

Design and Access Statements

Under the changes to the Development Control System set out in DCLG Circular 01/2006 effective from 10th August 2006 a design and access statement must accompany planning applications for both outline and full planning permissions.

A design and access statement is a short report accompanying and supporting a planning application to illustrate the process that has led to the development proposal, and to explain and justify the proposal in a structured way. It must not be used as a substitute for drawings and other material required to be submitted for determination as part of the planning application itself.

For most planning applications, only a page may be needed. For more complicated planning applications a longer document is likely to be necessary.

Design and access statements will be required for **all** planning applications **except for**:

- a material change in the use of land or buildings, unless it also involves operational development.
- engineering or mining operations.
- development of an existing dwelling house, or development within the curtilage of a dwelling house for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling house, where no part of that dwelling house or curtilage is within a designated area. "Designated area" means a National Park, site of special scientific interest, conservation area, area of outstanding natural beauty, World Heritage Site and the Broads.
- applications relating to advertisement control, tree preservation orders or storage of hazardous substances.

The design and access statement must be on the public register with the application to which it relates. Design and access statements should also be sent to consultees along with individual planning applications.

The level of detail required in a design and access statement will depend on the scale and complexity of the application, and the length of the statement will vary accordingly. Statement must be proportionate to the complexity of the application, but need not be long.

For most planning applications, only a page may be needed. For more complicated planning applications a longer document is likely to be necessary.

To gain a good understanding of context and to use it appropriately applicant should follow a design process which includes:

Assessment - of the site's immediate and wider context in terms of physical, social and economic characteristics and relevant planning policies. This may include both a desk survey and on-site observations and access audit. The extent of the area to be surveyed will depend on the nature, scale and sensitivity of the development.

Involvement -of both community members and professionals undertaken or planned. This might include, for example, consultation with local community and access groups and planning, building control, conservation, design and access officers. The statement should indicate how the findings of any consultation have been taken into account for the proposed development and how this has affected the proposal.

Evaluation- of the information collected on the site's immediate and wider context, identifying opportunities and constraints and formulating design and access principles for the development. Evaluation may involve balancing any potentially conflicting issues that have been identified.

Design -of the scheme using the assessment, involvement, and evaluation information collected. Understanding a development's context is vital to producing good design and inclusive access and applicants should avoid working retrospectively, trying to justify a pre-determined design through subsequent site assessment and evaluation. In the light of this understanding of the context, a design and access statement should explain how this has been considered in relation to its proposed **use**. The use is the use or mix of uses proposed for land and buildings. Use cannot be reserved within an outline application. Design and access 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.

(For more detailed advice on the design aspect see para. 80-99 of Circular 01/2006)

The requirement for the access component of the statement relates only to access to the development and does not extend to internal aspects of individual buildings. Statements should explain:

- How users will have access to buildings and spaces and the public transport network.
- How relevant policies have been taken into account and information on any consultations.
- Why the main points of access to the site and layout of routes within the site have been chosen.

(For more detailed advice on the access aspect see paras. 100-104 of Circular 01/2006)

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment have produced an advice document: 'Design and Access Statements: How to write, read and use them,' which can be found at: <http://www.cabe.org.uk/AssetLibrary/8073.pdf>