

## APPENDIX 8

# DESIGN GUIDANCE

## **BUILDING DESIGN, LAYOUT & MATERIALS GUIDELINES**

This appendix expands on **Policy CD1** so as to offer guidance and justification when new development is being considered. It also acknowledges that there is a case for a more contemporary approach in certain circumstances where it responds to and enhances the environmental context.

The parish has a rich history which is reflected in a predominant “traditional” local vernacular, valued by residents as evidenced in their response to the Household Questionnaire. Residents were asked what principles should influence the design of new houses (Questions 6 and 11):

Traditional design: 67%      Innovative design: 26%      No selection: 7%  
New buildings should be designed to fit in with existing buildings and surroundings: 90%

### **Layout and landscaping**

The overall pattern of built and open areas at a street scale is very distinctive in the villages. Character analysis at this level is often overlooked, but it is crucial in determining the appropriate layout of new development if the character of a settlement is to be maintained. It is relevant both in the design of larger developments and in ensuring that individual buildings are appropriately positioned in relation to existing street frontages.

Entrances to Somerby parish conservation villages are very important, having a subtle grading of scale, mass and intensity from low at the periphery to higher in the centre. New development should respect and reflect this with the primary objective of fitting as seamlessly as possible into the rest of the village, socially as well as aesthetically. It will not be satisfactory to simply adopt what is often deemed a “traditional” aesthetic, but which is, in fact, more or less a synthesis of a number of traditional styles drawn from examples nationally and exemplified by the approach taken in many new developments both small and large in scale. Designs, both in terms of group layout as well as with regard to individual scale, detailing, materials and colour, should be supported by a written and illustrated contextual analysis within the Design and Access Statement, making direct reference to a number of features exhibited locally and considered to be specifically of the parish vernacular described elsewhere in this document. Selecting features to support a design that may be present in a small number of examples but not commonly adopted will not be considered representative of the vernacular.

The larger villages of the Parish have small greens, opening up space around the main street. Mature trees form avenues in Somerby from the High street into the open countryside. The canopies of mature trees in the grounds of the larger houses also form an internal landscape visible from all over the village.

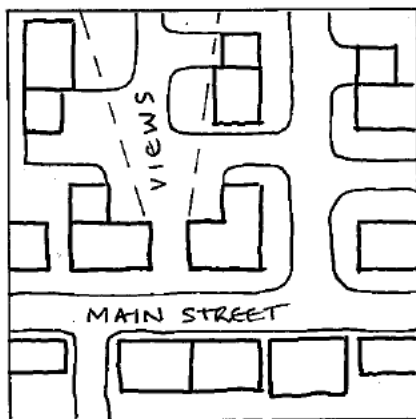
The historic core of each village, other than Leesthorpe, has a Church and surrounding churchyard with walks through from one part of the village to another. The Churches’ spires are visible along lengths of village roads and from the surrounding countryside. These views within settlements are important to the internal village character and should be carefully conserved.

The way that a new development connects with existing buildings and streets will have an impact on how it fits in overall. Views through to important buildings and spaces should be retained and included in new development.

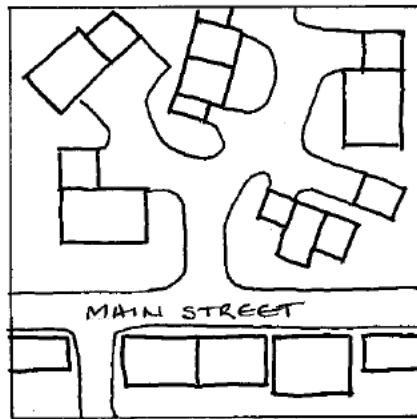
New development should include trees and landscaping that can grow to maturity, carefully located so as not to diminish views inwards and outwards from dwellings and key vistas (Environmental policy ENV11 should be followed accordingly). Stone boundary walls to large houses and historical parklands should be echoed so that the development fits with the character and also builds character as the village grows.

The spatial form of the villages in the Parish is dominated by a strong sense of enclosure created by walls and almost continuous frontages along the roads. Houses are often either built against one another or linked by connecting walls.

