



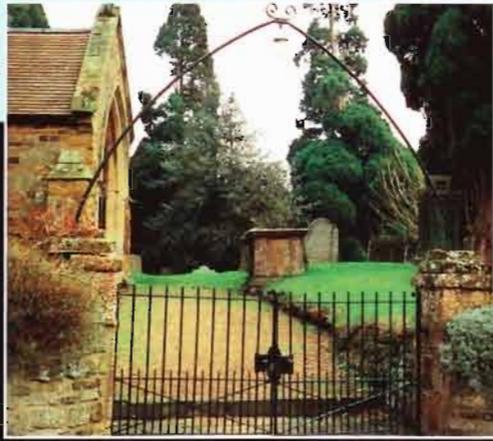
# Ravensthorpe Village Design Statement

## *Making Local Character Count*

*Adopted by Daventry District Council as  
Supplementary Planning Guidance*

*January 1999*





## RAVENSTHORPE VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

### *Mission*

Our aim is to raise awareness of design within Ravensthorpe and to produce a set of guidelines to influence the form of future development and preserve the character of the village.

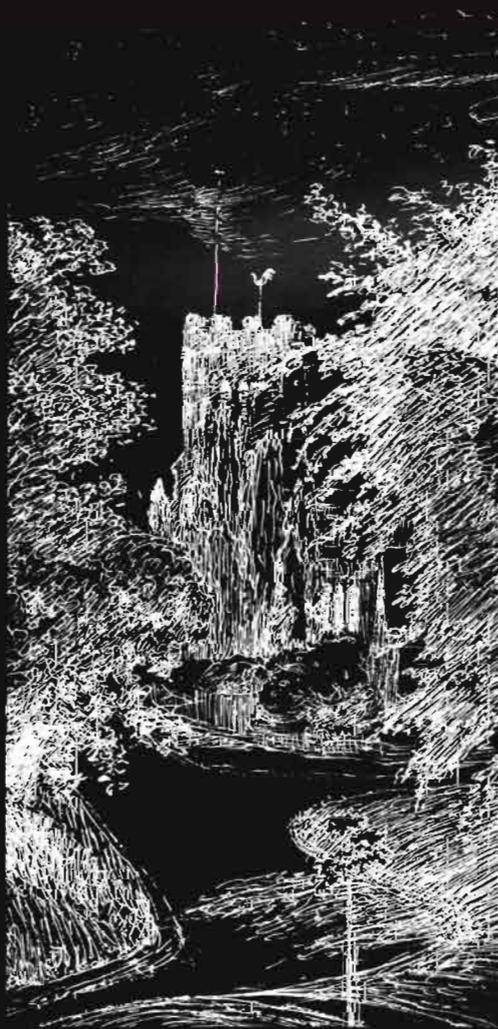
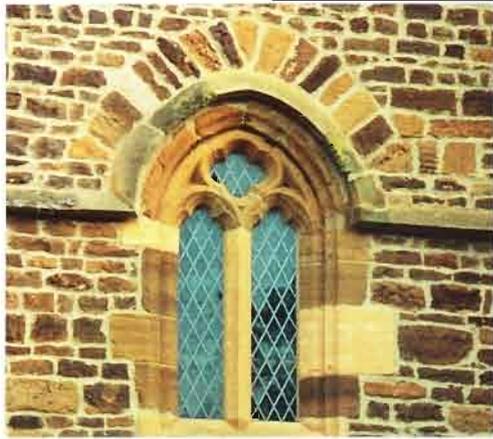


