

HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENTS

PLANNING GUIDANCE NOTE

MARCH 2007

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1. WHO NEEDS TO READ THIS GUIDANCE NOTE?

1.1 An applicant or developer who intends to make a Planning or Listed Building Consent application should read this note. All planning applications will require Design and Access Statements ('Statement') except:

- **Advertising** applications;
- **Change of use** applications;
- **Engineering or mining** operations;
- **Householder** applications (apart from those on sites in designated areas such as Conservation Areas or where the dwelling is Listed: in these cases a Statement is needed);
- **Storage of hazardous substances** applications;
- **Tree Preservation Order** applications.

A Statement must be submitted with all Listed Building Consent applications.

WHAT ARE DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENTS?

1.2 Statements are documents that explain the design thinking behind a planning application. For example, they should show that the person applying for permission (the applicant) has thought carefully about how everyone, including disabled people, older people and very young children, will be able to use the places they want to build.

1.3 Statements should include a written description and justification of the planning application. Sometimes photographs, maps and drawings may be needed to further illustrate the points made. They should be available alongside the application for anyone to see and so should avoid jargon or overly technical language. It is important that they are written specifically for the application they accompany. Statements need not be very long but the amount of detail they contain should reflect how complex the application is. Therefore, a Statement for a major development is likely to be much longer than one for a single building.

WHAT DOES THIS GUIDANCE CONTAIN?

1.4 This guidance contains information on how Design and Access Statements should be prepared and the information they should contain.

WHY ARE DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENTS IMPORTANT IN PLANNING AND LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATIONS?

1.5 There are several reasons why Statements are important. These include the following:

- Statements are required to help ensure that development proposals are based on a thoughtful design process and a sustainable approach to access;
- They allow applicants to explain and justify their proposals;
- They help the Local Planning Authority to assess the application and understand the design and access rationale that underpins it;
- Statements should improve the quality of proposals.

2. BACKGROUND: GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE

2.1 *Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development* (PPS1) sets out policies for the delivery of development through the planning system. Good design is fundamental to this. PPS1 states:

'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. 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 development schemes. Good design should contribute positively to making places better for people. 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'.

- 2.2 In practical terms, this advice has been translated into the requirement to provide Design and Access Statements with planning applications. Statements are a short report to show how a proposal has been arrived at. Statements need to document the factors which have been taken account during the design process. They should show how the proposals are appropriate for their local context and how issues relating to access to and within the site have been dealt with.
- 2.3 Conditions will be attached to planning permissions requiring that the development is built in accordance with the statement or parts of it.
- 2.4 For outline applications, the statement will govern the future development of the site and reserved matters applications will need to stay within the parameters of the Statement.

3. INFORMATION TO SUBMIT WITH A PLANNING APPLICATION

- 3.1 The Design and Access Statement must be included when you submit the planning application. **If this information is missing, the application will not be validated.**

PRESENTING THE INFORMATION

- 3.2 Statements should include a written description and justification of the planning application. This should be supplemented with drawings, plans, photographs and models of the proposal shown in their context, if needed.
- 3.3 Statements will be public documents which will be seen by local communities, Councillors and consultees. Therefore, they should be clear and easy to understand: avoid jargon and technical language where possible.
- 3.4 Statements will also need to be easy to access by Officers at the outset so that applications can be validated. Please bear this in mind: make headings clear; show how the process has been followed and avoid unnecessary text. Statements should not be increased in length purely in an effort to justify (or conceal) weaknesses in a development proposal.
- 3.5 The length and content of the Statement should be directly proportional to the scale and complexity of the proposals. For example, for the smallest scale applications, the Statement could be as little as one or two sides of A4 paper. The Council will, however, be looking for evidence that the Design and Access Statement process (see below) has been followed.
- 3.6 Statements will also be welcomed to support pre-application discussions to show how proposals have been formulated.