Generally speaking, existing dwellings line the street frontages of our villages with lanes and driveways at right angles, off which further houses are located and tend to be in the form of courtyards. This offers opportunities for sensitive infill and also a guide as to how to approach the design of larger developments on the periphery. The open frontages, roads and driveways that characterise many new developments elsewhere in the UK should be avoided as they tend to create separation rather than integration with the village core. New development should, therefore, reflect the current settlement pattern, particularly when fronting the main streets, with parking, garages and gardens located at the rear off side lanes where possible.



**Preferred Layout**



**Avoid open meandering "estate type" layout**

The treatment of settlement edges facing open landscape is of particular importance. The scale and massing of developments should diminish at edges, using single storey dwellings or those designed with some or all of the first floor in the roof-space. Hipped roofs also diminish the volume of properties. There are also opportunities to use green sedum or planted roofs, living walls or earth sheltered designs to soften the impact, particularly in sensitive locations or where development in open countryside is justified. Soft landscaping, framing views out rather than for blanket screening, is also important and its design and maintenance should be a condition of any consent. The parish has notable defined conservation areas and benefits from an extensive network of public footpaths; the enjoyment of these, especially with regard to outward aspects and towards villages, should not be unduly diminished.

Of considerable importance in considering new development is to ensure that it will not diminish the overall context in terms of soft and hard landscaping and, in fact, contribute to its enhancement, maturity and biodiversity. Planning applications should include, or be conditional upon, the provision of detailed proposals for both hard and soft landscaping in the immediate proximity of buildings, open areas and at site perimeters. This approach will be equally important and relevant to commercial as well as domestic sites, especially where screening can mitigate the visual impact of the harder built form or activity.

Soft landscaping should reflect the common scale, materials and planting patterns of the Parish and respect adjoining parcels of land that demonstrate such features. This is also pertinent to hard landscaping such as roads, fencing and boundary walls; for example, close boarded fencing is rare but local stone and brick walls, stock and metal estate fencing are predominant. Proposals should therefore demonstrate an understanding of the settlement character; visual, ecological, cultural and historical, and avoid non-indigenous planting. Good landscaping will strengthen the 'sense of place' and enhance recreational value where appropriate. At edges of settlements that border open countryside, particular attention should be given to how the proposals acknowledge and respect natural features. These include hedgerows, trees, groves of native species with great height and maturity, green banks, green ways, grazing paddocks, parkland landscapes, TPOs and ridge and furrow.

Accordingly, those considering development should also refer to Environmental policies ENV 7: Settlement Character, ENV 8: Local Landscape Character Areas, ENV 9: Important Views, ENV 11: Trees, Hedgerows and Verges and ENV 12: Dark Skies at Night and Tranquillity.

### **Architectural style and building materials**

Those considering development should examine building style at the scale of the individual built context as well as the features which distinguish the hierarchy of form, materials and detailing. A knowledge of the traditional building styles of the Parish is essential if new development is to be designed to respect its context.

Typically, there is a mixture of house types and styles within the Parish, but there are a number of common features. Many buildings are generally rectangular in plan with steeply pitched gabled roofs running along their lengths. They are built closely or attached with varied rooflines.

Architectural style is not greatly diverse; there is a predominance of local ironstone and later red brickwork with sash or casement windows and slate or terracotta coloured clay tiled roofs. Each of the villages also have a number of more contemporary 20<sup>th</sup> century properties, usually clustered together but also as individual infill. The proportion of ironstone-built houses to brick houses is about 60% to 40% especially in Somerby. There are also some rendered facades of varying quality and age. This relatively limited range of local walling and roofing materials across the Parish has been fundamental in creating a consistency in colour and texture between buildings of different periods.

Homes are mostly of two storeys interspersed with three storey buildings, sometimes by means of rooms in roof voids lit by dormer windows. This is consistent up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century but, thereafter, buildings started to adopt the use of more contemporary materials, albeit generally respecting the massing and scale of earlier development. The housing needs survey identified the need and desire for more single-storey homes, of which there are relatively few at present. Respect for the context, in terms of character, style, use

of materials and colour is equally important when considering the design of more modest single storey homes.

