

APPENDIX D. DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENTS

REQUIREMENTS FOR DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENTS

On the 10 August 2006 new regulations came into force under section 42 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requiring Design and Access Statements 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.

NB In the Southampton context, a “Designated area” means a Site of Special Scientific Interest or a conservation area). Design and Access Statements are not required for applications relating to advertisement control, tree preservation orders or storage of hazardous substances.

THE PURPOSE OF A DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

A Design and Access Statement should be a short and concise report that accompanies and supports a planning application and illustrates the process that has led to the development proposal, explaining and justifying the proposal in a structured way. The main role of the statement will be as a material consideration and therefore, they should not be used as a substitute for drawings and other material required to be submitted for determination as part of the planning application itself. Design and Access statements will be sent to consultees along with individual planning applications.

They provide an opportunity for developers and designers to demonstrate their commitment to achieving good design and ensuring accessibility in the work they undertake, and allow them to show how they are meeting, or will meet the various obligations placed on them by legislation and policy. It will also give local communities a greater understanding of what is proposed, what might eventually be built and therefore a greater opportunity to contribute to the planning process. Many developers are already familiar with producing such statements and this new requirement should be seen as an extension of what is current best practice. As a checklist, it will be helpful for the applicant to refer to the matrix included in Appendix C that references relevant information to the preparation of the statement with the Building for Life questions.

Design and access statements submitted with detailed applications will explain and justify past design decisions that have led to the detailed application. Where a statement has been submitted with an outline planning application there will be no need for a further statement at the reserved matters stage, however the detailed application should be consistent with principles and concepts established in the statement assessed at outline application and this will inform the assessment of any matters reserved by condition. The planning authority may feel that additional information, building on the original statement, is required at the reserved matters stage. In such cases the planning authority will consider setting out such a requirement through a condition on the outline planning application.

Where a planning application and an application for listed building consent are submitted together one design and access statement will suffice. A brief explanation of how design policies and approaches have taken account of paragraph 3.5 of PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) will be required. For further advice contact the Conservation Officer.

Applications which are accompanied by an environmental statement will require much of the information and analysis needed for a design and access statement to be fixed as part of the environmental impact assessment carried out by the applicant. This does not obviate the need for a design and access statement to be prepared. It is important that the design and access statement is consistent with, but presented separately from, the environmental statement, with cross-references and linkages where appropriate.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSIDERING DESIGN AND ACCESS ISSUES TOGETHER

Access is established as a fundamental planning issue owing to its importance to a growing percentage of the population with mobility impairments. Under previous planning legislation disabled access need only be addressed once planning permission was granted. At this point in the design process it is too late to make any significant alterations, for example, a differently orientated building may give level access to a building. However under the new regulations design and access must be considered together at the earliest stages of design development.

It is important to note that the new regulations only relate to 'access TO the development' and therefore, for the purposes of gaining planning permission do not include access internally within individual buildings. 'Access to' can include access to the main point of entry to a site and therefore covers road layout and public transport links, and access to individual buildings within a site (i.e. access to all shops in a mixed use development).

INCLUSIVE DESIGN

Developments should be designed to integrate and adopt the following principles of inclusive design that will result in developments that:

- can be used safely and easily by as many people as possible without undue effort, separation or special treatment;
- offer the freedom to choose and the ability to participate equally in the development's mainstream activities;
- value and embrace diversity and difference;
- are of high quality design;
- allocates appropriate space for people;
- achieves safe, comfortable and healthy environments;

- ensures ease of use, comprehension and understanding;
- have signing that is legible and predictable.

Setting out an access strategy at the beginning of a project and reviewing access for each phase, element or building can help to ensure that inclusive design principles inform the design of the development from inception, through the planning process, detailed design, construction, occupation, management and operation stages. Each of these stages should be fully inclusive, involving disabled people and other potential stakeholders in their development and evaluation.

PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS

It is considered good practice to use design and access statements as an aid to pre-application discussions. Statements can be a cost effective and useful way to discuss a proposal throughout the design process, whilst early discussion on the inclusive access component should help to establish any initial access issues.

