

Cottenham Village Design Group

Planning application comments

S/1859/13/FL

Unit 15 Watsons Yard High Street Cottenham - Demolition of garage and erection of replacement building for B1 (office) use

The Design Group commented on a previous application for this site under S/0042/12, our comment mostly on the appropriateness of this site for residential accommodation. This application is for a small office building which we believe to be a more suitable use, the Design Group supports the creation and expansion of employment opportunities within the village.

The building has been designed as if it were a traditional outbuilding and the materials are appropriate to this; the element of corner glazing adds some interest to the whole.

There are no comparative roof heights given in the application but it would appear as if the proposed building would be of similar height to unit 7/8, a significant increase in height and volume over the building it replaces. The Design Group remain concerned about the impact that this building will have in this location to the immediate neighbour, the siting otherwise is such as only to be visible from the adjacent fire station.

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

• Encouragement will be given to well-designed buildings on appropriate infill plots.' (Design Statement p.18)

'B/3: Relationships between buildings are as important as the design of buildings themselves.

• Make skilful use of spaces between buildings: this can help new developments to be assimilated successfully.' (Design Statement p.19)

'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 settlement patterns in layout.

• 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.

• 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)

S/1749/13/FL

331 High Street Cottenham - Conversion of barn to dwelling with associated amenity space and parking

S/1750/13/LB

331 High Street Cottenham - Listed Building Consent for Conversion of barn to dwelling with associated amenity space and parking

This proposed conversion of a listed barn and outbuildings to a residential unit is welcomed for the way it keeps the form and outline of the existing buildings unchanged.

The scheme proposes four new window openings in the barn but these should not significantly detract from its character or setting. Three new openings, on the north east/ Village College-facing elevation, will change the nature of a currently blank wall, but they are designed to minimize impact, being narrow or small-sized, and will be substantially screened by trees in summer. The roof should be improved by the reduction in size and number of rooflights.

The application proposes slate for both the barn roof and the single-story stables. The use of slate for the barn roof is an acceptable choice although was not a traditional material for roofing barns. The reasons for the use of slate on the stables is not clear, these form a continuous range with the outbuildings behind no 331, which are roofed with pantiles, and pantiles would appear to be much the preferable material for this part of the roof. The texture and colour of pantiles would retain some of the gritty historic character of the building whereas the overall effect with slates could be both too bland and unifying (of the separate characters, uses and forms) of the two elements. The back side of the stable roof is currently corrugated, re-roofing here will be an improvement on the existing state.

The plans show a barn door fixed alongside the new south-west elevation ground floor window, although it's not clear whether this is the actual old side door – if yes, it's a valuable retention of something of the building's history and its rough feel and history. On the other hand, the treatment of the main, double height opening on the north west elevation (which will be visible from the street, whereas the side door is not) seems a little dull. It would be preferable to see some sort of reference made here to the form or character of the existing, three-part barn doors, perhaps be retention of these elements to the sides of the new openings. A number of precedents for the treatment of barns during a conversion exist in the village and should be referred to, see the very successful Elm Barns.

The changes to the boundary wall to enclose the forecourt and garden should be in keeping with the context here, as Morgans is a narrow cul-de-sac, walled along the south west side and tightly built-up.

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

- Changes to height or detailing of chimneys should be avoided. New chimneys should be located carefully and detailing should reflect the building to which they are attached.*
- The style and materials used for replacement doors and windows should match those of the original building; size and proportion of frames and the depth of reveals should be appropriate to the house type. Avoid altering the size of existing openings.*
- Individual householders should choose TV dishes and aerials of minimum size, and site them unobtrusively.*
- Roof lights should be located carefully, preferably where they are not visible from the street. In more sensitive sites, roof lights should be mounted flush with the roof and the number of openings minimised.*

- 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/3: Relationships between buildings are as important as the design of buildings themselves.

- Make skilful use of spaces between buildings: this can help new developments to be assimilated successfully.
- Do not alter existing buildings without consideration of the resulting spatial effect.' (Design Statement p.19)

'B/5: Reuse barns and outbuildings through conversions where appropriate.

- Minimise changes to the existing building such that its existing character is maintained.
- Avoid piercing the façade and roofline: lighting can be achieved by the minimal use of roof lights and by glazing existing openings.' (Design Statement p.19)

Applications viewed and comments prepared on behalf of Cottenham Village Design Group by Alex Darby and Jane Heath, September 4th 2013. 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.