The colour of the local stone provides a strong unifying influence. Manor houses, farm houses and cottages in the Parish are generally constructed with simply dressed or rubble ironstone, usually sourced from local quarries, including the quarry at Pickwell. Red brick, laid in English bond with fine jointing, is also a common feature of 19th Century development, with some earlier dwellings being formed from previous red brick agricultural buildings in Flemish bond. More modern homes are also of brick, but often lighter in colour. Other properties are of dressed ashlar, usually for higher status buildings or for quoins, string courses, lintels, sills and corbels elsewhere.

Stone is traditionally laid in horizontal courses of stone of uniform height but varying length, with each course being random in height to the one above and below. (Note that random un-coursed stonework and courses with jumper stones are not traditional to the area). Ironstone should be bedded in a carefully specified mortar that allows the movement of this soft, friable stone and prevents spalling from frost. Similarly, lime mortar should be used for pointing where possible, or a suitable mortar mix that retains the creamy white colour that replicates a traditional lime mortar finish. House walls built with ironstone can also be finished at the eaves and corners with red brick to reflect the vernacular illustrated below.



**Mix of ironstone walls, red brick walls, dressed stone mullions, bays, slate roofs and string courses (High Street, Somerby).**



**Left: Ironstone walls, slate roofs, timber lintels) with side lane serving further development  
Right: Ironstone, red brick and dressed limestone, slate roofs and dormers (High Street, Somerby)**



**Left: Example of brick quoins framing ironstone walls (Manor lane, Somerby)**

**Middle: New home on Manor lane reflecting the vernacular, with single storey subservient to the rectangular form of the principal two storey element using brick and pantile.**

**Right: 21<sup>st</sup> Century brick home with dentils at verge, corbeled eaves and bracketed gutters (Somerby)**



**Left: 20<sup>th</sup> century ironstone home using brick quoin, arches and verge detailing (Main Street, Pickwell).**

**Right: Ironstone walls, dressed stone quoins, parapet and chimney and Welsh slate Note subservient outbuilding with hip to soften edge (Burrough).**

## **Boundaries**

A particular feature of the villages, especially Somerby, are boundary walls, some of which retain higher ground behind, the majority built from ironstone. They frame entrances and continue a good way into the village. Boundary walls provide important links within our settlements. Walls within villages are generally capped with stone copings or slate tiles. There are examples of noted brick and mud walls which are specifically protected under policies in this plan.

The use of fencing to street frontages should be avoided and, where feasible, existing ironstone walls and brick walls should be preserved and reflected in new developments, using the materials, type of construction and proportions prevalent.



**Ironstone and brick walls lining the main roads through the village (High Street, Somerby).**

### **Roofs**

Roofs are traditionally simple in form, predominantly of Welsh blue/grey slate with gable ends and mortar verges, although there are examples of more modern tiles, of varying styles and visual quality, used for re-roofing older properties and for newer construction. Single storey elements are often pantiled or slated, some of which are hipped. The streetscape benefits from undulating rooflines and the use of cupolas, finials, weather vanes, clocks, barge boards, verge and eaves detailing.

Blue slate was not widely used until the mid 19th Century, when the coming of the railways meant that mass produced slate from North Wales became cheaply available. Welsh slate may be laid at a shallow pitch and, where seen on steeply pitched roofs, is likely to be a replacement for thatch or Collyweston slate.

Limestone slate from pits within Rutland County have long been used as a distinguishing roofing material and the steep pitched rugged roofs laid in diminishing courses are a defining feature, particularly of higher status properties. Collyweston roofs usually have gabled ends and swept valleys. It is important that surviving Collyweston roofs are retained if the character and appearance of our villages are to be protected. Red and orange clay pantiles were historically used for cottages, outbuildings and farm buildings.

### **Chimneys**

Chimneys, whilst generally simple and functional in design, are an important feature of the built environment and add considerably to the street scene. They tend to be capped with corbelled brick courses with plain clay pots to flues.

### **Windows and door styles**

The front elevation of traditional buildings usually have a simple, uncluttered appearance punctuated by sash or casement windows and door openings.

