

Cottenham Village Design Group

Planning application comments

S/2033/11

273 High Street Cottenham - Installation of new shopfront including an automatic sliding entrance door, reroofing of existing building, rebuilding and addition of pitched roof to part of the rear of the building, and erection of enclosed plant area and covered bin store to the rear

The design group was sympathetic to the damage caused to this valuable community facility following the fire and took the proactive measure of providing comments prior to the receipt of a planning application. The aim of this was to aid the Co-Op store and its designers with any rebuilding proposals and were in the form of a comment citing the appropriate guidelines from the Cottenham Village Design Statement. Our chair was also subsequently involved in a number of pre-application meetings with the Co-op and the Parish Council.

As existing the building's size, location, prominent fascia advertising, detailing and construction mean that it is not a natural fit in the conservation area, this application has gone some way to improving the general appearance of the building but could have presented a more cohesive set of proposals. It would be the Design Group's wish to see additional areas such as the carpark and street/side area improved in the near future once the store is re-opened.

The design group were a little disappointed in the somewhat superficial Local Requirements Statement/ Planning Obligations document claims that the development would have "no impact on the street scene" as a justification for not including any photographs or artists impressions. The aforementioned size, location and prominence of the store should have justified more analysis and supporting information to back up the design proposals.

Notwithstanding, the proposals for the new shopfront are welcomed although more detail would have been helpful to explain the proposals for the treatment of the gable etc. The glazing is taller than within the existing building and the Design Group has some concerns as to the resultant positioning and prominence of the new signage band which is now sitting higher up the elevation, the signage element would benefit from being a little more understated. The use of painted softwood for the glazing framework is welcomed and the proposals also show a stall riser which is a more traditional treatment for the base of the window. We have no comment on the use of an automatic door.

The intention towards replacing the now damaged asbestos roof sheeting with a proprietary fibre cement cladding is probably the right choice. The use of sheet metal sinusoidal cladding sheets, although generally in the place of thatch, has some precedent in the village and can be seen from the application site. The exact profile is not shown but should be carefully chosen to be as unobtrusive as possible, it would be better suited towards a simple sinusoidal sheet rather than the more trapezoidal profile of the existing roof.

The rebuilt sections of the building at the rear use matching materials and are generally in keeping with the existing building, the intention to complete the warehouse area with a pitched roof set lower than that of the main roof is welcomed.

The addition of monitoring to the carpark by the addition of a window on the rear elevation, as suggested by the Design Group, is also welcomed.

The proposals for tidying up and containing the plant and bin areas with hit and miss timber fencing seem acceptable.

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

'E/3: Commercial developments or conversions should be designed to harmonise with the predominantly residential setting.' (Design Statement p.3)

'E/4: Shops and business premises have a major visual impact.

- *Keep frontages in sympathy with upper storeys and with neighbouring façades.*
- *Minimise the size of plate glass windows on the street front.*
- *Use traditional non-illuminated non-reflective hand painted signs in quieter colours fixed flush to buildings.*
- *Traditional shop frontage features such as stall risers would enhance the character of the area. Avoid canopies.*
- *Restrict the brightness of external and internal lighting to minimise light pollution and glare. Just as we value the 'green belt' by day, we should preserve the 'dark belt' by night.* (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.* (Design Statement p.3)

'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/2: Buildings should be maintained using original or sympathetic materials and details.

- *Use photographic evidence or other historical evidence, including the building fabric, to select appropriate materials (such as the type of thatch).*
- *Brickwork should be retained in its original state, characteristically unpainted.*
- *Pointing should not over-pack the mortar and should be carefully applied. The colour of the mortar should be carefully chosen to blend well with the brickwork. Buff brickwork works best when the mortar is close in tone, but just a little lighter than the brick itself.*
- *Abrasive or other harsh cleaning is detrimental to brickwork, both aesthetically and practically, and should generally be avoided.'* (Design Statement p.18/19)

'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.*
- *Alternative materials can sometimes work, for example when it is important to separate components of an extended building.'* (Design Statement p.19)

'B/6:

- *Respect local characteristics and context of the particular site.*
- *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.*
- *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)

'F/1:

• Private security lights should be muted and carefully sited to light the required area without forming a hazard to road users. (Design Statement p.21)

Applications viewed and comments prepared on behalf of Cottenham Village Design Group by Alex Darby, John Williams, Mike Smith, Alex Thoukydides and Steven Poole, November 10th 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.