# Feix&Merlin wins Practice of the Year for innovative Walworth Town Hall restoration



The AJ Retrofit & Reuse Awards recently celebrated architectural excellence in the renewal and repurposing of existing buildings, spotlighting projects that prioritise reuse of materials and structure across 16 categories. Among the highlights was Feix&Merlin Architects being named Practice of the Year, largely for their sensitive and innovative restoration of Walworth Town Hall in south London. This Grade II-listed building, a local landmark since 1894, had suffered severe fire damage in 2013 and was subsequently placed on the Heritage at Risk register.

Feix&Merlin's transformation of Walworth Town Hall is testament to the firm’s commitment to preserving heritage while adapting to contemporary needs. Retaining 95% of the original structure, the project carefully blended restoration with the introduction of modern materials such as Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) and Glulam. These sustainable timber inserts were pivotal in rebuilding damaged sections, including the reconstruction of a vaulted ceiling in the former council chamber. The ground-floor café and lobby now feature open-plan spaces with timber ceilings and arched timber columns, creating a welcoming environment that supports both community use and flexible workspaces designed to accommodate over 550 people.

This complex project involved collaboration with developer General Projects and Southwark Council and required an extensive design process, producing over 5,000 drawings. The scheme also incorporates a community centre composed of three flexible rooms, managed by the Walworth Town Hall Community Space Board—a non-profit group comprising local residents, youth representatives, council members, and General Projects’ management arm. Judges at the awards praised the project’s strong community engagement, noting that the team went beyond its initial brief to enhance public access and inclusivity throughout the lifespan of the project.

The restoration’s environmental credentials were equally recognised, with significant embodied carbon reductions estimated at 68 tonnes CO2e through the use of mass timber construction methods. This sustainable approach aligns with wider industry trends in achieving net-zero retrofit ambitions, a key theme underscored by the AJ Retrofit & Reuse Awards themselves, which rebranded last year to better reflect an evolving industry focus on sustainability and material reuse.

Feix&Merlin Architects, an LGBTQI+-led practice based in Peckham and founded in 2006 by Julia Feix and Tarek Merlin, exemplify a versatile approach to retrofitting that balances heritage conservation with strong community-oriented architecture. Building on their success with Walworth Town Hall, the practice is also working on adaptive reuse projects of varying scales, including a notable collaboration with David Chipperfield Architects on a London School of Economics building and a smaller-scale regeneration project in Walthamstow involving railway arches and public realm improvements.

The Practice of the Year award recognises Feix&Merlin’s ability to deliver equitable, high-quality design while navigating complex restoration challenges. Their work demonstrated "admirable perseverance" and a nuanced understanding of how adaptive reuse can simultaneously protect heritage, respond to environmental concerns, and foster local community involvement. The award ceremony, held at The Brewery in the City of London, culminated the AJ Retrofit Live conference and featured a rigorous judging process involving a panel of 30 esteemed professionals, highlighting how Feix&Merlin's achievements set a benchmark for the sector.

