

Design and Access Statements Planning Advisory Leaflet

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What are Design and Access Statements?

Statements are documents that explain the design thinking behind a planning application. For example, they should show that the person applying for permission (the applicant) has thought carefully about how everyone, including disabled people, older people and very young children, will be able to use the buildings they want to construct.

Statements should include a written description and justification of the planning application. Photographs, maps and drawings may also be used to further illustrate the points made. They will be available alongside the application for anyone to see so should avoid jargon or overly technical language. It is important that they are written specifically for the application they accompany. They need not be very long but the amount of detail they contain should reflect how complex the application is. So, a statement for a major development is likely to be much longer than one for a single building.

Statements should explain the design principles and concepts that have informed the development and how access issues have been dealt with. So, although there will be a design and an access component, you should not think of a Design and Access Statement as two separate documents. Much of the preliminary work that needs to be done for the design component will help inform the access component and vice versa.

When are Design and Access Statements required?

Article 4C of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 makes provision for Design and Access Statements to accompany certain applications made under the Town and Country Planning Acts, including Listed Building applications.

Design and Access Statements not required for:-

- engineering or mining operations;
- development of an existing dwellinghouse or development within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse where no part of that dwellinghouse or curtilage is within a designated area;
- a material change in the use of land or buildings unless it involves operational development;
- extensions to the time limits for implementing existing planning permissions;
- development of an existing flat for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the flat as such, where no part of that flat is within a designated area;
- the extension of an existing building used for non-domestic purposes where the floorspace created by the development does not exceed 100 square metres and where no part of the building or the development is within a designated area;

- the erection, construction, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure up to 2m high or the height of the existing means of enclosure, whichever is the higher, where no part of the building or the development is within a designated area or the curtilage of a listed building;
- development on operational land consisting of the erection of a building or structure up to 100 cubic metres in volume and 15m in height and where no part of the development is within a designated area;
- the alteration of an existing building where the alteration does not increase the size of the building and where no part of the building or the development is within a designated area;
- the erection, alteration or replacement of plant or machinery where, as a result of the development, the height of the plant or machinery would not exceed the greater of 15 metres above ground level or the height of the original plant or machinery, and where no part of the development is within a designated area;
- development of land pursuant to Section 73 (determination of applications to develop land without conditions previously attached) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

“designated area” means a World Heritage Site or a Conservation Area

Section 327A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 prohibits a Local Planning Authority from entertaining an application unless it is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement. Applications which need to be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement but are submitted without one will not, therefore, be registered until the statement has been received.

One statement should cover both design and access in order to demonstrate an integrated approach that will deliver inclusive design and address a full range of access requirements throughout the design process.

What is required in a Design and Access Statement – the Design Component

The Design and Access Statement should cover both the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development and how issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with. Statements should evolve throughout the design and development process.

A Design and Access Statement should explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to particular aspects of the proposal – these are the amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance of the development.

The **amount** of development is how much development is proposed. For residential development this means the number of proposed units for residential use and for all other development this means the proposed floor space for each proposed use.

Amount cannot be reserved within an outline application although it is common to express a maximum amount of floorspace for each use in the planning application and for this to be made the subject of a planning condition. The Design and Access Statement for both outline and detailed applications should explain and justify the amount of development proposed for each use, how this will be distributed across the site, how the proposal relates to the site’s surroundings and what consideration is being given to ensure that accessibility for users to and between parts of the development is maximised. Where the application specifies a range of floorspace for a particular use, the reasons for this should be explained clearly in the Design and Access Statement.

The **layout** is the way in which buildings, routes and open spaces (both private and public) are provided, placed and orientated in relation to each other and buildings and spaces surrounding the development.

If layout is reserved at the outline stage, the outline planning application should provide information on the approximate location of buildings, routes and open spaces proposed. The Design and Access Statement accompanying an outline application should explain and justify the principles behind the choice of development zones and blocks or building plots proposed and explain how these principles, including the need for appropriate access will inform the detailed layout. The use of illustrative diagrams is encouraged to assist in explaining this.

