

# The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn

## *What was The Abbey of St Edmund?*



© Historic England/English Heritage Trust

The Abbey of St Edmund was once one of England's greatest monasteries.

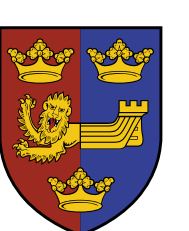
It is named after Edmund, a Saxon king of East Anglia who was killed by Danish raiders in 869. Within a generation, Edmund was being celebrated as a martyr and a saint. Edmund's shrine made the Abbey one of England's most popular destinations for pilgrims.

Today the Abbey ruins are part of the Abbey Gardens, a popular parkland which is free to enter and enjoyed by local residents and visitors to Bury St Edmunds throughout the year.

Scan here to find out more about the Abbey's fascinating story



St Edmundsbury  
Cathedral





# The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn

## *What is this Project about?*



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Made possible by National Lottery players,  
our £9.9m project will

- Conserve the Abbey ruins to give them a sustainable future
- Create a visitor centre facing Angel Hill and linked to the Cathedral
- Connect the site with town and cathedral through an improved footpath network
- Increase biodiversity in the Abbey area
- Provide year-round family and community activities, more volunteering opportunities linked to heritage and green activities, and an annual programme of events, exhibitions and workshops

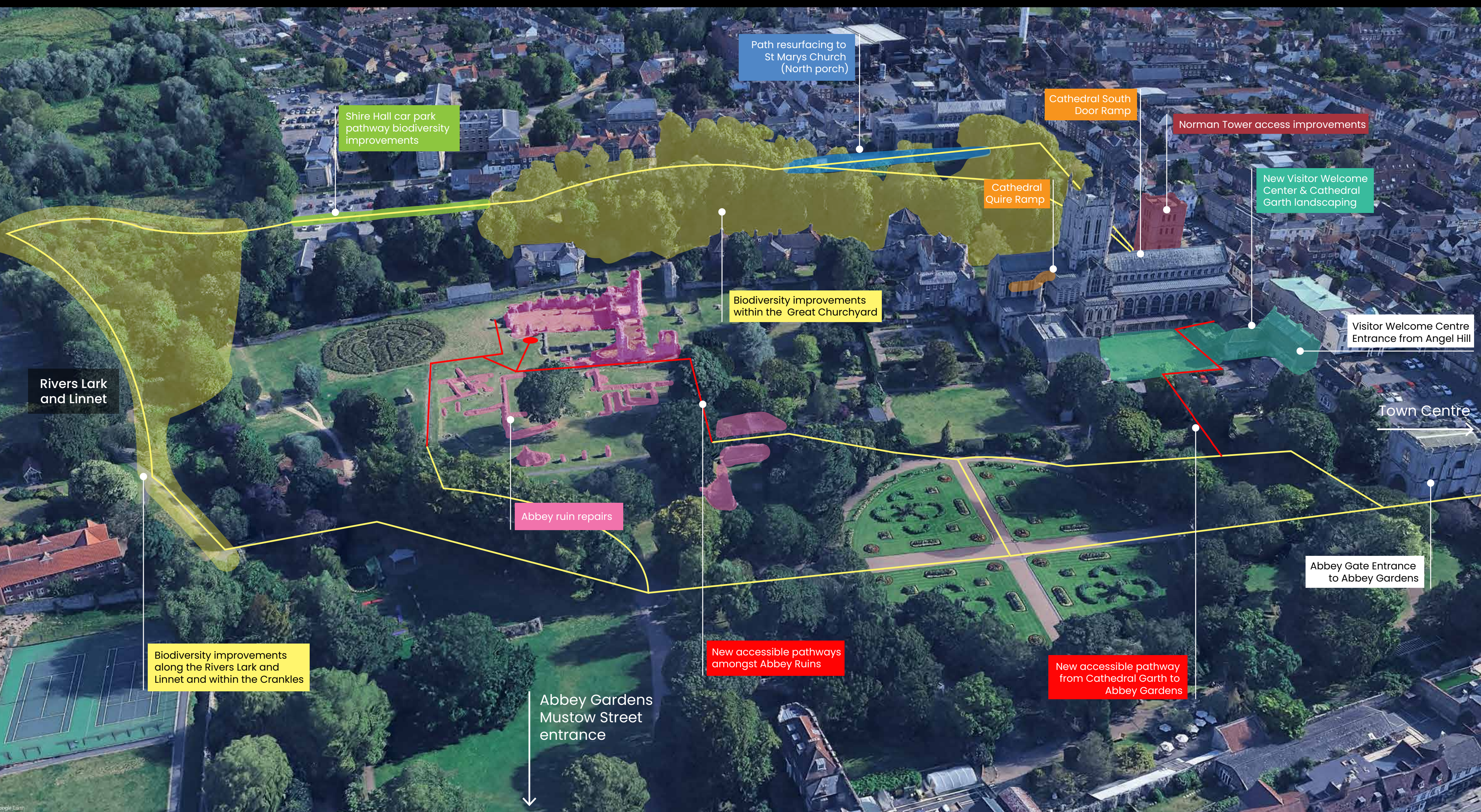
Scan here to find out more  
about the Project's aims





