

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC

20 December 2021

Kelly Pritchard
Mendip District Council
Cannards Grave Road
Shepton Mallet
Somerset
BA4 5BT

By e-mail: consultations@mendip.gov.uk;

Application: 2021/2722/FUL

Site: The Amulet 7 Market Place Shepton Mallet BA4 5AZ

Proposals: Change of use from theatre (sui generis) to retail use (A1), with associated works.

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 change of use of the Amulet from theatre (Sui Generis) to retail. We should have been notified as a statutory consultee and these comments must be afforded weight as such.

There is an existing planning application seeking change of use of the building to residential with a retail unit, this remains undetermined with the Trust having strongly objected. There is also substantial local opposition to those plans. The applicant's statement for this application suggests works would be limited to the understage area, however the red line boundary takes in the entire site. We urge that this is clarified. Nonetheless loss of even a part of the site for alternative use could compromise efforts to restore theatre or similar compatible community and cultural use. We would also note there is no longer an A1 use class, and the new class E would enable a wider range of uses within this space which could further compromise retention of theatre, community and cultural uses.

The significance of the Amulet and its importance as a venue to the town have already been articulated within our comments for application reference 2020/1414/FUL. Although the Amulet

Theatres Trust

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Interim Chair Paddy Dillon Director Jon Morgan

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has been vacant for some time we consider there is clear need and demand for performance, community and cultural use with evidence suggesting asking rents for this site have been unrealistic. Therefore proposals for change of use of part of this building, like the existing wider application, would need to be supported by robust evidence that meaningful efforts to bring the Amulet back to its original or similar use at realistic asking prices have failed.

Development Policy 17 seeks to safeguard community facilities and does not permit the loss of sites or premises last used for local services unless suitable alternative provision is made or there is no likelihood of a viable community use. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for cultural uses and to protect against unnecessary loss. There is interest in this site for community and cultural use and evidence to the contrary remains lacking.

Therefore we again strongly object to this application and urge the refusal of planning permission for change of use.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Trust should you wish to discuss these comments in further detail.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tom Clarke MRTPI
National Planning Adviser

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