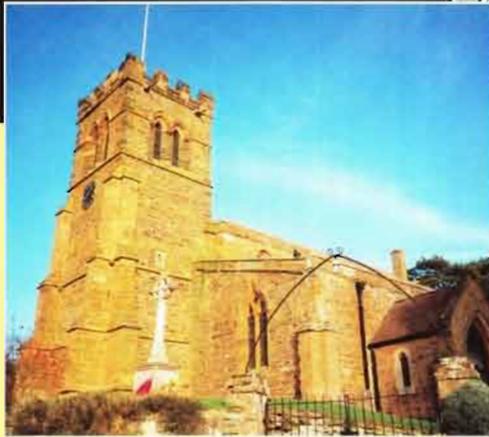
Illustration by Felicity Jones



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## INTRODUCTION

### *What is a Village Design Statement?*

The Village Design Statement (VDS) describes Ravensthorpe as it is today and highlights the qualities valued by its residents. This Statement has been produced by a group of villagers in consultation with all households in Ravensthorpe, so that local knowledge, views and ideas may contribute, ultimately, to improving the quality of our environment. In a village survey conducted in 1998, over 94% of respondents supported the preparation of a VDS for Ravensthorpe.

This VDS is aimed at ensuring that our local distinctiveness and character is taken into consideration when local planning decisions are being taken.

### *Who is it for?*

Change is brought about not only by large developments, but also by the smaller day-to-day adjustments to homes and gardens, open spaces, paths and hedges, which alter the look and feel of the whole village. The VDS is therefore addressed to:

- Planners, developers, builders, architects, designers, engineers
- Statutory bodies and public authorities
- Householders and local businesses
- Local community groups

### *How does the VDS work?*

*This VDS was approved by Daventry District Council Planning Committee on*

*13/01/99 as Supplementary Planning Guidance in conjunction with Daventry District Council Local Plan adopted in June 1997. Its recommendations will be taken into account when planning applications are assessed. In this way it will support the Local Plan as it affects Ravensthorpe and assist the work of the Parish Council and the District Council.*

## VILLAGE CONTEXT

### *Community*

Ravensthorpe is situated in northwest Northamptonshire, approximately midway between Northampton and Rugby, eight miles northeast of Daventry, and ten miles south of Market Harborough. The M1 motorway lies six miles to the west and the nearest railway stations are at Long Buckby, Northampton and Rugby.

The oldest surviving building in the village is the church of St Denys (from circa 1290). It has had more recent restoration and rebuilding and is the only structure in the village accorded Grade II\* Listed Building status.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century (1886-90), Ravensthorpe Reservoir was constructed in a valley to the northeast of the village and this remains the major landscape feature associated with Ravensthorpe today.

During the twentieth century Ravensthorpe has seen many changes to its building stock and local services, including the closure in 1962 and subsequent demolition of the village school and the demolition of the former Baptist Chapel in 1972. Today, Church Gardens and Scott Close occupy these





respective sites and the nearest schools are at East Haddon and Guilsborough. Other losses during the second half of this century include a shop and a public house.

The village population peaked historically in 1821 at 620. By 1961 it had fallen to 315. In 1998 Ravensthorpe had around 240 households and a population of approximately 650.

Groups and amenities within the village today include the church, village hall (opened in 1912), playing field (a Second World War memorial, opened in 1949), Women's Institute, bowls club, football club, mothers and toddlers group and keep fit.

### *Economy*

The second half of the twentieth century has seen a fundamental change in Ravensthorpe's economy. Where once most villagers were employed on the land or in local trades, the majority now commute to a wide variety of destinations, and most households have at least one car.

This is a general trend across the county and many local residents express great concern regarding the volume and speed of traffic through Ravensthorpe.

Local farms still operate, but require little extra labour and the dairy herds have disappeared. Farming however is still significant in the local economy.

Despite its small size Ravensthorpe is

not purely a commuter dormitory. Businesses within the village, apart from farming, include a plant nursery, civil engineering, replacement windows, extrusions distribution, garage, hi-tech engineering, educational mailing, bootmaking and various home-based services. There is one shop/Post Office and one public house.

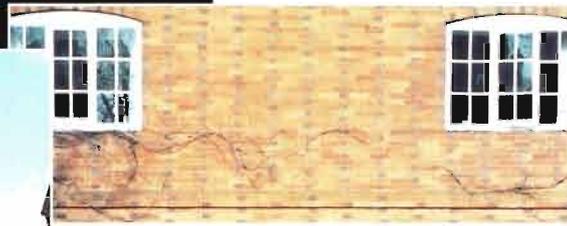
Most villagers appreciate amenities such as a local pub or shop and all residents should be encouraged to use these services.

