

Working for you

**What is required in a
DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT
Guidance for Applicants**



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 A Design and Access Statement is a short report accompanying and supporting a planning application to illustrate the process which has led to the development proposal and to explain and justify the proposal in a structured way.
- 1.2 Section 42 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 amends the relevant sections of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 and the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to provide that, from 10th August 2006, a local planning authority will be unable to accept a listed building application or the majority of planning applications unless they are accompanied by a Design and Access Statement (hereafter abbreviated to DAS). This applies to both Outline and Full planning applications, with the following exceptions:
- Change of use applications* (unless also involving operational development);
 - Engineering or mining operations;
 - Development of an existing dwellinghouse or of land within its curtilage for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse where no part of the house or its curtilage is within a designated area ("Designated area" means: National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Conservation Area, Site of Special Scientific Interest and World Heritage Site);
 - applications relating to advertisement control;
 - tree preservation orders; and
 - the storage of hazardous substances.
- * *Applications for Change of Use in relation to historic buildings are exempt only if there are no alterations, no matter how minor, required to either the exterior or interior of the historic building to facilitate the new use.*
- 1.3 The essential objective of a DAS is to promote good design in the widest sense of the term. The Government's objectives for the planning system are set out in 'PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development' which includes that planning should ensure high quality development through good and



inclusive design. Indeed, design which is inappropriate in its context or which fails to take available opportunities to improve the character and quality of an area should not be accepted.

- 1.4 DASs will make applicants think more carefully about the design of their proposal in relation to its surroundings. A DAS gives the applicant an opportunity to explain and justify their proposal which may help to negotiate changes. However, it must be noted that a DAS will not guarantee approval of a proposal - the normal planning decision process still applies.
- 1.5 A DAS for small-scale or straightforward development, such as the erection of a house extension in a Conservation Area or minor alterations to a Listed Building, may require only a single A4 sheet of information. But complex developments, those on sensitive sites or that will have considerable impact, will require greater study of the site and its context, which may include explanatory drawing, maps, photographs (and montages) and perspectives as required. However, any explanatory drawings do not replace the application drawings themselves.

2 Writing the Statement

- 2.1 The DAS should cover both design and access in one statement so that it demonstrates that the developer has taken an integrated approach to the proposals.
- 2.2 The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) has a guide to good practice entitled: "*Design & Access Statements, how to write, read and use them*" (find it in the 'publications' tab on their website at: www.cabe.org.uk) A four stage process is recommended:
 - 1) **Assessment** - demonstrate that the context of the site and its surroundings have been addressed. The context includes the physical, which includes historic context, and, as necessary, the social and economic characteristics of the site and surroundings as well as relevant planning policies.

Physical context - what the place looks like, the characteristics* of the building/site are derived from existing buildings, landscape and movement routes.



Consideration must be given to whether the building, structure or other attribute of the land is an Heritage Asset,** whether designated or not. The Statement should include a description of the historic asset and any information available related to its history. The Historic Environment Record held by the County Council should be consulted, and where appropriate other archival sources.

Additionally, if there are species protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended, or protected habitats these should be discussed in the Statement.

Social context - how people in the locality will be affected by the development.

Economic context - the contribution which the development will have to the local economy.

* *Further guidance on site appraisals or characteristics for residential applications is given in the Council's "Residential Design Guide" and also "House extensions and Garages Design Guide" both available from our website at: www.harrogate.gov.uk/harrogate-6419*

** *A Heritage Asset is a building, monument, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance. Heritage Assets are valued components of the historic environment, which hold meaning for society over and above their functional utility. Designated Assets include Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens, Battlefield, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and the World Heritage Site.*

- 2) **Involvement** - indicate who has been consulted and the results of discussions or formal consultation (refer to "*Community Involvement in significant Planning Applications*" in the Council's Planning Pack. For further information see p17 of the Local Development Framework adopted SCI (www.harrogate.gov.uk/harrogate-6422))
- 3) **Evaluation** - evaluate the information collected in stages 1 and 2 and identify opportunities and constraints. Where the proposal would affect an Heritage Asset, the DAS should discuss the Significance*** of the heritage asset affected, sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on that significance. Evaluation may include resolving any conflicting issues and the DAS should set out the decisions made including the reasoning behind those decisions.



***Significance is the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its historic interest. It sums up the qualities that make an otherwise ordinary place a heritage asset, and these qualities are derived from the architectural, historic, artistic and/or archaeological interest of the asset.

- 4) **Design** - design of the proposal can then be guided with respect to stages 1, 2 and 3. A major part of this stage would be explaining how the local context has influenced design.

