

Homes for a better future

This year's competition will celebrate the best in housing. Is yours up to scratch, asks *Martina Lees*



Design treasure: the Nash crescents of Regent's Park
ALAMY

Can you design a house that would still be cherished in 250 years? Too many new-builds are bland boxes or recycled pastiche. With housebuilding at a 10-year high, it's all the more important to find a new prototype for the terrace — the most prevalent, and most popular, type of house in Britain.

That's why, in this year's Sunday Times British Homes

Awards, we're challenging architects to reinvent the terrace so it's fit for our time. The style could borrow from the past or be uncompromisingly of the present, but it must have the qualities that make us treasure the Georgian squares of Edinburgh and Bath, the Nash crescents of Regent's Park and the Victori-

an streets near so many town

centres. Its exterior should be carefully detailed, with a strong sense of place — not just to win over any Nimby neighbours today, but to leave a visual legacy that our children's children will love, no matter how the way we live may change.

It should not only be a home we'd like to look at, but one

we'd like to live in, as we aspire to a mix of light-filled open-plan spaces and sanctuaries to retreat to. A home that can grow with us through every life stage, as more of us work from home or juggle children and grandparents under one roof. And a home that can be built at the reasonable costs and higher densities we need to end our housing crisis.

Why are we focusing on the terrace? Nearly a third of homes in England and Wales are terraced. They are flexible — we can knock through, extend, convert and dig down, adding value and adapting them to our lifestyles.

These streets of homes that share their side walls offer a happy medium between the benefits of low-density suburbia — with more private space in your home and garden — and high-density housing that makes better use of land, allowing you to walk everywhere and get to know your neighbours.

In our design competition, judges will shortlist five concepts of a "terrace for our time" before we ask readers to vote for their favourite in Au-

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gust. The winner will be announced in September at an awards ceremony in London.

The government pledged £44bn in the budget to boost the construction of homes, so we need to champion good design. The stakes could hardly be higher. That's why we have made this year's awards bigger and better, with a new logo to match. In addition to the concept design competition, there are 22 prizes for homes that have been built in the past year — from individual extensions to landmark developments, from small makeovers to placemaking on a grand scale. Shortlisted entries will be considered for the prestigious Manser Medal — named after Michael Manser, the late modernist architect.

A new award for housing crisis solution of the year will go

to a design that is truly affordable for those on lower incomes, including microhomes, rental innovations and social housing. New, too, is an award for small but sensitive schemes that respond well to their context, whether urban or rural.

In partnership with the British Institute of Interior Design, we have added three prizes to recognise interior design in private homes and developments. With Cedia, the home technology trade body, we have introduced a smart home award for Britain's best residential technology installation. Another specialist category recognises garden design and landscaping.

The Sunday Times British Homes Awards are the only housing honours that span every aspect of one-off homes and developments. They celebrate the exceptional in all things home.

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