

Judges' Citation RTPI South East Awards for Planning Excellence 2018

Category: Excellence in Planning for Heritage and Culture

Winner: Reading Abbey Quarter

Reading Borough Council

The Abbey Quarter in central Reading brings together nationally important heritage within the former grounds of Reading Abbey. The conservation and interpretation of the Grade 1 listed and scheduled Abbey ruins and the Abbey Gateway have been central to the Council's vision to transform the Quarter into a unique historical and cultural destination.



The creation of the Abbey Quarter has been achieved through conservation, interpretation, signage and active community engagement. It is now a critical part of the town's place-making agenda. The Quarter is somewhere for residents to be proud of and tourists to visit. This concept has been visually enforced through the installation of branded interpretation and signage. 27 information panels across the town centre and in the Abbey itself reveal the significant history of the area. Directional signage encourages visitors to the Quarter from the train station, shopping centres and key pedestrian routes. Listed buildings and structures in the Quarter have been conserved or restored, including the Abbey Ruins and Gateway and St Laurence's churchyard wall.

From the start of this project, Reading's planners have worked closely with the project team and the new Reading local plan recognises the Quarter as a key contribution to Reading's economic success, quality of life and cultural opportunities.

The judges were impressed by:

- the extent that Reading's heritage is seen as a catalyst for positive change;
- the extent that the Abbey Quarter is at the heart of the town's cultural renaissance;
- the Council's positive attitude to balancing heritage protection and being a destination for locals and visitors alike; and
- the creation of a strategic cultural and heritage strategy for Reading.