

St Edmundsbury Cathedral



**Masterplan
2026-2030**

Message from the Bishop

St Edmundsbury Cathedral is at the heart of Suffolk, a place of prayer, worship, and service. Founded on a thousand years of witness, it seeks to resource the people of this county in their lives and work today, enabling the light of Christ to shine in every community.

With faith, it speaks of the love of God for all people. It unites us in the hope that, through the saving work of Jesus Christ, we can be reconciled to God and to each other. It encourages us to know the presence of the Holy Spirit moving in our lives and communities, bringing fresh hope and possibility.

Opening doors, it moves us to welcome pilgrims, friends, and strangers, people of all faiths and none, inviting us to give and to receive in a spirit of collaboration and generosity.

Opening hearts, it inspires us to gather up those who are lonely or in need, to practice love and tolerance, and to ensure the safety of all who discover God's welcome here.

Opening consciences, it prompts us to be confident about who we are and what we value, standing against all that sows division or diminishes any of God's children.

As you explore this plan for the next five years, I invite you to consider how God is calling you to contribute to and participate in building up the life of this community.

May the Holy Spirit stir up in our generation the flame of faith, renewing our commitment to prayer, worship, and service across the county of Suffolk.

With every blessing,

The Right Reverend Dr Joanne Woolway Grenfell
Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich



Message from the Dean

The document you are about to read marks the halfway point of St Edmundsbury Cathedral's ten-year journey of development, which started in 2020. We have reviewed what was achieved between 2020 and 2025, what principal challenges we faced, where we feel the Holy Spirit is guiding us in our service to county and diocese, and crucially what our partners in Gospel and service are asking of us.

The state of the world has been at the forefront of our minds in considering how best to reflect the presence of Jesus Christ, in worship, living out the good news and standing up for those who most need us. In the 2020 Masterplan, I reflected on the scars with which polarisation and inequality have wounded our contemporary society. In 2026 things are if anything, worse. The Church cannot therefore remain silent. Providing space and time for reflection and challenge will be a central part of our work for the next five years.

Crucial to our process of review has been the engagement of the Cathedral and wider community in asking ourselves the tough questions of mission and ministry in what, as I write, are troubled and uncertain times. The eagle-eyed will note some sharpening of our aims: confidence in worship; ensuring safety for all; developing faith encounters; growing our congregations in numbers and depth. In addition we will work as good partners to ensure the 'Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn' project fulfils its potential, stewards and safeguards creation, develops pilgrimage routes, remains faithful to our Benedictine heritage and welcomes more visitors to Cathedral, Abbey site and town.

It is essential that a Masterplan is a dynamic and living work in progress, hence our determination that it forms the basis of our work over the next five years. However, our Values have remained constant. They are the root of all we do: faith, welcome, compassion, confidence. We remind ourselves daily that each visitor is to be welcomed as if they were Christ himself (Rule of St Benedict, Chapter 53).

I am particularly grateful for the message from our Bishop, Joanne, in which she invites us to open doors, hearts and consciences. It will be a challenge which I hope all who consider yourselves part of the St Edmundsbury Cathedral community will take to heart as we begin an exciting and challenging five years of further development.

I warmly commend this revised masterplan to you.

Joe Hawes
Dean of St Edmundsbury



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Introduction

St Edmundsbury Cathedral is Suffolk's Cathedral. Found in the heart of Bury St Edmunds, it is open and available to everyone. As a physical place it is the cathedra, the seat of the Bishop; a centre of worship and mission; and a symbol of the aspirations of the wider diocese. As a place of prayer, it is a focus for pilgrimage and pastoral care where all are welcome. As a place of heritage, located on the historic Abbey of St Edmund site, it is a window into key moments from the past millennium. As a cultural place, it is a venue for learning and exploration, and for artistic and musical imagination. As a place of community, it gathers us in faith, debate, questioning and discussion.

For over 1000 years, this place has welcomed pilgrims, visitors and worshippers from near and far. People have come for many purposes: to be close to the story of Saint Edmund, called by their faith, to meet on matters of politics and law, to be with family, to wonder at the beauty and architecture of our building, and much, much more.

A thousand years ago, King Cnut re-founded the abbey dedicated to Saint Edmund, martyred in 869 by the Danes, and to this day the Cathedral, abbey and town carry that name. So many years later, we face such different challenges but also similar ones. We will continue to speak of faith in a troubled world and celebrate how God is active in society. Christians identify these signs as the dawning of the Kingdom of God, for which we pray each day in the Lord's Prayer.

Our vision is to be a sacred space which continues to transform lives for the next thousand years—a place of safety, welcome, and belonging for all, always.