# The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn

## *Connecting the Site*



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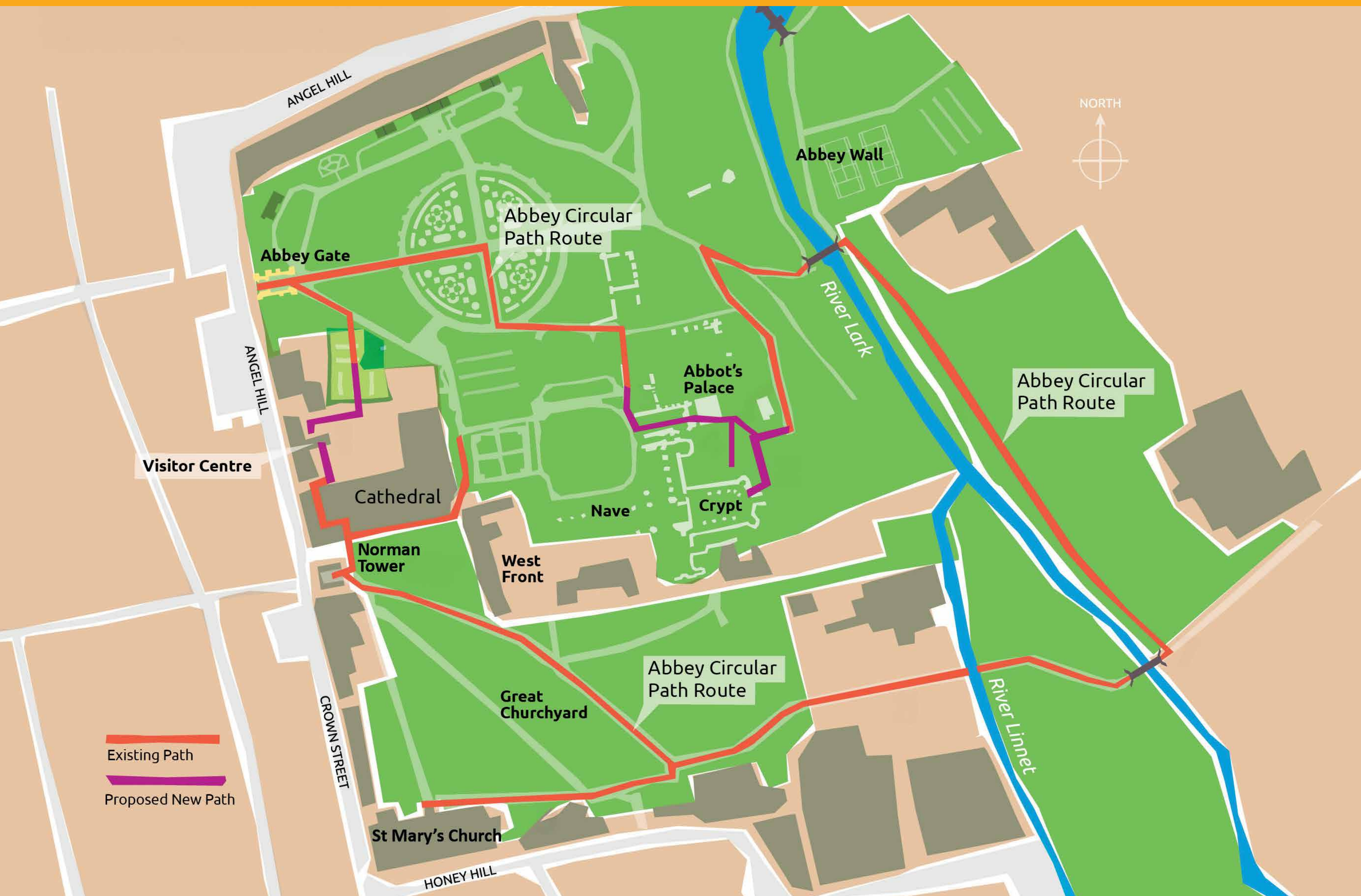
St Edmundsbury Cathedral (the lead partner), West Suffolk Council and English Heritage have come together as members of The Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership (comprising 29 organisations and individuals who care about the Abbey) to develop and deliver this project.

