



**Rochford District Council  
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT  
FRAMEWORK**

**DESIGN,  
LANDSCAPING AND  
ACCESS STATEMENTS**

**Supplementary Planning  
Document**

Regulation 17 Consultation Draft

**July 2006**





## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development) states that planning policies should promote high quality inclusive design in both the layout of new developments and within individual buildings. The function and impact of the building should be considered over the lifetime of the development not just for the short term. Design which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted. Good design, as stated in PPS1, is an important aspect of development and not necessarily easy to achieve. Applicants should be able to demonstrate how they have taken account of the need for good design in their development proposals. For these reasons, certain types of planning application are required to be accompanied by a design and landscaping statement.
- 1.2 Policy CS6 of the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan sets out the principles of good design which development proposals must demonstrate. Good quality design will:
- Take into account the existing form and character of the site and surroundings;
  - Relate to the locality in terms of scale, layout, proportion, materials and detailing;
  - Include landscaping arrangements which reduce the visual impact of and positively enhance the proposal and its surroundings; and
  - Minimise the risk of crime.
- 1.3 It is the intention of the requirements for design, landscaping and access statements to ensure that these standards of good quality design are achieved in the Rochford district. This supplementary planning document (SPD) follows on from previous supplementary planning guidance (LPSPG5) and aims to provide detailed guidance on the circumstances in which design, landscaping and access statements will be required and how they should be produced. It is important to note that there are different criteria for when access statements are required and these are detailed within the access statements section of this SPD. The circumstances when a design statement and landscaping scheme (Policy CS9) are required are set out below.

## **2. WHEN DESIGN STATEMENTS AND LANDSCAPE SCHEMES ARE REQUIRED**

- 2.1 Design statements and Landscape schemes are required in the case of all major development sites, and for any site which the Local Planning Authority considers to be sensitive or complex. Where a statement is required it must be submitted along with the planning application.

- 2.2 Major development sites are defined by and in association with policies contained in the Replacement Local Plan. As a summary, design statements and landscaping schemes will be required for all new housing developments of more than 12 dwellings, and should be submitted along with the planning application as described in Policy HP4 of the Replacement Local Plan. Statements will also be required with proposals for all major employment or industrial development (over 1000m<sup>2</sup> floorspace or a site of 1 hectare) as detailed by Policy EB6.

### **POLICY DLA1**

**Design and landscaping statements will also be required for any sites considered complex or sensitive by the Local Planning Authority. The Local Planning Authority defines sensitive sites as those lying within or having an impact upon the following (as defined by law or on the local plan proposals maps):**

- **Metropolitan Green Belt;**
- **Coastal Protection Zone;**
- **Special Landscape Areas;**
- **Areas of Historic Landscape Value;**
- **Sites of nature conservation importance (including, but not limited to, SSSIs, SACs and SPAs);**
- **Residential areas; and**
- **Public open space and important green spaces.**

**Where an applicant is unsure if a site is considered to be sensitive they are advised to contact the local planning authority to discuss the matter.**

- 2.3 It is important to note that the depth of work required will be largely dependent on the type of development proposed. Small householder applications will usually require nothing more than an extended covering letter, setting out their intention to comply with the design and landscaping requirements. New commercial development, however, will require significant work.

### **3. DESIGN STATEMENTS**

- 3.1 The Council believes that good quality design is important and therefore the early consideration of design issues is encouraged. The issue of design is one of the core policies within the local plan and is one of the threads that run through every section of it. Good design has the ability to improve the quality of development and to improve quality of life.

- 3.2 A Design Statement will help the Council, Councillors, neighbours and the public to:
- understand the proposals and the principles of the design;
  - consider the proposals against design policies in the Local Plan; and
  - consider the proposal against design objectives in PPG1 from which the Design Statement requirement comes.
- 3.3 If the proposal for development is of District-wide or greater significance, the Council will consult with the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE).

### Producing a Design Statement

#### **POLICY DLA2**

**There are three essential steps to producing a Statement. These are:**

- **site analysis**
- **identifying design principles – to include the urban, landscape and architectural design aspects of the development**
- **creating design solutions**

**These steps are dealt with in the sections below. It is important to note that the depth of work required will be largely dependent on the type of development proposed.**

- 3.4 Small householder applications will usually require nothing more than an extended covering letter, setting out the three areas. However, new commercial development will require significant work.

