

Agenda Item No:	9	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	30 September 2024	
Report Title:	Wisbech High Street Update	

1 Purpose / Summary

1.1 To provide Cabinet with a monthly update regarding:

- Ongoing construction work at 24 High Street, Wisbech.
- Progress regarding the options for 11-12 High Street, Wisbech.

2 Key Issues

2.1 24 High Street Construction Progress

2.2 Etec, FDC's main contractor, continues with the construction work on 24 High Street, Wisbech. More progress is visible, with work now taking place at height, with brick and blockwork at the second-floor level. It is expected that the roof will be added in October and then inside works will commence.

2.3 The expected completion date is currently March 2025 and that remains subject to negotiation with the contractor. This is a difficult site with recent issues including;

- Additional insulation within walls required (due to the state of wall either side of our building)
- The walls on both sides tapering into our building space as the walls rise
- The nature of the frontages of the buildings meaning that they will be offset from each other – like the rest of the street

2.4 The contractor has asked for an extension of time due to the laying of the slab and an additional slab extension being required. The project team are responding to this next week with the 18-week extension suggested being unrealistic and likely to cost the Council a considerable sum. This matter is complex with no one answer and a negotiated extension term will be decided in September.

2.5 Additionally, the contractor submitted a variation in cost due to their insistence that the volume of bricks required was significantly higher than that in the original bill of quantities for the building. FDC's quantity surveyor has rejected the original sum suggested. It appears that there will be some additional cost but around half the value initially claimed by the contractor. This matter will be resolved in September and return to Cabinet if necessary.

2.6 Finally, because of the differing frontages either side of 24 High Street, a small delay was encountered when deciding how to address the space issue.

The contractor is expected to claim additional time for this issue too. FDC's team is assessing what this value might be prior to any potential claim in order to expedite the understanding of excess cost to FDC and settle this issue more promptly than the previous claims.

2.7 11-12 High Street

2.8 The cost of developing a meaningful building in the space where 11-12 High Street formally stood remains considerable. Various options have been considered following the private developer pulling out due to affordability issues some 2 ½ years ago. It should be remembered that the private developer was buying the plot for £1 and would have received £1m in National Lottery Heritage Funding – and still could not make the project viable. Following discussions with Members, another option is being assessed for the space in terms of its cost.

2.9 Once a design has been settled on, the project will take several years to complete. Steps will include;

- Affordability; The cost of FDC's far smaller project at 24 High Street is around £3m. 11-12 is a space that is far larger – if this were built out the cost will exceed 24 High Street's significantly. Even a building on part of the plot will match – or exceed (given inflation in the past 18 months) the cost of 24 High Street. Potential funding partners such as the Wisbech Town Board, CPCA and National Lottery Heritage Fund will require an application process, associated governance and the time such processes take – with no guarantee of funding success.
- Designing the building.
- Planning permission – and the building is in a conservation area.
- Development of the specification for the building and the procurement pack for tender
- Tender, appointment of contractor, pre-contract period and the build itself. 24 High Street will take 2 years to construct due to the site difficulties and complexities, as well as the location of a compound away from the site and the High Street, meaning no road closures (unless very brief) are allowed.

3 Recommendation

3.1 For Members to note the report.

Wards Affected	Medworth ward	
Forward Plan Reference	N/A	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Chris Seaton Cllr Ian Benney Cllr Chris Boden	Portfolio Holder for Social Mobility and Heritage Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance
Report Originator(s)	Phil Hughes Mark Greenwood	Head of Service Head of Property, Assets and Major Projects
Contact Officer(s)	Phil Hughes Mark Greenwood Paul Medd Peter Catchpole	Head of Service Head of Property, Assets and Major Projects Chief Executive Corporate Director and S151 Officer
Background Papers		

1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with a monthly update regarding:
- Ongoing building work at 24 High Street, Wisbech.
 - Progress regarding the viable options for 11-12 High Street, Wisbech

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 This paper is for regular information regarding 2 key Council projects and does not require a Cabinet decision.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 N/A

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Several options have been considered for 11-12 High Street. Revisions have taken place to try and deliver a project that is affordable, works with necessary consideration of the historic nature of the High Street in Wisbech and delivers a building that provides value to the town centre in terms of a shop and residential accommodation.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal Implications

None at this time.

5.2 Financial Implications

5.3 24 High Street; As highlighted in the report above, there will be a cost implication to the Council regarding original estimates of construction materials, their deployment and the associated prelim's and management costs for an extended period of work.

5.4 In addition, the issues regarding the building slab have caused a delay. This remains a key point of discussion between the contractor and FDC's project team. This will be resolved this month with a firm cost available at that time which may require a return to Cabinet.

5.5 Equality Implications

N/A

6 SCHEDULES

N/A