

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: ESTATES AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE
DATE: 17TH AUGUST 2021
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND COMMISSIONING
AUTHOR: ANDREW LEADBETTER

SUBJECT: CREWE FIRE STATION

Purpose of Report

1. To update Members about progress with the project to replace the existing fire station in Crewe.

Recommended: That Members

[1] Note the report

Background

2. This committee last considered this project in November 2020. It was provided with information about a range of options. Members favoured the complete replacement of the fire station, but incorporating the existing bungalow building. The favoured option envisaged the creation of a temporary fire station off-site during the construction period. However, a fall-back option was also chosen.
3. The report considered by Members in November 2020 also mentioned a couple of issues that needed to be resolved: the impact of a restrictive covenant affecting the site; and the potential impact of HS2 on the site and surrounding infrastructure.

Information

4. There has been significant progress since November 2020, notwithstanding the challenges of working during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Contract

5. The contractor, ISG Construction Limited, was appointed in June 2021. ISG has been responsible for the construction of a number of fire stations (most recently, Chester), the safety centre and the training centre. At this point the Fire Authority is committed to the project to the end of the pre-construction activity, which should be completed during December 2021. The pre-construction activity involves the following:
 - development and submission of a planning application;

- obtaining all necessary surveys to support the planning application and development of design;
 - development of design and production of tender drawings and specifications;
 - development of a proposed contract sum and contractor's proposals for integration into the building contract;
 - all of the above in relation to both the temporary fire station, new building and refurbishment of the community bungalow
6. When the pre-construction activity has been completed this committee will need to meet to determine whether to proceed with the project. Members will have the opportunity to consider the contractor's proposals with the support and assistance of officers and external advisers.

Temporary Fire Station

7. There were two main benefits of the temporary fire station being accommodated off-site. Firstly, it meant that the construction site would not be constrained by the temporary fire station, providing greater flexibility and removing any risks associated with having an operational fire station and construction site directly adjacent to each other. Secondly, it was anticipated that it would be accommodated in an existing industrial unit, or similar and be considerably cheaper than a bespoke temporary fire station.
8. There has been a thorough search for a site to accommodate a temporary fire station off-site. Unfortunately, this has not been successful. Availability of suitable sites was limited. One site was identified that appeared to be workable, but it became clear that it was likely to be expensive, possibly more than a bespoke temporary fire station. The rent was higher than anticipated and the letting period longer than was required.
9. As a result of the failure to secure a suitable site, the Project Manager was given the task of identifying a way to accommodate the temporary fire station on site at a cost that was acceptable. The Project Manager and the Station Manager for Crewe have worked closely together to review the requirements of a temporary station and to ascertain the minimum facilities required on site and those which can be relocated to other nearby fire stations. This has also included an assessment of facilities already provided on other fire stations that can be used temporarily.
10. The Project Manager and Station Manager have also reviewed the location of the temporary station on the site such that it minimises the conflict between fire operations and construction activities, which in turn has led to the development of a solution that is centred on utilising the community bungalow, which is to be retained. The community bungalow will be supplemented by a small number of temporary buildings and a temporary appliance bay (similar to that used at Chester). This has resulted in a scheme for the temporary fire station which is much smaller than first envisaged and is affordable within the allocated project budget.

Restrictive Covenants

11. The title documentation includes a restrictive covenant that restricts the height of any construction on the site. The training tower needs to be higher than the height restriction. The covenant was intended to protect a proposed airport (in the deeds a reference is made to an aerodrome) and it dates back to the 1930s. It is clearly of no relevance now. Cheshire East Council and the Crown both benefit from the covenant.
12. Cheshire East Council and the Crown have both indicated a willingness to enter into a suitable document which will allow the project to proceed with a suitable training tower.

HS2

13. At the time of the last report correspondence from HS2 Limited had led to some uncertainties about the impact of the HS2 project.
14. With the assistance of colleagues at Cheshire East Council it has been possible to secure the necessary assurance that the HS2 project will not impact upon the site, or adversely alter the surrounding infrastructure.

