

Skelton Village Design Statement

Table of Contents

Our Village	1
Purpose of the Statement	1
Introduction	1
The background	
How has it been produced?	
Who will use it?	
What does it contain?	
Location and History	1
The Natural Environment	2
The Village Setting	3
Skelton's Green and Open Spaces	3
The Green Belt	4
The Shaping of the Settlement	4
The Form of the Settlement	5
Vernacular Features and Styles	6
Beyond the Conservation Area	7
Infrastructure and Environment	8
The elements of the streetscape	
The Road System - small streams, rising tide	
Car parking	
Noise	
Buildings and visual intrusion	
Community Facilities	10
Appendix 1 – Consultation results	11
Appendix 2 – School involvement	12
Appendix 3 – Community Engagement	13

SKELTON **VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT**

OUR VILLAGE

The rural parish of Skelton lies some four miles to the north of York City Centre and covers 977.3 hectares (3.77 square miles). In the south west sector lies Skelton village itself and nearby commercial undertakings. It is with this part of the parish – the village envelope – that this Design Statement is largely concerned, together with the relationship of the village to its setting within the parish and beyond.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STATEMENT

- **To identify those features of the village its setting, layout and architecture which define the special character of Skelton and which should be protected for future generations.**
- **To identify guidelines for any future development which will safeguard these qualities and preserve the traditions, appearance, form and cohesion of the existing settlement.**

INTRODUCTION

The Background

In 1996 the then Countryside Commission initiated Village Design Statements (VDSs). The objective was to provide a vehicle for local residents to have their say in the future development of their village. Since then several hundred villages across the country have completed a VDS. Work on the Skelton VDS started in autumn 2006.

How has it been produced?

Following two public meetings in late 2006, a steering group of nine volunteers from the village was formed, supported by representatives of the City of York Council with experience of other local VDS projects.

During 2007 the group assembled material, discussed the project with others in the village and conducted a survey of residents' opinions via house to house questionnaires. In early 2008 a first draft was written and displayed for consultation at two open days in the Village Hall, and on the websites of the Parish Council and the Village Trust.

Who will use it?.

It is for reference by and guidance to residents, architects, planners and developers; it concerns anyone considering a development – large or small – in, or in the surroundings of, Skelton village. They should not only familiarise themselves with the VDS guidelines, but demonstrate they have reflected them in their proposals.

Its aim is to promote standards of design appropriate to the village by providing practical guidelines. In this regard the individual property owner shares the same responsibilities as the large scale developer.

It is intended that this VDS be approved by City of York Council as an Interim Planning Statement pending the outcome of the Local Development Framework. As such it will then provide a material consideration in the interpretation of planning policies at local level. The Skelton VDS, however, does include some aspirational elements which are outside current planning regulations

What does it contain?

It describes the history, setting and visual characteristics of our village. In particular it identifies those features which are particularly valued by village residents. These are the features which any future development should acknowledge, protect and enhance. It also emphasises those features which may act as a constraint on development.

Whilst the VDS is intended to help conserve those qualities which make Skelton special – and we are fortunate to have such a wealth – it is not intended to prevent change or development. What is fundamental, for the sake of future generations, is that any development underpins, reflects and enhances the qualities we all value and which the statement identifies.

LOCATION AND HISTORY

During its long history Skelton has stood at the crossroads of tracks, later roads; one leading up from the river Ouse into the village and then out to the north east; the other leading north from York. In time the former has diminished in importance whilst the latter grew in significance, first to turnpike and then in the last century to a major trunk route. This road is now the busy A19 and it divides the historic, larger and mainly residential side of the village on the east from the mainly commercial development along its western edge.

The predominant natural feature is the eminence on which the old village centre stands, most likely a deposit of boulder clay, taking this section to a height some 25 metres above sea level, 10 metres more than the remainder of the village.

It is this eminence that probably explains the village's early settlement, away from the river but close enough for river transport, offering some security from surprise attack and elevated from the undrained and boggy land of the plain. There is little evidence of any Roman settlement here and the village name probably began as the Anglo-Saxon 'Shelfton' – the settlement on high ground' – becoming the present 'Skelton' under the invading Danes.

The village, along with nearby Overton, is mentioned in the Domesday Book, and appears to have grown into an established community from the thirteenth century onwards. The fine Church dates from 1247. Early documents record families of wealth living here: in mediaeval times the village had Royal connections as part of the Forest of Galtres; the fine Manor House, still with its imposing staircase and panelling was built in the 1550s and the Grange followed in 1675.

