

**PROPOSED EXTENSION AND ALTERATIONS TO
VACHE LODGE, VACHE LANE, CHALFONT ST GILES, BUCKS**

Chiltern D.C. ref.: CH/2014/1914/FA

Chiltern D.C. description: Part single storey, part first floor eastern extension, part single storey/part first floor/part two storey northern extension, insertion of two dormer windows in the north and west facing roofslope and balcony.

(The application form refers to two new dormer windows in the existing roof: there is one proposed new dormer window in the existing roof and two further dormer windows in the proposed extended roof. CDC's description states that the dormer windows are on the north and west roofslopes whereas they are the north and south slopes.)

- 1 Vache Lodge is a large house, built in the 1960's and extended over the years. It sits in a very large plot and has no other buildings nearby.
- 2 The Vache, a very large, attractive Grade 2 listed building, lies 140 metres to the north east of the house. The immediate setting of The Vache has been rather spoiled by a group of dwellings to the west of The Vache, of very ordinary style. These dwellings are positioned between The Vache and Vache Lodge.
- 3 Because of the distance between The Vache and Vache Lodge, and the presence of the housing complex referred to, and the well-established trees that surround Vache Lodge, it is difficult to find vantage points from where it is possible to see both The Vache and Vache Lodge at the same time - and then it is only a glimpse of part of The Vache.
- 4 It is unlikely that Vache Lodge itself can be seen from The Vache.
- 5 The site falls within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Green Belt, and having regard to this, the floor area of the proposed extensions taken together with past extensions has been kept within 50% addition to the original floor area.
- 6 Vache Lodge, though moderately attractive, is no architectural gem, and it has probably suffered from the extensions that have been added over the years.
- 7 The west elevation presents an end view of the house to the long approach drive, with four disturbingly off-centre windows on the ground and first floor, and a centrally placed pair of external doors to the loft floor. There is a single storey windowless extension to the north, adding to the blandness of the west elevation.

The front door cannot be seen as you approach the house, which is unsatisfactory and an anticlimax to a drive of some 60 metres length. A well-meaning wrap-around covered area seems to have been added to try to announce the presence of the front door, but it fails.

- 8 The south elevation suffers from a liberal application of solar panels on the roof and over-repetition of pairs of side-hung casements of identical size. The same window module appears on other elevations, some of which are Georgian style glazing rather than plain, adding to the quirkiness of the house.
- 9 A covered way has been added to the north elevation, probably to obscure the disparity of window shapes and heights on the ground floor, but the effect has been to darken the interior, particularly the sitting room and the utility room, making that part of the house gloomy. As a feature in itself it has no practical usefulness.
- 10 A stair "tower" has been added to the north with an incongruous curved-top window, which has ensured that the original plain 60's house has been brought fully into the realm of the quirky. Nevertheless it is a likeable building.
- 11 The proposals are intended to unify the house as far as possible, with a glazed gable feature establishing a vocabulary of modern style. The design, is not overtly eye-catching, and certainly not in competition with the remote listed building The Vache. Much care and thought has gone into the design, and it goes some way towards resolving the deficiencies of the house as presently designed, both internally and externally.
- 12 The proposed high-level triangular glazed gable to the west elevation will make very little impact when viewed from the drive from Vache Lane, but it will resolve this door feature, and take away the current appearance of the doors having been blown up there in a high wind.
- 13 The reasons for refusal of planning permission (condensed) are as follows.

1 By reason of its height, design, and introduction of large glazed elements the proposed extensions are not subordinate to the size and scale of the original dwellinghouse.

More eye-catching design is not respecting the form of the dwelling

Visually intrusive in the landscape inappropriate development
fails to maintain openness of the Green Belt.

2 By reason of height, design, introduction of large glazed elements, the proposed extension would result in the introduction of an eye-catching feature, alien and intrusive in the special landscape character of the Chilterns AONB.

Proposed extensions detract from the setting of nearby listed house and its significance as the prime building within its parkland landscape.

3 By reason of height, design and introduction of large glazed elements, the dwelling would appear more eye-catching, competitive and more obviously alien to The Vache.

The new glazed triangles would be particularly harmful in drawing attention to the third floor accommodation and would clash with the detailing of the front of the listed building, and detract from the setting of The Vache and its significance as the prime building within its parkland setting.

- 14 These objections are taken in turn.

Answer to Objection 1.

- 15 The total floor area of the old and new extensions would be less than 50% of the original house, the percentage beyond which "not subordinate" usually comes into play. The exact figures are detailed in the Access and Design Statement.
- 16 The requirement that extensions should be subordinate to the original dwelling does not necessarily imply that the roof-line should be lower, or the elevation should be set in. Such treatment of Vache Lodge would only add to its complexity, whereas simplicity of form is needed. Therefore the proposed roof on the east elevation has been continued in the same shape, size and form of the existing roof.
- 17 In fact the Case Officer's notes state that "The proposed extension at full height is relatively modest".
- 18 The proposed glazed gable area to the loft on the east elevation, 2.3m high at the ridge, will only really be visible from within the gardens, and only very obliquely from the drive from Vache Lane.
- 19 Height should not be considered as a reason for rejection of the proposals.
- 20 The proposed glazed gable on the west elevation incorporating the existing doors, will only be distantly viewed by the public; and glass normally reading as a dark element against the brickwork, it cannot be held that these elements would cause "harm" to the Green Belt.
- 21 The triangular portions of glass follow and respect the roof pitch and harmonise with the overall fenestration. The use of 600mm wide intervals between mullions helps this harmony.

