

Westow Village Design Statement was written, illustrated and designed entirely by a group of local residents. Advice was taken from the Planning Department of Ryedale District Council, who also helped with the printing. The residents of Westow were consulted through a questionnaire sent to all households, and through a public exercise of photographing and discussing what they think is important in and around the village. Comments were invited on the draft text that resulted from this consultation.

The Village Design Statement was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Ryedale District Council on 14 October 1999.



## WESTOW VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT



# Introduction

## The village

Westow is a small settlement with a population of about 300, much the same number as there were 100 years ago. It lies in the Derwent valley about 6 miles southwest of Malton, just off the Stamford Bridge road. Access is via minor roads only, making the village relatively quiet and undisturbed by passing traffic.

## What is a Village Design Statement?

The Village Design Statement describes Westow as it was and as it is today. It was written by a group of residents and highlights the qualities that are valued by those who live in the village. Its purpose is to contribute the views, local knowledge and interests of the villagers towards the future development of the village. The aim is to ensure that further development is based upon an appreciation of the past, and will protect and enhance the special qualities of the village.

## Who is it for?

Changes in the village can be brought about by small alterations to buildings and gardens, changes to open

spaces within the village, management of the surrounding land and by major developments. Small changes can be cumulative and eventually have a large impact on the appearance of the village, while large housing projects have an immediate impact.

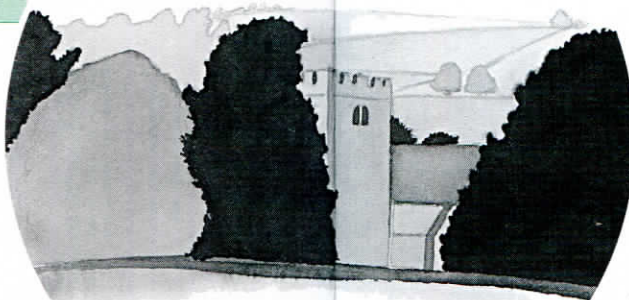
The Statement is therefore addressed to:

- ◆ statutory bodies and public authorities;
- ◆ planners, developers, builders, architects, designers and engineers;
- ◆ local residents and businesses.

## How does it work?

The Statement has been adopted by Ryedale District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Its recommendations will be taken into account when planning applications in the village are assessed, thus making sure that the views of local residents are properly considered. In this way it will support the Council's Local Plan.

It is also intended as a collective statement by residents to influence and guide local householders and landowners in the development of their properties. In this way we hope that changes in and around the village will be acceptable to the majority of the residents.



# The Community

## History

The earliest evidence of human settlement near to Westow can be found in the long barrow to the west of the village dating from c.4000 - 3500 BC, and the nearby round barrow c.2000 - 1500 BC. The discovery in 1846 of the Westow Bronze Hoard, dated c.1000 - 800 BC, is further evidence of the pre-historic history of the village. Westow probably became one of the first settlements in Danelaw after the great Viking invasion of c. 865 AD and its identity as a village probably dates from 876. It was never an Estate village and in the Mid 19th century consisted of farms between 70 - 100 acres in size. Two local farms bear the name Grange indicating possible ownership by Kirkham Priory. The church register is dated 1549, but it has a Norman font. A Primitive Methodist chapel built in 1879 is now demolished, and the Wesleyan chapel of 1879 is now a private house. The village school closed in the 1960s. Most of today's buildings date from the 17th to 20th centuries. The pattern of settlement reflects the agricultural base upon which the major part of the village was formed.

## The village today

Much of the old part of the village stands each side of Main Street, which bends to the east within the village so that development has occurred in an L shape. Although the older part of the village consists primarily of frontage development onto Main Street, the modern part of the village is to the north and consists of a variety of differing brick built bungalows and two storey houses.

