A guided walk

And now we come to one of our most iconic landmarks: the town hall. It was built in the neo-Gothic style so popular in 19th-century England. As you can see, it uses features from late medieval architecture, such as pointed arches supported by long, thin pillars and tall, narrow stained-glass windows. The clock tower looks a little like Big Ben, but its design is much more elaborate. It is 85 metres high and is flanked by four little turrets. Notice the statues along the facade: they represent important figures from our city’s history.

No fewer than 14 million bricks were required to build the walls. The building has six storeys, two grand staircases and three spiral staircases. When we go inside, you’ll notice the rib-vault ceiling in the entrance hall, reminiscent of Gothic cathedral architecture. Be sure to admire the beautiful mosaic floors, decorated with flowers, birds and bees, and the Pre-Raphaelite murals, depicting scenes from the Arthurian legends.

The town hall is a listed building. Some of the plasterwork is beginning to crumble away and a number of roof tiles need replacing, so it will be closed next year for refurbishment.
PRACTICE

Now, try the following exercises to practise talking about buildings and architecture.

Exercise 1

Complete the phrases below with a suitable adjective from the list.

iconic | pitched | pointed | rib-vault | spiral | stained-glass

A. a(n) staircase
B. a(n) landmark
C. a(n) roof
D. a(n) arch
E. a(n) window
F. a(n) ceiling

Exercise 2

Odd one out: Cross out one word in each line that does not match the others.

A. brick | concrete | gable | steel
B. ceiling | facade | floor | staircase
C. balcony | bay window | dormer | skylight
D. building | buttress | dome | pillar

Exercise 3

Complete the definitions with adjectives and verbs from the opposite page. The first letters are given.

A. If something is r of a particular style, it reminds you of that style.
B. If a building is l, it is of historical interest and therefore protected.
C. If a design is e, it has a lot of details that all fit together.
D. If something is d, it is shown in a picture.
E. If a structure is f by something, it has something on both sides of it.
F. If something is beginning to c away, parts of it are starting to break off.

The levels of a building

Note the different terms in British and American English:

- What British English speakers refer to as the *ground floor* is usually called the *first floor* in American English, whereas the *first floor* in Britain is the *second floor* in the US.
- To refer to the levels of a building, the word *storey* (plural: *storeys*) is often used instead of “floor”. The US spelling is *story* (plural: *stories*).

Answers

1. A. gable | B. other three are | C. pointed arch | D. stained-glass window
2. A. one is | B. the other three are | C. balcony | D. Types (three windows, door, two arches, two columns, one architectural feature)
3. A. unspoilt | B. other three | C. elaborately decorated | D. depicted on façade