Many houses still surviving were put up in the 18th.Century and after the Enclosure Award in the early 19th.Century an unusual number of other large dwellings followed, including Fairfield Manor to the west in 1815, The Hall in 1833 and Moorlands in 1864. By 1901 the village was recorded as comprising 2473 acres with a population of 270 having varied over the previous hundred years between 203 and 367, most employed in servicing these large houses and in agriculture.

Apart from the building in the mid-1900s of a line of bungalows and houses along the present Moorlands Road, little changed from then until the second half of the last century. In 1951 the population was still only about 481 but then expanded rapidly. First came the local authority Brecksfield estate of about 150 dwellings built along a new circular road which doubled the size of the village. This was followed by several smaller developments, such as The Meadows, The Vale and The Dell, and finally by the building on the old Grange Estate of some 240 houses around the new Fairfields Drive and Burtree Avenue, bringing the present day population to in excess of 1600.

Across the A19, on its western edge, there is a scattering of dwellings, but the predominant features are the commercial undertakings

established during the second part of the last century.

- **The knowledge and sense of the history within the village creates a sense of permanence and continuity, a wish to maintain and cherish age old features, and a respect for Skelton's traditional buildings and its timeless natural setting.**

DESIGN GUIDELINE 1

Plans for new development need to show awareness of, and not dwarf or submerge, the historical past of the village

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

For the best part of 1000 years the village has been dominated by agriculture and farming. Cultivation around the settlement was mentioned in the Domesday Book and even today the village is surrounded on all sides by well farmed agricultural land capable of sustaining most crops. To the north there remains evidence of the old mediaeval and early enclosure field patterns and there is a relatively high retention of ancient hedgerows.

The village itself is adequately drained by three well maintained streams. Currently there seems little risk of substantial flooding in the lower parts of the village itself but the situation is not without concern. Within the settlement are several ponds, two in private grounds to the north west and north east of the Church, and on either side of the A19, one the Skelton Pond, off Burtree Avenue and the other in the grounds of the food factory, indicating a high water table. Then, just outside the immediate village periphery there is substantial flooding risk to the surrounding fields on three sides as the attached Department of the Environment map shows

- **At a time of increasing general concern at flooding risk it is important to ensure such risk within the existing village is not increased by ill-planned large scale development.**

The close proximity on all sides of the surrounding fields creates the valuable ecosystem the village enjoys. The hedgerows sustain a wide variety of natural life and the small copses in the North Field and at Moorlands provide a haven for transient roe deer, as does the much larger plantation in the neighbouring Overton Wood. The richness of the ever-present flora and fauna was documented in two surveys, one in 1956 and later in the

Stapleton/Thomson book in 1971. Within and in the immediate village surrounds they identified:-

- In the region of 100 species of birds
- 328 species of trees and plants
- 8 different ferns
- 31 different types of moss
- 9 fungi
- amphibians, including frogs, toads, the Warty or Crested Newt and the Smooth Newt
- 21 species of mammals including the Whiskered Bat and the Long Eared Bat

The bats and the Crested Newts in the village are protected species.

THE VILLAGE SETTING

The approach to the village settlement from the west has been likened to a township rising from the surrounding fields like an island from a green sea. Writing in 1971 the Rev. H .E. C. Stapleton wrote:- ‘The best way to appreciate the choice of Skelton as a site for a settlement is to stand and look at the present village from Stripe Lane . From there it looks rather like a fishing village. On the ‘quayside’ stands the ‘harbour inn’, the Blacksmith’s Arms, and behind, galleried on the gentle rise of the hill, are the houses crowned by the church belfry and the trees of the green as a backcloth.’

By contrast, approaching from the north the fields and copses lead to the settlement across open land, along the old Northfield (sometime called Foster’s) Lane, past scattered houses and directly into the heart of the conservation area at The Green. From the east, the well-treed Moorlands Road leads past farm buildings and cottages to the line of houses and bungalows, which still look out to the pure countryside across the road, and thence to The Green. From the south, fields come right up to the southern housing, with the old partially wooded right of way across the fields from Rawcliffe running parallel to the A19 emerging directly into Brecksfield.

On three sides and to the west of the A19 the village looks out to the agriculture and countryside it has always known. Long vistas, sometimes glimpsed between mature trees, unfold on all sides from the relative high ground and stretch for many miles across fields and copses, including to the south to the stirring sight of York Minster, a fitting reminder of the architectural connection between the village church and its incomparable contemporaneous senior.

