



New buildings and developments, even those on a small scale, can have an impact on the landscape and existing built heritage. The location of a development can help create an asset to a community but equally, if not carefully considered, a development could have a negative impact on a location's character. It should be recognised that the delivery of inclusive environments for all should be key in development proposals. Design is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, and Design & Access Statements help clarify the design choices you have made, how access issues have been addressed and provide a means of supporting your application.

What is a Design & Access Statement?

A Design & Access Statement is a short report that explains the design reasoning behind a planning application. It should demonstrate how your particular layout, scale and appearance fits within the context of the site and the wider area, in order to produce the best outcome for the development of that site. Use it to demonstrate your commitment to achieving good design and ensuring accessibility in the development, and show how you meet, or will meet, the various obligations from legislation and policy.

When is a Design & Access Statement required?

Design and Access Statements will be required for Major and National developments, as defined by the Scottish Government's hierarchy of development.

(See http://www.oqps.gov.uk/legislation/ssi/ssi2009/ssi_20090051_en_1)

Exceptions include applications for Planning Permission for (i) Engineering or mining operations or (ii) development relating to an existing dwellinghouse or (iii) Material Changes of Use. Furthermore, "Design Statements" are not a statutory requirement for applications for "Planning Permission in Principle" or "Approval of Matters Specified in Conditions" but the Comhairle's Planning Service may, at its discretion, require a Statement through a condition attached to a Planning Permission in Principle.

What should be considered when working on your Design & Access Statement?

It is important that Design & Access Statements are written specifically for the application they accompany. They allow local communities, access groups, amenity groups and other stakeholders to involve themselves more directly in the planning process without needing to interpret plans that can be technical and confusing. Their length and complexity should reflect the scale and nature of the development versus the sensitivity of the site. Design & Access Statements form part of the planning application and will be made available on-line for public viewing via the Comhairle on-line Public Access Planning Portal, <http://planning.cne-siar.gov.uk/publicaccess/>.

What format should the Design & Access Statement take?

There is no prescribed format for your Design & Access Statement, but the content detailed overleaf will be useful in terms of structuring your document and will help you to properly address and explain your design rationale. Other useful tips to bear in mind include:

- Start the Statement when you start to plan your proposal – it can help influence the design;
- Take account of the wider context in which your development is placed;
- Explain how the design has come about and what you are trying to achieve;
- Avoid repetition – the application form and plans do not need to be repeated, but supported by the Design & Access Statement;
- Use accurate and informative illustrations.

It is important to bear in mind that the Statement forms part of your Planning Application, and it is assessed in combination with all other information submitted. While the Comhairle may be able to validate your application on the basis of the submission of a Statement, the Planning Service may contact you to provide more information or further clarification during the course of the assessment of your application.

Consultation

The Design & Access Statement should indicate what, if any, consultation has been undertaken on the development and what account was taken of the outcome of such consultation. Make clear links as to how this has informed the final design of the development.

Design & Access Statement: Suggested Format

Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Describe the general history of your site ✓ List any known conservation/environmental designations of the site or in the surrounding area ✓ Describe the location of the site in relation to the settlement and in relation to prominent features of the area ✓ Describe the surroundings, e.g. urban, residential or industrial ✓ Highlight adjacent land uses and relevant planning proposals ✓ Identify desire lines, main bus routes, pedestrian and cycle links
Site Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Detail the size (in hectares/square metres) and shape of your site ✓ Point out the views to/from/over the site ✓ Detail existing natural features such as trees, hedges, rocky outcrops or streams ✓ Describe the levels of the site (e.g. sloping, flat, undulating). Significant changes in levels can create issues of overlooking and over-shadowing of neighbouring properties. If the levels present challenges in terms of siting, please describe how these will be dealt with. Cross sections should be included where there are any significant changes in level. ✓ If there are existing buildings and structures on site, give an indication of how they will be retained or incorporated into your design solution or detail how and why they might be removed ✓ Discuss how the site layout has been design to ensure inclusive, well thought out access for all users
Surrounding Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Detail the forms of houses surrounding the site (e.g. single storey dwellings, 1.5 storey dwellings, agricultural buildings, etc.) ✓ Detail the scale (height and proportions), appearance (details and materials), and local architectural style ✓ Provide details of the building line of the houses in the vicinity (e.g. how the buildings are oriented in relation to the road, how set back from the road are they, what the plot/feu size tends to be) ✓ Describe typical features of the nearby buildings: roof type (hipped, flat, pitched), walls (wet dash, smooth render, natural stone etc.), height/proportions (number of floors, scale, etc.)
Development on the Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Discuss what influenced your particular design and how this relates to the surrounding buildings, settlement pattern, and landform ✓ Note the use of any signage, lighting etc., designed to create an inclusive environment ✓ Note the use of appropriate surface materials for disabled and mobility-impaired users along with any other considerations and solutions to the access needs of users ✓ Describe what informed the position of the building(s) on the site ✓ Explain the use of any under-build, infill, excavation and the landscaping of the site.
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Detail whether and how public utilities (e.g. underground services, drainage systems, overhead power lines) influence the siting/layout of the development
Policy and Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Local Development Plan: The relevant development plan is the Western Isles Local Plan 2008 and Structure Plan 2003. Please detail (if applicable) policies from the plan relevant to the site, the surrounding area and the actual design of your proposals. You can access the Local Development Plan on-line at: http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/planningservice/developmentplan.asp ✓ Other supplementary planning guidance: The Comhairle Design Guide presents Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's aims for good design in the Western Isles. Please take this into account when developing your design solution and Design Statement for the development.

Useful Publications

Scottish Government Planning Advice Notes and other publications can provide guidance on considerations when drawing up Design and Access Statements: PAN 68 – Design Statements (2003), PAN 78 – Inclusive Design (2006), Designing Places (2001). These are all available online at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications>

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) in England also provides a comprehensive guide on Design and Access Statements which is relevant to those required under the new Scottish legislation: Design and Access Statements: How to write, read and use them (2006). This is available online at <http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/design-and-access-statements>.