The project will bring together town, cathedral and abbey for the first time in hundreds of years. In doing this, it will improve heritage, access, visitor experience and biodiversity.

A new **Visitor Centre** will face the town's main public space, link historic buildings and create fresh spaces to enjoy. The **Abbey ruins** will be conserved and better interpreted. The **network of footpaths** will be upgraded, making the site easier to explore and connecting the Cathedral with the Abbey Gardens. Across the wider site, biodiversity will be improved along the River Lark, the Crankles and Great Churchyard.



# The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn *Network of Footpaths*



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An improved and extended 1.4km network of footpaths and gateways will take in all the greatest elements of the Abbey and make it easy for everyone to access and enjoy the site.

The circular footpath will start and finish at the Visitor Centre but can be joined at any point throughout the Abbey Gardens.



# The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn

## *Conserving the Abbey Ruins*



© Tom Soper Photography

It might seem that ruins don't need much looking after but, in many ways, they're more vulnerable than other historic buildings.

Urgent conservation work has already begun to make the ruins stable and safe. We will be repairing and consolidating walls, stabilising ground and fixing health and safety concerns.

Our aim isn't to make the walls as good as new. Instead, we'll stabilise them and keep as much original material in place as we can. We want people to be able to enjoy the Abbey ruins for generations to come.

Scan here to find out more about the conservation plans





# The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn *Creating a Visitor Centre*



© Purcell Architecture Ltd

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The proposed Visitor Centre will be created by re-purposing a line of listed properties facing Angel Hill, which are part of the Cathedral precinct and between the Abbey Gate and Norman Tower.

The Visitor Centre will welcome people to the site providing information, toilets, and a shop. There will be space to host school

groups and a room available for community use (such as workshops, classes or meetings). New interpretation spaces will explore the stories of the Abbey and St Edmund in new and exciting ways.

Visitors will be able to access the Visitor Centre from both Angel Hill and the Cathedral.

