

RIBA Stirling Prize shortlist announced: Bookies favour Niall McLaughlin chapel

For first time, half of Stirling Prize shortlisted firms have women directors

AWARDS The AJ can reveal the six contenders shortlisted for this year's RIBA Stirling Prize – the most prestigious accolade in British architecture.

It is the first year in the prize's 18-year history that half of the shortlisted firms have women at the helm: Alison Brooks Architects (ABA), Grafton Architects and Heneghan Peng. ABA-founder Brooks is also the only architect to have been on the list before. The Canadian jointly won the Stirling Prize in 2008 with the ground-breaking Accordia housing development.

This year she has been nominated for her Be:Newhall housing scheme in Harlow, which has already picked up a number of awards, including Supreme Winner at the Housing Design Awards.

Be:Newhall is joined by Grafton's Limerick Medical School, Heneghan Peng's Giant's Causeway visitor centre,

Wetherford Watson Mann's revamp of 12th century Astley Castle and the regeneration of Sheffield's 1960s Park Hill 'streets in the sky' estate by Hawkins\Brown and Studio Egret West.

The shortlist is completed by Niall McLaughlin's 'beautifully crafted' Bishop Edward King Chapel – bookmaker William Hill's favourite at 9/4.

The six were chosen from this year's 52 RIBA Award winners. Among the surprise omissions are Zaha Hadid's Pierresvives scheme in Montpellier, France, and Hackett Hall McKnight's MAC in Belfast.

RIBA president Angela Brady said: 'The Stirling Prize is awarded to the building that has made the biggest contribution to the evolution of architecture, and nowhere is the need for fresh-thinking needed more than in housing. The UK is blighted with unimaginative, poor-quality houses that people

don't want to live in but have little other choice, so I am delighted to see two amazing and highly original housing projects on this year's shortlist. These projects show how, when talented architects and clients work together and focus on quality, affordable and desirable new homes can be created. They shine a light on what the future of UK housing can be.'

The winner of the RIBA Stirling Prize will be announced on the evening of Thursday 26 September at Central Saint Martins, King's Cross, designed by last year's RIBA Stirling Prize winner Stanton Williams.

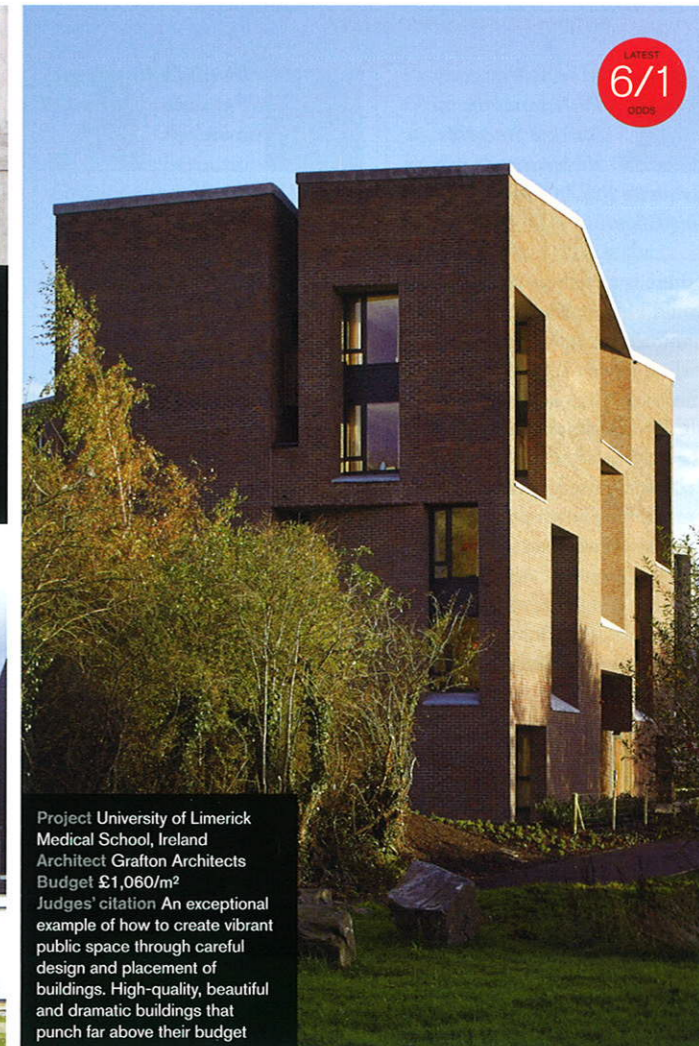
This year's judges are: RIBA President Elect Stephen Hodder; Sheila O'Donnell of O'Donnell + Tuomey; Paul Williams of Stanton Williams; philanthropist and chair of the Clore Duffield Foundation, Vivien Duffield; journalist and broadcaster Tom Dyckhoff. *Richard Waite*



