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Grand Designs special: the first two homes in the running to win RIBA House of the Year revealed

LIZZIE RIVERA | Tuesday 7 November 2017 19:33 GMT |



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An “Oast House on steroids” in Kent and an “upside-down” house in Northumberland have been short-listed for the prestigious [House of the Year 2017](#) award.

The first two houses to make the shortlist were revealed in tonight’s episode of the new Grand Designs Channel 4 series presented by Kevin McCloud that follows the Royal Institute of British Architects’ competition.

Kent’s **Caring Wood** is a collection of four houses set in an 84-acre estate and built for three generations of the same family.

The modern vision of the 'English country house' is so big the family use walkie-talkies to find each other. The jury were impressed with the purpose-built gallery space for art plus a large space for music performances, but a building which 'nevertheless feels like a home'.



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They also admired the attention to detail, and that despite its size it provides a carbon-neutral response to climate change.

The second building to make it onto the shortlist is **Shawm House**, Northumberland's "upside-down" home.

The bedrooms are on the ground-floor and the living rooms upstairs, which is a nod to the Battle Houses of [Northumberland's](#) past. But this arrangement also provides stunning views.

The house was a self-build, built by a son for his ageing parents and the judges say that the careful design means 'Shawm House will be a perfect home for Richard's parents and is indeed one of Northumberland's finest homes.'

The judges also selected it for its 'truly sustainable, low energy and low impact proposition'.

The two finalists were revealed during an episode featuring five of the homes on the award's longlist, which was revealed in June.

Hill House, a modernist house in Bath, is a bungalow built by an architect couple as their family home. The project was 10-years in the making and consists of two off-set blocks.

One is home to the master bedroom and an open-plan living room/kitchen/diner that opens up onto the garden. The other largely belongs to the architects' two teenage daughters, who have their own living room at the other end of the house.

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The understated Modernist home is unique in a city renowned for its historic and Grade-II listed buildings while being sympathetic to its heritage - and this is one of the qualities admired by the [RIBA](#) judges.

A renovated shepherds hut in the Scottish Highlands, with a similar two-block design, was also featured in the show as part of the long-list.

The owners bought run-down **Fernaig Cottage** and visited once a month for two years before committing to their plan which including renovating the existing hut and building another adjoining one, cleverly using the stones of the lean-to they knocked down.

The next house, **No.49**, on a south [London](#) street of terraced houses is another built of separate blocks. Victorian houses are typically long and narrow - this one brilliantly flips that idea on its side.

It also plays with the traditional idea of rooms - the house is a series of fluid spaces that progressively lead from one area to another.

The houses that have been long-listed to win couldn't be more different, but what they do have in common is "conviction and originality", says McCloud.

Over four episodes, seven shortlisted homes will gradually be revealed as finalists, before the winner is announced on Tuesday 28 November.

RIBA House of the Year, Channel 4, Tuesdays 9pm ■

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