PRESENTING THE INFORMATION

Hard copies of the Design and Access statement should be submitted but may be accompanied by electronic copies. The planning authorities may need to make statements available in alternative formats (large print, audio tape etc.) to comply with the requirements of section 21 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

WHAT IS REQUIRED IN A DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

In summary, the planning authority will require the following information to be explained, justified and/or provided in the Design and Access Statement:

- a brief description of the proposals, site location, number of residential units and proposed floor space of other uses;
- appraisal of the context;
- the Design component: the design principles, concepts and further details as described in the following paragraphs;
- the Access component: the design principles, concepts and further details as described in the following paragraphs;

- Illustrations: including maps, plans, sections, elevations, photos, artists impressions and computer generated images to clearly illustrate the proposals and supporting analyses (see Section 1.13) for details on planning submission requirements);
- the above elements should clearly indicate how the proposals meet the key objectives for residential design as set out in Page 11 of this guidance.

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 and should be proportionate to the complexity of the application.

APPRAISAL OF THE CONTEXT

A design and access statement must demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the proposed development. It is important that an applicant should understand the context in which their proposal will sit, and use this understanding to draw up the application. To gain a good understanding of context and to use it appropriately applicants should follow a design process which includes **character assessments**, **involvement**, **evaluation** and **design**, which together should build a case for the proposed **use**:

Character Assessments:

- The guidance given in Circular 01/06 (DCLG) amounts to the preparation of a character assessment, advice on which is given in Appendix E. This includes setting the context of relevant national regional and local planning policies and guidance.

Involvement:

- Of both community members and professionals; through participatory consultation events, e.g. presentations; surveys, planning for real workshops
- 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;
- 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 character 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 predetermined design through subsequent site assessment and evaluation.

Use:

- Explained and justified through the character assessments, involvement, evaluation and design process, in relation to proposed uses, distribution across the site, the appropriateness of the accessibility to and between them, and their interrelationship to uses surrounding the site.
- The statement should explain how this context has been considered in relation to the physical characteristics of the proposal, that is, the amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance of the development.

THE DESIGN COMPONENT

The design and access statement should cover both the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development and how issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with. Statements should evolve throughout the design and development process. This will include descriptions of the spatial qualities in an urban design context with particular reference as to how the proposals meet the key objects for residential design as set out on Page 11 of this guidance.

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.

The following information should be provided for to explain and justify each aspect of the proposal for both outline and detailed applications;

Amount:

- No. of residential units proposed and proposed floor space for other uses (maximum amounts are required to be specified for outline applications);
- Distribution across the site;
- Response to the site's context and surroundings;
- How accessibility for users to and between parts of the development is maximized.

Layout:

- Orientation in relation to each other of buildings, routes and open spaces (both private and public) and spaces surrounding the development (where layout is reserved in outline applications approximate relationships should be shown).;
- How these relationships, within and around the site, will help to create safe, vibrant and successful places;
- Principles behind the choice of blocks or building plots proposed and explain how these principles, including the need for appropriate access will inform the detailed layout (the use of illustrative diagrams will assist in explaining this);
- Factors important to accessibility of the site for users, such as travel distances and gradients, and the orientation of block and units in relation to any site topography to afford optimum accessibility.
- Demonstration of how crime prevention measures have been considered in the design of the proposal.

Scale:

- The principles used to establish the scale, including details of the height, width and length, of a building or buildings in relation to its surroundings and the relevant skyline (if scale is reserved in outline applications the upper and lower limits of height, width and length should be established);
- The size of building parts, particularly entrances and facades, with regard to how they will relate to the human scale.

