ASHLEY
VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Ashley is a small village situated on rising ground above the water meadows of the River Welland, about mid-way between Market Harborough and Corby. It has been designated a “Restricted Infill Village”. Due to its “tucked away” situation in the north of Northamptonshire, it is not particularly well known but its inhabitants consider this to be an advantage, enjoying the peace and quiet and relative freedom from through traffic.

It is a pleasant and interesting village of some historic interest, having been noted as a community of 73 houses supported by agriculture and forestry in the Domesday Book in 1086 and having been largely remodelled by its wealthy squire and rector during the second half of the 19th Century.

There are still several working farms in and around the village, creating an agricultural setting. This peaceful, rural atmosphere, together with the special architectural and other features of the village, are what this Village Design Statement seeks to emphasise, so that any future development may be influenced by its contents and therefore be sympathetic and appropriate.

AIMS OF THE VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

The aim of this Village Design Statement (VDS) is to identify the unique characteristics of Ashley and its environment as seen through the eyes of the inhabitants of its 104 households. In 1999 a detailed questionnaire was distributed to all adult and teenage inhabitants and, from the results, this statement has been written so that local knowledge, perceptions and ideas may contribute

- to maintain the characteristics which the villagers most value
- to ensure that future change and development is based on a considered understanding of the evolution of the village and is of a sympathetic and suitable nature.
WHO IS THE VDS ADDRESSED TO?

In a small village change is brought about not only by developments in new housing, but by smaller alterations to homes and gardens, open spaces, trees, footpaths and walls, which alter the look and feel of the whole village. Therefore, it is hoped that the VDS will be read by

- the local planning authority and Parish Council
- planners, developers, builders, and architects when considering development in Ashley
- residents and particularly newcomers to the village

HOW DOES THE VDS FIT INTO THE PLANNING PROCESS?

The VDS will be adopted by Kettering Borough Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance and its recommendations will be taken into account as a material consideration when planning applications are assessed. It will also assist in the review of the Local Plan for Kettering Borough.

Ashley has been designated a “Restricted Infill Village”. It has a Conservation Area (approved 9/11/77), 31 listed buildings and monuments and two significant green spaces designated as important to the environment.

The VDS will supplement policies in the Local Plan relating to the form and scale of new development, including changes of use and extensions, landscaping proposals and the protection of environmentally important open space. It will also provide guidance upon matters of special control like the protection and enhancement of the Ashley Conservation Area, works to trees specifically protected by a Preservation Order and preserving the character and appearance of Listed Buildings.

Ashley VDS fully endorses the analysis and recommendations of “Building on Tradition”, The Rockingham Forest Countryside Design Summary July 2000.(CDS)

THE VILLAGE TODAY

Ashley has 104 households. In and around the village, there are several working farms whose fields, hedgerows and activities form the rural background to the village. The main economic activity in the village is agriculture, although during the 1990’s there has been a growth in households supported by businesses run from a home office. However, most households are supported by employment in urban centres outside the village and transport by car is essential. Public transport is very limited with two bus services per week and a school bus service to nearby schools.

The village has three public buildings: the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, the Village Hall and a Public House, The George. There is a small playground for children.

The local history and characteristics of Ashley are described in detail in the Ashley Village Appraisal Document 1992 – 95.

(Copies available from Ashley Parish Council)
THE CHARACTER OF THE LANDSCAPE SETTING

The village nestles into a fold of the rolling hills on the south side of the Welland Valley. The water meadows of the River Welland are visible on approaches from the north, east and west. It is surrounded on all sides by undulating agricultural land, with a mixture of pasture and cropped fields divided by hedgerows containing mature trees. The village boundary is largely formed by hedgerows with glimpses of farm buildings. To the south, the land rises sharply intensifying the impression of a rural setting. The beautiful countryside surrounding the village is greatly appreciated by the villagers.

Recommendations:

- Ashley falls within the Welland Special Landscape Area (Policy 9 of KBC Local Plan) which restricts new developments, which would have an adverse impact on the visual character and amenity of the village in its landscape.
  
  The VDS endorses this policy.

- Rockingham Forest CDS
  
  3.1 Landscape Setting makes many recommendations, which will help preserve Ashley in its landscape setting. The VDS supports the guidance set out in the Rockingham Forest CDS.
VILLAGE TREES IN THE LANDSCAPE SETTING

TREES

Ashley grew from a small clearing in Rockingham Forest and the trees and vegetation are as important today as they were centuries ago. The trees in farm hedgerows and along boundaries have, for their relative size, an enormous impact on the landscape. In the south of the village and along the stream, there are mature trees, which are a legacy of the Pulteney estate. Many gardens back onto fields blurring the division between village and countryside.

