
MPS Crime Prevention & TP Capability Environmental Visual Audit (EVA)



BCU	Islington
Problem	Drug related death of customer - 25/06/2016
Area/Address	Fabric (nightclub), 77a Charterhouse Street, Clerkenwell, London, EC1M 6HJ
Prepared for	Chief Inspector Jennifer East MPS Central Licensing Team
Prepared by	DOCO Karl Turton
Date approved	04/08/2016

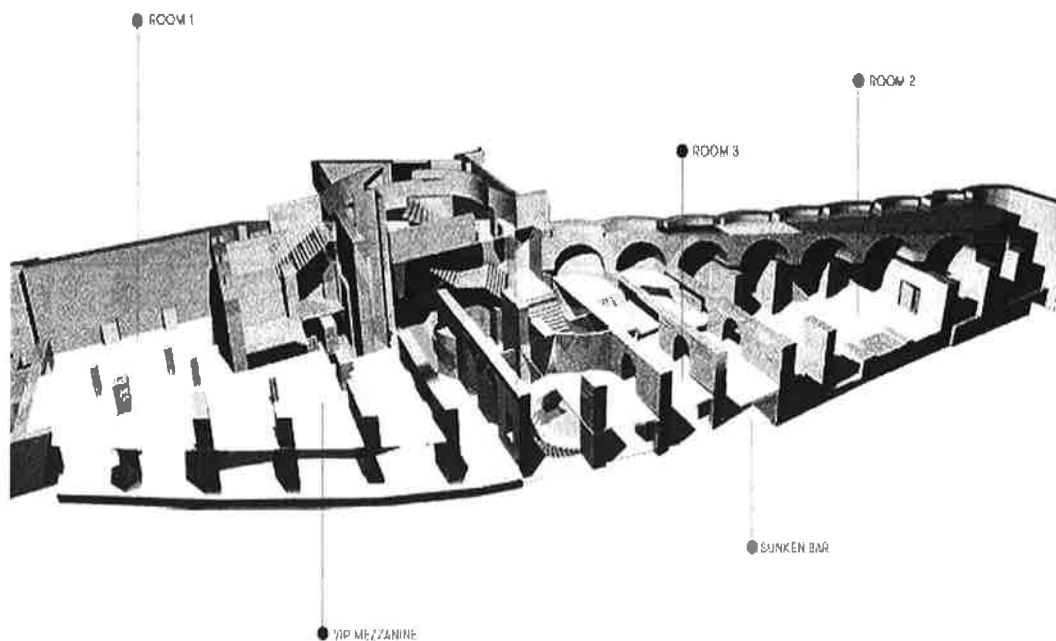
1. Location, structure and history

Fabric is an iconic night club located at 77a Charterhouse Street, Clerkenwell. It overlooks 'Smithfield Meat market' dating from the 10th century.

Smithfield is within the ward of Farringdon, situated on the North West border of the 'City of London' and the borough of Islington. The venue shares a street scene with a number of valued City institutions, such as St Bartholomew's Hospital, the Charterhouse and Livery Halls notably those of the Butchers' and Haberdashers' Companies.

