

Allerdale Borough Council The Need for Design and Access Statements

Recent legislative changes which came into force on 10 August 2006 now require that a statement covering design concepts and principles and access issues be submitted with certain applications for planning permission and listed building consent. The legislation now prohibits a local planning authority from entertaining an application unless it is accompanied by a design and access statement, where required.

What is a design and access statement?

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 it in a structured way.

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

The level of detail required in a design and access statement will depend on the scale and complexity of the application. So, a statement for a major development is likely to be much longer than one for a single building.

Detailed guidance on the requirements and content of design and access statements can be found in Department for Communities and Local Government Circular (DCLG) 01/2006 which is available on the internet at www.dclg.gov.uk Further information is also set out in a booklet produced by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) – 'Design and Access statements – How to write, read and use them'. This is also available on the internet at www.cabe.org.uk

When a Design and Access Statement is required

A design and access statement must accompany planning applications for both outline and full applications. The elements to be described in design and access statements will be the same regardless of whether the application is for outline or full, but their scope will differ.

As set out in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (GPDO) design and access statements will be required for all planning applications except for:

- a) engineering or mining operations;
- b) development of an existing dwelling house, or development within the curtilage of such a dwelling house for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling house, where no part of that dwelling house is within a 'designated area'. Within West Berkshire these include conservation areas, area of outstanding natural beauty and sites of special scientific interest.
- c) A material change in the use of land or buildings, unless it also involves operational development.

Design and access statements are not required for applications relating to advertisement control, tree preservation orders or storage of hazardous substances.

Presenting the information

A design and access statement can be presented in various formats. For most straightforward applications, the statement may be short, for some only a page may be needed, whereas for more complicated applications a more detailed document is likely to be necessary. For larger or more challenging sites, the design and access statements may also include drawings illustrating the various issues which the scheme has responded to. The statements may include, as appropriate, plans and elevations, photographs of the site and its surroundings or even a model in the case of large and more complex schemes. However, these illustrative materials must not be used as a substitute for adequate drawings submitted with the application.

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

The design component of the 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. You are also required to demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the development and how the design of the development takes that context into account in relation to its proposed use and each of the aspects set out above.

The **amount** of development is how much is proposed. For residential development this means the number of proposed units and for all other development, the floor space proposed for each use. This cannot be reserved within an outline application although it may be expressed as a maximum amount of floor space for each use. The statement for both outline and detailed applications should explain and justify the amount of development proposed and how this will be distributed across the site, how the proposal relates to the sites surroundings, and what consideration is being given to ensure that accessibility for users to and between parts of the development is maximised.

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 still provide information on the approx. 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.

For detailed applications, and outline applications where layout is not reserved, the statement should explain and justify the proposed layout in terms of the relationship between buildings and public and private spaces 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, gradients and orientation of block and units in relation to site topography to afford optimum accessibility. The statement should also demonstrate how crime prevention measures have been considered in the design of the proposal.

Scale is the height, width and length of a building or buildings in relation to its surroundings. If scale is 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 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 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 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. If landscaping is to be reserved at the outline stage the design and access statement need only explain and justify the principles that will inform any future landscaping scheme for the site. However, for detailed applications the statement should explain and justify the landscaping proposals, the purpose of landscaping private and public spaces, and its relationship to the surrounding area.

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 application does not need to provide specific information on this issue. In such cases the design and access statement should explain and justify the principles behind the intended appearance and how these will inform the final design of the development. For detailed applications, and outline applications that do not reserve appearance, the 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 including the choice and judicious use of materials.

The Access component

The access component of the statement relates only to "access to the development" and therefore does not extend to internal aspects of individual buildings. The statements should explain the policy adopted by the applicant in relation to access, and how relevant policies in local development documents have been taken into account in preparing the scheme. The statement should also provide information on any consultation undertaken in relation to issues of access and what account has been taken of the outcome of any such consultation.

It should explain how any specific issues which might affect access to the development have been addressed (such as the inclusion of disabled people) and how prospective users will be able to gain access to the development from the existing transport network. The statement should also explain why the main points of access to the site and the layout of access routes within the site have been chosen and how features which ensure access to the development will be maintained.

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.

Statement Accompanying Applications for Listed Building Consent

Design and access statements will also be required for applications for listed building consent. Where a planning application is submitted in parallel with an application for listed building consent, a single, combined statement should address the requirements of both. A separate leaflet is available from the council setting out the additional requirements in relation to listed building consent.

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Any queries please contact Allerdale Borough Council at planning@allerdale.gov.uk or telephone the North Team on 01900 702740 or the South Team on 01900 702760.