DEMONSTRATING THE PROCESS

- 3.7 Statements must show that the following process has been followed. Statements should not be produced retrospectively to try to justify a pre-designed scheme. They are intended to be a working document which explains how the development's context has been understood **before** the design is drafted.

STEP 1: ASSESSMENT	Assessment of the site's immediate and wider context. This should look at: <u>Physical Context:</u> the character of existing buildings and spaces, landscaping and movement routes: <u>Social Context:</u> how local people will be affected by the development: <u>Economic Context:</u> the contribution the development will make to the local economy: <u>Relevant Planning Policies</u>
Notes:	This will refer to physical features of the site and surroundings: gradients, trees and

	<p>hedges, buildings, water features, access routes, existing use of the site and surrounding land uses. <i>For an application for a single house, the assessment may only need to include details of what abuts the site.</i> It may refer to details of access to local shops and services and public transport routes to show that the proposal is in a sustainable location.</p> <p>Social context may include: how the loss of the existing site use / building will affect people; whether any nearby dwellings could be overlooked or overshadowed by a new development on the site; information about any current local service provision (such as availability of school places) or issues that could be addressed through a development on the site (such as the development supporting a local need).</p> <p>Economic impact may include jobs provided, support for local businesses or increasing the attractiveness of an area to potential investors.</p> <p>For some small scale proposals, the impact on the social and economic context may be neutral or limited. If this is the case, this can be stated. For larger schemes, the Design and Access Statement should be used as a framework to pull together the strands of other statements which are required to be submitted with a planning application (i.e. traffic impact assessments or environmental impact assessments). These statements will also address the context of the site and should be cross-referenced in the Design and Access Statement.</p> <p>Relevant national, regional and local policies and relevant supplementary planning guidance / documents need to be referred to here. The policies do not need to be quoted in full.</p>
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<p>STEP 2: INVOLVEMENT</p>	<p>Involvement of community members (neighbours, Councillors, local community groups) and professionals (planning, building control, conservation and design officers) undertaken or planned (eg. consultation planned for a reserved matters application). The Statement should indicate how this involvement has been taken into account in the proposal.</p>
<p>Notes:</p>	<p>The Council's Statement of Community Involvement provides information on the process the Council has adopted for consulting on planning applications and also gives a list of groups which may be consulted on Local Development Documents. Applicants may wish to engage with some of the groups listed to satisfy the requirements of the involvement stage.</p> <p>The level of involvement required is dependent upon the scale and complexity of the development proposed. For example, an application for a single house may need the involvement only of the immediate neighbours. Please remember that Statements will be read by the public as part of a planning application – this includes the views of neighbours recorded in them.</p>

<p>STEP 3: EVALUATION</p>	<p>Evaluation of the information collected and identifying opportunities and constraints and formulating design and access principles. Conflicting issues may be identified and the evaluation should show how these are balanced.</p>
<p>Notes:</p>	<p>The evaluation phase of the process should identify the comments made and indicate how they have been taken account of (eg. by detailing how the scheme has been amended as a result) or the justification for why concerns have not been taken account of (eg. the comments do not raise significant planning issues).</p> <p>Objections received as a result of the Involvement stage will not automatically mean that the application will be refused. Similarly, support for an application does not necessarily mean that the application will be approved.</p>

<p>STEP 4: DESIGN</p>	<p>Design of the scheme using the assessment, involvement and evaluation information collected.</p>
<p>Notes:</p>	<p>This is a description of the final submitted scheme and the justification for it based on the information collected and the evaluation undertaken. The Statement should explain and justify why the following elements of a scheme are proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The use of the buildings and spaces ▪ Amount ▪ Layout

- Scale
- Landscaping
- Appearance

The Statement should include details of why access points and routes have been chosen and how accessibility for all sections of the community has been considered.

Amount:

A justification of how much development is proposed and its distribution across the site, how it relates to surroundings and how accessibility is to be maximised between different parts of the development will be required. For residential development this means the number of units. For all other development, this is the proposed floorspace for each proposed use. Design and Access Statements for outline planning applications should also explain and justify the amount of development proposed and its distribution across the site.