However, of all these it is the trees that most unify the rural village with the surrounding countryside and merit most attention. In several parts, but particularly on The Green and in and around the grounds of Skelton Hall, the village is graced by many substantial, mainly deciduous mature trees. No species predominates but together they form an attractive canopy enhancing the village, defining its character and standing as an integral part of the Conservation Area.

Further from the centre, along Moorlands Road, are lines of fine old oak trees and whilst winter gales take their toll of some branches the landowning family has continued this age old feature by planting many saplings. Elsewhere the Parish Council and Village Trust have continued the tradition by establishing young trees in the green spaces of the village

SKELTON’S GREEN AND OPEN SPACES

Throughout the village immensely valuable open spaces have been left undisturbed or been created for the benefit of residents. They are cared for by the Parish Council and local volunteer groups and include The Green, Crooking Green, Orchard Field, The Pasture, Skelton Pond, the two open spaces at Sycamore Close and the open areas in Brecksfield. The football field and the adjoining school playing fields are themselves separated by long private gardens from the Moorlands Road properties to the north, providing a valuable margin of separation.

The extent and importance of the open spaces becomes apparent on walking from the northern end of the old Northfield Lane (Fosters Lane) through The Green, across the road, down the new pasture, past the fine line of oak trees by the bungalows in Fairfields Drive/Brecksfield, then onto either the Brecksfield right of way or open space. The village will have been walked from north to south, through its centre, almost entirely on tracks or across open spaces, a wonderful indication of how well the rural atmosphere has been preserved and enhanced.

- **All the public open spaces sustain and enhance the pervading village atmosphere, provide collective and individual recreational opportunities and open aspects amidst the built environment. They are a crucial element in the success of the village as a community.**

DESIGN GUIDELINE 2

The immediate proximity of the surrounding fields, the rich and varied flora, the abundant natural bird and mammal life and these graceful, mature trees together unite with the many open green spaces to create in many residential parts of Skelton a rural atmosphere not otherwise found in an increasingly urbanised Greater York area. These characteristics should never be compromised by future development but supported and enhanced by it.

DESIGN GUIDELINE 3

Future development should not increase flooding risk within the village and should incorporate adequate drainage measures for each development.

THE GREEN BELT

As the plan shows the currently recognised Green Belt line is drawn tightly round all sides of the eastern village, separating the settlement from the pure countryside which surrounds it. Successive objectors and developers have urged it should be relaxed to allow substantial further village development but the line has been maintained. The control thus created has allowed a village unlike others in and around the City to maintain its essential features and characteristics. Relevant factors which support this control include:

- **To the North is the observed evidence of Mediaeval and early Enclosure field pattern which is likely to be prejudiced by development**
- **To the West is the A19**
- **To the South is the narrow stretch of green fields between the village and York outer ring road which provide a buffer against absorption into the North York suburbs**
- **To the east are good agricultural land and efficient farms.**

The Green Belt has been formally considered in the City of York Development Control Local Plan. The substantial Draft Local Plan incorporating the 4th. set of changes published 2005 records the Inspector's recommendations that there be no change to the Skelton Green

Belt boundary; that land to the north west should be included in the Green Belt; but that commercial premises on the west side of the A19 occupied by a chilled food factory should be excluded from the Green Belt as an Existing Employment Area.

DESIGN GUIDELINE 4

The Inspector's recommendations (which are reinforced by overwhelming support in the responses to the public consultation for this Design Statement) for retaining the present line of the draft Green Belt around Skelton should be respected and followed.

THE SHAPING OF THE SETTLEMENT

The village Church, formerly All Saints but now known as St. Giles, is a Grade 1 listed building and to the immediate south was The Green and it was around them that the first domestic and farm buildings grew – an unusual feature in the Vale of York where most settlements are street villages. The typical mediaeval pattern of 'toft and croft' agriculture can still be traced in the long, narrow plot boundaries extending back from the present houses. Over the years other houses were built off The Green, so that in the centuries to 1950 the village radiated progressively further from this historic core along the present St. Giles and Moorlands Roads and The Village. Indeed the mansions at Moorlands and Fairfield Manor are so far from the centre of the village as to be on the boundaries of the Parish. Almost always, however, alongside the large houses were the smaller tenements for the servants and agricultural workers who serviced them.

When the Brecksfield Estate was built in the early 1950s it was also away from The Green. Other smaller private estates followed as did the 1980s Grange Park development built alongside Brecksfield. This 1980s addition to the village was significant in several ways:

- With the Brecksfield development it increased the village population from 481 in 1951 to the present figure of about 1600
- It gave direct access to the A19 from both Fairfield and Brecksfield along Fairfield Drive.
- Its mixed pattern of affordable and larger properties preserved the historic pattern of building large detached houses in the immediate proximity of much smaller properties.

