

# Cottenham Village Design Group

## Planning application comments

### **S/0685/11**

#### **38, Dunstal Field, Cottenham - Conversion of Garage to Habitable Accommodation, and Extension**

The proposals make improvements to the general appearance of the current dwelling and the style and specified materials appear appropriate.

*'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.'* (Design Statement p.19)

### **S/0779/11**

#### **Cuckoo Hill Farm, Oakington Road, Cottenham - Erection of Farmhouse, Five Agricultural Buildings and Ancillary Works**

The Design Group supports the retention and development of agriculture in the surrounding area.

The site is very visible from Oakington Road as it is upon the ridge between Cottenham and Westwick and is higher than the road at this point, it is also possible to view it clearly as the immediate section of the road here is without the benefit of hedging. The siting of the new buildings behind and adjacent to the existing agricultural buildings, using these as a partial screen, therefore seems logical. The intention to landscape around the residential site with indigenous hedgerows and to provide an orchard within the garden is welcomed, however the landscaping is noted as not being a part of this application; the Design Group would welcome further planting around the proposed agricultural buildings together with a formalisation of the landscaping proposals if consent were granted.

The intent for the design of the farmhouse itself is much less satisfactory, this appears to be essentially a 'pattern-book' design which lacks specific acknowledgement of its Cottenham context – both in terms of physical design and in relation to the highly distinctive historical settlement patterns of the parish. The concept for the design as both a barn and a traditional farm house seems both confused and inappropriate for this area. Prior to the enclosure of the Cottenham's open fields and fen grazing in the 1840s, building in the open countryside was effectively prohibited – even farmhouses were concentrated within the village core. The farmhouses built subsequently were constructed to more or less the same designs, and using the same materials, as the detached suburban houses of the mid nineteenth century – or are more obviously modern replacements. The barns and other outbuildings of this period were generally of very simple and functional appearance. The proposed design does not reflect either the typical farmhouse or the typical barn of the area, referencing inappropriately early models and including some features – notably the halfhip roof – which are not typical of Cottenham.

It would be preferable for any design to be based either on a locally appropriate historical precedent (as has been the case in a recent the new house on a farm site nearby at Westwick), or to be an honestly designed bespoke modern house of the highest quality, using locally appropriate materials and expressing its function as a dwelling.

The intention towards the use of appropriate on site generating solutions is welcomed.

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

*'E/5: Commercial and industrial developments should be designed to high architectural standards.*

- Building design, materials and site layout should be compatible with the surrounding area and, where appropriate, reflect their Cottenham context.*
- Reduce the visual impact of new and existing sites by planting native broadleaf species and hedgerow shrubs.'* (Design Statement p.3)

*'L/1: 'Landscape design criteria should form a key aspect in the layout, form and urban design qualities of new developments' Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines (Cambridgeshire County Council).*

- In the case of significant landscape developments or changes, a professional design scheme should be prepared for consultation.*
- New landscapes should be endowed with sufficient management resources for securing long-term care.'* (Design Statement p.6)

*'L/2: Essential elements of the parish's distinctive Fen Edge landscape character should be protected.*

- New developments should contribute positively to the quality of the landscape and enjoyment of the environment.*
- There is considerable room for the improvement of wildlife habitat and protection. This creates opportunities for developers to address these aspects within their schemes and enhance the assets of the village.'* (Design Statement p.6)

*'L/4: Action by landowners, community groups and individuals.*

- Plant native and/or locally typical species to retain landscape character and to benefit wildlife within the village.*
- Orchards are part of the village heritage and should be retained.*
- This is a landscape of wide views and open spaces. Efforts should be made to minimise impact of developments on the character of this landscape.*

*• When planting, relatively small groups of trees may be most appropriate.'* (Design Statement p.6)

*'B/1: High-quality contemporary architecture is encouraged.*

*• Imaginative and original design can extend and renew the distinctive character and traditions of Cottenham's built environment.* (Design Statement p.18)

*'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.*

- Respect local characteristics and context of the particular site.*
- Refer to local building forms and proportion.*
- Use good quality materials – whether modern or traditional – which are appropriate to Cottenham.*
- Where possible, roof lights should be located on rear elevations or otherwise away from public view. In more sensitive areas they should be mounted flush with the roof and the number of openings kept to a minimum.*
- Refer to locally distinctive details; accurately match these to the chosen building form and avoid mixing styles or historical references in the same building.* (Design Statement p.19)

*'B/7: The appointment of architects and, where appropriate, relevant specialists is encouraged for all developments.*

*• Developers should provide perspective drawings, isometric drawings or artists' impressions to show how new developments will appear in relation to their overall surroundings.'* (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.*
- In sensitive situations, solar panels should be mounted flush and finished to blend with the roof.*
- Average wind speeds in Cottenham are generally too low for productive use of micro-generation turbines; their use is not recommended unless significant benefits can be demonstrated.* (Design Statement p.19)

Applications viewed and comments prepared on behalf of Cottenham Village Design Group by Alex Darby and John Williams, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2011. 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.