Timber is the traditional material for windows within our villages, but the type of window tends to reflect the status, date and style of the building. High status buildings will often have stone mullioned windows with metal casements. Farmhouses and simple vernacular cottages usually have side-hung, two and three-light casements. These were generally made of painted softwood and would have originally been multi pane or horizontal sliding windows. Window frames constructed from oak however, are often left untreated. Vertical sliding sash windows are confined to the larger higher status houses within the villages. Improvements in

glass manufacture with the introduction of sheet glass from the 19th century onwards resulted in larger paned windows, with the windows divided horizontally by a single slender glazing bar.

Window sills and lintels are usually stone although there are several examples of timber lintels. Top opening windows are not a traditional feature. It should be noted that upper floor windows are usually smaller in height and width than those at ground level. Window frames are recessed within the opening approximately 75-100 mm from the external face of the masonry and are generally either timber or stone lintels as previously mentioned. This introduces relief and interest within an elevation and offers greater protection from the elements. Generally, with casement windows, opening and fixed lights are constructed to similar dimensions and have a matching appearance.

The door types within the villages vary according to status period and style and include simple vertical boarded ledged and braced, or framed, ledged and braced as well as those with recessed panels. Enclosed porches are rarely found on vernacular buildings. Simple lean-to pitched or flat roof canopies over the door are more common and retain the simple uncluttered appearance of front elevation, whilst providing a degree of protection against the weather. The introduction of entrance halls into buildings from 1720 onwards witnesses the increasing use of fanlights above the door or in some cases, square or rectangular glazed panels within the door to provide daylight. More modern pseudo fanlights within doors should be avoided.

Whilst timber is the traditional material used for doors, windows and other external joinery, it is accepted that uPVC and aluminium need less maintenance and offer better thermal insulation. Although they should be avoided in historic buildings, especially those fronting main streets, where these newer materials are proposed specific attention should be focussed on ensuring that the section size, texture, colour and proportion of the frames, opening lights, mullions, cills, heads, transoms and glazing bars replicate as closely as possible those of the traditional aesthetic.



**Local doors, fanlights, canopies and porches.**



**Local doors, fanlights, canopies and windows.**

## Dormers

There are several examples of dormer windows found within our villages. On some of the larger properties they are generally small, hipped or gabled, and set up within the roof. Where used to provide light to the first floor of smaller cottages they are usually just above or broach the eaves. Dormer windows are usually dictated by the characteristics of the roofing materials. Collyweston slate roofs generally have gabled or hipped dormers, clay tiles and blue slate roofs favour simple gabled dormers, and thatch roofs usually have swept dormers. The dormer cheeks are often finished either in a render or lead finish, or in the case of Collyweston roofs, in stone slate.



**Dormers and chimney in converted chapel (Somerby).**



**Gable dormer (Burrough).**

## Rooflights

In situations where rooflights are necessary, the low-profile flush fitting type with a vertical emphasis should be used, as it minimises disruption to the appearance of the roof. The dimensions of the rooflight requires careful consideration and, where possible, dormers are preferable on principal street facades.

## Lighting

The principal streets and side lanes of our villages are lit with street lighting on columns or affixed to facades. They offer important safety and security at night. Commensurate street lighting should be provided to new access roads, however, new fittings are available that direct light downwards and cut the spread, especially that which causes glare and diminishes dark skies at night. For example, Somerby has recently been retrofitted with TRT Lighting- “Aspect” range, or similar LED fittings, which can be controlled to suit the specific location and intrusion on local property and can be adjusted if residents make application to Melton Borough Council. A softer tone rather than harsh white can be specified and is preferable.

Similarly, external lighting to houses and outside areas, both public and private, should be respectful of the impact on neighbours and the night sky. These should be preferably fitted with timers to switch off after around 11pm at the latest and/or fitted with movement sensors if safety or security is a priority. Equally, the opportunity should be taken to encourage the use of curtains, shutters or blinds that diminish light spill from homes or other property.

