



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 December 2025

by **C Walker BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/J1535/D/25/3373367

Holmwood, Stapleford Road, Stapleford Abbots, Romford, Essex RM4 1EJ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Shaun Silver against the decision of Epping Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref is EPF/0682/25.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a detached garage for use ancillary to the main residential dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and any relevant development plan policies;
 - the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - if inappropriate, whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Reasons

Whether inappropriate development

3. The appeal site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Policy DM4 of the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033 Part One (2023) (EFLP) sets out that within the Green Belt, planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development, except in very special circumstances, in accordance with national policy. The Framework makes clear that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It goes on to set out that development should be regarded as inappropriate unless one of a list of exceptions apply.
4. The Council do not consider the proposal would meet any of the exceptions listed at paragraph 154 of the Framework, albeit limited detailed analysis is provided to support this. The appellant seeks to argue that the relevant exceptions are paragraph 154(c), (e) and (g), which are considered below.

Whether a disproportionate addition

5. The exception set out at paragraph 154(c) of the Framework and in EFLP Policy DM4(C)(iii), is for the extension or alteration of a building, provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
6. The proposal seeks the erection of a detached garage set forward of Holmwood. The Council draws my attention to a proposed garage at this same site, dismissed on appeal¹ in 2023 where the Inspector concluded that its introduction, approximately 20 metres forward of the original property, could not be regarded as an extension or alteration.
7. Despite its amended position from that of the previous appeal, which brings the reduced sized garage slightly closer to the dwelling, and its clear domestic use, it would still be a considerable distance from the appeal property. Given the extent of physical separation between the two buildings, and that they would be appreciated as such, like the Inspector before me, I find it should not be regarded as a domestic adjunct and, thus, not an extension.
8. My attention has been drawn to a garage nearby, that was allowed on appeal² where the Inspector had regard to relevant case law. This makes clear that such an exception is not to be interpreted as solely being confined to physically attached structures. Rather it is a matter of fact and degree as to whether outbuildings can readily be considered as extensions of other buildings even when they may not physically be connected. In that case the Inspector held that the garage, which was also to the front of the house, could be regarded as an addition under this exception. However, crucially the garage was located considerably closer to the dwelling than the appeal before me, such that it would be visually read as part of the existing property. This was also the case for the approved planning application³ for an outbuilding nearby. Consequently, it does not alter my findings on this element.
9. As I am not satisfied that the appeal can be regarded as an addition, it is not necessary for me to go on to consider whether it would be disproportionate or not.

Whether infill or partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land

10. The exception set out at EFLP Policy DM4(C)(vi) allows for 'limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development'. However, paragraph 154(g) of the Framework differs by requiring development to not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt. As there is some policy tension, I attribute more weight to the Framework as it is more up-to-date.
11. The Framework excludes land in built-up areas such as residential gardens from the definition of previously developed land (PDL). However, I would not regard the site, located on the rural fringe of Stapleford Abbots, to be a built-up area. Consequently, I find that it meets the definition of PDL. The test then turns on

¹ APP/J1535/D/23/3314878 – 'Proposed erection of new garage/store'

² APP/J1535/D/25/3367968 – Rosemary House, Stapleford Road, Stapleford Abbots, allowed 13 August 2025

³ Planning Ref: EPF/2243/23 – 6 Woodlands Grove, Stapleford Grove

whether the development would cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

12. In spatial terms, the garage would increase the footprint of development on the plot overall and introduce a structure on part of the site currently devoid of development. Therefore, the proposal would have a limited adverse effect on the openness of the Green Belt spatially, through its footprint, mass and height over the existing situation.
13. Visually, the proposal would sit forward of the dwelling and thus occupies a prominent position close to the site frontage and roadside. However, an existing hedgerow set behind the frontage wall, railings and pillars, plus the established trees running alongside the adjacent boundary would help to screen the development from Stapleford Road, reducing its prominence. As such it would have a limited visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
14. Drawing together both the spatial and visual dimensions of openness, I find that there would be limited harm. Whilst this conflicts with Policy DM4(C)(vi) in that it would have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development, having regard to the more up-to-date Framework, the threshold for harm only requires that the development should not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The limited harm identified does not amount to substantial harm to openness, in the context of paragraph 154(g) of the Framework.

Conclusions on whether inappropriate development

15. As I have found the proposal to accord with the exception outlined above, it is not necessary for me to consider the scheme against paragraph 154(e) of the Framework or EFLP Policy DM4(C)(v) which relates to infill development.
16. Drawing the above together, I find that the development would not represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the Framework. As such, it is not necessary for me to consider whether very special circumstances exist.

Character and appearance

17. Located on Stapleford Road, the appeal site forms part of a ribbon of development. Typically, this comprises detached dwellings set well back from the roadside in an irregular pattern but with generous frontages, behind grass verges. On the other side of the road, the land comprises open fields lined with established trees and vegetation, with some sporadic development interspersed. These factors combine to give the area an attractive, verdant, semi-rural character and appearance.
18. As a single storey garage, the outbuilding would be subservient to Holmwood, but it would sit forward of the dwelling close to the frontage boundary. This location makes development prominent here from the public realm. Whilst it has been designed to be of a domestic scale, even as a modest sized garage, its 3.6m ridge height would project above the adjacent boundary treatments and would be noticeable despite the retained soft landscaping. The residential frontages along this stretch of Stapleford Road are typically devoid of development beyond their principal elevations, enjoying spacious and open plots towards the street scene.

By contrast, the introduction of a garage in this location would disrupt the sense of spaciousness, and its presence would be incongruous with the prevailing character and appearance of the area.

19. Whilst noting this scheme has sought to reduce the scale of the development and relocate it away from retained trees, this would not fully negate or mitigate the harmful impacts that the introduction of the garage would have on the character and appearance of the area. It follows that a condition to protect existing landscaping would not be sufficient to remedy the harm either.
20. Examples of similar outbuildings in the area have been cited. However, very limited details have been provided in respect of these, including their precise location, such that I have been unable to make a direct comparison between the cases. They attract limited weight therefore, and do not alter my findings on this appeal.
21. For these reasons, the proposal would be contrary to EFLP Policy DM9 which seeks to secure high quality development in the district and expects development to contribute positively to the distinctive character and amenity of the local area. The proposal would also conflict with the Framework which requires development to be sympathetic to local character.

Conclusion

22. I have found that the proposal would not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having regard to the Framework. However, I have identified demonstrable harm to the prevailing character and appearance of the area. Therefore, when considered as a whole, the proposal conflicts with the development plan, and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, that indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it.
23. For the reasons given above, the appeal should be dismissed.

C Walker

INSPECTOR