

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENTS – GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS AND AGENTS – HOUSEHOLDER PLANNING APPLICATIONS

What is a Design and Access Statement?

A Design and Access Statement should state how the proposed development has used the principles of inclusive design to ensure access and use of the development site by all. The term “By all” means for example access to and use of the development by disabled people, young and old people, people with children in prams, pushchairs and multiple occupancy buggies designed to transport more than one child.

A Design Statement enables applicants and their agents to demonstrate how they have achieved good design in their development proposals. It should clearly demonstrate how the proposal fits the context of the site and its immediate surroundings and if appropriate how it relates to the wider areas of towns and villages.

Design and Access Statements are a statutory requirement. From 10 August 2006, most applications for planning permission must be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement. Failure to submit one is likely to result in delay (because the application will not be registered without one) - or refusal of the application if it is not of sufficient standard.

The Statement must address both **design** and **access** and demonstrate how each informs the other.

This Guidance Note sets out what such Statements should address. It has been drawn up by Planning Officers across the whole of the historic county of Hampshire, including Southampton and Portsmouth, the Isle of Wight and also includes the New Forest National Park so as to provide consistency of approach for applicants and their agents.

A list of references is given at the end of the document, together with internet links.

Separate guidance notes deal with Design and Access Statements for Listed Buildings and Non-Householder Planning Applications.

When is a Design and Access Statement needed?

A Design and Access Statement has to be submitted with an application for either an extension to a dwelling or for the construction of an outbuilding within the curtilage (normally the garden) of a dwelling when any part of the curtilage lies within any of the following areas:

- Conservation Area
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- New Forest National Park
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- World Heritage Site

If you not sure whether the property lies within such a designation then please contact the Council before commencing your design.

Even where a Design and Access statement is not mandatory it is considered good practice to include one with the application.

What do I need to do?

A design and access statement has five essential steps:

1. *Appraising the Context*

This should include:

- **Assessing** the character both of the building and site and its immediate surroundings. It should consider:
 - Relevant planning policies. The planning office can advise which policies would be relevant for your scheme.
 - Physical, social and economic characteristics

This may be both a desk survey and on-site observations and include an access audit. It should look at the immediate vicinity.

- **Involving the community**, for example:
 - Consultation with neighbours and the town/parish council
 - Meeting with planning, building control, conservation, design and access officers.

Havant Borough Council Access Group consists of people with disabilities, their families and carers living in the Borough. Representatives from local disability related organisations also regularly attend meetings.

An Access Group meeting is held fortnightly on a Monday morning at the Civic Offices hosted by the Equalities and Access Officer. If you would like to consult with the Access Group about your planning application and access and design statement please contact the Equalities and Access Officer for the date of the next Access Group meeting

The statement should demonstrate how views have been taken into account and how the proposal was changed or modified as a result.

- **Evaluating the information** with a view to:
 - Identifying opportunities and constraints
 - Formulating design and access principles
 - Balancing any potentially conflicting issues

2. **Identifying the Design Principles**

An appreciation of the context provides the principles for arriving at the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposal.

Applicants should avoid working retrospectively, trying to justify a pre-determined design through subsequent site assessment and evaluation.

The Statement needs to consider:

- **Amount.** The proposed *floor space* which should be:
 - Explained and justified
 - Shown how it was been located in relation to the existing building.
 - Demonstrated how it relates to the site's surroundings
 - Show how accessibility for users is maximised.
- **Layout.** This is the way in which buildings, routes and spaces are provided both to each other and buildings and spaces surrounding the development.

The Design and Access Statement should:

- Provide information on the approximate location of buildings/extensions and routes around the site
- Show the orientation of the development in relation to adjoining buildings and spaces, including any changes of level.
- Demonstrate how the design incorporates crime prevention measures.

The use of illustrative diagrams is encouraged to assist in explaining this.

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

The design and access statement should:

- Explain and justify how the proposed scale has been arrived at
- Demonstrate how this relates to the site's surroundings, including adjoining buildings, and the relevant skyline.
- Explain and justify the scale of building features, such as entrances and facades.

