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The year we're meant to feel richer – but hiring tells another story / Chloë McCulloch

Keir Starmer's new year message promised that 2026 is the year we'll start to feel richer. He acknowledged our frustrations and expressed confidence that the country's decline will be reversed. But before anyone gets too excited, he reminded us with his trademark pained expression that "renewal is not an overnight job".

Optimism alone won't fix the structural issues holding back growth and jobs. If you struggled to find inspiration or vision in the prime minister's statements, you were not alone.

Aecom's market forecast highlights economic uncertainty and market shifts, despite construction's resilience relative to other sectors over the past 12 months. Still, there are glimmers of hope: the Office for Budget Responsibility predicts 1.4% economic growth in 2026, and the Budget reaffirmed capital investment pledges – though the agonisingly long run-up to it slowed momentum.

Less encouraging is the jobs market snapshot. Hiring activity fell sharply at the end of 2025, with December seeing the steepest drop in permanent hires since August. Redundancies and fewer opportunities are swelling candidate availability, according to KPMG and the Recruitment and Employment Confederation. Temporary roles are faring slightly better, as short-term contracts allow firms to take on less risk.

Employers cite rising costs and weak confidence as reasons for holding back on recruitment – or even cutting staff. Arup, for example, spent £20m on redundancies worldwide last year. Logistics, defence and engineering are bucking the trend, with the Midlands a bright spot.

Sector data paints a mixed picture: permanent construction roles saw a sharper fall in demand than engineering, which recorded the softest decline. Temporary vacancies in both sectors also dropped in December. Meanwhile, skills shortages persist in some areas, driving up salaries for roles such as quantity surveyors and mechanical and electrical engineers – though increases are below the long-term average. Temporary wages rose marginally.

So, what's next? Analysts expect these trends to continue in the near term, with CEOs waiting for signs of broader recovery before reopening the hiring taps. Even if the economy ticks up, employers remain uneasy about the Employment Rights Act, which received royal assent last month. While a compromise was reached on a six-month qualifying period for unfair dismissal, concerns linger over guaranteed-hours contracts and rules for temporary workers – changes that could reshape hiring decisions.

Many fear stricter rules on temporary working arrangements will backfire, hurting workers as much as employers. The hope is that as the details are worked out through the secondary legislation phase, more compromise can be reached.

> "Even if the economy ticks up, employers remain uneasy about the Employment Rights Act, which received royal assent last month

If Starmer wants 2026 to feel richer, easing hiring fears with a pragmatic approach to the Employment Rights Act is vital.

Tempsford is a warning

Tempsford, a one-road Bedfordshire village framed by fields, has become the unlikely test case for the government's promise to supercharge housebuilding (see page 16). In theory, everything's aligned: the A1 and East Coast Main Line run north–south, new east–west routes are in play, and the prospect of a station for East West Rail that could anchor a truly sustainable settlement. In practice, the story so far is fragmented, opaque and slow.

Let's start with the ambition. Tempsford has been flagged by the New Towns Task Force as a "unique opportunity" with potential for 40,000 homes. Urban & Civic holds options on significant land, suggesting assembly could be straightforward. There are even those, such as the authors of the UK Day One report, who believe there is the potential for a far more ambitious plan and recommend a city of 350,000 people on the site.

On paper, it's a dream site: connectivity, scale and the chance to do planning "infrastructure first". In reality, nothing's definite; the government has not formally selected Tempsford, leaving locals and industry in limbo.

Governance and process are already sapping momentum. Officials say they must complete a programme-wide strategic environmental assessment before anything can move decisively, and that they're busy modelling economics, funding and delivery vehicles ahead of consultation and selections "in spring".

Those steps are legally prudent – no one wants judicial review – but they are also time-consuming. When timelines and responsibilities are vague, projects stall. Multiply that scenario across a dozen prospective new towns and you begin to see how the whole endeavour could become hostage to process.

Another risk for Tempsford is it becomes a commuter dormitory. To avoid that fate planners must intentionally wire it into high-value employment – with land, transport and skills policy aligned. If the government can't demonstrate that model here, in one of its "promising" sites, why should anyone believe it can scale into a new towns programme with the momentum to survive beyond this parliament?

Chloë McCulloch is the editor of Building

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New unit handling most cases as BSR races to clear backlog

By Dave Rogers

The Building Safety Regulator's innovation unit is now handling the majority of its live new-build cases, as it moves closer to clearing its legacy cases. The latest figures, which cover the 12-week period to 22 December 2025, show that 102 of the regulator's 171 live cases for new-build were being handled by the unit established in the summer to replace the failing multidisciplinary team system.

That amounts to just under 60% and is an increase on the previous figures, reported on 24 November. At that point, 73 of 167 cases (44%) were under the unit's supervision.

The new procedure was brought in by BSR chair Andy Roe – who was given a life peerage last month – to help speed up decision-making at the regulator. Roe told the Building the Future Conference last autumn that the regulator aims to phase out the legacy model by the end of this month.

The BSR said there had been a "strong focus on closing out legacy cases" during the period, resulting in the number of such cases falling to 40, with a further 29 "legacy transitional cases". As a result, the number of live applications across all categories fell from 1,219 to 1,158 over the 12 weeks. However, with all new cases for new-build higher-risk buildings flowing into the innovation unit, its caseload has been rising, augmented by new applications.

Andy Roe addressing the Building the Future Conference in October

A total of 101 new applications came into the unit over the 12-week period, and this increasing rate is set to continue. However, the BSR anticipates it will "stabilise somewhere between 120 and 180 once in steady state".

It added: "As part of our work to drive up approval rates for safe applications, cases which are over 12 weeks – but are considered to have the potential to achieve an approval with further information – are now held by account managers who liaise closely with the applicant."

The regulator expects the overall number of determinations in the final quarter of the year to be 250% higher than in the first quarter.

The news comes after a damning House of Lords inquiry into the BSR regime which recommended streamlining the approvals process, hiring more inspectors and cutting out red tape. The industry and regulators committee found that "many applications are being rejected or delayed due to basic errors and applicants' inability to evidence how they are considering elements of fire and structural safety, which reflects poorly on the construction industry".

The committee added: "The BSR has not given clear enough guidance on how applicants are supposed to demonstrate that their buildings are safe," while it warned: "Difficulties in local authority funding and the introduction of regulation have left an ageing workforce of building inspectors who are struggling to meet demand."

It said that limited resources were not being used properly: "Despite these skills shortages, smaller works such as bathroom renovations in high-rise buildings are being subject to the scrutiny of the BSR's hard-pressed multidisciplinary teams."

