East Lothian Council

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 29 October 2024

BY: Executive Director for Place

SUBJECT: The Brunton Hall RAAC Update, Proposal for Closure and Alternative Service Delivery Arrangements

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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To provide an update on the current position at the Brunton Hall which has been compromised structurally due to the discovery and condition of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC).

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is recommended to:

2.1 Note that RAAC roof panels are present at the Brunton Hall and that structural surveys have identified significant structural issues with these.

2.2 Note the current condition of the RAAC roof panels, the challenges of maintaining statutory compliance and the poor working environment at the Brunton Hall.

2.3 Agree to relocate Council services currently operating from the Brunton Hall to alternative locations at a cost of £442,000.

2.4 Approve the closure and mothballing of the Brunton Hall as soon as possible after suitable alternative arrangements for service delivery are in place.

2.5 Agree to carry out one-off mothball works at the Brunton Hall and split the heating system that serves both the Brunton Hall and Brunton Court at a cost of £729,000 (of which £705,000 will require clarification as to whether all or an apportionment sits within the HRA).

2.6 Note that the potential remediation of the RAAC at the Brunton Hall is unaffordable and that the preferred option is to demolish the building at a cost of £3.6m.

2.7 Agree to undertake a statutory consultation under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 to demolish the Brunton Hall.

2.8 Agree to undertake a place-based development project to prepare viable options for the future service delivery and accommodation of the arts in the Musselburgh area.

2.9 Agree that the results of the consultation exercise and the place-based development project are reported to East Lothian Council to allow a decision on this proposal to be taken.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Brunton Hall complex was officially opened on the 25 June 1971 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. It contains an auditorium, performance halls, Council offices and is the focal point of Council services for Musselburgh. The auditorium was refurbished in 1990 and a further building refurbishment was undertaken in 2010.

3.2 The building is generally understood to be of steel/concrete frame construction with reinforced concrete floors and a mixture of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) and reinforced concrete roofs. External walls are understood to be primarily reinforced concrete cladding panels. Like many buildings of this age and type, asbestos containing materials were used in the construction of the Brunton Hall and those that are still present are subject to an asbestos management regime.

3.3 RAAC is a lightweight form of precast concrete but is much less durable than traditional concrete. Concerns have been raised of the safety of RAAC as a result of a number of instances where it has resulted in roof collapse. Inspections carried out in March 2023 identified the presence of RAAC roof panels. The extent of RAAC found in the Brunton Hall can be seen in Appendix 1.

Current Safety Arrangements

3.4 Following the discovery of RAAC roof panels, several measures have been implemented to ensure the safety of staff and customers as well as continuity of service.

- Restrictions have been put in place to control access to areas directly below RAAC roof panels including Venue 1, the Supper Room, and the top floor of the office block.
- Alternative performance venues are currently being used by Brunton Theatre Trust to deliver the programme of events.
- Propping has been installed to several areas that were deemed high-risk by the structural engineer due to the condition of the RAAC roof panels. However, not all high-risk areas are currently propped, the risk is controlled by restrictions accessing these areas.

- A programme of ceiling removal has been undertaken to reduce the loading from the underside of the roof planks. This has also allowed access to allow inspection of the exposed roof panels.

- A RAAC Management Plan has been prepared for the Brunton Hall and has been approved by the Council's insurers and shared with the Health & Safety Executive.

3.5 Whilst these measures have meant that the Brunton Hall is currently safe to use for staff and customers, it is becoming increasingly difficult and more expensive to maintain the building with the restrictions in place. There remains a risk that this could change at short notice as the RAAC continues to deteriorate.

Current RAAC Condition

3.6 RAAC is a lightweight cementitious material with mild steel reinforced bars and was used mainly in flat roof construction between the 1960s and the 1980s. It is aerated and contains no coarse aggregates meaning it does not behave like conventional reinforced concrete. RAAC is highly permeable and any defects in the roof membrane can allow water to permeate into the panels. This can lead to an increase in panel weight, corrosion of reinforcement and ultimately adversely impact the material strength. Behaviour of the panels is difficult to predict due to uncertainties in the material and the mechanical properties of the panel.

3.7 The Building Research Establishment (BRE) estimates the design life of RAAC panels to be approximately 30 years after which consideration should be given to replacement. The roof panels in the Brunton Hall are now more than 50 years old.

3.8 Ongoing water ingress at the Brunton Hall, particularly in areas where propping is not present, is resulting in deterioration of the roof panels. This presents an ongoing risk of failure of the panels. Detailed assessment of these panels by the structural engineer have not been possible due to concerns safely accessing them and the underside of the panels being obscured for visual inspection.

3.9 Whilst safety arrangements have been put in place to mitigate the risk associated with these roof panels, there have been cases of sudden failure elsewhere in the UK. If the roof panels were to fail, there would be a significant risk of disruption to asbestos-containing materials below, with possible release of asbestos fibres into the air. Failure of the roof panels would also be likely to make refurbishment or demolition much more complex and more expensive.

3.10 The risk associated with the failure of RAAC panels could be reduced if additional propping is provided to the remaining areas and the water ingress to the roof is resolved. However, this presents technical challenges as some of these areas are double height spaces with tiered seating below and walkways/services at high level. To safely install these props, an extensive asbestos removal programme would also be required in

advance. It is worth noting that this would be a temporary measure and full remediation of the roof panels would still be required. If additional propping was installed, it would permanently render a number of rooms unusable for service delivery. This would include the Theatre, Venue 1 and the Supper Room. Installing propping at critical locations at the end of the panels significantly reduces the risk of roof collapse; however, water ingress may continue to deteriorate RAAC panels even where propping is present.

3.11 As part of the option appraisal investigations, the structural engineers also carried out testing to the concrete frame and cladding panels. The testing identified two cladding panels which were assessed as having a high risk of potential corrosion. They have confirmed that it is not presently considered a safety issue, but further investigation and remedial works are required to address this.

Statutory Compliance Challenges

3.13 Ensuring statutory compliance within the Brunton Hall is becoming more and more challenging and expensive. Reduced staff presence and restricted area have increased risk associated with legionella. Stagnant water in the system provides a breeding ground for legionella to multiply. In normal use, with a fully occupied building, the system is in regular use. Little used outlets are identified and flushed weekly as party of a monitoring regime. However, large areas of the building have little or no use, so an increased flushing regime has been put in place that includes daily flushing of outlets. This is much more onerous and expensive to undertake. Also, large area of the building has access restrictions in place. This means additional controls on contractors carrying out statutory compliance inspections and maintenance to ensure that they can carry these out safely This is increasing time consuming to undertake and manage.

Current Working Environment

3.14 Following the partial closure of large areas of the building and the general decline in numbers of users, staff still using the remainder of the Brunton Hall have advised that the quality of the working environment has deteriorated significantly, and it is no longer a pleasant place to operate from. This includes a decline in air quality (e.g. damp, stuffiness). The heating system to half of the office areas being used in the building have now failed with investment required to replace the heating pumps which is estimated to cost in the region of £10,000. Temporary heating is presently being provided which will be much more expensive to operate therefore extended use is not advisable. This further supports the recommendation to mothball.

Proposed Relocation of Services Based at the Brunton Hall

3.15 Given the poor working environment, statutory compliance challenges and the future risk associated with the RAAC roof, it is proposed that Council services currently based in the Brunton Hall are relocated to suitable alternative properties as a precautionary measure. The full list of services

at the Brunton Hall and the proposed alternative service locations can be found in Appendix 2.

3.16 Former Citizens Advice Bureau at 141 High Street, Musselburgh

This building has been vacant since the CAB moved to the Fisherrow Centre. It will contain 14 workstations and 2 customer counters along with 4 interview rooms. It is proposed that this will be the main Council presence in the town centre for face-to-face contact and will include the following services:

- Customer Services
- Housing Options Duty Officer
- Musselburgh Community Housing Team
- Bookable desks, interview rooms and a meeting room that can be used by other services.

3.17 Musselburgh East Community Learning Centre

It is proposed that one of the existing training rooms at Musselburgh East Community Learning Centre will be converted into office accommodation to accommodate the Art Services team.

3.18 Aldhammer House, Prestonpans

Previously used as a Housing Area Office it is currently mothballed due to condition issues with the heating system. It is proposed that this property is brought back into operation and interview rooms be provided to accommodate Justice Social Work and associated Business Support.

3.19 John Muir House, Haddington

John Muir House is undergoing a phased transformation to the 'new ways of working' layouts. The following services will be relocated to John Muir House:

- Housing Options
- Mental Health Officers
- Public Protection Unit

3.20 The following table provides a summary of the costs to upgrade each of the alternative service locations.

Property	Cost to Upgrade
141 High Street, Musselburgh	£170,000
Musselburgh East Community Learning Centre (Community Meeting Room R006)	£12,000
Aldhammer House	£260,000
John Muir House	Included in current approved NWOW budget
Total	**£442,000**

The proposed works will take an estimated 6 months to complete.

Such a change in accessing Council services will require to be well managed and communicated to staff and customers.

Closure and Mothballing of the Brunton Hall

3.21 Once services have been relocated to the alternative locations, it is proposed that the Brunton Hall be closed and mothballed. This would result in a temporary revenue saving of approximately £300,000 per annum on current year budgets through the reduction in energy costs, cleaning, janitorial and maintenance.

. The table below shows one-off costs to mothball the Brunton Hall.

Description	Estimated One-off Costs (Mothballed)
Split heating system with Brunton Court	705,000
Board up doors and windows	13,000
Reflective film to ground floor windows	9,000
Remote CCTV security system	1,000
System drain-down and final disconnections	1,000
Total	**729,000**

The following should be noted:

- The heating system at the Brunton Hall also serves Brunton Court. There will therefore be a requirement to split these systems to make Brunton Court operate independently if a decision is taken to mothball. The costs for this will require clarification as to whether all or an apportionment sits within the HRA budget which may require to be re-prioritised to accommodate this.

- Ground floor windows will have a reflective film applied to them externally and boarded up internally.

Options for RAAC Remediation

3.22 An option appraisal has been carried out by Council officers and the structural engineer to establish the potential technical solutions to remediate the RAAC roof at the Brunton Hall and to provide an indication of cost. A summary of the options considered, and an indication of costs is shown in the table below.

Option Description	**Budget Cost**
Incorporation of secondary structural deck	£22.242m
Complete refurbishment of the building (Option 3)	£42.912m
Demolition and new build (Option 4)	£50.742m
Demolition and new build to Passivhaus standard (Option 5)	£57.949m

<u>Incorporation of secondary structural deck</u>

This option is based on the existing RAAC panels remaining in place but being fully supported from below using a secondary timber structure (similar to the solution employed at Preston Lodge High School). There are some roofs where this is not feasible, so complete roof replacement has been proposed in these areas. This option will require significant alteration and replacement of existing mechanical and electrical services, particularly those located adjacent to RAAC roof panels. Officers have concerns over practicalities of this option, the long-term ability to keep the RAAC panels dry, the life expectancy of other building elements and the future cost liability in not carrying out other condition related works such as replacement windows and cladding, etc. As a result, this option is not recommended.

Complete refurbishment of the building

This option consists of the complete replacement of the RAAC roof panels as well as full refurbishment of the Brunton Hall. Significant investment will be required to deliver this option and there are concerns whether this would represent value for money as the existing footprint and internal configuration being retained has considerable energy and environmental challenges and retains operational difficulties with the layout that would not be considered best value.

Demolition and new build

This option would involve the demolition of the Brunton Hall, and a new facility built to current standards on the existing site. Costs are based on retaining the same floor area as the existing building.

Demolition and new build to Passivhaus standard

This option would involve the demolition of the Brunton Hall, and a new facility built to Passivhaus standard on the existing site. Passivhaus is a voluntary standard for energy efficiency that is in excess of current building standards. It results in an ultra-low energy building through increased insulation, improved air tightness and low carbon heating sources. Costs are based on retaining the same floor area as the existing building.

Partial demolition

3.23 The viability of demolishing the office part of the Brunton Hall to leave only the performance spaces was considered. However, this option has been discounted on the basis that significant RAAC remediation would still be required to the roofs above these areas and the fact that the main service supplies are located on the east side of the building and would require to be relocated.

Proposal for Demolition

3.24 The options above are considered unaffordable and do not represent value for money due to the current fiscal climate and the financial challenges facing the Council. It is therefore proposed that the building should be demolished once the building has been mothballed and services relocated. This would provide the benefit of not having an ongoing safety and security liability. It would also reduce the risk of increased future demolition costs if part of the roof was to collapse. The Brunton Hall houses a Scottish Power sub-station and telecom masts which would need to be taken into account if demolishing the building. It is also worth noting that whilst the Brunton Hall is not in a conservation area, engagement with Planning Services would be required prior to demolition.

3.25 The Brunton Hall is classified as a Common Good asset. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires the Council to publish details of any proposed changes to Common Good assets and to open these proposals to community councils for consultation. As a result, it is proposed that an exercise be undertaken to consult on the proposal to

demolish the Brunton Hall prior to a decision being taken on the future of the building.

Place-based Approach to Future Service Delivery

3.26 Musselburgh is the largest town in East Lothian with a population estimated to be over 21,000. Should the Brunton Hall be demolished then it is recommended that place-based development project, consistent with the Council's asset strategy and management plan, is undertaken to determine the most appropriate, sustainable and affordable way forward.

This could include:

- Potential co-location with Community Planning Partners
- Business case for replacement of the theatre and other performance spaces
- Alternative locations such as Musselburgh Old Town Hall
- Possible integration with any proposals to replace Musselburgh Grammar School following PPP agreement.

Further consideration will be required as to how this development project is resourced and funded.

Conclusion

3.27 Given the current condition and significant cost of the options to remediate the RAAC, the recommendation is to close the Brunton Hall and decant services to alternative locations.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The recommendations of this report align with the Property Asset Strategy & Management Plan 2024–2028, approved by the Council on 25 June 2024.

4.2 The actions recommended in this report align with the East Lothian Council Plan 2022-27.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 The subject of this report may affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy therefore an Integrated Impact Assessment has been carried out, and will be published on the Council's website:

Integrated Impact Assessments | Integrated Impact Assessments | East Lothian Council

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial – There is a temporary revenue saving on premises costs of £300,000 per annum if the Brunton Hall is closed and mothballed. The following one-off costs are required to achieve this.

Description	**Estimate (£000)**
Upgrade works to 141 High Street, Musselburgh East Community Learning Centre and Aldhammer House	442
Split heating system with Brunton Court	705
Other mothball works	24
Total	**1,171**

The cost to demolish the Brunton Hall is estimated to be £3.6m (subject to consultation) and may require to be met from Common Good.

6.2 Personnel – there will be a requirement for staff to be moved to a new work location with amendments required to their contracts for their new work base.

Resources to carry out the feasibility and design works for alternative decant premises have not been identified at present. There is concern that this is unplanned work, and existing resources are fully committed with other agreed project work.

6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Appendix 1: Extent of RAAC at the Brunton Hall

Appendix 2: Alternative Service Delivery Locations

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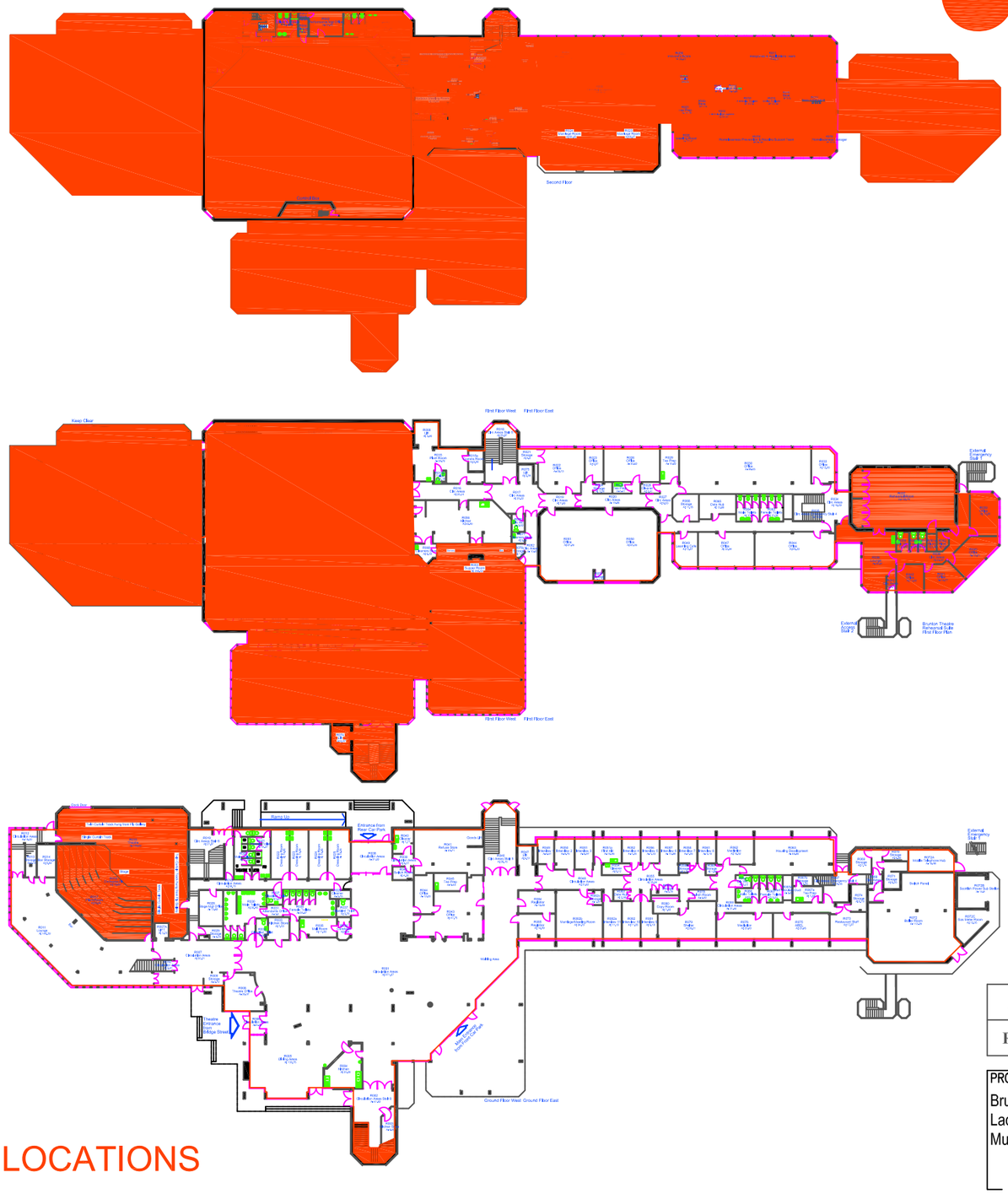
DATE	29 October 2024

OUT OF BOUNDS LOCATIONS



OUT OF BOUNDS LOCATIONS

Rev	Date	Description	Drawn
A	13/04/2023	Out of bounds areas at the Brunton Hall / RAAC Locations	GF

PROJECT
Brunton Hall
Ladywell Way
Musselburgh EH21 6AF

DRAWING
Out of Bounds Locations

East Lothian Council
ENGINEERING SERVICES

SCALE			PROJECT No.	Asset No
N.T.S		At A3		1552
DRAWN	CHECKED	DATE	DRG NO	STAGE
KS		Apr 23		
				REVISION A

John Muir House Haddington East Lothian EH41 3HA
Telephone 01620 827827 Fax 01620 827437

Property	Workstation Availability	Proposed Workstation/Service Allocation
141 High Street, Musselburgh (Ground Floor)	• 2 open interview counters • 4 workstation desks	• Customer Services (2 open interview counters & 3 desks) • Housing Options Duty Officer (1 desk)
141 High Street, Musselburgh (First Floor)	• 8 workstation desks with Meeting Room.	• Community Housing Team (4 desks) • Bookable Hot Desks (4 desks) *can be used by TAC team when meeting YP*
Musselburgh East Community Learning Centre, Musselburgh (Community Meeting Room R006)	• 12 workstation desks	• Arts Services (8 desks)
John Muir House, Haddington	• Various	• Housing Options (10 desks) • Mental Health Officers (8 desks) • Public Protection Unit (5 desks)
Aldhammer House Ground Floor	• 25 workstation desks	• Justice Social Work (19 Desks) • Business Support (4 Desks)