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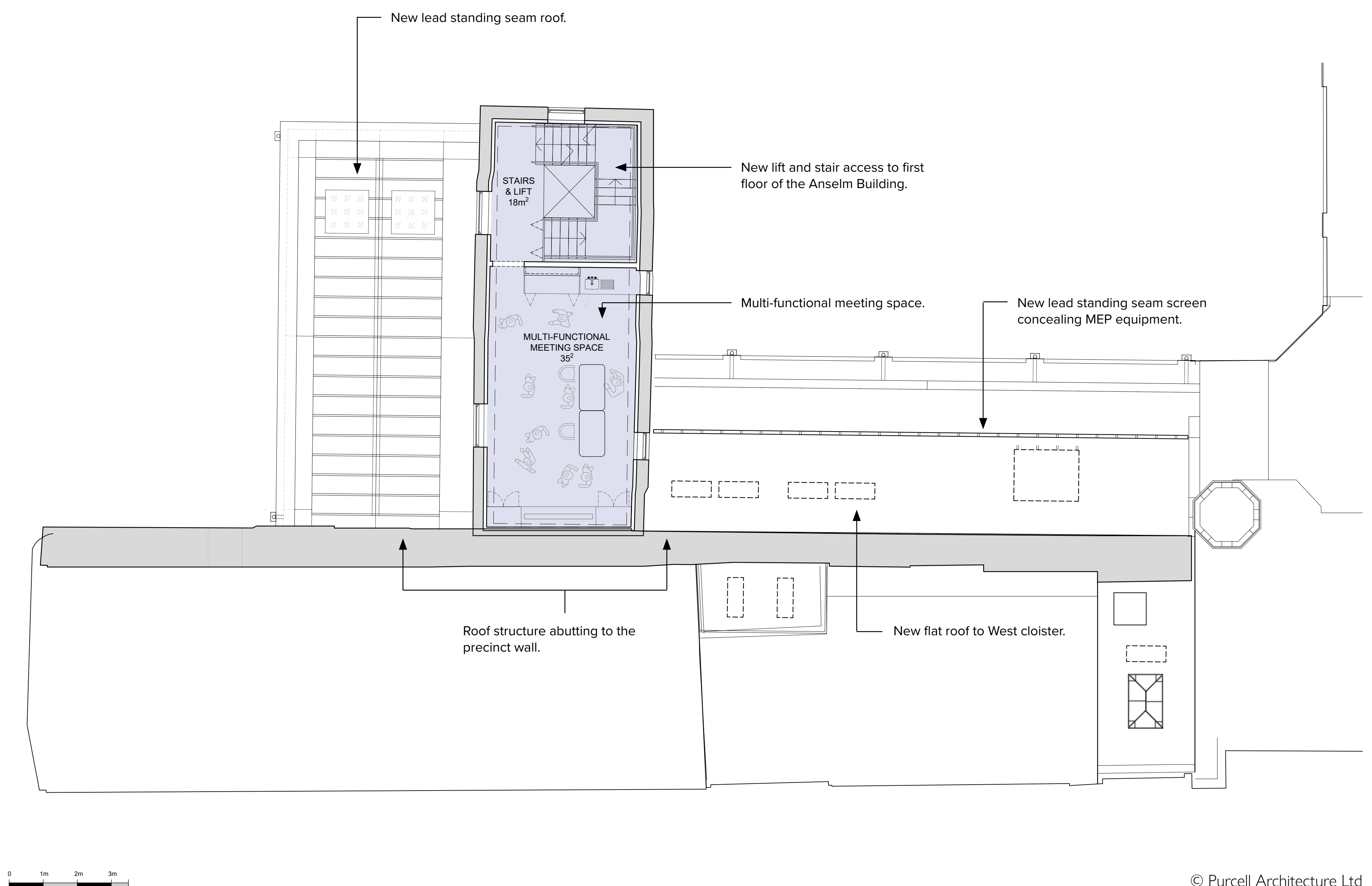




# The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn

## *Creating a Visitor Centre*

### First floor layout of Visitor Centre



Abbey House was bought by the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich in 1932 and it is possible at this time the upper floor was converted to a meeting room for the Cathedral congregation and named the Anselm Room.

In keeping with the spirit of 1932, the first floor of the Anselm building will serve as a flexible venue for workshops and community use.



