



Design and access statements
planning advice note

August 2006

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL ADVICE NOTE

Design and Access Statements

Introduction

This guidance note relates to recent changes to the development control systems that require the submission of design and access statements with certain types of applications for planning permission and listed building consent. The Government sets out the formal requirements for the submission of design and access statements in Circular 01/2006 entitled 'Guidance on changes to the development control system' This prohibits the Local Planning Authority from entertaining an application unless it is accompanied by a design and access statement, where required.

This advice note has been produced by New Forest District Council as an at-a-glance summary of this council's requirements and should be read in conjunction with the government circular.

When is a design and access statement required?

A design and access statement is required to be submitted for **all** outline and full planning applications except for:

- a material change of use of land or buildings unless it 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 that dwelling house where no part of the dwelling is within a "designated area";*
- applications made for advertisements, tree preservation or storage of hazardous substances.

*A designated area is a National Park, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Conservation Area, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage Site and The Broads.

What is a design and access statement?

It is a written and illustrated report accompanying and supporting a planning application. It enables applicants to demonstrate the quality of their design and why they believe it is suitable for the site and its context.

Considerations must include access for those with special needs and this should be an integral part of the overall design approach. The statement must show how the applicant has analysed the site and its setting, and how the applicant has formulated and applied

design principles to achieve good design for the proposed buildings, spaces, paths, streets, and places.

It needs to explain and justify the proposed development and can be linked to planning decisions by conditions.

What will it accomplish?

Design and access statements will put good design at the heart of the planning, development and decision making process and ensure that design and accessibility is considered from the outset.

By putting design at the heart of the process, the overall standard of design of development proposals should be raised and the submission of poor and ill-considered proposals avoided.

The process of preparing a design and access statement should ensure that development of an acceptable quality, for both applicant and local community alike, is achieved. It will enable an understanding by all parties as to what sort of a place the applicant is trying to create. It will also show how all users, including disabled people, will be given equal and convenient access to the development.

It should not only offer some surety of design quality to inform planning decisions but it should set an example for future applications whenever there might be additional work or alterations. If a clear design philosophy can be established for the site, before going into detail, then problems can be ironed out at an early stage. For this reason it is particularly useful in pre-application discussion. Remember that

“Design which is inappropriate in 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” (PPS1 2005).

If your proposal is for development of an existing dwelling house or development within the curtilage of a dwelling house for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of that dwelling house and is within a ‘designated area’, you should now read **section B**

If your proposal needs listed building consent, you should also refer to **section C**

Section A: All non-householder applications

Introduction

The Local Planning Authority is prohibited from entertaining an application unless it is accompanied by a design and access statement, where required.

What is required for the design and access statement?

The design and access statement should explain the proposals, principles and concepts so that all parties can understand what sort of a place it is intended to create and why that is thought to be appropriate. A proper assessment of the site and its context (as well as a survey with analytical information) will be absolutely vital before taking the project further. The level of detail required in a design and access statement will depend on the scale and complexity of the application proposal. Statements need not be long.

The design and access statement should include a record of issues drawn out from consultation with local communities. This is particularly important when proposing development on larger or controversial sites. This council will expect the local community to be consulted and resultant issues included in the assessment and contextual analysis stages i.e. **before** design work is undertaken. This will enable such issues to be fully considered throughout the development of the design.

DCLG Circular 01/2006 gives more detail as to the requirements for the statement. For clarity and convenience, it sets out the access component separately from the design component. This can be helpful especially for highway officers, transport planners and disability access officers. However, in the design process for most developments, the design is inextricably linked to access.

To avoid repetition of information and to allow the evolution of the design process, applicants may prefer to include the access and design components together, provided that the result is clearly set out and that the access component, **including disabled access**, is fully considered.

