing a positive impact to those who use them.

PRM Host Areas, Heathrow Airport

Lived Experience input

Heathrow typically welcomes over 1.3 million passengers who require support in the airport environment – such as mobility assistance or support for people with non-visible disabilities. Heathrow's goal is to be the most welcoming and accessible airport in the world, ensuring every passenger can travel the way they choose, with the dignity and care they expect.

Each terminal has People Requiring Support (PRS) host areas. The purpose of the host area is to support passengers with additional mobility, sensory or cognitive requirements to help reduce travel anxiety and stress. They are a CAA regulatory requirement and are primarily the first check point to make
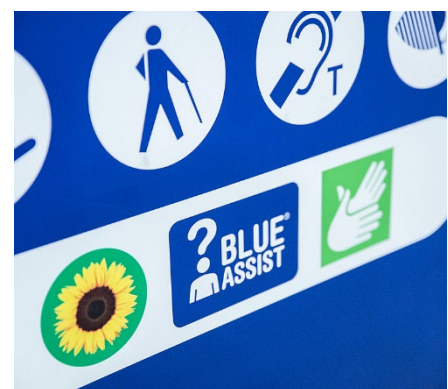

Image shows the communal office space at St James' Market

themselves known to the assistance team who are there to organise the support required throughout their airport journey.

When initiating the project to identify and understand the correct requirements when reviewing and updating the facility it was critical that we involved those with lived experience, and therefore utilised our access advisory group HAAG.

Heathrow Access Advisory Group (HAAG) helps Heathrow to deliver its vision to become the industry's leading airport in accessibility and inclusion. The HAAG team comprises of committed advocates with a wide range of experience within aviation and disability. The objective of the HAAG is to provide independent advice and constructive challenges, as well as to bring a consumer perspective to Heathrow's decision-making and planning processes.

The HAAG meets quarterly to consider issues relating to all aspects of accessibility. HAAG reviews assistance service quality performance, quality and consistency of training protocols and brings innovation and fresh thinking through advice on assistive technology for all aspects of the passenger journey for passengers who require support.

The HAAG input into the scheme resulted in a proposal for the T2 host area to have direct entry into security, for the scheme to incorporate various seating options and he creation of a quiet zone. The scheme look and feel should be more equivalent to a lounge area, with adjustable lighting and mitigation for acoustics.

The importance of this level of lived experience stakeholder consultation and co-designed is echoed in both the RIBA Inclusive Design and Engagement Overlays. It ensures that assumptions are left at the door and instead the voices of those impacted are heard and lead to decisions that have real social and financial impact.

HAAG member Geraldine Lundy says "I have held several roles within aviation over the past twenty five years focusing on accessibility and inclusion for passengers and employees. It is my firm belief that to achieve the best outcome in any aspect, whether that is training, equipment, process, policy etc a business must engage with people with lived experience of disability at the beginning of and throughout any initiative."

Appendix B - Spotlight on disability

Whilst consideration of inclusivity should extend beyond disability to encompass all protected characteristics, the majority of the data collected about inclusivity and inclusive design focuses on disability and how disabled people experience the built environment. As such, this section focuses on that disability data and the impact it has for how businesses operate.

There is a common misconception associating disability solely with wheelchair users when, in fact, the WHO's 2023 social model of disability encompasses a wider range of contributing factors such as physical, cognitive, and sensory conditions.[19] Many experiences of disability can be intersectional, with almost 75% of disabled people having more than one impairment.[4] The following section considers the intersectional experience of disability.

The demand for inclusive buildings and spaces that cater to the needs of disabled people is growing rapidly. Over the past 20 years, the number of disabled people in the UK has grown from approximately 10 million to 16 million.[20] As of 2021, 58% of people aged over 80 report being disabled.[20] Disabled people have a significant spending power with households including at least one disabled person estimated to spend almost £300 billion each year.[Error! Bookmark not defined.]

Figure 1 The number of disabled people in the UK has also risen by approximately 6 million over the last decade with a high proportion of state pension aged residents reporting a disability.