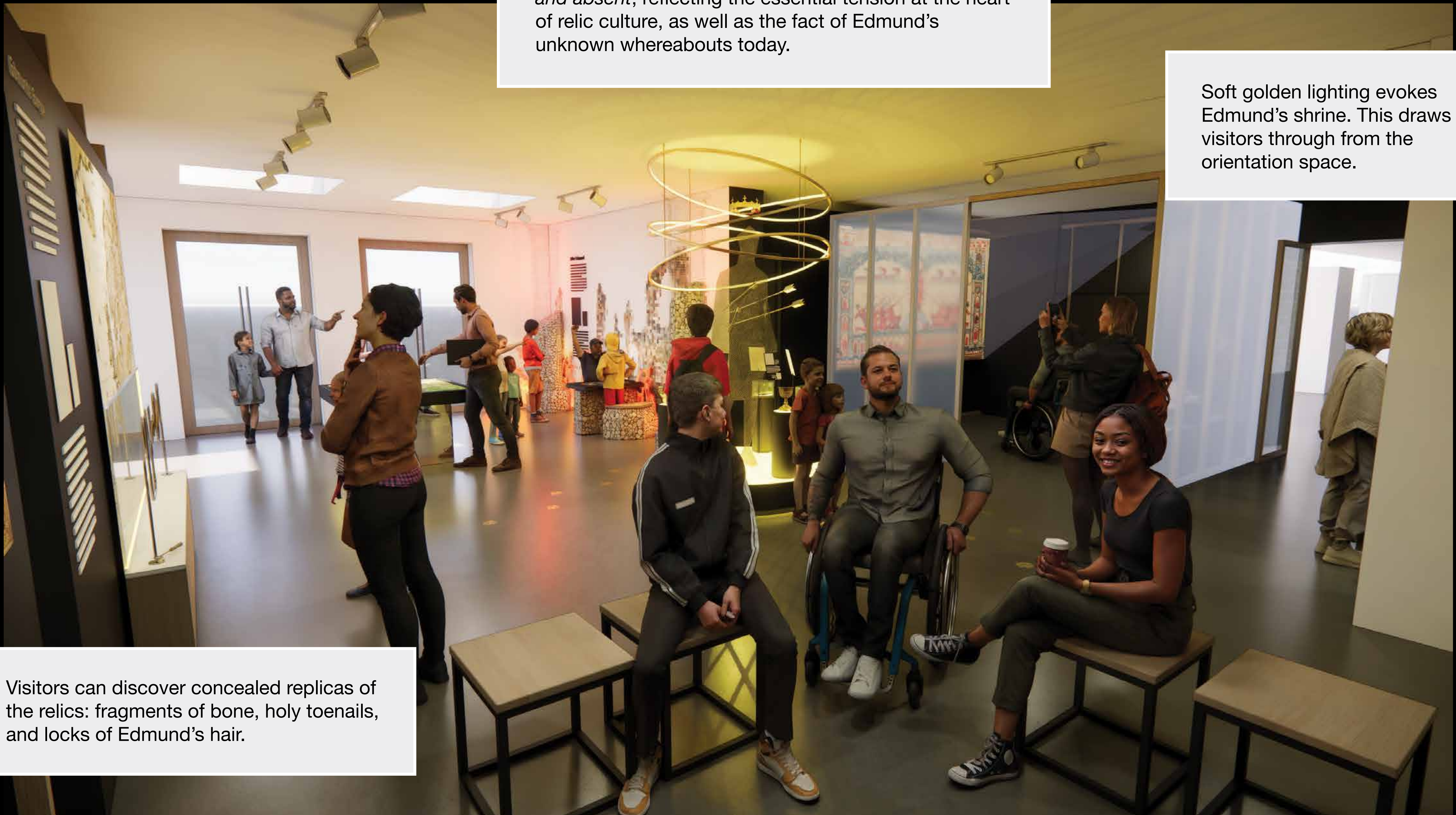
# The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn *Interpretation Spaces*

Here is an indication of the type of interpretation that will be in this space.

## SACRED BONES

A central sculptural element introduces the mysterious figure of Edmund. In this form, *Edmund is both present and absent*, reflecting the essential tension at the heart of relic culture, as well as the fact of Edmund's unknown whereabouts today.

Soft golden lighting evokes Edmund's shrine. This draws visitors through from the orientation space.



Visitors can discover concealed replicas of the relics: fragments of bone, holy toenails, and locks of Edmund's hair.

© RFA Design

The Interpretation Plan sets out a creative vision to bring one of England's greatest medieval abbeys to life for today's visitors.