- 22 The front entrance needs to be visible as you approach the building. Also the west end elevation needs to present a more welcoming face to the visitor. For this reason the existing "shed" extension to the north has been widened in the design to incorporate an entrance hall with a distinctive porch.
- 23 The roofspace above is sufficient to incorporate bedroom space, which in turn releases space on, and allows light to, the currently cramped and rather dark first floor landing. The extension is effectively just a little more than single-storey structure, subservient to the main house, and enhancing the otherwise bland appearance of this elevation.
- 24 Notwithstanding the Council's objections to height, size and scale, the Case Officer's notes state that "The proposed extensions in themselves may be considered of a size and scale that is subordinate to the main dwelling, and in respect of the dormer windows these would be sited high in the roofslope, and are of a size that would be greater than normally acceptable under the Residential SPD. However they are of a similar design to the existing dormer windows and therefore no objection could be raised in respect of the design of the dormer windows".
- 25 No alteration is to be made to the landscape, which extensively lawned, with isolated trees, and a strong belt of established trees to the north east, obscuring distant views of The Vache, even in winter, as photographs show.
- 26 Vache Lodge is at least 60m distant at the nearest point from which it can be viewed, Therefore the proposed alterations will have very limited visual impact.
- 27 These things considered, there is full compliance with GB13 and H13-17..

Answer to Objection 2.

- 28 This objection seems to unreasonably preclude modern design, or modern elements, from the Chilterns AONB.
- 29 The following illustrations show similar modern elements to buildings in the Chilterns AONB.



This is an illustration of a recent building on page 23 of the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide remarked on as a suitable design for the Chilterns AONB. It has a large area of glazing, including a glazed gable.



This is offered as a good example of a conversion of a farm building on page 53 in the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide. It has a glazed gable. It is attractive, modern and yet respectful of the form of the building. The caption notes that there is minimal alteration to its appearance.



This building is a conversion of Castle Hill Farm Barns in Berkhamsted, by Paul Carpenter Associates. It has a large area of glazing extending the whole of the height of the building. It was highly commended in the Chilterns Building Design Awards. The glazing is a modern element, but it is attractive, respectful of the building's form and not dominant.

- 30 Other objections are covered in the answer to Objection 1.
- 31 These things considered, there is full compliance with GB2.

Answer to Objection 3.

- 32 The existing dormer windows and high level doors already draw full attention to the fact that there is a loft floor.
- 33 The Vache is so remote from Vache Lodge that the proposals could have no effect on the detailing on the north facing front of the listed building. Indeed Vache Lodge is not in the immediate setting of The Vache, and cannot be viewed together with it.
- 34 The case officer's report on a recent application (ref. CH/2014/0758/FA) for a new gate to Vache Lodge, which was granted permission, states that "the proposal would not affect the setting of the listed building".

- 35 The proposals do not upstage or usurp the primacy of The Vache because of the addition of relatively small extensions with glass features. The fact that the design is not bland does not imply that the proposals are competitive. The Vache clearly remains the primary building in the locality.
- 36 Planning permission was granted for the adjacent housing development, which has tended to diminish The Vache. It seems strange, therefore, to argue that the proposals for the relatively more remote Vache Lodge could do harm to the listed building.
- 37 Other objections are covered in the answer to Objection 1.
- 38 These things considered, there is full compliance with GC1 and LB2.

Further remarks.

- 39 Chalfont St Giles Parish Council had no objection to the proposals.
- 40 The proposed triangular glazed windows would help to make Vache Lodge more attractive.
- 41 Such windows could be fitted to the existing house without need for planning permission, in any case.
- 42 Care has been taken in the design to respect the existing form of the building, and to use matching materials to the roof and walls.
- 43 Photographs have been taken at intervals along the drive from Vache Lane, and these are included in the appeal as an appendix. They show that The Vache and Vache Lodge can only be seen together from a few points, and then both buildings are obscured. Photographs are referenced on drawing no. 28.
- Photographs nos. 2, 17, 18, 21 and 30 are accompanied by the same view with an outline of the proposals added. They show that the impact of the proposed extensions is low, and views of Vache Lodge are quite distant.
- 44 Too "eye-catching" seems a strange reason to refuse a planning application. The proposals are not flamboyant or showy, but hopefully the finished building will be worth a second glance.
- 45 The proposed extensions to Vache Lodge cause no harm to the Green Belt and AONB setting, nor affect the listed Building; but they are visual improvements.

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