

Protecting theatres  
for **everyone**



Ref.: TC/1844

11 April 2023

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Development, Environment & Leisure  
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S1 2SH

By e-mail: [planningapps@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:planningapps@sheffield.gov.uk)

**Application:** 23/00822/FUL

**Site:** 25 Surrey Street Sheffield S1 2LG

**Proposal:** Change of Use from retail (Use Class E) to a theatre (Use Class Sui Generis) including formation of new entrance doors with box office area, new glazing, removal of entrance steps to provide low level access and relocation of existing iron gates further within the entrance

### **Remit:**

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'.

### **Theatres Trust**

22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QL

**Telephone** 020 7836 8591 **Email** [info@theatrestrust.org.uk](mailto:info@theatrestrust.org.uk) **Website** [theatrestrust.org.uk](http://theatrestrust.org.uk) **Twitter** @TheatresTrust

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**Chair** Dave Moutrey OBE

**Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** Paul Cartwright, James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Lucy Osborne, 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

**Comment:**

This application for planning permission has come to the attention of the Trust because it is seeking to convert a retail unit to form part of an expanded foyer for The Montgomery Theatre & Arts Centre. We have not been notified despite this falling within our remit outlined above.

The Montgomery is a community venue which focuses on provision for young people, their families and local groups. It is located within Montgomery Hall which was part of a nineteenth century charity with the objective of educating working children. It was built towards the end of the 1800s as part of a much larger complex which also contained classrooms, reading rooms and a library. There were shops at the ground floor level to generate an income. There has long been theatre use within the hall, but its current incarnation dates from a 1971 remodelling following a fire. The Montgomery offers a main theatre space with a capacity of around 414, a studio, rehearsal space and gallery. It is a facility valued by local people and which contributes towards Sheffield's cultural offer. Paragraph 93 of the NPPF (2021) seeks planning decisions to plan positively for facilities of this nature.

Despite this we are aware the venue has some limitations particularly in terms of accessibility and there have been development plans for some time. The nature of the building means that it has little street frontage so lacks prominence.

We understand that the theatre has been in receipt of a Future High Streets Fund which has provided an opportunity to acquire and integrate a vacant retail unit neighbouring the theatre's foyer. This will provide the space necessary to install a lift and new front desk/box office. Alongside this the existing entrance to the theatre will be dropped through removal of terrazzo steps to provide level entry. The glazing to the existing shopfront will be altered with repairs of its side cast iron portico and timber lintel above.

We are supportive of these interventions. Whilst to some degree the proposal conflicts with out-of-date retained policies on retail frontages from the Unitary Development Plan (1998), it is compatible with the types of uses which are acceptable within emerging Policy VC1 of Part 2 of the Sheffield Plan (Regulation 19 version, 2022). Policy CS19 of the Sheffield Development Framework Core Strategy (2009) encourages new uses which relate to cultural activity. We contend that loss of retail use at this unit is necessary and justifiable to deliver the wider public benefits arising from enhancing accessibility and function at the Montgomery. In turn this

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supports the wider diversity and vitality of the designated City Centre Primary Shopping Area.

We similarly support the external design approach which we consider to be sensitive to location and setting within the City Centre Conservation Area.

We are therefore supportive of the granting of planning permission.

Please contact us if we may be of further assistance or should you wish to discuss this representation in greater detail.

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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