# **Design and Access Statements**





On 10 August 2006, the government introduced legislation which requires that most types of planning application and listed building consent application must now be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement.

# What is a Design and Access Statement?

A Design and Access Statement is a report accompanying a planning application which seeks to explain the design thinking behind an application, in order to demonstrate and justify how the proposed design or use is appropriate to its surrounding area. The statement should also show how the accessibility of the development has been considered to ensure that it is as inclusive as possible. The statement should clearly illustrate the process behind the development of the proposal and should not be just a description or list of technical specifications. It is not a substitute for drawings and other information required as part of the planning application itself.

The amount of information required will depend on the complexity and scale of the application. For most straightforward applications, the statement can be short, whereas more complicated applications will require a detailed report.

There is no specific format to it and there is no special form you need to fill in. Each statement should be individual and relevant to the application, and supporting information such as plans or photographs can be included if appropriate.

# What types of application need a Design and Access Statement?

Design and Access Statements are required for all planning applications, full and outline, except:

- Reserved Matters
- Engineering and mining operations
- Change of use (where there are no external operations)
- Development incidental to existing residential uses, including extensions (outside Conservation Areas, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and Sites of Special Scientific Interest)
- Advert Consent applications
- Hazardous Substances Consent
- Prior Approval applications
- Screening and Scoping Opinions
- Certificate of Lawful Use or Development
- Modification of Planning Obligation
- Discharge of Planning Obligation/Condition
- Permitted Development Enquiries
- Variation/Remove Conditions
- Tree Preservation Order applications

Design and Access Statements are required for all applications for listed building consent. Where a planning application is submitted together with an application for listed building consent, a single, combined statement can address the requirements of both.

Design & Access Statements can also be submitted with a request for informal planning advice. Pre-application discussions are a very important part of the planning process and benefit both developers and local planning authorities and it is considered extremely helpful to use Design & Access statements as an aid to these discussions.

## What should a Design and Access Statement Contain?

A design and access statement should show that the site's full context has been assessed, including physical, social and economic characteristics and relevant planning policies. It should also demonstrate wherever possible how community involvement has been part of the process. The statement should show that the scheme has emerged from a rigorous process through the various stages of assessment, involvement, evaluation and design rather than coming up with a scheme and trying to justify it retrospectively. It is also not acceptable to write general statements such as "the building will fit in with its surroundings" without fully justifying it with evidence.

Government guidelines state that all Statements must address the following points where applicable: (please note that some of these points may not apply to all applications)

#### Use

• Explain and justify how the application would help to create an appropriate mix of uses in the area, and how the different uses would work well together.

#### **Amount**

- State how much development is proposed. For example, this means the number and density of dwellings for residential development, or for other uses, the amount of floorspace proposed. Explain and justify how this would be appropriate for the location.
- Explain and justify how the infrastructure and public services in the area could support the development proposed.

# Layout

- Explain and justify the way in which buildings, roads, paths and open spaces (private and public) would be laid out on site and how these would link and fit in with the surrounding area
- Explain and justify how the layout would create a safe and successful environment.

## **Scale**

- Explain and justify how the sizes of the buildings are appropriate and would help them to integrate with their surroundings.
- Explain and justify how other elements of the development, including windows and doors, would be of an appropriate scale.

## Landscaping

- Explain and justify the landscaping scheme, including the purpose and use of all the
  external spaces and how they would complement and enhance both the site and the wider
  surrounding context.
- Explain how the landscaping scheme would be maintained in the future.

## **Appearance**

- Explain and justify why the design and external materials have been chosen and how the development would visually relate to its surroundings.
- Explain and justify how it would be appropriate and attractive.

#### **Access**

- Explain and justify how the development would be accessed, and how it would be as
  inclusive as possible, i.e. have the access needs of all sections of society including disabled
  people been considered? The internal layout of individual buildings does not need to be
  included.
- Explain and justify how it would make the most of the surrounding movement network (roads, footpaths, public transport).

Please note the statements must address each point (where applicable), or the application will be invalid.

## **Design and Access Statements for listed buildings**

For listed building consent applications, Design and Access Statements are similar except that information for use, amount and landscaping is not required (for LB consent applications not accompanied by a planning application). A full explanation and justification must also be given as to how the proposed works have taken into account:

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

Where a planning application is submitted together with an application for listed building consent, a single, combined statement can address the requirements of both. Please note the statements must address each point (where applicable), or the application will be invalid.

# **More Information**

More detailed information is available from the following websites:

CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) <a href="https://www.cabe.org.uk/assetlibrary/8073.pdf">www.cabe.org.uk/assetlibrary/8073.pdf</a>

RICS (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors) www.planning-applications.co.uk/designandaccessststements.htm

DCLG Circular 01/2006

www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/144854.pdf

English Historic Towns Forum (includes advice on Design and Access Statements for listed buildings)

http://83.170.75.16/file.php?file=/1/ehtf\_documents/free\_download\_publications/57\_mblbc.pdf