As retrofit and reuse become increasingly critical in the fight against climate change and urban regeneration, projects like Walworth Town Hall offer inspiring examples of how architecture can honour the past, engage the present community, and build towards a sustainable future.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/feixmerlin-named-practice-of-the-year-at-aj-retrofit-reuse-awards), [[2]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/feixmerlin-named-practice-of-the-year-at-aj-retrofit-reuse-awards)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/feixmerlin-named-practice-of-the-year-at-aj-retrofit-reuse-awards), [[3]](https://feixandmerlin.com/walworth-town-hall/), [[6]](https://www.ribaj.com/products/walworth-town-hall-restoration-mass-timber-construction-conservation-heritage-southwark-feix-and-merlin)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/feixmerlin-named-practice-of-the-year-at-aj-retrofit-reuse-awards), [[4]](https://www.mixinteriors.com/award-entry/feixmerlin-with-general-projects-walworth-town-hall-london/), [[6]](https://www.ribaj.com/products/walworth-town-hall-restoration-mass-timber-construction-conservation-heritage-southwark-feix-and-merlin)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/feixmerlin-named-practice-of-the-year-at-aj-retrofit-reuse-awards), [[4]](https://www.mixinteriors.com/award-entry/feixmerlin-with-general-projects-walworth-town-hall-london/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/feixmerlin-named-practice-of-the-year-at-aj-retrofit-reuse-awards), [[2]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/feixmerlin-named-practice-of-the-year-at-aj-retrofit-reuse-awards), [[7]](https://www.generalprojects.com/portfolio/walworth-town-hall/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/feixmerlin-named-practice-of-the-year-at-aj-retrofit-reuse-awards), [[2]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/feixmerlin-named-practice-of-the-year-at-aj-retrofit-reuse-awards), [[3]](https://feixandmerlin.com/walworth-town-hall/), [[4]](https://www.mixinteriors.com/award-entry/feixmerlin-with-general-projects-walworth-town-hall-london/), [[7]](https://www.generalprojects.com/portfolio/walworth-town-hall/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/feixmerlin-named-practice-of-the-year-at-aj-retrofit-reuse-awards> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/feixmerlin-named-practice-of-the-year-at-aj-retrofit-reuse-awards> - Feix&Merlin Architects have been named Practice of the Year at the AJ Retrofit & Reuse Awards for their sensitive restoration of Walworth Town Hall. The Grade II-listed building in south London, severely damaged by fire in 2013, was transformed into a workspace for 550 people and a community hub, retaining 95% of the original structure. The project was praised for its strong community engagement and innovative approach to balancing heritage preservation with modernisation. ([feixandmerlin.com](https://feixandmerlin.com/walworth-town-hall/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://feixandmerlin.com/walworth-town-hall/> - Feix&Merlin Architects, in collaboration with developer General Projects and Southwark Council, have completed the transformation of Walworth Town Hall into a dynamic workspace and community hub. The Grade II-listed building, damaged by fire in 2013, now offers flexible offices for over 550 workers and public spaces, including a café and community centre. The restoration retained 95% of the original structure, incorporating mass timber inserts where rebuilding was necessary. ([feixandmerlin.com](https://feixandmerlin.com/walworth-town-hall/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.mixinteriors.com/award-entry/feixmerlin-with-general-projects-walworth-town-hall-london/> - Feix&Merlin Architects, alongside developer General Projects, have restored Walworth Town Hall, a Grade II listed building severely damaged by fire in 2013. The project, now removed from Historic England’s 'Heritage at Risk' register, has been transformed into a workspace and community hub. The interiors combine restored heritage features with sustainable interventions, including the use of Cross-Laminated Timber and Glulam, reducing embodied carbon by 68 tonnes CO2e. The building now hosts flexible workspaces for over 550 people, a public café, restaurant, and a purpose-built community centre. ([mixinteriors.com](https://www.mixinteriors.com/award-entry/feixmerlin-with-general-projects-walworth-town-hall-london/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.conamar.co.uk/project/walworth-town-hall/> - Conamar Building Services has commenced work on the £21 million revival of Grade II listed Walworth Town Hall in south London. The building, which has been derelict since a fire in 2013, is being restored and extended to its former glory. The designs by Feix & Merlin, Heyne Tillett Steel & RED have carefully crafted a fitting response to the building’s great heritage dating back to 1894, whilst also delivering a building suitable for modern uses, revolving around the creation of a free-to-use community hub as well as event and workspaces for independent creative ventures. ([conamar.co.uk](https://www.conamar.co.uk/project/walworth-town-hall/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.ribaj.com/products/walworth-town-hall-restoration-mass-timber-construction-conservation-heritage-southwark-feix-and-merlin> - Feix & Merlin Architects have employed mass timber construction in the restoration of the Grade II-listed Walworth Town Hall in Southwark, London. The building, severely damaged by fire in 2013, is being transformed into a workspace and community hub. The use of mass timber, including Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) and Glulam, is central to the restoration, providing a sustainable and efficient solution to rebuild the damaged sections while respecting the building's heritage. ([ribaj.com](https://www.ribaj.com/products/walworth-town-hall-restoration-mass-timber-construction-conservation-heritage-southwark-feix-and-merlin?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.generalprojects.com/portfolio/walworth-town-hall/> - General Projects, in partnership with Southwark Council, has been selected to redevelop and revive Walworth Town Hall, a Grade II listed building in south London. The project, designed by Feix&Merlin Architects, aims to restore the building to its former glory while introducing modern uses, including a free-to-use community hub and workspaces for independent creative ventures. The development will also include a new central atrium, a new entrance at Walworth Square, and a new healthy café and co-working space. ([generalprojects.com](https://www.generalprojects.com/portfolio/walworth-town-hall/?utm_source=openai))