

The Planning Authority  
Launceston City Council  
PO Box 396  
Tas 7250



29/08/2018

Dear General Manager,

**Response to Representation against Change of Use to Business and Professional Services at Shop 14 – 61 George St, Launceston received by Council on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2018. DA0449**

I am writing in response to a representation against my Development Application to change the Use of shop 14/61 George St, Launceston to Business and Professional Services. The representation was received by Council on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August and was forwarded on to myself on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2018.

The main points raised in the representation in question are:

- The square was designed as a retail precinct.
- An office will have a negative effect on the retail businesses through detracting shoppers and will change the whole ambiance of the area.
- An office is not within keeping with the 'shopping village in the city' image of York Town Square.

The York Town Square precinct is zoned as 'Central Business' under *the Launceston Interim Planning Scheme 2015* (the Planning Scheme). Before lodging my development application, I took the time to thoroughly review the Purpose Statements for this zone to ensure my proposal is in keeping with these statements. The relevant Purpose Statements are:

22.1.1.1 – to provide for business, civic and cultural, community, food, hotel, professional, retail and tourist functions within a major centre serving the region and sub-region.

22.1.1.3 – to enhance the role of Launceston's central city area, by encouraging intensive development of the central business as the major retail, commercial and entertainment centre and the principle activity centre within the Northern Tasmania region.

22.1.1.3 – to create

- a) Activity at pedestrian level, with active road frontages offering interest and engagement to shoppers.
- b) Appropriate provision for car parking, pedestrian access and traffic circulation.

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I would like to take the opportunity to first provide additional information relevant to the Zone Purpose statements and then provide additional background information before responding to the points raised in the representation.

### **Zone Purpose Statements.**

AK Consultants is a commercial business that provides natural resource management and agricultural consulting services to clients from all over the State. Under the Planning Scheme AK Consultants' proposed use is classed as 'business and professional services' as we provide professional services to our clients in an office environment. However, I emphasise that we are a commercial business that provides services to clients for a cost. I note that the Purpose Statements 22.1.1.1 & 22.1.1.2 encourages intensive development of a range of businesses within the zone, which specifically includes commercially driven businesses as well as professional businesses, both of which AK Consultants are.

As a commercial business we regularly have clients and other professional service providers visit our office for consultations and meetings. It is also anticipated that we will develop an active shop front advertising our services. This is in keeping with Purpose Statement 22.1.1.3.a. Furthermore, the convenience of access for clients through both parking provisions within York Town Square and ease of pedestrian access was one of the key attractive points when considering locating AK Consultants within this building. York Town Square is also within the *Launceston Central Business District Parking Exemption Area* under the *Parking and Sustainable Transport Code* of the Planning Scheme. Because 14/61 George St is within this Exemption Area there is no requirement to meet usual parking requirements for a business and professional services operation; This is in keeping with Purpose Statement 22.1.1.3.b.

The Central Business Zone appears to be clearly designed to facilitate a range of businesses (of which 'professional' is one) within the same area to provide diversity. I would also like to note, that the Development Application meets all Acceptable Solutions for Use Standards under the Central Business Zone.

### **Additional Background Information.**

14/61 George St has been for sale and/or for lease since late March 2018. This followed on from the property being sold in early March 2018. It is my understanding that before the sale in March the property was for sale and/or for lease for at least 6 months. Again, it is my understanding that for the entirety of this time the property has been vacant.

There is a diversity of business and residential activity in York Town Square. There are also business and professional service enterprises located within the rear of the adjacent Grand Chancellor. My understanding is that although the representation discusses the potential for impact on 'retail' businesses there appears to be very little traditional 'retail' activity as such. A significant proportion of the 'retail' activity appears to be food services in the form of cafes and restaurants. There are also hairdressers and a beauty salon, art gallery and gaming room. As far as I'm aware there are no special provisions from a planning perspective that limits the type of businesses that can operate out of York Town Square.

From my observation of activity within York Town Square the majority of the activity is at night when diners congregate at the restaurants; during the day York Town Square appears relatively quiet.

I currently have a contract of sale on this property that is subject to Planning Approval for a Change of Use to Business and Professional Services so that I can relocate my business to these premises. My business employees five permanent staff and regularly has clients and other professional people visiting. Many clients come from rural locations well outside of the Launceston area, it is conceivable that many of these clients would not regularly visit York town Square.

My intention in purchasing the premises is to provide security of tenure for my business. AK Consultants (formerly Armstrong Agricultural Services) are a well-known and respected consultancy firm with a proven track record of quality service in the Agricultural and Natural Resource Management sector for a diverse range of clients from Agribusinesses, landholders to Local Government. We have been at our current location for nearly 30 years and we are only moving due to the impending disruption from the construction of the hotel Verge. Relocating requires substantial capital resources and is a risk for my business. I intend for the relocation to be permanent.

In my opinion our office will attract a different genre of foot traffic within the precinct that may not have previously been attracted to York Town Square on a regular basis. In fact, since becoming interested in locating an office within York Town Square, I myself have dined on two separate occasions at restaurants within the precinct. My business will provide long term complementary activity in York Town square by increasing foot traffic and exposure for other businesses during quiet times.

#### **Representation Points and responses**

- *The square was designed as a retail precinct.*

York Town Square already caters for a range of business, retail and food services. AK Consultants will complement the activities within York Town Square.

- *An office will have a negative effect on the retail businesses through detracting shoppers and will change the whole ambiance of the area.*

AK Consultants will attract a genre of potential customers who may not previously have frequented York Town Square. AK Consultants will increase foot traffic during quiet times and provide exposure for existing businesses. AK Consultants' staff, clients and professional acquaintances will utilise the existing retail businesses within York Town Square and bring increased business activity.

- *An office is not within keeping with the 'shopping village in the city' image of York Town Square.*

AK Consultants will provide additional diversity which will be an improvement on the current vacant status.

#### **Conclusion**

I struggle to see how locating AK Consultants at York Town Square can in anyway have a negative impact on adjacent businesses as it will ensure that a currently vacant building will be occupied indefinitely. In January 2018 when I first looked at this property as a potential option I contacted the Body Corporate Manager for York Town Square. At this time, I was lead to believe that the Body Corporate would be supportive of my proposal, hence this was a key consideration when placing a contract of sale on the property. It appears from the wording of the representation, that it is either from the body corporate or a number of Body Corporate members. Hence this is a distinct change in stance since I was first in contact with the Body Corporate manager.

While a retail business would likely generate more foot traffic into York Town Square, a vacant building provides none. In my opinion our office will have no negative impact on the ambiance of the square. In my opinion our proposal meets the Purpose Statements for the Central Business Zone and our proposal is compliant with the Acceptable Solutions for the Zone's Use Standards.

I would appreciate the opportunity for mediation if it appears that the application will be refused.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Ketelaar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Astrid Ketelaar**

Business Owner/Director

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