The process for signing off safety approval could be improved by "removing smaller works from the BSR's building control approval processes". The committee recommended that "the BSR allocate the same multidisciplinary teams to similar buildings or projects built by the same organisation, which could improve efficiency and consistency".

But several contractors have begun to notice an improvement in the approvals process. Adam Quinn, chief executive of high-rise specialist HG Construction, said the BSR was upping its game.

"For us, 2025 was a year of two halves. In the early part of the year,

Continued on page 8

Ex-Davis Langdon partner Erland Rendall dies aged 54

By Dave Rogers

Former Davis Langdon partner Erland Rendall has died. He was 54. It is understood that he passed away on New Year's Day while out cycling.

Former colleague Iain Parker, who left Davis Langdon after it was bought by Aecom to help set up Alinea, said: "Erland was a dear friend and someone I put a lot of trust in. He always wanted to help others, a very selfless person.

"He was passionate about innovation and trying to find ways to move the industry forward, whether that was on a corporate level or mentoring an individual. He had an infectious sense of humour and the day always seemed to be more fun when he was around. He will be missed by many."

Former Davis Langdon senior partner Paul Morrell added: "He was a good soul. He was the first person I knew, or the first one I noticed, who was happy working on computer drawings without printing them out, leading me to think, 'Hello, the Game Boy generation has arrived at work'."

Erland Rendall joined Davis Langdon in 1995 and helped to set up the business in Abu Dhabi

Rendall joined Davis Langdon in 1995 as a project surveyor, later becoming a partner. He helped to set up the firm's business in Abu Dhabi, where he worked on the Cleveland Clinic hospital scheme. Other jobs that he worked on during his time at Davis Langdon included the McLaren headquarters development in Woking.

After Davis Langdon was bought by Aecom, Rendall was made head of global thought leadership at the enlarged business, before leaving in 2012 to set up Atorus Consult.

He is survived by his wife Jackie and three children Rachel, Jonathan and Molly.

WILDE FRY

Finlay takes on new role as Kier shuffles top team

By Dave Rogers

Kier's chief people officer Louisa Finlay is to take on a newly created role of chief operating officer at the group. Finlay, who has spent more than 35 years at Kier, took on her current position three years ago.

She said: "I am thrilled to share that I am taking on a newly created role on our executive committee, chief operating officer at Kier Group. With responsibility for operational excellence, health, safety and wellbeing, sustainability, our corporate real estate and digital, data and IT, I am looking forward to heading up our drive to become a naturally digital business and to bringing together my time on site with the functional roles."

In a post on LinkedIn, Finlay added that she would be carrying on with her current duties "for a while longer, and then will be passing the baton over".

Finlay replaced Helen Redfern as chief people officer in March 2023, having been Kier's client and markets managing director. Prior to this, she was boss of Kier's Southern construction business. She joined the business in 1988 as a trainee site engineer.

Meanwhile, the firm has announced other changes at the top, with James Askew made group commercial director. He had been serving as interim group managing director of construction after previous incumbent Stuart Togwell was promoted to group chief executive following Andrew Davies' decision to retire last October.

Askew arrived at Kier in 2022 after spending more than 25 years at Wates. He was brought to Kier by Togwell, who was then commercial director.

New chief operating officer Louisa Finlay joined Kier as a trainee site engineer in 1988

Abi Cooke, previously head of strategy for Kier Places, has been made chief of staff to Togwell. Other new arrivals include Martin Staehr, who is joining from Laing O'Rourke to head up the firm's construction business. Tom Hinton has been appointed to replace Simon Kesteron as chief financial officer and started work at the beginning of the month.

Meanwhile, Kier has formed a new infrastructure division, which will merge its transportation and natural resources, nuclear and networks divisions into one business. It will be led by Joe Incutti, previously group managing director for Kier Transportation.

Togwell said: "Bringing together our transportation and natural resources, nuclear and networks is a next step for us and creates a clear market-facing infrastructure powerhouse that combines the expertise across these two divisions and strengthens our ability to serve our customers."

In a trading update two months ago, Kier said that its order book since 1 July last year now stood at £11.6bn, thanks to infrastructure wins along with new schools and prisons work, while its property arm had secured planning for a logistics scheme at Andover in Hampshire called Logistics City. The firm said that 94% of its revenue for the current trading year had already been secured.

The company is due to release an update next week ahead of the publication of its interim results for the six months to December on 3 March.

BSR aims to clear approvals backlog

Continued on page 8

the sector as a whole struggled with the requirements and depth of the submissions. Thankfully, we achieved our first gateway 2 approval in May, a significant milestone which signalled a turning point for our business."

He added: "We have welcomed the willingness of the regulator to engage in an open and collaborative process, with a dedicated point of contact providing ongoing communication and feedback. I am confident that 2026 will see many more gateway 2 submissions gaining approval within much shorter time frames."

Meanwhile, the government has announced plans to establish a single construction regulator and launched a consultation to seek industry feedback. Proposals to bring together oversight of buildings, materials and professionals from across the built environment were one of the key recommendations of the Grenfell Inquiry's final report.

The plan, unveiled just before Christmas, aims to reduce fragmentation and unnecessary complexity in the way the construction of buildings is regulated in order to improve public safety. It will include strengthened regulation of professions across the built environment which will be set out in a long-term strategy in spring 2027, following a call for evidence starting this spring.

The reforms will aim to simplify the current patchwork of professional regulation with a central oversight function based on a "clear and coherent set of standards, expectations and outcomes," said the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Standardising professional regulation
Readers' views, page 27

Major progress on longest tunnel

Construction of HS2's longest green tunnel took a major step forward last month with the realignment of a key local road, freeing up space for the next phase of excavations. Set to stretch for 2.7km, the tunnel is being built inside a cutting near Greatworth, west Northamptonshire, using a cut-and-cover technique, with the earth put back on top afterwards. This helps to blend the railway into the landscape.

Engineers have assembled the first kilometre of the structure, and the realignment of the B4525 will allow work to begin on the next phase. Assembled from precast concrete segments, the tunnel is in an M-shape, with separate halves for northbound and southbound trains. The approach promised to be quick to assemble, with much of the work done offsite.

The nearby Chipping Warden green tunnel uses a similar design, and the teams at the two tunnels have been learning lessons from each other. As a result, they are now installing around five to six segments per day – more than double the initial rate at Chipping Warden.

