



Historic England

Historic England Repair Grants for Heritage at Risk

THE ALMONRY, MERSTOW GREEN
Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 4BQ

EMERGENCY REPAIRS

List Entry Number: 1302722

Historic England Report

28th February 2024



1. **Name of building, monument or landscape:** The Almonry, 52 Merstow Green, Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 4BQ

Historic England ref: TBA

Author: Amanda White
Heritage at Risk Surveyor, Historic England (HE)

Designation: Grade I Listed Building (LEN 1302722)
Evesham Conservation Area (LEN 374)

HAR Assessment: Vulnerability: Medium
Trend: Declining
Condition: Very Bad
Priority Category B: Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; solution agreed but not yet implemented

Year added to the register: 2016

2. **Date of assessment:** 22nd February 2024

Weather: Mild and overcast.

Present: Jo Adams, Town Clerk, Evesham Town Council
Ashleigh Jayes, Almonry Manager, Evesham Town Council
Richard Jordan, Heritage Roofer
Tom Kinghorn-Evans, Conservator
Steve McLeish, Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas, Historic England (HE)
Craig Tebbutt, Conservation Officer, Malvern Hills and Wychavon DCs
Amanda White, Historic Buildings Building Surveyor, HE



3. Short description of the property, which summarises:

3.1 Designation, description and significance (reasons for designation)

The Almonry is a grade 1 listed building. It is located within the southern part of Evesham Conservation Area; an area of high heritage value.

The building is complex having been much altered and extended. Recent research suggests that the building dates to C14, perhaps earlier; this accords with the Heritage List for England's entry (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1302722?section=official-list-entry>):

C15 and earlier building of the Benedictine Abbey. Partly rubble, partly timber frame. The left-hand portion of rubble and probably of C14 origin, has buttresses at sides, gable, and a C17 four-light mullioned window with hood mould. Centre has rubble base with close-set timber framing above, five-light wood mullioned window having leaded lights, and two windows in chamfered reveals. Right-hand bay timber-framed, with oversailing upper storey and gable with carved barge-boards; also a three-light oriel with renewed leaded lights. Cotswold stone roof. The building well restored throughout and now The Almonry Museum containing items of local and rural interest and numerous relics of the Abbey.

Nos 53 and 54 incorporating Remains of Abbey Gate, Gate and railings of No 53, Remains of Abbey Stables, the Almonry and The Stocks, together with Nos 4 and 5 Abbey Gate and Remains of south wall of Abbey Precinct, Little Abbey Lane, form a group with Church of All Saints, Church of St Lawrence, The Bell Tower, Abbot Reginald's Wall and The Porter's Lodge, Remains of west wall of North Transept of Abbey, Archway to south of the Remains of the west wall of the North Transept of Abbey, Abbot Reginald's Gateway and The Old Vicarage, the Public Library, Nos 6 and 6A, Nos 7 and 8 and Walker Hall, Market Place.

Further research would aid understanding but, in any event, The Almonry is one of Evesham's most significant late medieval buildings.



3.2 Form and materials:

The building is constructed partly of rubble stonework and is partly timber framed with 'plaster' infill panels. Roofs, except for a small, modern flat roof, are pitched and stone slated. The building is of irregular plan form; it is complex and much altered. There are multiple pitched roofs at various levels and of varying accessibility. Elements of the building, its roofs and associated rainwater goods are hard to reach. There are complex and less than desirable abutments between roofs and upstanding fabric. There is some scope to rationalize rainwater goods.

3.3 Use, Condition and Heritage at Risk Status:

The Almonry is Evesham's town museum and Tourist Information Centre. The condition of the building, particularly stone slate roof coverings and rainwater goods are in 'very bad' condition and are of considerable concern. There are additional significant localised defects in the timber frame and broader issues with infill panels.

The condition survey report prepared by Arnold Bartosh Ltd in 2020, updated 2023, succinctly concludes:

'This important historic building is currently on the cusp of falling into serious decay, despite valiant efforts by the owners. Roofs in particular are at the end of their useful lives and need to be re-laid. Rainwater goods are failing and leaking, causing damage to the timber framing. Previous repairs to the timber framing and stonework are now life- expired, and the structure is beginning to deteriorate significantly. Parts of infill panels are loose and likely to fall in areas with public access. Immediate repairs are required to correct these and to safeguard members of the public.