- **Landscaping.** This includes both the planted (soft) and built (hard) landscape elements in private and public spaces

The design and access statement should:

- Explain the purpose of landscaping spaces and how proposals relate to the surrounding area.
- Provide a schedule of planting and proposed hard landscaping materials.

- Explain how landscaping will be maintained.
- **Appearance.** This refers to the visual impression a place or building makes, including the external built form of the development, its architecture, materials, decoration, lighting, colour and texture.

The design and access statement should:

- Explain and justify the appearance of the scheme and how this relates to the appearance and character of its surroundings.
- Demonstrate how the decisions taken about appearance have considered accessibility. This may include:

Materials and textures, for example contrasts in tone and colour help define important accessibility features such as entrances, circulation routes or seating

Location and levels of lighting.

3. *Identifying the Access Principles*

The same process should be followed with regard to access. “Access” refers to “access to the development”, not just the internal aspects of individual buildings.

The statement should:

- Describe the site and the existing access arrangements, and
- Sustainability of the existing access arrangements.

A checklist of topics that should be covered may include:

- Highway Access
- Pedestrian Access
- Public Transport Access
- Cycle Access
- Parking provision
- Sustainability (location)
- Emergency and service access

4. *Creating the Design Solution*

There may be several different design solutions for a site. The design solution should be based upon the design principles that have been established through the appraisal of the context and identification of design principles. Without going through these two stages the design solution is likely to be flawed.

5. *Creating the Access Solution*

Statements should:

- Explain how access arrangements will ensure that all users will have equal and convenient access to buildings and spaces and the public transport network. Inclusive Access can be achieved by following the guidance in Approved Document M of the

Building Regulations “Access To and Use of Buildings 2004”. Also the guidance contained in BS 8300 “ The Design of Buildings and their Approaches to Meet the Needs of Disabled People”

- Address the need for flexibility of the development and how it may adapt to changing needs.
- Explain how access for the emergency services can be achieved, including circulation routes round the site and egress from buildings in the event of emergency evacuation

Final Comments

It should be remembered that a design and access statement is not a technical document. It is an opportunity for an applicant to inform the wider public of the scheme.

Reproduced below is the crib sheet which officers will use in assessing the proposal:

THE PROCESS

- Does the statement show the applicant has assessed the site’s full context, including physical, social and economic characteristics and relevant planning policies?
- Has the applicant demonstrated how they have taken account of the results of any community involvement?
- Does the statement show that the scheme has emerged from a rigorous assessment-involvement-evaluation-design process rather than trying to justify retrospectively a pre-determined solution?

USE

- Would the application help to create an appropriate mix of uses in the area?
- Would different uses work together well, or would they cause unacceptable annoyance?

AMOUNT

- Is the density appropriate?
- Could the neighbourhood’s services support the amount of development planned.

LAYOUT

- Do all spaces have a purpose?
- Will public spaces be practical, safe, overlooked and inclusive?
- Will private spaces be adaptable, secure and inviting?

SCALE

- Will the buildings sit comfortably with their surroundings?
- Will they, and parts like doors and windows, be of a comfortable scale for people?

LANDSCAPING

- Has landscaping been properly considered from the start?
- Will it help to make the place look good and work well, and will it meet any specific aims for the site?

APPEARANCE

- How will the development visually relate to its surroundings?
- Will it look attractive?

ACCESS

- Will the place be safe and easy for everyone to move around?
- Has the applicant clearly described their policy approach and consultation process, whether carried out or planned?

REFERENCES:

CABE (2006) Design and Access Statements – How to write, read and use them, London www.cabe.org.uk/AssetLibrary/8073.pdf

Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) – News Release 2006/0024

www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1002882&PressNoticeID=2170

DCLG (2006) Circular 01/2006: Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System, London www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1500620

Home Office/Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (2003) Safer Places- the Planning System and Crime Prevention www.communities.gov.uk/pub/724/SaferplacestheplanningsystemandcrimepreventionPDF3168Kb_id1144724.pdf

ODPM (2005) Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development, London www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143804