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## What is a design statement?

A Design Statement uses images and words to describe the rationale behind a development proposal. It illustrates how the proposed development responds to the opportunities and constraints of the **site** on which it is being built and the surrounding area. It expresses the analysis and thinking behind the design being proposed.

It helps to test and communicate the ideas that inform a development, and enables the design and development team to document and share the analysis and decision making that underpin the development. The key attributes of a **site** and the surrounding area, as well as other factors that have informed the development are clearly identified in the Design Statement, and the design decisions made in response to these attributes are clearly stated.

A Design Statement records the work of the design and development team. For many, this formalises a process already in place. For others, this prompts a closer look at the development in the context of its **site** and surrounding area.

## What does a design statement consider?

A Design Statement is made up of **site analysis**, existing neighbourhood context (where required), planning context, an opportunities and constraints diagram and a design response. A Design Statement can consist of:

- Plans, sketches and diagrams: These help to analyse the proposal in context, and illustrate how the proposal responds to the attributes of the **site** and its surrounds
- Photos, photo montages and maps: These help to capture the existing environment and illustrate how the proposed development will integrate with it
- Words: Written descriptions, conclusions or ideas help to encapsulate the thinking and intent behind the proposed development, and provide a useful reference point later in the design process.

Design Statements range in size, technicality and formality, depending on the scale and complexity of a development proposal, and the scale and significance of potential effects.

## What do I do with a design statement?

The different parts of your Design Statement should be shared with council officers at pre-application meetings, prior to preparing a detailed design proposal. A final Design Statement should be submitted within a resource consent application and informs the Assessment of Environmental Effects.

## How much does it cost to prepare a Design Statement

The size and complexity of Design Statements, and the time and costs involved, are relative to the size and complexity of the development **site** and proposal. The majority of the information required for a design statement is the same or similar to a standard resource consent application, or if necessary, for submission to the Auckland Urban Design Panel. By preparing a contextual response that successfully integrates with its surroundings, and by providing all documentation and rationale via the design statement, a resource consent application can be easily assessed

The preparation of a design statement should not be an onerous task. If the preparation of a design statement does involve additional work for a design team to present (i.e. document) design ideas and thinking, in many cases this can be achieved very simply. For example, annotated hand drawn sketches prepared as part of a designer's concept formulation are acceptable – the PAUP does not require fully rendered drawings.

Furthermore, the design statement information requirements have been specifically tailored to the scale and complexity of a particular activity, and its anticipated environmental effects. Information required by a design statement that is in addition to general information requirements of all resource consent applications are linked to matters of discretion and relevant assessment criteria, or are considered to be a relevant s104 matter for non-complying or discretionary activities. Therefore, such an application would be required to communicate how any effects of the proposed activity are avoided or reduced anyway, with the design statement providing certainty of how to do so rather than an additional requirement with an associated cost/ burden.

## What benefit does a Design Statement add?

Design statements are a valuable tool for the applicant/client, the designer and council for the following reasons:

- They encourage and support quality design outcomes including avoidance of environmental impacts and costs;
- They are an effective communication tool; and
- They assist in streamlining the design and resource consent process.

Site responsive development can also add value by capitalising on on-site features, such as views and water bodies. A well designed and integrated development will create a high level of on and off site amenity, which typically achieves a higher economic value.

As a tool, a design statement communicates the rationale and implications of the design decisions made, which assists the council and other interested parties who may be reviewing the development proposal. When submitted as part of a resource consent application, it provides applicants with certainty regarding the information and analysis required.

The specific benefits to a developer/applicant and their design team of a well-considered design statement will be to speed up the resource consent process, and contribute to good communication and understanding between the applicant, council and the community. This is because the design statement should identify issues and potential constraints prior to commissioning a design that may prove controversial. It will maximise long term value for the development, and enable a cost effective, culturally and environmentally responsive design.

In assessing a resource consent application, the council will consider whether the proposal has identified and responded to the unique characteristics of the site, and the future planned character as identified in the Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan. This can be evidenced by the design approach and process the applicant and their team has taken. Providing all this information in a single design statement reduces the need for the council to seek further information, as the rationale as to why design decisions have been made is clearly presented. Design statements also introduce a form of 'self-check' or 'quality control' to the design process. In preparing a design statement any inadequacies of the proposed development will become apparent, enabling applicants to make changes or improvements before submitting a resource consent application.