

Ref.: TC/2003

13 March 2025

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**Application:** 2020/1414/FUL

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

**Proposal:** Change of use from theatre (sui generis) to mixed use, 7no residential flats (C3), 1no retail unit (A1) and associated works. (phosphate information received 24.12.24 and drawing number H5934 100J received 19.02.25)

## **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'.

## **Comment:**

Thank you for re-consulting Theatres Trust on this application for planning permission at the Amulet Theatre following submission of additional information. It

### **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** Joshua McTaggart

**Trustees** Vicky Browning OBE, Anna Collins, James Dacre, Suba Das, Liam Evans-Ford, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson OBE, Tracy Ann Oberman, Lucy Osborne, Saratha Rajeswaran, Truda Spruyt, Michèle Taylor MBE, Katie Town

The Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund supports the work of The Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

seeks conversion of the building to residential use. We previously submitted comments in August and October 2020 objecting to this proposal.

We have no comment to make on the contents of the Nutrient Neutrality Assessment and Mitigation Strategy. We do have further comments and revisions to our previous submission reflecting the changes in policy and the status of the Amulet since 2020. The council has itself merged into a larger authority for Somerset.

The Mendip District Local Plan 2006-2029 Part 1 remains current. Since our previous comments Part 2 (Sites and Policies) has also been adopted in 2021 with a limited update in 2022 following Judicial Review. That document seeks to ensure sufficient sites to enable a rolling five-year supply of housing land in the district to meet the housing delivery test. In the applicant's Design & Access Statement they lean heavily on the Local Plan being out of date and the council not being able to demonstrate a five year supply of housing to justify the proposed change of use. In turn they cited paragraph 11 of the NPPF (which remains paragraph 11 in the most recent version published in 2024 with minor clarification in 2025) which directs permission to be granted unless there is conflict with the criteria in part d. We made comments on this previously, but with reference to part d.ii we contend the adverse impacts of losing this theatre space would outweigh the benefits of new housing. Additionally, with adoption of an up-to-date plan with identified sites for delivery of housing the applicant's argument in this regard has become redundant.

Local Plan Part II establishes a need for 420 homes per year across Mendip. The latest data on housing completions published by the local authority up to 2024 shows delivery of 1,105 homes over the previous three years. Whilst below target it is a delivery rate of 87%, far above the delivery test of 75% cited in footnote 8 under NPPF paragraph 11. The completions data also shows a strong pipeline of dwellings with permission or currently under construction. This further shows that this site is not necessary as a site for housing. In contrast, as noted before the Local Plan does note a general lack of cultural provision across the wider area and specifically that Shepton Mallet "is arguably less well catered for in terms of cultural venues".

The Amulet was added to Theatres Trust's Theatres at Risk register in 2022. This is a list of the theatres across the UK considered most under threat and under greatest risk of loss. The list is compiled based on the type of risk faced, the quality and significance of the building, and its importance to the community. Its inclusion therefore demonstrates the value and importance of this building.

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Moreover, community interest and credible options for reopening the building as a theatre and community/cultural venue have grown since submission of the application. There is an active local community group comprising different arts organisations and individuals who have launched a bid to purchase the Amulet and undertaken substantial public engagement and fundraising. This has included a community survey, the response to which indicated strong support for the Amulet to be restored as a community centre, hosting theatre, cinema, and live music, alongside arts workshops and community events.

The community group has recently announced they will host a series of pop-up events within the currently disused ground floor unit of the Amulet this spring and summer, a proposal which is supported by the owner / applicant. This further evidences and justifies the need to safeguard this facility in line with Development Policy 17 and discounts there being no likelihood of a viable community use. Paragraph 98 of the NPPF also seeks planning decisions to plan positively for such uses and to protect against unnecessary loss.

In conclusion, we consider the arguments against this application and the loss of the Amulet as a space for theatre have grown since the original submission and our previous comments. We therefore continue to **object** to the granting of planning permission.

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

Tom Clarke MRTPI

National Planning Adviser

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