Recommendations:
- Protect mature trees in the village (15 are already protected by Tree Preservation Orders).
- Encourage the planting of new native trees in any new development and promote the replacement of farmland and hedgerow trees, which have died or been felled, in order to maintain the distinctiveness of the landscape.
- Maintain hedgerows by gapping-up.
- Maintain existing mature trees and copses, which are close to the village, even though they are in open countryside.
- Traditional hedgerows should be retained and should be utilised within new development as the main boundary treatment between open countryside and the village.

SETTLEMENT PATTERN CHARACTER

The overall pattern of the village is a double loop with the addition of the Westhorpe close, which is more intensively settled around a triangular green. The housing pattern is linear and open, reflecting the agricultural tradition of the village, with the gardens of many houses backing on to fields or green spaces. Gardens are a feature of the village and there are many vistas through to open countryside.

Recommendations:
- There is overwhelming support for maintaining Ashley as a “Restricted Infill Village” in the review of the Local Plan for Kettering Borough.
- The linear form of the village should be protected from inappropriate forms of development that would undermine its character. This may exclude development in a backland form, unless it is considered that, by virtue of sensitive design, it can be accommodated without causing harm to the character and form of the settlement.
- Any future development should provide adequate off-road parking.
- Any new development in Ashley should take into consideration the recommendations of The Rockingham Forest CDS “Building On Tradition” 3.2 Settlement Pattern.
ASHLEY
VILLAGE BOUNDARY, CONSERVATION AREA AND ENVIRONMENTALLY IMPORTANT OPEN SPACE
1. Main Street
2. Westhorpe
3. Green Lane
4. Environmentally Important Open Space
5. Church of St. Mary the Virgin
6. The ‘George’ Public House
7. The Old School & Schoolhouse
8. Ashley Court
9. The Manor House
10. The Village Hall
11. “Yeomans”
12. Farms

Aerial View of ASHLEY 1999
BUILDINGS AND SPACES IN THE VILLAGE

There are several distinct areas of building types in the village:

1. THE MOST PROMINENT IS THE PLANNED, FORMAL 19th CENTURY ARRANGEMENT IN MAIN STREET of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, the school and schoolmaster’s house, the Old Rectory and nos. 18-26 and 13-19 Main Street.

In planning terms, Ashley is regarded as a “re-modelled village” because of the extensive demolition and re-building which took place in the village between 1854 and 1888. The wealthy squire/rector at the time, the Rev. R.T. Pulteney, commissioned the esteemed Victorian architect, Sir George Gilbert Scott, to create a new plan for Ashley and consequently Ashley has a notable Gothic Revival heritage in the area to the south of the Church as detailed below:

- 100 yards of straight road in Main Street, bordered by pavements and a wide grass verge, giving an almost ceremonial-style approach to the Church of St. Mary from the south.

- The addition to the 14th Century Church of a highly stylised and decorated chancel (1854-5), now a Grade 1 listed building.

- The formal and beautifully detailed schoolroom (1856) and schoolmaster’s house (1864) built in imported materials of ashlar limestone with roofs of Westmorland slate.

- Examples of late Victorian Gothic Revival domestic architecture in Nos. 18-26 and 13-15 Main Street, built in Northamptonshire ironstone under roofs of Collyweston slate with window and door surrounds in ashlar limestone.

- Restoration of Ashley Court (16thC) and The Manor (17thC) with some late Victorian features.

Recommendations:

- New development including alterations to existing buildings and structures should have regard to preserving or enhancing the character of the area as a whole given its designation as a Conservation Area.
- Traditional materials should be used for restorations and alterations.
- New buildings should blend with their surroundings.
- The uncluttered and spacious feel of the area should be maintained.
- The stone walls in this area help to create a unified whole and must be maintained. New development should incorporate stone walling to define boundaries which are visually prominent in the street scene.

The School and Schoolhouse built in ashlar limestone with a Westmoreland slate roof have many distinctive features.
Sir George Gilbert Scott was the architect.
2. THE AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE VILLAGE IS REFLECTED IN THE NUMEROUS NORTHAMPTONSHIRE STONE FARMHOUSES AND STABLE YARDS, DATING FROM THE 17thC TO THE 19thC ALONG MAIN STREET AND HALL LANE.

This agricultural tradition has created a feeling of spaciousness. There is a frequently repeated pattern of open courtyards or stable yards, providing space between the larger buildings of the village e.g. Ashley Court, The Manor, 1 Main Street, 30 Main Street, the George, 1 Green Lane, 38 Main Street, 43 Main Street, 45 Main Street, and more recently, Garden House.

The 20th Century infilling on the fields between the older buildings has been with individual houses on sizeable garden plots. Where barns have been converted, e.g. the Maltings, once the barns of The Manor and now 7 individual dwellings, the number of new houses has been limited to retain a feeling of spaciousness with each house having its own garden. The open housing pattern and gardens are a distinctive feature of the village.

Recommendations:
- The feeling of spaciousness and garden plots, which comes from the agricultural heritage, must be maintained in future developments.
- Future conversions of stable yards and barns should include adequate parking facilities for the number of dwellings and retain the architectural features of the original farm buildings.