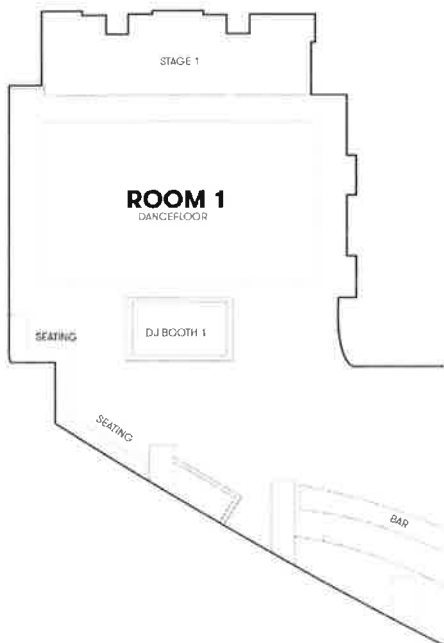
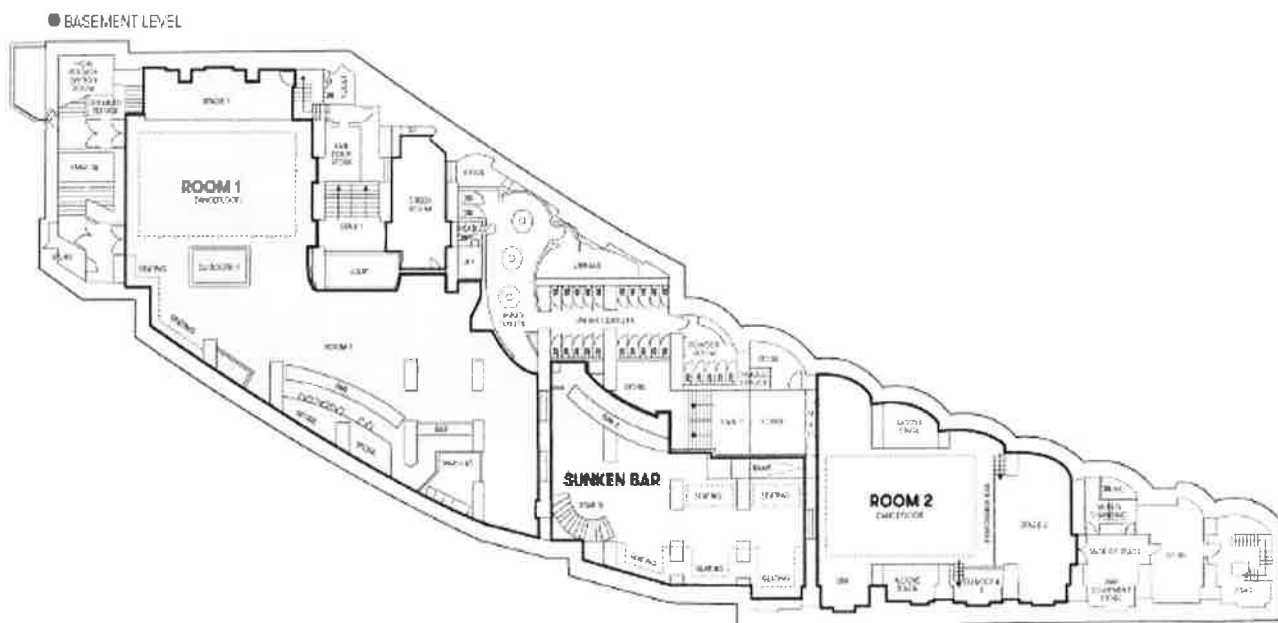
The club was founded by Keith Reilly and Cameron Leslie and opened on 21st October 1999 and Fabric occupies the renovated space of the Metropolitan Cold Stores. Smithfield Meat Market stands and operates from a site directly opposite, with the building's construction taking place in Victorian times.

The conversion work from warehouse to club took over 3 years to complete, with the idea that Fabric was conceived by people that go to clubs. Fabric has three purpose built rooms with independent sound systems; two of the rooms feature stages for live acts. A feature of the club is its vibrating floor in Room One known as a "bodysonic" dancefloor. Sections of the floor are attached to 400 bass transducers emitting bass frequencies of the music being played. The vast majority of the club is located below ground connected by a labyrinth of stairs and interconnecting rooms; only the entrance, ticket office, cloakroom and smoking area are on the ground floor with the club occupying a total area of 25,000 square feet.