HS2 Ltd's project manager, Sam Arrowsmith, said: "This major milestone means that we can keep the local traffic moving while we deliver the next stage of the Greatworth green tunnel."

HS2 cuts 300 roles as Wild resets business

By Daniel Gayne

Around 300 permanent corporate roles were cut at HS2 Ltd last year as the firm switched to a slimmed-down and "less bureaucratic" model. According to an end-of-year update put out by the company responsible for delivering the high-speed line, more than 150 staff were redeployed or appointed to frontline civil delivery roles.

HS2 LTD

All 23 miles of deep-bore tunnels on the scheme have now been excavated between Old Oak Common and Birmingham Curzon Street, and 70% of the earthworks programme has been delivered.

Former Crossrail boss Mark Wild took over as chief executive of HS2 Ltd just over a year ago. The company has since reformed its cost controls, established a new construction schedule and changed its leadership team.

A new chair, Mike Brown, joined the board alongside six new non-executive directors. Meanwhile, Ruth Dunphy joined as chief transformation officer and Morag Stuart joined as chief commercial officer.

"I made a commitment to the transport secretary that I would address the failures of the past and get HS2 on track. It is clear we can only do so with a fundamental reset," Wild said. "Over the last year we have been through the programme with a fine-tooth comb and are now very close to establishing a clear path forward."

Having advised that the target of opening the railway between 2029 and 2033 could not be achieved, Wild is now finalising a new range of cost and schedule estimates.

NEWS IN BRIEF

New year's honours

Mace executive chair Mark Reynolds was among the construction and built environment figures to be recognised in the King's new year's honours list. Reynolds, who is also co-chair of the CLC, was awarded a CBE while Andrew McNaughton, executive director for infrastructure projects at AWE and a former adviser on HS2, received a CBE. Landscape architect Kim Wilkie was also given a CBE.

Multiplex signs up for 75 London Wall revamp

Multiplex has signed up for a scheme to redevelop 75 London Wall in the City. The building was the former home of Deutsche Bank, which moved out in 2024 to premises at 21 Moorfields. Multiplex won the job under a PCSA in spring 2024, with Erith carrying out demolition and enabling works last year. The £250m scheme is being developed by Castleforge in a joint venture with Malaysian company Gamuda Group.

AtkinsRéalis brings in new cost management lead

AtkinsRéalis has appointed Gemma Prior as its head of cost management for London and the South-east. Prior, who started last week, had been fulfilling the same role at Scottish consultant Thomas & Adamson since February last year.

British Land CEO to join logistics developer

Chief executive Simon Carter is leaving British Land to join logistics developer P3 Logistics Parks. Carter first joined the developer in 2004. He left in 2015, then returned as CEO five years later. British Land, which is behind Sir Robert McAlpine's tower at 2 Finsbury Avenue, is searching for his replacement.

Reds10 revenue up 2%

Turnover at modular specialist Reds10 edged up last year, its latest accounts have revealed. Revenue was up 2% to £145m in the year to March 2025 with pre-tax profit staying flat at £7m. The firm expects income this year to be around £160m.

New RICS president officially in place

Nick Maclean has officially stepped into his role as president of the RICS. Maclean became acting president of the surveyors' body last March when Justin Sullivan stepped aside following his involvement in a legal battle over the sale of a moth-infested mansion in Notting Hill.

Losses grow at Permasteelisa

Problem jobs meant that losses at the UK business of Italian cladding firm Permasteelisa widened last year. The contractor said pre-tax losses jumped from £6.8m to £10.3m in the year to March 2025. Turnover from the UK was up a quarter to £182m. The loss meant the firm stayed in the red for a third successive year, having racked up an £11.2m loss in 2023.

G&T partner to step down

Gardiner & Theobald has confirmed that equity partner Alex Davey is to leave. Davey, who joined from Aecom in 2013, will retire at the end of March "following a planned transition".

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Unite faces £10m bill over 'unviable' student scheme

By Dave Rogers

Student homes specialist Unite has said it will have to write off £10m in planning costs after pulling the plug on proposals for a 20-storey tower in London, which finally got approval last month more than three years after being first refused.

Make Architects' plans for the scheme in Paddington were given the green light by London's deputy mayor, Jules Pipe, last month after twice being refused by Westminster council. The 605-bedroom proposal for Unite Students and Travis Perkins was thrown out by councillors last January due to its height, scale and impact on nearby residents. This followed a refusal for a 768-home version of the job in 2022, which had itself been scaled back from the original 22-storey plan containing 843 homes.

The Paddington scheme finally received planning permission last month

In a trading update last week, Unite said that the scheme was no longer "financially viable based on our target return requirements and an extended delivery programme. We expect to recognise a c£10m exceptional write-off of planning costs in FY2025."

It said securing planning approval had "fulfilled our contractual commitment to the landowner".

The site is located behind Paddington Station beside Fletcher Priest's Brunel Building, which was built by Laing O'Rourke. The project team includes Gerald Eve on planning, Arup on transport, GIA on daylight, Tavernor Consultancy on heritage, Waterman on MEP, Meinhardt as structural and facade engineer, BDP as landscape architect and AtkinsRéalis as principal designer.

Unite said it was also mothballing a 500-bed scheme in Bristol called Freestone Island "while we explore options to secure best value from the project". The move would free up £55m of capital costs which had been earmarked for the project.

Unite expects to complete the takeover of rival student homes provider Empiric, which it first announced last August, shortly after 28 January. It is set to release its full-year results on 24 February.

Output in red for whole of last year

By Dave Rogers

Construction output stayed in negative territory for the whole of last year, the latest S&P Global UK Construction Purchasing Managers' Index has confirmed. Although last month's figure was up to 40.1, from November's score of 39.4 – itself the lowest number since May 2020 – it meant that the index remained below the key 50 number, where growth is registered, for every month of 2025.

Civil engineering was the weakest-performing category with a score of 32.9, although this was up from 30, while housing activity (33.5) and commercial construction (42) stayed well in the red. But there were signs of optimism, with around 37% of the survey panel predicting a rise in output levels in the year ahead, compared with 20% forecasting a decline – the highest level of confidence for five months.