3. THE MORE DENSELY SETTLED ENCLOSED SPACE OF WESTHORPE WITH ITS HARMONIOUS ARRANGEMENT OF FARMHOUSE AND COTTAGES ENCIRCLING THE TRIANGULAR GREEN. Among the 17thC – 20thC buildings, is the Manse with its adjacent Chapel, which was the second oldest dissenters’ Chapel in Northamptonshire. Due to the limited access in Westhorpe, it would be difficult for this area to sustain future development.

Recommendations:
- Any future development proposals in Westhorpe should have full regard to the existing access constraints and should ensure that adequate vehicle parking is provided within the development site.
- The VDS supports the protection of the green as an environmentally important open space as stated in KBC Local Plan Policy 94, RA3 and RA10 and seeks its continued protection as part of the Local Plan Review.
Recommendations:

- Ashley is a landscape dominated village. New development should preserve the feeling of space between buildings.
- The scale of new buildings should respect that of neighbouring properties and be in sympathy with existing rooflines.
- The housing pattern in Ashley is linear and this should be preserved, with backland development being discouraged.
- Ashley is an agricultural village and new building should blend in with the traditional features of this agricultural heritage. – see Distinctive Building Details.
- New development shall be constructed in materials that are in keeping with their surroundings and the wider character of the village. This will primarily be in natural stone and/or brick for walling and blue slate/Collyweston stone slates for main roofs. The VDS fully endorses the guidance contained in Section 3.3 “Building Style” of the Rockingham Forest CDS.
- Extensions and restoration work on existing buildings should be in materials and in a style which is in keeping with the existing building.
- New walls should be built in materials appropriate to the village. The maintenance of stone walls should be done using existing materials and the pointing methods recommended by KBC.
- The remote situation of the village and the lack of public transport means that private transport is essential. Any future development should provide adequate off-road parking.

4. THE RURAL CHARACTER OF GREEN LANE, which encloses a large, open, green space through which runs the stream, edged by trees, and also gives many vistas through to open fields. The housing pattern is open, with views out to the countryside and at the western end there are some fine stone walls. The oldest house in the village is ‘Yeomans’, which is believed to be Medieval in origin and has a cruck roof construction.

Recommendation:

- The large, open space in Green Lane with its hedgerows and many trees gives a special feeling of space and countryside within the village. It is very important to the special character of Ashley that this space is retained. The VDS supports the KBC Local Plan Policy 94, RA3 and RA10, which designate the fields within Green Lane as an environmentally important open space and seeks its continued protection as part of the Local Plan Review.

5. 20th CENTURY AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
The policy of infilling in the village has meant that many of the empty spaces have been filled with 20th Century houses. This has resulted in a variety of styles and materials on the approaches from the east and west, some of which are not integrated with their surroundings as harmoniously as the VDS would recommend for the future.
DISTINCTIVE BUILDING DETAILS

Please refer to The Rockingham Forest CDS 3.3 Building style for an in-depth analysis of appropriate features for new buildings, alterations and extensions.

Some notable architectural features in Ashley are:

Windows include stone mullions, metal casements, timber casements and some sliding sashes. They are usually under dressed stone or oak lintels or a lintel formed from curved brick. This design feature has been used in recent buildings.

There are many examples of steep-pitched Collyweston roofs in the village, often associated with dormer windows, stone mullions with casement windows and tall chimneys.

The other common roof material is Welsh slate. There are also a few examples of clay pantiles.

Distinctive limestone and ironstone walls with stone or brick copings are seen throughout the village linking buildings and creating a sense of unity in the street scene.
Chimney stacks are a feature of the rooflines in Ashley. 20thC houses have incorporated this into their design.

Walls are predominantly limestone, ironstone, Victorian red brick.

**TRAFFIC, STREET FURNITURE AND LIGHTING**

**Recommendations:**

- Although through traffic does sometimes speed through the village, speed prevention measures such as humps would be inappropriate in this rural setting and would not be practical in a village with four working farms.
- Street furniture is traditional and in keeping with the age of the village. Distinctive wooden road signs, black and white-striped bollards in Main Street, listed telephone kiosk and postbox are in keeping with the architecture of the village and should be maintained.
- The granite set kerbs, cobbled and grass-mown verges are other features to be preserved.
- Lighting is subdued and appropriate to this village. Any future new lighting should be of a design and form that is sympathetic to the character of the village.
Acknowledgments:
Kettering Borough Council; Ashley Parish Council; Ashley Village Appraisal Group;
Ashley VDS Group; Villagers of Ashley 1999 & 2000.

Documents referred to in the text:
Kettering Borough Council Local Plan;
"Building on Tradition" The Rockingham Forest Countryside Design Summary (July 2000),
Ashley Village Appraisal 1992 ~ 95.

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