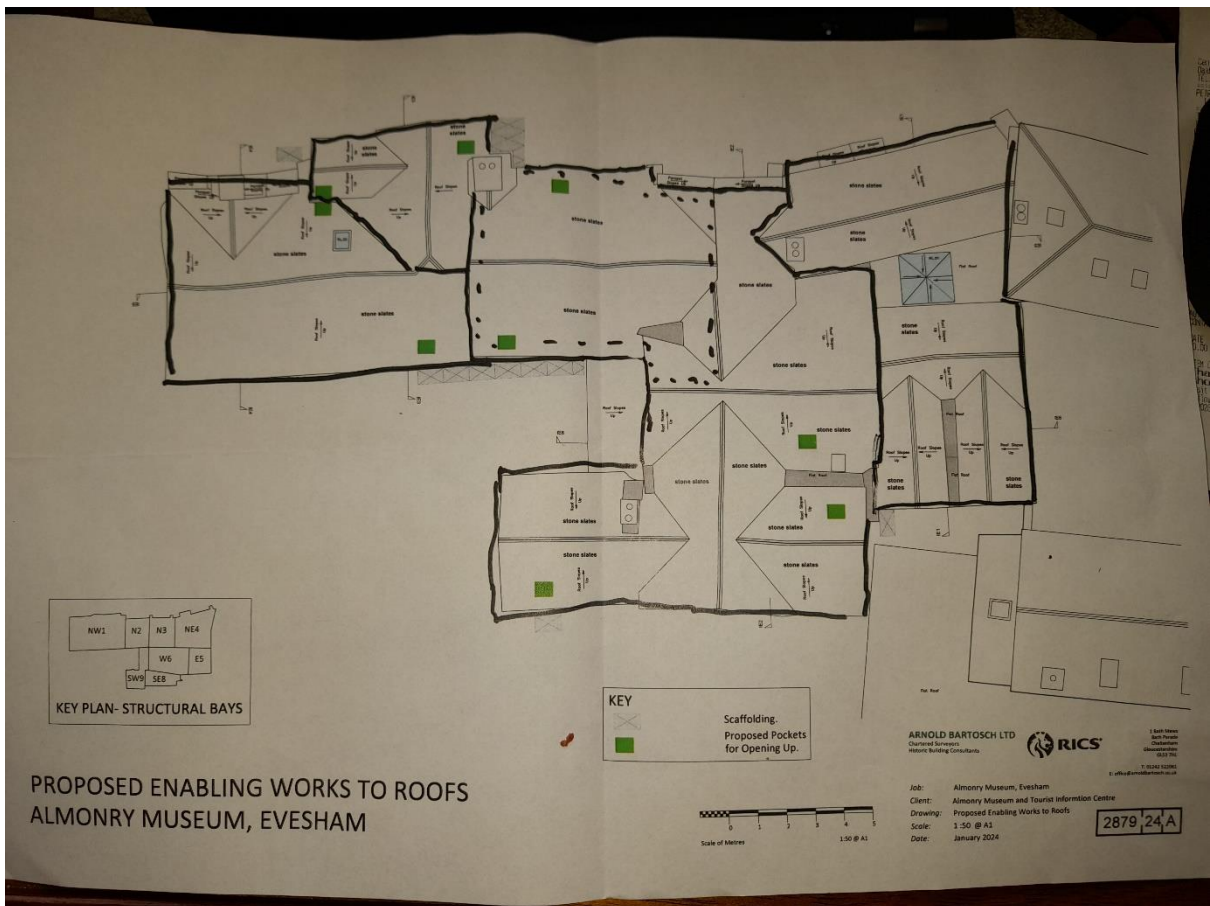
The issues identified are a combination of the use of inappropriate material for repairs, poor maintenance (including access) and general wear and age. The inappropriate materials are trapping moisture and causing accelerated decay to the historic timber-



frame. Urgent repairs are required to prevent further decay and associated increased costs in the future.

Services have been altered and extended in an ad-hoc manner, and would benefit from updating. The building fabric includes numerous potential trip and fall hazards, which are not helped by poor lighting design.'

HE funded Project Development activities are currently underway. A recent assessment of slated roofs (during w/c 19th February 2024) included localized opening up and confirmed the very poor condition of slating. The assessment identified that some slopes are particularly vulnerable there being no pegs and bedding mortar having perished. These roofs, as indicated below by the broken line, are at risk of catastrophic failure:





The Almonry was added to Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register (HARR) in 2016 on account of the condition of the timber frame, infill panels, roof coverings and rainwater disposal goods.

4. Current ownership and future

The Almonry is owned by Evesham Town Council who, as above, operate the site as a Museum and Tourist Information Centre.

The Council had been planning to apply to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for repair work and to refresh exhibitions at the time the building was added to HE'S HARR. Proposals were subsequently suspended due to Covid in 2019.

In 2020, during the Covid pandemic, HE awarded a modest 'Covid 19' grant to the Council for various reports including the specialist assessment of the timber frame; a structural appraisal and a building assessment (Historic Building Survey (level 3)).

The Council were unsuccessful with an Arts Council England (ACE) MEND application in 2022 (Round 2). HE, as ACE's technical advisers under their scheme, were not confident that a Round 3 award would be made given some aspects of the application were, at the time of application (August 2023), not sufficiently well developed. In this context the Council act swiftly upon the advice given by HE during the pre-application visit. Funds were secured from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for further project development work to inform repair needs – anticipating a MEND Round 4 submission. Modest further supplementary project development work is currently being funded by HE; the detailed assessment of stone slate roofs during w/c 19th February confirmed that stone slates roofs are in very poor condition and that some are at risk of catastrophic failure. The investigation of infill panels (an SPF funded activity) also highlighted the need for some localised and targeted intrusive investigations.



5. Location and map

The Almonry is located at National Grid Reference SP0357443646:



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