

Design and Access Statements: Guidance for applicants



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Reforms to Design and Access Statements came into force on 25th June 2013.

The threshold for Design and Access Statements has been raised so that they are now only required for **major developments** and **listed building consent applications**.

However, a new lower threshold has been introduced in **designated areas** (conservation areas and World Heritage sites). The lower threshold involves:

- one or more dwellings, or,
- a building or buildings where the floor space created by the development is 100 square metres or more.

The Department of Communities and Local Government said the changes would not affect an applicant's ability to explain or justify their design and neither would they alter a local planning authority's ability to apply its design and access policies when determining applications.

Where required, a local planning authority remains prohibited from considering an Application unless it is accompanied by a design and access statement.

What is a design and access statement?

A design and access statement is a report accompanying and supporting a planning application to illustrate the process that has led to the development proposal, and to explain and justify it in a structured way.

One statement should cover both design and access, allowing applicants to demonstrate an integrated approach that will deliver inclusive design, and address a full range of access requirements throughout the design process.

The level of detail required in a design and access statement will depend on the scale and complexity of the application. A statement for a major development is likely to be much longer than one for a single building. Statements must be proportionate to the complexity of the application, but need not be long.

When a design and access statement is required

A design and access statement must accompany planning applications for both **outline** and **full** applications. The elements to be described in the design and access statements will be the same regardless of whether the application is for outline or full, but their scope will differ.

Presenting the information

A design and access statement can be presented in various formats. For most straightforward applications, the statement may be short. For some, only a page will be needed, whereas for more complicated proposals a more detailed document is likely to be necessary. For larger and more challenging sites, the design and access statement may also include drawings illustrating the various issues which the scheme has responded to.

The statements may include, as appropriate, plans and elevations, sketches, photographs of the site and its surroundings, or even a model in the case of large and more complex schemes. However, such illustrations must not be used as a substitute for adequate drawings submitted with the application.

Pre-application discussion

Pre-application discussions are critically important and benefit both developers and local planning authorities in ensuring a better mutual understanding of objectives and the constraints that exist. Local planning authorities and applicants should therefore take a positive attitude towards early engagement in pre-application discussions. Design and Access 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.

What is required in a Design and Access Statement

An application for planning permission shall be accompanied by a statement about the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development and how issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with. A design and access statement should include the following information:

- Explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development
- Demonstrated the steps taken to appraise the context of the development and how the design of the development takes that into account;
- Explain the policy adopted as to access, and how the policies relating to access in relevant local development documents have been taken into account;
- State what, if any, consultation has been undertaken on issues relating to access to the development and what account has been taken of the outcome of any such consultation; and,
- Explain how any specific issues which might affect access to the development have been addressed.

The government has produced guidance on what a design and access statement should contain and its role within the decision making process, which you can access below:

- [Guidance on information requirements and validation](#)

The Government's design adviser, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), has produced guidance on how to write, read and use design and access statements, which can be viewed below:

- [Design and access statements - how to read, write and use them](#)

If you would like to find out which types of development do not require a design and access statement please follow the link below which sets out the full exemptions:

- [Article 4C of the Statutory Instrument 2010/567](#)

For further information, please contact the City Development department at Oxford City Council by email to planning@oxford.gov.uk.

Useful websites: www.oxford.gov.uk

The Planning Portal: www.planningportal.gov.uk