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# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 October 2025

by **J Smith MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 October 2025

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**Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/W/25/3369391**

**Fix A Fone, 6 St. Marys Way, Thornbury, Bristol BS35 2BH**

- 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 R Rahman of FixaFone against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
  - The application Ref is P25/00977/F.
  - The development proposed is installation of security shutters to shopfront.
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## Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

## Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Thornbury Conservation Area.

## Reasons

3. The appeal site is located within the Thornbury Conservation Area (CA). The statutory duty set out in Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. The CA is split into five distinctive character areas, which are noted within the Thornbury Conservation Area Advice Note 2004. The appeal site is situated between two of these areas. These are the High Street and the Back Lane character areas.
4. The High Street forms the central focus of Thornbury, characterised by a diverse mix of architectural periods and styles. Visual interest is achieved through a variety of architectural features, including bay windows, recessed doorways, porches, varied roof heights, and irregular building lines. Several buildings within this character area serve as visual landmarks, distinguished by their unique forms and historical functions.
5. Although the Back Lane area lacks the architectural richness of the High Street, it nonetheless makes a vital contribution to the character and appearance of the CA. Its significance lies in the simplicity of its historic features, which establish a tangible connection which is linked with access to the High Street. These features include traditional stone boundary walls, rows of terraced cottages, and the intimate enclosure created by narrow lanes which converge on the High Street.
6. In the context of this appeal, the significance of the CA is derived from its spatial layout, the architectural variety and detailing of its buildings, and the connective

network of narrow, enclosed lanes that link the distinct character areas and converge on the High Street.

7. The appeal site is situated within the St Mary Centre, a retail precinct that presents a predominantly modern appearance. Notably, the presence of traditional iron lampposts introduces a subtle historic character that contrasts with the contemporary design, offering a visual reference to the area's heritage. Importantly, the precinct serves as a transitional space, linking the High Street and Back Lane character areas and reinforcing the continuity of the CA. As such, both the appeal site and the precinct in which it sits contribute positively to the CA by providing an enhanced connection between its distinct character areas.
8. The Shopfronts and Advertisements Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides guidance on the design of shopfronts and has particular regard to security shutters. It notes that solid security shutters, such as that proposed in this appeal, can give an inhospitable feel to buildings which can detract from the historic character of an area. The SPD further indicates that by way of comparison, open designs allow shopfronts to be seen through which avoids the deadening effect of the street scene, whilst still providing a security measure.
9. The proposed development involves the installation of a full-faced shop shutter with an overhead shutter box. When in use, the shutter would present a closed, uninviting, and visually poor-quality frontage, resulting in an inhospitable appearance at the appeal site. Given its location, serving as a key transitional point between two distinct character areas within a busy part of the CA, the development would cause notable harm to the character or appearance of it. This would be contrary to the guidance set out in the SPD. While the SPD is just guidance, it remains a material consideration in the determination of this appeal.
10. The appellant asserts that the roller shutter, when not in use, would have no impact on the appearance of the building or the character or appearance of the CA. However, when deployed, the shutter would present as a heavy, bulky, and visually incongruous addition to the façade. The suggestion that a mural could be applied to mitigate its visual impact has been noted; yet, no substantive details have been provided to enable an assessment of whether such an approach would effectively address the harm identified in relation to the proposal's design and its effect on the CA. Furthermore, while it is claimed that the shutter would be maintained in an "as new" condition, this does not resolve the fundamental issue of its design, which would be detrimental to the character or appearance of the CA.
11. A photograph of an example of a similar development employed at a local pharmacy has been provided. It is contended that this development does benefit from planning permission. However, no details of this development have been provided. Therefore, I cannot make a judgement of the reasoning behind this decision, of it does indeed benefit from planning permission.
12. The development fails to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA. In terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the harm that I have identified would be less than substantial. The Framework establishes that any harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the development.

13. It is contended that the new shutter would provide a deterrent to crime and anti-social behaviour. It is alleged that the appeal premises has been subject to crime, particularly theft. Whilst there is no detailed evidence of the specifics of the events which have taken place, a news article has been provided for my deliberation. This article notes that many incidents have occurred and therefore, I am cognisant that such a development would somewhat provide a solution to this issue when the shutter would be deployed. This would likely ensure that the premises is not boarded up during periods of repair to its glass frontage, or that the business is able to continue its overall operation.
14. However, the SPD provides guidance on the design of shutters which can be used to avoid the negative effects associated with closed shutters, as proposed in this appeal. It does not follow that the appeal should succeed primarily alone on the basis of a deterrent of crime, as there are other methods which may be utilised to address this issue. There is no convincing evidence before me to explain with sufficient vigour why an alternative solution as detailed within the SPD could not be employed.
15. Therefore, I am satisfied that these suggested benefits should only be given limited weight. I give the harm that I have identified considerable importance and weight in accordance with the Framework, which establishes that great weight should be given to the conservation of a heritage asset. In this context I find that the limited public benefits of the development are not sufficient to outweigh the degree of harm identified.
16. To conclude, I find that the development would fail to meet the requirements of Policies CS1 and CS9 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan Core Strategy 2006 – 2027. Furthermore, it would not meet the requirements of Policies PSP1 and PSP17 of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan Policies, Sites and Places Plan 2017. Collectively, these policies seek to provide high quality design, ensuring that heritage assets are respected and preserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, with proposals required to demonstrate that their design has had proper regard to the distinctive character and appearance of the CA, amongst other things.

## **Conclusion**

17. In conclusion, the development conflicts with the development plan and there are no other considerations that outweigh this conflict. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

*J Smith*

INSPECTOR