The Education Centre at Winchester Cathedral, situated in the Inner Close, is currently located in a Grade I listed eighteenth century house built around the remains of the original Priory kitchen with a long back garden enclosed by walls. The Centre is intensively used to receive church and school groups and host courses and meetings. The Cathedral recognises the need to expand these facilities just as those for general visitors have been in the recent past.

The brief was to improve the existing unsatisfactory ground floor layout and access to the first floor rooms and provide a multi-purpose seminar room capable of accommodating 120 people and with supporting services including kitchen and toilets.

Following their appointment, HCC Property Services carried out detailed surveys of the site. Rather than attempt an extension, the decision was made to create a new free-standing building and so avoid having to break through the rear wall of the old building. As the site is a scheduled ancient monument, the new pavilion is designed with a raft foundation to avoid interfering with archaeological layers below. A simple barn-like structure contains a spacious seminar room exploiting a dramatic view of the Cathedral. It is designed to have a low-carbon footprint and uses naturally weathering materials. The ground floor layout of the existing building is improved to provide a clear route from the reinstated front door straight through to the new pavilion in the back garden. The rather awkward existing staircase is removed and replaced with one which makes room for a lift to serve the existing classroom and library on the first floor.

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Key Benefits

- Removal of unsympathetic modern interventions and rationalisation of internal layout.
- Provision of level access at ground floor level and a lift to the first floor rooms.
- Protection of historic building by designing the required new large space as a separate pavilion hidden from public view.
- Sustainable design and use of naturally weathering materials for the new building.

“This is a delightful, sensitive scheme which makes little impact on the highly valued and historic setting of the Cathedral Close and illustrates the value of comprehensive pre-application discussion with all interested parties.”

Alison Davidson – Head of Historic Environment, Winchester City Council