



ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENTS

An Advice Note

This note is to be read in conjunction with policies in the Local Plan, particularly Policy 1 and Appendix 1

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The note clarifies the Council's expectation of sustainability statements required under Policy 1 and Appendix 1 of Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991 – 2011.

It also underlines the Council's expectation that proposals in high quality sustainability statements will result in a substantial contribution to sustainable development⁽¹⁾

The Government's Planning Policy Statement 1, "Delivering Sustainable Development", emphasises that sustainable development is the core principle underpinning planning. The aim is to achieve:

- social cohesion and inclusion;
- protection and enhancement of the environment;
- prudent use of natural resources; and
- sustainable economic development.

The Local Plan seeks to secure a more sustainable pattern of development in the borough. To this end the Council will pursue the detailed aims and objectives of sustainable development as set in the United Kingdom Sustainable Development Strategy (2005), Hertfordshire County Structure Plan 1991 – 2011 (especially Policy 1), Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991 – 2011 ⁽²⁾ and other relevant policy advice. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the Council to exercise its local planning function "with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development" ⁽³⁾

When to provide a Sustainability Statement

A sustainability statement should be submitted with planning applications for the following types of development ⁽⁴⁾:

- New building, which creates new dwellings and new commercial or non-residential floorspace

This is subdivided into:

- (a) large scale
 - comprising five or more dwellings; or
 - comprising more than 235 sq m of floorspace for commercial or non-residential development
- (b) small scale
 - less than 5 dwellings; or
 - up to 235 sq m of commercial or non-residential floorspace

- Changes of use and conversions
- Engineering or other development works, such as car parking and landscaping.

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1. Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland Report definition, 1987)
 2. Ref. Paragraph 12
 3. Ref. Paragraph 39
 4. The following forms of development do not require the submission of a sustainability checklist statement: householder applications; advertisements; and telecommunications applications

Using the Checklist

The Council expects all sustainability statements to be provided to a high standard. Each statement should systematically work through the checklist in Appendix 1 of the Local Plan. The statement should be tailored to the type of development:

- All questions marked A should be answered for large scale new building
- All questions marked B should be answered for small scale new building
- All questions marked C should be answered for changes of use or conversions
- All questions marked D should be answered for engineering or other development works.

The questions in the sustainability checklist are phrased – “does my proposal ...?”

An example is:

“does my proposal *minimise* water consumption, e.g. through water meters, water efficient fixtures, rainwater storage and use of ‘grey’ water?”

The Council is seeking the answer, “Yes”, because measures to minimise water consumption will contribute to sustainable development.

The checklist is not simply a Yes/No tick list. Applicants are expected to assess their proposals very carefully against the checklist and provide sufficient information to enable the Council to judge the full impact of the development proposal.⁽⁵⁾

In another example the question is:

“does my proposal *maximise* energy conservation in buildings, i.e. by using renewable energy sources, solar panels, insulation creating buffer zones e.g. lobbies, draught proofing, localising temperature controls, weather breaking planting and use of condensing boilers?”

The answer may be:

- Yes

In which case the Council needs to receive an explanation of how the proposal will achieve maximum energy conservation

- No

In which case the Council expects

- (a) full justification as to why energy conservation in buildings is not maximised⁽⁶⁾; and

5. Ref. Policy 11, Local Plan: “Applicants will be required to provide sufficient information and appropriately detailed plans to enable the Council to judge the full impact of the development proposal”.

6. The Council does not regard cost of energy conservation measures as an acceptable justification, unless it can be demonstrated that the viability of the scheme would be undermined.

- (b) a statement as to the energy conservation measures that can be achieved.

If the answer is “No”, the proposal will not make full contribution to the achievement of sustainable development.

Reaching a Decision

The Council will separately judge whether the explanation is reasonable in all the circumstances, and if not, will request the applicant to reconsider. Policy 1 in the Local Plan states:

“Development will be permitted where it can be shown it would satisfy the principles of sustainable development as set out in the policies of the Local Plan and contained within statements of national planning policy.”

The Council is seeking positive evidence and answers.

The corollary to Policy 1 is therefore that development should not be permitted if it does not satisfy the principles of sustainable development.

Further Information

Sustainable development embraces some very important environmental principles:

- Energy Conservation;
- Water Conservation;
- Promoting Biodiversity ;
- Avoiding Pollution; and
- Limiting the impact on natural resources

These are addressed through a range of relevant Local Plan policies (e.g. Policy 11(j) – development should avoid harm from pollution in all its forms) and supplementary guidance, all of which should be referred to.

Environmental Guidelines on Energy Efficiency and Conservation, and Water Conservation have contact references for further information.

Advice may be obtainable from the Environment Agency (e.g. in respect of the water environment and avoidance of groundwater pollution) and Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre (in respect of nature conservation/biodiversity).

Applicants may need to consult specialists in particular fields to help prepare the evidence in support of the sustainability checklist.