

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENTS (DAS)

What are design and access statements?

They are reports accompanying and supporting a planning application that allow an applicant to explain and justify the design thinking behind an application. They should cover the process, design principles and concepts that led to the development proposal and how issues relating to access have been dealt with.

When are they required?

A DAS must accompany all outline and full applications for planning permission (including Listed Building Consent) except:

- Changes of use not involving building works or other operational development
- Engineering or mining operations
- Householder development unless the house is within a conservation area or other designated area such as an area of outstanding natural beauty.

A DAS is not required for applications relating to advertisement control,. Tree preservation orders or storage of hazardous substances

What should a DAS include?

The level of detail required in a DAS will depend on the scale and complexity of the application. A proposal for a single building will normally require only a brief DAS whereas a DAS for a major development will be more extensive in content.

A DAS should include a written description and justification of the proposal. Photographs, maps and drawings of the proposal, the site and its context should be used to illustrate points. It is nevertheless important to note that a DAS must not be used as a substitute for the drawings and other material required to be submitted as part of the planning application itself.

The Design Component

A DAS must demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the development in terms of physical, social and economic characteristics and relevant planning policies.

The **physical** characteristics of the proposal relate to the amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance of the development. For all applications, an

appraisal of the site and its surroundings is required, the extent of which is dependent on the scale of the proposal and should normally include:-

A brief history of the site;

The size, shape, orientation and topography of the site, including levels;

The location, condition and importance of any existing buildings or other structures on the site;

Existing landscape features, including vegetation;

The character of the surrounding area, including any distinctive architectural or natural features;

Important views from and to the site;

Access to the site including the adjacent road and footpath layout;

Location of existing utilities;

The relationship of the development with adjoining buildings.

The **social** characteristics relate to how people in the locality will be affected. For smaller schemes where the social impact is negligible, a statement to that effect will suffice.

The **economic** characteristics relate to an appraisal of the contribution of the development to the local economy. For smaller schemes where the economic impact is negligible, a statement to that effect will suffice.

Relevant planning policies – how the development will meet the relevant requirements of the Luton Local Plan and other planning policies.

Context

The DAS must demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the development proposed.

The appraisal process should include:-

Assessment – of the physical, social and economic characteristics and relevant planning policies, as described above.

Involvement – the statement should set out the consultations undertaken with local community groups, neighbours and local authority officers and explain how these consultations have informed the design process.

Evaluation – an assessment of the information collected on the site's context to identify opportunities and constraints in the formulation of design principles. This may involve balancing any potentially conflicting issues that have been identified.

Design – using the assessment, involvement and evaluation of the information collected. Applicants should avoid working retrospectively, trying to justify a pre-determined design through subsequent assessment and evaluation.

Use – the statement should explain how the context has been considered in relation to the proposed use. The DAS should explain the use or uses proposed, their distribution across the site, the accessibility to and between them and their relationship to uses surrounding the site.

The statement should also explain how design principles and concepts have been applied to the physical characteristics of the development. i.e. the amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance of the development:-

Amount – how much development is proposed in terms of the number of units in relation to residential development and floorspace for all other development. The DAS should explain and justify the amount of development proposed and how this will be distributed across the site and how the proposal relates to the sites surroundings.

Layout – the way in which buildings, routes and open spaces are provided, sited and orientated in relation to each other and buildings and spaces surrounding the development. The DAS should also identify how these relationships will help to create safe, vibrant and successful places and address the issue of crime prevention. In the case of the latter, PPS1 makes clear that a key objective for new developments should be that they create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion. Statements should demonstrate how crime prevention measures have been considered in the design of the proposal and how the design reflects the attributes of safe, sustainable places set out in *Safer Places - the Planning System and Crime Prevention*.

Scale – an explanation and justification of the height, width and length of new buildings and how these relate to the site's surroundings and skyline. The DAS should also explain and justify the size of component parts of the building, particularly entrances and facades in terms of how they relate to the human scale.

Landscaping – the treatment of private and public spaces through hard and soft landscaping measures and their subsequent maintenance.

Appearance – an explanation and justification of the external built form of the development in terms of its architecture, detailing, materials, lighting, colour and texture.

The Access Component

The requirement for the access component of the statement relates only to “access to the development” and does not extend to internal aspects of individual buildings.

The statement should explain how access arrangements will ensure all users will have equal and convenient access to buildings and spaces and the public transport network.

The DAS should address:-

Transport links – vehicular and pedestrian movements to and from the site and into the buildings for all users including emergency vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians; links to public transport provision; how the site responds to the surrounding highway network and the rationale behind the choice of access points, building entrances and circulation routes.

Inclusive access – the DAS should include a brief explanation of the applicant's policy and approach to inclusive access to demonstrate how everyone can get to and move through the site on equal terms regardless of age, disability, ethnicity or social grouping and describe how the sources of advice on design and accessibility have been followed. Inclusive accessibility should also be addressed in terms of design by reference to levels, surface finishes, colours, seating and lighting

Relevant planning policies - how the relevant planning policies of the Luton Local Plan have been taken into account.

Involvement – the statement should set out the pre-application discussions that have taken place and explain how these discussions have informed the submission.

The access component of a DAS is particularly important where public access building is involved as such schemes are required to comply with the provisions of the Disability and Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA)

Outline Applications

The level of information required in an application for outline planning permission is not as detailed as for an application for full planning permission or reserved matters. However, a DAS accompanying an outline application must explain and justify the design and access principles that will be used to develop future details of the scheme. The DAS will form a link between the outline permission and the consideration of reserved matters. Circumstances may occur where the Council may consider that additional information based on the principles and concepts set out in the DAS should be the subject of additional information at reserved matters stage. In such cases, the Council may consider setting out such a requirement through a condition on the outline planning permission.

Listed Building Consent

A DAS will be required for listed building consent. Where a planning application is submitted in parallel with an application for listed building consent, a single, combined statement should address the requirements of both. In such cases, a DAS relating to an application for listed building consent should include a brief explanation of how the design has taken account of paragraph 3.5 of PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment), and in particular:-

- 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

Useful references

Circular 1/2006 : Guidance on Changes to the development Control System
www.communities.gov.uk

The Town and Country Planning (general Development Procedure)(Amendment) (England) Order 2006
www.opsi.gov.uk

The Planning(Applications for Planning Permission, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment)(England) Regulations 2006
www.opsi.gov.uk

Safer Places -the Planning System and Crime Prevention.
www.communities.gov.uk

CABE's Design & Access Statements : How to write, read and use them
www.cabe.org.uk

PLEASE NOTE THAT PLANNING APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED WITHOUT A DAS WILL NOT BE VALIDATED. IN ADDITION, IF YOUR STATEMENT DOES NOT COVER ALL OF THE ASPECTS REQUIRED, THE COUNCIL WILL NOT REGISTER YOUR APPLICATION.