#### **STEP 1 – SITE ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION**

- 3.5 This is a factual account, which should be essentially based upon drawings and sketches explaining the site within its context and surroundings, e.g. urban, residential, conservation area, sloping, industrial, vegetation, etc.

#### **DLA3**

**It is important that this analysis is primarily based on fact and reason rather than opinion and must include:**

- **building styles and sizes, street patterns the nature of spaces between buildings and their uses, the character of the area, proximity to Listed Buildings, etc.;**

- **an explanation of the constraints and opportunities the site has in terms of its design, e.g. features worthy of retention or protection, features which are detrimental and need to be addressed; and**
- **an explanation of the constraints and opportunities the site has in terms of its context, e.g. local building, changes of levels, physical features such as underground services, drainage systems, overhead powerlines, service trenches, trees, ecology and wildlife habitats, etc.**

3.6 This section should include plans, sketches and photographs to support and explain the approach adopted.

#### STEP 2 - IDENTIFYING THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

3.7 These are the main criteria that the design needs to fulfil. These principles should be so important that they cannot be easily changed. However, the principles will not just be a list of preferences, but instead a clear statement of what needs to be included in the design. They will remain consistent irrespective of any approach taken. The principles may also include critical constraints to the applicant such as minimum floor space to be achieved, the importance of signs to a commercial proposal, financial constraints, etc. This section will also include principles that are a requirement of the Council as may be set down in Local Plans and Development Briefs or other Guidance Notes.

3.8 The design principles must clearly relate to the site analysis and evaluation findings. If the site evaluation identifies negative features, then these must be addressed and overcome in this section. The design principles will vary in number and complexity from proposal to proposal. For extensions or alterations to dwellings it is likely that there will be only a few principles, e.g. the extension should be designed to be sympathetically related to the existing property and not to cause harm to the neighbour.

3.9 However, in more complex proposals, design principles may include the retention of important public views, whether the mass and scale of buildings should be similar to those in the street or conversely a new building ought to be larger because of the relationship of the site to neighbouring buildings. Other important considerations might include the need to keep important trees or that buildings may need to face a particular way or be in specific positions to meet the needs of industrial activities, etc.

3.10 It is important to understand that each site and proposal is unique and there is no right or wrong set of design principles.

#### STEP 3 – CREATING THE DESIGN SOLUTION

3.11 The third stage is to produce the design solution.

## POLICY DLA4

**The design solution should incorporate the design principles, which in turn can be justified against the site analysis and evaluation.**

### Conclusion

3.12 There are no set rules or ways of presenting design statements. Much depends upon the scale and nature of the development proposed. It should first comprise a detailed site analysis based upon drawings and sketches setting out the constraints, opportunities and design principles. Written statements alone may not be enough and photographs of the site and its surroundings can be helpful. The statement should relate to the wider context of the site and not just to the site itself.

3.13 A good design statement should have addressed each of the following points. These areas also provide an option for an alternative structure of statement.

- **response to context.**

This means how the physical, social, economic and policy context of the development has informed its design in relation to each of the 6 other design elements below;

- **quantum**

or amount of development proposed for each use expressed in terms of the number of residential units or floor space for other forms of development. Quantum supersedes density in the earlier Ministerial list of elements;

- **use**

or mix of uses proposed;

- **layout,**

the buildings, routes and open spaces within the development and their relationship to buildings and spaces outside the development;

- **scale,**

height, width and length of each proposed building;

- **appearance,**

aspects of a building or place which determine the visual impression it makes, including the external built form of the development;

- **landscaping,**

this section should cover the enhancement or protection of the amenities of the site and the area in which it is situated, including screening and planting. Policy CS9 of the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan details the emphasis the Council places on the value of landscaping. Although only one part of an integrated overall statement, landscaping schemes can be considered a key part of such design statements. As such the requirements for landscaping schemes and statements are detailed further in the following section.

- 3.14 In all cases applicants are invited to contact the local planning authority for pre-application advice as such discussions are often a resource-effective and valuable opportunity to resolve issues at an early stage.

