



# *Design and Access Statements*



**This note is to give advance notice** of a change to the information that must be submitted with certain types of planning application.

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## Introduction

From 10th August 2006 changes introduced by the government come into force requiring all planning applications not included in the categories listed below to be accompanied by a DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT.

The categories **not** included in the new requirement are:

- engineering and mining operations;
- development of an existing house or development within the curtilage for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling-house (except for dwelling-houses in a National Park, Conservation Area, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Site Special Scientific Interest);
- a material change of use of land or buildings.

However ALL applications made on a listed building including listed building consent will require a design and access statement. **Any applications submitted without a design and access statement will not be considered and inevitably be delayed.**

The purpose of the statement is to explain and justify the design and assess principles and concepts on which a development proposal is based, and how these will be reflected in individual aspects of the scheme.

The legislation requires that the statement must provide information about:

- the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development; and
- how issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with.

## Writing the Design and Access Statement

### What is the statement?

A design and access statement should explain the design thinking behind a planning application and include a written description and justification of the application. It should show the applicant has thought carefully about how everyone, including disabled people, older people and very young children will be able to use the places they want to build. Photos, maps and drawings can be included and may enhance the statement, the statement should not be overly complicated and avoid jargon or overly technical language, it will be available for everyone to see along with the rest of the application. The statement should not be too long, the length should be determined by the complexity of the application, for small applications only a paragraph may be required, larger developments will need a more in-depth statement.

### What to include in the statement

The statement should cover both the design principle and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development and how issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with.

There are five main points to consider, explain and justify for the development:

- Amount – for residential development this is the number of proposed units, for other applications this means the floor space for each proposed use.
- Layout – the way in which buildings, routes and open spaces (both private and public) are provided, placed and orientated to each other and buildings surrounding the development.
- Scale – the height, width and length of a building in relation to its surroundings.
- Landscaping - 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.
- Appearance – the aspect of the place or building that determines the visual impression it makes, including the external build form of the development, its architecture, materials, decoration, lighting, colour and texture.

The statement needs to include two potential aspects of access:

- Vehicular and transport links – why the access points and routes have been chosen, and how the site responds to road layout and public transport provision.
- Inclusive access – how everyone can get to and move through the place on equal terms regardless of age, disability, ethnicity or social grouping.

Statements may include other information which applicants may feel is relevant. This may include energy performance of buildings or whether they meet design standards (Lifetime Homes, Buildings for Life Standards), or how the public have influenced the plan.

### **Listed Buildings Consent**

The statement for listed building consent should follow many of the same principles as outlined above for a standard application, in addition a brief explanation of how the design takes into account the following should be included:

- historic and special architectural importance of the building
- particular physical features of the building that justify its designation as a listed building
- building's setting

The statement should justify the approach to ensure the buildings historical or architectural importance is preserved or enhanced. If an aspect of the design may impact this then an explanation of why this is necessary and how the approach used will minimise this. It should be made clear how the approach to access has balanced the duties imposed by the Disability Discrimination Act where the proposal is subject to those and the particular historical and architectural significance of the building. Any issues that arise due to the building being listed should also be explained. Options considered and where inclusive (access for disabled people, older people and very young children) design has not been provide an explanation as to why

should be given. Where the fabric of existing buildings restricts the ability to meet the minimum levels of accessibility details should be provided as to the solutions that will be put in place to minimise the impact on disabled people.

If a planning application is being submitted in parallel with an application for listed building consent, a single, combined statement should address the requirements for both. The combined statement should address the elements required in relation to a planning application in the normal way and the additional requirements in relation to listed building consent.

## **Tips**

- Keep it short and to the point
- Write it for the application; don't copy it from somewhere else
- Start the statement when you start the scheme, and use it to influence the design
- Explain how the design has come about and what you are trying to achieve
- Talk to people who could help as soon as you can. Consulting access specialists, local groups, planners, building control and so on early on will help the statement hang together
- Use statements as a negotiation tool, and allow them to change if the scheme changes
- Use accurate and informative illustrations. Any maps, diagrams or artists' impressions should be based on the application drawings.

## **Further Information**

The circular itself *Guidance on changes to the development control system* explains in detail when statements are needed and how they should be used (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1500620>). The Disability Rights Commission website ([www.drc-org.uk](http://www.drc-org.uk)) explains how access statements work and how they should be used. There is more information in *Planning and access for disabled people: a good practice guide*.

(Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003) and *Safer places: the planning system and crime prevention* (ODPM/Home Office, 2003). The Urban Design Group has also produced detailed guidance called *Design and access statements for development frameworks*. You can get details from [www.udg.org.uk](http://www.udg.org.uk).