

## Design and Access Statements - Notes for Guidance

### Introduction

This planning guidance note promotes development quality in the built environment, design and layout which is safe and accessible to everyone regardless of age, gender or disability and contributes towards the Council's commitment to deliver sustainable developments and inclusive environments. There is specific legal requirement to consider the needs of disabled people under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA).

There is a statutory requirement for either a Design and Access Statement or a Design Statement to accompany a planning application in certain circumstances. A Design and Access Statement is a single written document, combining a Design Statement which addresses the design of the development and an Access Statement which demonstrates observance of the equal opportunities requirements.

The Statement content will vary depending on the scale and nature of the proposed development and the sensitivity of the site. It would assist if it included good quality photographs, maps and drawings to illustrate particular points.

The term "design" relates to the physical and visual impact of the built form and its external envelope on streets and public areas in our towns, villages and rural areas. Qualities of a well designed place are: distinctive, welcoming, connected, safe, adaptable and resource efficient.

The Statement will allow the applicant to explain and justify the design and accessibility of the proposal, and then be better informed to conduct negotiations with the planning officer and help all those assessing the application to understand the design rationale.

Design and the delivery of inclusive environments are material considerations in determining planning applications. Where a Statement is required and not submitted or severely deficient then the application will be declared invalid. The application will not progress until a Statement is provided or amended to the satisfaction of the planning authority. If not provided within a reasonable time the application will be returned to the applicant.

### What is a Design Statement?

A Design Statement is a document which explains and illustrates the principles and concepts of the design of a proposed development in a structured way, and sets out the thought process that has led to the final design.

The Statement should demonstrate that the site and its surroundings have been fully appraised and that the final design solution promoted takes that context into account.

The Statement should explain how the proposal takes into account national guidance, design policies within the development plan and any supplementary planning guidance, urban design strategy or Masterplan applicable to the site. It should state, what, if any consultation has been undertaken on issues relating to the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development, and what account has been taken of the outcome of any such consultation.

### What is an Access Statement?

An Access Statement explains how issues relating to access to the development for those with disabilities has been addressed. In this way it can remove exclusion.

## When is a Design and Access Statement or a Design Statement required?

A Design and Access Statement must accompany all “national” and “major” category applications unless the proposed development is of a type listed within the prescribed exceptions. In terms of scale, sites of 2 hectares or more, residential developments of 50 units or more or agricultural buildings of 5,000 square metres or more all require a Design and Access Statement.

A Design Statement alone is required for an application for a local development, unless the proposal is for the alteration or extension of an existing building, within the following sensitive areas:

- Conservation Area
- National Scenic Area
- Site of a Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Curtilage of a Category A Listed Building
- Historic Garden or Designed Landscape
- World Heritage Site (not applicable within Dumfries and Galloway)

A Design Statement will in specific circumstances be required for a marine fish farm development.

Neither a Design and Access Statement nor a Design Statement is required for:

- Development of an existing dwellinghouse, or any development within the curtilage of such a dwellinghouse for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse
- Applications for planning permission in principle
- A material change of use of land or buildings
- Engineering or mining operations
- Applications to vary or set aside conditions subject to which a previous planning permission was granted

The planning authority does have the power to ask for a Design and Access Statement, even if it is not statutorily required, if it considers one is required to enable it to deal with the application concerned.

## What must a Design Statement include?

The statement must detail the design concept, including the context of the proposal, and how the proposal meets design policies. It should ideally include all the following information:

1. **Background information** – purpose of document, applicant and agent details, site location, description of proposal, ownership and development history, how the design will deliver an appropriate solution in terms of the site
2. **Site and context appraisal** – examination of the site and surroundings. Depending on the site and proposed development, this is likely to refer to a number of the following factors:
  - site description** - e.g. adjacent land uses, boundary treatment, heritage conservation, focal points, landmarks, vistas, views – (to/from/over site), topography, microclimate – (wind, sun orientation, exposure, shelter);
  - services** – e.g. public utilities – (underground services, drainage, overhead power lines), public services available locally – (schools, public transport);
  - surrounding buildings** – e.g. existing settlement pattern, building lines, fenestration sizes and styles, active frontages, scale – (height and massing), appearance – (details and materials);
  - use of space** – between buildings - (public, private), day, night, seasonal variation, prohibited activities, crime prevention measures - (structure, surveillance, ownership, physical protection, activity);
  - landscape** – e.g. soft landscaping – (landscape character, quality of landscaping, need for ground modelling, wildlife habitats, protected trees, play and recreational space), hard landscaping – (street furniture, public art, condition and maintenance, public use);
  - connections** – e.g. vehicular movement – (street layout, access, parking and circulation, public transport routes and stops, taxi stances, cycle ways, vehicular/pedestrian conflict, traffic calming measures, servicing arrangements), pedestrian access – (movement to and from, desire lines, disabled access, current access restrictions).