- The two estates, together with the new school between them moved the village centre (measured by footfall) away from the historic core to where they now meet at the village shop.
- **Maintaining a traditional pattern of development where large houses are found cheek by jowl with much smaller properties is an uncommon but welcome feature of the village. A man or woman might today be born in a housing association property in Skelton, marry to a traditional cottage or affordable new house, move to a much larger modern or older family home and retire to a pleasant bungalow, never moving more than a short distance from his birthplace, reflecting a truly astonishing and socially desirable balanced pattern of development which any future plans should preserve.**

DESIGN GUIDELINE 5

Future development should maintain the existing social pattern of mixed housing in mutual proximity wherever possible.

Across the A19, the old Toll Bar Cottage was built when the then road north was turnpiked, but other than Fairfield Manor the few houses here are relatively modern and dominated by commercial activity. Fairfield Manor itself is now a large, thriving hotel; other businesses include a prepared food factory, an ambulance control centre, a small golf course and a garden centre. This sector is separated from the residential village by the A19's constant traffic which forms not just a physical and visual barrier between the two parts but a constraint on future development and integration also.

- **The A19 brings benefits (ease of access) and penalties (noise, traffic hazards, pollution) but it also defines the western boundary of the housing settlement. Any significant future housing development west of the A19 would be separated from the existing village and its amenities by the A19 hazards and would merely increase those obstacles that hinder community integration.**
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DESIGN GUIDELINE 6

The part of the village to the west of the A19 is more suited to continuing light commercial development than to substantial new residential housing

THE FORM OF THE SETTLEMENT

THE CONSERVATION AREA

Although the area of the Green may no longer be the village geographical centre it remains the village core and it was in recognition of the desirable balance between the natural and developed environment there that the old residential village was one of the first places in North Yorkshire to be designated a Conservation Area in 1973. The area is delineated on the plan.

The authors acknowledge the framework and phraseology of the following section are an amplified version of the inspired description of the Conservation Area in the original designation document:

“A combination of interesting topography and street pattern, varied building forms and a well-treed setting give Skelton its attractive, distinctly rural, restful character. This is emphasised by its location just off the main A19 road, from which the virtues of the village are unsuspected.”

The village focal point is **The Green**: its undulating grassed ground and mature trees create almost a miniature landscape in its own right.

The Green provides a setting for **The Church of St. Giles** (formerly known as All Saints) a Grade 1 listed building, dating from c.1240, with restorations of 1810-18 by Henry Graham and 1863 by Ewan Christian. It was probably built by the masons of the south transept of York Minster. Though small it is a foremost example of early 13c. work in this region. The materials used are magnesium limestone and Westmorland slate.

An attractive terrace of 18th. and 19th.Century cottages amongst which is **the listed Grade 2 Pyramid House (1760 – 1780), formerly The Old School House**, whose roof is an arresting feature.

In contrast opposite are individual properties, including the **19C Cottage**, which are set in their own, walled grounds. This variety epitomises Skelton, a village of contrast, yet unified by the trees, boundary walls and the use of natural

building materials to create a natural “flow” from one part of the village to another.

Skelton Manor (grade 2* listing) has mid-16c origins, with major alterations from the early-mid 18c and late 19c. Vestigial timber framing was subsequently cased in brick and the roof is of plain tile. The interior is exceptionally well preserved and has been restored with very great care.

A shady lane leads past the Church, where **Skelton Hall** is set in extensive landscaped grounds, with the stables and outbuildings converted into a separate dwellings. These, with the conversions of the former parts of the nearby Skelton Manor, have created two small intimate communities; part of but discreetly separated from the main village. Paddock areas provide their setting on the north side with the open countryside beyond.

Eastward from the Green the road slopes quite sharply down hill to **The Old Rectory** and **Crookhill**, the road fringed by grass verges, hedges and boundary walls. Looking back the treed setting of the village, with buildings half hidden, can be appreciated.

