

# Cottenham Village Design Group

## Planning application comments

**S/1435/09/F**

**Cottenham Village College, High Street, Cottenham – Extension & erection of new building to form new 6th form facility with associated car/cycle parking, landscaping & drainage. Relocation of 3 existing temporary classrooms**

We welcome this well-presented application which will extend the range of educational opportunities available to the local community and increase the level of employment within the village.

However, we do feel that the site is becoming overcrowded, reducing the options available for access to and through the site and leaving too little outdoor space to accommodate existing and new student communities. We suggest that an outline plan for the longer term development / re-development of the whole site is needed to allow this proposal to be fully assessed. We consider it likely that any longer term plan would require some development within the Cambridge Green Belt – this may be a better solution than forcing overdevelopment within the current village framework.

We suggest that the options available for future development of the site will be significantly reduced if this development is completed as proposed. For example, the location of the technology building will limit development options for the Sports Centre (an important facility for the community) as well as making access to the existing sports facilities more difficult. The split sixth form accommodation also seems undesirable from a site circulation and cohesion perspective; we would prefer to see a solution which co-located these buildings.

We support a sustainable approach to transport policy including provision of good access links and cycle parking to encourage short distance trips by walking and cycling and a preference for a modal shift from car to public transport. However, we note that no net additional parking is proposed to support the new accommodation. All new parking spaces simply replace existing spaces lost during the development or formalise existing informal provision – spaces that we see used for parking on a regular basis today. Also, given the very large expected catchment area for the new provision and the limited public transport into this area, we suggest it is a mistake to assume that no students will drive (Transport Assessment, page 20) – although we do accept that the proportion may be quite small. We therefore conclude that the level of parking provision falls very short of what will be needed to support the additional staff and students and have strong concerns regarding the resultant overflow parking onto village streets. This aspect of the proposal must be re-visited.

We also consider that the level of cycle parking proposed is minimal – we'd hope that the upgrading of the cycle path to Histon and beyond committed for 2010 and the new provision associated with the guided busway together with the college's sustainable transport policy would see the proportion of students that cycle increase beyond the level assumed. In addition, no provision at all seems to have been made for moped / motor scooter parking – a favoured choice of transport within the age group targeted.

We generally support the imaginative designs for the new buildings and the materials chosen, particularly the main sixth form building. We are less convinced by the technology building

where we have minor concerns regarding the use of so much brown cedar and the maintenance difficulties that might result from this and also the white fabric roof.

The proposed solar panels, air circulation 'chimneys' and sedum roofs are all positive devices that we support as means to help reduce the development's carbon footprint.

We appreciate that the tightness of the site and the need to formalise more parking spaces will require removal of some trees. However, we cannot support the removal of the two cedar trees (numbers 66 and 67, both with a documented estimated remaining contribution of 50 years) from the front of the site – we consider these to be a feature which must not be removed simply to provide a few parking spaces. The green space to the front of the college and the many trees within it are of significant visual importance to the wider village.

Finally, we are pleased to note the consideration given in the Planning Statement to the guidelines in the Village Design Statement. However, we do feel that the community consultation opportunity referred to in this same document was of limited value as notification regarding this appears to have been minimal.

*'E/1: It is important to retain and develop Cottenham's character as a working village offering a variety of employment.'* (Cottenham Village Design Statement p.3)

*'The Village College is the main focus for community activity. The Sports Centre and outdoor swimming pool at the Village College, ..., have all increased the scope of what is available locally. ... The increasing population continues to require the expansion of the primary and secondary schools and adds to the demand for improved community facilities, such as ... and extending the Sports Centre at the Village College.'* (Design Statement p.2)

*'Other spaces have more limited functions, but play a positive role in the village landscape. These include: ... the frontage to the Village College.'* (Design Statement p.8)

*'E/2: Improve cycle parking adjacent to retail outlets and community buildings.'* (Design Statement p.3)

*'L/3: New developments on the village edge should give high priority to landscape design and management of light pollution, to protect and enhance the external view of the village. Do not form a stark edge to the village, or spoil the outside view by neglecting the backs of gardens or buildings.'* (Design Statement p.6)

