

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/1947

25 October 2021

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By e-mail: planning@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Application: 3/21/21/095

Site: Sallys Vintage Chic, 10 - 16 The Avenue, Minehead, TA24 5AZ

Proposal: Amalgamation of the ground floor tea room with the Regal Theatre with reinstatement of staircase

Remit:

The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We were established through the Theatres Trust Act 1976 'to promote the better protection of theatres' and provide statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use in England through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, requiring the Trust to be consulted by local authorities on planning applications which include 'development involving any land on which there is a theatre'.

Comment:

This application has come to the attention of the Trust because it is seeking development at the Regal Theatre. We have not been directly notified despite this falling within our statutory remit described above.

The Regal opened in 1934 as a cinema and theatre with adjoining shops. It had 1,250 seats across stalls and a circle level and was equipped with a stage which hosted variety shows, a large ballroom and a cafe. Externally it was in red brick with stone and a large fin tower. The Trust's database describes it as being of "ambitious size and quality for a small town". It was sub-divided in 1979 and then two years later the stalls area was converted to a supermarket which lost use of the stage house. The smaller 444-seat cinema remained in the former circle and maintained occasional live shows until its closure in 1994. It was subsequently reopened as a theatre by the Minehead Amateur Theatrical Association with occasional cinema screenings held by the Regal Film Society.

The Regal is an important cultural and social facility for the town and its surrounding communities. It is operated as a charity and run by its members and volunteers. It hosts a mixed programme of its own amateur productions as well as professional and touring shows

Theatres Trust

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Interim Chair Paddy Dillon Director Jon Morgan

Trustees Richard Baldwin, Paul Cartwright, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

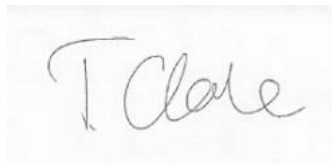
including live music and comedy. Venues such as this are particularly important for supporting well-being, providing opportunities for people to come together, engage in the arts and develop new skills. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature. Cultural facilities are also becoming increasingly important for their role in bringing people into town centres, maintaining vibrancy and footfall to the benefit of other businesses.

Currently public access to the Regal is through the ground floor ticket office which was extended around ten years ago and included installation of a lift to make the venue fully accessible. This proposal centres on one of the shop units within the original Regal development, currently/most recently in use as a tea room, and would see this unit amalgamated into the Regal with a new staircase providing access to the existing bar and auditorium above.

We are highly supportive of this proposal. The additional unit at ground floor level will give the theatre additional street frontage and visibility. This will give the Regal the ability and flexibility to operate as more of an all-day venue which will bring more people in and allow increased engagement with the theatre. It will also diversify potential to generate income which will support the Regal's important cultural role. This part of the building along with neighbouring units have already been heavily altered, therefore works would not cause harm either to the Regal as an undesignated heritage asset or to the sites wider setting within the conservation area.

Therefore we recommend the granting of planning permission.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss these comments further.



Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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