Across The Green is the paddock and green open space which extends towards Brecksfield. It is through this open space that the winter view of York Minster from St.Giles has been preserved. In Orchard View is a further row of cottages leading to **Grange Farmhouse.**”

The designation document concluded:

“The main elements of the character and appearance of the area are:

- (1) The way that topography, mature trees, the street pattern and building forms create a varied, yet cohesive, village character.**
- (2) The qualities of individual buildings set in their own grounds, creating a ‘rural hideaway’ atmosphere; and in contrast the groups of cottages that front onto the street elsewhere in the village.**
- (3) The way that boundary walls, hedges, grass verges and roadside trees lead naturally from one part of the village to another.”**

Other properties typical of their time which, whilst not listed, enhance the Conservation Area, include the 200 years old traditional former farm houses at Skelton Croft and Orchard House (later a coaching inn); the lines

of cottages in Orchard Close, The Village and Chestnut Row; the former parts of The Manor at The Coach House, the staff buildings at The Lodge and the barn at Manor Court; and Cobblestones, the parallel buildings formerly stables and coach house of The Hall, where the clock tower and old hay lofts are immediately recognisable. The Blacksmith’s Arms, with its old mounting block, remains the well known travellers’ feature it has been for approaching three hundred years.

VERNACULAR FEATURES AND STYLES

The vernacular features of older village buildings are more than architectural detail: they speak volumes as to the materials available when they were built, as to the buildings themselves and about the village then around them.

The Church, built to God’s glory, had to be in stone, the most valuable, longest lasting and most readily carved material available.

The dimensions of The Manor suggest the earlier use of timber framing, readily available from the trees in the nearby Forest of Galtres, and the possibility of an earlier thatched roof.

The remains of a brick kiln north of the settlement explain the prevalence of so much matching brick and tile throughout the village after the mediaeval period.

On The Green, The Cottage elevation is that of a classic Vale of York C18th. vernacular house built from brick with a narrow stringcourse feature and the traditional relationship of door to chimney stacks. Its small paned windows reflect the limits of then current glassmaking.

The many small cottages on and around The Green, with their characteristic low profiles, roof lines and chimney stack, are similarly built in the materials close at hand, as is the fine, classic Vale of York farmhouse, Crookhill (1763) built in narrow bricks also with the traditional stringcourse feature. The slate roof of the well balanced regency Hall reminds us that at the time of its construction new railways were able to transport materials from further afield.

DESIGN GUIDELINE 7

- A) No new development or extension to an existing property which prejudices or adversely affects the identified character and appearance of the Conservation Area should be permitted and vernacular features of construction lay out and design relevant to individual buildings or**

the area around them should be respected.

- B) The scale and density of new buildings or extensions to existing buildings should reflect and not swamp that of its own and neighbouring properties**
- C) Replacement windows should be in keeping with the vernacular style of the property concerned and roof lights and dormer windows detrimental to the character of the building avoided.**
- D) Whilst the use of vernacular materials of brick, timber and clay pantiles is generally desirable, sympathetic, innovative and high quality new design, especially combined with eco-architecture, which enhances the character and appearance of the Area may emerge enabling a new vernacular style to develop and providing a sense of overall continuity.**
- E) City of York guidance in its publication 'A practical guide to living within a Conservation Area for householders' should be followed in all building works.**

BEYOND THE CONSERVATION AREA

The line of bungalows and houses along Moorlands Road retain the best features and stand as good examples of housing development in the mid 1900s, well set back from the road and with long back gardens which merge into the football field making a valuable contribution to the environment in this part of the village.

The newer village beyond has, to an encouraging extent, maintained the traditional village harmony and sense of scale. Relatively short roadways (many cul-de-sacs), varied groupings of dwellings, decent size plots, the use of traditional brick and tiles and conventional and restrained domestic architecture have combined, with the result that variety, intimacy and cohesiveness have not been sacrificed wholesale to expansion.

The village has been fortunate in that C20th. development has largely (though not exclusively) used materials traditional to the village. Brick and tile, coupled with the widespread modest domestic design, predominate in Brecksfields, The Meadows, the extensive Grange Park housing and in Pasture Close, providing visual continuity of

housing which unifies and bonds the entire settlement.

- **These characteristics should be maintained as features of any further develop**
- **The wider village's amenable characteristics also require protection from over-development at both individual dwelling and community level**

DESIGN GUIDELINE 8

A) As to the layout, scale and density of new development and extensions to existing properties:

- 1. The pleasing balance between buildings and open space, created by short or irregular roadways, reasonable plot sizes and mature boundaries of hedges, walls, trees and appropriate fencing should be maintained. In-fill development and extensions to existing properties should only be considered where it can be clearly demonstrated there will be no detriment to the character and amenity of the surroundings and that neighbouring residents' existing privacy and convenience are not adversely prejudiced.**

- 2. Any new development should observe the present pattern where dwellings of various sizes are grouped together.**

- 3. Green open spaces, being a key feature of the village, and where appropriate suitable landscaping, should be provided to complement new development.**

B) As to the materials and design of new development and extensions to existing properties:

- 1. For extensions pitched rather than flat roofs and wherever possible building materials matching or compatible with existing elevations should be encouraged.**

- 2. New houses should be eco-friendly and of well designed domestic architecture; and if of contemporary building style respectful of their setting**
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INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

1. The elements of the streetscape.

Generally, Skelton is characterised by roadways of modest width with adequate footways, many with grass verges. Together with bordering hedges, walls and houses set back behind front gardens, the effect is to soften the urban tarmac and paved surfaces.