Layout:

This should show the way in which buildings, routes and open spaces are placed in relation to each other and neighbouring property. Accessibility factors should also be considered, such as travel distances and gradients and the orientation of blocks and units in relation to topography to maximise accessibility. Layout should also demonstrate how crime prevention measures have been considered in the design to create a safe, sustainable place. For outline planning applications where layout is reserved, the proposals should still provide information on the approximate location of buildings, routes and open spaces. The use of illustrative diagrams will be helpful.

Scale:

This should show a justification of the height, width and length of the building(s) in relation to its surroundings, particularly entrances and facades in relation to the human scale. Outline planning applications where scale is reserved should still include details of the upper and lower limits of height, width and length of each building proposed and justify them.

Landscaping:

A justification of the details of hard and soft landscaping of private and public spaces chosen to enhance or protect the amenities of the site and area in which it is situated will be required. Statements should also include details of how the landscaping will be maintained. If landscaping is reserved to outline stage, the Statement still needs to explain and justify the landscaping principles which will be used to inform the final design.

Appearance:

Justification of the appearance of the external built form of the development will be required. This will include its architecture, materials, decoration, lighting, colour and texture and how this affects accessibility. If appearance is reserved at outline stage, the Statement still needs to explain and justify the landscaping principles which will be used to inform the final design.

Access Component

Access considerations should not be considered separately but should be considered as part of the process set out above.

Details of the internal arrangements of buildings and how this affects access are not required but Statements should explain how all users will have equal and convenient access into buildings and spaces and the public transport network. It should explain the policy adopted by the applicant in relation to access and how relevant local planning policies have been taken into account. It should also include details of any consultation undertaken and how this informed the design process.

Access for emergency services should be explained where relevant. Such information may include circulation routes around the site and egress from buildings in the event of emergency evacuation.

4. INFORMATION TO SUBMIT WITH A LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATION

- 4.1 Where a planning application is submitted in parallel with an application for Listed Building Consent, a single combined Statement should address the requirements for both. For Listed Building Statements only, information on use, amount and landscaping is not required. Statements should include details of layout, scale, appearance and access.

The Listed Building Statement should also take into account:

- The historic and special architectural importance of the building
 - The particular physical features of the building that justify its designation as a Listed Building
 - The building's setting.
- 4.2 The Statement should make it clear how the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, illustrating how everyone will have equal and convenient access, is balanced with the historical and architectural significance of the building. Where justified, to protect the special qualities of listed buildings, allowances can be made in the application of other policies.

5. WHAT OFFICERS LOOK FOR WHEN VALIDATING AND ASSESSING APPLICATIONS

Validation: Looking for evidence that the process has been followed.

- 5.1 The Statement will be tested for validity by looking for the provision of an adequate level of information under the four steps of the process. Examples of questions that officers could ask when testing for validity of an application are:

- Does the Statement show that the site's context has been assessed, including physical, social and economic characteristics and relevant planning policies?
- Does the Statement show that community involvement has been taken into account? Have all the appropriate parties been involved?
- Does the Statement demonstrate that the scheme comes from an assessment, involvement, evaluation and design process rather than written to fit a pre-designed scheme?
- Is the Statement internally consistent and consistent with the submitted plans?

Assessing the application

- 5.2 Examples of questions officers could ask when assessing an application are:

Use:

- Will the application help create an appropriate mix of uses in the area?
- Will different uses work well together?

Amount:

- Is the density appropriate?
- Can the neighbourhood's services support the amount of development planned?

Layout:

- Do all spaces have a purpose?
- Will public space be practical, safe, overlooked and inclusive?
- Will private spaces be secure and usable?

Scale:

- Are the buildings appropriate to their surroundings?
- Will entrances and windows be of a comfortable scale for people?