The designation of much of the village as a Conservation Area reflects the attractiveness of the stone and old brick buildings, including 13 Listed Buildings. These include two storey hammer-dressed limestone cottages and houses, and the Grade II\*

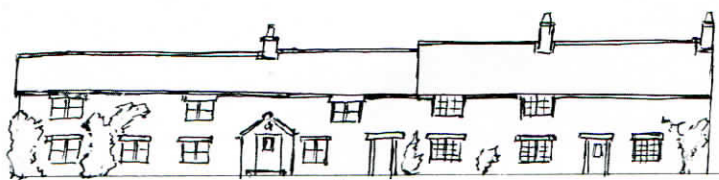
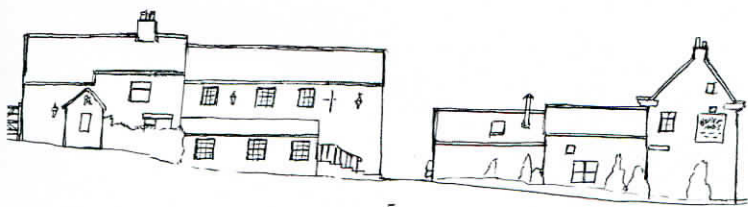
Westow Hall, built in 1700. The Conservation Area also contains a number of stone walls that contribute to the attractiveness of the village.

The economy of the village was based predominantly on agriculture and there are three farms within the built up area of the village. Today the population has a mixed employment pattern, with a significant proportion still involved in agriculture and horticulture. A Post Office and general store, a butcher, a tailor and a Public House are all found in the village. A travelling fishmonger, greengrocer, and the mobile library visit the village. There is a well-used village hall that was given to the village just after the First World War. The maintenance of these services is critical to the well being of the community.

## Guidelines

It is important to retain Westow's character as a working village. Barns and yards may be suitable for small-scale businesses; planning policies could encourage applications for their conversion to sympathetic business use that has no adverse environmental consequences. Such conversions should retain the form of the building. Conversion to residential use is an alternative. All conversions should match the existing style of the building. All new developments should be designed so that they blend in with the style of the majority of buildings in the Conservation Area.

The villagers do not support large-scale development, but should there a change to the Local Plan and new developments are allowed outside the current development limit, buildings should be constructed in stone. It is important that common open space with a green area should be included any proposal.

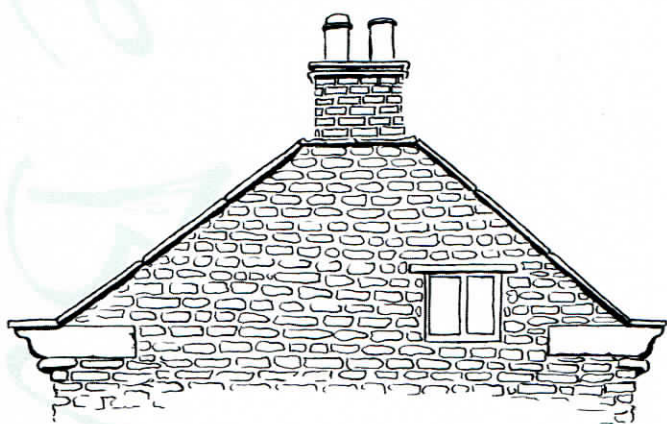




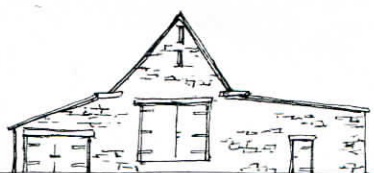
# The Buildings

There are features of the buildings in Westow, and traditions of local building style that should be encouraged. This section focuses on locally distinctive building types and materials that give the village its special identity.

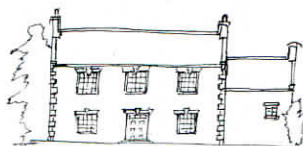
More than any other single component the choice of walling material establishes the character of the vernacular architecture. The major part of the village and its historic core is constructed from locally quarried, honey coloured, oolitic limestone. The coursing is either irregular with random snecking or more usually, regular coursing with grading of stone from bottom to top (see sketch).



Roofs are typically red clay Yorkshire pantiles, with some of the more substantial buildings having parapets to the gables with sandstone coping, terminating in decorated kneelers in limestone. The chimneys, which are central to the ridge, are of brick with stepping one course below the flaunching and a slate bed projecting just above the ridge line. The clay chimney pots are buff in colour and the ridge has sandstone capping stones. A feature of the village roofscape is the use of cat-slide upper windows piercing the roofs (see sketch).



