

Design and Access Statements

Changes to the Development Control system introduced in 2006 now mean that as from 10 August Design and Access Statements must accompany most* types of planning applications and Listed Building applications. These changes are set out in DCLG Circular 01/2006 , new sections inserted into the Planning and Listed Buildings Acts and the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) (England) Order 2006. **Changes to the primary legislation mean that a planning authority will be prohibited from entertaining an application unless it is accompanied by a design statement and an access statement, where required.**

* Statements are not required for applications for changes of use (unless operational development is involved), engineering or mining operations, or householder development (unless the dwellinghouse is in a Conservation Area)

Background

Planning Policy Statement 1 issued in February 2005 highlighted the importance of good design in the development process.

“Good design ensures attractive usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Good design is indivisible from good planning.” Para. 33.

“Planning Authorities should plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes. Good design should contribute to making places better for people. Design which is inappropriate to its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted.” Para. 34.

The Policy Statement requires Planning Authorities to prepare robust policies on design and access. The overriding objectives are to ensure that developments are sustainable, respond to their local context and create or reinforce local distinctiveness, create safe and accessible environments and are visually attractive. Applicants and agents will need to provide sufficient information with their applications to show how they have taken into account good design in their development proposals in the form of a Design and Access Statement.

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 the proposal in a structured way.

What do I need to include in a Design and Access Statement?

The 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 thought through and will need to cover the following:-

- The **amount** of development being applied for should be explained and justified.
- The **layout** of the proposed development should be explained and justified in terms of the relationship between buildings and private and public spaces within and around the site. The accessibility of this site for users and how crime

prevention measures have been considered in the design of the proposal should also be made explicit.

- **Climate change** – How the development minimises carbon emissions by taking account of landform, aspect, building orientation, green space for shade, sustainable drainage systems, sustainable waste management and sustainable transport.
- The **scale** of the building or buildings i.e. height, width and length in relation to its surroundings should be explained, including why particular heights have been settled on and how these relate to the site's surroundings and the relevant skyline.
- The proposed **landscaping** scheme should be explained and justified, making clear the purpose of landscaping private and public spaces within the development and its relationship to the surrounding area.
- The **appearance** of the development and how this will relate to the appearance and character of the development's surroundings should be described and explained. The relationship of the appearance, particularly choice of materials, surface treatments, paving and lighting will have a significant impact on the accessibility of the development.

What is the “Access” component of the Statement?

This relates to the access to the development and will need to explain how the chosen access arrangements will ensure that all users will have equal and convenient access to buildings and spaces and the public transport network. In summary, applicants will need to make explicit their policy and approach on access with particular reference to the inclusion of disabled people. Access for the emergency services should also be explained where relevant.

Is a Design and Access Statement required with an outline application?

Yes. Applicants will need to provide a statement which clearly explains and justifies the design and access principles that will be used to develop further details of the scheme to be submitted at reserved matter stage. The outline application itself will need to include information on:-

- Use – showing development zones where different uses are proposed.
- Amount of Development – the amount of development for each use.
- Indicative layout showing separate development zones where applicable.
- Scale parameters – upper and lower limits for height, width and length of each building within the site boundary.
- Indicative access points – an area or areas in which the access point or points to the site will be situated.

NB There are legislative changes which modify the outline planning permission regime which will mean that more information will need to be provided with outline applications at the outset. These changes take effect at the same time as the Design and Access statement requirements set out in this advice note come into operation.

Is a Design and Access Statement required with a Listed Building application?

Yes. The statement will be similar to the one required with a planning application, although there will be some differences because of the different nature of the

application. With concurrent planning and listed building applications, the statement can be combined as a single statement.

For the design component, applicants will need to show how the design has taken into account:-

- The historic and architectural importance of the building.
- The particular physical features of the building that justify its designation as a Listed Building.
- The setting of the building.

The design approach will need to ensure that the historic and architectural importance of the Listed Building has been preserved or enhanced and show how the impact on the Listed Building has been minimised.

The access component is broadly the same as the one required for a planning application but will need to pay particular attention to the matters listed above.

How will the Planning Authority handle design issues as part of the decision making process on planning applications?

We welcome the submission of schemes informally prior to a formal application being made. At this stage we will assess proposals in relation to the Council's approved design (and other) policies and offer advice on an appropriate design approach. You may wish to prepare a draft Design and Access Statement at this stage as a basis for discussion.

The Planning Authority will need to assess the appearance of the development - how it will look and how the overall design has been thought through – how it will work for the people who will wish to use the development.

Government policy sets out a number of design objectives for new development. Annex A to PPS1 in particular is useful as it has a resume of what is said in a number of other PPG's and PPS's – PPG 3, PPS 6, PPS 7, PPG 13, PPG15 , PPG 21 and PPS 22.

What specific policies does the Planning Authority have on design and access matters?

The Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 is the key document setting out the Council's planning framework for the area and a number of policies in the plan have a direct bearing on design and access considerations. There are also development briefs for significant individual sites. You should refer to these documents or contact a Planning Officer for further guidance.

There are also a number of separate more specialised policy documents which set out the Council's design expectations for certain types of development proposals. In addition to these approved documents, a Residential Design Guide is in course of preparation and a draft document is currently out for consultation.

All our specific approved policy documents relating to design and the draft Residential Design Guide can be viewed on our website www.warwickdc.gov.uk.

NB This note contains only a summary of the main aspects of the changes linked to the introduction of Design and Access Statements and is not a definitive legal document.