Signage and lighting away from the A19 is – generally – relatively unobtrusive and adequate. Both have been welcomingly restrained within the limits of practicality and safety. Private security lighting is increasing and can be invasive if not positioned with care. Similarly whilst there is a general absence of overhead cabling (with the notable exception of the eastern section of The Village and Moorlands), poorly positioned satellite dishes and other receivers can create eyesores.

In the Conservation Area footways have generally maintained a reasonable balance between modern needs (pushchairs, wheelchairs) and urban standards (tarmac, generous width) as has street lighting. This will be a continuing dilemma but in the quiet lanes urbanisation can be avoided. Other street furniture is kept to an unobtrusive minimum. The George V1 post box in the wall of the old post office, and the mounting block outside the Blacksmiths Arms are valuable reminders of our links to the past.

DESIGN GUIDELINE 9

- A) Grass verges should be protected as a valuable village feature**
- B) Changes to lighting, signage and street furniture should respect the village character – particularly extensions to current levels should be avoided wherever possible.**
- C) All cabling should be routed underground.**
- D) Private security lighting should be moderate and non-invasive.**
- E) Satellite dishes and receivers should be sited as unobtrusively as possible.**
- F) In the older parts of the village urbanisation of footways, lighting and signage should be avoided and any**

proposals should be discussed with residents and representative bodies.

- G) The old post box and mounting block should be conserved as historic artefacts**
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2. The Road System - small streams, rising tide

Three minor roads join the residential village to the A19 on its eastern side. Several minor tracks and lanes plus one major commercial entrance provide access on the western side. There is one road providing access to and from the east of the village.

The A19.

Being a major route the A19 is well used. During 'peak periods' there are regular tailbacks stretching from the York ring road beyond the village to the north. At other times, consequent upon traffic speeds, there are hazards to vehicles joining the road and to pedestrians

- **It is essential that any further development**
 - **does not worsen traffic congestion on the A19**
 - **has safe road junctions with the A19**
 - **facilitates pedestrian and cycle safety.**

Church Lane access to the A19.

The lane is so narrow vehicles cannot pass without one stopping and it enters the Green by a 90 degree blind bend. At the junction with the A19 sight lines to the north are restricted

- **Church Lane lacks the capacity to serve any more than the present limited local traffic and is unsuitable for further expansion.**

St. Giles Road access to the A19:

St. Giles Road leads into The Village, then Moorlands Road and out towards Skelton Cemetery and Wigginton. These roads and this junction are well used, both by local traffic (including buses and large service vehicles) and by drivers avoiding ring road congestion.

At its western end traffic hazards are compounded by a number of factors: a double 90 degree blind bend, on-road parking (due to older cottage properties lacking off road parking space) and vehicle egress from some properties feeding straight onto the road at its narrowest point. The combination of these factors increases, particularly at busy times, the risk of accidents to pedestrians, residents and other road users.

- **This short section of St.Giles Road/The Village presents hazards to vehicles and frontagers at the present level of usage, exacerbated by the growth of through traffic**

Fairfield/Brecksfield access to the A19

The junction itself is wide and modern and built to a standard to give access to and from the two estates. The road is adequate as a local distributor – there are nine junctions in 500 yards - but as Fairfield Drive turns north into Brecksfield it can present hazards: there is the school drop-off point, a much narrower road with a bend, parked cars, and a poor visibility access into The Village.

- **This particular section of Brecksfield is not capable of significant expanded use.**

The tracks into The Green

On either side of St. Giles Church unsurfaced tracks lead from the northern part of the Conservation Area and the Green Belt directly onto The Green. These tracks are an integral feature of the Conservation Area and provide pedestrian and vehicular access to the houses north of the Church and to the farmland beyond the village

- **These tracks are as protected by Conservation status as the rest of the Area and it is essential for the protection of The Green, at the heart of the Conservation Area, that they should not be permitted to become access roads for any other purpose**

Access to the A19 from the West

The several access points are from Stripe Lane, from Toll Bar Cottage, from the golf course/garden centre and café, from the food factory and nearby cottages, and from the hotel/lay-by/ambulance centre. Together they generate considerable traffic, some being slow moving, articulated lorries particularly vulnerable to the heavy traffic flows on the A19.

