

10.14 SETTLEMENT INSETS – SKILGATE

Policy Profile

Settlement Classification: Small Village (SP/1)
Landscape Conservation:
Landscape Character Area: The Brendon Fringe¹ (LC/3)

Location and Character

10.14.1 Skilgate is a small isolated village on the southern slopes of Haddon Hill. It is set approximately 3 miles from Upton and 6 miles from Dulverton and Bampton, and all the roads leading from the settlement are narrow and very poorly aligned. The village's most notable quality is that it has remained largely unaltered during the last Century. It has seen a small amount of post-war development and this has been concentrated about the road junction in the village core. The village is built on the descent to the valley of a tributary of the River Bathern. Land within the village is Grade 3 agricultural land with Grade 4 all around.² Skilgate Wood is a County Wildlife Site described as a broadleaved semi-natural woodland with areas of conifer plantation (see Policy NC/2).

Settlement Policy

10.14.2 Policy SP/1 defines Skilgate as a Small Village, however, as is the case for a number of small villages in the Plan area, there is limited scope for development. Any development should take the form of infilling, conversion or redevelopment.

Population and Housing

10.14.3 The Parish population of Skilgate was 96 in 2001³ and remained unchanged from the 1981 Census.⁴ Since 1974 there have been two detached dwellings built in the village (permission was granted in 1986), however in recent years applications have more often been refused. An example is the application made to develop the field opposite John the Baptist's Church. The grounds for refusal were that this open space contributes greatly to the character of Skilgate, which is a loose-knit group of houses, and further ribbon-type development would be contrary to the established form and layout of the village. Policy R/5 will continue to safeguard this site from development.

Employment

10.14.4 Apart from a livestock and general haulage business, Skilgate is basically an agricultural settlement with Townsend Farm and Pitt Farm within the village, and Court Place Farm outside the village limits.

¹ WS Atkins South West; West Somerset Landscape Character Assessment; West Somerset District Council; 1999

² Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales; Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food; 1988

³ Office for National Statistics; 2001 Census: Neighbourhood Statistics – West Somerset; ONS; 2004 (data-set)

⁴ Office of Population Censuses and Surveys; Census 1981: Ward and Civil Parish Monitor: Somerset; HMSO; 1984. ISBN 0 903933 85 3

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Shops and Services

10.14.5 Although the fabric of the village remains unchanged, Skilgate has not escaped the general trend in declining rural services. A private dwelling is all that remains of the post office and the nearest service centre is some 6 miles away, although there is a garage and public house at the neighbouring settlement of Upton.

Environment and Conservation

10.14.6 St. John's is the Parish Church of Skilgate. It, along with four other buildings and structures, is listed and subject to Policies LB/1 and LB/2.⁵ According to records, none of the buildings date back to any earlier than the nineteenth century apart from the Church, which has features dating from the fourteenth century (see Policies AH/2 and AH/3).

10.14.7 The open structure of the village will be retained, and development impinging on the more important open areas resisted (see Policy R/5). Views out of the village are pleasant despite it being in a valley and relatively enclosed.

10.14.8 Retaining hedges and natural stone walls in the village have been protected as part of development control and this will become policy in Skilgate as with many other villages in the Plan area.

⁵ Department of the Environment; List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest: District of West Somerset, Exmoor National Park/Somerset (Parishes of Brompton Ralph, Brompton Regis, Brushford, Clatworthy, Dulverton, Huish Champflower, Skilgate and, Upton) (as amended); Department of the Environment; 1986.

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