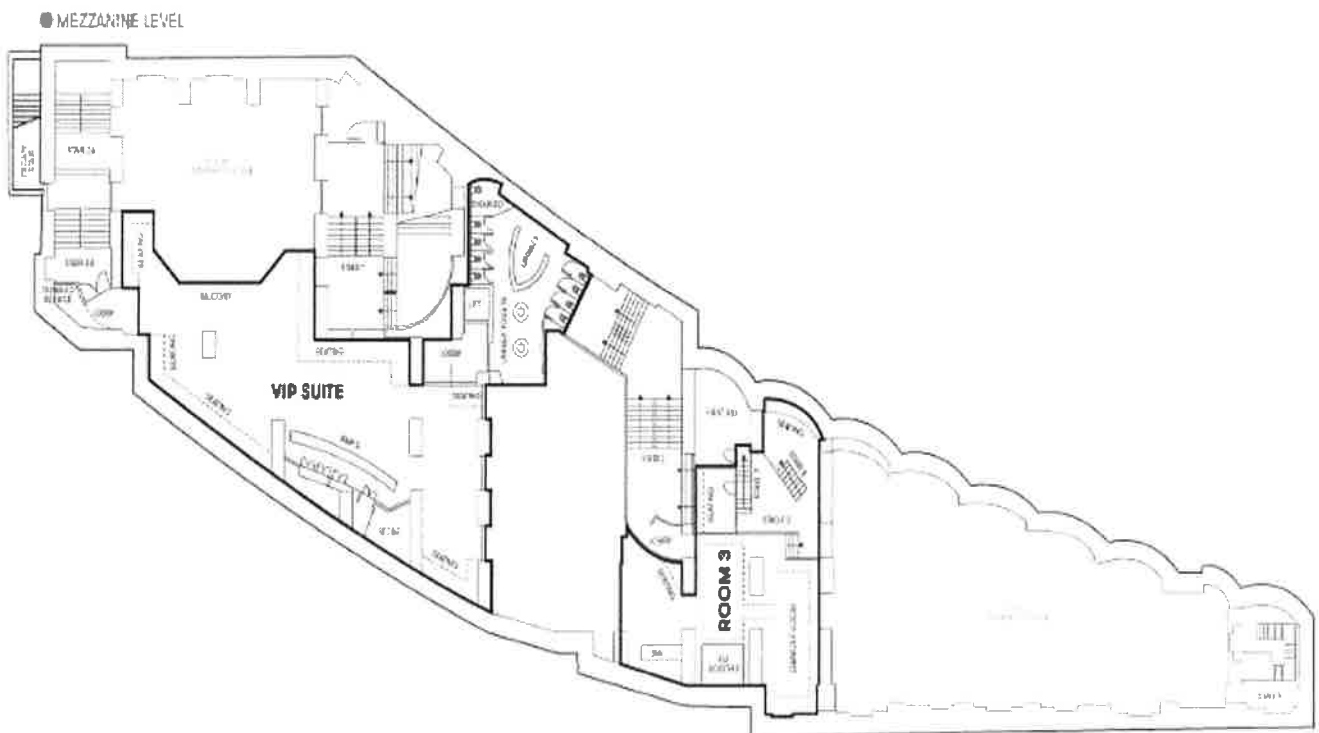
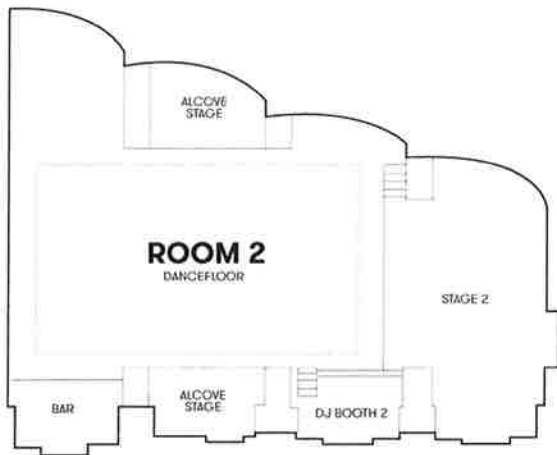
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3D Plan of Fabric Fabric floor plans



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Fabric floor plans



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2. Introduction

Officers from the Central Licensing Team (CLT) and a Design Out Crime Officer (DOCO) attended Fabric night club on Sunday 3rd July 2016 at approx. 01.15 hrs to conduct a joint visit with the local borough's (Islington) licensing officer PC Steve Harrington. This was in relation to a recent death of a patron from what is believed at this point in time to be a drug related incident. This is the fifth drug related death connected to the venue since 2011.

