

Heritage Statement

History

'The carpenter's firm of Charles Sparks in Tarrant Street was dealing in furniture in 1852, later taking on the businesses of auctioneer, house and estate agent, cabinet maker, upholsterer, house decorator, and undertaker, and from c. 1877 occupying a large brick building in Tarrant Street of six bays and three storeys'

-A History of the County of Sussex [Vol. 5, part1]

Sparks Furniture Depository, albeit initially constructed as a warehouse, appears to have also accommodated a variety of Charles Sparks' other enterprises. A separate but related piano storage building was at some time also constructed to the north of the building. In the mid 20th Century, both buildings were multi occupied as commercial premises. The Furniture Depository became known as The Emporium and for a number of years operated as a retail 'flea market' on its two lower floors with an apartment on the third floor, above.

In the late 1980s the building was acquired by the architectural practice of Thorpe Architecture and together with the adjacent Bay Tree House [number 16] and Piano Store [number 18A] buildings. They were combined to form a relatively large scale design studio campus. The internal configuration of the building was subsequently changed, with a new stairway connecting all three floors and associated service accommodation constructed in the Tarrant Street level of the northern part of the building footprint, all primarily accessed from the elevated Sparks Yard into the first floor level of the building.

The 'Sparks Yard' hard paved area was created by combining the external areas of all three properties. A new access stairway was created to the elevated yard area, from Tarrant Street, located within the eastern lean-to element of the building.

The Tarrant Street ground floor level of the building was later fitted out as a wine bar/restaurant separately accessed direct from Tarrant Street. The yard was subsequently reduced slightly in area when Bay Tree House was sold a few years later and subsequently converted to residential use.

18 Tarrant Street was listed grade II in December 1994. The description reads:

'Furniture repository, later offices and restaurant. C1880. Red brick with contrasting yellow/red brick decorative courses and segmental arches and surrounds to windows. Brick modillion eaves cornice. Slate roof. Brick chimneys. Three storeys with 2 storey lean-to section at east end. Double gabled roof. South elevation to street: ground floor has arcaded front with five archways, the central one being taller with a stone keystone to its arch. The masonry arches forming the facade at this level were blocked with timber hoardings at time of inspection. At the west end a larger arch with stone keystone has a double wooden garage door. The lean-to section at the east end has been altered (c 1991) to an arched entrance to match that at the west end, leading to a flight of brick steps. First

floor: 6 double-hung sash windows with glazing bars, 1 small window in lean-to section replaced by an arched opening. Second floor: 6 double-hung sash windows with glazing bars. East elevation: second floor has 3 double-hung sash windows with glazing bars and painted sign. West elevation is similar to east but 2 of the 3 windows have a differing glazing bar configuration.'

The architectural practice continued to occupy 18 Tarrant Street until 2012, albeit that its accommodation requirements significantly reduced after 2002. The adjacent Piano store building [18a Tarrant Street] was occupied by a graphic design organisation in the later 1990s and early 2000s, whilst Sparks Yard General Store opened for business in the Tarrant Street Ground Floor Level of 18 Tarrant Street in 2003. The business grew rapidly and within 12 months, it grew to also occupy the first floor level. Later it grew again to occupy the whole building, with a restaurant on the second floor level.

Sparks Yard General Store traded for over in excess of 16 years, winning many awards until closing at the beginning of January 2019, as a result of a dramatically worsening trading environment.

The building has remained unoccupied from that date. Planning approval was granted on 26th September 2019 for 'internal alterations to facilitate the change of use of upper floors to a single four bedrooomed residential unit and ground floor to a commercial unit [Use classes A1.A2 and B1a]' - ref: AB/49/19/L. The building has been subsequently marketed as such during the subsequent 48 month period. Despite interest no purchaser has been found for the property in this format, as described in the accompanying economic development statement.

Works were commenced on site within the terms of the above consent in September 2020 with the infilling of three then existing windows and one then existing doorway on the west elevation of the building. These works were carried out in accordance with the requirements of condition number 3 of the planning approval and the details reserved by this condition were subsequently approved on 21st September 2021. The consent is therefore, despite not being fully implemented, remains existent. This status being confirmed

The proposals

Given the apparent inability of the current consent to generate a solution for the building's future, this application, initiated after considerable discussion over a protracted period with our property consultants, seeks to create a more currently viable and deliverable future use for the building given both current and forecasted market requirements.

As was the case for the currently approved and part implemented application, the proposals within this application seek to retain as much of the character and detail of the listed building as possible both for the lifetime of the uses proposed and other possible uses in the future. During all of its changes of use, largely as a result of the high flexibility of the building's 'open floor' warehouse format, very little variation to the building's structure and fabric have been required. It has retained the original utilitarian character both externally and internally. The proposals within this application adopt as much as is practicable, a similar approach.

Externally

This is an iconic building within the Tarrant Street Streetscape. It is the largest, most visually prominent building in this part of Arundel. It is not the intention to fundamentally change any elements of the building visible from either Tarrant Street or any other part of the town, from which, the building is significantly visually exposed.

It is not proposed that the building's overall form is significantly changed. The south [Tarrant Street] elevation is unchanged except for the creation of a second external entrance lobby, replacing the two existing side-hung timber service doors in its western part. These doors were sealed in c.1994 and are now proposed as removed to provide an access lobby to one of the three proposed residential units. The existing lean-to external stairway in its eastern part, initially created in the early 1990s in response to the needs of the building's then total commercial use, is proposed to be removed with the existing enclosing building envelope repurposed and extended to form the third, smallest proposed residential unit. The resultant reduced depth external entrance lobby serving both the second and third residential units. Both entrance lobbies are proposed as internally clad in hardwood cladding based upon the design of the removed doors existing doors in the elevation's western part.

It is proposed that the east elevation changes with the extension of the existing lean-to section northwards, in order to accommodate the third residential unit. No additional windows are proposed in this lengthened elevation, which conceals one small existing window opening and one door opening in the main building elevation. It is also proposed that an additional existing window opening at first floor level, within this elevation, is infilled in order to create a privacy separation between the third residential courtyard and the main living space of the adjacent proposed residential unit within the main building.

The proposed extension with its associated small walled courtyard replaces the existing, now redundant, walling, air conditioning enclosure and planting structures associated with the existing commercial scale stairway. Two conservation roof lights are proposed in the extended slate roof of the lean-to. All existing detritus, inappropriate drainage hardware, [electrical conduits, air conditioning hoses etc. are to be removed [as were similar detritus removed from the north elevation within the implemented works of the existing consent].

The North [Sparks Yard] elevation remains as existing apart from a proposed dividing wall to match the existing one that it adjoins, separating the courtyard areas of two of the proposed residential units and a identically formed wall forming the northern enclosure to the third residential unit's courtyard. The northern elevation elevation of the third small residential unit incorporating two sets of side hung hardwood framed glazed doors, not visible from outside the courtyard that they serve.

Internally

The design aim is to retain not only many of the existing valuable elements of the building as possible but also to retain as much of the open feel of the building as possible, especially on the second floor, where currently all roof trusses are currently exposed. It is proposed that all internal partitions within the second floor will, where possible, leave exposed the timbers forming the existing roof trusses.

It is proposed to retain all currently exposed brickwork within the building, the internal faces of external walls and freestanding internal columns. It is also proposed to retain the existing steel ad Hardwood stairway installed in the 1990s but not to retain the lift installed in the early 2000s. The proposal therefore provides the next chapter in what will always be an iconic building.

Thorpe Architecture 06.01.25 [on behalf of Terrier Firma Ltd]