- **The same considerations should apply to traffic from the west of the trunk road as apply to that from the residential village on the east**

3. Car Parking

Vehicles are a feature of modern life and cause particular difficulties in old villages

where cottages were built with no conception of modern traffic and consequently without provision for parking. The problem is exacerbated where there is parking access for one car but more than one vehicle in the household. Such difficulties feature in Skelton where

- Many older properties, especially in the Conservation Area, have no planned place for vehicles
- Vehicles are consequently left on the road or parked on verges
- There is resultant nuisance, traffic hazard and inconvenience especially involving buses, emergency and service vehicles, obstruction and loss of visual amenity.
- In some houses subject to large extensions the extra building occupies the space provided for off-road parking.

- **The present problems should not be augmented by further development which depends on the existing road capacity.**

- **All permission for building extensions should wherever possible be subject to satisfactory provision for off-road parking.**

4. Noise

Traffic on the A19 inevitably generates substantial and intrusive noise for those whose properties adjoin it: for others in the residential part it is less so. Noise from home based enterprises is so far not a problem but 'working from home' is likely to increase and even be encouraged.

Developers should be aware that the generation of unsocial levels of noise, disturbance (eg vehicular), noxious smells and the like are unacceptable to the community. The proper place for any commercial development is adjoining existing facilities west of the A19.

5. Buildings and Visual Intrusion

Most residents enjoy a good degree of privacy in their homes and gardens. This is partly due to the layout of plots and roadways, and to the presence of hedges, fences and trees – all part of a mature settlement. The green spaces serve to separate one set of housing from another.

- **The preservation of privacy and personal space is a constant challenge in any built environment. In Skelton any proposed new construction should at least**

maintain present standards of privacy. This should not exclude imaginative concepts but should exclude visual clash and intrusion, and dominant size

DESIGN GUIDELINE 10

- A) Bottlenecks leading to traffic hazards occur in St Giles Road/The Village and in the northern section of Brecksfield. Increase usage stemming from development should be avoided.**
- B) Further expansion of other tracks leading into The Green is to be avoided, as it would create intolerable pressure upon the Conservation Area eco-system rendering it impossible to sustain it in the manner intended when it was so designated;**
- C) Any future substantial development on either side of the A19 should provide its own safe access to and egress from the trunk road**
- D) Any development proposals for individual or multiple properties should contain adequate provision for off-street parking wherever possible**
- E) Pollution, emanating from domestic or commercial premises, and caused by excessive noise, smell or disturbance, should be avoided and wherever possible controlled through the development control process.**

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Many contributors to this VDS have made the point that a community thrives not by its buildings and physical features but by its people, and Skelton is fortunate in this respect. The village embraces a host of activities reflecting the widespread interests and commitment of its residents.

It sustains most of the essential features of village life: thriving Church communities, a well regarded primary school, a regular bus service, village hall, doctor's surgery, shop and post office, pub and club. Thriving organisations cater for all interests from local history to youth football. Skelton Pond and its wildlife – the village feature most popular with the school children – is a source of pleasure to young and old

It is amenities and organisations such as these that underpin the social networks of village life. Their health and maintenance are at the heart of a successful village community

CONCLUSION

Not by specific planning, but by the way development has occurred, the eastern, residential part of the Skelton village has acquired and retained many of the characteristics which go to make up the ideal village;

- **In contrast to some neighbouring villages much of its village character remains despite significant development**
- **It retains the natural features and immediate proximity to the surrounding countryside which preserve its rural appearance and character.**
- **It has a well rounded social mix resulting from an almost unique balance of housing types.**
- **It retains most of the essential amenities and interest groups which sustain village life whilst benefiting from proximity to a large centre of population providing employment, services, shopping and entertainment.**
- **It retains the sense of historical community resulting from its development over many centuries.**
- **Skelton Village has a recognised balance and sense of scale which distinguish it from other local settlements, both of which should be respected and carefully protected in any future development.**
- **The A19 is a busy trunk route and is a fact of life. It is a barrier separating the west of Skelton from the east. Inhabitants of any further housing development to the west would have difficulty in accessing the community life and services of the village.**
- **The features identified in this Statement generate and ensure an enviable quality of life and it is hoped understanding of, and adherence to, these guidelines will ensure the benefits enjoyed today will be preserved for future residents for generations to come.**

APPENDIX ONE

A first Public Consultation on this Design Statement was carried out in November and December 2007 in which every house in Skelton was circularised with a Questionnaire. There was a good response by over 80 Respondents from all parts of the village.

