25.10.2015 THE SUNDAY TIMES

HOME

THE SUNDAY TIMES BRITISH HOMES AWARDS

Broombank, a modernist property in Suffolk, was one of our winners; see page IV

This year's best new homes are the most varied yet — but not every developer has got it right. **Martina Lees** unveils the winners

With Britain's housing shortage hitting the headlines — and, in many cases, our pockets — the Sunday Times British Homes Awards provide a telling snapshot of the market in 2015, from fairy-tale barn conversions to new garden suburbs of almost 1,000 properties.

This is the first time in the awards' nine-year history that the entries have showcased "the full stylistic variety of British homes", says Robert Adam, chairman of the judging panel. "In almost every category, we have had a mixture of traditional and contemporary, and have been able to select well-designed houses of all types."

In the past, architects often dared to be different (but ended up being just the same) by adding yet another glass box to a period home, or an abundance of horizontal windows and balconies to blocks of flats. Expanses of glass have become commonplace, Adam says, as has the use of bare brick in modern exteriors. But this year's sample of traditional alternatives shows "the public are being offered choice — and this can only be good".

Homebuilder of the Year went to Berkeley Homes, which won two Development of the Year awards: for its bespoke family houses at Wimbledon Hill Park, in southwest London; and for its luxury apartments at One Tower Bridge — a landmark scheme, with a resin-coated timber bath in the show home, that also won the **Interior Design** category. The developer earned a commendation, too, for its cruiser-like flats at Vista, overlooking Battersea Park.

One Tower Bridge helped bag Squire & Partners the accolade of **Architect of the Year**. Run by a father-and-son team, Michael and Henry Squire, the practice has grown from 40 people to 220 in the past decade — making its name by salvaging projects such as the £3bn Chelsea Barracks redevelopment, in jeopardy after Prince Charles scuppered Lord Rogers's original modernist design. Squire was also commended for its first project as a developer: three £6.75m modern townhouses with Georgian proportions in Clapham.

Striking one-off homes and extensions were celebrated, including Broombank, a sensitive modernist house in Suffolk by SOUP Architects (above). Yet some of the best solutions for the housing crisis featured in the less glamorous categories. At Creekside Wharf, winner of the **Housing Project** award, Assael Architecture came up with a family-friendly tower block that offers buggy storage, indoor play space and extra sound insulation. William Street Quarter, a mix of brick mews houses and mansion blocks in Barking and Dagenham, is the first privately funded affordable-homes scheme in Britain — and deservedly won in the **Affordable Housing** category. The same borough experimented with almshouse architecture at Luke Allsopp Square, an over-55s complex that inspires on a budget. Named best **Age-Restricted Development**, it shows how the shortage of retirement homes can be addressed.

Alas, some didn't make the grade. In a few categories — such as **Best House Design**, where apart from the outstanding Oakgrove Village, there were no commendations for schemes above 50 homes — some submissions were of a low standard. "Dull, dull, dull," one judge said during the discussion. "I thought that was the kind of thing planning was meant to stop," said another.

"There will be good and bad in all fields, but it is depressing to see poor design put forward for an award, as the architects or developers did not realise the error of their ways," Adam says. As this year's winners prove, good design can be achieved across all aspects and styles of housing.

@TheSTHome; britishhomesawards.co.uk

The judging panel

Chairman: Professor Robert Adam
Director of ADAM Architecture

Assisted by:
Lewis Blackwell Executive director of strategy, The Building Centre
Dr Peter Bonfield Chief executive, BRE
Nick Boyle Chief executive, Lightsource Renewable Energy
David Bryant Chairman, New Homes Marketing Board
Paul Finch Editorial director, The Architects' Journal
Cliff Fudge Technical director, H+H
Martina Lees Writer, The Sunday Times Home
David Mote Editor, Housebuilder & Developer
Stuart Norton Group design and technical director, Redrow
Roger Scruton Writer and philosopher on aesthetics
Jo Smit Writer, editor and commentator on the built environment
Lynne Sullivan Co-founding partner, Sustainable by Design

