

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 13 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, albeit the company had habitual problems attracting staff to the town

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 architectural practice finally left the building.

Trading in the first few years was good for Sparks Yard General Store, 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 initial success of the combined shop/restaurant, margins both within the store and 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. Historically the building sat between a number of retail and business premises in this fringe area. Now almost all have been converted to full residential use, removing any form of continuous commercial frontage. The building now firmly sits within a residentially dominated area.

The building never had a designated parking bay for deliveries adjacent to it and therefore was always very difficult to service. The removal of restricted parking in Tarrant Street, opposite the building, in favour of unrestricted, 'resident friendly' parking, further made its retail use significantly more difficult. Sadly the company finally 'gave up the fight' and ceased trading at the beginning of 2019.

Realising that the building was no longer viable as such a relatively large stand alone commercial unit within a changing town, in 2019 approval was both sought and given to convert it to a combination of residential and associated commercial use. The ground floor retained as commercial and the two upper floors reconfigured as a single residential unit. [ref: AB/49/19/L] It was hoped that a single occupier would be found who would both live in the upper floors and operate a deliverable scale business on the ground floor. This approach also requiring as little change as possible to the existing building fabric. The consent has subsequently been partially implemented.

The building has been actively marketed as defined by the consent in the intervening period. Despite considerable interest, after approximately 48 months, no purchaser has yet been found. Covid undoubtedly did not help but the relative complexity of such a project for an individual occupier, the operating constraints of even a more modest commercial use within this location and a general lack of sufficient belief in such a project at this time , have all conspired against its realisation.

After considerable discussion regarding options for the building's future we have conclude that there is little or no future for continuing commercial use within the building, and limited demand for such a large single residential unit in this location. Whilst the combination of the two uses may be a limited number of people's dream, there seems to be little appetite for the complexity and cost of its realisation.

Various totally residential options have been investigated. Apartment solutions , albeit that they could be served by the existing lift, worked for the first and second floors but not for the ground floor . Any units at this level being single sided to a busy, noisy Tarrant Street , with large unventilated glazed arches. Town house solutions resolve the ground floor use issue, by creating entrances and hallways to Tarrant Street together with ancillary service accommodation in the back, not naturally illuminated areas, as these dark areas were used when the building was in commercial operation. Three units of different sizes and numbers of bedrooms fit well lto the existing building . The smallest occupying the existing major access stairway to what was Sparks Yard behind the building.The stairway being not necessary for the proposed townhouse use.The accommodation provided by this solution is significantly more comparable in scale with other houses within the town and we are advised by our property consultants, considerably more 'deliverable'.

The current proposal is therefore intended to secure a consent for a significantly more relevant and deliverable solution to the building's future, whilst continuing to preserve, as much as possible, it's historic character.

Thorpe Architecture [on behalf of Terrier Firma Ltd] 06.01.25