

A Guide to Design and Access Statements (DAS)

As of the **10th August 2006**, a Design and Access Statement or **DAS** will be required to accompany applications for certain types of permission and consent. Qualifying applications will not be registered if the requisite **DAS** is not submitted with the relevant fee, application forms, drawings and other relevant documents.

This guide seeks to explain the basics of **DAS** and outline some of the key areas North Hertfordshire District Council will expect to be covered before the Authority can consider a development proposal.

It should also be noted that as of the **10th August 2006** the process covering outline applications will also change in that the list of reserved matters will alter to comprise *Layout, Scale, Appearance, Access and Landscaping*. These form some of the **key elements** to be addressed by the **DAS**.

Q. What is a DAS ?

Design and Access Statements are described by the Government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space as follows:

“You should think of the statement as telling the story behind the scheme as it is presented in the planning application. Do not think of it as a chore, the statement is your opportunity to show that decisions you have made are not guesswork but based on an understanding of the real world as it affects the application site. A good design statement will therefore increase support for your proposal.”

(CABE, 2006)

A **DAS** is a concise report accompanying and supporting an application for planning permission (including outline submissions) or listed building consent which illustrates the process that has led to the proposal and explains and justifies it in a structured way.

The **DAS** must explain and justify the key elements of your proposal in relation to evidence that you understand and have taken into account the **physical, economic policy** and **social (PEPS)** context relevant to your chosen site.

Q. Which applications will need a DAS?

A **DAS** will need to be submitted with all planning applications (full and outline) except in the following cases

- applications involving a change of use where there is no operational development, such as buildings, involved.
- engineering or mining operations.
- development of an existing dwelling house or development within the curtilage of dwelling house where that development is incidental to the residential use and no part of the curtilage or dwelling lies within a designated area such as a Conservation Area or AONB.

A **DAS** will also be needed for listed building consent applications.

Q. What are the key elements the DAS will need to cover ?

The detail afforded to some elements will depend on whether the application is for full or outline permission. With the exception of landscaping, the following element headings are relevant to all statements. The differences for outline submissions reserving matters are highlighted.

USE (mandatory)

The **DAS** will explain what the development is to be used for, how this will fit into the surrounding area and how it will support local aims. You should include reference to relevant land use policies, both local and national. You need to explain how the proposal will promote a sense of community in the locality, improve opportunities and reinforce or improve a sense of place. The **DAS** should demonstrate that the applicant understands the access needs of different uses and made sure the uses maximises access opportunities.

AMOUNT (mandatory)

The **DAS** must explain and justify the amount of development being proposed such as the number of residential units or floor space for each use. The amount or density of development must be justified in terms of the **PEPS** context explained above. For example, the statement must explain and justify density decisions, not only in terms of Government guidance, but also against site specific physical, social and economic constraints and opportunities. For example, the expected number of extra people the development will bring to the locality is as necessary to consider as the impact the proposed density will have in relation to surrounding patterns of development.

LAYOUT (*Indicative layout* if reserved matter)

This demonstrates and explains the way in which buildings, routes and open spaces (private and public) are provided, placed and orientated in relation to each other and the surrounding area. For small schemes this should be relatively simple, for larger or more complex proposals, the **DAS** will need to explain and justify the choices made between what may be competing interests such as solar gain, crime prevention, accessibility and privacy. It may be very helpful to include rejected layouts and the reason why these were deemed unsuitable. Annotated plans and diagrams may be as informative as text when explaining layout choices. The **DAS** should clearly justify the chosen layout by explaining how it will help to create safe, accessible, vibrant and sustainable development that respects its setting.

SCALE (*scale parameters* if reserved matter)

This element relates to the size of buildings and spaces. For outline submissions the minimum and maximum sizes envisaged (scale parameters) will need to be specified. The **DAS** must explain and justify why the buildings sizes chosen are right for the site. Sections and street scene drawings are helpful to explain proposed and existing building relationships. However, these should be realistic and offer views which would be commonplace. It is also important to justify development in relation to the human scale.

LANDSCAPING (not mandatory for outline)

Landscaping should not be considered after full planning permission has been granted as it is about more than just plants. The **DAS** should explain how the specified landscape scheme (including open spaces, and all hard and soft landscaping) will make the proposal attractive, useful, socially and environmentally responsible and respond to its particular context. It should explain how the landscape proposals integrate with other design decisions and the wider landscape and biological setting. It should also justify landscape choices in relation to future management arrangements explaining what provisions are to be made for long term maintenance. The **DAS** should explain how landscape proposals facilitate access for a wide range of people including those with disability or special needs. It should also assess and explain the scheme's contribution to increasing habitat diversity.

APPEARANCE (*Intended appearance* if reserved matter)

Appearance is about the resulting visual impact or impression of all decisions and choices taken in presenting a development proposal. Appearance covers external built form, architectural style, materials, decoration, lighting, colours and textures as well as layout, scale and landscaping. The **DAS** needs to explain what the applicant wants the development to look like and why, particularly in relation to its surroundings. Furthermore, the statement must explain how that look will be achieved and maintained in the future. The statement should articulate the overall design philosophy and explain how this has informed architectural treatments and the other factors mentioned above. It should also acknowledge the effect of time and season on the appearance of the development.

If a reserved matter, the **DAS** should explain and justify the principles behind the intended appearance and how these principles will inform the final design of the development.

ACCESS (*Indicative access* if a reserved matter)

As part of planning applications, the Access component of the **DAS** relates to access to the development and does not extend to the internal treatment of individual buildings. It needs to cover both vehicular and transport links and inclusive access. This should not imply that these are separate and the statement should show that these have been considered together. The statement should establish a policy approach with particular reference to the inclusion of the disabled and non-motor vehicular traffic. The statement should provide information on consultations carried out such as with community groups or technical specialists including highway engineers or urban designers.

The **DAS** should explain relationships with the existing highway network including paths. It should explain how movement for pedestrians including the disabled has been facilitated as inclusive and optimised and explain where competing access priorities have been favoured. It should explain changes in level including bus stops, dropped kerbs, parking spaces and parks. The statement should explain access for emergency vehicles including the provision made for emergency congregation.

LISTED BUILDING CONSENTS

The **DAS** will be similar to that needed for a planning application though there will need to be some differences because of the different nature of the application. When a proposal needs planning permission and listed building consent, a single statement can address all the relevant issues.

Any considerations of scale, layout and appearance are broadly the same as for planning applications. Information on use, amount and landscaping are not required for a listed building consent application that does not accompany a planning application.

Accompanying a listed building consent application, the **DAS** will need to specifically address how the proposal has taken account of:

- the building's setting
- its historic and special importance.
- the physical features of the building that are part of the reason for its listing

These could include the original use character of the building, its size and scale, architectural style and design, the internal layout, particular architectural features like fireplaces, doors and cornices. Consideration will also need to be given to the protection of the historic physical fabric of the building.

For buildings where inclusive access is appropriate, the statement will need to address access to the building and its interior. The statement will need to show the proposed approach for balancing the protection of the building's special character with access needs. Where appropriate levels of accessibility cannot be achieved, information will need to show solutions to minimise the impact on people with disabilities and provide services in other ways.

For further information:-

Department for Communities and Local Government
Circular 01/2006 – Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)
Design and access statements – How to write, read and use them
www.cabe.org.uk

DAS/1 4th August 2006