9/1
Project Park Hill Phase 1, Sheffield
Architect Hawkins\Brown with Studio Egret West
Budget £36.5 million
Judges' citation The reinvention of the 'loved or loathed' Grade II-listed '60s estate, stands as a beacon for imaginative regeneration, quality mass housing and the bold reuse of a listed building



3/1
Project Be:Newhall, Harlow
Architect Alison Brooks Architects
Budget £12 million
Judges' citation The radical re-thinking of the shape and interior of the UK house is tackled masterfully with these 84 new homes. The scheme illustrates that good design and committed developers can transform lives



6/1
Project University of Limerick Medical School, Ireland
Architect Grafton Architects
Budget £1,060/m²
Judges' citation An exceptional example of how to create vibrant public space through careful design and placement of buildings. High-quality, beautiful and dramatic buildings that punch far above their budget



6/1
Project Astley Castle, Warwickshire
Architect Wetherford Watson Mann Architects
Budget £1.35 million
Judges' citation A beautiful contemporary Landmark Trust holiday home installed in the ruined walls of a 12th-century manor. It is a prototype for a new attitude to restoration and reuse



9/4
Project Bishop Edward King Chapel, Oxfordshire
Architect Niall McLaughlin Architects
Budget £2.03 million
Judges' citation An uplifting spiritual space of great potency, described by the client as 'what we dreamed of, but didn't think we would get'. An incredible showcase for British craftsmanship



3/1
Project Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre, Northern Ireland
Architect Heneghan Peng
Budget £18.5 million
Judges' citation Breaks the mould of the traditional visitor centre. This highly imaginative and sculptural piece of 'land art' offers visitors an experience that is physical and interactive, like the causeway itself

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DANIEL HOPKINSON

PAUL RIDDLE

HELENE BINET

DENNISILBERT


COMMENT ON THE STIRLING SHORTLIST

 Murray Fraser, Professor at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL
Favourite Bishop Edward King Chapel

If there is anywhere where corks should be popping at the announcement of this year's Stirling Prize shortlist, it is University College Dublin (UCD). It's an architectural school I know and admire, and it was the training ground for three of the shortlisted practices – Shelley McNamara and Yvonne Farrell of Grafton Architects, Niall McLaughlin, and Roisin Heneghan. And this is after UCD graduates and tutors Sheila O'Donnell and John Tuomey were Stirling-shortlisted in the previous two years, and could be yet again for their forthcoming LSE student building.

Why might this be? There is certainly a tradition of serious thought at UCD about the craft of planning and constructing, which perhaps has better weathered the recession by being able to deliver real quality with even relatively little material. It is remarkable that all this year's shortlisted buildings, including those without Irish connections, are such austere projects, possessing less architectural flash, but also greater internal consistency of detailing than in other years. Notably, two projects are architectural conservation.

Who should now win? I may be biased, since he is a good friend and part-time colleague at the Bartlett, but Niall McLaughlin's chapel (*pictured*) in Oxfordshire is the scheme which looks memorably magical, lifting it that little bit higher over others. It is a Tempio for our times.


 Joseph Rykwert, critic
Favourite 'They are all winners'

A great list this time – thoughtful, inclusive and various. Two of the six are Irish, and that is a tribute to their position on the British scene; two other projects are not for new buildings, but rehabilitations of existing ones – a ruined Elizabethan manor is the occasion for a brave and very sensitive operation; another is a privatised giant (and famous) post-war public housing scheme in Sheffield. Those two listings are a necessary tribute as well as a prod to both public and professional attention, reminding us of the importance renovating the existing building stock must play in the future – something that the developers of the Sheffield flats have pioneered.