This council's adopted supplementary planning document (SPD) entitled 'Housing design, density and character' takes just such an approach and sets out a design process, assessing and responding to context which is inclusive of the access component. This SPD is available at the Planning Reception and can be viewed on the Council's website www.newforest.gov.uk

This guidance expresses the need to assess and respond to the context which is described in terms of three important constituent parts:

- character and sense of identity (including layout, landscape character, scale, appearance, density and mix);
- access, movement and permeability (including existing and potential movement routes, destinations and entrances for; pedestrians, noting whether it is inclusive of special needs or otherwise; bicycles; vehicles and public transport); and
- activity and social expectation (enabling the integral inclusion of issues raised by liaison with the local community).

Following this process should have the advantage of setting the access component out clearly for specialist consideration, whilst also obviating the need for repetition where access issues clearly affect the layout and other elements of design.

If proposing residential development, this planning authority will therefore expect you to follow the published SPD, ensuring that the access, movement and permeability section is fully considered including coverage of access for special needs as part of this.

'Planning and Access for Disabled People – a Good Practice Guide' (ODPM 2003), recommends that an access statement should be submitted with non-domestic applications for building regulations. This should identify the philosophy and approach taken to inclusive design, the key issues of the particular scheme and sources of advice and guidance used. A summary sheet of the main issues of design accommodating special needs will therefore also be required as part of the design and access statement.

How should it be set out?

The design and access statement need not be a huge exercise. Simple concise bullet points and diagrams can get the message across in a few pages. Remember, what we really need to know is:

- **What sort of a place are you trying to create?**
- **Why are those particular characteristics of place thought to be appropriate? and**
- **How is it intended to carry the ideas through into the design?**

In producing the design and access statement you should follow these key steps in the order set out below. It is no use doing parts of this retrospectively:

1. Research and background work.

Read relevant local documents and plans, walk the area, check policy, consider what parts of the surroundings or approaches will be useful in recognising the context.

2. Analyse the context. Sketch, measure, photograph and list important elements and issues. Involve the local community.

Analysis must cover:

- character and sense of identity;
- access movement and permeability; and
- activity and social expectation.

3. Respond to your analysis.

Identify key principles and concepts of the emerging design through the evaluation of the contextual information, and identifying opportunities and constraints. The design must evolve from this evaluation and it should be based

upon an understanding of the qualities that we expect from a successful place. Such qualities are listed under 'Objectives of urban design' in *By Design* (CABE and Government guidance document):

- Character
- Continuity and enclosure
- Quality of the public realm
- Ease of movement
- Legibility
- Adaptability
- Diversity and choice

4 Bring it all together.

Describe the design, identifying how it evolves from steps one, two and three. This must include illustrative material that shows how the final design responds to context and how it follows the key principles and concepts from step three.

An annotated version of your application drawings can point out the reasoning behind design features, materials, articulation etc, i.e. the things that make up the character and sense of identity that your proposal will be contributing to.

An annotated version of the layout and how it fits into the surrounding fabric of the area can illustrate the access, movement and permeability that will be provided by your proposal and how special needs will be catered for.

Similarly, activity and social expectation can be shown annotated in diagram form on plans. Include notes indicating how key issues raised by the local community have contributed to the design.

You will need to show how your design is appropriate in its context and how it improves the character and quality of your area.

What is not required for the design and access statement?

- Retrospective justification of a scheme.
- Information on matters that are not relevant to the planning decision.
- Regurgitated planning policies.
- Bald statements of compliance with assumed design criteria without the relevant explanation. Typically; "*The proposal is designed to fit in with neighbouring properties*".
- Too much detail and technical information.
- Writing in jargon. (Technical or specialist terms may be useful but refer to a recognised glossary).
- Repetition of drawings that actually form the application, other than where used as part of a diagram or adapted to illustrate a point.
- Illustrations and photographs of ideas and details that are either irrelevant or unlikely to be produced in the proposal.
- Developers marketing material.

How will it be used?

