

Report of the Director of City Strategy

CONSULTATION DRAFT VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT FOR SKELTON

Summary

1. This report presents the Skelton consultation draft Village Design Statement. It sums up the process so far in producing the document and concludes that a consultation process should be undertaken, with a view to adopting the design statement as an Interim Planning Statement to the draft Local Plan (as amended). The document would thus become a material planning consideration when considering planning applications for development in Skelton.

Background

2. In 1996 the Countryside Commission (now Natural England) launched the 'Design in the Countryside' initiative, and produced advisory packs to help villages understand the concept, process and method of producing a Village Design Statement (VDS).
3. Village Design Statements are prepared by local communities. They offer a framework for engaging local people in constructive debate about defining the special character of their village, as a basis for ensuring that new development in their area fits its surroundings and is in keeping with that character. The VDS can help everyone involved in a development to understand local views and perceptions at the outset of the design process. This helps new buildings to be designed in a way that is more likely to gain local support, rather than generate opposition. Village Design Statements provide a tool to help manage long-term change, not prevent it.
4. PPS7: 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas' gives guidance on the design and character of rural settlements (paragraph 13) and endorses the use of Village Design Statements; *'Local planning authorities should prepare policies and guidance that encourage good quality design throughout their rural areas, in accordance with Annex C to PPS1, and utilising tools such as Landscape Character Assessments and Village or Town Design Statements, and the design elements of Village or Parish Plans prepared by local communities.'*
5. PPS3: 'Housing' (paragraph 18) states; *'To facilitate efficient delivery of high quality development, Local Planning Authorities should draw on relevant guidance and standards and promote the use of appropriate tools and*

techniques, such as Design Coding, alongside urban design guidelines, detailed masterplans, village design statements, site briefs and community participation techniques'.

6. A VDS contains a descriptive analysis of the relationship between landscape, settlement patterns and buildings. From the survey analysis, the VDS identifies principles to be applied to new developments such as the design of buildings and the spaces between them. The document should benefit local people, developers, new occupants and planners.
7. If approved by the local planning authority as an Interim Planning Statement, the VDS becomes a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications. The weight which will be attached to different elements of the guide will depend on how closely they reflect national or regional guidance; the technical work that supports it and the robustness of the planning argument behind it, in addition to the level of consultation undertaken. As such the material weight to be attached to the document will need to be assessed in relation to the individual circumstances of each application site and other material planning considerations.
8. The draft Skelton Village Design Statement is attached as Annex 1 to this committee report, with a draft cover at Annex 2. The finalised version of the VDS will include a full range of photographs, maps and illustrations, as in other VDS's that have been completed. The introduction to the VDS explains that it includes some aspirations that are outside current planning regulations. However, this is the villagers' own document and the inclusion of non-planning issues can be appropriate because the information is relevant to all, not just the local planning authority.
9. Skelton village first started work upon the village design statement in Autumn 2006. Following two public meetings, a steering group was formed from the village to take the VDS forward. During 2007 and early 2008 the group sought the views of local people through house to house questionnaires, a village walkabout, a two-day exhibition in the Village Hall and placing a draft document upon the web sites of the Parish Council and the Village Trust. This was to ensure that the VDS was representative of the views of the local people of Skelton and gave everyone the opportunity to get involved in the process. Since these events several drafts of the VDS have been produced and council officers have commented on the contents of the drafts, part of the usual process.

Consultation

10. The VDS has now reached the stage where it is appropriate to undertake a wider public consultation exercise, for which this report seeks approval to proceed. It is therefore proposed that the draft documents be sent to organisations that have a particular interest in this parish, including statutory undertakers and Council service providers; a full list of consultees is provided in Annex 3. Local people should also be afforded a final opportunity to comment on the drafts.

11. The consultation exercise will include the following elements:
 - throughout the consultation period copies of the draft VDS will be placed at the central reference library and appropriate local venues;
 - copies of the document will be made available at the Council reception at 9 St Leonard's Place;
 - appropriate advertising - press release/ posters; and
 - copies of the VDS's will be made available on the Council's website (if logistically possible depending upon software compatibility and file size).
12. A period of six weeks is suggested for representations to be submitted. The local working group and officers will consider the comments, and a report would then be brought back to planning committee outlining the subsequent amendments, with the intention of the VDS being accepted as an Interim Planning Statement at that time.

Options

13. Option 1 is to approve the draft VDS for consultation, with the range and methods of consultation as outlined.
14. Option 2 is to request the Skelton VDS group to amend the draft document and/or for officers to make basic changes to the range and methods of consultation.
15. Option 3 is to not approve the draft VDS for consultation.

Analysis

16. Option 1 is preferred, unless there are any obvious omissions or inaccuracies in the draft VDS, or the consultation process. Options 2 and 3 could delay or halt the VDS process, at a crucial stage when the village VDS group has worked well to produce an interesting, well-researched and effective draft document.

Corporate Priorities

17. The VDS, once agreed and adopted, would assist in making decisions upon planning applications, through the Development Control process. VDS's have also been given weight by Planning Inspectors in individual planning appeal cases. The VDS is valuable and carries weight as a material consideration because of the degree of local community involvement in producing it.

Implications

Financial

18. It would be necessary for the Council to meet the cost of part of the print run of the final version of the VDS, if approved, so that colour copies are available for officers and the public. The cost of £250 has similarly been agreed for the other VDS's in the City of York.

19. Copying costs, postage and packing costs associated with the consultation process would need to be met through the planning budget.

Human Resources (HR)

20. No known implications.

Equalities

21. Different formats of the consultation draft will be made available on request. Documents will be lodged in accessible locations.

Legal

22. No implications at this stage.

Crime and Disorder

23. No known implications.

Information Technology (IT)

24. No implications.

Property

25. No implications

Risk Management

26. There should be no additional risks.

Recommendations

27. Members are asked to agree Option 1, which is to:-
- (i) approve the draft Village Design Statement for Skelton, as a basis for the next stage of consultations
 - (ii) agree the range and methods of consultation proposed.

Reasons:

- the draft VDS follows in the footsteps of other VDS's that have been agreed; observing the general guidance and principles required in their production, whilst successfully defining the individual qualities of Skelton as a village and bringing forward appropriate Design Guidelines.
- the consultation process as suggested in this Report follows the procedure established for other Village Design Statements, at this stage of their production.

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Report Approved: ✓ Date: 11 June 2008

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers

PPS3 (Housing, November 2006)

PPS7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, August 2004)

Annexes

Annex 1: Skelton Draft Village Design Statement
Annex 2: Draft Cover for VDS
Annex 3: List of suggested consultees

13 June 2008
planning/240608 Consultation Draft
Village Design Statement for Skelton