

Further to your email below please see our response to the questions raised by the local resident.

The council should have every confidence in the design team and project management for the project involving the repair, refurbishment and improvement of this important listed building. The scheme has been developed with input of experienced Consultants, Archaeologists and specialist stonemasons, roofers and glaziers and realised through unprecedented world events and extremely challenging times within the construction industry.

The roofs were inspected together with a roofing contractor with extensive conservation experience. Ladders were provided giving access to the roofs and tiles were lifted to all roof slopes to inspect the condition beneath the tiling. Wholesale reroofing was not deemed necessary.

The northeast roof slope, facing the road, was found to be felt and battened and in reasonable condition with some defective tiles requiring replacement. Other roofs were found to be in a very poor condition and failing. These roofs were specified for recovering with new tiles, battens and felt.

The tender documents allowed for tile replacements to the front roof by way of provisional sum. Unfortunately, a greater number of tiles were found to be displaying signs of deterioration and a decision had to be made as to whether to proceed with tile replacements, as allowed for, and accept that there would be an ongoing maintenance requirement to replace the tiles as they fail either by cherry picker or scaffold or to utilise the scaffold that is in place and replace all the tiles with new. The latter solution was considered to be economically the best option in longer term as it saves the cost of expensive access equipment/scaffold and further disruption in the future. The council decided to proceed with the full replacement, which in our opinion was the right decision giving many years life without ongoing maintenance.

From our experience a drone survey would not have helped in this situation. See also EAR Sheppard's comments.

With a building project such as this where historic building fabric is involved some hidden defects are expected and unknowns that could reasonably be anticipated have been covered by provisional sums and contingencies which is normal practice. However, the defects have been greater than anyone could have expected and where records indicated that some remedial repairs had been carried out, this was found not to be the case. Areas deemed necessary for reinspection were carried out prior to tender with the appropriate specialist.

Planning and Listed Building applications were approved in 2017 for reinstatement of the southern range of The Almonry to its original form with internal alterations to provide flexible meeting space. A variation of condition was submitted to accommodate design changes including omission of the extension and alteration to the plans for the internal improvement works.

A separate application for planning and listed building consent was submitted for improvement to the access ramp and driveway and provision of a platform lift to provide disabled access into building instead of the ramped approach previously proposed. The application was approved in February 2021 and an application for discharge for conditions submitted immediately. Delays in determination of the application by RDC were experienced and the Conservation Officer required various changes to be made which were post tender, these included the introduction of Yorkstone paving in lieu of the fully bonded gravel finish.

The main contractor confirms that Highways were fully consulted throughout contract and their stipulations have been met in full.

Lump sum fees were approved by BTC for professional services for the construction phase of the project based on the contractor's programme of work. Interim accounts have been submitted against the agreed fees.

*Please also see comments from Structural Engineer, Quantity Surveyor and M&E Consultant sent separately. Photographs to follow under separate cover.*

*With kind regards*

Mark