Landscaping:

- Has landscaping been designed in from the start?

- Will it help to make the scheme work well?

Appearance:

- How will the scheme relate to its surroundings?
- Will it be attractive?

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

More information can be found from the following sources:

Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System: DCLG Circular 01/2006. www.dclg.gov.uk

Safer Places – The Planning System and Crime Prevention. ODPM / Home Office 2003.
www.communities.gov.uk/pub/724/saferplacestheplanningsystemandcrimepreventionPDF3168Kb_id1144724.pdf

Design and Access Statements: how to write, read and use them. CABE 2006: www.cabe.org.uk

Guidance on Access Statements – Disability Rights Commission Website: www.drc-gb.org.uk

Details of national planning policy can be found at: www.communities.gov.uk

Details of the Regional Spatial Strategy can be found at: www.gos.gov.uk/goyh/plan/regplan/

The Hambleton District Council Development Plan (Local Development Framework) and Supplementary Planning Guidance can be found at: www.hambleton.gov.uk

ANNEX: DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENTS – CHECKLIST

In accordance with Circular 01/2006: *Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System* (12 June 2006) and the CABE publication *Design and Access Statements: how to write read and use them*, a valid Design and Access Statement must contain all of the following points. This checklist can be used to assist in the creation of Statements.

POINT TO CONSIDER IN THE DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT	Has this point been included?		
	Yes	No	N/A
STEP 1: ASSESSMENT OF CONTEXT			
Information on Physical Context: Surroundings			
Uses			
Buildings / Character			
Spaces			
Access Routes			
Access To Local Services and Transportation			
Any Special Designation (e.g. Conservation Area)			
Information on Physical Context: Site			
Uses			
Buildings / Character			
Spaces Within The Site			
Access Through The Site			
Natural Features (e.g. Trees, Hedges, Water Features)			
Topography, Gradients			
Any Special Designation (e.g. Conservation Area)			
For a Listed Building:			
Historic and Special Architectural Importance			
Physical Features Justifying Listed Status			
Setting of a Listed Building			
Social Context:			
Any Effect From Loss of Existing Buildings / Uses			
Any Potential Overlooking / Overshadowing From The Site			
Impact on Any Local Services			
Economic Context:			
Any Jobs Created			
Any Businesses Created			
Effect on Attractiveness of Area to Investors			
Planning Policies:			
Reference To Relevant National, Regional and Local Policies			
STEP 2: INVOLVEMENT OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS			
Have Neighbours Been Consulted and Responses Included			
Is The Level of Involvement Consistent With SCI and / or Scale of Development			
STEP 3: EVALUATION			
Is It Clear How Comments Have Been Taken Into Account?			
If Not, Is It Explained Why Not?			
Are Constraints On Development From Physical/Social/Economic Context Identified?			
If So, Does This Link To Scope / Opportunities For Development?			
Are Constraints From Any Relevant Policies Identified?			
STEP 4: DESIGN OF THE SCHEME			
Use: Is this justified in terms of:			
Site and Surroundings			
Land Use Policies			
Amount: Is there justification for:			
How Much Development Is Proposed (number of dwellings / floorspace)			
The Way This Is Distributed On Site			
How It Relates To Its Surroundings			
Layout: Are The Following Considered:			
Relative Locations of Different Uses			
Accessibility and Travel Distances			
Gradient and Topography			
Crime Prevention Measures			
Scale: Are The Following Justified:			
Size of Buildings In Relation To Surroundings			
Size of Entrances / Facades In Relation To Human Scale			
Landscaping: Are The Following Justified:			
Landscaping Principles and Details			
Future Maintenance Information			
Appearance: Are The Following Justified:			
Architectural Style, Design, Detail			
Materials, Colours, Textures			
Any Lighting Proposed			
How This Affects Accessibility			
Access:			
Is Equal and Convenient Access For All Users Addressed			
If This Cannot Be Achieved, Is Justification Provided			