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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 October 2025 by Elizabeth Davies BSc (Hons) MIEMA, CEnv

### Decision by A M Nilsson BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 JANUARY 2026

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### Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/D/25/3373599

### Batts Farm, Blanks Lane, Newdigate, Surrey RH5 5ED

- 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 T Webb against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
  - The application Ref is MO/2025/1040.
  - The development proposed is erection of detached garage.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

### Main Issues

3. The main issues in the appeal are:
  - Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework');
  - The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
  - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the appeal property and local area; and
  - If the development would be inappropriate, whether the harm to the Green Belt by way of inappropriateness and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify it.

### Reasons for the Recommendation

#### *Whether it would be inappropriate development*

4. The appeal property contains a large, detached dwelling, along with a number of outbuildings. The site is accessed to the side off a private access drive. To the front of the dwelling is a driveway, parking and a substantial front garden.
5. The development proposed is a three-bay detached garage. It would be sited adjacent to the boundary of the appeal site in the front garden, approximately 28 metres from the dwelling.

6. Paragraph 154 of the Framework states that new buildings are inappropriate in the Green Belt unless they fall within the given list of exceptions. Policy EN1 of the Mole Valley Local Plan 2020-2039 (the 'Local Plan') states that land which is designated as Metropolitan Green Belt will be protected against inappropriate development, as defined by national policy. It sets out exceptions which largely align with those set out within the Framework. One of the exceptions in the Framework, is the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. A residential outbuilding, which is physically separated from a dwelling, can be assessed as an extension of a dwelling where it is considered to be a normal domestic adjunct. The Council took this approach when considering the proposed garage and the appellant does not dispute this and I have no reason to form a different view.
7. The term 'disproportionate additions' is not defined in the Framework and is a matter for the decision maker to determine whether the extension is disproportionate.
8. In terms of the increase in floor area alone, the proposed garage, at 63sqm would be a sizeable addition. The appeal dwelling has been subject to a number of previous alterations and extensions. The council have provided figures indicating that the cumulative uplift in floor space from the original building, including the proposed garage, would be 215sqm which equates to an increase in floorspace of approximately 80%. These figures indicate to me that the proposed garage would result in a disproportionate addition when taken with the previous extensions to the property.
9. The supporting text of Local Plan Policy EN1 indicates that a broader assessment should also be made of design, bulk and mass of the extension and the effect that would have on the scale of the existing building, the garage would be free standing. It would therefore have no effect on the scale of the existing building. However, the large three bay garage would add to the overall mass and spread of built development on the appeal site which as described above, would result in a disproportionate addition.
10. For these reasons, I find that the proposal would comprise inappropriate development within the Green Belt as defined by the Framework and Policy EN1 of the Local Plan.

### *Openness*

11. The Framework states that "the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence". Openness can be determined by visual and spatial aspects.
12. Spatially, the proposed garage would add a structure and hardstanding in a previously undeveloped part of the appeal site, within the Green Belt. Due to the scale of the development and the area it would cover, it would reduce the openness of the Green Belt in spatial terms. This would cause a moderate degree of harm.
13. The garage would be set to the front and side away from the main dwelling and although visible, the distance from the dwelling and entrance to the appeal property mean it would not dominate the view or front garden. It would also only be in

occasional use by vehicles. The new area of hardstanding however would be more visible as it extends the existing driveway immediately in front of the appeal dwelling and is fairly significant in width to serve the proposed garage. The proposed garage would be screened from view from the road by mature trees and hedges and would therefore not be highly visible from outside the appeal site. On balance, the harm would be fairly limited in visual terms.

14. Overall, therefore, the proposal would have a harmful effect on openness.

#### *Character and Appearance*

15. The proposed garage has been designed in a traditional cart lodge style with two open front bays and one closed bay with timber double doors. The brickwork would match the existing dwelling and feature a clay tiled roof. Whilst the half-hipped roof is fairly bulky, it is in keeping with the design style of the garage and would not look disproportionate. Having regard to the design of the appeal dwelling and its rural/agricultural location it would be a suitable design in this context.

16. Photographs of a similar style garage at a neighbouring property have been provided by the appellant and I could see on my site visit that the traditional style design would fit in with the built form in the surrounding area.

17. Despite the proposed garage being located to the front of the appeal property, which I note is not supported by the Council's Supplementary Planning Document 'Extending Your House: Design Guidance for House Extensions and Outbuildings 2025' the dwelling is not typical as it's frontage is orientated away from the road and it features substantial grounds at the front of the property. The proposed garage would be in a fairly discreet location close to the site boundary some distance from the appeal dwelling. It would be well screened by mature trees and hedges from view from the road. Even if in future the boundary vegetation were to be removed, the design and style of the building would mean it would not be harmful in views into the appeal site.

18. Whilst the proposed area of hardstanding would be extended to serve the garage, this would be an extension to the existing driveway and would not result in a significant change to the character and appearance of the property.

19. On this basis, I am content that the proposed garage would harmonise satisfactorily with the existing dwelling and the surrounding area. It would therefore not cause harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling or the surrounding area and would conform with Local Plan Policy EN4 which sets out a requirement for new development to be of high-quality design that makes a positive contribution to local character.

#### **Other Considerations**

20. Paragraph 153 of the Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. Paragraph 153 requires substantial weight to be given to any harm to the Green Belt and requires very special circumstances to be demonstrated to clearly outweigh any harm to the Green Belt by way of inappropriateness, or any other harm.

21. There is a lawful development certificate (LDC) (MO/2025/0635/PCL) for a detached garage structure at the appeal site. It is noted that the LDC scheme is

larger than the appeal proposal in both volume and floor area, but it is not in the location preferred by the appellant. However, the appellant has stated that the LDC scheme would be built if the appeal scheme is not allowed. Whilst there is every likelihood the LDC scheme would be built, I have not considered the implications of this further because if I were to allow the appeal there is nothing before me to prevent both schemes from being lawfully implemented. I therefore give this matter limited weight.

22. The proposed garage would be a functional space and benefit the appellant. There are areas in which the proposals would not be unacceptable, including in relation to biodiversity, heritage assets and residential amenity, and I have no reason to disagree with the conclusions of the main parties thereon. I note that there will be no change to access arrangements or landscaping at the appeal site. I also note that there were no objections from consultees or neighbours to the proposal at the planning application stage. These are, however, neutral factors in the balance.
23. The appellant has highlighted what they consider to be the sustainability benefits of the proposal, and these are noted. It is not, however, clear how these go beyond the national policy requirement to deliver sustainable development. These have limited weight in favour of the proposed development.

### **Planning Balance and Conclusion**

24. The development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and harms its openness, to which I must attribute substantial weight against the development. Balanced against that are the other considerations identified above. I cannot attach any substantial weight to the LDC scheme as a fallback position. The appellant's need for the proposed development and the sustainability benefits attract only limited weight, the lack of harm to character and appearance, biodiversity, heritage assets, residential amenity, access arrangements and landscaping are neutral factors in the planning balance. I conclude that the other considerations do not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and therefore there are no very special circumstances to justify the proposal.
25. Therefore, the proposed development would be contrary to the Framework and Policy EN1 of the Local Plan as described above.
26. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Elizabeth Davies*

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

### **Inspector's Decision**

27. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

*A M Nilsson*

INSPECTOR