3. Structure and operation

Access to the club is gained via the front of the building on Charterhouse Street via a set of double doors which are located on the ground floor of the building. The entire ground floor front elevation is a combination of metal/timber door sets and masonry. When in operation, the doors to the right of the facade are utilised for access in to the club and the doors to the left are used for egress only. The main doors in the center of the building are not used and remain closed while the club operates. Above the exterior doors are two steel and glass canopies with internal down lights, constructed to give shelter to patrons and staff below.

The only other aspect of the club which is at ground level is the smoking area which is located to the rear of the venue and is connected to the club when in operation, by a series of tubular 1.2 metre high barriers, which form a footway. The smoking area is partitioned off with temporary heras interlocking fencing and illuminated by halogen spot lights. The rear of this area has a 1.8 m high brick wall which is adjacent to 78 Cowcross Street, EC1M. The area the other side of this wall is a brick courtyard accessed by a 2m high steel gate and roller shutter from 78 Cowcross Street.

Once patrons are inside the front doors of the club, there is a small entrance lobby, which is divided in half with a rope style barrier and a double width staircase rising to the left. This rises to the first floor where a number of small ticket offices are located, again on the left, and after this the club's cloakroom is situated. The corridor turns towards the front of the building once again and falls back to the ground floor, directly opposite the entrance. The rope barrier is required to direct customers up to the first floor ticket offices as customers are required to pay on entry. Without the barrier, customers would be able to walk directly down into the club, bypassing the ticket booths.

A wider staircase then takes you down from the entrance lobby to below ground level where there are three separate themed rooms with various bars and seating areas. The vast majority of the club is below ground level.

Fabric night club has limited facilities to accommodate queuing customers within the curtilage of the building and has developed a queuing strategy where prospective customers assemble at ground level in the street directly outside the venue. The strategy further breaks down this group into potentially three further sub queues and has staff located at various points to allow access to neighboring venues.

There is a queue for walk up / pay on-the-door customers and entry to the club is approximately £20 to £30. The second queue is for ticket holders or pre-paid customers and, when required, there is a third queue for guest list/VIPs.

The queuing system is all accommodated on the footway directly outside Fabric and the combined queue can stretch for some considerable distance and consist of hundreds of customers as illustrated in the image below.



Typical queue system used at Fabric

The management of the venue erects temporary barriers along Charterhouse Street and other surrounding streets, in an attempt to control the crowds that gather when the club is operating. The club has a 24 hour premises licence and no fixed last hour of entry. Fabric has a defined operating capacity of 1510 which is the only controlling factor regarding access and egress at the venue. As such, there is normally a healthy footfall through the club's hours of operation, with doors opening at 11pm and closing in the late morning.

The local authority has recognised the affect the club has on the surrounding area and requires the club, via conditions on the premises licence, to dedicate staff to patrolling the locality and specific fixed posts, in an attempt to reduce the operation's impact on local business and residents.

Hours the club elects to operate are:

Friday 11pm until 7am
 Saturday 11pm until 8am
 Sunday 11pm until 5.30am

Capacity:

Basement stage 2 and rooms to the rear of stage 2	0 persons
Basement and Mezzanine 1 and Dance floor 1	200 persons
Mezzanine 1 V.I.P Suite	300 persons

4. Observations

4.1 Natural surveillance and territorial control - queue

The club faces a number of challenges in relation to the queue and the limited space available to accommodate what can be significant numbers of patrons. The site was originally a cold meat store/warehouse for Smithfield Meat Market, which is located directly opposite and as such this adapted building has a limited footprint above ground, making its operation as a night club challenging.

