

Cottenham Village Design Group

Planning application comments

S/0197/03/O

Hawthorn Farm, Twentypence Road, Cottenham

Agricultural Dwelling

The Design Group opposes the extension of building onto agricultural land outside the village envelope on principal as alien to the historic settlement pattern of the village and the wide-open views of the landscape. However, where a clear and unambiguous case can be made that a development is essential for viable and sustainable agricultural purposes we would not normally oppose this. Should this development go ahead we hope to see a well-designed proposal using locally appropriate design materials and building forms. A landscaping plan utilising native species could help to minimise the visual impact on the landscape.

'Plant native species to retain landscape character ... This is a landscape of wide views and open spaces' (Cottenham Village Design Statement p.10)

'Settlement patterns are key to the distinctive nature of the village' (CVDS p.12)

'In the case of significant landscape developments or changes, a professional design scheme should be prepared for consultation ...' (CVDS p.9)

'avoid pattern-book designs ... Respect local characteristics ... Refer to local building forms and proportion ... Use good quality materials appropriate to Cottenham.' (CVDS p.23)

'it is important to ensure positive opportunities for high quality contemporary architecture. Imaginative and original design can extend and renew the distinctive character and traditions of Cottenham's built environment' (CVDS p.22)

S/0220/03/F

28/30 Histon Road, Cottenham

Erection of 6 Houses and Garages (Plots 2-7)

We commented at length on a previous version of this application (S/2410/01/F). Although we felt that the design quality was above average, overall it failed sufficiently to reflect local materials and building forms. Where pastiche design is attempted it is vital that historic design, materials and detailing are accurately reproduced, that designs are not muddled between styles and periods, and that local forms and materials are respected. These principals are key to the Design Statement. We commented in some detail on the previous application in the hope of seeing some improvement; in the absence of such improvement we now object to this proposal.

However, although we welcome some features, for example the use of brick flat arches, we are disappointed to find that there are still serious deficiencies in the designs. The overall impression is not locally distinctive, but rather suggestive of plans prepared for another location (the way in which some doors open into confined spaces may suggest that this is actually the case). Overall, the house designs are too complex, with multiple projecting gables and dormers; Cottenham houses are characteristically restrained and generally flat-fronted, without dormers to two-storey houses. Since successful, and locally appropriate, detail is key to the success of pastiche designs, some detailed comments follow:

Unit 2 - This design is one of the simplest, and most appropriate to Cottenham in style and materials, although a flatter, symmetrical front would be more suitable.

Unit 3 - this is a very over-complicated design. The rendered projection to the SE elevation is particularly objectionable; it is ungainly, and does not seem to draw on the same historic models or proportions as the rest of the house. Such a mixture of brick and render is very atypical of Cottenham.

The use of red brick detailing to a yellow brick house is found in Cottenham on houses built after c.1870, but in this case will further complicate the appearance. From some angles the large garage block will obscure the house front in an unfortunate manner.

Unit 4 - as for unit 3, the mixture of brick with a central rendered section is not appropriate to Cottenham. Yellow brick (which we hope would actually be of a buff appearance) is, but is generally found in combination with slate rather than plain tiles. The use of a 'gabled' roof is particularly objectionable - not only is it arguably rather ungainly, it is also a highly distinctive feature which is wholly alien to this village; a locally distinctive feature employed in entirely the wrong locality.

Unit 5 - this is a fairly successful design, of broadly early C18th appearance. With this in mind, the use of red brick and plain tiles would be appropriate for this design; the large-pane glazing is less suitable. However, the validity of using this architectural style in Cottenham is doubtful, since this style of house is not found in the village. In fact, the Cottenham is remarkable for the very nearly total absence of houses of this type.

Unit 6 & 7 - The design of these houses is simpler, although again the use of dormers to the front and the projecting central section are not really appropriate in a Cottenham context. We are very unhappy with the proposed use of 'red/brown stock brick'. A yellow/buff brick would be appropriate, and red brick might be acceptable in limited doses, but brown or red/brown would have no historic precedent in the village and would be unacceptably alien. Slate would be a more locally appropriate roofing material for these designs. The addition of weatherboarding to the rear elevation seems an unnecessary variation; in a Cottenham context weatherboarding has been generally confined to outbuildings.

Layout - The layout appears little changed, and the same comments apply: although the road layout is rectilinear, appropriate to Cottenham, this remains a cul-de-sac development, and therefore potentially lacking social integration with the rest of village. Although some areas are marked as amenity areas, we are concerned that fencing them with 1.4m post and rail fences may limit their function as such.

