

Economic Development Statement

18 Tarrant Street is not located within either Arundel's designated primary or secondary retail areas. It's long use as an office and studio for Thorpe Architecture Ltd, until approximately 10 years ago was unaffected by its location, as the company's workload was generated by projects either elsewhere in the UK or in the rest of the world.

Sparks Yard General Store Ltd began business in 2003, partially occupying the building. It started with the ground storey and within 12 months expanded to also occupy the second storey, as Thorpe Architecture contracted. The building was jointly occupied with TA retaining the second storey accommodation until 2012, when they finally left the building.

Trading in the first few years was good for SY Ltd, but as time went by became increasingly difficult. Costs had dramatically increased and margins were becoming squeezed. 2012 was a decision year, either to change location to either a more mainstream position in Arundel or more advantageously, another, larger town. An alternative decision was made however, to further expand the store into the third story accommodation and add a restaurant. The principle being to both expand sufficiently to increase returns if not margins on individual sales and increase 'the offer' as a 'destination store' The third story was subsequently opened as 'The Loft', an ancillary restaurant to the main retail use.

Despite the success of the restaurant, margins both within the store and in the restaurant continued to be squeezed. For the last five years of its operation, as both internet sales grew, operating costs yet again increased and Arundel's fringe retail area [westwards along Tarrant Street from Bakers Arms Hill] all but disappeared. At the beginning Sparks Yard sat between a number of retail and business premises in this fringe area. Now all but a few have been converted to full residential use, removing any form of continuous retail frontage. Sparks Yard these days sits almost like an 'alien' within a residential area. This fact being recently confirmed by the attitude of the town to access to the building. Sparks Yard has never had a designated parking bay for deliveries and the latest removal of restricted parking in Tarrant Street, opposite the building, in favour of 'stagnant' residents parking, makes trading almost impossible.

So, the company gallantly hung-on until the New Year this year. Following an indifferent Christmas trading period, it closed, exhausted.

The conclusion to be made from this sequence of events is that given that a multi prize winning, large scale, innovative store, run by two young energetic people cannot make it in this location, the building is not viable as a stand alone retail store. Nor is it viable as any other totally business use. Its very close relationship with surrounding residential property, total lack of any adjacent visitor parking and relatively high running costs make it economically unworkable.

This applicant does not give up with business use within the building, but strongly believes that it is only viable on a reduced scale at Tarrant Street level. The application therefore includes the retention and expansion of the ground floor business accommodation, albeit that an expansion of business uses to A2 and B1a is proposed in addition to the existing A1 approved use. We continue to believe in Arundel, but must be realistic in terms of what is survivable in both the Town and this specific location.

Thorpe Architecture [on behalf of Terrier Firma Ltd] 11.05.2019

