

Right: Domino Houses in Bounds Green, by Studio Verve, are built in dramatic, pure black Himley bricks



Large developments category: below and below right, Peabody's St John's Hill in Wandsworth stands out, designed by Hawkins Brown. Here, 300 homes were demolished and almost 600 replace them, using a regular, rhythmic design and lovely coloured bricks, both smooth and glazed – a Peabody tradition – from Wienerberger. For a very special feature of the development, local artist Rodney Harris designed four brick reliefs using a traditional technique that takes great skill



Slick with bricks

The stunning versatility of bricks will be celebrated at a London awards ceremony tomorrow, reports **Philippa Stockley**

MADE from fired clay, bricks might seem low tech, but to the delight of those tired of glass-and-steel towers they're having a dazzling renaissance – not just because they look great and last for centuries, but because they are cheap, ecologically sound, have terrific thermal properties and can be made in any shape.

Bricks can be used to create a single home or a vast housing scheme, which is why developers are all at it, using handmade, machine-made and reclaimed bricks, in all colours from pale straw to pure black. Decorative brickwork is back, too, with exciting patterns that take skill and pride to achieve.

More than 200 entries across 15 categories are being considered for the 40th annual Brick Awards – and the best are in the capital.

■ **In the one-off homes category, two of the six shortlisted entries are in London. Map House** by SAM Architects is in Denmark Hill, near Camberwell. A former garage in a mews is now a snug, boxy, two-storey house using dark reclaimed brick above, with charred larch screens below that can cover the full-height windows when desired.

The reclaimed bricks blend instantly with surrounding Victorian houses. Using reclaimed bricks sends a great message and should be done more often. Well-made bricks really do last hundreds, even thousands, of years and old ones laid with lime mortar are easily cleaned for reuse.



Patterned for interest: Hindman's Yard in East Dulwich, four homes with "dogtooth" bricklaying



Small development category: above, creamy Ibstock bricks add grace and light at Elmwood Court, Battersea

Courtyard House near Forest Gate, by Dallas Pierce Quintero, uses Ibstock's sultry Staffordshire "blues" in both plain and "sawtooth" – angled along one long side, to set in patterns. The architects took a narrow builder's yard with old, yellowish walls either side and inserted a modern two-storey house with four tiny courtyards. The almost-black bricks continue inside the house, where their gleaming, patterned surface is delightful. Like Map House, bricks used against a palette of wood and other materials create visual variety.

Incurvo in commuter-belt Goring in Oxfordshire deserves a mention, too. This stunning, curvaceous hymn to brick's versatility has been done in glowing local orange-red handmade bricks from Ibstock, with curved bespoke windows. It's a sexy stunner, designed by Adrian James.

■ **Small developments:** 20 entries gave a shortlist of six, all in London. **Domino Houses** by Studio Verve in Bounds Green is the most dramatic, built in pure black Himley bricks from Ibstock. The eight homes are grouped around woodland, some linked, some standalone, creating monolithic, magical forms. Porthole windows throw light around inside, and curved green roofs soften the look. All the homes have private gardens, with photovoltaic panels among their strong eco-credentials.



Blue is the new black: right and far right, young architects Juliet Quintero Jonathan Dallas and David Pierce used inky Staffordshire blue brick for Courtyard House near Forest Gate

Left: in the small developments category, **Foundry Mews** by Project Orange architects features pale bricks from Wienerberger to create seven artisans' duplex homes and workshops on the site of a former MOT and car bodyshop in Barnes. These bricks are worked with surface patterns and also laid as perforated screens, creating privacy and shifting light patterns. Bricks are long-lasting, cost effective and hard to deface

Sexy stunner: Incurvo, below, in Goring, Oxfordshire, uses glowing local orange-red brick

One-off homes: below right, Map House, Denmark Hill, with dark reclaimed brick and larch screens



Architect CF Moller's **Elmwood Court** in Battersea is a five-storey development that packs in 22 affordable flats for Peabody housing association, built on a disused car park within an existing Peabody development. It puts shops below and homes above, for instant community and security.

Creamy Ibstock bricks add grace and lightness, and continue a Peabody tradition. Most flats are dual aspect, with deep balconies to the bedrooms, which helps with sound reduction and privacy.

More textured brickwork and pale bricks are found in **Hindman's Yard** in East Dulwich, designed by Foster Lomas, where four little homes are set on a backland site surrounded by Victorian houses. Wienerberger's



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