Landscaping:

- The principles behind the proposed landscaping scheme, explaining the purpose of landscaping private and public spaces and its relationship to the surrounding area, including 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;
- How landscaping will be maintained;
- How the proposed landscaping scheme will ensure accessibility to all users;
- Where possible, a schedule of planting and proposed hard landscaping materials to be used is recommended (if landscaping is reserved in outline applications, this information is not required);

Appearance:

- The visual impression of the proposed development, including the external built form, its architecture, materials, decoration, lighting, colour and texture;
- The principles behind the intended appearance and how these will inform the final design of the development and no further specific information required for outline applications reserving appearance;
- The appearance of the place or buildings proposed including how this will relate to the appearance and character of the development's surroundings;

- How the decisions taken regarding choice of particular materials and textures, in particular contrast in tone and colour, will improve the development's accessibility e.g. features such as entrances, circulation routes or seating;
- The location and levels of lighting with respect to accessibility in particular.

THE ACCESS COMPONENT

The access component of the statement only relates to "access to the development" and therefore does not extend to internal aspects of individual buildings. In this context the statement should provide the following information, explaining and justifying where appropriate;

- 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;
 - How access arrangements will ensure that all users will have equal and convenient access to buildings and spaces and the public transport network;
 - How the need for flexibility of the development is addressed and how it may adapt to changing needs;
 - The policy adopted in relation to access and how relevant policies in local development documents have been taken into account;
 - Provide information on any consultation undertaken in relation to issues of access and how the outcome of this consultation has informed the development proposals. This should include, for example, a brief explanation of the applicant's policy and approach to access, with particular reference to the inclusion of disabled people, and a description of how the sources of advice on design and accessibility and technical issues will be, or have been followed;
 - Access for the emergency services should also be explained where relevant. Such information may include circulation routes round the site and egress from buildings in the event of emergency evacuation;
- For outline applications, where access is reserved, the application should indicate the location of points of access to the site.

WHAT ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL IS REQUIRED?

Detailed planning applications will not be accepted without the following illustrative material:

- A site plan of not less than 1:200 for an individual building, or 1:500 for a development comprising a number of buildings
- This plan should be used as the basis for the submitting the following information:
 - Site survey including existing and proposed levels;
 - Site analysis;
 - Tree survey;
 - Service information, sightlines, access points
 - Landscape design proposals;
 - Sustainable design concept,
 - Response to biodiversity/ecological surveys
- Plans and Elevations of existing and proposed buildings at 1:100/1:50, including those existing buildings which constitute the street scene;
- Site sections (1:500/1:200) and building sections (1:100/1:50);
- A photographic survey of the site and surrounds;
- Detailed Planting Proposal;
- Landscape Structures and Surfaces

The planning authority reserves the right, where the above has failed to clarify the issues, to request the following additional material:

- A context plan at not less than 1:2500 which shows an area of not less than 400m radius (10 minute walking distance) from the centre of the site;
- Axonometric or isometric projection, or perspective (artist or computer generated drawings), setting the proposed development in context, including visual representations of the proposed development as seen from key view points;
- A scale model and/or computer generated walk-throughs.

Other information, including surveys and checklists pertaining to the specific nature of the site and its context may be required and should be included in the Design and Access Statement. Refer to Appendix H for further details.

WHAT TO DO NEXT?

If your application requires the submissions of a Design and Access Statement, you should request the contact details of the Development Control Officer who will handle your case. The Case Officer and Officers providing specialist advice, for example on urban design, ecology, sustainability or transport, will assist you to identify the major issues relating to the submissions of a satisfactory Design and Access Statement (refer to Appendix L for contact details). Refer to Part 1 – Introduction, that gives further detail of the pre-application process.

Planning applications and the accompanying Design and Access Statements will be assessed by development control officers and other officers, including the City Design Team, and in some cases, depending on the profile and strategic importance of the proposals, they will be referred to either the Architect's Panel (comprising of local architects) or the City's Design Advisory Panel (comprising a panel of specially selected eminent architects and designer professionals of national and international repute) or to the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment for comment.

Please remember that, in order to avoid delay, an application will not be registered until a satisfactory statement has been submitted.

Note: This Appendix has been prepared using guidance contained in Circular 01/06 (DCLG): Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System.