

Agenda Item No:	8	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	16 December 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. Whilst the original end date for the construction was 23 November, it is pleasing to see satisfactory progress in the past 2 months. The building is up and will be watertight by mid-December.

Description of ongoing works being carried out:

- Blockwork and brickwork completed
- All old props between the 2 adjacent buildings have finally been removed
- Insulation installation ongoing
- Cavity barrier installation ongoing
- Window installation underway

2.3 The expected completion date is currently March 2025 and that remains subject to negotiation with the contractor. In regard to Extension of Time (EoT) 2 regarding the laying of the slab and the setting out of the walls, the client team has determined that 8 weeks is the maximum time to be offered to the contractor. The contractor has asked for 12 weeks. We await to hear their feedback. There is a possibility that they will wish for a third-party arbitration to assess the EoT. If that was the case, it would likely take place after completion of the building. Discussions are ongoing, but at this stage the minimal additional cost to FDC for this issue is just under £90,000.

2.4 The contractor also submitted a variation in cost due to the volume of materials required for the build compared with those detailed in the original bill of quantities for the building. The issue of materials is now resolved with the cost to FDC less than half of the contractor's original claim. The contractor has issued EoT 3 for the extra time required to use the additional materials and the team awaits further information in support of this claim.

2.5 In the past month the contractor has also submitted EoT 4 for time incurred due to the differing frontages either side of 24 High Street. This will be assessed by the client team in the coming weeks.

3 11-12 High Street

- 3.1 A revised design that reduces the number of flats on the project has been devised and is under discussion. This approach will bring down the original cost by in excess of £1million, but obviously will not deliver the rental income of the original design.
- 3.2 Discussions have taken place with a Heritage Lottery Fund consultant. Whilst the original project has ended, the consultant is hopeful that the HLF will allow a project extension and technical appraisal of 11-12. If this approach was possible, the grant may then be available without a further, new, applications to HLF.
- 3.3 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.

Wards Affected	Medworth ward	
Forward Plan Reference	KEY21APR22/01	
Portfolio Holders	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
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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 (EoT 3) to the Council regarding original estimates of construction materials, their deployment and the associated prelims 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. The council's minimum costs are now clear; however, a firm cost depends on the contractor's approach to the final EoT 2 offer made by the client team.

5.5 EoT 4 has now been submitted by the Contractor for the front of the building and this is currently under consideration.

5.6 Equality Implications

N/A

6 SCHEDULES

N/A