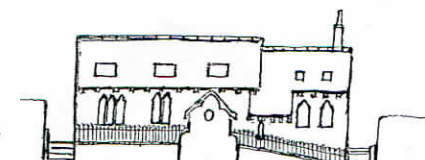
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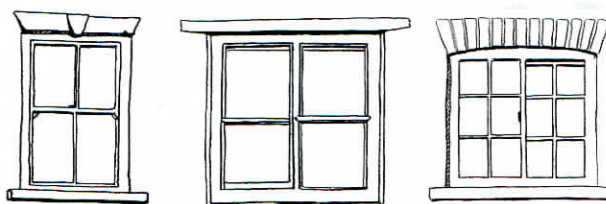
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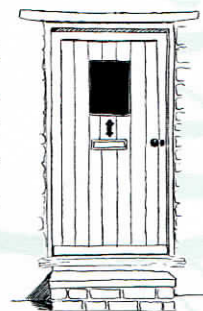
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The vernacular style of guttering is half-round, cast iron with rise and fall brackets.

Many of the cottages retain traditional horizontally sliding Yorkshire sash windows painted in a light colour. Other buildings have vertically sliding, sash box frame windows (see sketch).



Doors are typically heavy vertical boarding with battens internally, hung on iron pins and brackets, with a small rectangular light set centrally one third of the way down the door.



## Guidelines

Developers should follow both the Ryedale District Planning Guidelines Booklet and this Village Design Statement. Whatever the scale and type of new or conversion developments, two important principles should apply. Firstly, new buildings should follow in the traditions of their setting, reflecting the important characteristics that make our village special and different from other places. Secondly, standard designs are not appropriate in Westow.

- ◆ The styles of windows and doors should match those of both the original building where converting, and the vernacular style of Westow in new houses. There should be a similar relationship of solid and void in the walls. New doors and windows should be painted. Heavily stained timber or plastic frames do not match the vernacular style. Glazing bars of the small pane type are traditional to the village (see sketch);
- ◆ New buildings should be of stone with the characteristic features already described. Existing stonework should be retained in its original state, and the use of lime mortars is encouraged, with a brushed finish;
- ◆ Any new scheme should be based on the existing layout of the houses in the old part of the village. Housing density is important to the 'village feel'. Gardens should be enclosed by either hedges of indigenous species, or stone walls (see later sections).



# The Streets

All four approaches to the village are by way of narrow, high-banked lanes with no footpaths. The banking is mostly of soil and grass, but in places this has had a reinforcing stone facing which has now fallen into disrepair. These narrow approaches are attractive whilst additionally serving to maintain the village's rural isolation.

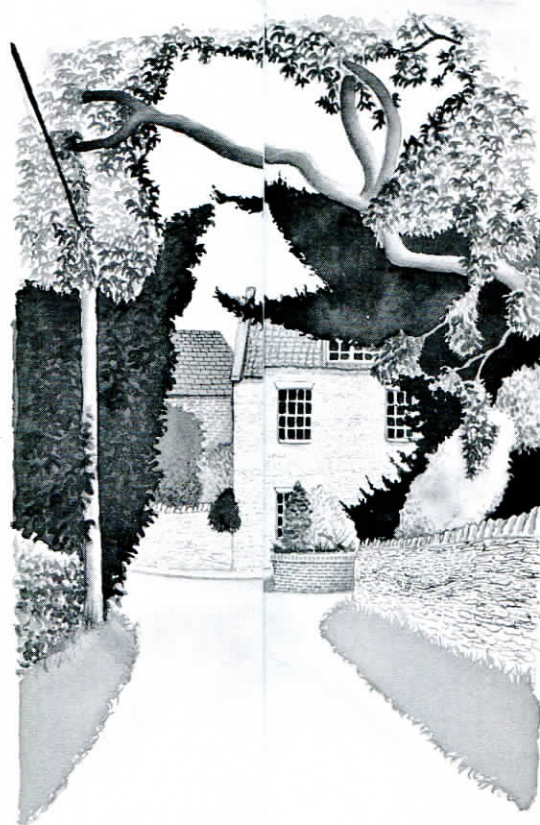
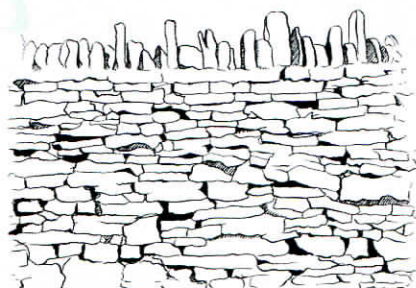
There is a 30 mph speed limit within the village. Along one side of Main Street is a footpath of variable width and on the other side a small grass bank. There are no further traffic calming measures in place and no parking restrictions. At certain times the area around the shops, 'phone box and pub which forms the heart of the village can become quite busy. Disregard for the speed limit may require calming measures, but these must be appropriate to the character of the village.