### ECONOMY GUIDELINES

It is important to retain Ravensthorpe's character as a working village offering a variety of employment.

- **Businesses established in Ravensthorpe should be 'good neighbours' - not adversely affecting the community with unreasonable working hours, pollution of any kind, or generating unreasonable extra traffic volumes.**
- **Should new commercial development take place, the buildings should be of high quality, sympathetic with local building styles, of low visual impact and sites should be enhanced by the planting of native trees, hedgerows and shrubs.**
- **Older buildings may usefully and sympathetically be converted to appropriate Business or Light Industrial use.**





## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Ravensthorpe is situated in a Special Landscape Area on the fringe of the Northamptonshire Uplands. The village occupies a ridge, which is demarcated by the valleys of the Washbrook to the south and Coton Brook to the north. These two brooks meet one mile east of the village.

Like many villages in the vicinity, Ravensthorpe is located on an outcrop of Northampton Sand. This provides a well-drained site above underlying Upper Lias clay. To the northwest, parts of the outcrop are overlain by glacial deposits including sands, gravels and clays. The local geology is reflected in the older building fabric of warm-hued brown ironstone and cob (mud).

The Northamptonshire Uplands contain some of the County's finest landscapes, and the many attractive views out to north, south, east and west are Ravensthorpe's major asset. The locality is almost entirely agricultural.

Views to the north include Ravensthorpe Reservoir, which is an important landmark in the local landscape. There has been much planting of trees around the reservoir, and it attracts wildfowl and a wide variety of other birds. One section of the reservoir is set aside as a Country Wildlife Site. Although there is no sizeable woodland in the locality, the copses

around the reservoir, and the many trees in the hedges give the landscape a wooded appearance. Much of this dates from the 1795 Enclosure of the formerly open fields. The Enclosure hedges are important local features. They were kept thick and stout by hedge laying. This is still practiced today, although not as much as in the past.

The various approaches into Ravensthorpe show a contained settlement, defined by trees and hedges. This is especially true on the Coton and Guilsborough Roads to the north of the village. This Fringe Zone brings the countryside in close to the village centre. It is a very important feature of the village. See Plan.

Despite the amount of development, which has occurred over the last few decades, the majority has remained within the earlier village boundaries. See Plan.

Beyond the village boundaries, there are occasional, post-Enclosure farms sited out in their fields. More common are individual, or small collections, of barns and byres. These are usually of the local orange-red brick under tile or slate roofs.

## LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

**In the Local Plan, Ravensthorpe is a 'Restricted Infill Village'. Housing Policy HS 22 and clauses 4.88 to 4.92 apply.**

**Action recommended for householders, landowners, community groups.**

- Plant native species to retain landscape character and to benefit wildlife within the village. Local





native broadleaf trees include Ash, Elm, English Oak.

- Mature trees should be retained wherever possible, and tree roots should be protected by fencing during building work, trench digging and ploughing.
- The West and East Haddon Roads have 'avenues' of mature trees. Replacement of any diseased or uprooted trees along these routes will help to maintain their visual quality.
- Existing hedges should be retained where possible to form boundaries.
- Local hedgerow species should be encouraged rather than fast-growing evergreens. Local species include Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Crab Apple, Holly, Elm, Field Maple, Hazel and Ash.
- Hedge heights, except for specific screening purposes, should be approximately 2 metres maximum in the interests of highway safety and good neighbourly relations.
- Hedge laying is a traditional local skill and should be encouraged as it provides work and leads to healthier hedges.

The needs of wildlife are the concern of every one.

- Developers, landowners and householders can protect existing wildlife environments and help create new habitats in the form of copses, hedgerows, ditches and ponds, and open spaces of rough grassland. Advice is available from Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust.

