# Aberdeen couple confronts uncertain future amid RAAC home demolition crisis



In the face of a crisis surrounding the use of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in their homes, Callum and Sarah Shinnie, a young couple from Balnagask in Aberdeen, found their lives radically altered. Their home, once a promise of future comfort, has now become emblematic of the community's struggle with the ramifications of structural safety issues. The couple's experience is a poignant reflection of wider frustrations experienced by many homeowners in the area.

In August 2024, amid the stress of impending demolition, Sarah gave birth to their son, Jude. It was a time of joy tinged with uncertainty, as they were made to accept an offer of £73,000 for their property—£43,000 less than its pre-RAAC value. “I gave birth believing that we could be evacuated any minute, such was the safety risk of our homes,” Sarah remarked, a sentiment that underscores the anxiety and instability that many affected families now face.

Callum, who purchased the three-bedroom house on Lochnagar Road in 2017, initially viewed it as a promising investment. “I thought I’d got the deal of the century,” he recalled; the optimism of a young couple building a future soon turned into despair. They first learned about the RAAC concerns from their neighbours—a situation that highlights the inadequate communication from Aberdeen City Council at a critical time. Residents were informed after council tenants had already been alerted, leading to a sense of distrust and confusion among homeowners.

As the Shinnies tried to make sense of the situation, relationships with their neighbours, once a source of community support, became fraught with shared worries regarding safety and future placement. With the local area deteriorating—overflowing bins and rubbish strewn about—the Shinnies felt the heart of their community slowly fading. “We just want to take our babies and start again,” Sarah expressed, articulating a shared frustration that has been echoed by others facing similar fates.

The couple's attempts to engage with the council regarding alternative housing have also proved discouraging. After applying for council accommodation, they were offered a home significantly smaller than their current residence and in an unfamiliar area. This lack of suitable options has left them in a state of uncertainty, rendering them unable to secure necessary early education arrangements for their daughter, Olivia. “We can’t even fill out a form for Olivia to start nursery because we don’t know where we are going to be,” Callum lamented.

Aberdeen City Council’s buy-back scheme, which purportedly offers homeowners a chance to sell their properties back to the council, has met with significant resistance. As of recent reports, only four out of 138 owners in the affected areas have accepted offers, a statistic that reflects widespread dissatisfaction with the financial valuations being presented. Many homeowners worry about potential deductions for repair costs, which could plunge them into negative equity. The Shinnies have expressed concerns regarding the lack of clear communication and support throughout this ordeal. “I’d say the communication of all of this has been pretty terrible,” Callum said.

In addressing the broader implications, Aberdeen City Council has initiated a phased demolition plan, starting with vacant council-owned properties before proceeding to privately owned homes. This plan aims to ensure safety and support, yet the slow progress and lack of transparency have left many residents feeling stranded in what they term "RAAC limbo." There is a palpable sense of urgency as families seek clarity in a process that continues to unfold without meaningful dialogue from the authorities.

As the Shinnies wait for news, they cling to their faith that a resolution will come—but the uncertainty looms large over their plans for the future. Their story is not just about individual despair but reflects a community grappling with a crisis that has evolved from civil engineering oversight into a profound social issue.

The situation serves as a stark reminder of the delicate balance between property ownership and safety, illustrating the broader ramifications of policy decisions in urban planning. While the council maintains that it is committed to working with all those affected, the experience of the Shinnies and many others advocates for a more responsive and effective approach to such urgent community matters.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/6759983/aberdeen-familys-frustrating-raac-limbo-we-accepted-an-offer-last-year-and-heard-nothing-since/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/news/demolition-raac-affected-homes-be-carried-out> - Aberdeen City Council has agreed to a phased demolition of council and private homes affected by Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). The plan includes demolishing vacant council-owned properties first, followed by private homes through voluntary acquisition. The council aims to ensure safety and support residents during this process.
3. <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/housing/buy-back-scheme> - Aberdeen City Council's buy-back scheme offers homeowners affected by RAAC the option to sell their properties back to the council. The process requires specific documentation and surveys, with valuations reflecting the current condition of the properties, including the presence of RAAC panels.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3vkvk9epgpo> - Homeowners in Aberdeen's Torry area, whose homes contain RAAC, are protesting the council's voluntary purchase scheme. They are concerned that repair costs will be deducted from the market value of their properties, potentially leaving them with negative equity.
5. <https://aberdeenbusinessnews.co.uk/torry-raac-homeowners-refuse-council-voluntary-purchase-scheme/> - In Aberdeen's Torry area, homeowners affected by RAAC have collectively decided to refuse the council's voluntary purchase scheme. They are demanding that the cost of repairing RAAC be excluded from property valuations to prevent financial loss.
6. <https://aberdeenbusinessnews.co.uk/raac-and-ruin-continues-only-four-aberdeen-homeowners-accept-purchase-offers/> - Only four out of 138 private homeowners in Aberdeen have accepted the council's purchase offers for homes affected by RAAC. This highlights the slow progress of the council's demolition plan and ongoing disputes over compensation.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cgm7wmvky4ro> - Aberdeen City Council has voted to demolish and rebuild hundreds of homes affected by RAAC, with an estimated cost exceeding £150 million. The council plans to demolish 504 properties, including 366 council homes and 138 private homes, and rebuild them over several years.