Pre-application advice

If this is needed, remember it can only be given if your work is in accordance with the above process. Meetings may be useful but resources are limited and best value is only likely to be achieved if meetings are taken as an opportunity to consider the evolution of the design and access statement. Submitting unsupported draft layouts for comment, based upon a pre-determined number of units or floorspace, is not an efficient way of working and neither will it achieve the most creative or beneficial schemes. Applicants should only submit pre-application work for consideration at either or both of the following two stages. If a meeting is preferable, a planning officer will contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time and place and to set an agenda along the lines described below:

First stage.

Applicants should expect to produce at least the contextual analysis and the main key principles that will lead the design before seeking advice. Applicants should expect the information for steps 1 and 2 (research and analysis) to form the agenda for a first pre-application meeting. Any information needed before that (for instance checking the relevant documentation or agreeing a sample area for assessing the character and identity) could usefully be checked by telephone or a brief visit to planning reception at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst, if there is any uncertainty.

Second stage.

Applicants should have completed up to step three and start to be exploring options for bringing the design together, before submitting information for discussion. This should be prior to finalising designs. In this way, a consensus on the main issues can be reached.

Council officers will only offer advice without prejudice to the democratic process and whilst professional advice will be given in accordance with guidelines and current design philosophy, no guarantee that any particular idea will be approved by the council can be given.

Where pre-application advice is not sought this Council will, in most cases, determine planning applications without negotiations to amend their design or layout or the design and access statement accompanying them. This approach is necessary if resources are to be released for more involved pre-application negotiations along the lines set out above.

At planning application stage

The design and access statement can be used to help consultees to understand the reasoning behind particular design decisions, and the likely nature of any outstanding

detail. Committee decisions can be more focused on the objective issues of design, rather than confusing subjective matters of taste and style that may not be relevant. The completed statement must be submitted with the application and conditions may be applied to any permission to ensure that particularly relevant or valued principles are adhered to. CABE has produced an assessment crib sheet in their document 'Design and access statements: How to write, read and use them'. This covers the main elements of good design that the local planning authority will need to understand and agree if they are to give permission for a development. The statement may be checked against this crib sheet and the application itself will be checked for compliance with the statement.

Remember that in assessing a planning application the local planning authority will be asking 'is the design good enough to approve?', not 'is it bad enough to refuse?'

Building Control and disabled access

Although disabled access is an integral part of the overall design approach for all developments, it will also be necessary to draw out and present information on how your proposals address the needs of disabled people as a separate section of the design and access statement. This will ensure that the correct consultations can be undertaken properly within the timescales.

This summary section of the design and access statement needs to set out:

- What consideration has been given to disabled access in the design philosophy and how has this been used to inform the layout including the location of car parking, dropping-off points and other external spaces?
- What provisions have been made for disabled access to the building itself - thresholds, ramps, door widths etc and the avoidance of obstructions?
- Details of how pathways and other routes within the development site cater for disabled needs, including the use of textures, colours, seating and external lighting (where appropriate)?
- What access is available to the development from the public transport network?
- An explanation of how the internal layout meets with Part M of the Building Regulations.

Applicants need to be aware of the requirements to Part M of the Building Regulations.

Good practice guidance, issued in 2003, recommends that an access statement is submitted with non-domestic applications for building regulations. This is to identify the philosophy and approach taken to inclusive design, the key issues of the particular scheme and sources of advice and guidance used. This guide suggests that the access statement provided for building regulation purposes should be seen as **complimentary to, and a development of, the information provided for planning purposes**, rather than as a separate document. Further details of this guidance can be found in "Planning and Access for Disabled People – a Good Practice Guide "(ODPM 2003)

Whereas internal arrangements of buildings are not normally a matter for planning consideration, if these are not considered as a part of the overall design process, adjustments that may be required at building regulations stage could have a detrimental effect on the design.

In future

The statement can be referred to when applying for amendments to an existing permission or extensions to buildings already built. They can be useful for guiding future neighbouring development applications and where developers are seeking to work on neighbouring sites, the council encourages collaboration on design and access statements such that a common idea of context and a series of common or similar goals can be sought in designing developments.

Section B: Householder applications in designated areas.