## SETTLEMENT

Prior to twentieth century changes, Ravensthorpe's development was concentrated along the High Street and Church Hill, which runs north from the eastern end of the High Street, and the latter's east/west route. Many of

Ravensthorpe's major buildings are, or have been, sited around Church Hill and its junction with Guilsborough Road, including the church, vicarage, school, village green and Manor Farm.

Surviving cottages and farmhouses in these areas of Ravensthorpe generally are sited either directly onto the street, or set back slightly, with a boundary wall between house and pavement. Access is frequently to the side and behind, with outbuildings along the edge of plots. Such areas are the most densely settled, enclosed and informal parts of Ravensthorpe. Many older properties on the south side of the High Street still retain the long, narrow plots, which run down to the brook. Where older buildings have been replaced by modern layouts, the quality of the streetscape has been seriously weakened.

Despite much later construction, the compact nature of Ravensthorpe's settlement pattern still exists. The major change has been the growth of housing along what was known as 'back' lane of Guilsborough Road, which is an east/west route running to the north of the High Street. Ribbon development has occurred along Guilsborough Road's south side, and there have been several areas of building on its north side.

Further into the village, much of the newer housing has been laid out as culs-de-sac on former fields, allotments





and orchards. Whilst they have the advantage of privacy, they can also serve to isolate residents from the rest of the village.

Along the High Street, many of the older cottages have been demolished and, although their replacements are set further back from the street, with a lessening in the historical sense of enclosure, gaps remain between houses, which allow glimpses out of Ravensthorpe, making a vital visual connection with the open countryside. See Plan.

#### SETTLEMENT GUIDELINES

Ravensthorpe's settlement patterns vary greatly between old and new areas of the village. The countryside proximity enjoyed by most parts of the village must be preserved.

- Streets in the older parts of Ravensthorpe are characteristically winding, with the streetscape being revealed gradually. New houses in these areas should respect the tradition of building close to the street, either through the position of the house, or by means of construction of a suitable boundary wall.
- All Existing views within the village, and into the countryside should be protected.
- Infill development or lateral extensions to existing buildings should not interfere with views out of the village.

Generally culs-de-sac are not satisfactory for Village layout as they can

isolate their residents.

- Any new road/development should include, at least, a pedestrian access to other parts of the village in addition to and separate from the vehicle access.

#### *Important public and private spaces*

Public open spaces within Ravensthorpe include the Village Green, Churchyard, Playing Field and the allotments. There are also plans to plant a small area on the western edge of the village known as Crabtree Pit.

The Village Green forms a corridor stretching from the church towards the southern border of the village, which is enhanced by the open but tree-and shrub-filled gardens of the new houses on the south side of the Teeton Road. The two beech trees on the Green commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, and King George V's Silver Jubilee in 1935. There are other trees on the green commemorating important events. The Playing Field links the Teeton Road to the cul-de-sac of Church Gardens and offers wonderful views out across the reservoir to the north and towards Holdenby to the south. See Plan. A footpath from Church Gardens runs between the churchyard and allotments to connect with The Hollow on the northern edge of the village.

The remaining open fields bordering Guilsborough Road contribute especially to the countryside proximity, which is such an attractive aspect of the Ravensthorpe settlement. It is important to preserve this characteristic throughout the village.

The village contains a number of visually important private spaces. These may be gardens or paddocks that are





part of, or immediately adjacent to, domestic or other property.

## OPEN SPACE GUIDELINES

See Housing Policy HS 22 and subsequent clauses.

- Ravensthorpe's open spaces are very important to the visual quality of the village.
- The allotments today are but a fraction of the land they once occupied and they should be retained as allotments.
- The Playing Field, the field opposite Home Farm, and the triangular small-holding opposite the end of Little Lane and the fields to the north of Guilsborough Road are examples of just some of the green boundaries of Ravensthorpe. This "countryside proximity" characteristic should be protected.