Hebridean self-build was house of 2025

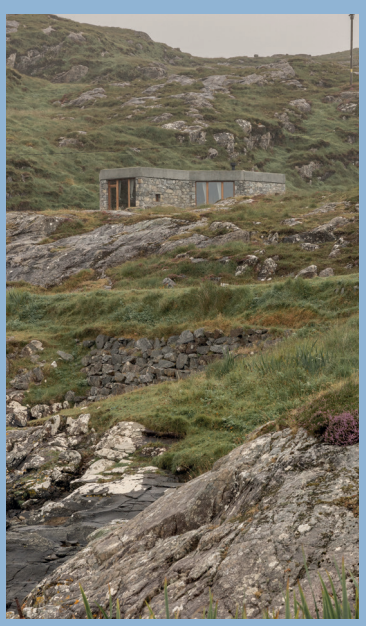
A stone and timber self-build house in Scotland's Outer Hebrides was named the best new home in the UK in 2025. Coachan na Creige, meaning "little quiet one by the rock", was announced the winner of the RIBA House of the Year award in an episode of Grand Designs.

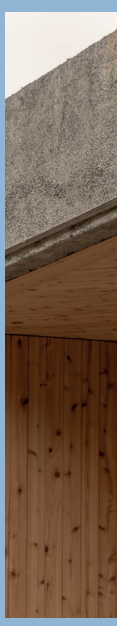
The 85m² home was designed by Eilidh Izat and Jack Arundell of local practice Izat Arundell for themselves, with help from Izat's furniture-maker brother Alasdair Izat. The house was chosen unanimously from a shortlist of six projects by judges who praised its site-responsive design and "exceptional craftsmanship".

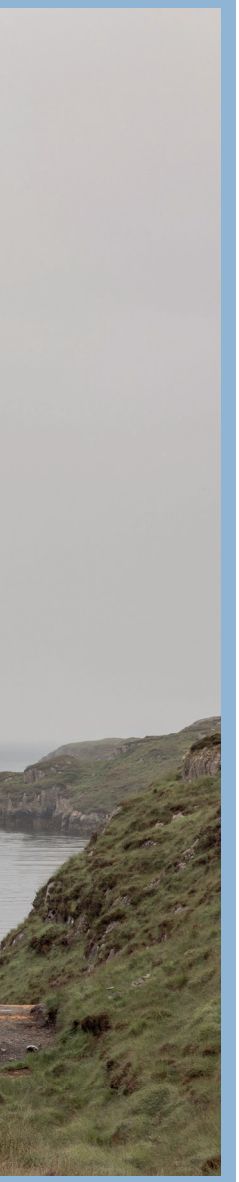
Clad in local gneiss stone on the outside and Scottish cedar on its interior walls, the timber-framed house is designed to nestle in the landscape while providing expansive views across the sea and surrounding headland.

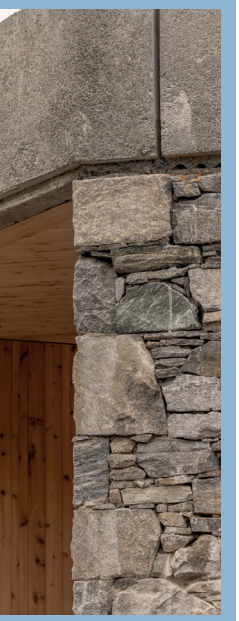
The judges said the home "appears to grow out of its rugged surroundings", balancing the demands of an unforgiving climate with a "deep respect for the surrounding environment".

Jury chair David Kohn said the project addressed every issue, including a tight budget, with a "rare mixture of sensitivity and boldness… Modest in size, but luxurious in its connection to the landscape, it is self-built from hyper-local stone in a way that is suited to its material qualities."









Plans submitted to revamp Stirling's City landmark

By Dave Rogers

Proposals to revamp James Stirling's City landmark No 1 Poultry have gone in for planning. The building, completed in 1997 by John Laing, has been empty since last October when serviced office provider WeWork moved out.

The building has seven floors and the reworked interiors will be able to accommodate around 1,000 people across 152,000ft². Developer Fore Partnership is marketing the scheme as a headquarters building. Cushman & Wakefield is leasing agent, and the job is being funded by South Korean investor IGIS Asset Management, with the value of the retrofit thought to be in the region of £60m.

Fore is speaking to several contractors about the work, with a winner expected in the spring. Others on the scheme include John Robertson Architects, project manager Storey, cost consultant Quantem and heritage consultant Alan Baxter. Structural engineer is Civic, while Hilson Moran is on M&E and sustainability. Planning consultant is The Planning Lab while Studio GB is landscape architect.

The proposals, which are being backed by government heritage adviser Historic England, include reinstating public access to the Apex Garden roof terrace, while the Prow entrance at Bank junction will be reopened for the first time since 2000.

No 1 Poultry was years in the making with a late 1960s plan by Mies van der Rohe abandoned before Stirling was brought on board. His design was submitted in 1984 but the job took nine years to clear planning hurdles, largely because of proposals to knock down a listed building occupied by luxury retailer Mappin & Webb.

It was finally given planning in 1993 and Laing began work the following year. The scheme was one of several loss-making jobs the firm was carrying which eventually forced it to pull out of contracting.

'Headcount reduction costs' exceed £43m for Arup

By Dave Rogers

Arup spent nearly £20m on redundancy costs last year as the firm cut worldwide staff numbers by 5%. In accounts for Arup Group, now filed at Companies House, the company said that it spent £19.8m on "headcount reduction costs".

It said: "During the year ended 31 March 2025, the group undertook a reshaping programme to reflect anticipated forward workload, business size, shape and skillsets."

The latest figure comes on top of the near £24m it spent in 2024 on cost-cutting, bringing the total put aside for redundancies in the past two years to more than £43m. The number of staff at the year-end was 16,930 – down from 17,740 last time.

Arup said a fraud incident, which cost it £25m in its 2024 accounts, had now been resolved and booked no exceptional item for it in its 2025 accounts. Turnover stayed broadly flat at £2.2bn but pre-tax profit nudged up 2% to £45m.

Jerome Frost, the firm's first ever chief executive, said: "We achieved a solid financial performance and maintained profitability. Our business, like many, continued to experience economic challenges with some of the markets we work in seeing a slowdown in investment, some of those due to change in a year of elections.

"Some challenges persist, particularly around reduced infrastructure spending and a quieter global property market. The changes in capital flows have also led to growth in some new markets and we are in a strong position to target these."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Former Mace boss takes up new role at Amazon

Former Mace construction boss Andrew Jackson has been appointed to oversee Amazon's data centre building programme across Europe, the Middle East and Africa. He started his new role at the tech giant last week, where his official title is director of data centre capacity delivery. He left Mace in October 2024, having joined the firm in 2015.