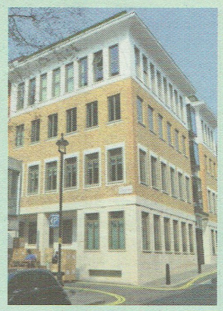
For the Interior Design Award:
Dan Hopwood President, British Institute of Interior Design

JEREMY KING ARCHITECTS
jeremykingarchitects.com

CONVERSION, RESTORATION OR REFURBISHMENT

JOINT WINNERS
The Barns at Lynch Farm; Jeremy King Architects, Emerys of Bath (left)
Hulme Hall; Core Design, PH Property Holdings (far right)
Hop House; Brimelow McSweeney Architects, Dukelease (right)
With 37 entries spanning the transformation of barns, office blocks and listed buildings, the judges deliberated at length and chose a winner for each type.

Two wonderfully wonky barns at **Lynch Farm**, in Shalbourne, Wiltshire, were joined to the farmhouse to form a single family home, while still looking like separate buildings. The threshing barn (pictured) was held up by a single telegraph pole, but planners wanted to preserve its precarious shape. The solution was to glue a timber shell to the outside, locking the undulating form into place.



Subdividing listed manors often compromises the feature rooms. Not so at 17th-century **Hulme Hall**, near Manchester, where a conversion into mews houses preserved the principal spaces in their original form.

Hop House, 29 flats in a former office block in Covent Garden, central London, won praise for details such as carved hop motifs and bronze shingle cladding on the roof extension.

COMMENDED
Brentford Magistrates Court and Market Place Paul Murphy Architects, Abchurch Properties
Morgan House and Regency Mews Stride Treglown, Taylor Wimpey Central London
The Old Library TateHindle, TAG Exclusive Properties
Royal Connaught Park Plus Architecture, Comer Homes Group

ONE-OFF HOUSE OR EXTENSION: UP TO 2,500 SQ FT

WINNER Sandpath; Adrian James Architects
For a timber and glass box on a budget, this four-bedroom self-build in the countryside near Oxford is as good as it gets. With less than £1,500 a sq ft to spend, the owners — who managed the project themselves — opted for a no-frills cube constructed with prefab timber panels (and a bit of steel for that huge window to the garden). The money went towards a few features that mattered, such as the cantilevered front, for a dramatic welcome, and the minimalist staircase, a focal point in the open-plan living area. "The purity of the shape not only helped the cost, it helps the architecture, keeping it pristine and clean," says Adrian James, Sandpath's architect.

COMMENDED
Crowsport LA Hally Architect
London Art de Vivre Sophie Nguyen Architects

AGE-RESTRICTED DEVELOPMENT

WINNER Luke Allsopp Square; Patel Taylor Architects, London Borough of Barking & Dagenham
Many more aspirational retirement properties are needed to tempt older people to "right-size" — which could release up to 3.4m family homes. Inspired by almshouses and set around a large communal garden, Patel Taylor's "courtyard housing" scheme for over-55s in the East End of London shows how this can be done without spending a fortune.

COMMENDED
Audley Binswood Quad Projects, Audley Retirement
Church View ADAM Architecture*, Lochailort Investments
**Robert Adam, director of ADAM Architecture, did not judge this category*

AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

WINNER William Street Quarter; Maccreanor Lavington/Allford Hall Monaghan Morris, London Borough of Barking & Dagenham
The first affordable-housing scheme in Britain to be wholly privately funded, the 201-home William Street Quarter replaced the tower blocks of Barking's Linton estate. Three streets of family terraces and three cubist blocks of flats are built around public spaces for "informal play", as the design statement puts it.

COMMENDED
Vaudeville Court Levitt Bernstein, Islington Council
The Paddocks & Old Common Mews Lovell

JEREMY KING ARCHITECTS
jeremykingarchitects.com