## BUILDINGS

The church tower of St Denys remains the tallest structure in Ravensthorpe. There are some 37 individually listed structures in the village, including the K6 telephone kiosk, which was listed in 1990 (for further details contact the conservation officer at DDC). The majority of these structures are located in and around Church Hill and High Street. Other parts of the village are wholly, or predominantly, later twentieth century. The overall result is a wide variety of building types. For the character of distinct areas, please refer to the map in the centre pages.

This section focuses on locally distinctive building types and materials, which have given Ravensthorpe its specific identity.

### *Height, scale and density*

Generally the surviving older housing



is of moderate proportion (1 1/2- 2 storeys). It is high in density with a strong sense of enclosure.

In contrast, more recent housing is characteristically set well back in its plot, and of moderate density (being mostly detached). However, in terms of scale, the newer housing is much larger due to increased modern storey heights and a tendency to extend into former roof space.

### *Mixture of sizes, styles and types*

Some of the older properties have wide street frontages, but little depth. Others have been built sideways on, with a narrow gable end abutting the street. Many of this latter type have been lost in Ravensthorpe during this century. Certain houses are larger than the surrounding cottages, and are sometimes set slightly back, behind a boundary wall.

The more recent buildings have increasingly become similar to each other in size, style and type. Most are detached with four or more bedrooms, and many of the plots' street front space is given over to large garages and areas of hard standing for car parking. There is little positive sense of enclosure, with small, or non-existent boundary walls, hedges or fences.

A large proportion of development in recent decades has consisted of detached, 'executive' housing. There is some imbalance in numbers between





larger and smaller dwellings in Ravensthorpe.

### *Boundary walls*

Many of the pre-twentieth century mud boundary walls are listed, and are an important feature of Ravensthorpe. Other fine walls include the redbrick examples along the churchyard's southern boundary, and at No 2 Church Hill. See plan.

### *Locally distinctive materials*

Ironstone, a local sandstone with a warm tone, has been used for most of Ravensthorpe's larger buildings. It has also been used for many cottage and boundary wall plinths.

Brick became fashionable from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as is demonstrated by the brick wing added to the Old Vicarage which was constructed in ironstone. The local bricks are an orange-red and simple patterns, using vitrified dark blue or black headers, can be seen in many Ravensthorpe houses and walls.

Important local features include the number of cottages, barns and boundary walls constructed partly from cob. This was locally-dug clay-soil mixed together with other materials such as barley and then built up in horizontal layers, or 'lifts', on top of a stone or brick plinth. This material is long lasting, as long as it receives regular light maintenance.

Traditionally, many of Ravensthorpe's



roofs were of longstraw thatch, with flush ridges. Ravensthorpe now has only one example left (the village shop). From the 1850s, when corrugated metal became available and affordable, many failing thatched roofs were overlaid with this sheeting, and some are still covered with this today. Many of the cob boundary walls would have been protected by a thatch coping.

### *Building details*

Ravensthorpe contains some unexpectedly fine details, such as the ashlar stone chimney and parapet kneelers on the roof of Hall's Farmhouse, and the tall brick chimneys with rounded corners on The Cottage, Coton Road. See Plan.

Manor Farmhouse, Guilsborough Road, has a brick string course at first floor level, chequer-work brick walling and a fine, six-panelled front door with flat wooden hood.

## BUILDING GUIDELINES

Traditions of local building can be the stimulus to new architecture of originality and imagination.

- The keyword should be **QUALITY** in materials and design to avoid a 'mass-produced' look which can be seen anywhere in Britain today.
- The colour, texture and patterns of long-standing locally distinctive materials such as ironstone, mud and chequer-work brick should be a source of inspiration for new buildings (the local orange-red brick colour has rarely been used in recent buildings).
- Cob could be used for boundary walls and, possibly buildings. The material has good thermal properties.
- Concrete block, rendered in a way





sympathetic to the traditional local rural style would have at least a visual connection to existing rendered cob housing.

