



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 November 2025

by A Caines BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/25/3373099

46 Front Street East, Bedlington NE22 5AB

- 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 Mrs Lisa Foreman against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/02008/FUL.
 - The development proposed is described as retrospective installation of roller shutter to shop front.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The application was submitted retrospectively for development that had already been carried out. I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The Bedlington Conservation Area (BCA) encompasses the historic core of the settlement and derives its significance, in part, from the survival of its linear street pattern, the consistent use of local sandstone in predominantly two-storey buildings, and the presence of traditional shopfronts that contribute to its commercial character. These elements combine to create a coherent and distinctive townscape that reflects the area's historic development and architectural vernacular. Long views along Front Street, together with the rhythm and proportion of modest facades, reinforce its sense of place and distinctiveness. These attributes are fundamental to the special interest of the BCA and underpin its designation as a heritage asset of architectural and historic importance.
5. The appeal site occupies a mid-terrace position within this street scene. The host building is of modest scale and reflects the traditional form and vernacular. Its shopfront plays a role in maintaining the commercial character of Front Street.
6. The Shopfront Design Guide for Bedlington Conservation Area advises that solid shutters should be avoided because they create a besieged and hostile appearance, deadening visual amenity and undermining the street's commercial attractiveness. It also advises that no security element should protrude beyond the profile of the shopfront. The proposal conflicts with this guidance. The roller shutter is solid and housed within a prominent box casing that projects above the fascia.

When closed, it presents a blank frontage, and even when open, the protruding casing and guide rails remain visible at all times. These components give the installation an assertive and intrusive appearance, disrupting the shopfront's simple proportions and detracting from the established character of the BCA.

7. The appellant refers to a previous shutter at the site and the presence of other shutters along Front Street. However, these factors do not justify further harm. The statutory duty under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the policies of the development plan apply to all proposals, regardless of past alterations. The presence of other harmful features does not lessen the statutory duty to preserve the character and appearance of the BCA, nor does it provide a sound basis for compounding that harm. Each case must be assessed on its own merits and in accordance with current policy and guidance, which clearly discourage solid shutters.
8. The harm to the significance of the BCA would be less than substantial, falling towards the lower end of that scale. Nevertheless, any harm to a designated heritage asset is a matter of considerable importance and weight. Paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires that this harm be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
9. The appellant explains that the shutter is required for security and that the proposal supports the reuse of a vacant unit. While these considerations carry some weight, they are not of a scale or nature sufficient to outweigh the identified harm. Furthermore, the evidence does not demonstrate that less harmful options, such as internal security measures, could not achieve the same objective.
10. In line with my duties under Section 72(1), I conclude that the development causes harm to the significance of the BCA and fails to preserve or enhance its character or appearance. It therefore conflicts with Policies ENV1, ENV7, ENV9 and QOP1 of the Northumberland Local Plan (2022) and with Section 16 of the Framework, which together require high quality design that conserves and enhances the historic environment and respects local character and distinctiveness.

Conclusion

11. The proposal conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole and with national heritage protection policies. There are no material considerations that indicate a decision other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

A Caines

INSPECTOR