The older Chapel Lane and Westfield are similar in appearance to Main Street, while the more modern residential Orchards and Kirkham View have pavements both sides.

## Walls and Verges

Most of the properties within the conservation area have stone wall boundaries. Because of the topography many of these bordering Main Street are raised above street level. On one side the footpath has replaced the original retaining grass banks, and the original steps to many of the houses' front doors are still in place, extending well on to the pavement. Where there is no footpath the banks do not have kerb stones.

Whilst the banks are all grassed over, the walls are of several styles. Many are built of the same stone as their houses but originally laid dry and rough-coursed. Several however have been made from brick that is now



weathered into the surroundings. Some of the stone walling has been renovated and pointed, while some has been re-laid dry. Hedges and fences are also found.

At the new end of the village there is no general theme. The Orchards and Kirkham View are more uniform with fences being the norm. Here garden walls in isolation would now look out of place.

## Street fixtures and fittings

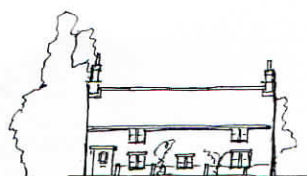
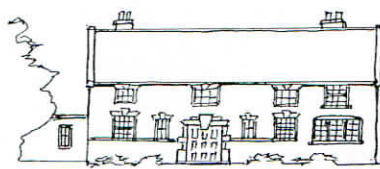
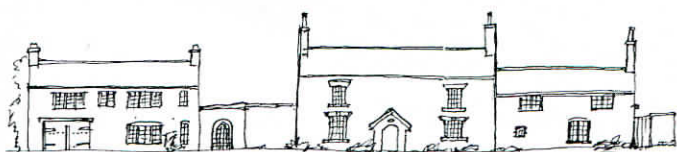
At the entrances to the village are standard council type, village name signs.

The war memorial is surrounded by the only real example of iron railings on the street although there is an example of iron fence work around the old chapel. The telephone box is the old red style and forms a focal point along with the old village pump. Sited as these are on the broad pavement by the pub and notice board, these form important features at the heart of the village.

There are street lights only in the new area of the village and these are of the inappropriate, orange neon type.

## Guidelines

- ◆ The current verges and pavements are adequate for the old part of the village and add to its charm;
- ◆ The speed limit needs to be enforced where it is being ignored;
- ◆ Stonewalls are an integral part of old village and should be constructed around new stone properties;
- ◆ A majority of villagers do not want any further street lighting. If it is obligatory in future developments, it should be white light, deflected downwards to minimise light pollution. Lamps should be mounted on appropriate standards or brackets;
- ◆ Future services should go underground;
- ◆ New benches and litter bins should be constructed in wood;
- ◆ Householders are encouraged to site satellite dishes on the rear of their properties.





# The Landscape and Wildlife

## Landscape

Westow lies between the western edge of the Yorkshire Wolds and the Howardian Hills. The underlying rock is oolitic limestone from the Jurassic period and the overlying soils vary in texture from sandy, through sandy loam to clay.

The topography is gently undulating, ranging in height from 20m close to the Derwent, to 99m at the top of Spy Hill. The village itself is at about 70m. The approaches to the village are all on country lanes with banked verges or walls. The first impression is of a secluded, welcoming village with warm stone buildings and walls, as well as brick houses, mature gardens and trees.

The first Ordnance Survey map (6 in. to 1 mile) published in 1862 shows the village surrounded by small fields, with small blocks of woodland and larger plantations such as Howsham Wood and Firby Wood. The main difference with today's map is the loss of perhaps half or more of the field boundaries. Most of these were probably hedges as many have hedgerow trees marked in them, or hedges over ditches. Two different patterns of fields can be detected on the early map. One is a system of long, thin fields from Low Lane, crossing High Lane and going down to a drainage ditch running east west. This may be the remnant of a strip farming system, indeed until 1997 there was old rigg and furrow grassland here. The other fields were more rectangular in shape and larger. The visual importance of the hedges and hedgerow trees can be seen in the views to and from the village.

