

<b>Agenda Item No:</b>	<b>9</b>	
<b>Committee:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>5 September 2022</b>	
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>11 - 12 High Street, Wisbech - update report</b>	

## 1. Purpose / Summary

To provide Cabinet with an update regarding ongoing work related to the 11 – 12 High Street, Wisbech site.

## 2. Ongoing work to secure a future for 11- 12 High Street, Wisbech

3.1 As Cabinet is aware, the arrangement with a third-party developer was ended when the cost to develop the site to the agreed design that has planning permission rose significantly, increasing the developer’s potential loss on initial development above £1.3m.

3.2 Council officers are presently pursuing 3 potential options for number 11 – 12. These remain in development and a future paper will detail potential options and their costs and risks to Cabinet formally when assessment work is completed.

- **Development of a façade on the High Street**

Whilst this option is not ideal, given the constraints of the site and the current costs of any building development, a façade may be a pragmatic approach. A façade would ensure that the High Street is brought back to look how the community and visitors expect, albeit with no building behind.

A quantity surveyor has worked up estimated costs for both a front and rear façade. This is being adjusted to split the cost between the two to allow the Council to consider an option of just the front aspect facing the High Street.

If it could be shown that this was the only practical approach to securing the High Street’s appearance then it is anticipated that National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) would be sympathetic to supporting this approach and fund 65% of any costs.

This option would also consider the costs that the Council is currently responsible for in terms of the scaffolding in place and ongoing annual costs for this to remain in place.

- **Development of 11 -12 to the agreed planning permission by a 3rd sector organisation operating in the housing sector**

Officers have discussed the potential of a 3rd sector organisation developing the site. The organisation sees value in the development of the site, allowing housing right in the heart of the town centre. A further quantity surveyor report has been developed by the Council and the charitable trust has used this work to sense check the previous work of

the third party developer. Whilst very keen to pursue the possibility of development, there remains a significant gap in affordability, despite the £1m NLHF grant. Options to plug the funding gap are being investigated at present.

- Market testing; Development of 11 -12 to the agreed planning permission by a third-party developer

The loss of the previous developer on this site was a significant setback giving the expectation that any other developer would have the same affordability issues. To assess that this is indeed the case, the Council has approached another builder to take a considered view regarding the development of the site.

- 3.3 The possible outcomes of these three options should be available in the coming weeks, with a report to Cabinet then developed detailing potential options and their costs.
- 3.4 It should be noted that the NLHF grant of £1m is still available for this site. However, time is running short, with the NLHF expecting to see the Council in contract on the site before the end of March 2023. An extension beyond that period is unlikely. If all potential options have been exhausted and the start of any development of 11 -12 not be possible in that period, the Council would ask NLHF to consider applying some of the £1m grant to support the building works at number 24.

#### 4 Recommendations

- 4.1 That Cabinet notes the current position in relation to 11 -12 High Street, Wisbech.

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
Report Originator Contact Officers	Phil Hughes Paul Medd Matt Wright Peter Catchpole Amy Brown	Acting Assistant Director Chief Executive High Streets Project manager Corporate Director and S151 Officer Monitoring Officer and Chief Legal Officer