Guidance should be sought from industry experts and bodies that seek to protect our environment from unnecessary light pollution. Examples are available from The Institute of Lighting Engineers: ‘Guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light’, The Society of Light and Lighting (part of the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers), Department for Communities and Local Government: ‘Lighting in the Countryside: Towards Good Practice’ and from the CPRE.



Developments should demonstrate lighting schemes and other aspects of reducing the risk of rural crime by reference to the Police & Crime Prevention Initiatives website, Secured by Design.com and other similar guidance.

### **Street scenes, street furniture and signage**

As noted in the guidance section on Layout and Landscape, street scale and scenes are very distinctive in the villages and new development should seek to maintain existing character, the key features of which are described in this Appendix.

Examples of local street furniture, such as wooden benches and signage mounted on timber, should be replicated and reflect the more rural nature of our environment. More urban concrete and metallic finishes will be less appropriate and are discouraged

Signage should be kept to the minimum to ensure safety or other necessary purpose, both within the villages and on their approach roads. Commercial signage should be of a scale and colouration to reflect the rural environment, with urban motifs avoided.

### **Non-domestic development**

There are relatively few examples of non-domestic architecture, apart from churches, farm buildings, schools and village halls. Recent developments using large single rectangular steel frame, metal or wood clad structures, with unnecessarily high eaves and ridges, have a huge impact on our environment, are often in open countryside, diminish open views and do not respect the scale, massing, materials and colours prevalent.

Where possible, non-domestic development needs to respect the scale and materials of more traditional development and preferably be broken down into smaller elements rather than adopting large framed and clad alternatives. Reference should be made to the more traditional farm buildings that characterise our landscape; often within a modest courtyard layout and usually of stone or mellow red brick walls, no more than 2.4m to eaves, a depth of no more than 8m and with slate roofs. Where larger volume structures are unavoidable, at least, they should be screened with soft landscaping and/or bunding and preferably located in dips and hollows so as not to dominate the skyline.

### **Extensions and alterations to existing properties**

The individual character of each property will dictate the approach taken to extensions and alterations. Broadly speaking, alterations should respect the existing features and, where previous work has not done so, the opportunity to correct previous ill-informed design should be prioritised.

New extensions to traditional buildings need to be carefully considered in terms of their impact on the existing building; they should normally be subservient in scale and mass. This approach, adopted for several centuries, is illustrated in many examples across the parish. Notwithstanding this, more contemporary extensions can often prevent visually undermining the vernacular form, especially when predominantly glazed and particularly when used to form links between separate more solid elements.

## **New technology and carbon emissions**

It will be important to use new technology and design, and where feasible sustainable building materials, to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions and also to generate energy from renewable sources. Solar gain and thermal mass can also assist to create almost zero-carbon homes. Having said this, surface-fixed photovoltaic panels, solar hot water panels, turbines, dishes and the like can often be detrimental to key facades, especially where retrofitted and in traditional street scenes, and should be carefully evaluated accordingly. Some or all of these measures can often be incorporated without having a significant impact on the appearance and form in a traditional context, the most significant contribution being insulation, which can be concealed within. With the advent of electric vehicles, charging points and associated parking should be incorporated into dwellings and developments, as well as in off-street locations for passing visitors and where the development relies on shared or on-street parking. Similarly, fibre-optic cabling and/or ducting for super-fast internet should be installed wherever feasible and ready for the upgrading of public infrastructure where not yet present. Above ground services should be avoided.



**Left: Contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> century home using ironstone, slate, aluminium, recessed roof-lights and photovoltaic panels (Pickwell).**



**Right: Example of how green roofs can merge into the landscape in sensitive locations (Pembrokeshire coastal path).**

## **Conclusion**

The appearance, scale and massing of our built environment is generally modest and sits comfortably within our rural landscape. It is this, and the relatively small palette of materials and techniques traditionally used in the Parish, which ensure that development of different ages and styles sit harmoniously together and serve to guide the design of future development. Thus, having outlined these and other key features that contribute to our valued distinctive and recognisable local vernacular, it is clear that any new development, in group or individual form, which reflects this and respects our rural landscape, will make a valuable contribution to our parish and will be welcomed accordingly.