



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 November 2025

by **Les Greenwood MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/E3335/D/25/3369836

1 Ethel Street, Wells, Somerset BA5 2HP

- 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 Michael Thomas against the decision of Somerset Council.
 - The application Ref is 2025/0766/HSE.
 - The development proposed is the partial demolition of an original rear kitchen offshoot and attached outdoor store, to be replaced by a larger ground floor extension, with an additional smaller first floor en-suite bathroom above with the ground floor housing a larger kitchen/dining space, a utility room, a new family bathroom, an additional double bedroom and a new lobby area.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matter

2. The Council has not mentioned the City of Wells Neighbourhood Plan (CWNP) in its report, but that plan is mentioned by the appellant. The copy provided is labelled the 'final version', but its text states that it has not yet been formally made. I have therefore treated it as being an emerging plan.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wells Conservation Area.

Reasons

Conservation Area

4. 1 Ethel Street is a stone and tile, 2 storey, end of terrace house situated on a prominent corner plot within a mixed residential and commercial area and the city's conservation area. The proposal would partly demolish a long, narrow, single storey rear wing, then add a first floor/2 storey section and a much wider single storey section with a low pitched cat slide roof.
5. In accordance with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. The Council's *Conservation Area Appraisal – Wells* aptly identifies this terrace of houses as a positive feature of the conservation area. The frontage of the handsome terrace is largely unchanged and the houses remain as one of the more historic groups in an area which has been much changed by more recent development. The terrace is

therefore of heritage significance as a marker of the area's origins and a contributor to the street scene.

6. The houses here have been variously extended to the rear, as part of the natural evolution of buildings to meet changing needs, without necessarily harming the character of the terrace. The proposed new first floor section would be relatively small in scale and reasonably low in height. It has been appropriately designed to fit in with the existing house and the terrace in terms of form, size and materials. It would not be significantly different to other extensions nearby and would cause no harm to local character.
7. On the other hand, the proposed ground floor extension's low pitched composite roof, rendered walls and grey aluminium windows and rooflights would contrast strongly with the design and materials of the existing building. This in itself is not necessarily a problem. As indicated by the CWNP (in connection with another local building), contemporary design and sensitive contrast can be appropriate in the context of historic buildings.
8. I therefore have no concerns in principle about the use of a modern roof form and materials. The single storey extension would, however, be excessively bulky, extending well beyond the main side wall and occupying almost the full width of the plot. This would have the effect of creating an outsized, awkward expanse of very low pitched, composite roofing. The appellant states that this would not be seen from the street because it would sit behind the boundary wall/fence, but from my observations on site I find that parts of the roof would be visible in the street scene. The extensive area of new roofing on the ground floor extension would not be an appropriately subservient element of the building and would detract from its historic character. I saw no similar extensions in the local area.
9. I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the conservation area. It therefore conflicts with policies DP1, DP3 and DP7 of the Mendip Local Plan 2006-2029 Part 1 Strategy and Policies and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which aim to secure high quality design that contributes to local distinctiveness and preserves or enhances the significance of heritage assets. For the same reasons, the proposal conflicts with CWNP policy HBE1, which aligns closely with the above-mentioned policies.

Other matters

10. The site lies within the catchment area for the Somerset Moors and Levels Ramsar site¹ where there are risks associated with elevated phosphate levels. The Council determined that a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) should not be required as the proposed extension to an existing dwelling would not pose a risk to the designated features of the Ramsar. I am also satisfied that there would be no additional impact on the Ramsar site from this domestic extension, so that an HRA is not required.

Planning balance and conclusion

11. The harm to the conservation area, in the terms of Framework paragraph 212, would be 'less than substantial' - and towards the lower end of that broad scale. I nevertheless give great weight to this matter. Framework paragraph 215 says that

¹ A wetland of international importance, designated under the 1971 Ramsar Convention.

where a proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. I recognise the appellant's reasonable wish to improve the family home. Such improvements to the housing stock bring some public, as well as private, benefit. I find, however, that the public benefit in this case would not outweigh the harm caused to the significance of a heritage asset, so that the test set out at Framework paragraph 215 would not be met.

12. The proposal conflicts with the development plan for the area. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Les Greenwood

INSPECTOR