This Worksheet provides advice and guidance to planners, designers and policy-makers on how to implement ‘inclusive design’ principles in eco-town developments. It provides an explanation of the concept and core principles of inclusive design and explains how these principles can be implemented in practice. It sets out issues that should be considered at a strategic level, but it should not be seen as definitive detailed design guidance. Any references to particular design solutions are purely illustrative, for the purpose of better explaining the practical application of inclusive design principles.

The first part of the Worksheet explains in detail what inclusive design principles are, their origin in the demands of disabled people for accessible buildings, and how they are now being used to provide a more inclusive environment for all of us. It then details what needs to be done at each stage of the development and design process using the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) ‘Plan of Work’ stages as a framework.

The Worksheet then outlines the professional roles required within design teams to ensure that the principles of inclusive design are fully implemented from the start of the design process. Further advice is given on design strategies, feasibility studies, masterplan development, and the establishment of strategic access forums to provide continuing advice throughout the development of the eco-town.
Applying Inclusive Design Principles to Eco-town Development
Eco-towns Inclusive Design Worksheet
Advice to Promoters and Planners
May 2009
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Many of the processes and examples highlighted in this Worksheet have been drawn from the London Development Agency’s Inclusive Design Toolkit (see http://www.lda.gov.uk/server.php?show=ConWebDoc.2983) and the Olympic Delivery Authority’s Inclusive Design Strategy (see http://www.london2012.com/documents/oda-publications/inclusive-design-strategy.pdf) – both are recognised as setting the standard for implementing inclusive design principles in strategic developments.

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introduction

The eco-towns programme presents a rare opportunity to build new settlements that are designed and organised from the outset to provide all inhabitants – regardless of age, disability, faith or gender – with places where dwellings are responsive to individual need and are located within easy access of employment, services and leisure; where the public realm does not exclude people; and where all residents are enabled to participate fully in public life and enjoy a real sense of belonging to their community.

Planners have a key role in the design process in ensuring that eco-towns are planned to anticipate these needs. Doing so will meet the new duties that have been placed on all public bodies, including local planning authorities, to consider the needs of people of different capabilities, ages and backgrounds when designing and delivering public services. At the heart of these legislative changes is the need to implement ‘inclusive design’.

The concept of inclusive design emerged from the disability movement as a way of mainstreaming the access needs of disabled people as well as avoiding last-minute compromises that segregate, separate and demean the user. It is built on a rejection of the divisive ‘medical model’ of disability and the adoption instead of the ‘social model’ (see Box 1).

Box 1 Disability – the ‘medical model’ versus the ‘social model’

The traditional view of disability – the ‘medical model’ – sees an individual with an impairment as ‘the problem’. It holds the view that people with impairments need to be cured or rehabilitated to fit into ‘normal’ life, and that inability to do so should be met with special provisions that are often separate or outside of community life.

By contrast, the ‘social model’ of disability asserts that it is society itself – through our attitudes and behaviour, our institutions and laws, our buildings and public spaces – that creates barriers which can result in segregation and separation. The social model aims to integrate the needs of all into mainstream provisions, thereby avoiding the need for unwanted special facilities. It is from the social model that the concept of inclusive design emerged.

Developers should use the social model as a way of understanding the needs of people with impairments and then interpreting how best to avoid creating disabling social, economic and environmental barriers within their area of influence. This model should also inform the way we design, develop and manage our new communities.

The social model approach to inclusive design is recognised as a way of ensuring access to, and use of, the built environment by all members of a community, regardless of their age, disability, faith or gender. It is an essential tool in addressing the challenges emerging from the changing demographics and the wide diversity of our communities. Barriers to inclusion often arise from a lack of awareness, adherence to out-of-date principles and standards, and a failure to understand a community’s diverse needs or consult with – and listen to – users.

It is estimated that there are around 9.8 million people living in the UK today who have an impairment or disability which impacts on aspects of their daily living.

1 An impairment or disability here refers to difficulties with mobility, sensory mechanisms, learning and communications, mental health issues, and hidden disabilities.
2 Economic and Social Research Council Fact Sheet – Disability in the UK. http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/facts/index42.aspx
For example:

- Research for the RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People) found that nearly one in 30 of the UK population has significant sight loss.\(^3\)

- The RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf People) estimates that nearly one in seven of the UK population has a degree of hearing loss, with incidence increasing with age.