All who seek to enter the club are required to queue directly outside the venue in Charterhouse Street and line up heading west. The queue can stretch all the way in to St John Street and Cowcross Street. The queue system is affected by the lack of space outside the club entrance with three separate lines filling the pavement, making anyone looking to walk along that section of pavement divert into the road and in to oncoming traffic and, as such, is a hazard.

There is also no cab or vehicle drop off point either forcing taxis to pull up in the carriageway directly adjacent to the main doors of the club, further adding to congestion. This creates a chaotic space with significant hazards to both vehicles and pedestrians.

The management are aware of the impact this has on its surroundings and have now introduced the use of 1.2 metre high tubular steel pedestrian bar barriers to manage the queue. This queue strategy has been developed further with breaks in the line of barriers, in order for neighbouring venues to have access allowing them to operate. The gap / breaks in the queue system are supervised by Fabric's security staff.

This long winding line of prospective customers becomes increasingly vulnerable the further they are from the venue. The risk of patrons either taking drugs prior to entry, or drug dealers targeting this group, increases the further distance they are from the doors.

It is important to encourage territorial control of these remote aspects of the operation and, in doing so, it allows the club greater time to profile prospective customers; assisting to profile those who are intoxicated, violent or taking / selling drugs and, when required, offering assistance to those who are vulnerable. The St John Street area and its cafes and shops that were open, appeared busy with people who filled the footway drinking and eating.

There was evidence of both pre-loading of alcohol and drug dealing within this location, with officers observing part drunk or empty bottles of Vodka, Jack Daniels, beer and wine discarded on the floor. Males were seen to approach groups heading towards the club and brief conversations were overheard, where these males offered Mandy (which officers believed to be MDMA). Most ignored the offer but officers did see groups pause and ask about prices.

When asked about the St John Street area, Luke Laws, the duty manager, stated that they did position staff at static posts within Peter Lane and Green Hill Rents, where the club block off the street with heras fencing panels to create the smoking area. It is

unclear if the club has the authority to construct such a physical barrier when operating; blocking a right of way for neighbouring properties.

However, due to past attacks on security staff, mobile patrols are only conducted when there are two or more staff available. During the entire tour, officers only observed static points being manned and no interaction with the security staff members and the crowds within that area.

The impression to officers was that the static points were there to reduce noise to nearby homes by directing clubbers away from local resident's property and remove discarded bottles left by clubbers.

At the same time, officers also failed to observe any uniformed police presence patrolling this location during the tour. There were brief moments when a marked police car would pass the front of the club but none stopped to engage with any groups either outside the club or in the areas around the club.

Options

1. Restructure the queue so that access to the venue is through the rear of the club via Greenhill Rents which is currently blocked off by the venue. Clarity over control over this location would need to be confirmed prior to any adaptations being planned. The rear smoking area occupies only part of the exterior space utilised by the club when it trades, as during the visit a number of motor vehicles were parked in a sectioned off area close to the rear of the club. This could allow a higher number of prospective patrons to be accommodated within a protective perimeter. In turn, moving the displaced smoking area to the front elevation in a pen constructed from temporary fencing. This would reduce the impact on neighbouring properties. This would also assist with vehicular congestion at the junction with Charterhouse Street and St John Street.
2. Set a terminal hour for last entry in to the club. Fabric operates from 11pm until 8am on Friday, Saturday and 11pm until 5.30am on Sunday.

The premises do not operate at any other time during the week. Their business model looks to maximise the hours of operation within the weekend period and, to do this successfully, the club needs to be open as long as possible during this reduced time frame.

The club has a footfall far in excess of its capacity and relies on customers paying an entrance fee, throughout the late evening and early morning. Once at capacity, prospective patrons are held in the queue. The later the entry time, the higher the entrance price.