Number and growth of disabled people compared to growth of the population and the proportion of people who report a disability by age group
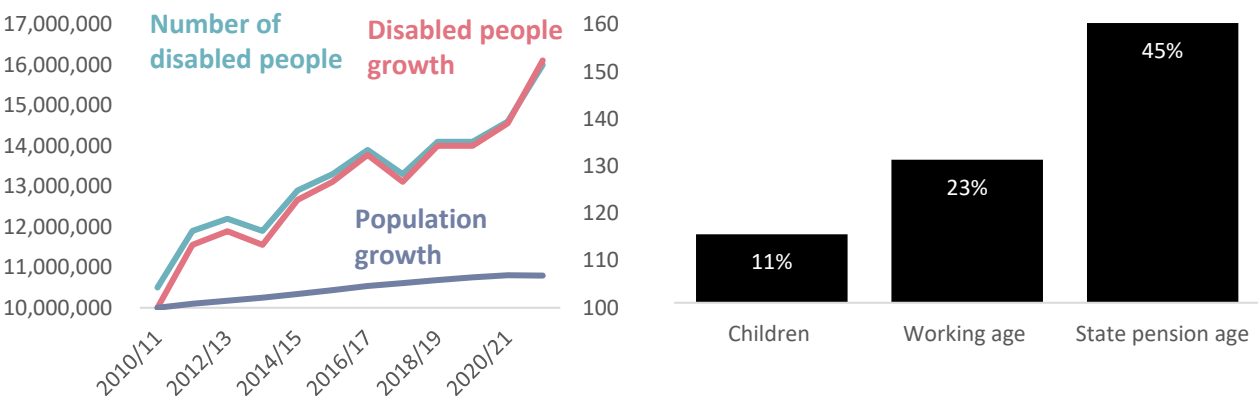

Source: House of Commons Library, 2023. UK disability statistics: Prevalence and life experiences

Large numbers of disabled people report being excluded from aspects of the built environment. In the 12 months to March 2022, disabled people were almost three times as likely to report difficulties in finding access to products than non-disabled people.[21] The most commonly reported barriers for disabled people are those involving physical access to products and services and in particular the lack of transport, resting places, pavements and footpaths.

Figure 2, Disabled people are significantly more likely to report physical access barriers as the key reasons preventing access to products and services.

Percentage of disabled and non-disabled adults aged 16 years and over who experienced different types of barriers to accessing products and services in the last 12 months
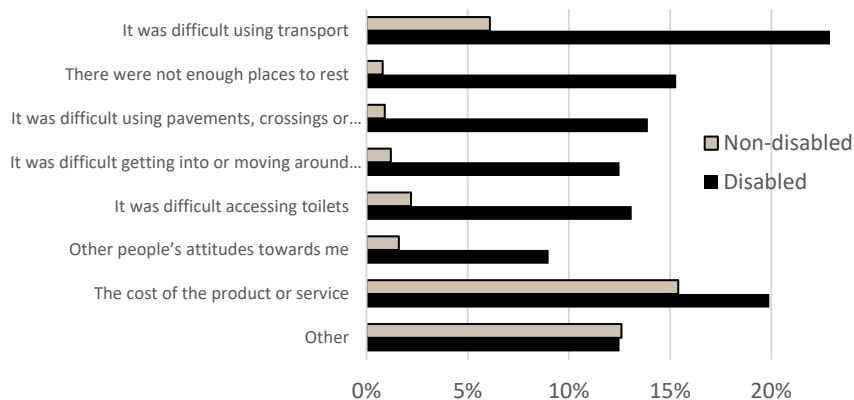
Source: ONS, 2023. Opinions and Lifestyle Survey 2022.

In a 2022 survey conducted by the Business Disability Forum, 43% of disabled people said they had recently abandoned an in-person shop due to the barriers they experienced.[22] This related not only to physical accessibility such as wheelchair access, but also to environmental factors including lighting and noise levels. People with sensory processing difficulties often report retail environments as difficult to use due to surrounding environmental factors such as noise levels.

These challenges result in people leaving spaces early or avoiding them completely. By making considered changes to spatial layouts, lighting, acoustics, materials, signage and technology, property owners and their tenants can remove barriers for all consumers to create spaces that are welcoming, provide an improved customer experience and attract new customers.