Introduction

The Local Planning Authority is prohibited from entertaining an application unless it is accompanied by a design and access statement, where required.

When is a design and access statement required?

A design and access statement is required for householder applications which are located in a designated:

- Conservation Area,
- Site of Special Scientific Interest,
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

If you are unsure whether your property is located within one of these areas please contact Planning Services. Telephone 023 8028 5333.

This advice note sets out what is required for an acceptable design and access statement for householder development in designated areas.

For householder development the design and access statement need not be a huge exercise. Simple concise bullet points and diagrams can get the message across in a few pages. The character and features of the designated area need to be given careful consideration at the outset.

Remember, we all need to know:

- **What sort of a place are you affecting and how will your design contribute to the quality of that place?**
- **What characteristics of the place or neighbourhood are thought to be most appropriate to reflect in your design? and**
- **How is it intended to carry the ideas through into the design?**

There may be several different design solutions for a site. It is important that the following process is carried out to ensure that design and access are appropriate to the site.

What do I need to do?

It should be a simple process for householder development involving the following four steps:

1. Research and background work

Find out what policies or local documents are relevant to your neighbourhood. The Council's web site or planning reception can help you do this.

Consider the area in which your property is located and why it has been designated as, for example, a conservation area. What are its particularly important features? A number of character appraisals have been undertaken of the district's conservation areas which may be a useful starting point.

2. Analyse the context

Sketch, measure, photograph and list the important elements and issues relevant to your neighbourhood. Look at your and your neighbouring properties and note the following¹:

- What are the plot widths? Is there a strong uniformity?
- Is there a regular set back from the road?
- Are there any particular design or other distinctive features?
- What are the front boundaries made up of? How do driveways, paths and entrances work?
- Do ridges run parallel to the road; are there gables, bays, chimneys, and dormer windows?
- What are the predominant materials – look at the type, texture and colour?
- What is the typical ratio of front gardens to hard standing?
- Are there any other features of note?

¹. This is a simplified checklist based on that contained in New Forest District Council Supplementary Planning Document "Housing Design Density and Character".

3. Respond to your analysis

Once this contextual analysis has been undertaken, your Design and Access Statement should explain, using illustrative material where necessary, how your design can use this information. Include which parts of your analysis you consider to be important and how you might include similar elements in your own design.

4. Bring it all together

Describe the design identifying how it has evolved from steps one, two and three. An annotated version of your application drawings can point out the reasoning behind design features, materials etc.

Remember, the planning authority will be looking to see whether your design is good enough to approve. You will need to show how your design is appropriate in its context and how it improves the character and quality of your area. For building regulations, please include a summary of how you have considered and dealt with disabled access.

Section C: Listed building applications.

A design and access statement has to be submitted with any application for listed building consent.

If you are submitting a complementary application for planning permission then there can be a single design and access statement for both applications, however, it is necessary to ensure that the statement includes the additional elements required for applications for listed building consent.

In addition to the information required for a planning application, the design and access statement should include a brief explanation of how design policies and approaches have taken account of paragraph [3.5 of PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment](#) see below*.

Assessment must be made of :

- the historic and architectural importance of the building;
- the particular physical features of the building that justify its designation as a listed building;
- the building's setting; and
- the benefits it may bring to the community.

The statement will need to explain and justify the approach to ensuring that the special historic and architectural importance of the listed building is preserved or enhanced. Where there is potentially an aspect of design, including design for access, that will impact on this, the statement should explain why this is necessary, and what measures within the approach to design have been taken to minimise its impact. Further guidance on access to historic buildings can be found in English Heritage's publication 'Easy access to historic buildings'.

In alterations to existing buildings where the fabric of the structure restricts the ability to meet minimum levels of accessibility, details should be provided of the options considered and the solutions that will be put in place to minimise the impact on disabled people.