For detailed applications and outline applications where layout is not reserved the Design and Access Statement should explain and justify the proposed layout in terms of the relationship between buildings and public and private spaces within and around the site and how these relationships will help to create safe, vibrant and successful places. An indication should also be given of factors important to accessibility of the site for users, such as travel distances and gradients, and the orientation of block and units in relation to any site topography to afford optimum accessibility.

Design and Access Statements for outline and detailed applications should also demonstrate how crime prevention measures have been considered in the design of the proposal and how the design reflects the attributes of safe, sustainable places set out in *“Safer Places - the Planning System and Crime Prevention”* (ODPM/Home Office 2003).

Scale is the height, width and length of a building or buildings in relation to its surroundings.

If scale has been reserved at the outline stage the application should still indicate parameters for the upper and lower limits of the height, width and length of each building proposed to establish a 3-dimensional building envelope within which the detailed design of buildings will be constructed. In such cases the design component of the statement should explain and justify the principles behind these parameters and explain how these will inform the final scale of the buildings.

For detailed applications and outline applications that do not reserve scale, the Design and Access Statement should explain and justify the scale of buildings proposed, including why particular heights have been settled upon and how these relate to the site’s surroundings and the relevant skyline. The statement should also explain and justify the size of building parts, particularly entrances and facades with regard to how they will relate to the human scale.

Landscaping is the treatment of private and public spaces to enhance or protect the amenities of the site and the area in which it is situated through hard and soft landscaping measures. Statements should also explain how landscaping will be maintained and the function of the landscaping, for instance for sustainable drainage purposes, providing shading or other climate change adaptation purposes, and explain how it will be maintained.

If landscaping is reserved at the outline stage the outline application does not need to provide any specific landscaping information. However, the Design and Access Statement should still explain and justify the principles that will inform any future landscaping scheme for the site.

For detailed applications and outline applications that do not reserve landscaping, the Design and Access Statement should explain and justify the proposed landscaping scheme, explaining the purpose of landscaping private and public spaces and its relationship to the surrounding area. A schedule of planting and proposed hard landscaping materials should be included.

Some development proposals (for example, alterations to an existing building) may include no landscaping element. For such proposals this section of the Design and Access Statement would simply need to state why landscaping is not relevant to the application.

Appearance is the aspect of a place or building that determines the visual impression it makes, including the external built form of the development, its architecture, materials, decoration, lighting, colour and texture.

If appearance is reserved at the outline stage, the outline application does not need to provide any specific information on the issue. In such cases the Design and Access Statement should explain and justify the principles behind the intended appearance and explain how these will inform the final design of the development.

For detailed applications and outline applications that do not reserve appearance, the Design and Access Statement should explain and justify the appearance of the place or buildings proposed including how this will relate to the appearance and character of the development's surroundings. It should explain how the decisions taken about appearance have considered accessibility. The choice of particular materials and textures will have a significant impact upon a development's accessibility. Judicious use of materials that contrast in tone and colour to define important features such as entrances, circulation routes or seating, for example, will greatly enhance access for everyone. Similarly, early consideration of the location and levels of lighting will be critical to the standard of accessibility ultimately achieved.

Appraising the Context

Development proposals that are not based on a good understanding of the local physical, economic and social context are often unsympathetic and poorly designed and can lead to the exclusion of particular communities. An important part of a Design and Access Statement is the explanation of how local context has influenced the design. In this regard, context should be discussed in relation to the scheme as a whole rather than specifically in relation to the five sub-components of amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance.

What is required in a Design and Access Statement – the Access Component

It is important to note that the requirement for the access component of the statement relates only to "access to the development" and, therefore, does not extend to internal aspects of individual buildings.