- The latest statistics from the NHS indicate that 750,000 people use a wheelchair as an essential part of their daily life.\(^4\)

The Office for National Statistics forecasts that within 20 years half of the UK’s adult population will be over 50, with a steeper percentage rise in the number of very old people – i.e. people over the age of 80. These changes will inevitably place a greater demand on local services and the way in which they are to be provided. But they will also place a greater demand on individuals and how they can best help themselves. Furthermore, a large number of people aged 50-70 who are working or looking for work say that they plan to continue to work in some capacity in retirement or will not retire at all.

At the other end of the age scale, an increasing number of children born with previously life-limiting conditions are growing into adulthood. A recent report estimates that there are 156,000 adolescents (aged 16-19) with a disability living in the UK, 4,000 of whom have a severe disability.\(^5\) Like young people everywhere, most would like the opportunity to live independently.

These profound changes in our society not only challenge the conventional way in which disabled and older people are viewed, they also challenge the way that we design the built environment to ensure that it does not inhibit aspirations for mainstream education, family life, living independently, work, leisure, and continued skills development.

Box 2 Planning for equality

This Worksheet focuses on inclusive design to ensure that no section of the community living in or visiting the eco-town is disadvantaged by its design.

However, to achieve true equality the spatial needs of all sections of the community must be considered. Guidance which sets out some of the overarching principles to guide planning for equality can be found in the London Mayor’s Supplementary Planning Guidance, *Planning for Equality and Diversity in London* – see [http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/sds/docs/spg-planning-for-equality.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/sds/docs/spg-planning-for-equality.pdf)

Groups representing the interests of disabled people have campaigned over several decades for a built environment that does not exclude. Although progress has been slow, it has been consistent. In part this is because it was soon recognised that the benefits of inclusive design would be felt more widely than by one group alone. Applying inclusive design principles to eco-towns will, for this reason, make them attractive places in which to live for all. As the Planning Advisory Service notes: *An environment which is inclusive and accessible recognises that people have different needs and different ways of using the environment, it celebrates this diversity and is*

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safe, predictable, sustainable and sufficiently flexible to be used by everyone regardless of age, gender or disability.\textsuperscript{6}

In order to take up this challenge, the core principles of inclusive design need to be understood and embraced at all levels of thinking within the development process. Therefore this Worksheet should be read in conjunction with the others in this series. It is intended as a starting point to ensure that consideration is given to the needs of all people who will occupy, and wish to enjoy, the new communities created by the eco-towns project.

**inclusive design principles**

‘The quality of buildings and spaces has a strong influence on the quality of people’s lives. Decisions about the design, planning and management of places can enhance or restrict a sense of belonging. They can increase or reduce feelings of security, mobility, and improve or damage health. They can remove real and imagined barriers between communities and foster understanding and generosity of spirit.’

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, 2008\textsuperscript{7}

The key principles of inclusive design, based on the recommendations set out by CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) in its report *Inclusion by Design: Equality, Diversity and the Built Environment*,\textsuperscript{8} are:

- Incorporating inclusive design principles from the outset. They are not an optional extra to be applied at the end of the design process if the budget allows. The latter approach can be guaranteed to result in *ad hoc*, often ineffectual and unsightly adaptations to overcome obstacles that should have been foreseen and designed out.
- Ensuring that inclusive design is applied consistently, and with continuity, throughout the design process from inception through to completion and management.

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\textsuperscript{8} ibid.
Establishing and maintaining a constructive dialogue with community groups from the earliest stages of the project.

Ensuring that designers of the built environment – including architects, town planners, landscape architects, highways engineers, and maintenance teams – understand and apply the principles of inclusive design.

Thinking about everyone who will use the space or building that is being designed, and not just the immediate obligations placed on a professional designer by his/her client.

The benefits of inclusive design and its impact on the design of eco-towns can be summarised as:

- **Inclusive** – so that everyone can use the environments created safely, easily and with dignity.
- **Responsive** – taking account of what people say they need and want.
- **Flexible** – so that different people can use the built environment in different ways.
- **Convenient** – so that everyone can use the built environment without too much effort or separation.
- **Accommodating** – for all people, regardless of their age, gender, mobility, ethnicity or circumstances.
- **Welcoming** – with no disabling barriers that might exclude some people.
- **Realistic** – offering more than one solution to help balance everyone’s needs and recognising that one solution may not work for all.

### Box 3 Lifetime neighbourhoods


Within this strategy guidance is given on the practical design issues that need to be addressed to ensure that a neighbourhood is accessible to all sections of society. These include careful paving and kerb design, access to public amenities, the location of bus stops, and access to public toilets.