"At some point in life everyone will be affected by disability; whether it is you, your friends or family. People that aren't yet affected don't realise how badly places are designed"

Taken from attendee of lived experience workshop

"Disabled people adapt to the world rather than the world adapting to them… they often don't have a voice, and this results in them being isolated from the built environment"

Taken from interview with inclusive design specialist

Only 10% of large global businesses aim to support the needs of disabled people, which suggests this is a wider commercial opportunity currently being missed by many. As discussed above, the spending power of UK households with at least one disabled person has been estimated to total £300bn each year.**Error! Bookmark not defined.** Purple Pound estimates that UK businesses directly lose £2 billion a month by not considering the barriers that disabled people face.[16]

In contrast to other prominent social movements, the disabled community often lacks the same level of visibility and amplification in advocating for meaningful change. This community often must adapt to circumstances provided to them rather than being afforded the opportunity to articulate their perspectives, which are crucial for driving meaningful change. This is reflected in organisations

not considering the needs of disabled people in the built environment. Investment in addressing these needs represents a real opportunity for businesses.

Appendix C – Legislation and guidance

Type of document	Document and publication date
Legislation (Legal Acts and Building Regulations)	Equality Act, 2010
	Approved Document B (AD B), 2019, amended 2020 and 2022
	Approved Document M (AD M), 2015, amended 2020
	Approved Document K (AD K), 2013 & BCA Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 16, rev. 2016
	Approved Document O (AD O), 2021
	Approved Document S (AD S), 2021
Policies and Plans	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2021
	The London Plan, 2021
	Good Growth by Design (GGbD), 2017
Technical Design Standards and Specifications	BS 8300: 2018 Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment
	PAS 6463: 2022 Design for the mind – Neurodiversity and the built environment
	PAS 1899: 2022 Electric vehicles – Accessible charging
	BS 9999: 2017 Code of practice for fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings

Appendix D – Footnotes/resources

1 Adapted from: Inclusion London, 2017. The Social Model of Disability

2 Mayor of London, 2018. Inclusive London: The Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

3 Adapted from: Microsoft, 2016. Microsoft Inclusive Design Toolkit

4 Sport England, no date. Mapping Disability: The Facts

5 Figures from the Census 2021 for ethnic minority residents and total population, ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Survey for disabled people, and House of Commons Library, 2023. 2021 census: What do we know about the LGBT+ population? for the LGBTQ+ population.

6 House of Commons Library, 2023. UK Disability Statistics: Prevalence and Life Experiences.

7 M. Guzman-Castillo et al., 2017. Forecasted trends in disability and life expectancy in England and Wales up to 2025: a modelling study. The Lancet Public Health vol 2(7).

8 Figures from the Census 2001 and 2021 for England and Wales only (consistent Scotland and Northern Ireland data unavailable).

9 Intersectionality figures taken from TfL, 2019. Understanding Our Diverse Communities, and compared to figures from ONS, 2021. Census.

10 House of Commons Library, 2023. UK disability statistics: Prevalence and life experiences; Disability Rights UK, 2020. Nearly half of everyone in poverty is either a disabled person or lives with a disabled person

11 Purple, 2023. The Purple Pound: What it is and Why Markets Should Care?

12 Blacklight, 2022. Black Pound Report 2022- Full Version

13 Tom West, 2020. Crunch: Pursuing the pink pound: How big is the UK's LGBT market?

14 Business Disability Forum, 2022. What Disabled Consumers Choose to Buy and Why.

15 The Pursuit of barrier-free brand experience, 2024. Interbrand

16 Purple, 2015. The Purple Pound 2015.

17 Institution of Structural Engineers, 2023. Inclusive Design for Structural Engineers.

18 Historic England, 2023. Historic England open data for November 2023.

19 World Health Organisation, 2002. Towards a Common Language for Functioning, Disability and Health.

20 House of Commons Library, 2023. UK disability statistics: Prevalence and life experiences.

21 ONS, 2023. Opinions and Lifestyle Survey 2022.

22 Business Disability Forum, 2022. What Disabled Consumers Choose to Buy and Why.

Institution of Structural Engineers, 2023. Inclusive Design for Structural Engineers. https://www.istructe.org/resources/guidance/inclusive-design-for-structural-engineers/

Centre for Inclusive Design, 2023. The Benefit of Designing for Everyone. https://centreforinclusivedesign.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/inclusive-design-report-digital-160519.pdf

Centre for Cities, 2023. How will the new Energy Efficiency Standard regulations affect commercial property across the UK? https://www.centreforcities.org/blog/how-will-new-energy-efficiency-regulations-affect-commercial-property/#:~:text=One%20in%20eight%20commercial%20property,band%20C%20(Figure%201).