# Broadland Council moves to sell Thorpe Lodge amid mounting costs and office space challenges



Broadland Council has taken a significant step towards finalising the sale of Thorpe Lodge, an expansive property that includes a Grade-II listed stately home and a nuclear bunker situated on Yarmouth Road near Norwich. The building has remained vacant since the council relocated its operations alongside South Norfolk Council to the Horizon Centre at Broadland Business Park in early 2023. This move, whilst aimed at consolidating services, has led to concerns regarding the financial viability of both the authority’s previous offices and its new headquarters.

The council's efforts to divest itself of Thorpe Lodge began prior to the relocation, driven by the rising costs associated with maintaining the vacant property. Currently, Broadland Council is incurring annual expenses of approximately £70,000, covering utility bills, insurance, and maintenance—funds that could arguably be better spent elsewhere. Instead of securing the hoped-for £2.5 million from the sale, the council has since acknowledged the need to accept lower bids to effect a sale, reflecting broader trends within the property market affected by rising interest rates and a general lack of demand for office space.

Criticism has not been limited to the prospective sale of Thorpe Lodge. The £7 million Horizon Centre, intended to house both councils, has been under scrutiny due to large swathes of unused office space. Originally, the councils had planned to rent out parts of this new headquarters to mitigate costs; however, over a year post-relocation, many areas remain unfilled. This has prompted questions about the strategic rationale behind the move and whether more effective and economical alternatives existed. Some councillors even suggested that the existing Thorpe Lodge could have sufficed, sparking debates about priorities and decision-making processes within the councils.

Interest in Thorpe Lodge has reportedly gained traction, with the Thorpe St Andrew Town Council emerging as a potential buyer. Their vision involves transforming the historic building into an incubator hub designed for start-ups and entrepreneurs, alongside utilising part of the space for archiving the town’s history. This approach not only aims to preserve the building's historical significance but also to repurpose it for future community benefit, marking a potentially positive turnaround for a property that has long stood empty.

In light of these developments, Broadland Council's choice of bidder remains undisclosed until the finalisation of the sale. The authority seems poised to navigate a complex landscape of operational change and fiscal responsibility, balancing the historical and architectural significance of Thorpe Lodge with the pressing need for financial viability in an evolving property market. The outcome will not only impact the future of the council's financial health but also the community’s engagement with its local history and entrepreneurial landscape.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3
2. Paragraph 4
3. Paragraph 5
4. Paragraph 6

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25176117.broadland-council-finalising-deal-sale-thorpe-lodge/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.dissexpress.co.uk/news/criticism-of-councils-over-empty-spaces-at-7m-hq-9397872/> - This article discusses the criticism faced by Broadland and South Norfolk Councils over the underutilization of their £7 million Horizon Centre headquarters. Despite the significant investment, large sections of the office remain empty, leading to concerns about the efficiency and financial prudence of the move. The councils had anticipated renting out parts of the building to offset costs, but over a year after the relocation, much of the space remains unoccupied, prompting questions about the decision-making process and the building's suitability for the councils' needs.
3. <https://www.eveningnews24.co.uk/news/local-council/22318887.mystery-potential-buyer-former-council-offices-revealed/> - This article reveals that Thorpe St Andrew Town Council has expressed interest in acquiring the former Broadland District Council offices at Thorpe Lodge. The town council envisions transforming the Grade II-listed building into an incubator hub for start-up businesses and entrepreneurs. Additionally, they are considering using part of the space to store the town's archives and create a permanent display for a local history collection, aiming to preserve the building's historical significance while repurposing it for community use.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-norfolk-61434817?fr=operanews> - This article reports on Broadland District Council's decision to purchase the Horizon Building at Broadland Business Park for £10.1 million, intended to serve as the new headquarters for both Broadland and South Norfolk Councils. The move aims to consolidate operations, reduce running costs, and achieve significant financial savings. However, the decision has faced opposition, with some councillors questioning the necessity of the purchase and suggesting that utilizing the existing Thorpe Lodge building could have been a more cost-effective solution.
5. <https://www.dissexpress.co.uk/news/criticism-of-councils-over-empty-spaces-at-7m-hq-9397872/> - This article discusses the criticism faced by Broadland and South Norfolk Councils over the underutilization of their £7 million Horizon Centre headquarters. Despite the significant investment, large sections of the office remain empty, leading to concerns about the efficiency and financial prudence of the move. The councils had anticipated renting out parts of the building to offset costs, but over a year after the relocation, much of the space remains unoccupied, prompting questions about the decision-making process and the building's suitability for the councils' needs.
6. <https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/news/article/215/broadland-move-firmly-on-the-horizon-for-broadland-district-council> - This article announces Broadland District Council's decision to purchase the Horizon Building at Broadland Business Park, intended to serve as the new headquarters for both Broadland and South Norfolk Councils. The move aims to consolidate operations, reduce running costs, and achieve significant financial savings. The building's extensive solar panels are expected to offset energy price hikes, and the relocation is projected to reduce the councils' carbon footprint by 84%, supporting their goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn87p2v4517o> - This article reports on Norfolk County Council's decision to sell the Broadland Youth and Community Centre in Hoveton, as it is deemed 'surplus to requirements.' The property, which ceased functioning as a youth centre in 2002, has been leased to a local charity and is now hired out for various community uses. The council plans to explore selling or offering the site as a leasehold to the current tenant, with the possibility of offering it on the open market if no agreement is reached.