Huge life sciences scheme in Paddington

Plans have been submitted to Westminster council for a huge life sciences scheme next to St Mary's Hospital in Paddington. Designed by HOK for developers Cohort Ltd and Bartlet Asset Management, the 16-storey scheme, close to Renzo Piano's Cube office block built by Mace, would accommodate more than 1,800 clinicians across 48,000m² of floorspace.

Elland Road expansion plans

Main construction work on plans by Leeds United FC to expand the capacity of its Elland Road ground to more than 50,000 is expected to begin when the season ends in late May. Proposals by architect KSS will see the ground's capacity increased from 38,000 to 53,000, through the expansion of the West and North Stands and alterations to the South Stand.

Timber firm's rescue saves 160 jobs

Newport-based Premier Forest Products has bought National Timber Systems out of administration, rescuing 160 jobs. The deal, announced just before Christmas, followed the collapse of National Timber Systems' parent National Timber Group in November with the loss of more than 550 jobs. Premier Forest was set up in 1993 and, in its results for the year to April 2024, had a turnover of £97m and a pre-tax profit of £2.7m.

McAlpine to start work on £150m West End office

Sir Robert McAlpine is set to start work on the third major office job in London being masterminded by Edge after the Dutch developer and partner Mitsubishi Estate secured funding from a consortium of Japanese investors. The £150m DSDHA-designed Charing Cross Road scheme is due to finish in 2028.

Plans reduced for Manchester university library

Hawkins\Brown has submitted revised plans for a new library at Manchester Metropolitan University. A 13-storey, £90m proposal was approved in February 2024, but last year the university decided it was no longer viable. The new proposal is for nine storeys and a reduction in floorspace by almost half. Meanwhile, the architect said its income in the year to March 2025 was down 16% to £29.5m with pre-tax profit falling 79% to just £267,000.

Management buy-out at Henry Boot

Henry Boot has confirmed that it sold its £50m-turnover construction business to its management at the end of last year. New firm PWS Construction has been formed by the construction business's existing management team, which includes managing director Lee Powell.

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RICHARD GASTON

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Listed status saves landmark 1960s Wolverhampton building

A landmark brutalist building in Wolverhampton has been spared the wrecking ball after it was listed before it could be demolished. The University of Wolverhampton School of Art building, also known as the MK Building, was granted grade II listed status by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on the advice of Historic England last month. The building, completed in 1969, was set to be torn down as part of the university's plans for a "radical" overhaul of its estate. But thousands of people signed a petition set up in the wake of the plan and the building was given listed status just before Christmas.

Updated plans submitted to increase City Ground capacity

Updated plans for a major overhaul of Nottingham Forest's City Ground stadium have been submitted to local planners by the Premier League club. The club has been looking at upgrading its 128-year-old home, and plans drawn up by Benoy were unveiled nearly seven years ago to take the capacity from 30,000 to 38,000 by redeveloping the Peter Taylor Stand, named after the assistant to manager Brian Clough during the club's European Cup-winning years in 1979 and 1980. The job, originally due to have been carried out by collapsed contractor Buckingham, was approved by Rushcliffe borough council last summer, but fresh plans drawn up by KSS have now been lodged which would extend the capacity further. With other work on other stands, the aim is now to take total capacity up to 52,500 by 2033.

JAMES O DAVIES; CAMBRIDGE INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP

Plans go in for new homes on Cambridge council estate

Cambridge Investment Partnership – a joint venture between the city council and housebuilder Hill Group – has submitted plans to build 134 new homes on a former council estate in the city. The plans have been shaped by feedback from residents after consultation on the future of the Ekin Road estate. The scheme will see 78 new council homes and 56 private homes replace the existing 91 council homes and 17 private homes. Gerri Bird, a local councillor and CIP board member, said: "The redevelopment of Ekin Road forms part of the council's wider programme to raise the standards of existing council homes, deliver additional council homes to meet local need and help address Cambridge's broader housing supply challenges."

New buildings completed for Sheffield Hallam University

Sheffield Hallam University has completed three new buildings at its city campus, marking a major milestone in its transformation programme. The facilities, named Langsett, Redmires and Strines, provide teaching, research workplace and social environments for more than 5,000 students and staff. Together they establish a renewed civic gateway for the university, connecting the campus with the heart of Sheffield and creating new public spaces for collaborative work. The project was delivered through a partnership between Sheffield Hallam University, BDP, Arup, Bam and CBRE.

Fosters to extend St James's Square office block

Westminster council has approved plans by Foster + Partners to redevelop a 1990s building on St James's Square in central London. Designed for Hong Kong-based Super Expert Investments Limited, the scheme will overhaul the 1990s Sheppard Robson-designed building while retaining 50% of its structure. The frontages will be replaced with new Portland stone facades and two storeys with outdoor terrace space will be added. The application was submitted in 2023 but underwent some design amendments last year. The project team also includes WSP, RLB, DP9, Feilden & Mawson, Arup, Eckersley O'Callaghan, Hoare Lea and Kanda.

Ghotmeh leads museum expansion and transformation

A major campus expansion is under way at Mathaf, the Arab Museum of Modern Art, in Doha, led by the Lebanese-born architect Lina Ghotmeh. Timed to coincide with Mathaf's 15th anniversary, the project was inaugurated last month with the opening of a majlis-inspired library and conversation space dedicated to art publications from the region. Built around a set of flexible, building-block-like furniture units, it can be reconfigured for different needs. In the years ahead, the museum's car park and plaza will be redesigned as studio facilities for artists and designers working in ceramics, glass, sound and textiles. Ghotmeh, who is based in Paris, said: "It is my honour to accept this remarkable commission and have the opportunity to create new spaces for Mathaf and transform its architecture. The Arab Museum of Modern Art is a cherished and unrivalled institution that will evolve into an active museum of making and learning."

New public facilities in historic Woolwich square

Studio Weave has completed its latest project – a new market pavilion, public toilets and gardens in Woolwich, next to the gates of the Woolwich Arsenal, as part of the revitalisation of Beresford Square Market in south-east London. Beresford Square was formed in the early 19th century and named after General William Beresford. It became the focal point of a market that was established by a 1618 charter and moved to the square in 1888. The new pavilion provides public toilets and a cafe (run by a locally owned business), as well as utilities for the market and adjacent fountains. The red-brick building has two chimneys, which provide natural ventilation and also frame the turret of the Arsenal gatehouse. Eddie Blake, co-director of Studio Weave, said: "It has been a privilege to work on this building and landscape which will hopefully be well used by the public… These designs will transform Beresford Square into a haven for people and wildlife right in the middle of Woolwich for many decades."

