

# The Shard

**A must-see in London** > The Shard is definitely one of the most iconic buildings on the London skyline, towering over the city like a glass pyramid. Located at the southern end of London Bridge, the Shard was completed in 2012 reaching a final height of nearly 310 metres, which made it the tallest building in the UK.

**Early conception of The Shard** > The Shard was designed by the Italian architect Renzo Piano. The story goes that he drew an off-the-cuff sketch of the building on a restaurant napkin during a lunch meeting in Berlin with British entrepreneur Irvine Sellar who wanted to redevelop the area he had bought in Southwark. It was the year 2000 and London was preparing to host the 2012 Olympic Games.



**Inspirational sources** > Renzo Piano's design drew inspiration from the architecture already existing near the site where the massive building would be erected: the nearby railway lines, the masts of sailing ships on the river Thames, and the spires of London churches, as painted by 18<sup>th</sup>-century Venetian artist Canaletto.

**The origin of its nickname** > The Shard actually resembles a giant mast or spire, but its name derives from a negative remark from English Heritage, who said that the building would be "a shard of glass through the heart of historic London". They particularly criticised its height, which would overshadow the monumentality of St Paul's Cathedral.

**A vertical city** > The Shard dominates London's skyline: a pyramid of glass, with 73 floors and a spectacular 360-degree conceived view of the city. It is a building with multiple uses: a vertical space where people can live, work, and have fun. It includes business offices, prestigious restaurants and cocktail bars, the 5-star Shangri-La Hotel, an open-air Skydeck on the 72<sup>nd</sup> floor, and exclusive flats. The construction started in March 2009 and was completed on July 5, 2012.

**A sustainable building** > The Shard was conceived as a sustainable building: 95% of its construction materials come from recycled sources including steel. The 11,000 glass panels of its façade help reduce heat loss and maximise natural light. Besides this, to meet heating and hot water needs, a natural gas generator was installed in the basement. The Shard also includes sound insulation to reduce noise pollution and rainwater harvesting systems to meet water demand and reduce dependence on external supplies.

## glossary

**English Heritage:** a charity looking after historical sites and monuments in the UK  
**in the pipeline:** in cantiere  
**mast:** albero maestro

**off-the-cuff:** improvvisato  
**to overshadow:** offuscare, sminuire  
**napkin:** tovagliolo  
**remark:** commento  
**sketch:** schizzo  
**spire:** guglia, pinnacolo

## Romeo and The Shard

This amazing building has a mascot, Romeo, a fox which was found living on the 72<sup>nd</sup> floor in 2011.



**1 READING WRITING** Say if the sentences are true or false and correct the false ones.

- |   | T                        | F                        |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Renzo Piano drew the first sketch of The Shard on a restaurant menu.          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Construction works started during the 2012 London Olympics.                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 English Heritage did not approve the project.                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 The nickname 'The Shard' was chosen to celebrate its unique design.           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 At the top of the building there's a panoramic platform.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 Most of the materials used for building the Shard come from recycled sources. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**2 READING VOCABULARY** Complete the text with one word that fits the gaps.

### Manhattan-on-the-Thames

A skyscraper called One Undershaft

1. .... approved by the City of London Corporation on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2024. The building is 2. .... to match The Shard and share its title as the 3. .... building in the City of London. The building, in fact, will reach the same 4. .... (1,015.8 feet, i.e 309.6 m) of Renzo Piano's iconic structure and will be located 5. .... the Gherkin and the Cheesegrater, following the demolition of the current Aviva Tower. It 6. .... have 74 floors, a public garden on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor, and an educational centre for the London Museum. Despite the City of London Corporation's approval, however, the project is meeting 7. .... some objections concerning design and 8. .... visual impact on the Square Mile (i.e. the historic centre of London). Not only, Heathrow Airport raised concerns 9. .... security, as their radar systems could be impacted by the building and prevent aircraft from being detected. With nearly 600 skyscrapers in the pipeline • for the UK's capital, the city is already 10. .... referred to as 'Manhattan-on-the-Thames'.

Adapted from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cp9n19ekx1go>

**3 SPEAKING WRITING PAIRWORK** Go online, find information about an iconic skyscraper in the USA, and present it to your class.