This 'churn' is responsible for queues later on in the club's operation, with the club looking to target customers wishing to continue their night out after other bars, restaurants and clubs have closed. It was clear to officers that a significant portion of the venue's income is generated this way.

3. Police could mount an operation with drugs indicator dogs used in conjunction with TSG (territorial support officers) to identify dealers and patrons who may

hold drugs and are within the vicinity of the club. Once identified, TSG officers would detain and search identified subjects.

4. Safer neighbourhood teams could conduct operations during the clubs hours of operation. For example, joint foot patrols with both local authority enforcement officers and club security staff in the streets surround the club.
5. Continue with the queue system in its current form for walk up customers and support this with further security staff at regular intervals along the queue, who are issued with body worn video and part of the club's radio linked system. This would help deter ASB and drug dealers from the queue, as well as help identify patrons looking to pre-load prior to entering the club.
6. This should be supported by regular pulse patrols from local police night time economy units and night duty police officers, paid for by money raised by the borough's night time levy.
7. Fabric could contact the corporation of London who have control of the car park spaces opposite the club, serving the meat market, and enquire to hire car park bays opposite to act as a taxi drop off area, maintaining traffic flow and reducing the vehicle hazard.
8. The amount of pavement monopolised by the club needs to be reduced to allow the public to navigate past the venue safely. Pre-paid and VIP customers could use the rear entrance via Greenhill Rents, which would help reduce the need for three alternative queues.

4.2 Natural surveillance - inside the club

Natural surveillance inside the club is poor. This is due to light levels which are mentioned later in this report. However, design visibility (line of sight) is especially challenging due to the nature of the conversion from warehouse/ cold store to multi-roomed night club.

Design visibility is hampered by recessed doorways, remote alcoves, and sharp 'blind corners' and steep changes in gradient, all of which Fabric have. This situation is further aggravated by poor levels of lighting and large crowds of customers congregating in certain parts of the club, making natural surveillance a problem.

Fabric has attempted to mitigate this problem with an extensive CCTV system (formal surveillance) with a member of staff responsible for monitoring the feeds. However, very few CCTV systems are able to capture every aspect of the building they are installed in and likewise there are many blind spots within the club, smoking area and the queue.

Options

1. Improve lighting levels with the use of coloured lighting, rather than just white light.
2. Increase the number of windows between rooms and common parts of the building such as corridors and walkways.

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3. Install mirrors at key locations to allow vision beyond a corner.
4. Increase the use of CCTV and body worn video throughout the club.

4.3 Access control - the entrance lobby / search area

This space is located as you enter the club on the ground floor and is sectioned off to direct customers upstairs to the ticket offices. The 25sqm space was then used to search both male and female customers and located against the far wall was a small table, which was not used whilst officers observed the entry aspect of the operation.

Officers observed five members of door staff stationed in this location who were dealing with 3 customers. There was a metal detector arch located over both male and female entrances, restricting space even further. The entrance lobby was not suitable for the number of customers that the club processes while operating.

This poorly designed space did not have adequate levels of task driven lighting or designated marked out search boxes / stations, supported with search tables. As such, the quality of searching suffered. Patrons were not asked to empty their pockets / bags, etc and were subject to pat down searches only, with no attempt to look into pockets, remove headwear or outer clothing.

Options

1. Relocate the stairs from the ticket office and cloak room above to allow greater lobby space. This will allow the use of search boxes / tables to assist the search process.
2. If the entrance is moved to the rear of the building, a temporary structure (marquee) could be used to house search teams and equipment.
3. Improve the levels of lighting in the existing lobby area, in conjunction with a lighting survey conducted by a suitably qualified engineer (Lux plan).
4. Construct search boxes / stations in preset planned areas of the lobby, clearly marked out to both staff and patrons. The search boxes should be covered by quality CCTV (audio) supported by adequate lighting.
5. Retrain staff regarding search techniques.