DAVID BARBOUR; FOSTER + PARTNERS; LINA GHOTMEH; JIM STEPHENSON

WHAT THE SLOW PROGRESS AT TEMPSFORD SAYS ABOUT THE WIDER NEW TOWNS PROGRAMME

Despite the eminently suitable location of the Bedfordshire site as a place for tens of thousands of new homes, the government has still not formally backed the project. **Joey Gardiner** asks why so many questions remain unresolved – and what it means for the other proposed new towns

"It is a tremendous opportunity", says Jas Bhalla, principal at architect Jas Bhalla Works. "You very, very, rarely see this scale of opportunity where different elements come together."

Bhalla is discussing the potential for building a new town at Tempsford in Bedfordshire, currently a one-road village of fewer than 600 people, surrounded by low-lying boggy fields draining into the nearby Great Ouse, and centred on the Wheatsheaf pub.

Bhalla's practice drew up a masterplan for the 15,000-home development of the area prior to the covid-19 pandemic. Now, it has been named as a potential location for a 40,000-home new town, with the government already picking it as one of its three most "promising" sites.

But it could even go bigger. A report by think tank UK Day One in 2024 said that there was scope to create a city "larger than Oxford or Cambridge" on the site, which it said could house 350,000 people and be a "major employment centre" for life sciences.

Tempsford is just one of 12 locations selected for major growth last September by the New Towns Task Force, with two others – Crews Hill in north London and Leeds South Bank – also earmarked as promising for early build-out, meaning work could begin before the end of the parliament.

Ellie de la Bedoyere, deputy director of the New Towns Unit within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), told delegates at a conference in Westminster last year that her team were working rapidly to push ahead on the programme. "The level of government enthusiasm for new towns [is] genuinely unparalleled from anything I have seen in my last 10 years in government," she added.

Others, however, say that slow progress and siloed working mean opportunities at Tempsford to make the most of the site's potential to create a great new community are already being missed. And, if Tempsford is the front-runner in the programme, what does the progress at this site – or the lack of it – say about the wider new towns programme?

Why Tempsford?

The reason for all this focus on an otherwise unpromisingly soggy stretch of land comes from its proximity to current and planned infrastructure. The site sits next to both a section of the A1(M) motorway and the East Coast Main Line railway running north-south down to London and up to Leeds and beyond. Currently under construction is an east-west dual carriageway, the A421, which will take drivers quickly across to Cambridge in one direction or to Milton Keynes and Bedford in the other.

But most significant is the promise by the

builders of East West Rail, which runs through the site, to put a station at Tempsford, opening it up to become a properly sustainable place in its own right, not reliant on car journeys. Even groups that you might expect to be opposed, such as Bedfordshire's branch of countryside charity the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), see the logic of focusing necessary growth in one location.

"We're broadly supportive," says Susan Lynch, a trustee of CPRE Bedfordshire. "There are potentially a lot of advantages to not spreading growth across the county."

This potential was clear as far back as the end of the last decade, when Jason Longhurst, now UK head of sustainable investment and partnerships at logistics developer Prologis, was executive director for regeneration and business growth at central Bedfordshire council. As the official in charge of planning, he tried to persuade members to allocate the site to a 45,000- to 70,000-home new town in the local plan, but in the end the leader decided to oppose the idea.

> ON THIS TIMESCALE A STATION AT TEMPSFORD AND THE RAIL LINK TO CAMBRIDGE IS UNLIKELY BEFORE 2040
>
> **NIGEL MOOR, FORMER PLANNING CONSULTANT**

The authority's current 2015-2035 local plan, adopted in July 2021, ultimately put off any decision about it until after a promised future review – a review which has so far not happened. "We could have had a near perfect plan where close to 90% of the need was met with a sustainable strategic development," Longhurst says. "But the leader resisted the housing numbers."

Progress, what progress?

Now the scheme has the backing of the government-appointed taskforce set up to identify locations for new towns, which described it as a "unique opportunity with potential to provide over 40,000 homes in a standalone greenfield settlement", hailing its "excellent connectivity" and the potential for an "infrastructure-first" approach. Large-scale developer Urban & Civic has an option on a large parcel of land that could form the basis of the scheme, making land assembly relatively straightforward.

However, while the government has described the recommendation as "promising", it has not formally selected it or named it as a new town location, and for those in the area worried about the future, there is absolutely no clarity at all on what is being planned.

Adam Zerny has been the leader of the council since 2023, when his Independent »

SHUTTERSTOCK

Right: Tempsford is currently a one-road village of fewer than 600 people

Far right: The proposed route of the East West Rail line, including a station at Tempsford

I SUSPECT THIS BIGGER OPPORTUNITY IS ONE WE'RE GOING TO MISS BECAUSE IT REQUIRES A LEVEL OF STATE ORGANISATION, BANDWIDTH AND JOINED-UP THINKING THAT I THINK WE'RE GOING TO STRUGGLE TO HAVE

SAMUEL HUGHES, RESEARCHER AND CO-AUTHOR OF THE UK DAY ONE REPORT

» Alliance grouping won control on an anti-development ticket. Personally representing the Potton ward, which covers Tempsford village, he said recently that he had met with ministry officials and that "the government doesn't yet have a footprint" for the new town, but that it was "clear the government is pushing for as big a development as it can".

John English, another trustee of CPRE Bedfordshire, says: "There's only 250 homes right now at Tempsford. To say that something like 40,000 might be built, for the people of Tempsford it's absolute devastation. They will just be hoping that the government will buy their homes from them."

CPRE's Lynch says she needs to know that any new-town homes built will count toward local housing numbers, and assurance that transport and flood defence infrastructure will be provided up front before offering support.

The ministry, for its part, says it cannot provide clarity now because there is due process to go through. Most significantly, that it needs to undertake a programme-wide strategic environmental assessment (SEA) before the government can kick off work in earnest – or leave itself open to judicial review.

So, while progress may not be visible to those outside the ministry and its agencies, officials maintain that work is happening nonetheless. The new towns unit's de la Bedoyere says that alongside the "very important" SEA, the unit was also "working with delivery partners to really understand the opportunities, [and] the constraints. We're considering the funding, the economic modelling, the infrastructure gaps, the potential governance, the potential delivery pathways and possible delivery vehicles [that we] need to support ministerial decisions on location selection."

