# Appleby Blue Almshouse wins Stirling Prize 2025 for innovative social housing



The Appleby Blue Almshouse in Bermondsey, south London, has been awarded the prestigious Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Stirling Prize 2025, marking it as Britain’s best new building. Designed by Witherford Watson Mann Architects, this housing complex offers 59 affordable flats for people aged over 65, embedded with a strong social mission: to combat loneliness and foster a vibrant sense of community among older residents.

Built on the site of a former care home by United St Saviour's Charity, the Appleby Blue Almshouse reinterprets the traditional concept of almshouses, which historically provided charitable accommodation for those in need. The project stands out for its thoughtful, high-quality design that emphasises human connection through communal spaces such as a community kitchen, a roof garden, and a double-height garden room. These shared areas encourage interaction and reduce social isolation, which is particularly important as loneliness among older adults is a growing concern in urban environments.

The Stirling Prize jury praised the building’s "generous" homes and its terracotta-paved hallways, which are enhanced by benches and planters, contributing to an atmosphere described as a "woodland oasis" thanks to a calming water feature. This naturalistic aesthetic creates an "aspirational living environment" that sharply contrasts with the often institutional feel associated with housing for older people. The building’s design is lauded for setting a new standard in inclusive social housing, combining care for residents’ wellbeing with high architectural ambitions.

The award-winning complex is recognised not only for its aesthetic and functional attributes but also for addressing social issues. Speaking about the project, Ingrid Schroder, director of the Architectural Association School of Architecture and a member of the Stirling Prize jury, noted that the architects had crafted spaces that "truly care for their residents." This reflects a broader architectural movement towards designing environments that promote wellbeing and community, particularly for vulnerable groups such as the elderly.

Appleby Blue stood out among other impressive contenders for the Stirling Prize, which included the Elizabeth Tower (Big Ben) restoration in London, a new fashion college campus, a science laboratory, and a home extension known for its inventive design. Its victory underscores a growing recognition within the architectural community and beyond that socially focused projects can achieve both excellence in design and meaningful impact.

The project also received other notable accolades, including the RIBA London Award and a RIBA National Award in 2025, reinforcing its significance at both a regional and national level. Additionally, the landscaping by Grant Associates integrates ecology and wellbeing, complementing the design’s emphasis on fostering community in a bustling city centre.

Commissioned by United St Saviour's Charity, Appleby Blue is a pioneering example of modern social housing that rejects isolation in favour of communal living, serving as a beacon for future housing developments for older people in urban areas.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4gwlz6k96no?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss), [[2]](https://www.riba.org/news/uk-s-best-new-building-appleby-blue-almshouse-wins-riba-stirling-prize-2025-for-architecture/), [[4]](https://www.ribaj.com/buildings/stirling-prize-2025-winner-appleby-blue-almshouse)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4gwlz6k96no?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss), [[4]](https://www.ribaj.com/buildings/stirling-prize-2025-winner-appleby-blue-almshouse), [[5]](https://www.riba.org/explore/awards/uk-awards/regional-awards/2025/london-awards/appleby-blue-almshouse/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4gwlz6k96no?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss), [[5]](https://www.riba.org/explore/awards/uk-awards/regional-awards/2025/london-awards/appleby-blue-almshouse/), [[7]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/riba-stirling-prize-2025-won-by-radical-social-housing-complex-RZFG7XNBOJMOFLP6GNMAWNUUDM/)
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* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4gwlz6k96no?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss), [[3]](https://www.riba.org/news/duplicate-riba-stirling-prize-2025-shortlist-announced/), [[7]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/riba-stirling-prize-2025-won-by-radical-social-housing-complex-RZFG7XNBOJMOFLP6GNMAWNUUDM/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4gwlz6k96no?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss), [[5]](https://www.riba.org/explore/awards/uk-awards/regional-awards/2025/london-awards/appleby-blue-almshouse/), [[6]](https://grant-associates.uk.com/news/appleby-blue-almshouses-shortlisted-for-2025-stirling-prize)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4gwlz6k96no?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss), [[5]](https://www.riba.org/explore/awards/uk-awards/regional-awards/2025/london-awards/appleby-blue-almshouse/), [[6]](https://grant-associates.uk.com/news/appleby-blue-almshouses-shortlisted-for-2025-stirling-prize)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4gwlz6k96no?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.riba.org/news/uk-s-best-new-building-appleby-blue-almshouse-wins-riba-stirling-prize-2025-for-architecture/> - The Appleby Blue Almshouse, designed by Witherford Watson Mann Architects, has been awarded the RIBA Stirling Prize 2025 for architecture. This social housing complex for over-65s in Bermondsey, London, reimagines the traditional almshouse model to foster community and reduce isolation among residents. The design includes communal areas such as a kitchen and a double-height garden room, setting a new standard for inclusive social housing in later life.
3. <https://www.riba.org/news/duplicate-riba-stirling-prize-2025-shortlist-announced/> - The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) has announced the shortlist for the 2025 Stirling Prize, featuring six projects, including the Appleby Blue Almshouse by Witherford Watson Mann Architects. This project replaces an abandoned care home with a design that places communal spaces at its heart to encourage interaction among residents, aiming to reduce isolation and foster community.
4. <https://www.ribaj.com/buildings/stirling-prize-2025-winner-appleby-blue-almshouse> - Witherford Watson Mann Architects have won the RIBA Stirling Prize 2025 for the Appleby Blue Almshouse, a pioneering social housing scheme in Bermondsey, south London. The design focuses on creating high-quality, thoughtful spaces that foster human connection and community among older residents, setting a new standard for inclusive social housing.
5. <https://www.riba.org/explore/awards/uk-awards/regional-awards/2025/london-awards/appleby-blue-almshouse/> - The Appleby Blue Almshouse, designed by Witherford Watson Mann Architects, has won the RIBA London Award 2025 and a RIBA National Award 2025. Commissioned by United St Saviour’s Charity, the project reinterprets the traditional almshouse model to offer high-quality social housing for older people, aiming to reduce isolation and foster community.
6. <https://grant-associates.uk.com/news/appleby-blue-almshouses-shortlisted-for-2025-stirling-prize> - Appleby Blue Almshouses in Southwark, London, with landscape design by Grant Associates, have been shortlisted for the 2025 RIBA Stirling Prize. The project reimagines the traditional almshouse model, offering affordable, independent homes for older people in the city centre, with a focus on community, wellbeing, and ecology.
7. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/riba-stirling-prize-2025-won-by-radical-social-housing-complex-RZFG7XNBOJMOFLP6GNMAWNUUDM/> - The Appleby Blue Almshouse, designed by Witherford Watson Mann Architects, has won the RIBA Stirling Prize 2025 for its community-centered design. Located in Bermondsey, London, the development reimagines later living as a collective experience, integrating features to help reduce social isolation among older people, such as light-filled hallways with customisable planters and benches, a colourful communal roof terrace, and a double-height public 'garden room'.