* PPG15 paragraph 3.5

" The issues that are generally relevant to the consideration of all listed building consent applications are:

- i. the importance of the building, its intrinsic architectural and historic interest and rarity, in both national and local terms ('historic interest' is further explained in paragraph 6.11);*
- ii. the particular physical features of the building (which may include its design, plan, materials or location) which justify its inclusion in the list: list descriptions may draw attention to features of particular interest or value, but they are not exhaustive and other features of importance (eg. interiors) may come to light after the building's inclusion in the list;*
- iii. the building's setting and its contribution to the local scene, which may be very important, eg. where it forms an element in a group, park, garden or other townscape or landscape, or where it shares particular architectural forms or details with other buildings nearby;*
- iv. the extent to which the proposed works would bring substantial benefits for the community, in particular by contributing to the economic regeneration of the area or the enhancement of its environment (including other listed buildings)."*

Further advice on design and access statements can be obtained from:

Environmental Design Team
New Forest District Council
Appletree Court
Lyndhurst
Hampshire
SO43 7PA

e-mail environmentaldesign@nfdc.gov.uk

Other relevant documents/contacts:

- Supplementary Planning Documents “Housing design, density and character” (2006), New Forest District Council. Website: www.newforest.gov.uk
- Circular 1/2006 “Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System” Department of Communities and Local Government. Website: www.communities.gov.uk
- “Planning and Access for Disabled People – a Good Practice Guide “(ODPM 2003). Website: www.communities.gov.uk
- Design Statements: How to write, read and use them - CABE (2006). Website: www.cabe.org.uk.
- Easy access to historic buildings – www.english-heritage.org.uk
- Building in Context – English Heritage and CABE
- Part M of Building Regulations
- By Design CABE and DETR see CABE’s website above.
- Disability Rights Commission – www.drc-gb.org.uk

Design and Access Statements

Planning Advice Note - Addendum April 2007

Consultation with local people with disabilities or the local access group

NB: This advice note is not formal SPD.

Note: This addendum is to read with the Design and Access Statement booklet published August 2006.

Introduction

This guidance note explains the Council's requirements on consulting with local people with disabilities or the local access group so that the issues they raise can be dealt with in the design and access statement. All consultation must be via the development control team so as to ensure a comprehensive response covering all relevant planning issues is received.

Why consult with people with disabilities?

Nationally 1 in 7 people are disabled. The majority of them are able to participate fully in everyday activities provided buildings are thoughtfully designed and have suitable access. Disabled people understand what is needed to make a new development or renovation suitable for everyone. They experience the problems of inaccessibility daily and they know how these barriers can be overcome. Putting their ideas into practice often is inexpensive and straightforward especially when included at the design stage. They can also bring their experience of how similar problems have been solved elsewhere.

When should you consult people with disabilities?

It is always best to consult with the Council before design work starts to make sure accessibility issues are fully understood for all aspects of the design. Consultation should always be undertaken for public buildings, large developments, and controversial sites. It is not necessary to consult on domestic householder applications.

How should you consult people with disabilities?

The New Forest Access For All (NFafa) group is the Council's local access group. This is an independent voluntary group of disabled people who have been trained to enable them to assist applicants and agents with design and access statements and other access issues. You can contact them at:

New Forest Access For All

Telephone: 01590673141

Email: mary.nfafa@newforest.demon.co.uk

Website: www.newforestaccessforall.org.uk

If you only wish for advice on access issues approach them direct but please explain the type of development you propose and provide any preliminary drawings or proposals and be aware that the advice given is independent of other relevant planning, building regulation or listed building considerations.

NFAFA will visit the site, if necessary, and provide a written statement including suggestions for overcoming any potential barriers or issues with the design. They will copy this response to the Development Control team.

They may also include suggestions for other aspects of the development which may not be part of the planning applications but may be useful for you to act on to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Acts (DDA)(1995/2005). This could include items such as lighting, signage, decor or facilities needed such as hearing loops.

Remember the granting of planning permission or building control approval will not necessarily mean that any development will automatically comply with the provisions of the DDA so this additional advice could prove very useful.

If you need this information in larger print, Braille, by email, on CD, on cassette or in a language other than English please telephone 02380285491.