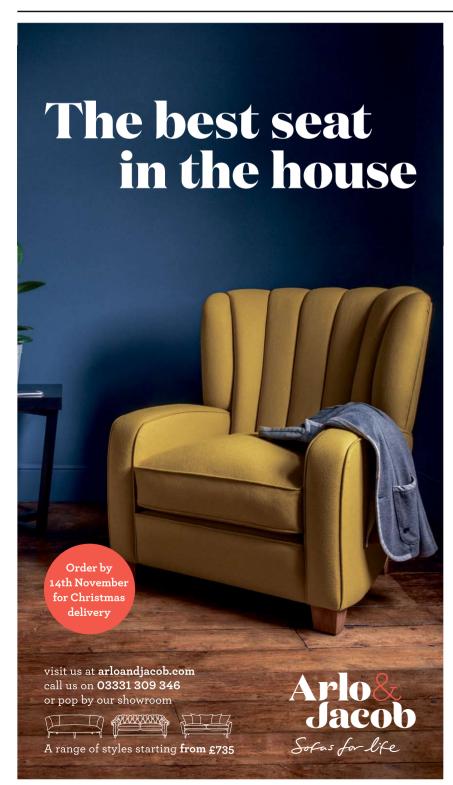
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Right: Domino Houses in Bounds Green, by Studio Verve, are built in dramatic, pure black Himley bricks

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







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

ADE from fired clay, bricks might seem low tech, but to the delight of those tired of glassand-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-storev 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.

Sexy stunner:

Incurvo, below,

glowing local

Oxfordshire, uses

orange-red brick

One-off homes:

below right, Map

House, Denmark

Hill, with dark

reclaimed brick

and larch screens

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.



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



hard to deface "Smoked Prata" brick is set in patterns for variety, with extra patterns added by using contrasting perforated steel. This type of laying, called "dogtooth", is popular this year – easy to learn, it makes an

interesting broken surface.

Ouintero

used inky

blue brick for

Left: in the small

developments category,

Foundry Mews by Project

features pale bricks from

create seven

homes and

Wienerberger to

artisans' duplex

workshops on the

site of a former

MOT and car

bodyshop in

worked with surface patterns

perforated

privacy and

shifting light

and also laid as

screens, creating

patterns. Bricks

are long-lasting,

bricks are

■ Large developments: a whopping 43 entries. Of seven on the shortlist, three are in London with three more nearby. **Chobham Manor** by PRP stands out, creating a massive 800 new homes in the Olympic Park for London Legacy Corporation, sending a strong signal that brick is back. Terrace and mews houses in tree-lined avenues use Michelmersh bricks, and Blockley's smooth blacks. Even the names of bricks are delightful. You can't say that about steel.









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