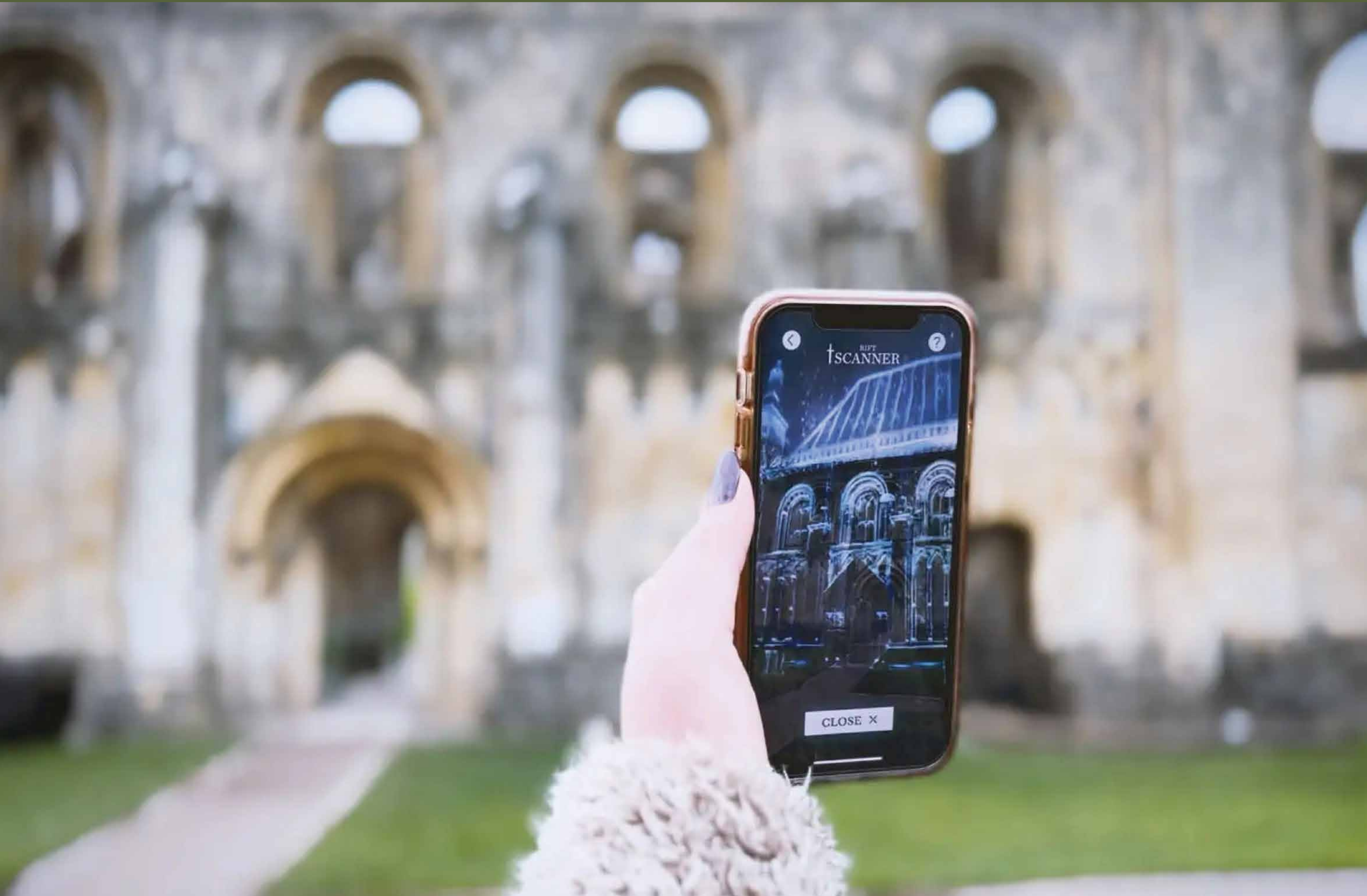
At its centre is St Edmund – the Anglo-Saxon king, saint and martyr – after whom the Abbey is named. Visitors will discover the lives, beliefs and struggles of those who built and sustained the Abbey through family trails, exhibitions, digital reconstructions, guided walks and quiet spaces. The aim is to make the Abbey engaging for all and to inspire generations to come.

Scan here to find out more about the stories we might tell and how we will tell them





# The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn *Augmented Reality*



© RFA Design

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Augmented reality, or AR, is a technology that adds digital information to the real world using a smartphone or tablet. Instead of replacing reality, like virtual reality does, AR layers images, animations, or sounds over what you can already see.

For visitors to the Abbey site, this will mean the past can be brought vividly to life while standing in the present-day landscape.

AR can show where walls once stood, how people dressed, or what daily life looked and sounded like. It allows stories that might otherwise be lost to appear directly in front of the visitor.