4.4 Access control - electronic computerised entry system

Fabric doesn't use any electronic I.D. scanning equipment to profile patrons. Management may require proof of age, and agreed forms of ID are provided by customers but are not routinely recorded. If once inside, a customer is found in breach of the club's rules, for example found with drugs or a weapon, they are taken to an internal security room, where they are subject to a more thorough search.

If small amounts of drugs are found, they are seized and the subject's photo is taken. If they are in possession of any I.D. this too is photographed.

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This information is then transferred into a paper binder which is updated once a week. Before being ejected from the club, the subject is taken to the front door where door staff are shown the subject and instructed to remember that individual.

If larger amounts of drugs or weapons are found, then the police are called. Customers who are found in possession of smaller amounts of drugs while being searched on entry to the club, have the drugs seized and are then refused entry.

The club's management are extremely resistant to any I.D. scan style device being used and have concerns over speed of use and its reliability.

They state that if used any I.D. scan style system would result in disorder from customers, due to the frustration of being held in a queue for such an extended period of time.

Options

1. The venue adopts an I.D. scan style system, with multiple system interfaces. These can be body worn and taken along the awaiting queues with banned subjects then removed from the queue. The existing system is antiquated and allows the potential for ejected customers to return later that night or after a few days.

It is unrealistic to expect the door staff to consult a binder every time a customer presents themselves at the door, in an area with limited space and poor lighting. Any system which requires security staff to be able to locate and successfully identify a past banned patron in such a way is unreliable and time consuming.

2. Link the I.D. scan details with other premises in the location that have a similar system within the borough, for example EGG. This way, the drug dealers would then find it more difficult to get access to venues.
3. Local licensing officer to work closely with the club's management and meet every two weeks to discuss recent crimes within the venue, explicitly telling the club where within the venue they occurred. This is not the situation at the moment; only details from theft crimes are shared with the club. Management are unaware of any drugs information at this point.

4.5 Access control - rear smoking area

The club operates a ground floor exterior smoking area which is located to the rear of the club, which can be accessed from Greenhill Rents. The club has constructed a physical temporary barrier between the junction of Cowcross Street and Greenhill Rents. Security staff are employed at this location to assist with the creation of a sterile area, restricting access to the rear of the club. Within this area were a number of parked vehicles; it was unclear who the vehicles belonged to. Located behind the smoking area is a 1.8 metre high brick wall which is the boundary to 78 Cowcross Street.

There is a roller shutter / service gate at 78 Cowcross Street which is damaged and insecure and, while conducting the inspection, the management stated that this gate was constantly being damaged by vehicles during the day, while the club is closed.

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As such, the management stated that they were not content to keep paying for the shutter to be repaired and have placed a single staff member there to mitigate the risk. This rear access point is a vulnerability for the club and is reliant on staff members' integrity and vigilance.

Options

1. Remove the rear steel gate and frame and replace this with an approved and accredited security rated floor-to-ceiling roller shutter to LPS 1175 security rating 2 or above.
2. Fit automatic vehicle access control barriers to the rear access gate at 78 Cowcross Street. This could be operated by controls from within the venue and will protect any roller shutter or gate from contact with vehicles.
3. Continue with the manned security and utilised body worn CCTV. Cover the position with in-house CCTV camera to mitigate the risk from a breach to the perimeter or physical threat toward staff.

4.6 Maintenance / Image - levels of lighting

Officers are concerned that the levels of lighting throughout the public areas of the club are too low, hindering natural surveillance and making navigation of the club confusing and difficult. Officers were unable to see into the more remote aspects of the club. Low levels of lighting affect a number of key elements of the operation such as customer and staff safety.

Lighting should be uniformly spread to reduce contrast between shadows and illuminated areas. More fixtures with lower wattage, rather than single fixtures with very high wattages, help reduce deep shadows and avoid excessive glare.

The smoking area is constructed with heras fencing covered in black close mesh matting, this coupled with temporary high output halogen lighting fitted to the rear of the club façade, leads to deep shadows and excessive glare. This makes observing the area more difficult for staff.