On the latter issue the Communities and Local Government department has published *Improving Public Access to Toilets: Guidance on Community Toilet Schemes and SatLav*, which provides an overview of a successful community toilet scheme and a step-by-step guide on setting one up – see: [http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/guidancetoiletschemes](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/guidancetoiletschemes)

### planning for an inclusive environment

At the heart of Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) is the concept of the sustainable community. Planning and development which encompasses good access and inclusive design is an essential part of this. As PPS1 states, ‘Planning authorities should plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes.’

All development should contribute to the creation of a safe, sustainable and liveable environment which supports mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all community members. Planning proposals which fail to do this are unlikely to be accepted. Many local planning authorities already consider accessibility to
be a material planning consideration. Therefore the earlier that good access and inclusive design principles are incorporated into the development process, the more likely the development is to be accepted by the planning authority, and the better will be the final outcome.

Legislation also backs this approach, with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requiring Local Development Documents to be prepared with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. Following an amendment in 2005, the Disability Discrimination Act placed a duty, the Disability Equality Duty, on all public authorities, including local councils. This requires active intervention by local authorities in all their functions, including planning and building control, to ensure that all disabled people are treated equally and have equal access to services, buildings and shared spaces. Doing so will, as noted above, deliver a more accessible environment for all.


4 implementing inclusive design

4.1 Inclusive design actions set within the RIBA ‘Plan of Work’ stages

This section sets out the activities that should be undertaken at each of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) ‘Plan of Work’ stages as they might apply to a project on the scale of an eco-town in order to ensure that the principles of inclusive design are embedded in the design process, from inception to completion, and to enable this process to be documented, reviewed and monitored throughout:

- **Pre stage A:** There needs to be a commitment within the project objectives and philosophy to aspire to the principles of inclusive design by adopting best practice standards of accessibility and inclusion.
- **Stages A-B:** An Access Strategy should be adopted. The strategy should include the identification of an access champion, and ensure that an access consultant with specialist technical expertise is appointed. The budget should allow for access expertise on the design team to ensure that features are integrated into the scheme from the outset. Arrangements for consultation with disabled people and other relevant organisations (a local parents group, for example) should be established.
- **Stage C:** Scheme design review should be undertaken in preparation for drafting the outline planning access statement. Access objectives should be set out in the context of the development and addressed as part of the design review. Arrangements for consultation should be put in place.
- **Stages D-E:** Scheme design reviews should be carried out, including detailed planning access statements for reserved matters and applications for building control approval. The progress of access considerations should be recorded, including consultation issues.
- **Stages F-L:** Access statement commitments should be continuously reviewed to pick up any outstanding issues, including management and monitoring.

Figure 1 shows that for a project on the scale of an eco-town, inclusive design requires actions well ahead of the normal planning procedures. Key inclusive design parameters have to be agreed and fixed well before the application for outline planning permission.
**Figure 1** Inclusive design embedded within the RIBA’s ‘Plan of Work’ stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Stage</th>
<th>Access Output</th>
<th>Planning Stages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre stage A</td>
<td>Project objectives</td>
<td>Objectives to include meeting the principles of inclusive design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access Strategy adopted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Access champion identified</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access consultant with specialist technical expertise appointed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget established to include access expertise on the design team and to ensure that physical access features are integrated from the outset</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation with community organisations begins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages A-B</td>
<td>Business case/strategic brief/feasibility studies/masterplanning</td>
<td>Access Strategy adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business case/strategic brief/feasibility studies/masterplanning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Access forum established</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Design standards established</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masterplan access statement drafted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Design stage review</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Outline planning application</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Outline planning permission</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages D-E</td>
<td>Project objectives</td>
<td>Updated access statements for reserved matters planning applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design stage review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Access statement for building control approval</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full planning application</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Full planning permission</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reserved matters</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stages F-L</td>
<td>Project objectives</td>
<td>Review of access statements to pick up any outstanding issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management, monitoring and review document</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitoring outcome</td>
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</table>
A masterplan access statement is a means of identifying the aspirations, objectives, duties and obligations that are to apply to the project. This document will be a benchmark commitment and will be available for continual reference as the design process proceeds.

4.2 Inclusive design professionals within the design team

4.2.1 Access champion

The access champion should be someone with influence – either a member of the client board or the project steering group – who will promote the principles of inclusive design. Their primary mission will be to ensure continuity of inclusive design through each stage the development process. It is important that the champion has the political skills to influence outcomes at a strategic level and is able to communicate regularly and effectively with the access expert when necessary. The role of the access champion should include:

- Checking that design decisions are monitored and reviewed to ensure that the objectives of inclusion will be achieved and not compromised.
- Resolving any conflicts that occur.
- Being accountable for the access design rationale.