*'B/1: High-quality contemporary architecture is encouraged.'* (Design Statement p.18)

*'B/3: Relationships between buildings are as important as the design of buildings themselves.'* (Design Statement p.19)

*'B/9: Carefully considered local energy saving or generating solutions should be supported. Solar panels and other devices should be encouraged, so long as they can be installed without detrimental effect on the visual environment of the village. Locations should be selected for solar panels or similar equipment based on maximising energy savings and minimising disruption to the appearance or fabric of the building.'* (Design Statement p.19)

*'C/1: Developers and planners should consult the Village Design Statement, which reflects the views of the community.'* (Design Statement p.2)

**S/1498/09/F**

**Cottenham Village College, High Street, Cottenham – Retention of Three 5 Bay  
Modular Classrooms Until End of 2014**

It is important to provide appropriate facilities for education within the village. We note that these temporary structures have been on-site for quite some time now and we therefore welcome the plan to replace these with permanent provision within the new sixth form building and the later redevelopment of The Centre School. We support the retention of these temporary buildings until these developments are complete.

*'The increasing population continues to require the expansion of the primary and secondary schools...'* (Cottenham Village Design Statement p.2)

*'B/8: Temporary buildings are acceptable when there is a short-term agricultural or educational need. Where there is an associated long-term need, consideration should be given at that time to how this need can be met resulting in the eventual removal of any temporary buildings.'* (Design Statement p.19)

**S/1556/09/F**

**39 Histon Road, Cottenham – Garage (retrospective)**

This building is rather larger than would be expected for a garage within a residential context and the materials chosen are completely inappropriate – being indicative of an industrial building. Although located well back from the road where its impact will be reduced, we cannot support a new building of this scale and character within this residential and village-edge location. We object to this development.

*'B/6: New developments should acknowledge their Cottenham context and avoid pattern-book designs. Developments can maintain and strengthen the visual cohesion of the village, and help to renew the specific architectural traditions of Cottenham. Refer to local building forms and proportion. There is a variety of proportions throughout the village: developments can reflect those which are adjacent. Use good quality materials – whether modern or traditional – which are appropriate to Cottenham. New-build garages and car parking areas should not obscure house fronts; avoid blocks of garages.'* (Cottenham Village Design Statement p.19)

*'L/3: New developments on the village edge should give high priority to landscape design and management of light pollution, to protect and enhance the external view of the village. Do not form a stark edge to the village, or spoil the outside view by neglecting the backs of gardens or buildings.'* (Design Statement p.6)

**S/1615/09/F**

**11A Church Close, Cottenham – Conservatory & garden store to annexe**

This development appropriately reflects the ranges of outbuildings and barns often found along plot edges within Cottenham. In the main, the proposed materials are locally appropriate; reclaimed bricks, natural slate and black stained boarding.

Although the conservatory is not particularly traditional, we feel it is acceptable in this context. However, we would wish the materials for this to be more clearly specified; it would be preferable to use black stained wood rather than uPVC.

*'B/4: Extensions should remain in scale with the original building and are usually most successful when matching materials are specified. Avoid dominant or bulky additions to existing buildings. Setting back walls or lowering the roofline of extensions can help to reduce apparent bulk. Conservatory or garden room extensions should respect the existing building: materials and colours should be carefully selected.'* (Cottenham Village Design Statement p.19)

*'Outbuildings run along the edge of plots, many of which follow the early farmstead boundaries.'* (Design Statement p.7)

Applications viewed and comments prepared on behalf of Cottenham Village Design Group by Steven Poole, Jennie Blood-Smyth, Sue Gymer, Michael Smith, Alexander Thoukydides and John Williams, 11<sup>th</sup> November (S/1435/09/F), Steven Poole and Alexander Thoukydides, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2009 (all others). All quoted text is taken from the Cottenham Village Design Statement, Supplementary Planning Document: <http://www.cvdg.org/design-statement-2007.pdf>. Comments are based solely on the principles and guidelines set out in this document.