



Sensitive transformation of historic subterranean spaces into an education facility, balancing structural integrity, archaeology preservation, and modern accessibility requirements

**Location:** Worcester, Worcestershire

**Client:** Worcester Cathedral

**Architect:** Clews

**Value:** £1m



Education / Adaptation / Heritage / Listed

### Project Overview

Located beneath Worcester Cathedral, the Undercroft project transformed a 12th-century former monastic refectory cellar into a fully accessible education centre. Previously unused and inaccessible, the listed space was carefully opened to the public for the first time, supporting the Cathedral's long-standing commitment to learning and community engagement with a flexible venue for education, arts, and outreach.

### Engineering Challenges

Working within a sensitive heritage environment required a carefully considered structural approach. A modern brick vault, which had replaced a collapsed medieval section, was removed to facilitate new stair and lift access. The existing floor level was reduced by removing later concrete additions, replaced with breathable lime-crete to protect underlying archaeology. New shallow raft foundations were introduced to minimise ground disturbance. Throughout, repairs and stabilisation of the original vaulting were undertaken, ensuring long-term structural performance while preserving historic fabric.

### Project Recognition

The completed learning centre received multiple honours, including the 2022 RIBA West Midlands Awards for Building of the Year, Conservation, and Client of the Year, as well as a Civic Trust AABC Conservation Award. These accolades reflect the project's success in delivering a carefully considered, light-touch intervention that has brought new life and purpose to a historically significant space.