4.2.2 Access consultant (or access expert)

The access consultant should be appointed at the beginning of the development project by the developer, in consultation with the design team. The access consultant should advise project teams on the inclusive design implications of concepts and proposals and should contribute to:

- The creation of inclusive solutions.
- The preparation of the Access Strategy.
• Design reviews.
• Statements and audits.

The access consultant should also monitor compliance with agreed design standards. The role of the access consultant is to:

• Establish from the outset the appropriate technical access standards to be adopted.
• Advise the design team and other decision-makers on the principles of inclusive design.
• Regularly attend design meetings, participate in early design briefings, and identify strategic issues of concern at an early stage.
• Facilitate consultation with user groups as part of the approvals process, and set up a strategic access forum to provide ongoing advice from the growing eco-town community on access issues.
• Undertake access audits and site visits to identify key features, challenges and opportunities essential to the delivery of inclusive design.
• Draft documents necessary for design development, review and approvals.
• Monitor and contribute to the design process to ensure that inclusive design standards are adopted.
• Set up and manage a compliance reporting system to ensure that designs do not progress to the next stage unless they have been successfully assessed against the agreed inclusive design standards and criteria.

Once the project design has been completed, the access consultant’s services should be retained to assist in resolving issues that arise during the construction, fit-out and finishing stages. It might also be appropriate for the access consultant to prepare a manual for the facility manager to demonstrate how ongoing management and maintenance will not compromise access.

4.2.3 Disability equality consultant

Dependent on the nature of the project, it may also be appropriate to engage a disability equality consultant who can provide advice and information on achieving disability equality. The role complements that of the access consultant; it does not replace it. The disability equality consultant will:

• Provide knowledge of the local area and issues of interest or concern to the local community.
• Assist in advocacy and engagement issues by setting up consultation events between developers, access groups and organisations of disabled people.

Ease of access to information, the attitude of participants and appropriate management systems are all important parts of inclusive design.

4.3 Inclusive Design Strategy

At pre stage A in the RIBA ‘Plan of Work’, when the eco-town’s business case is prepared, the strategic brief should establish inclusive design as a key objective of the project. The Inclusive Design Strategy goes wider than the Access Strategy by including consideration of the long-term management and ongoing maintenance of the buildings or open areas within the eco-town to ensure inclusion for all. It will:

• Set out the strategic vision of inclusive design.
• Explain what inclusive design means for the eco-town project.
• Emphasise the key objective of achieving an inclusive environment.
• Set the objectives within the context of other project strategies, such as sustainability and transport.
• Explain how access professionals will operate and work with the design team.
Set out how community groups, including access forums and user groups, will be established.

Plan and timetable critical consultation phases, including pre-application.

Acknowledge and allocate the budget and staff resources needed to meet inclusive design principles.

Set out a timetable for preparing design reviews, access statements and other key stage documents.

Box 4 Example: the Olympic Delivery Authority’s Inclusive Design Strategy

The Olympic Delivery Authority’s (ODA’s) Inclusive Design Strategy sets out the ODA’s understanding of inclusive design, its objectives in meeting inclusive design principles, and how it intends to deliver inclusive access. It outlines relevant corporate commitments and the legal framework, and it signposts the reader to a separate document which sets out specific inclusive design standards to be adopted by all design teams working on the Olympic venues.

The strategy also explains how the ODA will engage with organisations of disabled people by setting up an Access and Inclusion Forum, a Built Environment Access Panel, and a Transport Access Panel, and by holding Technical Forum events for key stakeholders. It also explains how it will monitor the implementation of its adopted inclusive access standards, its compliance monitoring procedures and reporting processes, and the staff resources available to undertake the task.


4.4 Feasibility studies

A feasibility study is usually conducted at RIBA ‘Plan of Work’ stages A-B, and should refer to the Inclusive Design Strategy. Any assessment in the feasibility study regarding access to and from the site and information regarding the site itself, such as gradients, distances, external features and uses of the buildings on the site, should be assessed in relation to the provisions made in the masterplan.

The feasibility report should aim to:

- Ensure that the vision of an accessible and inclusive project can be achieved.
- Ensure that the highest technical access standards are adopted and that legislation and regulatory requirements are met.
- Highlight any areas of contention and suggest solutions.
- Provide the designers with a clear direction through to design development.
- Ensure that the most practical and effective form of inclusive design is achieved.
- Ensure that future maintenance and management take account of inclusion.

