

ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Report to	Finance Governance & Asset Management
Meeting date	14 June 2023
Report author	Dan Sancisi
Agenda item	10

Report of Museum Manager

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform members on progress of the extended feasibility study reports for pre-planning application advice for the submission of a planning application to install a lift to the first floor of the Museum.
- 1.2 No decision required, report to be noted.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Ridge and Partners LLP were instructed to continue the feasibility study reports by your officers, following committee approval, minute F73/22, FGAM meeting of the 17 January 2023.
- 2.2 Your officers have commissioned an access audit and access plan. Both copies are attached as appendices.

3. Action required

- 3.1 Your officers request that committee notes this progress report.

4. Link to strategic plan and objectives

4.1 Forward Plan – Museum Lift F3

4.2 Our key objectives:

- 3 To manage the Council's assets efficiently and effectively to meet for the needs of the community now and in the future.
Improving the condition of existing buildings extends their function and facility for the community.
- 4 To work with community partners to support those who are vulnerable and in need and to create opportunities to increase social inclusivity.
In line with a commitment to accessibility and inclusivity your Officers are developing a proposal for lift access to first and second floors of the Abingdon County Hall.

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5. **Background**

5.1 **Preplanning advice and feasibility study for a new lift**

- 5.2 18 November 2019: minute C70/19 FGAM decision to investigate lift to upper floors.
- 5.3 23 November 2021 minute FG45/21. It was recommended that the 'S21-2833 – Abingdon County Hall Museum Lift Feasibility Report' be approved.
- 5.4 21 Oct 2022 Pre-application advice received from Vale of the White Horse planning suggested further research is required, they were clearly influenced by the letter of advice from Historic England suggesting a modified option three to first floor only would be their only positive planning consideration. They go on to say that this option would need supporting evidence of a compelling case to increase visitor access into the building.
- 5.5 17 Jan 2023 minute F73/22 decision to extend pre-application to include an access plan, also to extend the conservation report and consider historic views of the town centre and to be specific to a modified 'option three' proposal, as suggested by Historic England.

6. **Key information and options**

- 6.1 The Museum Manager met with Adrian Kite of Ridge Partners, the Vale Conservation Officer Boris Van der Ree and Nick Doggett Director of Asset Heritage (conservation consultants) on 25th May 2023 to discuss validated views of the proposed lift position in relation to Abingdon Town centre conservation area.
- 6.2 The intended focus of the meeting was to be consideration of developing a revised 'option three' of the feasibility study in the context of the conservation area.
- 6.3 In addition we discussed the possibility of progressing plans for an external lift tower in the location of the existing lift, albeit to first floor only. The conservation officer (surprisingly) thought it sensible to explore this as an option alongside the favoured modified option three (under the arcade).
- 6.4 Developed drawings, plans and extended conservation reports will form the basis for an extended feasibility study submission to Historic England for further comment. That report along with Historic England's response will be presented at the next committee meeting for approval, if complete, before a second pre-planning application is made.
- 6.5 Your officers consider that any negative type of response from Historic England would condemn any prospect of planning permission being granted.

7. **Climate change/green implications**

- 7.1 none.

8. **Financial/budget implications**

- 8.1 No further financial implications, other than the agreed costs at FGAM 17 Jan 2023, minute F73/22.

9. **HR implications**

- 9.1 None at this time.