In answer to the question ‘What physical features of Skelton make it special to you?’ there were over 150 observations summarised as follows:-

1. The green open spaces, heritage buildings and a variety of architectural styles and materials.
2. The Church.
3. The village being separated from other places by fields but with convenient access to outside amenities.
4. Its restrained and compact scale and its quiet and safe village ‘feel’.
5. The benefit of having pathways throughout and across the open spaces.

In response to the question ‘Are there any changes/improvements you would like to see?’ there were well over a hundred suggestions:-

Those occurring most frequently related to improvements to road, footpath and traffic management, to lighting, to dog fouling, to hedges and trees (trimming back the former, increasing the latter in newer parts of the village) and children’s play facilities. All the suggestions will be passed to the Parish Council for its consideration

When invited to comment on the statement ‘Skelton benefits from being separated by green fields from neighbouring communities’ on a scale of 1 – 10 where ‘1’ marked ‘Agree strongly’ and ‘10’ ‘Disagree strongly’, the result was:-

Category 1	-	79
Category 2	-	3
Category 3	-	4
Categories 4 –10	-	0
Not stated	-	3

When invited to respond to the question ‘Do you think Skelton should stay broadly as it is in size or be allowed to grow via development?’ on a scale of 1 – 10 where ‘1’ marked ‘Stay as it is’ and 10 ‘Whatever demand decides’ the result was:-

Category 1	-	69
Category 2	-	6
Category 3	-	9
Categories 4-6	-	0
Category 7	-	1
Category 8	-	0
Category 9	-	1

Finally respondents were invited to make ‘Any other comments’.

There were over one hundred suggestions including a small number from those respondents who believed some judicious low scale development might be appropriate.

However, the overwhelming majority opined development should not be permitted ‘just because there is a demand. It has to be weighed against the effect on existing aspects and amenities’ and on the availability and greater suitability of other locations and opportunities.

The result of the public consultation was succinctly and movingly summarised in the words of one respondent:

‘Skelton is a village and should stay that way. It is a beautiful place to come home to.’

APPENDIX TWO

Pupils at Skelton Primary School were invited to complete a questionnaire to ascertain their thoughts about the village where they live. These were their responses:

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT SKELTON?

By far the most popular feature was Skelton Pond, with playing fields, shop, Church, school, greens and friendly people all receiving support.

WHAT DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD BE PROTECTING?

Again Skelton Pond predominated, with Church, trees, nature and the village also mentioned.

WHAT COULD WE IMPROVE IN THE VILLAGE?

Understandably there was very strong support for a park/playground, also strongly featured were: less litter/more bins, protect pond (from litter) and a bigger shop

APPENDIX THREE

Skelton Village Design Statement

The first public meeting, to discuss the feasibility of a Village Design Statement, and ascertain whether there was support for the idea, was held on 26th October 2006. A leaflet was delivered to all properties in the village. Turnout at the meeting was heartening with approximately sixty residents attending. Support was evident from a number of the local village groups, most noticeably Skelton Parish Council and Skelton Village Trust.

There were a number of informal meetings over the next few months, while people discussed their ideas of what the content of a Village Design Statement should contain. This culminated in two villagers drafting a preliminary statement as a basis for further discussion, and Steering Group being formed.

During October and November 2007, a public consultation was undertaken, with over six hundred leaflets being delivered to homes in the village. Ninety forms were returned and the comments received were discussed by the Steering Group, and amendments were made to the draft statement in light of the comments.

Involvement of the local primary school was considered key to getting the younger view, and a competition was held. At school assembly, on 22nd February 2008, Key Stage 1 pupils were invited to paint or draw what aspect of the village they liked most. Key Stage 2 pupils were asked to draw or paint what aspect of the village they liked most but were also asked to respond to three questions. The responses are summarised in Appendix Two of the draft VDS. There were three winners in each age group who were presented with their prizes at school assembly on 14th March. The winning pictures will be included in the final VDS.

The draft VDS was launched at an exhibition in the Village Hall on 29th and 30th March, 2008. Copies were handed out at the exhibition and also sent to those respondents of the previous consultation who had indicated that they wished to continue to be involved. In all nearly 120 copies were distributed. In addition the draft was accessible via both the Skelton Village Trust website and the Skelton Parish Council website. Forty responses were received.

The comments made to the consultation were considered by the Steering Group on 14th May, and changes were made to the draft in light of the comments received. The final document produced has now been submitted for consideration by the City of York Council's Planning Committee.