4.5 Preparation of masterplans and development briefs

4.5.1 Masterplans

It is important that inclusive design issues are identified at the early masterplan stage, well in advance of any outline planning submission. Although it seems early to be considering how accessible the site is, key decisions at this stage can affect how accessible the buildings will be.
A strategic inclusive design assessment of the proposed eco-town location should be undertaken to assess its suitability from the perspective of achieving an inclusive built environment and public realm that provides unimpeded access for participation in all the activities it hosts.

Issues such as topography can significantly influence ease of movement throughout the eco-town, and, depending on how key elements are orientated, can either hinder or enhance accessibility. For example, the location of buildings, their orientation and relationship to their surroundings, including the position and clarity of the entrance, can critically influence how accessible the proposal is.

Careful consideration must be given to circulation between the various zones of the eco-town, the relationship to existing and proposed public transport provision both within the town and connecting to the wider network, and private car access and parking provision for those who need it. The positioning of roads, vehicular access points, public transport routes, safe cycle routes, drop-off facilities and car parking provision can all impact on the usability of the scheme for disabled and older people and families with children.

The street plan and the location of key features, such as GP surgeries, dispensing chemists, general stores and amenity spaces, are fundamental elements in an eco-town that will facilitate independent as well as sustainable living. Thus early agreement with strategic partners should be obtained to ensure that provision of such an infrastructure will be delivered in accessible locations.

Box 5 Stratford City Masterplan

For Stratford City the original Masterplan divided the site into seven zones, each of which would have its own Zonal Masterplan Access Statement. To ensure consistency, the initial Masterplan established a set of inclusive design principles. These were attached to each of the seven Zonal Masterplans at outline planning stage.

It was also agreed at this early stage to set up the Stratford City Consultative Access Group (SCCAG) to be led by an independent chair. Key issues discussed at this early stage by SCCAG included an accessible and integrated transport strategy; pedestrian routes across the site, including gradients, steps and lifts; and accessible housing design.

Key access standards

The Stratford City Masterplan set out key access standards as listed below, and these were applied to the feasibility study (this list would now typically include reference to minimising disruption through preventative maintenance measures):

- Provision and distribution of ‘Blue Badge’ parking bays for public visitors.
- Provision and distribution of disabled parking bays for residents.
- Taxi drop-off and pick-up.
- Shopmobility.
- Public transport.
- Orientation and wayfinding.
- Pedestrian networks – primary access routes.
- Public realm features.
- Buildings.
- Residential.
- Sources of advice.

The masterplan should:

- Illustrate how commitments made in the Access Strategy are being implemented.
- Set the technical access standards to be applied (including for signage, telecoms and IT terminals).
- Describe how the layout of buildings, pathways and roads maximises access.
- Set out a strategy for street furniture to ensure that it does not become a barrier.
- Describe how the topography of the site has been used to best effect to ensure access.
- Outline how engagement with community groups, including an access group, will be managed.
- Outline reporting and monitoring mechanisms to ensure technical compliance.
- Set out how critical advice will be fed back to ensure that access standards are met.

Box 6  Manchester City Council's inclusive design standards

Design for Access 2 is Manchester City Council's best practice guidance for inclusive design standards. It provides a practical approach to inclusive design to a wide variety of features, from footpaths, crossings, ramps and handrails, to toilets and baby-changing facilities. It also gives references to more detailed technical guidance – see http://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/designforaccess2.pdf

The implications of the above should be documented within an inclusive design access statement, which would normally be submitted with the masterplan at outline planning application stage.

An academic study looking at the spatial needs of older people living with dementia produced a checklist of requirements (reproduced in Annex 2 of this Worksheet) for inclusion when considering a masterplan. These recommendations will also benefit other groups of people in society who live with a cognitive impairment, as well as families with young children – see http://www.idgo.ac.uk/about_idgo/docs/Neighbourhoods.pdf.

4.5.2  Development briefs

Specific clauses in the development brief, prepared by the planning authority, should ask developers how they intend to incorporate inclusive design into the scheme design and project delivery.

The development brief should:

- Be explicit that excellence in the design and delivery of an accessible environment will be required.
- Require the building of a team that can demonstrate a commitment to inclusive design to meet the needs of the local community.
- Require the preparation of an Access Strategy which sets out a clear process of how inclusive design will be achieved.
- Require the developer to commission an access consultant to act as an independent advisor to ensure that access issues are properly considered and resolved to an appropriate level of detail at each stage of the planning, design, construction and operation of the development.
- Set out the need for developers to comply with national, regional and local guidance and technical standards on accessibility.
- Make a commitment to engage and consult with local access groups, organisations of disabled people and other community groups.
- Make it clear that fittings and controls also need to be accessible – including common features like door entry systems and taps on wash basins.
5 consultation

Eco-town developers will need to identify community groups in the local area, as recommended in the Eco-towns Community Worksheet, and should make contact with these groups where possible. Consultation will need to occur with proxies in advance of new residents forming a new community. This could be supported by Planning Aid (see http://www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk/), through the Enquiry by Design process (see http://www.princes-foundation.org/files/ebd.pdf), through the Planning Delivery Grant process, and through other agencies such as CABE (which offers Building for Life support and training).