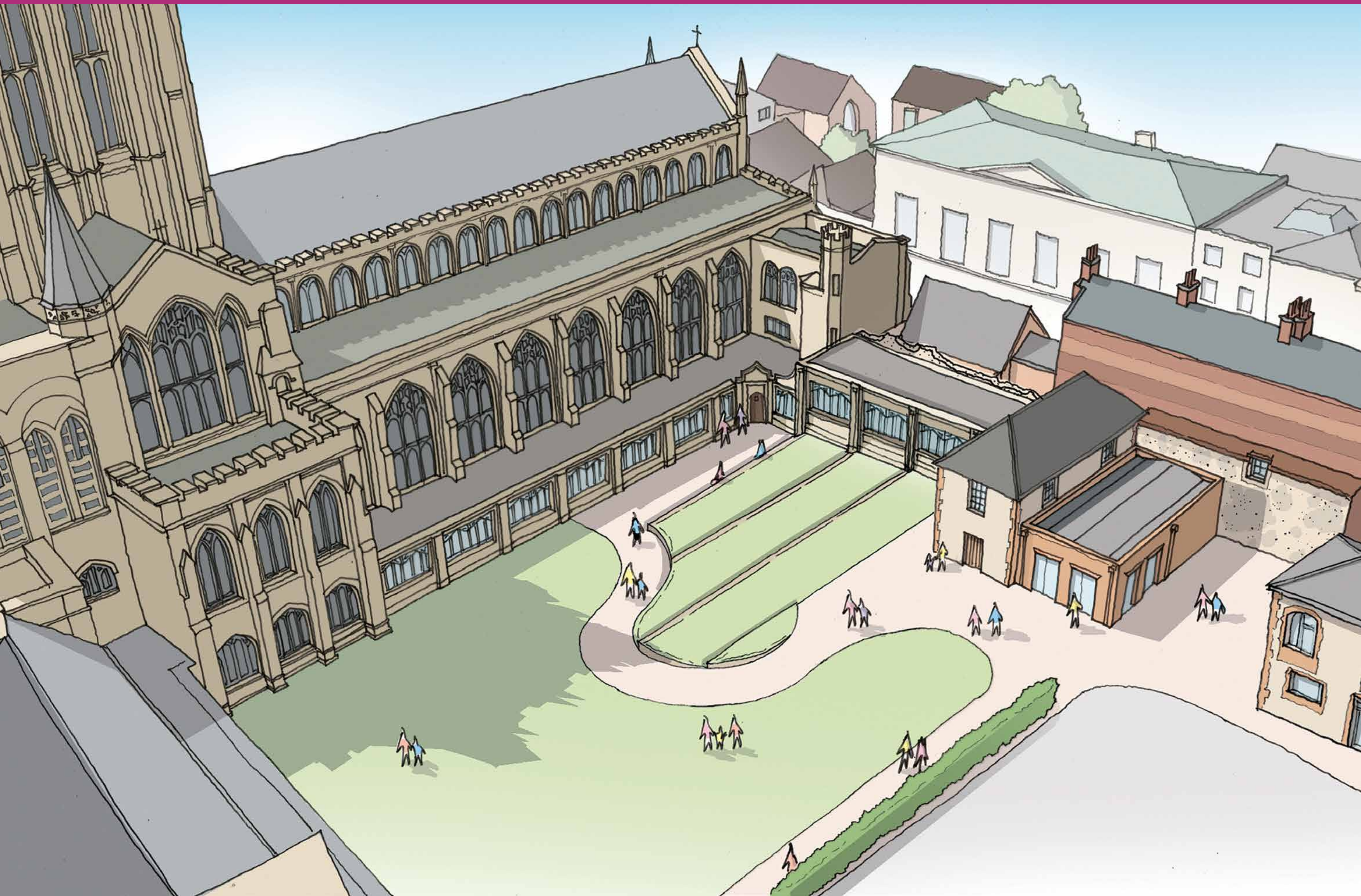
By blending history with digital storytelling, AR helps people understand more than just facts. It is also flexible – new stories can be added over time, and it can be tailored to specific audience groups.

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# The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn

## *A New West Cloister*

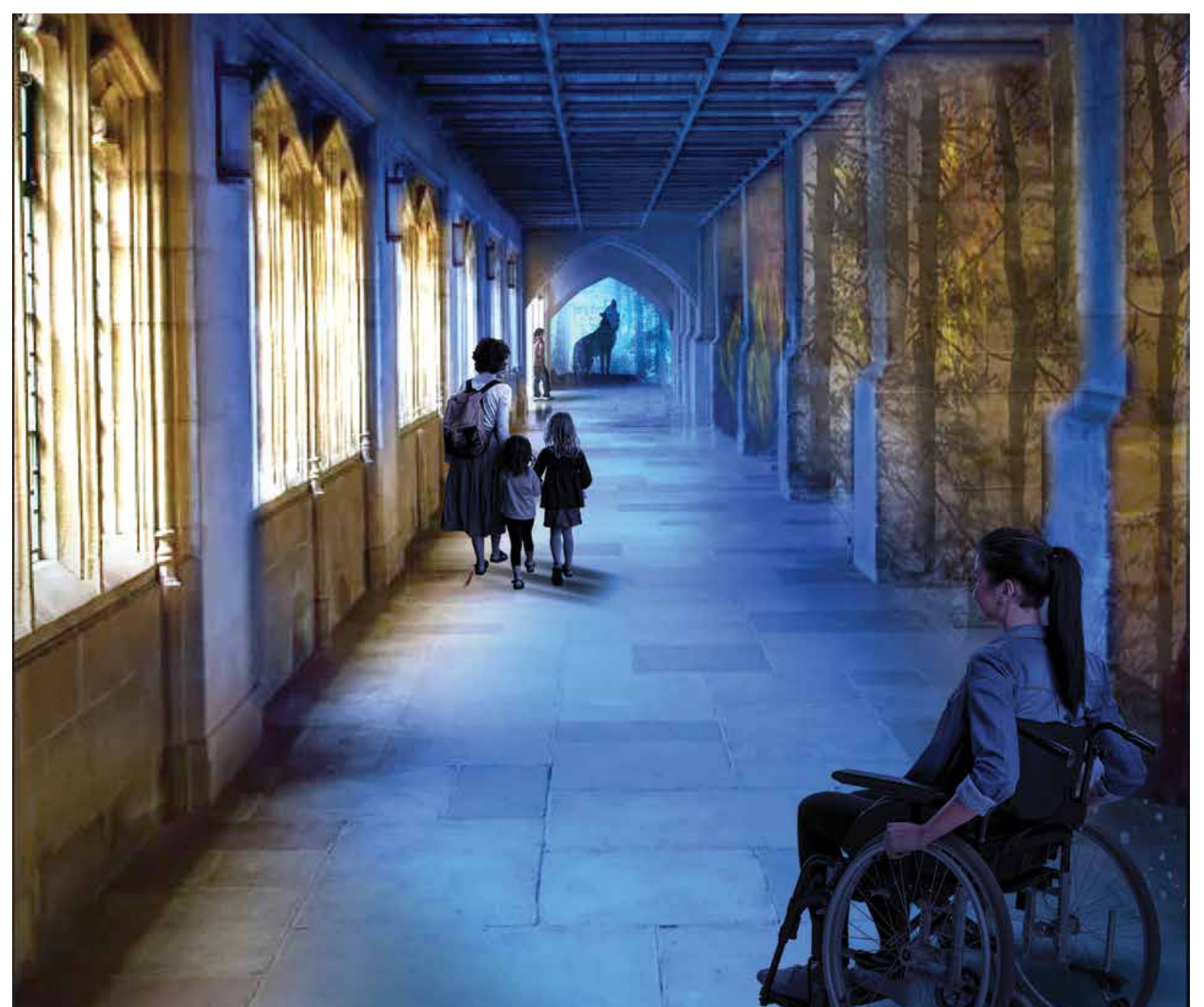


© Purcell Architecture Ltd

We will continue the vision of the renowned architect Stephen Dykes Bower for a new west cloister.

The West Cloister will form a link between the Visitor Centre and the Cathedral, be a spiritual place of calm and beauty, and be a space to display temporary art installations and exhibitions.

The West Cloister lit in St Edmund's colours with the mythical wolf from his story in the background.





# The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn

## *Future Proofing and Restoring Nature*



© Catherine Rayson

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With the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, we aim to help restore the Abbey's green spaces by

- Adding plant diversity along the routes of the new Abbey ruins footpaths to encourage pollinating insects
  - Involving volunteers in maintaining biodiversity
  - Pollarding willow and thinning trees along the River Lark to encourage plant growth in and around the river
  - Greening the boundaries of the path linking the Crankles to the Great Churchyard
  - Vegetation and tree management to enhance the ground flora and associated fauna
  - A green corridor (long, narrow pollinator-friendly flower bed) across the Shire Hall car park public right of way
  - Increasing plant diversity in the Great Churchyard by timely mowing the more vigorous plants, allowing wildflowers to spread from the Charnel House and selectively introducing native wildflowers
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# The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn

## *Next Steps*



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**September 2025**  
Community consultation

**October 2025**  
Submit planning permission applications

**February 2026**  
Submit application for £6.7million from the  
The National Lottery Heritage Fund for the  
project delivery

**Summer 2026**  
Should funding application be successful,  
project delivery begins

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# The Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn

## *Tell Us What You Think*



© Tom Soper Photography

We want the whole community to be part of shaping the story of The Abbey of St Edmund.

We have consulted widely to create these proposals, but we need your help to make this the best project it can be.

Scan the QR code to access an online feedback form - it should only take five minutes. What ideas do you like? and dislike? What have we missed?

This is your project – together we can ensure the Abbey inspires our communities for years to come.

We thank you for your help.



St Edmundsbury  
Cathedral