2.3 The DAS must address the following issues:

- a) **Use** - what the buildings and spaces will be used for.
- b) **Amount** - how much development is proposed, the number of units or the floorspace for each proposed use.
- c) **Historic Environment** – whether the building or land, or its setting is/are a valued component/s of the historic environment (Heritage Assets), and if so what the qualities and values are (Significance). The Heritage Statement may be in a separate document. See Section 6 for further advice.
- d) **Layout** - how the layout was decided upon and how it will 'work and fit in' with its surroundings. For larger proposals, issues such as solar gain, crime prevention, public spaces and links will influence design: in these cases a 'concept diagram' would be useful.
- e) **Scale** - how the sizes of buildings and spaces were chosen: this often means explaining the size relationships of the proposal to those of existing neighbouring development(s).
- f) **Landscaping** - how landscaping has been considered in parallel with other design issues and how it relates to the proposal site and its surroundings.
- g) **Appearance** - what the applicant wants the proposal to look like and why (this often necessitates explaining how the appearance of surrounding buildings' appearance may have influenced choice of materials, fenestration and detailing).
- h) **Access - Vehicular Access and Transport Links** - how vehicles, cycles and pedestrians move around the site comfortably, safely and easily. What access points and routes have been chosen and how



these relate to public transport. Inclusive Access - how access is provided for wheelchairs, pushchairs or people with visual impairments. How access is available to all regardless of age, disability, ethnicity or social grouping.

3 Outline Planning

- 3.1 With an application for Outline Planning Permission detailed consideration will always be required on the use and amount of development whether or not the layout is 'Reserved'. The DAS must include information on:
- the Use;
 - the Amount of Development for each use;
 - an Indicative Layout with separate development zones proposed;
 - Scale Parameters which is an indication of the upper and lower limits for height, width and length of each building; and
 - Indicative Access points.
- 3.2 A DAS for an Outline Application should set out the principles and concepts that will be used when the proposal is developed in the future and the relevant parts of the DAS will be used to design and assess detailed proposals. Where development would directly affect Heritage Assets or their setting, it is important that the DAS includes a description and evaluation of those assets.

4 Good Design Principles

- 4.1 There are seven characteristics which 'successful' places share and these are identified in *"By Design: urban design in the planning system - towards better practice"* (www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1145240) (Thomas Telford Ltd 2000) the companion guide to PPS1.
- 1 **Character** - a place should have its own identity. Character is promoted by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development. Where there are no significant local traditions, the challenge to create a distinctive place is greater;
 - 2 **Continuity and enclosure** - promote continuity of street frontages and public and private spaces should be clearly distinguished;



- 3 Quality of the public realm** - a place should have attractive and successful outdoor areas;
- 4 Ease of movement** - a place should be easy to get to and move through - put people before traffic;
- 5 Legibility** - a place should have a clear image and be easy to understand. Recognisable routes and landmarks help people find their way around;
- 6 Adaptability** - a place should be able to change easily to respond to social, technological and economic change;
- 7 Diversity** - a place should have variety and choice to create viable places.

Other useful guidance is provided in "*Planning and Access for Disabled People: A Good Practice Guide*" (www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144644) (3.17Mb)(ODPM 2003).

"*Safer places: the Planning System and Crime Prevention*" (www.cabe.org.uk/default.aspx?contentitemid=685)(ODPM/Home Office 2003).

5 Listed Building Applications

- 5.1 In the case of Listed Building Applications, a DAS must fully explain how the proposal has taken account of PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment (see 2.2 and 2.3 above). The DAS must include:
 - Specific mention of the special architectural and historic interest of the building, the particular physical features that are significant, and the setting of the building.
 - Justification for the proposals (note the greater the harm to the special interest, the greater must be the justification).
- 5.2 The Statement should also make clear how the proposals balance the duties imposed by the Disability Discrimination Act against the preservation of the character and fabric of the Listed Building.



6 Further Advice

- 6.1 PPS1 and PPS5 may be viewed on the 'planning' area of the DCLG's website at www.dclg.gov.uk
- 6.2 Department of Communities and Local Government Circular 01/2006: Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System (552kb): (www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1500620) Section 3 provides guidance on the legislative practices and information required.
- 6.3 The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment has published a guide "Design & Access Statements: How to write, read and use them" (919kb) (www.cabe.org.uk/default.aspx?contentitemid=1334)
- 6.4 "Safer Places - the Planning System and Crime Prevention" (www.cabe.org.uk/default.aspx?contentitemid=685)(3.17Mb)
- 6.5 The Disability Rights Commission has produced guidance on Access Statements (go to: www.drc-gb.org/employers_and_service_provider/services_and_transport/access_statements.aspx then scroll to bottom of page to the download links).
- 6.6 English Heritage, the Department of Communities and Local Government, and the Department of Culture Media and Sport have jointly published a very useful guide entitled "PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Practice Guide", which may be viewed at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps5>
- 6.7 Having read the above, including the relevant linked documentation, should you require clarification or more information please contact an officer of the Council's Heritage & Design Section, regarding building design and conservation, landscape design or nature conservation. Tel 01423 500600.

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