Developers should commit to holding regular public meetings and to engaging with the community as the eco-town design proceeds. In the absence of an existing local community, the eco-town developer and design team will need to consult with community support and representative organisations at a strategic level. This may be in the form of an access forum or by some other consultation model considered to be effective.

An agenda of issues for discussion should be drawn up to provide a framework for consultation. This will typically include:

- Where we live, our homes and our expectations.
- Where we learn and work.
- Where we socialise and engage in recreation.
- How we travel.
- Access to health at home and in the community.
- Access to information and support.

Addressing these issues, across the anticipated spectrum of eco-town residents, visitors and workers, and in the context of a specific location, will help to steer developers and designers towards an understanding of expectations and how they might be met. Developers must ensure that the diversity of the community is represented and heard when consulting on their plans.

5.1 Strategic access forums

As well as consulting with the local community, the developer should establish a strategic access forum to consider and influence the provision of inclusive access during the feasibility study and planning and design of the development. These forums have proved to be effective in ensuring that inclusive design principles are embedded into the scheme at the outset, and members’ own personal experience of inaccessible environments in helping to develop successful inclusion approaches.

The involvement of people with personal experience of disability or poor access and with knowledge of local issues can help in finding creative solutions at an early stage. The minutes of access forum meetings should provide an audit trail of how inclusive access has been considered during the design process and will help to validate key design decisions. When Wembley Stadium was designed, representatives of disabled football supporters’ organisations from all over the country were invited to participate in a forum and attended regular meetings at an accessible venue in the Wembley area.

Developers should, at their sole expense, establish the access forum at RIBA ‘Plan of Work’ stage C or before. The project’s access consultant and/or disability equality consultant will be able to set up the group, with the help of local access groups and/or local organisations of disabled people where they exist. The professional should have good networks and experience of setting up such groups.
As well as local disabled people with an interest in the area, the developer should invite onto the group the local authority access officer, the design team’s access consultant, the developer’s own access champion, and a representative of the Community Development Trust (where applicable). Other regional or national organisations of disabled people or other community groups may be invited, if appropriate, and if they will be of specific help to the project.

Once the membership has been established, consideration needs to be given to the following:

- Protocols for involvement of members in the group and the frequency of meetings.
- Support for members in reading plans and understanding the planning system as it applies to inclusive design.
- Provision of information, plans, minutes and agendas etc. in accessible formats where needed.
- Willingness and ability to comment on the access provisions made in the development.
- Commitment to the project’s success.

**Box 7 Strategic access forums**

Strategic access forums have mostly been set up as a result of negotiations with local planning authorities and developers at the outline planning stage, and have been a requirement of a planning condition or section 106 agreement. Both the Lend Lease/Westfield Stratford City development and the Quintain Development in Wembley had access forums set up as a result of section 106 agreements.
- Provision of an accessible venue.
- Re-imbursement of expenses/provision of accessible transport to and from meetings.
- The continuation of the group into the post-occupancy period.

The cost of establishing and running a group needs to be considered by the developer when drawing up project budgets, including the cost of professional support and engagement.

Terms of reference should be established and agreed by the group at the first meeting so that everyone participating has a clear understanding of what they are expected to contribute and achieve and the protocols for discussion, resolution of differences, and agreements on confidentiality.

The strategic access forum should be chaired by an independent individual of acknowledged calibre with experience in the field of disabled access and inclusion. A written outline of the matters to be considered should be presented at all meetings, together with copies of any supporting documents where relevant and practicable. This information may be required in alternative formats to suit the specific requirements of group members.9

### 5.2 Access groups

The scale of an eco-town development is such that it will be developed in several phases over several years, and each phase will probably have distinctive priorities and separate time-lines. While individual access groups might be considered in relation to each of these zones, such arrangements will need to be organised in partnership with the initial strategic access forum to ensure that there is no conflict in aims.

