

A Guide to Design and Access Statements

A Design and Access Statement covering design concepts, principles and access issues is required to accompany most applications for planning permission and all applications for Listed Building Consent. Any application that is submitted without a Design and Access Statement will be returned without being registered.

What is a Design and Access Statement?

A Design and Access Statement is a written and illustrated report accompanying and supporting a planning application, which illustrates the process that has led to the proposal and explains and justifies it in a structured way.

Exclusions

The following types of development do not require a Design and Access Statement unless any part of the site is within a Conservation Area or the curtilage of a Listed Building:

- Householder developments to an existing dwelling (extensions and alterations to a house, bungalow, flat, maisonette);
- Extension of a non domestic building where not more than 100m² of new floorspace would be created;
- Alteration of an existing building which does not increase the size of the building;
- Erection, construction, alteration or improvement of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure where the new height would not exceed the existing height or 2 metres, whichever is the higher;
- The erection, alteration or replacement of plant and machinery not exceeding 15 metres in height or its former height, whichever is the greater;
- A building erected on operational land where the cubic content of the new works does not exceed 100m³ AND where the new height of the building would not exceed the existing height or 15 metres, whichever is the higher;





Writing a statement

The level of detail in the statement must be dependent on the type and size of the development and the sensitivity of its location. Statements should reflect the type of development and the complex issues that arise from it.

In respect of residential developments the South Norfolk District Council is promoting the Building for Life model of residential design excellence, produced by CABE and the Home Builders Federation. It includes a series of 20 questions and the Council welcome statements that use these as a framework. More information on Building for Life can be found at www.buildingforlife.org



The following types of application do not require a Design and Access Statement in any circumstances:

- Planning applications proposing solely engineering or mining operations;
- Applications to extend the time limit for implementing existing planning permissions;
- Planning applications proposing solely a change of use of the land or buildings, without any physical external alterations;
- Applications relating to Advertisement Control;
- Tree preservation orders (TPOs);
- Applications for the storage of hazardous substances;
- Applications for prior approval for proposed development, or non-material amendments to existing planning permissions.

If you are unsure if you need planning permission please complete a “Do I need Planning Permission?” form available from www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/planning

The Context Component

The first step in the preparation of the statement should be the appraisal of the site, including the local context and particular local issues. It is important that the statement shows how the site appraisal has influenced the resulting design. It is recommended that at least the site appraisal part of the statement is available for use in pre-application discussions with Planning Officers, if the full document is not complete.

A good source of information on site analysis and urban design is the Urban Design Compendium, prepared by English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation.

The Design Component

The second step in the preparation of a statement should be to explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to particular aspects of the proposal. These are use, amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance.

Use is what the development will be used for, how it will fit into the surrounding area and how this will support local aims. Statements for both outline and detailed applications should explain the use or uses proposed, their distribution across the site, the appropriateness of the accessibility to and between them, and their inter-relationship to uses surrounding the site.

Amount is how much development is proposed and how this complements the wider area. For residential development, this means the number of units for residential use and for all other development, the proposed floor space for each use. The Statement should also explain and justify how development will be distributed across the site and how the proposal relates to the site's surroundings. In the case of residential developments an explanation of the mix of dwelling types and tenures should be included.

Layout is the way in which buildings, routes and open spaces are provided, placed and orientated in relation to each other and buildings and spaces surrounding the development. Concept and illustrative diagrams will help to explain this. Design and Access Statements for outline and detailed applications should also demonstrate how crime prevention measures have been considered in the design.

Scale is the height, width and length of a building or buildings in relation to its surroundings. The statement should explain and justify the scale of buildings proposed, including why particular heights have been chosen, and how these relate to the site's surroundings and the relevant skyline.

Landscaping is the treatment of private and public spaces by the inclusion of planting and the use of hard materials; it should be an integral part of the scheme's design. Landscaped features will benefit the scheme by protecting and enhancing the character of the site, and also by providing a setting appropriate to the development's location. Statements should also explain how planting will be maintained to ensure that the planting is successfully established.

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.

The Access Component

The access component of the statement should relate to access arrangements to the development. Statements need to include two potential aspects of access. The first should deal with vehicular and transport links, explaining why the access points and routes have been chosen, and how the site responds to road layout and public transport provision. The second should deal with inclusive access and explain how everyone can get to and move through the place on equal terms regardless of age, disability, ethnicity or social grouping.

For outline applications where access is reserved, the application should still indicate the location of points of access to the site.



Outline & Reserved Matters Planning Applications

Outline planning applications are now required to contain sufficient information to describe the fundamentals of the scheme i.e. the use and amount of development, indicative layout, the height, width and length of each building and indicative access points. It should also set out the principles to be followed as the design becomes more detailed, where appropriate.

Listed Building Consents

Planning applications for listed building consent will be similar to those needed for a full planning application though there will need to be some differences because of the nature of the application. When a proposal needs both planning permission and listed building consent, a single statement can address all the relevant issues.

The statement will need to provide a description of the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance. This information together with an assessment of the impact of the proposal should be set out in the statement as part of the explanation of the design concept. The statement should also detail the sources of information that have been considered and the expertise that has been consulted.

Any considerations of scale, layout and appearance are the same as for full planning applications. Information on use, amount and landscaping are not required for a listed building consent application that does not accompany a planning application.

For buildings where inclusive access is appropriate, the statement will need to address access to the building and its interior. The statement will need to show the proposed approach for balancing the protection of the building's special character with access needs. Where appropriate levels of accessibility cannot be achieved, information will need to show solutions to minimise the impact on people with disabilities and provide services in other ways. The statement should be accompanied by details of how the work will be carried out and a specification of materials and techniques that will be used.

Good Practice Examples

Good practice examples of Design and Access Statements can be downloaded from the South Norfolk website www.south-norfolk.gov.uk

The examples are intended to be used as guidance only and should not form the basis of individual Design and Access Statements.

Checklist:

Use

What will the buildings and spaces be used for?

Amount

How much will be built on the site?

Layout

How are buildings and spaces arranged?

Scale

How big will the buildings and spaces be?

Landscaping

How will the open spaces be treated?

Appearance

What will the buildings and spaces look like?

Vehicular and transport links

Why have the access points and routes been chosen?

Inclusive Access

How can everyone get to and move through the place on equal terms?

Design and Access Statement topics

Related Documents

- Circular 01/06 (DCLG) Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System
- Guidance on Information Requirements and Validation – CLG, March 2010
- Design and access statements: How to write, read and use them - CABE 2006
- By Design - Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice, ODPM/CABE, 2000
- Building for Life – a national standard for well designed homes and neighbourhoods