# Elizabeth Tower restoration gains RIBA Stirling Prize shortlist recognition for blending historic craftsmanship with modern innovation



The restoration of the iconic Elizabeth Tower, known worldwide for housing the bell famously called Big Ben, has been shortlisted for the prestigious 2025 RIBA Stirling Prize, the United Kingdom’s highest honour in architecture. This recognition underscores the significance of a restoration project that combined historic craftsmanship with modern innovations, enhancing both the tower’s structural integrity and public accessibility.

The extensive restoration marked one of the most comprehensive conservation efforts in the tower’s 160-year history. The project carefully addressed previous restoration errors and repaired newly discovered damage sustained during the Second World War. Traditional materials and bespoke craftspeople played a vital role in this complex undertaking, with experts in stone masonry, gilding, glass cutting, and horology involved to ensure authenticity and meticulous detail. The interior rooms underwent thorough refurbishment, and crucially, a new visitor lift was installed, broadening access and allowing more people to experience this landmark.

A notable aspect of the project was the use of Level 2 Building Information Modelling (BIM), which facilitated precise scheduling and coordination of the repairs and created a detailed digital archive for future maintenance. This innovative approach allowed the multidisciplinary team—including project managers, structural engineers, and quantity surveyors—to work efficiently while preserving the tower's historic fabric. Since its reopening, public appreciation of the tower’s grandeur and heritage has visibly grown, highlighting the success of the restoration.

The Stirling Prize shortlist features six projects that collectively showcase architecture’s capacity to respond creatively to contemporary challenges. Among them is Appleby in south-east London, recognised as a pioneering model for housing designed to support later life. The London College of Fashion’s new campus, also shortlisted, stands out for its innovative design in education infrastructure.

Other contenders include Hastings House in East Sussex, noted for its sensitive timber-framed rear extension that reinvigorates an ageing hillside home, and South London’s Niwa House, a design inspired by Japanese aesthetics that exemplifies accessible, open-plan living. Additionally, the AstraZeneca Discovery Centre in Cambridge reflects cutting-edge medical research architecture, offering an innovative environment for pharmaceutical development.

Chris Williamson, president of the Royal Institute of British Architects, emphasised that the shortlisted projects collectively present a hopeful vision for the future. He remarked, “These projects demonstrate architecture’s unique ability to address some of the most urgent challenges of our time, responding with creativity, adaptability and care.” He further highlighted the blend of cultural investment, scientific advancement, and human-centred residential design exhibited by the finalists, calling attention to their role in fostering sustainable and inclusive communities.