Extracts from Cottenham Village Design Statement (Supplementary Planning Guidance):

'Buildings in new developments, both in estates and in groups, should acknowledge their Cottenham context and avoid pattern-book designs ... Respect local characteristics ... Refer to local building forms and proportion ... Use good quality materials appropriate to Cottenham. Refer to locally distinctive details: accurately match these to the chosen building form: avoid mixing styles or historical references in the same building ... New build garages and car parking areas should not obscure house fronts. (p.23)

'The striking characteristic of Cottenham is the large number of mid-19th century farmhouses or villas ... substantial, dignified flat-fronted houses built of yellow brick with slate roofs ... smaller 19th century houses are similarly flat-fronted and undecorated.' (p.19)

'avoid closes and cul-de-sacs' (p12)

'allow for informal recreation or meeting spaces ... create and plant incidental open spaces' (p18)

Summary

Since the developer has not amended the original application to make it more appropriate for a Cottenham context, we object to the proposal. These designs would be more appropriate if:

- The great majority of the brickwork were plain buff
- Red brick appeared sparingly in restrained detailing or one whole house
- Brown or red/brown brick was not used at all
- The great majority of roofing were in slate with grey ridges
- Flat tiles were used sparingly
- Rendered projections were eliminated
- Dormers to prominent elevations were kept to a minimum
- The facades were plainer, flatter and less complex
- Garages did not obscure the house fronts
- The gabled roof design was eliminated
- The 'amenity areas' were more accessible

S/0245/03/RM
Land R/O, 113 Rampton Road, Cottenham
Bungalow

The Cottenham Village Design Statement accepts the principal of developing infill plots, where suitable. In this case the plot is within the village envelope and of sufficient size, while the development would not be easily seen, either from within or from outside the village. We therefore do not object to the development of this plot.

However, we do feel that this is a dull and unimaginative pattern-book design with no reference to local building traditions or forms. We would be much happier to see a specially designed building on this site which drew on local traditions and used locally appropriate materials (for example buff brick and natural slate).

'Encouragement will be given to well-designed buildings on appropriate infill plots.' (Cottenham Village Design Statement p.22)

'avoid pattern-book designs ... Respect local characteristics ... Refer to local building forms and proportion ... Use good quality materials appropriate to Cottenham.' (Cottenham Village Design Statement p.23)

'it is important to ensure positive opportunities for high quality contemporary architecture. Imaginative and original design can extend and renew the distinctive character and traditions of Cottenham's built environment' (Cottenham Village Design Statement p.22)

S/0255/03/F
15A Lyles Road, Cottenham
Extension

We do not object to this proposal. However, some aspects of the design are not wholly satisfactory.

The extension might integrate better if matching materials were used throughout, rather than being mixed with rendered and tiled sections. Using coloured tiles around a subsidiary entrance on the front elevation may create an ambiguity over the status of the front door.

Overall, this will create a large flat-roofed area, and we are uncertain over the design of the projecting roof light. We feel that this may be a missed opportunity to create a more substantial looking pitched roof extension.

'Buildings should be maintained using original or sympathetic materials and details.' (Cottenham Village Design Statement p.22)

S/0293/LB
332 High Street
Garden Room

On a listed building within the Cottenham conservation area we would expect a very high standard of application, both in terms of design, and of the plans submitted. In this case we feel that the poor photocopies in the file are insufficiently clear and inadequately detailed for us to be able to judge this application as we might wish. There is insufficient information in the application to assess the importance of the fabric which would be lost by creating a new doorway and blocking a window. There is no assessment of the way in which the new structure connects physically to the old, or how removable it might be in the future.

In terms of materials the application seems largely satisfactory; while solid oak is not a particularly characteristic local material it generally weathers to combine well with other materials. Plain tiles should be of buff colour, similar to locally produced originals; it may be hard to obtain reclaimed examples of these, but new handmade examples are now available locally and may be a better choice.

We feel that the design of the proposed garden room is unsatisfactory. The present simple gable elevation is characteristic of earlier local forms. The new design seems far more complex than necessary and appears to be an unsatisfactory hybrid between a flat and pitched roofed structure.

While perceptions of design will vary from individual to individual, many would accept that the visual success of historic timber buildings rests, at least in part, on the way in which their form clearly expresses their structure. In this proposal the disposition of the timbers appears to be largely cosmetic, and we are concerned that this will lead to a superficial and unsatisfactory appearance. In particular, the gabled central section does not appear to integrate well with the rest of the proposal, there are no clear main structural members and the curved braces seem rather small to fulfil their implied function.

We therefore object to this proposal.

Respect local characteristics ... Refer to local building forms and proportion ... Use good quality materials appropriate to Cottenham. Refer to locally distinctive details: accurately match these to the chosen building form: avoid mixing styles or historical references in the same building' (Cottenham Village Design Statement p.23)