Aims

This plan lays out the focus of the Cathedral over the next five years. These are the key headlines we will aim to deliver as a priority:

- be a safe place for all people based on a healthy culture with safeguarding at its heart;
- work with local partners, including West Suffolk Council and English Heritage, to bring together the whole abbey site, linking the Cathedral, abbey and town as a richly textured experience;
- be confident in the missional potential of our liturgical and musical tradition, being recognised as a regional and national centre of excellence and ambition in this area;
- be a dynamic centre in the diocese and town for learning about faith, heritage and the arts, for all people;
- be good stewards of God's creation by protecting, through our own example, the environment and life on earth;
- grow our congregations, in number and depth, seeking to develop a younger and more diverse worshipping community;
- be a centre for pilgrimage, developing partnerships that bring new people to the Cathedral, of all religious traditions and none;
- have a calendar of events that helps to sustain the work of the Cathedral whilst still offering access to learning and creativity for all, including hard-to-reach groups;
- be a symbol of unity, tolerance, inclusivity, and respect.

This document provides an overview of how each area of the Cathedral's work—Worship, Mission, Hospitality and Sustainability—will focus to deliver these goals, alongside our day-to-day reason for being.



Our Values

Our values are a guide for all we do at the Cathedral, underpinned by our Benedictine heritage, whose principles remain crucial in the 21st century.

How we work with each other, how we talk about the Cathedral, how we reach out to the whole of Suffolk and beyond, and how we transform ourselves as we grow together are articulated through our values of Faith, Welcome, Compassion and Confidence.

Faith

in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and God's unconditional love for all people. This is our Christian conviction, and it is what defines and shapes us.

Welcome

to friends and to strangers; to people of all faiths and none; to those with whom we agree and disagree, building a culture of openness, collaboration and generosity across the county.

Compassion

walking alongside those in need, showing love, tolerance and respect in all we do, whilst ensuring safety for every person.

Confidence

to challenge wrongs; to be honest about who we are and that for which we stand; to be daring in what we do, how we do it and with whom we do it.



Our Areas of Work

The Cathedral has four key areas of work: worship, mission, hospitality and sustainability.



Worship

Worship lies at the heart of the Christian life. It is the foundation of all we do and all we are as a Cathedral. Each day, morning and evening, regardless of what else is happening, we offer praise, prayer and worship to God.

We worship God through the ancient and beautiful Anglican musical and liturgical tradition. As guardians of this tradition, we provide worshippers with an opportunity to encounter the sacred, to be formed into the likeness of Christ, and to be empowered to go out and make a difference in the world.

Over the next five years we want our congregations to grow in both number and depth, as we particularly seek to develop a younger and more diverse worshipping community. We will nurture and broaden our liturgical and choral tradition to the highest possible standard, working to ensure all people are able to participate in our worship, and that its impact may be felt throughout the diocese and beyond.

Therefore we will:

- a. promote a safe and welcoming environment for worship and discovery, developing a representative diversity of welcome, leadership, worship and learning opportunities;
- b. be confident in the missional and transformational power of our inherited liturgical and musical traditions;
- c. actively and regularly promote the worshipping life of the Cathedral both within and beyond the Cathedral community;
- d. work to ensure that all people are able to actively participate in worship;
- e. celebrate our choral tradition through a commitment to excellence and diversity, regularly commissioning new works to ensure its continued momentum and vitality for future generations;
- f. continue to strengthen our links with our communities so we can
 - i. successfully and sustainably attract choristers, vicars choral and scholars;
 - ii. engage a greater number of young people with their musical heritage through opportunities for musical exploration, expression and education;
 - iii. seek out exciting opportunities to grow the choirs' reputation locally and nationally;
- g. share our liturgical and musical expertise beyond the Cathedral as we continue to develop our relationships across the diocese, county and beyond.



Mission

St Edmundsbury Cathedral plays a significant role in the community we serve and as a resource for the Church in Suffolk. Mission includes sharing faith in Christ through compassion and service. In addition, we aim to be a centre for learning about faith and a public forum to respond to the pressing social and moral challenges of our time. We learn through conversation with our community and people.

