

Inclusive Design and Placemaking: Access Audit and Technical Guidance Toolkit

Background

This guidance document sets out the national policy and legislative basis for considering the access needs of those with disabilities. It suggests that the document is relevant to KCC in carrying out their functions as the local transport authority, to developers in preparing planning applications and to district councils in determining applications and carrying out certain other functions, such as maintaining open space. The key recommendations from the guidance documents are that diversity and the differences between people are considered in the design process and that an access audit is carried out for certain development sites, following the approach proposed in the toolkit document.

The toolkit suggests that an audit could be required either as a result of a local authority's scheme (for example KCC highway works) or as a result of a new development proposal. It suggests that different levels of audit, covering different geographic extents, should be undertaken for developments of different scales. It is suggested that full access audits should be required for housing developments of between 50 and 80 units, with 'neighbourhood' or 'doorstep' audits carried out for smaller sites. The exact boundaries of the areas to be considered would need to be agreed with the district and county councils. It is suggested that audits could be carried out as part of Transport Assessments, Travel Plans or Design and Access Statements.

The Access Group have requested that it is considered whether it could be adopted by SDC.

Should SDC adopt the Inclusive Design and Placemaking document?

The issues raised by the 'Inclusive Design and Placemaking' document are important and it provides a significant amount of guidance that is consistent with Policy SP1 of the Core Strategy and para 58 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In particular, the focus on developers consulting access groups when developing proposals for larger developments (pages 8-9) is supported.

SDC has adopted the Kent Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document. As a result, developers are required to take account of the sections within it that require them to take account of the needs of people with disabilities. Page 33 of the document states that LPAs may, in some cases, require that developers undertake Disability Discrimination Act 1995 audits with planning applications. Page 53 suggests that consideration needs to be given to the needs of people with disabilities at the outset of designing a scheme. This means that these issues should already be being considered in preparing planning applications and documented, where necessary, in Design and Access Statements.

There are aspects of the access audit that may have been sensible to include if the document was going to be applied by KCC in developing highway schemes but do not appear to be particularly appropriate to ask developers to consider. The

need for developers to consider the accessibility of bus stops/shelters, nearby public buildings, public conveniences, telephone boxes and ATMs (pages 18, 19, 25 and 32 of the Access Audit and Technical Toolkit) are examples of criteria that may be too onerous to expect developers to consider, especially for smaller development schemes of the type that are more common in Sevenoaks District.

The document does nevertheless provide helpful guidance that can be used where relevant. It can be used by Development Control officers to provide informal guidance on the types of issues that developers could be expected to cover in Design and Access Statements, Transport Assessments and/or Travel Plans for larger schemes.

Equality Implications

The document gives specific consideration to the needs of people with disabilities and adoption should help to make a positive contribution towards ensuring the needs of all sections of the community are considered in relevant developments.

Financial and Legal Implications

There are none

Recommendation

It is proposed that the Inclusive Design and Placemaking Access Audit and Technical Guidance Toolkit be adopted as informal guidance.

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