Statements should explain how access arrangements would ensure that all users would have equal and convenient access to buildings and spaces and the public transport network. The statement should address the need for flexibility of the development and how it may adapt to changing needs.

The Design and Access Statement should also explain the policy adopted in relation to access and how relevant policies in local development documents have been taken into account. The statement should also provide information on any consultation undertaken in relation to issues of access and how the outcome of this consultation has informed the development proposals. This should include, for example, a brief explanation of the applicant's policy and approach to access, with particular reference to the inclusion of disabled people, and a description of how the sources of advice on design and accessibility and technical issues will be, or have been followed.

Access for the emergency services should also be explained where relevant. Such information may include circulation routes around the site and egress from buildings in the event of emergency evacuation.

For outline applications where access is reserved, the application should still indicate the location of points of access to the site. Statements accompanying such applications should, however, clearly explain the principles which will be used to inform the access arrangements for the final development at all scales from neighbourhood movement patterns, where appropriate, to the treatment of individual access points to buildings.

The level of detail provided in the access component of the statement should be proportionate to the nature and scale of the access that will be required to the site. For proposals which will have no public access and only limited maintenance or operational access, the access component need not be long.

What should be included in a Listed Building Consent Statement?

Design and Access Statements will also be required for listed building consent applications. They will be similar to Design and Access Statements for planning applications, although there will be some differences because of the differing nature of the application. Where there is a planning application submitted in parallel with an application for listed building consent, a single, combined statement should address the requirements of both. The combined statement should address the elements required in relation to a planning application in the normal way and the additional requirements in relation to listed building consent. The Design and Access Statement should explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the scale, layout and appearance characteristics of a proposal (information on use, amount and landscaping is not required for listed building consent Design and Access Statements that do not also accompany a planning permission). Otherwise, scale, layout and appearance are broadly the same as outlined in previous paragraphs.

In addition to following the broad approach in drawing up the Design and Access Statement in relation to applications for planning permission, a Design and Access Statement relating to listed building consent should include a brief explanation of how the design has taken account of advice contained in PPS5 : *Planning for the Historic Environment*, and, in particular:-

- the historic and special architectural importance of the building;
- the particular physical features of the building that justify its designation as a listed building;
- the building's setting.

Refer to the Local Planning Authority's guidance note on preparing a 'Statement of Significance and Impact' which can be integrated into the Design and Access Statement or produced separately to accompany the Design and Access Statement.

The statement will need to explain and justify the approach to ensure that the proposals preserve or enhance the special historic and architectural importance and significance of the Listed Building. Where there is potentially an aspect of design that will impact on this, the statement should explain why this is necessary and what measures within the approach to design have been taken to minimise its impact.

Similarly, the access component is broadly the same as for Design and Access Statements accompanying applications for planning permission but, again, with reference to the special considerations set out above.

The statement should make clear how the approach to access has balanced the duties imposed by the Disability Discrimination Act where the proposal is subject to those and the particular historical and architectural significance of the building, as judged by the aspects set out in PPS5. The statement should detail any specific issues that arise particularly with regard to the fact that the building is listed, the range of options considered and where inclusive design has not been provided an explanation as to why should be given.

In alterations to existing buildings where the fabric of the structure restricts the ability to meet minimum levels of accessibility, details should be provided of the solutions that will be put in place to minimise the impact on disabled people and ensure that any services provided within the building are made available in other ways.

Further Information

This leaflet is intended to provide a brief explanation of the rules for Design and Access Statements.

Further information on Design and Access Statements is available from:-

- “Design and Access Statements – How to write, read and use them”. Published by CABE. This is available free at <http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications>
- The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) (England) Order 2006 sets out the legislative requirements. This is available free at http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2006/uksi_20061062_en.pdf
- Guidance on Information Requirements and Validation. This is available free at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/validationguidance>
- ‘Statement of Significance and Impact’ for Heritage Assets. See http://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/planning_and_building_control/listed_buildings/default.asp

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