Planning Application and Design

15. Initial discussions with the planning officer at Cheshire East Council were encouraging. These have been helpful in shaping the approach to the planning application and design. The planning application takes these discussion into account as well as the information gathered during the consultation process.
16. The views of staff, public and Fire Brigades Union have been taken into account and will continue to influence the design of the building, particularly the layout.
17. Images of the proposed building and site layout are attached to this report as Appendix 1.

Sustainable Design Development

18. A Summary Progress Report prepared by the Project Manager is attached to this report as Appendix 2. This contains information about sustainable design development.
19. The project is aiming for the BREEAM Excellent standard – which is the next higher rating than was achieved at Chester. Both Chester and Crewe will also be “Zero Carbon” buildings in respect of regulated energy, i.e. the energy that is needed for the building to function such as the provision of lighting, hot water and heating (but not the variable energy load caused by user’s equipment such as computers).
20. BREEAM is the preferred method of measurement of the sustainability credentials of a new building used by both Government and planning departments. It is operated by the BRE on behalf of the government and comprises two assessments, one at design stage and one at completion, with an optional third assessment twelve months after completion. There are a

number of ratings from Pass to Outstanding, with Excellent being the second highest. BREEAM is a wide ranging environmental assessment method that covers many different headings and as such it is difficult to get a rating higher than excellent on a fire station without investment in technology and reports that will be of limited value.

21. In achieving a higher rating for Crewe we are looking to enhance the sustainability credentials to the next level and the following list provides some examples of additional activities which should contribute toward this:
- undertaking overheating studies at an early project design stage;
 - undertaking carbon consumption studies of alternative forms of construction;
 - undertaking an operational use workshop to better understand how the building will be utilised;
 - undertaking an ecological workshop to ensure the protection of existing site ecology and its enhancement by the scheme;
 - introducing external solar shading to the building to prevent heat entering;
 - enhancing the insulation properties of walls, roofs and windows through material choices, without increasing construction cost;
 - undertaking detailed measurement of the building performance at Chester and incorporating lessons learned from this into Crewe;
 - installing a Power Management System to better align electricity production with consumption from the photo voltaic (solar) panels (a lesson from Chester).

Social Value

22. The Summary Progress Report also mentions the upcoming social value activity.

Possible Alternative Site

23. We have had an indication that there is the potential of an alternative site, to be released from the HS2 project, which could become available at a future date. This does have its attractions as it could become the site of the new fire station (not just a temporary fire station). This would mean that there would be no requirement for a temporary fire station; the existing fire station would continue to operate until the new fire station was ready for occupation. The difficulty here is the uncertainty about timescale and the complexity of agreeing the transactions that would be involved. For now officers believe that the current plans should proceed. Officers will revert to Members if the alternative site option becomes available at a time that makes it a realistic option.

Financial Implications

24. £7m is allocated for this project. It is contained in the capital programme. The project is to be funded by borrowing. The work during the pre-construction stage will finalise the detail and secure costs for the project. Whilst these costs are not fixed at pre-construction phase, they are substantially firmed up for most of the major elements of the project. There will be some uncertainties associated with a project of this kind that cannot be completely resolved before entering into the construction contract, e.g. contamination, ground conditions etc. However, it should be possible to assess these uncertainties and have a realistic view about the risks associated with the project budget and allocated funding.

Legal Implications

25. The Fire Authority is contracted until the end of the pre-construction stage. At that point it will be able to consider whether the project should continue to construction. If it wishes to proceed a further contract will be entered into at that time, when the cost of the building will have been firmed up.

Equality and Diversity Implications

26. The project will deliver a building that will take into account equality and diversity requirements.

Environmental Implications

27. The project will deliver structures that will be a considerable improvement over the existing buildings which are not environmentally efficient.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE