



Treatment of the Former County Hall – Appendix 2



Background

The Project Angel Business Case, which resulted in the provision of the Councils new offices at One Angel Square (OAS), assumed that there would be an ongoing need for public facing provision centred on the County Hall accommodation. It was recognised that parts of the building would not be required and early agreement was made for the disposal of the Old Gaol and Guildhall Road Blocks to Northampton Borough Council.

The intention was that democratic-related provision would continue to be centred on County Hall and that reception in Sessions House would continue to be the public facing provision.

The Constabulary block has been recognised as having a long term requirement to act as a strategic hub for LGSS IT services and now accommodates the County Coroners office and bulk storage facilities. Plans to create a walkway from One Angel Square to County Hall have been shelved.

Other areas within County Hall had no definite plans for their future use.

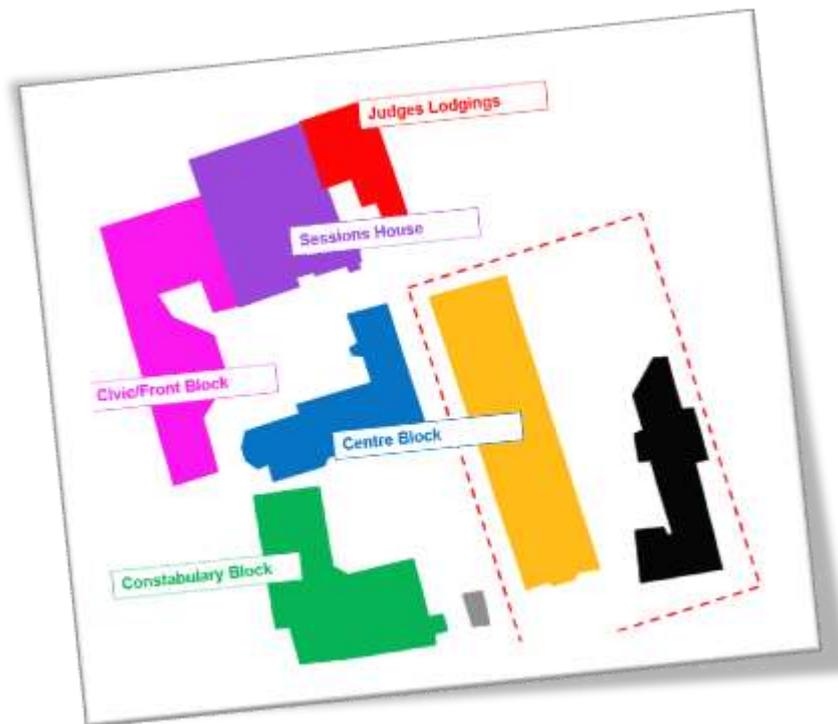
Gleeds were employed to examine initial options for County Hall and their reports and ongoing advice have provided the basis for the options set out in this report.

Given the current position however, an additional comment has been added to each option to provide clarity on the way forward.



Block Analysis

For the purposes of assessing County Hall the site can be broken down into distinct blocks, which can be described as follows:



Constabulary Block

Housing business critical IT provision provided by LGSS. Upper floor is now used as a secure office accommodation by the County Coroner, linked with use of the Courts on a weekly basis. Bulk storage for services operating from OAS. Occupancy has been maximised.

Centre Block

All staff have now been relocated in to OAS. Some storage by LGSS IT services at basement/lower ground level. Otherwise the building is mothballed.

Sessions House and the Courts

Tourist information remains in the manned reception area. Courts are used by the County Coroner with ancillary room spaces twice each week. Provides main access to County Hall and acts as a public face of the Council in Northampton. Providing low rates of utilisation but providing for space requirements that are difficult to house in alternative locations.

Front Block and Council Chamber Block

Now used entirely for democratic purposes, includes the Council Chamber and currently houses the Cabinet Offices, Lord Lieutenant and associated political rooms. Under utilised but provides the single largest meeting space in the County and arguably the only current venue suitable for full Council meetings, within direct County control.

Judges Lodgings

Historically associated and actually linked with the adjoining Courts, now providing very limited overnight accommodation to councillors and judges. Some meeting room use. Very underutilised.



History and Listing

The darker the area the older the building

Judicial element is the oldest (lodgings, courts etc.) – mid 1700s

The civic facilities are relatively new – circa 1900

The newest elements are the rear extension to the Constabulary block (late 20th century)



Front block / civic facilities – grade II*

Sessions House – grade I

Judge's Lodgings – grade II*

Centre block – grade II

Old Constabulary – locally listed

Operational Costs

Set out below is a table showing the estimated running costs relating to the relevant blocks:

Cost Centre	Front Block & Sessions House based on a GIA of 2696.38m ²	Judges Lodgings based on a GIA of 702.60m ²	Centre Block based on a GIA of 1374.32m ²	Constabulary Block based on a GIA of 1004.32m ²	Total
Asbestos	£ 128	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ 128
Hard FM	£ 10,732	£ 2,223	£ 10,918	£ 3,178	£ 27,050
Premises Running Costs	£ 29,434	£ 7,670	£ 15,002	£ 10,963	£ 63,069
Reactive Maintenance	£ 16,771	£ 848	£ 7,375	£ 2,411	£ 27,405
Soft FM	£ 34,268	£ 9,579	£ 17,772	£ 12,987	£ 74,605
Utilities	£ 29,041	£ 9,199	£ 14,626	£ 135,336	£ 188,202
Total	£ 120,373	£ 29,518	£ 65,693	£ 164,875	£ 380,459

Note. The figures quoted can only be estimated, as the services and other outgoings for each block are not separated. Apportionments based on floor areas have, therefore, been applied.

In addition there are staff costs that will be applicable to running of buildings. Any proposal to reduce the occupation of County Hall may give rise to potential savings in this area.



Block Options

Constabulary Block

Existing Uses	Angel Relocation	Reason	Solution
County Coroners Office	No	Need for secure accommodation and storage	Retain in existing location
IT Servers – Data Centre	No	Operational need to separate servers from Angel. Data Centre serves other authorities	Retain in existing location
Bulk Storage	Partial	OAS has limited storage. Storage items need to be accessible to OAS occupiers	Retain in existing location but explore further options to extend and give flexibility
Scope for Change			
Planning		Local listing will provide constraints	
Facilities		Does not meet DDA requirements WC Facilities limited	
Scope for Realising Value			
<p><u>Dispose</u> Inclusion as part of a wider disposal of the former County Hall may give some marginal increased returns and would certainly give greater scope for a disposal of Centre Block. The costs of relocating the Data Centre estimated at £4.5 million will more than outweigh the benefits derived. This block is associated with high running costs of c. £165,000. It should be noted however that these costs are associated with the use of the building as a data centre and it should be expected that a relocated facility will have correspondingly high running costs.</p> <p><u>Retain</u> Given the high utilisation of this building and the specialist needs that it accommodates it lends itself to retention in the short to medium term. Bulk storage represents a relatively low value use of the property but current constraints make this the only viable location within the town centre and with the potential closure of other areas of County Hall will put further pressure on storage needs. LGSS service other Councils from this facility.</p> <p>June 2018 – Alternative accommodation is to be sought for the Coroner’s Office and bulk storage. With regards the IT data centre, work will be required to identify future options in line with Districts/ Boroughs. Proposed to build in ability to remain in this block after the sale process for a determined period to allow suitable alternative provision of data centre in line with Unitary requirements.</p>			