- New buildings with thatched roofs have recently been constructed in the general vicinity.
- In Ravensthorpe longstraw thatch with plain flush ridges is the traditional local type. Encouragement should be given to reinstate thatch, where appropriate.
- If several new buildings are permitted on one site, variation in design and plan layout will help to avoid monotonous repetition of one house type.
- Where permission is granted for new housing on rising ground, extra care must be taken to ensure that the new building will not over-dominate its neighbours, or detract from village views.
- New development should not be allowed if it is too large in scale and massing for the plot.

Cars owned by residents living in older houses are generally either left on the street or in outbuildings to the side and rear of the house. Newer housing often has large garaging blocks to front or side.

- Ravensthorpe's typical settings and garden forms should be understood and large areas of hard surfacing at the front of houses avoided.
- New-build garages should not obscure house fronts. New garages should relate to the house to which they belong and be in sympathy with surrounding property in terms of design, materials and construction. Parking areas should be located to the side or the rear, particularly in older sections of the village.
- Boundary walls are important features in Ravensthorpe.
- Any development should retain

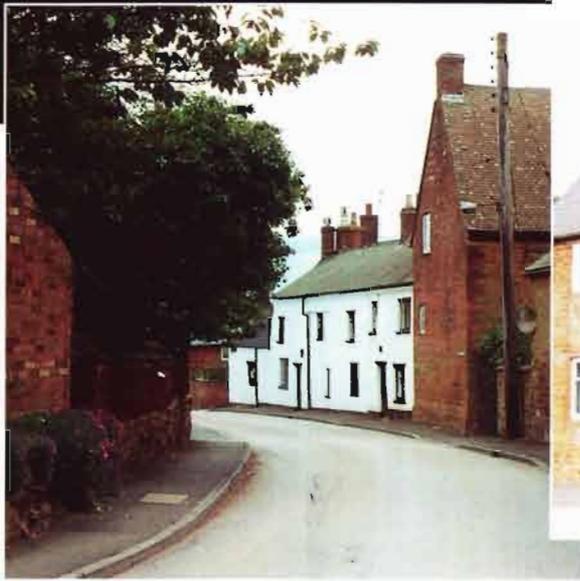
existing walls or keep alterations to a minimum.

- New development in old sections of the village should be encouraged to include a sense of enclosure rather than open-plan front gardens.
- New walls in older parts of the village should be built in a material sympathetic to that locality.
- Existing older buildings should be maintained using original or sympathetic materials and details.

Of particular importance to Ravensthorpe's historic fabric:

- Ironstone can erode rapidly. This process is quickened by repointing in hard cement mortars. Mortar must be weaker than the surrounding stonework and should be lime rather than cement based.
- Cob structures need little, but regular maintenance. A wide eaves and a plinth kept clear from surrounding ground level and vegetation are crucial. Plinths and caps should not be covered by paint or render. Any render or paint applied must be 'breathable' to let water in and out safely. Earth and lime renders and a limewash over, are recommended. If alterations or extensions are planned to a cob structure owners are strongly advised to employ a professional experienced in building with mud.
- Replacement doors and windows should retain the scale, detail and materials of original openings.
- Replacement of an old window or door should be a last resort when attempts at repair have conclusively failed.
- Older brickwork should be retained in its original state, characteristically unpainted. Lime rather than cement based mortar should be used for any repointing.





### HIGHWAYS AND STREET FURNITURE

In a recent questionnaire, many villagers expressed concern at the speed and quantity of traffic, which passes through Ravensthorpe. Calming options need to be carefully considered as many merely serve to create noise pollution for roadside residents (rumble strips, humps, chicanes) or weaken the visual quality of the streetscape through excess signage. In the past, rigidly adhered-to Highway Regulations have resulted in urban elements creeping in to the village streetscape, including concrete kerbs, large visibility splays and urban street lighting.

Iron railings have disappeared from Ravensthorpe, removed for armaments production during the war.

The village has many seats dotted around it, including several overlooking fine views.

Overhead wires and telegraph poles detract from the quality of the streetscape. The statutory bodies responsible for utilities need to be encouraged to conceal installations underground in future.

