

## VILLAGE VIEWS

making local character  
count in new development



Mike Smith  
Cottenham Village Design Group



Jane Heath  
Cottenham Village Design Group



## Village Views and Cottenham Village Design Statement

It was in 1993 that the then Countryside Commission (later became the Countryside Agency and recently Natural England) started an initiative to improve rural design. A key part of that was the initiation of Village Design Statements. They chose three villages in England to pilot this approach and one of these was Cottenham.

Consultants led the first few meetings and walks, which were attended by fifty plus Cottenham people, to observe and describe the wonderful features of the village that makes it Cottenham – we all, learned a great deal. They then passed the reins to us. People contributed their views verbally and in writing at some length and these were compiled and re-ordered and re-arranged and gradually views were reconciled. A draft of the statement was circulated to every house in the village and every comment considered in detail by the ever-increasing committee (as people were anxious to be involved and play a part). Eventually the statement with guidelines under each heading materialised and it was with great excitement that we heard in late 1994 that it had been accepted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC, the planning authority for Cottenham). A copy of the statement was delivered to each house in the village.

The Countryside Commission with the support of the Housebuilders Federation, in 1996, commissioned

two videos, one called “Village Design” and the other video called “Village Views: making local character count in new development”. (This is now available on line at <http://cvdg.blip.tv> – have a look you may enjoy the nostalgia and may well see yourself or someone you know! If you would like to borrow the video please contact CVDG.) This video focussed substantially on two of the first villages to have a Design Statement Cartmel in Cumbria and Cottenham, their features and some of their residents. This along with Cottenham’s Design Statement was used for the national publicity campaign. Over 100 villages followed suit and wrote a design statement for their village.

In 2007 the statement was re-written, updated and improved, adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) by SCDC and delivered to each house in Cottenham. Very few other villages have updated their statement so ours is again exceptional. It has been discussed with our twin town, Avrillé in the Loire valley and has been of significant influence on a Taiwanese student’s PhD thesis when working in Japan.

The impact of the statement was keenly felt on the design for Tenison Manor as it was being drafted at the same time as the overall plan for that development. But it did not end there as the Cottenham Village Design Group (CVDG) has continued and

*(continues on next page)*



flourished. It, as well as the Parish council, which is a statutory consultee, comments on all planning applications in Cottenham and on larger relevant applications nearby and also on regional strategies. The CVDG comments are made directly from considering the planning application in the light of the Design Statement.

Mike was at a meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> September about “Rural Cambs: Ensuring a Vibrant Future” when a number of people were suggesting that the planners did not listen to local views and were inconsistent with their decisions. He suggested that Cottenham might have fewer issues partly as a result of local people having, in effect, written the planning guidance for Cottenham on behalf of and for the planners. As Garth Hanlan of SCDC said on the 1996 video “it is a bonus for us as a Local Authority”. Certainly the issues which were raised are directly dealt with in the CVDS by clear guidelines and do not seem to have become issues here.

Influencing strategies, plans and views early and in general can avoid problems later in particular instances.

CVDG monitors planning decisions against its comments. It is interesting that over the years, as developers as well as planners have come to understand its guidelines, the decisions accord more closely with the comments. For more information visit <http://www.cvdg.org>.

*Mike Smith  
Chair*

View the video at <http://cvdg.blip.tv>

## Cycleway Improvements Coming Our Way – Soon

# CYCLE



# CAMBRIDGE

The Cycle Cambridge initiative has already delivered many small improvements that are helping to encourage more of us to cycle – we heard about some of these during a talk given to CVDG members and guests earlier this year by Mike Davies, Cycle Cambridge Programme Manager, Cambridgeshire County Council. However, few of these improvements have directly changed things for Cottenham residents considering a commute or other trip into Cambridge.

The good news is that a significant upgrade to the cycleway linking Cottenham to Histon and also to the route through Histon & Impington to the A14 is planned – the article by Nicholas Wilson in the last issue of this newsletter outlined the proposal. There has been significant progress recently with a number of exhibition events arranged by the County Council (including one at Cottenham Village College) where the proposed plans were shown and an opportunity was provided to discuss the proposals and provide feedback. CVDG Committee members of course

contributed to this process. The plans at this time were lacking detail, being little more than a thick blue line drawn on existing maps, but were sufficient to show where work was proposed and to trigger debate about possible alternatives.


The proposed scheme received a lot of positive support from the local community. Along with other cycleway improvements in South Cambridgeshire, the scheme has recently been given the go-ahead by the County Council meaning that detailed design work can commence, further liaison with stakeholders can take place and negotiation to acquire the necessary small strips of land can move forward.

It is still uncertain when we will see work start on the ground; it has been suggested by the County Council that this could be as soon as January 2010 but with land to be acquired and details of the scheme still to be firmed-up – and knowing how long other transport schemes have taken – it seems to me more likely that a start in the spring or even summer of 2010 is most likely.

Whatever the timescale, it does finally seem that we are to get a high quality link to Cambridge. It will not be perfect given constraints on the ground but hopefully it will be good enough to tempt the author and many other Cottenham residents to use our cycles rather more often than we do currently.

*Steven Poole  
Planning Comments Coordinator*

### Key

 2.75m combined cycle/footway (includes 0.5m safety margin)

© Crown Copyright. All Rights Reserved. Licence Number 100023205 2009





# Cottenham Village Design Group

## Newsletter Issue 7 - October 2009 (cont.)

### Become a Member

The Cottenham Village Design Group was formed in 1993, with assistance from the Countryside Commission, to give local people a voice in helping to protect and enhance the Village and its environment in the face of change and expansion.

If you would like to show your support for the group then please join using the form below. A variety of interesting visits are organised for members, with the next one expected to be to Accordia – winner of the 2007 RIBA Stirling Prize.

If you are already a member then take this opportunity to renew your membership for another year.

Only  
**£4**



### Housing Growth to 2031

The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) is undertaking a review of the East of England Plan to extend its guidance until 2031.

Four scenarios for housing and job growth in the region have been analysed, ranging from 3,608 to 4,559 new dwellings each year in Cambridgeshire. This compares to an average of 3,372 since 2001.

Respond to EERA's consultation on how fast the region should grow and broadly where that growth should be by 24<sup>th</sup> November 2009: <http://eera-consult.limehouse.co.uk>

Cambridgeshire County Council think that Option 1 (3,600 homes every year until 2031) will meet the area's needs. Let them know your opinion on this and other related issues by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2009: <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk>



### FEFF Quiz Prize Winner

The winner of the group's FEFF competition is shown below receiving her prize. The group would like to thank Richard Heeps Photography and County Frames of Cottenham for their support.



*From left to right:  
Mrs Sue Heavens, Mike Smith (chair),  
Henry Le Brecht and Clare Le Brecht.*

Email [membership@cvdg.org](mailto:membership@cvdg.org)  
Web [www.cvdg.org](http://www.cvdg.org)



## Cottenham Village Design Group

### Membership 2010

Membership of the group is available for an annual subscription of £4 (make cheques payable to the Cottenham Village Design Group). Please complete this form and return to:

*Alan Leeks, Membership Secretary, 25 Dunstal Field, Cottenham, CB24 8UH*

**Note:** The membership year ends on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2011.

Name *(please print)* .....

Address ....., Cottenham

Postcode ..... Telephone .....

Email .....