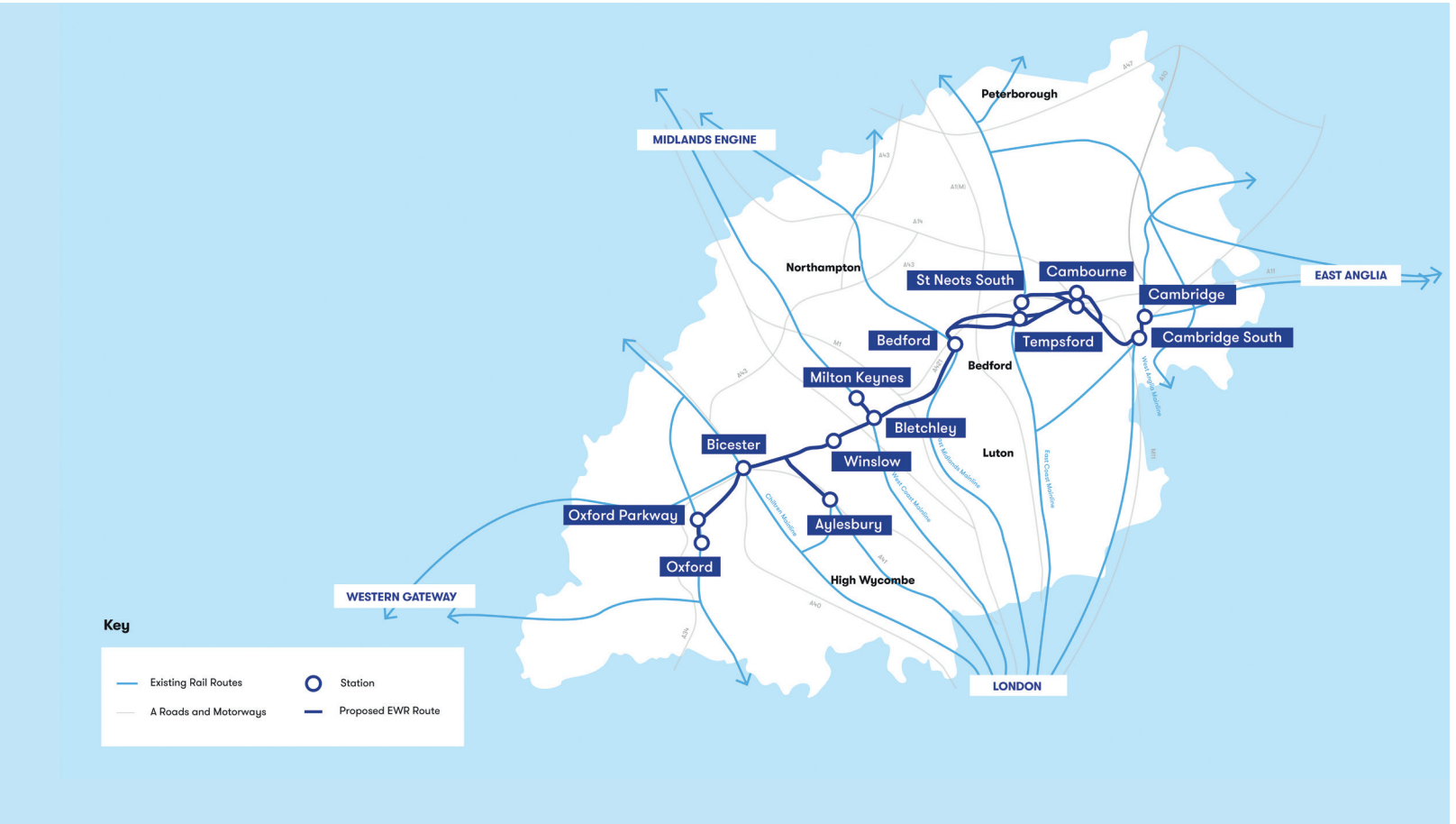
This work is being done ahead of a formal government consultation on its proposals for the new towns programme, and publication of the SEA, in February, she says. This is designed to then allow a final decision on allocations to be made and published in "spring" this year. The ambition, she says, is to bring forward development "with more ambition, built to last, [but] hopefully built fast".

However, de la Bedoyere was unable to say when the areas involved might find out what exactly is planned. And where and when vehicles such as development corporations might be set up. "In terms of confirming any timeline, I can't do that," she admits.

Missed opportunities

Nigel Moor, a former planning consultant at RPS and a Gloucestershire county councillor with responsibility for planning, is very concerned that slow progress and siloed thinking are already harming the potential for placemaking at Tempsford. He has conducted an in-depth study of the area, with engineer Doug Clelland, and recently gave evidence on the matter to the House of Lords' built environment committee's new towns inquiry.

Moor's main concerns are threefold: firstly, that the east-west A428 road is being built to go through Tempsford but without any junction or



exit into it besides an existing A1 junction some distance to the west; secondly, that the "sclerotic" pace of the East West Rail scheme's decision-making is hampering any progress on designing a non-car-based scheme for the new town; and thirdly, that East West Rail is potentially leaving itself open to judicial review if it does not address up front the environmental impact of the whole development in its forthcoming planning application.

East West Rail has been consulting on a route and location for the station since 2021, and in January last year the government said it was bringing forward delivery of the part of the station which will sit on the East Coast Main Line. However, in the autumn East West Rail said it may no longer issue a final formal statutory consultation imminently, given the new Planning and Infrastructure Act has reduced its obligations to consult, leaving its plans less certain.

Its autumn statement also made clear that its current preferred route alignment through the Tempsford area would take the proposed station further away from where the centre of the town is likely to be.

"On this timescale a station at Tempsford and the rail link to Cambridge is unlikely before 2040. This needs to be significantly advanced," says Moor, adding that East West Rail gave "little or no consideration" to the new town at Tempsford in its 2021 consultation.

"Contrast this to the speed that the dualling of the A428 is taking," he says. "This major road makes no allowance for a junction serving a Tempsford New Town. This can work – but is not ideal."

Moor is clear what needs to happen. "To date all these agencies have been working in silos," he says. "Ambition on this scale demands that government wastes no time setting up a specific team" involving existing agencies such as Homes England and the Highways Agency, which could then form the basis of a future development corporation set up to push the project forward.

He adds: "Action on Tempsford New Town now needs priority rather than consultation and process. Time wasted now on resolving issues of governance will only continue the lack of joined-up thinking unfortunately experienced so far."

Scale of ambition

He is not alone. Others fear the current proposals risk missing the potential scale of growth that could be accommodated in such a uniquely located place. Samuel Hughes, a researcher and co-author of the UK Day One report which recommended building a city of 350,000 people on the site, says the opportunity is there to build something that "could be so much bigger" than the taskforce's stated 40,000 home community.

