

ALCESTER TOWN COUNCIL

Abbey Fields & Priory Meadow

Management Plan · 2026 onwards

1. About the site

Abbey Fields and Priory Meadow form a nationally important open space in the north of Alcester, alongside the River Arrow. The site is the location of Alcester Abbey, a Benedictine monastery founded around 1138–40 and dissolved in 1536. Although no buildings remain above ground, significant buried remains survive.

The site is a **Scheduled Monument** (National Heritage List ref. 1008545), protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. It is owned and managed by Alcester Town Council, with Abbey Field forming part of the River Arrow Local Nature Reserve, managed in partnership with Stratford-on-Avon District Council and the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

A map of the site is at Appendix 1.

2. What does Scheduled Monument status mean?

Because the site contains nationally important buried archaeology, any works that could disturb the ground require Scheduled Monument Consent from Historic England before they can take place. This means management of the site must be carefully planned, and activities are limited to low-impact maintenance. Alcester Town Council works within guidance from Historic England at all times.

3. Our commitments

The Council is committed to the following ongoing activities:

Public access

- A mowed footpath will be maintained around the site for walkers and dog owners. Pedestrian access points are available from the School Road Allotments and Alcester Cemetery.

Protection of the Scheduled Monument

- The buried remains of Alcester Abbey will be protected. No ground-disturbing works will take place without consent from Historic England.

Biodiversity

- The site's grassland, wildflowers, wetland areas and habitats will be protected. Management will support wildlife and the nature reserve alongside the River Arrow.

Boundary features

- Fences, gates, hedgerows and the banks of the River Arrow will be maintained to keep the site safe, secure, and in good condition.

Water Quality

- Working with the River Arrow and Alne Revival (RAAR) CIC to improve local water quality, enhance natural habitats, and promote cleaner rivers

Education and community engagement

- The Council will promote the site to local schools, community groups and visitors, sharing the history of Alcester Abbey and its importance to the town.

4. What we will not do — and why

The Council's priority is to protect the site as it is. Extensive works — including exposing foundations or large-scale excavation — would require Scheduled Monument Consent and are unlikely to be appropriate or affordable. This approach protects the archaeology for future generations and reflects the site's status as a nationally important monument.

5. Future opportunities

Where funding and consent allow in future years, the Council may consider:

- Controlled clearance of self-seeding trees and scrub, which can damage buried archaeology if left unchecked.
- Pond restoration to restore ecological balance and improve water quality.
- Non-intrusive geophysical survey to better understand what lies beneath the surface.
- Improved interpretation, information boards and waymarked trails to help visitors understand the site's history.
- Community involvement through the Alcester & District Local History Society and local schools.

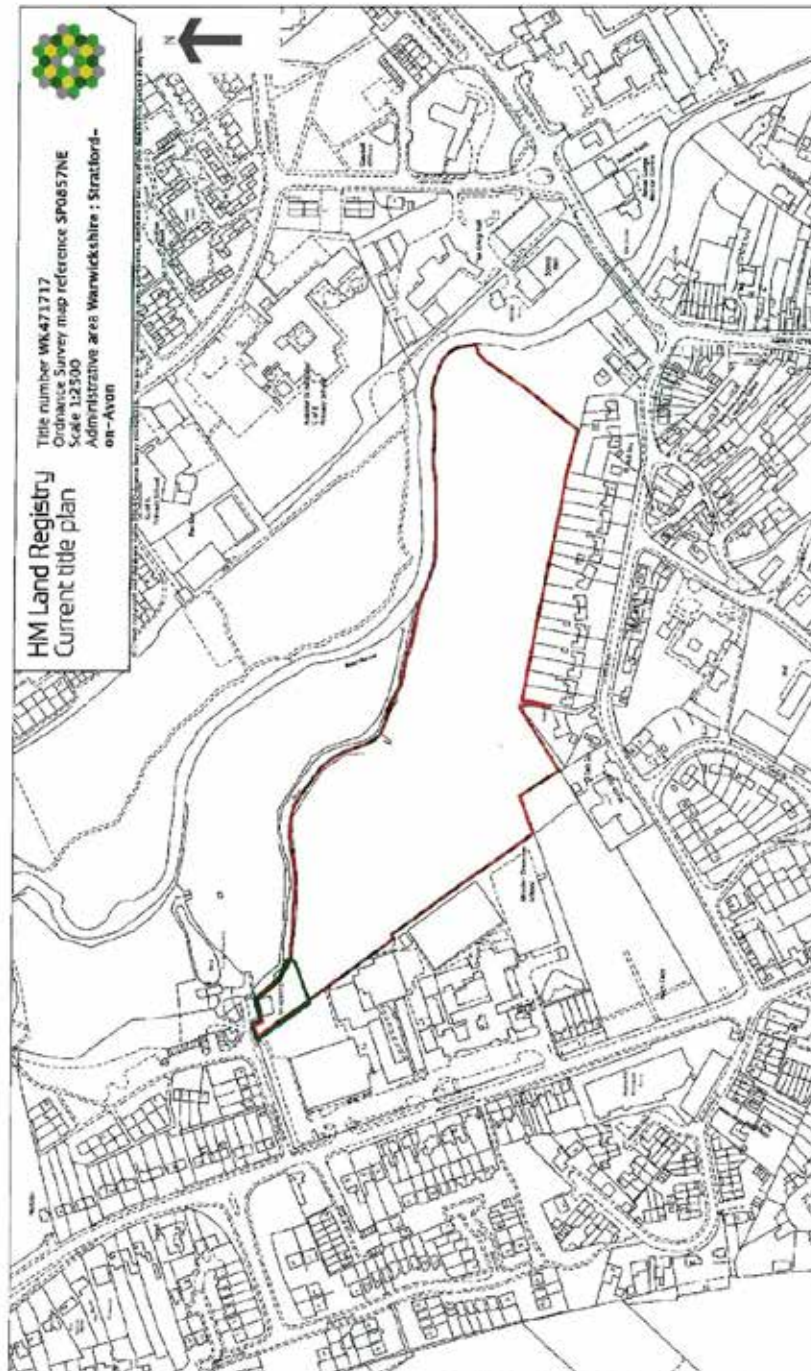
6. Review and monitoring

This plan will be reviewed every four years, and monitored annually by the Town Clerk and the Lead Councillor for Open Spaces.

The Council works in partnership with Historic England, the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency, and Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

Adopted by Full Council -

Appendix 1



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