Therefore we will:

- a. offer, in collaboration with key partners from the Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn project, opportunities across the abbey site for people at all stages of life to explore questions of faith and meaning through the rich history of the site, highlighting lessons from history to help communities navigate recurring human challenges and moral dilemmas;
- b. deliver a comprehensive programme for schools, and develop innovative partnerships with local schools (including chaplaincy at King Edward VI School), fostering reflection on faith, ethics, social justice and resilience in the face of contemporary pressures;
- c. offer family experiences that enable people to engage with the Cathedral and Christian faith;
- d. provide enriching activities for the local community and attractive reasons to visit for people further afield;
- e. develop as significant annual events the Edmund, Benedict and Ronald Blythe lectures, at which high-profile speakers address current issues with a Christian voice;
- f. maximise the potential of the Ancient Library and Cathedral Treasury for meaningful learning and visitor experience;
- g. work in partnership with local, countywide, national and international organisations, other religious traditions, civic bodies, government agencies and non-profit groups to serve the common good by promoting understanding, reconciliation and collective action in a divided world;
- h. continue to support the diocese and parishes by developing creative approaches to ministry, pastoral care and spiritual formation that reflect the realities of today's society;
- i. encourage and enable everyone who enters our doors to grow in awareness of God through transformative encounters, safe spaces for dialogue on big issues, and regular faith formation that nurtures curiosity, resilience and ethical reflection.



Hospitality

We are a welcoming space in a world greatly in need of compassion and sanctuary. We celebrate diversity and difference, and want to help those who come here to have an enriching spiritual and cultural encounter, to strengthen their sense of belonging within their own faith, or none. We want to tell a thousand years of stories to new audiences, sharing our faith and heritage for another millennium.

Therefore we will:

- a. work with our heritage partners towards a unified abbey area, improving visitor access, providing area-wide interpretation and contributing to the growth of Bury St Edmunds as a visitor destination;
- b. tell the story of Saint Edmund to national and international audiences, establishing the Cathedral and the whole abbey area as an important focus for pilgrimage;
- c. develop, with our heritage partners, new models for guided tours and engagement with the Cathedral and its treasures;
- d. develop the profile of volunteering at the Cathedral to attract a wider demographic, and adapt volunteering roles to match new patterns of volunteering;
- e. enable people to access the worship we offer on their own terms, helping them to grow in awareness of God.



Sustainability

Sustainability, safeguarding and good governance are fundamental priorities as we ensure a life-enhancing and secure environment for all. The sustainability of the Cathedral foundation into the future requires further innovative and environmentally responsible practices and continued progress towards financial sustainability. Maintaining a healthy organisational culture includes independent oversight of safeguarding and regular auditing of our governance practices.

Therefore we will:

- a. Work with partners to deliver the Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn Project across the whole abbey area to strengthen the physical, ecological and financial sustainability of the site
- b. reduce the carbon footprint of our buildings and activities, including carbon-neutral practices in any new capital projects;
- c. work towards resourcing the care and conservation of our archives, Ancient Library and treasures, and put in place a strategy for best practice in record management;
- d. broaden the diversity and skills of our people through high-quality recruitment and training opportunities;
- e. strive to create an environment where all who encounter the Cathedral are safe, valued and protected from abuse or exploitation.



Financial Sustainability

To deliver our aims and aspirations we need to build our reserves and develop adequate working capital resources.

Therefore we will:

- a. build financial resilience by developing and strengthening income streams, and by achieving cost reductions through lowering energy use;
- b. continue to develop fundraising and growing our income streams from memberships, legacies, appeals, grants, trusts and sponsorship;
- c. increase footfall and income to the Cathedral site as part of the Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn project with partners in the town and county;
- d. expand our events portfolio to include major exhibitions and cultural events across the abbey site;
- e. continue to increase the revenue of our trading activities through increased visitor numbers and expanded facilities.



Building Aspirations

We aspire to ensure that St Edmundsbury Cathedral continues to evolve as a living, welcoming space – one that honours its heritage whilst embracing the future.

Our building is at the heart of our mission and our community, and we want to care for it thoughtfully and sustainably. Some of these aspirations would be realised through our Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn project and other partnership working; others will emerge as circumstances, opportunities and resources allow. What unites them is our commitment to a Cathedral that is cherished, protected and fit for purpose for generations to come.



Description	Timeline
Solar panels installed on the South Aisle of the Cathedral. Church Commissioners Demonstrator Grant	Q4, 2025 – Q2, 2026
Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn (subject funding approval) - Visitor Welcome Centre / West Cloister - Access improvements via car park The Great West Window will be repaired and conserved as part of the Abbey of St Edmund Reborn Project. The window is in poor condition due to long-term weathering and lack of maintenance. The project is to be included in the same delivery period and funding requires further consideration.	2026 - 2029
Re-flooring of the nave with underfloor heating, alongside redecoration of the nave.	2030
Extension of Pilgrims' Kitchen Importance of creating extra seating to ease day-to-day lunchtime pressure, improve income generation and to allow for a separate function area balanced against build cost.	TBC, pending cost review
Completion of the precinct with a North Cloister – a vision originally proposed by Dykes Bower.	10+ years
Conversion of Abbey House into a Pilgrims' retreat – Potentially incorporating or enhancing office accommodation.	2045



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