Another exemplary housing project be: Newhall, backed by another developer, comes as no surprise among Stirling nominations, but is most welcome as distinguishing not only the architect – the only independent women's office among those selected – but also the architecturally enterprising patron. And finally, a rarity among such projects, a new chapel to serve a semi-monastic community resettled by a venerable theological college. It takes the form of an oval cylinder, stone-faced and timber-framed and clerestory-lit; the formal invention witnesses to the collaboration of architect and patron.

Though it's an apple and orange situation (and I have my favourites, of course), I feel sure that whoever wins this year, any one of the six deserves the prize.



 Edwin Heathcote, architecture critic at the Financial Times
Favourite Bishop Edward King Chapel

This has to be the lowest profile Stirling Prize shortlist for a decade. No blockbusters, no museums and not a single London building. It's not bad though, the list mostly contains serious buildings by thoughtful architects, and there is a coolly refreshing lack of Hadid, Foster and Rogers.

It is extremely encouraging to see two re-use schemes (surely the future of architecture), Park Hill and Astley Castle, both of which have an almost medieval mass, albeit in radically different contexts. If there is a surprise it is a kind of mid-century revivalism. You can't help seeing Louis Kahn in Grafton Architects' project, Eero Saarinen in Bishop Edward King Chapel or a mid-century, cheery revivification of Park Hill's original grey Brutalism.

There are some surprises. Hackett Hall McKnight's MAC in Belfast isn't here, although it was perhaps the most impressive building on the longlist and, despite myriad schools on this list, none have come through. Sometimes we find that a recession is good for the quality of architecture, filtering out the unnecessary headlines and pointless, over-engineered high-tech silly structures the Brits can't seem to grow out of. But wouldn't it have been good to see new social housing, public space and the rest? It all seems a bit disconnected; moments of quality, which I guess we should be grateful for. But remember, they are only moments.

 Cathy Slessor, editor of The Architectural Review
Favourite Bishop Edward King Chapel

No icons, no starchitects and no London projects. This year's Stirling Prize shortlist is a paean to modest ambitions and unsung architects, but it also has a strong Irish inflection. Yet, as with all Stirling Prize shortlists, it is like trying to judge a volume of poetry against a cookery book, as former AJ editor Isabel Allen once remarked.

The bookies' favourite is Niall McLaughlin's exquisite jewel box chapel in Oxfordshire, the most obviously and self-consciously poetic project of the group, but Witherford Watson Mann Architects' remodelling of Astley Castle is also a delicate and elegant piece of surgery.

Compare these with the recasting of Park Hill by Hawkins\Brown and Studio Egret West, which reboots a Brutalist classic for the 21st century, and Alison Brooks' be:Newhall, which celebrates the beauty of the ordinary and proves that housing can escape from the shackles of banality and pastiche. You get the point. Equally, how do you fathom a solid, sober medical school by Grafton Architects, stars of the Venice Biennale, against Heneghan Peng's riotously topographical Visitors' Centre for the Giants Causeway, which might have been the clear home banker had the RIBA stuck to their original plan of staging the ceremony in Derry/Londonderry. So that leaves the most open field for years. The 'could win' is Hawkins\Brown and Studio Egret West; and the 'should win' is Niall McLaughlin.

THE LUBETKIN PRIZE

Projects by Zaha Hadid, Grimshaw and Wilkinson Eyre are vying for the 2013 Lubetkin Prize – the award for the best international building outside the EU by a RIBA member.

Wilkinson Eyre has the chance to scoop the award, which has run since 2006, for the second year in a row. Having bagged the 2012 gong for its Guangzhou International Finance Centre in China, the practice's Cooled Conservatories Gardens by the Bay in Singapore is one of just three projects on the shortlist.

The scheme is up against Zaha Hadid Architects' Galaxy Soho – a 330,000m² retail and entertainment complex in Beijing and the £62 million Via Verde affordable housing development in the Bronx, New York designed by 2007 Lubetkin Prize winner Grimshaw.

The winner will be announced on 26 September 2013 as part of the RIBA Stirling Prize ceremony at Central Saint Martins, in London.



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CRAIG SHEPPARD



DAVID SUNDBERG