#### **4. LANDSCAPING SCHEMES**

- 4.1 Policy CS9, Emphasising the Value of Landscaping, sets out when the Local Planning Authority will require the submission of a landscape scheme as a condition of planning consent. Generally, where a design statement is required, this is also required to include a landscaping scheme.
- 4.2 The core strategy of the Replacement Local Plan with regard to promoting good design and design statements (Policy CS6), states the requirement for development proposals to demonstrate good quality design including the use of landscaping arrangements which reduce the visual impact of and positively enhance the proposal and its surroundings. The requirements of landscaping statements in relation to employment development in particular, are detailed in Policy EB7 of the Replacement Local Plan. A landscaping scheme should set out how the proposals intend to comply with or exceed the criteria contained within these policies.

#### **POLICY DLA5**

**Landscaping Schemes should pay particular attention to:**

- **Lighting, including that for security purposes**
- **Hard and soft landscaping measures; and**
- **Buffer zones**

**Landscaping schemes should also make use of on-site earth mounding or planting to protect or enhance amenities where possible.**



- 4.3 Landscaping schemes, especially in the case of employment development (Policy EB7), should make use of on-site earth mounding or planting to protect and enhance amenities where appropriate. It is also important to consider the ecological value and appearance of the surroundings in general, including those of neighbouring properties and nature conservation sites in particular.
- 4.4 Good practice guidance on Landscaping schemes is available from a number of sources.

### **Biodiversity**

- 4.5 Biodiversity is an important consideration in any landscaping scheme. In many cases, proposed development and landscaping schemes have the potential to impact on biodiversity.
- 4.6 It should be noted that established habitats are more likely to flourish with management than 'imposed' habitats and tend to be more cost effective as a result. Replacement/new habitat takes many years to stabilise and gain the value of an established habitat.

### **POLICY DLA6**

**The onus is on applicants to provide assurances to the Local Planning Authority that the development will not have undue impact on biodiversity. This will normally be provided in the form of an ecological impact assessment. Planning applications which have the potential to impact on biodiversity but which are not accompanied with an appropriate ecological impact assessment will not be granted consent.**

**In the majority of circumstances existing habitats should be retained. Landscaping should have regard to, and make the most of, what is established on site.**

### **Planting design**

#### **POLICY DLA7**

**Planting should be designed in such a way as to reflect the typical or traditional, indigenous landscape character of the adjoining area.**

**Planting should be structured to reflect and complement the landform and any variation in soil types.**

**A clear structure should be created using woodland blocks, hedges, more open scrubland, grassland areas and other landscape and habitat**

types. Indigenous species of plant material should be used in mixtures and proportions which are likely to simulate natural models.

A degree of ecological diversity is also to be encouraged both to create a good range of habitat and provide a range of seed sources for subsequent natural regeneration. This diversity should be reflected in a variety of planting related to habitat types.

The selection of species mixtures can be critical and the following guidelines should be noted.

- Limit the dominants for each area to one or two species.
- Avoid selecting tree species as a nurse. Use additional shrub species such as *Acer campestre* or *Crataegus monogyna*.
- If a tree nurse species is required to create 'high forest' use *Betula* or *Alnus* to a maximum of 20 per cent. *Pinus* or *Larix* should be avoided.
- Avoid mixing *Salix* or *Populus* directly with other tree species. Their vigour will create problems of competition.
- The major part of any mixture should comprise a limited number of species, but smaller amounts of numerous other species may be added to provide a seed source from which they can find their own population balance.
- Have a clear view of how any mixture is likely to develop over time and how it might be managed in the future to achieve a desired result. Where feasible consideration should be given to the establishment of advance structural planting, and provision made for planting within the period of the main contract.

### **Species choice**

4.7 In general, tree and shrub cover together with crops, are the basic materials of a landscape that lacks rocks and dramatic topography. Trees make contrasts with open land, form spaces, and give variety of texture, colour, and express seasonal change. Without them, the inland Essex landscape becomes bleak and uninteresting. Traditional trees express historical continuity.