Options

1. Request a lighting plan from a qualified engineer and amend areas highlighted within the report. All outside areas should be compliant with BS 5482.
2. The majority of materials used within Fabric are dark in colour and matt in texture and absorb light, limiting visibility further. Light colour finishes on walls and ceilings should be used.

4.7 Natural surveillance - fixed security points within the club

Within room 1, officers observed that staff were lost amongst the large crowd gathered there. Combined with the low light levels, this made identifying staff very difficult.

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The management explained that if traditional Hi-Viz tabards are worn they render the clubs CCTV useless. The door staff in a number of other locations were equally difficult to identify due to low light levels and this can prove awkward when staff try to engage with patrons. This may lead to confrontational situations.

Options

1. Install a number of fixed raised points within the club where staff are expected to be positioned; this will aid them in observing customers, crowd dynamic and fellow staff members as well as being easily identifiable to patrons in distress. Security staff should be rotated between fixed and roving posts as often as possible.
2. Suitable corporate clothing must be considered to assist identifying staff.

4.8 Maintenance / Image - signage/customer flow

There is very little to help the new customer to navigate their way around Fabric. Officers found the layout confusing and have witnessed staff having to give verbal commands to customers encouraging them to keep moving when they are transitioning from any of the three rooms to avoid congestion.

The club has issues with crowd density, with Room 1 being the most popular and other smaller rooms with only a handful of patrons present. The management stated that condition 30 of the premises licence (which relates to capacities throughout the club) is not adhered to.

There was no staff member counting people in or out of individual rooms and there is good reason to believe that this condition is being breached regularly.

There is very little signage identifying various rooms/toilets/bars or smoking area. As a result, patrons are frequently seen transitioning from room to room either looking to find friends, seeking to smoke, or get a drink. Confused patrons add to the flow which is then funneled through a network of dark interconnecting tunnels.

Officers found the bar areas throughout the club to be some of the quietest areas within the venue. Officers did not see large numbers of customers waiting at the bars or drinking alcohol throughout the visit. The club did offer a free water bar which provided free drinking water to customers. Officers observed patrons still purchasing water at the bar. If consumption of free water is deemed excessive, security staff will remove that person and subject them to further questioning and a possible search.

Where crowd densities increased in the more popular locations (Room 1), there was a noticeable increase in room temperature. The management did state that the club had an Air Handling Unit (AHU) which circulates air within the rooms of the building. The managed air system (AHU) was not able to deliver cold air uniformly around the site and this is of great concern when dealing with patrons who maybe suffering the effects of a drugs overdose.

It was clear that the venue had identified the issues of air circulation and cooling throughout the club and have taken the steps to fit a localised air conditioning unit to the medical room where patrons, who are displaying symptoms of intoxication, are taken.

Options

1. Clear and legible signage which can be supported by suitable lighting.
2. Condition 30 is explicit around numbers of patrons being in any one area while the club is operating. The police cannot be seen to allow certain venues to ignore conditions especially when relating to safety issues such as capacity.
3. If condition 30 is to be adhered to, there will need to be clickers used on all three areas mentioned on the licence. The club will need to have a plan in place when any of the areas hits the capacity and implement appropriate crowd control measures.
4. Upgrade the existing air handling unit to deliver cold air to areas where it is required and reduce the flow where it is not. Balancing the system to achieve this is important, however, it is currently not working.

5. Conclusion

Following the undertaking of this EVA, it has been especially challenging to identify tactical options which will produce any real positive outcomes. The link with this venue and high risk drug use is undeniable, and tragically, evident from recent events.

The options highlighted within this report, whilst may have some minor positive impact with respect the issues identified, are ultimately far from ideal and unlikely to achieve the desired outcomes one would expect following this process.

Therefore, this leads to the conclusion that due to the current business model and style of operation which is not compatible with the building in which it operates, and the location of the premises, there are very limited options available that would increase public safety to an acceptable level.

