

Lowestoft Town Hall Project

Progress Report for November 2024, Full Council

This report covers the period to 22 November 2024.

Procurement – main construction tender

- We have completed evaluation of the tenders and have issued award/non-award letters. We are now in the standstill period, which will end on 25 November.
- The award has been made dependent on funding being secured, and the preferred contractor is aware of the timetable.

Funding

- We have submitted an uplift request to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This will maintain their intervention level at just under 36%, as it was previously. We hope to hear from the Heritage Fund by mid-December.
- The application to the PWLB for a £5m loan was submitted on 5 November and is being assessed currently. We have requested a decision by end November if possible. This would be a very short timescale for a decision, but we are hopeful it might be met.
- East Suffolk Council is considering an uplift in their grant too, to support the project. There is no spare capacity within the Towns Fund budget at this stage, so ESC's potential support is very welcome. A decision from Cabinet is expected in January.

Design

- The design team are beginning their RIBA5 work (this will get construction-ready drawings in place).

Activity Plan & Interpretation

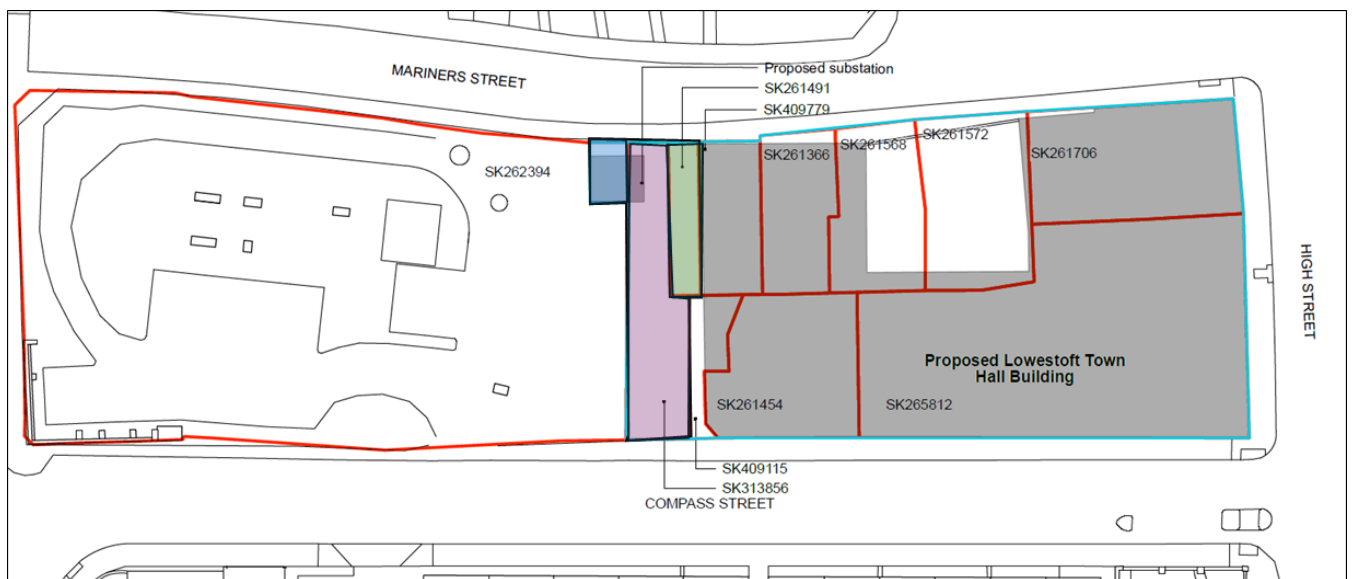
- The recently appointed Heritage Officer, John Chamberlain, has delivered a couple of engagement events (eg Food in School Holidays) and has been out and about with the Memories Bike, meeting people in the town. He has also visited a number of the heritage sites/museums in the Town and is building relationships with all of these. Our consultant Heritage Project Manager Jess Johnston is supporting John as he develops into the role.
- Jasmine Allen, curator of the Stained Glass Museum in Ely Cathedral, gave an online talk on the stained glass in the Council Chamber that was exceptionally well received. The webinar will be available on the project's YouTube channel shortly.
- Councillors will hopefully have seen the short film about the Heritage Skills Market made by our project filmmaker, Julian Claxton. It too will be on YouTube shortly.
- Jess has contacted Lowestoft Museum and a meeting has been arranged to discuss plans for LTC collection digitisation (part of the activity plan, and dependent on volunteers).
- Jess is working with PLB on the graphics schedule and content creation for our interpretation. Production won't begin until July next year at earliest. An accessibility consultant has made recommendations to improve the designs, and these are being implemented.

Evaluation

- Harriet Foster and Llewela Selfridge, our evaluation consultants, have audited the empty shops in the High Street and surrounding area. Currently, 18% of shops are vacant, down from 22% post-pandemic. We will be using this as part of our baseline to measure the economic impact of the project over next few years.