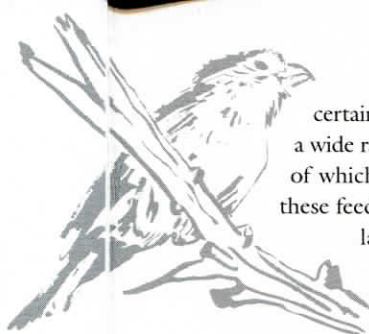
The past farming system probably reflected the soil types, with crops grown on the lighter soils and permanent grassland on the heavier, wetter clay. Today with under drainage and larger machinery, much of the grassland has been ploughed up. What remains is even more important for its contribution to the patchwork of field colours and biodiversity. There is only one small pond nearby today, but there are several springs and wells in and around the village.

The area of woodland has changed little since 1862, in fact it may have increased due to new planting in recent years.

The value of the local landscape has been recognised in the designation of the land to the west of the village as part of the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and to the east the Wolds Area of High Landscape Value.

## Wildlife

A mixed farm landscape of hedges, wooded ditches, grassland, arable fields and woodland supports a diversity of plants and animals. Many of the hedges are old as indicated by the number of woody species, e.g. 11 in the Church Lane hedge, with an average of six per 30m, making it about 600 years old. There are at least 13 species of tree and shrub in the churchyard. Hedgerow trees are both important landscape features and wildlife habitats. Howl Beck is a valuable corridor of woodland and unimproved grassland through the area. The diverse plant communities in the churchyard,



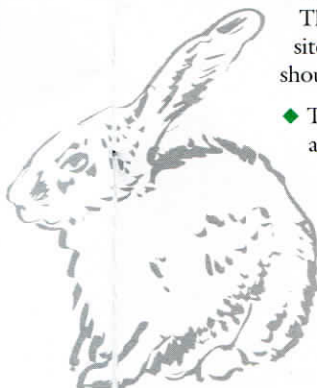
certain old grass fields and hedge bottoms support a wide range of insects and other invertebrates, many of which overwinter in the rough vegetation. On these feed the typical farmland birds such as skylark, lapwing, yellowhammer, sparrows, finches, and owls, as well as bats. There are several badger setts in the area, foxes live locally and there is plenty of cover for roe deer.

Within the village itself are some large, mature gardens with plenty of trees both young and old, and many stone walls hosting invertebrates, specialised plants and small mammals.

Of particular importance are the nearby section of the River Derwent and its banks, and some areas of adjacent woodland that have been designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Jeffry Bog is a Nature Reserve belonging to the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and managed for its wet grassland. Howsham Wood is an ancient woodland site, now being managed for its conservation and amenity values as well as timber production.

## Guidelines

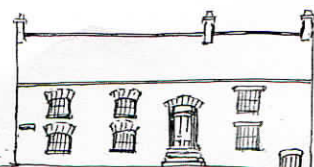
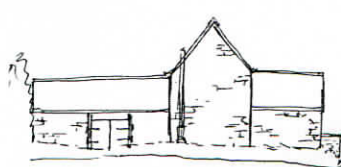
- ◆ The value of the surrounding countryside is recognised by the statutory designations. Landowners should be encouraged to retain and enhance the landscape;
- ◆ There should be no further removal of hedges in fields around the village;
- ◆ All remaining old grassland is of historic and conservation value and adds to the patchwork of fields;
- ◆ Improved hedge management, filling in gaps and adding to the stock of hedgerow trees will maintain the crucial importance of the hedge network to the landscape and wildlife;
- ◆ Advice on the above can be obtained from Ryedale DC and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. Grant aid is available from MAFF through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, and for new woodland from the Forestry Commission;
- ◆ Trees within the village add greatly to its appearance. Where appropriate new trees are desirable, particularly in the new part of the village. Native broad-leaved species are preferred. Old trees should be retained unless they pose a risk.
- ◆ The richness of the field and garden hedges can be continued by planting hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, hazel, dogwood, guelder rose and holly where new hedges are proposed;
- ◆ Old stone walls, as well as being lovely features, are habitats for lichens, mosses and other specialised plants. The cracks are home to invertebrates and nesting sites for birds such as blue tits. Maintenance of walls should recognise all these uses;
- ◆ The church and churchyard are important landscape and conservation features. The diversity of tree species needs to be retained, without any exotic introductions. Dead wood should be kept where safe. Regular mowing should be restricted to pathways and directly around certain graves. Occasional mowing of larger areas will encourage plant diversity as long as it is left until late July/August and the cuttings are removed.



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