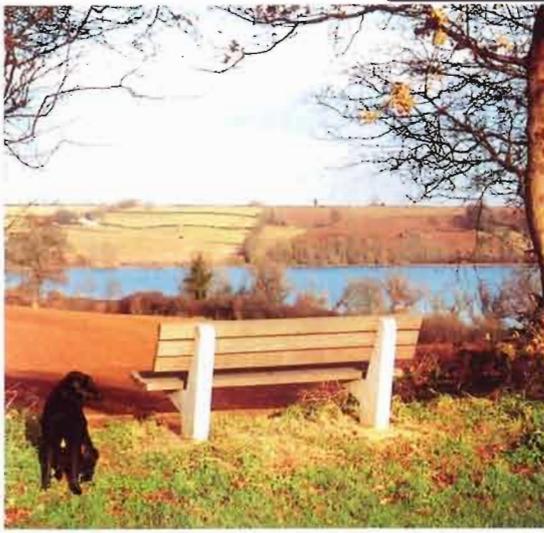
### HIGHWAY GUIDELINES

- 'Rural England' (October 1995), encourages new roads, footpaths and signs to be built to standards appropriate to their rural location.
- Where rural verges remain, such as Little Lane and the roads leading out of Ravensthorpe, they should be preserved.
- Older houses directly on the street currently have tarmacked pavement abutting the house walls. Rain 'splashback' from the hard paving can enter old fabric and cause damp problems. Thin gravel strips (French Drains) between houses and pavements may alleviate this problem in the future. The fall of the pavement should run towards the road and away from house walls.

### STREET FURNITURE GUIDELINES

- Quality street furniture should suit its Ravensthorpe context: urban street lighting is out of place.
- Rural Village' levels of lighting should be preserved: downlighting using white light rather than orange is preferred.
- Private security lights should be muted: and carefully sited to light the required area without forming a hazard to road users or annoyance to neighbours.





## CONSERVATION A SELF ASSESSMENT GUIDE

If you wish to make external improvements, changes or alterations to your property, paintwork, signs, garden or surrounds then perhaps you would consider the following;

- Look at the front of the property from some distance. Note down original and distinctive features. Are there any that are more recent or seem out of character with the original with your own property or those nearby?
- Now try standing closer to the house and note the details of the building. Roof, Chimneys, Eaves, Windows, Doors, Brick or Stonework Etc.
- Next, repeat the process on each side of your property in order to get the full picture.
- Then you might examine the guidelines within this document.
- Consider the changes that you have in mind. Will they be in keeping with the characteristics and details that you have noted down? If not consider how else your ultimate objective may be achieved in a manner that preserves the heritage of the property.
- Might the changes that you have in mind remove some of the uncharacteristic features that you have noted?
- Finally, it is suggested that you check your ideas with a builder or architect who may suggest improvements.

## GUIDELINES SUMMARY

- 1 Businesses established should be "Good Neighbours" in all senses.
- 2 Commercial development should be of the highest quality standard.
- 3 Older buildings may be sensitively converted for business use.
- 4 Historic boundaries should be maintained.
- 5 Protect trees and hedgerows.
- 6 Plant native species.
- 7 Protect wildlife.
- 8 Respect the ancient settlement patterns.
- 9 Protect views into and out of the village.
- 10 Integrate new development carefully.
- 11 Preserve the open spaces that remain.
- 12 Conserve the fabric of older buildings with appropriate treatment and material.
- 13 Newer buildings should respect the heritage of the village and be in sympathy with neighbouring properties.
- 14 Highways, signs, paths, street furniture and fittings should suit the traditional local rural context.

4th January 1999





# Ravensthorpe Village Design Statement

## STEERING GROUP

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We would like to thank all those in Ravensthorpe who attended meetings, the workshop, contributed to the drafting and participated in the other activities without which this VDS could not have been completed. We also would like to acknowledge the tremendous help and support of the Daventry District Council and Northamptonshire ACRE.

Further copies of this statement can be obtained from Daventry District Council Planning Department, telephone 01327 302586/7.



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