### **POLICY DLA8**

The following indigenous species are common in Essex and should form the main content of planting schemes.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Distribution</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Acer campestre	Field Maple	wide	small tree, woodland component
Carpinus betulus	Hornbeam	localised	clay soils
Cornus sanguinea	Dogwood	wide	hedge
Corylus avellana	Hazel	wide	woodland, hedges
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	wide	wetter sites
Fraxinus excelsior	Ash	wide	invasive
Hedera helix	Ivy	wide	more acid soils
Ilex aquifolium	Holly	wide	sometimes difficult to establish
Populus tremula	Aspen	localised	but can become invasive
Prunus avium	Wild Cherry	localised	lighter soils
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn	wide	woodland
Quercus petraea	Sessile Oak	localised	clay soils
Quercus robur	Pendunculate Oak	wide	small tree, woodland component
Rosa arvensis	Field rose	wide	clay soils
Rosa canina	Dog Rose	wide	hedge

## **5. ACCESS STATEMENTS**

- 5.1 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) guidance 'Planning and Access for Disabled People - A Good Practice Guide' recommends the provision of an Access Statement, principally to identify the philosophy and approach to inclusive design adopted, the key issues of the particular scheme, and the sources of advice and guidance used. An access statement is also important to assist building control in making judgements on whether proposals make reasonable access provision in accordance with The Building Regulations 2000 (Part M).

### **POLICY DLA9**

**An access statement is required with all applications for development within Rochford District. At its very simplest, such a statement might simply record that the intention of the client, designer or design team ('the applicant') was to comply where appropriate with the guidance in the Approved Document, and to indicate in what respects it was considered appropriate. Where an applicant wishes to depart from the guidance in Approved Document M, either to achieve a better solution using new technologies (e.g. infrared activated controls), to provide a**

more convenient solution, or to address the constraints of an existing building, the Statement should set out the reasons for departing from the guidance and the rationale for the design approach adopted.

Access statements should demonstrate both a commitment to inclusive design as well as compliance with the Building Regulations (2000) as required by Building Control. Statements should be provided at the time plans are deposited, a building notice is given or details of a project are given to an approved inspector, and updated to reflect decisions reached on site.

The requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations (2000) apply if:

- a. a non-domestic building or a dwelling is newly erected;
- b. an existing non-domestic building is extended, or undergoes a material alteration; or
- c. an existing building or part of an existing building undergoes a material change of use to a hotel or boarding house, institution, public building or shop.

For these types of development, therefore, the access statement should not only show a general inclusive approach to design, but also that the development complies with the Part M regulations.

It is also important to note that whilst the requirements do not generally apply to domestic dwellings, under regulation 4(2) any building which is extended, or undergoes a material alteration, must not be any more unsatisfactory in relation to the requirements of Schedule 1, than it was before alteration. In these circumstances, therefore, an access statement should set out how accessibility will not be compromised by the proposed development.

5.2 The exact form of statement depends upon the size, nature and complexity of the proposed building or space. It is recommended that each statement, as long as it is relevant, includes the following information:

- A short explanation of the Project Sponsor's policy and approach to access, with particular reference to the inclusion of disabled people.
- A description of sources of advice on accessibility.
- Details of any consultations undertaken or planned, which groups of people were consulted, and the degree to which the plans have been influenced by it.
- Details of any professional advice including any recommendations for access audits or appraisals.
- An explanation of any accessibility problems particular to this environment and details of the solutions adopted to ensure adequate provision of services, employment and educational opportunities.

- Details of management and maintenance policies to maintain features of the proposed development which enhance accessibility (for example lighting, colour and luminance contrast, door closing forces etc.), specialist equipment (such as induction loops, audible and visual fire alarm systems etc.), and staff training.
- A plan of the environment illustrated features such as routes in, out and around the outside of the building, vertical and horizontal circulation routes, positions of accessible parking bays (further advice can be found in the Vehicle Parking Standards SPD), the location of public transport, and any other features relevant to the proposal.
- Where good practice cannot, or may not, be met, the Access Statement should set out why, what implications this will have for users, and what alternative methods are being used to lessen the impact.

5.3 It is important to highlight that the scale of the development proposals will determine the complexity of access statement required. Small-scale domestic applications, for example, may only require a consideration of accessibility as part of an extended covering letter. Commercial or large-scale applications, however, will need to consider accessibility in greater detail. For further details on what may be included, the Disability Rights Commission's *Access Statements: Achieving an inclusive environment by ensuring continuity throughout the planning, design and management of buildings and spaces* provides more detailed good practice guidance (<http://www.drc-gb.org>). The Association of Building Engineers' *Access Statements: Key to an Inclusive Environment* document also provides good practice guidance and examples of how access statements should be produced for various types of development (<http://www.abe.org.uk>).



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