The winner of the 2025 RIBA Stirling Prize will be announced at a ceremony at London’s Roundhouse on October 16, where the Elizabeth Tower restoration will be competing for the honour among these notable examples of contemporary British architecture.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/restoration-of-big-bens-elizabeth-tower-shortlisted-for-architecture-award-N5ARIGDCTRJA3HKZ4B7DACYPYQ/), [[6]](https://purcellarchitecture.com/news/elizabeth-tower-shortlisted-for-riba-london-award/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/restoration-of-big-bens-elizabeth-tower-shortlisted-for-architecture-award-N5ARIGDCTRJA3HKZ4B7DACYPYQ/), [[3]](https://www.ribaj.com/buildings/riba-stirling-prize-2025-shortlist-purcell-elizabeth-tower), [[6]](https://purcellarchitecture.com/news/elizabeth-tower-shortlisted-for-riba-london-award/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.ribaj.com/buildings/riba-stirling-prize-2025-shortlist-purcell-elizabeth-tower), [[6]](https://purcellarchitecture.com/news/elizabeth-tower-shortlisted-for-riba-london-award/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/restoration-of-big-bens-elizabeth-tower-shortlisted-for-architecture-award-N5ARIGDCTRJA3HKZ4B7DACYPYQ/), [[2]](https://www.building.co.uk/news/six-schemes-on-stirling-prize-2025-shortlist-unveiled/5137903.article), [[5]](https://www.ribaj.com/buildings/riba-stirling-prize-2025-shortlist), [[7]](https://www.wallpaper.com/architecture/riba-stirling-prize-2025-shortlist)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/restoration-of-big-bens-elizabeth-tower-shortlisted-for-architecture-award-N5ARIGDCTRJA3HKZ4B7DACYPYQ/), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/elizabeth-tower-london-college-of-fashion-chris-williamson-palace-of-westminster-royal-institute-of-british-architects-b1245894.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/restoration-of-big-bens-elizabeth-tower-shortlisted-for-architecture-award-N5ARIGDCTRJA3HKZ4B7DACYPYQ/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.building.co.uk/news/six-schemes-on-stirling-prize-2025-shortlist-unveiled/5137903.article> - This article announces the six projects shortlisted for the 2025 RIBA Stirling Prize, including the restoration of Elizabeth Tower, housing the Big Ben bell. The restoration employed traditional materials and bespoke craftspeople to rectify previous restoration mistakes and repair damage from the Second World War. A new visitor lift was added to improve accessibility, opening the monument to a broader audience. The other shortlisted projects are Appleby in south-east London, London College of Fashion, Hastings House in East Sussex, Niwa House in South London, and AstraZeneca’s new Discovery Centre in Cambridge.
3. <https://www.ribaj.com/buildings/riba-stirling-prize-2025-shortlist-purcell-elizabeth-tower> - This article provides an in-depth look at the restoration of Elizabeth Tower by Purcell, shortlisted for the 2025 RIBA Stirling Prize. The project involved a comprehensive restoration, including extensive stone repairs, refurbishment of interior rooms, and the addition of a passenger lift. The use of Level 2 Building Information Modelling (BIM) was a significant aspect, aiding in scheduling repairs and providing a detailed model for future renovations. The project was praised for its teamwork and craftsmanship, with the public's appreciation for the building increasing since its reopening.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/elizabeth-tower-london-college-of-fashion-chris-williamson-palace-of-westminster-royal-institute-of-british-architects-b1245894.html> - This article discusses the restoration of Elizabeth Tower, housing Big Ben, which has been shortlisted for the 2025 RIBA Stirling Prize. The restoration rectified previous mistakes and repaired damage from the Second World War. Improvements to accessibility, such as a new visitor lift, have opened up the monument to a broader audience. Other shortlisted projects include Appleby in south-east London, London College of Fashion, Hastings House in East Sussex, Niwa House in South London, and AstraZeneca’s new Discovery Centre in Cambridge.
5. <https://www.ribaj.com/buildings/riba-stirling-prize-2025-shortlist> - This article presents the six projects shortlisted for the 2025 RIBA Stirling Prize, including the restoration of Elizabeth Tower by Purcell. The other shortlisted projects are Appleby Blue Almshouse by Witherford Watson Mann Architects, Hastings House by Hugh Strange Architects, London College of Fashion by Allies and Morrison, Niwa House by Takero Shimazaki Architects, and The Discovery Centre (DISC) by Herzog & de Meuron / BDP. Each project is highlighted for its unique contribution to architecture.
6. <https://purcellarchitecture.com/news/elizabeth-tower-shortlisted-for-riba-london-award/> - This article announces that the restoration of Elizabeth Tower has been shortlisted for a RIBA London Award. The conservation project is described as the most extensive in the tower’s 160-year history, involving comprehensive repairs and undoing previous interventions. The project was made possible by a multidisciplinary team, including project managers, quantity surveyors, structural engineers, and craftspeople skilled in traditional trades such as stone masonry, gilding, glass cutting, and horology.
7. <https://www.wallpaper.com/architecture/riba-stirling-prize-2025-shortlist> - This article introduces the six projects shortlisted for the 2025 RIBA Stirling Prize, including the restoration of Elizabeth Tower by Purcell. The other shortlisted projects are Appleby Blue Almshouse by Witherford Watson Mann Architects, Hastings House by Hugh Strange Architects, London College of Fashion by Allies and Morrison, Niwa House by Takero Shimazaki Architects, and The Discovery Centre (DISC) by Herzog & de Meuron / BDP. The article provides insights into each project and its significance in the field of architecture.