Land transfers

- Karen Chapman has been continuing the work to complete the transfers of land from ESC to LTC. This covers deeds SK261491 (green) & SK313856 (purple) on the diagram below. In addition, a small section of SK262394 (blue) will be transferred to house the UKPN substation. Originally intended to be leased from ESC, this small parcel will now be given to LTC in perpetuity.



- The Council's solicitor is dealing with UKPN to ensure a 99-year lease is in place, so they can schedule the installation.
- These transfers ensure that all the necessary land to cover the development site, including a wider alleyway at the rear of the building, is in LTC's ownership.
- Meanwhile, ESC will grant a licence to occupy the remainder of the adjacent site to the west during construction, for a compound and site accommodation. Heads of Terms have been sent and these are acceptable.

Business plan

- A revised and updated version of the business plan is available on the council's website (Town Hall Project). This was produced to support the PWLB loan application and has been completely brought up to date. Some of the financials have also been reworked, for example to take into account the increases in minimum wage, employer NICs etc.

PR & Comms

- I presented the project to the Lowestoft Place Board in early November, and to Lowestoft Vision a week later. In both cases, the project was well received and continues to have good support.

Members of Lowestoft Vision were particularly pleased to see the inclusion of the Changing Places room.

Financials

- Total spend to date is below:

Spend to date	TOTALS
Budget	£ 9,290,089.07
Actual spend to date	£ 727,420.24
Balance remaining	£ 8,562,668.83

- Invoices in this period are as follows:

Lowestoft Town Hall Project (NL-21-00031)		Delivery Stage	Invoice control sheet			
Invoice						
Date	Inv Ref N	Supplier	Description	Amount	VAT	Total inc V
28/10/24	LTH190	Halo Sunblinds	Sample markisolette blind	£ 1,594.00	£ 318.80	£ 1,912.80
01/11/24	LTH191	Dr Harriet Foster	Evaluation	£ 1,856.50	£ -	£ 1,856.50
21/11/24	LTH192	MossKing Associates Limited	Heritage Project Management October 24	£ 1,770.00	£ -	£ 1,770.00
21/11/24	LTH193	MossKing Associates Limited	Project Management October 24	£ 6,597.00	£ -	£ 6,597.00
14/11/24	LTH194	Andrew Morton Associates	Professional fees QS VE/evaluation	£ 2,166.00	£ 433.20	£ 2,599.20
14/11/24	LTH195	HAT Projects	Design team fees re VE October 24	£ 3,280.00	£ 656.00	£ 3,936.00
26/09/24	LTH196	Patricia Day	Prof fees re Heritage Skills Market Sept 24	£ 150.00	£ -	£ 150.00
04/10/24	LTH197	Stephen Amer	Prof fees re Heritage Skills Market Sept 24	£ 250.00	£ -	£ 250.00
02/09/24	LTH198	Ibbot's Uniques	Prof fees re Heritage Skills Market Sept 24	£ 811.25	£ -	£ 811.25
06/09/24	LTH199	Aartwork	Prof fees re Heritage Skills Market Sept 24	£ 400.00	£ -	£ 400.00
09/09/24	LTH200	Lowestoft Studio Ceramics	Prof fees re Heritage Skills Market Sept 24	£ 150.00	£ -	£ 150.00
28/09/24	LTH201	Miriam Hanid	Prof fees re Heritage Skills Market Sept 24	£ 200.00	£ -	£ 200.00
25/07/24	LTH202	The Guardian	Advert for Heritage Officer vacancy July 24	£ 575.00	£ 115.00	£ 690.00
24/05/24	LTH203	Kate Reeder	LED lights for gazebo for events May 24	£ 9.99	£ 2.00	£ 11.99
20/08/24	LTH204	East Suffolk Council	Licence for Heritage Skills Market Sept 24	£ 21.00	£ -	£ 21.00
01/08/24	LTH205	Seekbeak	Software licence for Virtual Town Hall	£ 458.73	£ -	£ 458.73
07/09/24	LTH206	Lowestoft Town Council	Staff salary (Heritage Manager) to Sept 24	£ 10,807.37	£ -	£ 10,807.37
23/10/24	LTH207	Lowestoft Town Council	Staff salary (HO) Oct 24	£ 1,300.31	£ -	£ 1,300.31
04/11/24	LTH208	Julian Claxton	Prof fees re filmmaking to Oct 24	£ 445.33	£ -	£ 445.33

- I have submitted Claim 3 to NLHF and expect a grant repayment of £23,884.37 in the next 10 days.

Next steps

- Over the next month, I will be managing/undertaking the following:
 - Seeking additional funding to cover our budget shortfall.
 - If funding is secured, progressing the implementation of the construction contract.
 - Researching the coworking market locally.
 - Seeking quotes for clock restoration, branding and signage design.
 - Developing content for interpretation and planning activity/engagement.
 - Investigating how to support Registrars' requirements re parking/cars.
 - Financial control over expenditure to support the above (in line with approved budgets).
 - Reporting as necessary to other funders.

Sheila Moss King
Project Manager