The National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) (see [http://www.navca.org.uk/](http://www.navca.org.uk/)) has contact details for most local community groups. Neighbouring local authorities should also have lists of local access groups and organisations of disabled people. Many areas also have groups working to promote equality for black and minority ethnic disabled people.
Further information on contacting access groups can be found at the dedicated website maintained by the Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) and the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR) – see http://www.accessgroupresources.co.uk

The Access Association (see http://www.access-association.org.uk) provides networking opportunities and support to professionals whose primary responsibility is to promote and facilitate accessible environments for all. Members are working in local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and private sector organisations.

design and access statements

A design and access statement is a written document of commitment that accompanies a planning approval submission and a building control application. This document should demonstrate how the principles of inclusive design, including the feedback from consultation, have been integrated into the proposed development and how inclusion can be maintained and managed. In its advice on how to write, read and then use design and access statements, CABE (see http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/design-and-access-statements for further details) recommends that the statement should:

- Be concise.
- Be specific to the scheme.
- Be a continuation of the Access Strategy written when the scheme started.
- Explain how the design has evolved and how the access statement will continue to document developments throughout the subsequent design stages.
- Explain what the scheme is trying to achieve at each stage and contain detail as appropriate – demonstrating that the proposals are accessible and inclusive.
- Use accurate and informative illustrations, maps and diagrams. Any artistic impressions should be based on up-to-date architects’ drawings.

A useful guide to producing a design and access statement has been produced by the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames as supplementary planning advice – see http://www.kingston.gov.uk/download_a_copy_of_the_council_s_design_and_access_statement_guidance.pdf. Guidance on drafting a design and access statement can also be found on the Greater London Authority (GLA) website at http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/planning_decisions/docs/access-guidance.pdf

monitoring and evaluation

A continual monitoring and review process should be established from the outset to ensure that access considerations have been embedded into the project and that inclusive design is effectively delivered. It is the responsibility of the developer and the project team as a whole to achieve inclusive design.

To achieve this, the following actions should be taken:

- All design team members should be aware of and trained in inclusive design, and should understand the principles and the access standards involved.
- Access should be an agenda item at each design and project team meeting, with the access consultant present as a team member.
- Any departures from adopted design guides or national standards, along with the rationale behind any alternative solution adopted, should be reported to the access consultant. Such reports should be accompanied by the authority or evidence that supports such an approach.
Any departures should be recorded in the access statement – there should be a commitment that the design will not progress to the next stage until the departure has been resolved in such a way as to ensure that inclusive access can be provided. For an example, see the compliance recording system set up by the Olympic Delivery Authority within the ODA Inclusive Design Strategy.

The incorporation of inclusive design into a project should be monitored and evaluated throughout the design process to ensure that the highest standards of access and inclusion are achieved in the completed project.

When project planning, it is advisable to have a reserve in the budget for post-completion rectification of issues that slipped through the design and construction net and are found to be a barrier to access.

Conclusion

Inclusive design is a ‘cross-cutting’ consideration which helps to ensure that we do not unintentionally create barriers or obstacles which prevent people from going about their normal daily lives and being part of their communities. This consideration is as vital at a strategic level as at any other, and applies equally to all key decision-makers in the design and construction of eco-towns.

One of the challenges facing developers of eco-towns is to recognise these fundamental changes and meet the needs and expectations of an increasingly diverse society by thinking afresh about how our towns are designed. This Worksheet is intended to help practitioners to meet these goals and create a new settlement where everybody is included.
annex 1

sources of further information

Regulations

Compliance with the statutory regulations such as Part M of the Building Regulations (Approved Part M of the Building Regulations, ODPM, 2004) does not always demonstrate that all inclusive design issues have been addressed and that the social model of disability has been adopted.

Best practice

There is much guidance on inclusive design at national, regional and local level, as well as technical access standards such as British Standard 8300 (*Design of Buildings and their Approaches to Meet the Needs of Disabled People: Code of Practice*). However, technical specifications and regulations are constantly changing to ensure better accessibility, so going beyond minimum regulatory standards is often necessary to ensure best practice for longer-term projects such as eco-towns.

Guidance

PPS 1: *Delivering Sustainable Development* expresses the requirement for high-quality inclusive design, and recognises the importance of personal well-being in creating sustainable communities. In particular, the location of housing in relation to essential services such as health care, primary schools and retail services is a key factor in enabling residents to maintain sustainable patterns of living throughout their life course.

PPS 3: *Housing* promotes inclusive, mixed communities and the development of sustainable housing which provides access to amenities for older people and those with disabilities.

PPS6: *Planning for Town Centres* supports the development of accessible town centres which provide genuine choice to meet the needs of the entire community.

PPG13: *Transport* seeks to ensure safe and easy access for all to housing, shops and services by a choice of modes, including public transport, walking and cycling, in order to promote social inclusion.