Centre Block

Existing Uses	Angel Relocation	Reason	Solution
Office Accommodation	Yes	All staff located to OAS, Although some storage still takes place in the basement.	Reuse or dispose
Magnolia Room	Yes	Sufficient space in OAS means that this large meeting facility is no longer required	Closed for bookings. Reuse or dispose.
Scope for Change			
Planning		Grade II* listing is likely to constrain uses and adaptations. Early discussions with English Heritage give reason to expect planning solutions will be available	
Facilities		Access difficulties. Physically and operationally linked with Front block and remainder of County Hall	
Scope for Realising Value			
<p><u>Dispose</u> Its links with the remainder of County Hall do make it a difficult property to sell in isolation and a leasehold disposal is, therefore, a more likely outcome. This would allow an income stream to be generated and for costs to be offset. At the same time it will be possible to retain control in the wider context of the management of County Hall. Without works to refurbish the space might lend itself to small scale lets to starter businesses or linked organisations. Longer term substantial refurbishment and improved access can be examined.</p> <p>Without investment Savings c.£60,000 pa Income c. £50,000 pa (both assume full occupation)</p> <p><u>Retain</u> Alternatively, the space could be brought back into office use for NCC staff. It might lend itself to a discrete service or partner to occupy. This goes away from the principles that OAS has been developed upon and may be seen as a retrograde step. If it is to be retained as part of the wider County Hall, however consideration should be made to maximising occupation of this space, as it offers accommodation on lower rental levels and would free up space in OAS which can then be let on the higher rates it is able to command.</p> <p><u>June 2018</u> – To be disposed as a whole site marketing exercise.</p>			



Front and Council Chamber Block

Existing Uses	Angel Relocation	Reason	Solution
Council Chamber	No	The Council Chamber is the only facility within Council Control that is sufficient to meet the needs for full Council meetings. The Ancillary accommodation also provides the necessary facilities for these meetings. Used for other ceremonial events. Angel as presently configured does not provide similar facilities	Retain in existing use – or seek alternative venues
Cabinet Office	Yes	Cabinet Office transferred to OAS to give greater linkages between Cabinet and officers	Transferred use to OAS.
Lord Lieutenant	No	Whilst the office accommodation is in practice limited, this is linked with the ceremonial space and it therefore is considered appropriate to retain.	Maintain as existing or Withdraw facility and/of find alternative
Group Rooms	Yes	OAS does not lend itself to dedicated group rooms at low levels of utilisation, but meeting rooms could be booked for needs arising	Maintain as existing or withdraw facility and find alternative
Miscellaneous office/meeting functions. Deeds Storage.	In part	Some meetings and functions are inappropriate for OAS, but there may be scope to widen its use for these purposes. At present there is an estimated use of around 800 meeting room days per annum.	Retain and maximise use. Or examine alternative model for these uses.
Scope for Change			
Planning	Grade II* listing is likely to constrain uses and adaptations. Early discussions with English Heritage regarding Room 15 give reason to expect planning solutions will be available		
Facilities	Access difficulties to parts of the building. Physically and operationally linked with other elements of County Hall, but capable of being separated by reinstatements of original access.		
Scope for Realising Value			

Dispose

The configuration and listed status of this element of County Hall will limit uses to which the building can be put, that are capable of driving value in isolation. There may be scope for creating complimentary uses of the Council Chamber, such as meeting or performance space. Or close as part of a wider withdrawal from OCH

Retain

Realising this block would fulfil the requirement to service democratic and ceremonial needs. The building is not fully utilised although it does provide useful public facing meeting rooms and this has been exacerbated by the relocation of Cabinet Office. It



is acknowledged that OAS is not suitable to deliver all types of services and that there are public facing meeting such as school appeals, whose service needs require space that this block could deliver.

The concentration of this type of use into the front block and ancillary accommodation around the Council Chamber, will give the potential to ensure that other County accommodation is released to achieve savings and realise capital and revenue streams.

June 2018 – Alternative venues for full Council meetings to be identified and utilised given the proposed Unitary Authority. Withdrawal of reception staff within the MTFP would inhibit public use of this space. Group rooms can be accommodated by the use of accommodation in OAS.