### 3. Identification of the design principles

Design principles are the general rules and guidance that inform and support the overall design of the proposal. The policy approach adopted should summarise the key policy drivers with reference to national guidance, development plan policies and planning guidance applicable.

### 4. Analysis and the development of the design concept

Once the information has been gathered it can be analysed e.g. important views and landmarks, any features, habitats, trees or buildings to be retained, streets and spaces, accessibility, safety and security, sustainability and energy efficiency. From this information the design solution can be developed and an outline provided on how this is to be delivered.

### 5. The design solution

This section should justify the quality of the design adopted in the context of the site appraisal and design principles and should refer to the following:

**Layout** – i.e. the way in which buildings, roads and open spaces (both private and public) are placed and orientated in relation to each other and to surrounding buildings and spaces.

**Landscape/landscaping** – i.e. the way in which the buildings and landscape interact and the treatment of spaces to enhance or protect the site and its surroundings through hard and soft landscaping measures.

**Scale and mix** – i.e. the height, massing and type of building(s) in relation to the surroundings.

**Appearance** – i.e. the aspect of a place or building that determines a proposal's visual impression, such as its built form, architectural detail, materials, fenestration, roof pitch, ornamentation, lighting, colour and texture.

### What must an Access Statement include?

The Statement must explain the policy or approach adopted; outline how any policies relating to such access in the development plan have been taken into account; explain how any specific issues which might affect access to the development for disabled people have been addressed; describe how features which ensure access to the development for disabled people will be maintained; and state what, if any, consultation has been taken on issues relating to access to the development for disabled people and what account has been taken of the outcome of any such consultation.

An Access Statement should also explain how access arrangements make provision both to and through the site to ensure disabled people have convenient access. It should consider accessible main entrances, desire lines, width and gradient, permeability, movement within public spaces where there may be level changes, use of contrasting surfaces to assist people with impaired vision, signage, lighting, public transport routes and the extent and location of dedicated accessible parking spaces which are designed so that drivers and passengers, either of whom may be disabled, can get in and out of their car easily. Internal aspects of individual buildings do not need to be included. This is a matter better considered under building standards legislation. However, the location and design of doors and windows, etc. will depend on an understanding of the internal layout of a building and may therefore be reflected in the Statement.

Access panels are a useful source to consult on design as they are able to give advice based on personal experience and knowledge. A list of access panels is available from the Scottish Disability Equality Forum [www.sdef.org.uk](http://www.sdef.org.uk).

### Public involvement

A Design and Access Statement is a communication tool, which will help local communities, access groups and others to understand the design rationale and make useful comments and thereby inform the decision making process.

This is the opportunity for information to be collected, access and design issues to be discussed, options evaluated and final proposals confirmed by the time the application is made.

A draft statement should form part of any pre-application public consultation. Details of any design or access issues raised during the consultation process and how these have informed the final proposal need to be included in any Pre-application Consultation Report submitted with the planning application. If this approach is undertaken there is a greater chance that local communities will accept and support the proposals.

## Legislation

- Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended by the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006
- Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2008

## Scottish planning policy

The Scottish Government is intent on raising the quality of urban design and the following publications may be useful:

- Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)
- Designing Places: A Policy Statement for Scotland
- Designing Streets: A Policy Statement for Scotland
- PAN 44 - Fitting New Housing into the Landscape
- PAN 65 - Planning and Open Space
- PAN 67 – Housing Quality
- PAN 68 – Design Statements
- PAN 71 – Conservation Area Management
- PAN 75 - Planning for Transport
- PAN 77 - Designing Safer Places
- PAN 78 – Inclusive Design

Also of relevance in terms of 'Secured by Design' is New Homes 2010 guide. This can be found at: <http://www.securedbydesign.com/professionals/guides.aspx>

## Local planning policy

Dumfries and Galloway Council's planning policies aim to raise design standards. The following development plan policies are particularly relevant:

- Structure Plan Policy D36 - Design of Development
- Local Plan General Policy GP7 - Siting and Design

Also of relevance is the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance No 2 - Design Guidance for the Built Environment.

## Further advice

If you require further guidance with your design or access statement, please contact your local area office.

- Annandale & Eskdale, Tel: 01576 206046
- Nithsdale, Tel: 01387 260199
- Stewartry, Tel: 01556 502351
- Wigtown, Tel: 01776 888417

Website: [www.dumgal.gov.uk/planning](http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/planning)