The appropriate regional plan, supported by the local district council supplementary planning guidance, if available, should provide useful guidance.

Inclusive design video

RIBA has produced a free-to-view film called *Inclusive Design: Creating a User’s World* – see [http://www.youtube.com/user/RIBAVIDEO](http://www.youtube.com/user/RIBAVIDEO)
Further reading

http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningaccess

http://www.dotheduty.org/files/Planningbuildingandstreets.doc


http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/design-and-access-statements


http://www.englishpartnerships.co.uk/inclusivedesign.htm

http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/03/07164427/0

http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/the-principles-of-inclusive-design

http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/sds/spg-children-recreation.jsp

http://www.idgo.ac.uk/about_idgo/docs/Neighbourhoods.pdf
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neighbourhoods for life – design checklist

The Neighbourhoods for Life publication, produced by the Oxford Centre for Sustainable Development and the Housing Corporation in 2004 (see http://www.idgo.ac.uk/about_idgo/docs/Neighbourhoods.pdf), sets out a checklist of design recommendations for designing dementia-friendly outdoor environments. These recommendations would also benefit other groups who live with a cognitive difficulty, as well as families with young children.

Scale of development
- Changes should be incremental and small scale.
- Existing places and buildings should be retained or regenerated.
- Housing schemes should be relatively compact.

Development mix
- Provide a variety of adaptable dwelling types.
- Locate housing no further than 500 metres from local primary services and facilities, including a general food store, post office, bank, GP surgery/health centre and public transport stops.
- Locate housing no further than 800 metres from local secondary services and facilities, including open space, a library, places of worship, and community and leisure facilities.

Layout
- Use an irregular grid layout.
- Have a hierarchy of street types, such as main streets, side streets, lanes, and passageways.
- Street blocks should be small.
- Streets should be connected with bends greater than 90 degrees.
- Streets should be fairly short, narrow and gently winding.
- Use forked, staggered or T-junctions.
- Provide quiet alternatives to busy streets, such as pedestrianised areas.

Open space
- Local open spaces should be small and informal, with varied activities and features.
- There should be a variety of open spaces, such as ‘village greens’, allotments and parks.
- Open spaces should have access to toilets, seating, shelter, lighting and refreshments.
- Open spaces should be free from motorised traffic.

Building form and style
- The local distinctiveness of the area should be maintained.
- Streets, places, buildings and architectural features should be in a variety of local styles, colours and materials that are familiar to or easily understood by older people.
- The function of places and buildings should be obvious.
- Entrances to places and buildings should be obvious and clearly visible.
- Use low walls, fences or hedges, or open fencing to separate private and public space.
- Spaces and buildings should be designed and oriented to avoid creating areas of dark shadow or bright glare.

Landmarks
- Existing historic and civic buildings should be retained.
- Distinctive structures should be retained or included.
- Places of activity should be retained or included.
Distinctive street furniture or aesthetic features should be positioned at decision points, such as road crossings and junctions.

**Signs**
- Signs should give simple, essential and clear information.
- Signs should have non-glare lighting and non-reflective coverings.
- Lettering and symbols should be large (5-7.5 centimetres high), realistic and in clear colour contrast to the background (preferably dark lettering on a light background).
- Directional signs should preferably be on posts and single pointers.
- Locational signs for primary services and facilities should be positioned perpendicular to the wall.

**Street furniture**
- Street furniture should be in designs familiar to or easily understood by older people.
- Public seating should be sturdy and in materials that do not conduct heat or cold.
- Public seating should have arm and back rests.
- Public seating should be provided every 100 metres.
- Public shelters should be enclosed and have seating.
- Telephone boxes should be enclosed with a level threshold.

**Pedestrian footways and crossings**
- Level changes should be avoided wherever possible.
- Gentle slopes, with a maximum gradient of 1:20, and steps should be used where level changes are unavoidable.
- Level changes should be clearly marked and well lit with guards, handrails and plain, non-slip, non-glare surfaces.
- Trees, on-road parking and bicycle lanes can be used to separate pedestrians from heavy traffic.
- Bicycle lanes should be separated from footways and clearly marked.
- Pedestrian crossings and public toilets should be at ground level.
- Pedestrian crossings should have signals with audible cues at a pitch and timing suitable for frail older people.
- Street lighting should be adequate for people with visual impairments.
- Footways should be wide with flat, smooth, non-slip and well maintained paving.
- Paving should be plain and non-reflective in clear colour contrast and textural contrast to walls, bicycle lanes and traffic calming measures.
- Grates and drains should be flush with the paving, with openings smaller than walking stick size.