Sessions House

Existing Uses	Angel Relocation	Reason	Solution
Reception/Tourist Information Centre	Some	If Services are to be offered from the adjoining space reception services will continue to be required. The historical nature of Sessions House and location continues to make it a good choice for the Tourist Information Centre	Continue as existing. Or close as part of a wider withdrawal from OCH
Courts	Possibly	These facilities are still used for the County Coroner to undertake inquests but by adapting space within OAS or making use of available alternative spaces in the town the Courts could be freed.	Retain in use. Or seek to find alternative accommodation
Blue Room	Some	Used as a large meeting space. It is considered that spaces within OAS lend themselves to similar uses. But used in association with Coroners court	Seek alternative use
Ancillary	Yes	The ancillary spaces are not high value spaces and OAS will offer better alternatives	Seek alternative use
Scope for Change			
Planning	Grade I listing is likely to constrain any use that results in a change to the structure or interior of the premises. Alternative uses considered to be extremely limited		
Facilities	The building operates as a front facing facility for access to information by the public. The present configuration aids this but limits alternative use.		
Scope for Realising Value			
<p><u>Dispose</u> The configuration and listed status of this building make it extremely difficult to drive any value in a disposal in isolation. A disposal is only likely as part of a wider sale and the inclusion of this element will be likely to result in a net reduction to a bid. It would result in savings to revenue running costs and maintenance liabilities.</p> <p><u>Retain</u> Although Sessions House operates at low levels of utilisation, it offers facilities that are valued and difficult to replicate. Constraints mean viable alternative uses may be difficult. The building can continue to function as the democratic face of the Council and give access to the adjoining spaces, with the potential to increase use of the retained areas. Examine scope for greater use of the courts. The University have already expressed interest in using the Courts for Mootings. Income derived can offset costs of operation.</p> <p>June 2018 – Withdrawal of revenue funding to run reception / TIC limits the ability to continue to utilise this space and wider use of chamber. Follow due process with regards to colleagues currently employed to provide service, look for alternative options to provide TIC information and include in disposal of whole site.</p>			



Judges Lodgings

Existing Uses	Angel Relocation	Reason	Solution
Meeting rooms	Yes	OAS provides for a full range of meeting rooms. Other retained elements of County Hall can add to the mix.	Reuse or dispose
Lodgings and associated facilities	No	No facility to provide residential accommodation within OAS	Close. Any accommodation needs can be provided in local hotels
Scope for Change			
Planning		Grade II listing is likely to constrain uses and adaptations. Links to adjoining Grade 1 listed Sessions House will apply further constraints	
Facilities		The property does not lend itself to Council use in its existing layout	
Scope for Realising Value			
<p><u>Dispose</u> The property is capable of being separated from other parts of County Hall in terms of its use. It should lend itself to residential, hotel or office accommodation and should therefore, be attractive to the market given its central location and status. However, initial discussions with English Heritage have indicated that a discrete occupation by a third party may be severely restricted by the requirement to maintain the door between this property and Sessions House. Sale or letting to a linked party may be the only feasible outcome, which will severely limit the market and have an effect on price. A sale of the wider site may allow for greater values to be released as part of a wider scheme.</p> <p><u>Retain</u> As existing, the accommodation would have limited use a meeting space, ceremonial purposes and very occasional use as accommodation.</p> <p>June 2018 – Set up overnight accommodation provision elsewhere, close section and include in disposal of whole site.</p>			

Wider Potential to Realise Value

From the above analysis there is some limited scope to deliver value from disposal of Judges Lodgings and Centre Block, but even these elements provide difficulties.

As an alternative to piecemeal disposal, the potential for the sale of the whole may be considered.

Whilst it is acknowledged that County Hall may present challenges in terms of its profitable re-use, elements do hold value for alternative uses. The parts that give greater challenge are those where there is a likely ongoing service or public need.

The Council could consider the potential to take a lease-back of Sessions House, Front and Council Chamber Block and the Constabulary, on one, or several leases, and upon terms that would be sufficiently attractive to investors. In this way a capital receipt could be generated, based on a guaranteed income from the Council over a term/terms that allowed the Council an ability to quit the buildings if necessary, in the medium term whilst the purchaser examined the potential for alternative uses.

With a change in local delivery of services following the Council's Best Value Review the potential to deliver services in the longer terms can be examined in line with the new models as they are rolled out.

June 2018 – Although a complicated and important site, a sale of the whole is likely to allow a new owner scope to develop and offer alternatives to suit the business case. The continued, short term occupation of the Constabulary Block would not interfere with any development proposals and allows NCC and the Boroughs/ Districts valuable time to consider the relocation and provision of a high cost item (data centre).

A range of artworks currently reside in former County Hall and will need to be assessed, professionally, allowing an informed view to be taken as to their future.

It should be noted that the ability to sell the site in a foreseeable timeframe is uncertain and that specialist consultancy advice will need to be sought to optimise best value.