

Report of the Director of City Strategy

## **SKELTON VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT FOR APPROVAL AS AN INTERIM PLANNING STATEMENT**

### **Summary**

1. This report presents a summary of the responses received following a consultation on Skelton Village Design Statement. A number of amendments are proposed as a result of the consultation process. With approval from Members, it is intended that the document becomes 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. An amended draft version of Skelton Village Design Statement is attached as Annex 1 to this committee report. Amendments following the consultation exercise have been incorporated to clarify some points in the document and to strengthen others. A schedule of responses received from the consultation, together with the VDS groups and officers responses are set out in Annex 2.
9. 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. (architects, builders, householders, businesses...), not just the local planning authority. The character of the village is defined by many details some of which cannot be regulated by the development control process, such as windows and boundary treatments, and therefore the role of the VDS in guiding the individual property owner in Skelton is crucial in maintaining the traditional aspects of the village.

## **Consultation**

10. 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. An art competition and questionnaire was done in February 2008 with pupils of the local primary school. 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.

11. On 24 June 2008 the draft VDS was presented to Members and was approved by Planning Committee for consultation. The eight week consultation was carried out between 9 July and 5 September. Given a low initial response rate, and the consultation running over the summer months, a reminder letter was sent and an extra period was added until 25 September. The final draft document was 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 Appendix 2 of the VDS. Local people also had an opportunity to comment on the final draft.
12. Throughout the consultation period copies of the draft VDS were available at:
  - the central reference library and local venues (shop/ church/ school);
  - the Council reception at 9 St Leonard's Place;
  - the Council, Skelton Parish Council and Skelton Village Trust websites; and
  - a press advert ran on 6 August, as well as a press release, local posters and an article in the parish newsletter which went to every household.
13. 14 responses were received from interested parties. Annex 2 to this report summarises the responses, and where appropriate, the subsequent amendments. The VDS group has worked well to produce an interesting and well researched document, and are now keen to see the document approved as an Interim Planning Statement

## **Options**

14. Option 1 is to approve the VDS as an Interim Planning Statement.
15. Option 2 is to request the Skelton VDS group to amend the document.
16. Option 3 is to not approve the VDS as an Interim Planning Statement.

## **Analysis**

17. Option 1 is preferred. Options 2 and 3 could delay or halt the VDS process.

## **Corporate Priorities**

18. The VDS, once agreed and approved, 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**

19. 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.

### **Human Resources (HR)**

20 No implications.

### **Equalities**

21 No known implications.

### **Legal**

22 No known implications.

### **Crime and Disorder**

23 No known implications.

### **Information Technology (IT)**

24 Add final VDS to the Council website.

### **Property**

25 No implications.

### **Risk Management**

26 There should be no additional risks.

### **Recommendations**

27 Members are asked to agree Option 1, to approve Skelton Village Design Statement as an Interim Planning Statement. The document would then be a material planning consideration when considering development in Skelton.

Reasons: The document follows 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.

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**Specialist Implications Officer(s)** None

**Wards Affected:** Skelton, Rawcliffe & Clifton Without

All  tick

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

**Background Papers**

Report to Planning Committee on the consultation draft VDS for Skelton 24 June 2008

PPS3 (Housing, November 2006)

PPS7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, August 2004)

**Annexes**

Annex 1: Skelton Village Design Statement (with consultation changes)

Annex 2: Schedule of responses (Sept 2008)