However, Hughes says that such large-scale growth could only happen with expensive capacity upgrades to the mainline railway – albeit works which could be paid for out of value capture. "If you had a regular service to London from there, the demand would be almost bottomless. But rail services are already at capacity, so to make it work you have to spend money," he says.

"I suspect this bigger opportunity is one we're going to miss because it requires a level of state organisation, bandwidth and joined-up thinking that I think we're going to struggle to have."

Likewise, Prologis's Longhurst says he is not convinced that those backing the new town have grasped the opportunity to make it a major employment centre in its right, rather than simply a dormitory suburb serving London, Cambridge or the forthcoming Universal Studios development outside Bedford. "I think they've understood the urgency of it; I'm just not sure they've got the economic connectivity point yet," Longhurst says.

"We can't only talk about housing, or this will just be a bloody dormitory town." »

SHUTTERSTOCK

I WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO GET BRITAIN BUILDING. WE'VE GOT TO 'BUILD, BABY, BUILD' … I AM LAUNCHING THE NEXT GENERATION OF NEW TOWNS TAKING THE LESSONS FROM THE POST-WAR LABOUR GOVERNMENT HOUSING BOOM, MOBILISING THE FULL POWER OF THE STATE TO BUILD A NEW GENERATION OF NEW TOWNS

STEVE REED, HOUSING SECRETARY, SEPTEMBER 2025

Left: The station at Winslow near Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire under construction for East West Rail. This section of the line is due to open this year

Middle: The A1(M) heading north through Hertfordshire. Tempsford is situated close to the motorway section in Bedfordshire

Far left: Jas Bhalla's architectural practice drew up a masterplan for a 15,000-home development of the area prior to the covid-19 pandemic

Far left, bottom: Housing secretary Steve Reed announces a programme last September to build 12 new towns across England in a bid to address the country's housing crisis

» Wider programme

"The risk", says Nigel Hugill, chair of developer Urban & Civic which has options on the Tempsford site, "is the process becomes ferociously bureaucratic." But right now, he says, he remains optimistic about progress.

"I'm very supportive of what the government's doing and very keen to be involved. We have to have development corporations as quickly as we can, and that seems to be the intent. I'm not sure how we can go faster than we are."

Others are less sure. Architect Jas Bhalla says the publication of the taskforce report has generated some momentum – but that will only continue as long as there is solid and evident political support. "We need cross-party consensus to ensure an ongoing political mandate," he says. "Tomorrow we could have another government, and we need to ensure this project has a life beyond that."

This links into criticisms of the wider programme made by the House of Lords' built environment committee last autumn. The committee's report found that ministers had failed to properly communicate a vision for the programme, leaving it instead to the taskforce. Furthermore, the government needed to set out its approach to funding new towns at the autumn Budget – something it did not do.

One source close to the taskforce told Building that they had definite concerns about a loss of momentum with the programme while the SEA process was being undertaken. In addition, the source said, there were fears that by only committing to get work started on site at three out of the 12 new towns by the time of the election, it might become a de facto three-town programme – which would not be enough to make a transformative difference.

> TOMORROW WE COULD HAVE ANOTHER GOVERNMENT, AND WE NEED TO ENSURE THIS PROJECT HAS A LIFE BEYOND THAT
>
> **JAS BHALLA, PRINCIPAL AT JAS BHALLA WORKS**

Lastly, the source said they were concerned about the lack of clarity on how new towns will be funded. The taskforce report called for significant up-front funding combined with long-term loans.

De la Bedoyere said last year that "all of the recommendations in the taskforce report around funding, including tax incremental financing, are being looked at" and that there was "lots of interest within number 10 and the Treasury and MHCLG" to come up with solutions. But no final position has so far been arrived at.

Asked if there is any chance of the bureaucracy around the new towns process actually delaying the development at Tempsford, and other locations, de la Bedoyere is adamant that this is being avoided. "There is no chance that they will be slowed down," she says, "because me and the team are on it."

She adds that she realises it is "frustrating" she cannot be more definitive about what is part of the programme at this stage. "But I also think the importance of getting this right and doing the proper environmental assessment will be critical to the longevity."

Samuel Hughes is sympathetic to the ministry over the "frustrating" but genuine legal obligation to undertake an SEA, which is currently delaying progress. But if new towns are to happen at all, rapid progress from here remains vital.

"If Tempsford is well under way by the election, then you can imagine that it will carry on whatever the next government," he says. "But, if it is still at the assessment or the planning stage, then very likely it could just lose momentum and stall and not happen."

That is something the scheme's opponents will be all too well aware of.

SHUTTERSTOCK

Opinion / Simon Rawlinson

Grounds for optimism: finding the fix for 2026

Market sentiment took a battering last year and viability remains a huge challenge, but there are also some positive signs that construction can take a little more control of its destiny

If you look hard enough, you can see the first signs of growth and renewal in 2026. Inflation is falling, bringing the promise of lower borrowing costs. Retail footfall rose over the crucial Christmas period – suggesting improving consumer confidence. Furthermore, Building Safety Regulator reforms appear to be working – potentially bringing forward a wave of much-needed urban housing.

But you do have to look hard. Affordability remains a challenge across too many sectors, and occupier demand remains elusive. The latest Arcadis market forecast was entitled "Last roll of the dice" for good reason – highlighting just how dependent consultants and contractors will be on the opening of the investment taps in 2026.

The bull case relies on an almost Panglossian level of optimism. Rather than thinking of 2025 as another year of disappointing growth, you need to think of it as a proof point of the resilience of the UK economy. Similarly, we must anticipate that 2026 will be the year when the impact of 18 months of policy work bears fruit.

Even so, it is a stretch to think that lower inflation and the end to Budget uncertainty will unleash a wave of demand-led investment – particularly as interest rates and taxation continue to weigh down on growth and investment and as affordability limits act as a viability barrier in many markets, including housing.

Any further slowdown in investment will have wider implications for the market. The Financial Times has, for example, recently highlighted that a number of large corporate occupiers – including Accenture and Investec – are choosing to extend their existing office leases in response to London's space shortage, but also to save on fit-out costs.

One of the implications is that staying put potentially reduces the size of the fit-out pipeline. This is the opposite of growth. One effect of the high cost of construction is the cannibalisation of future opportunities – reducing the market size for housing, workspace and public infrastructure.

The situation makes me think of the chemist Ernest Rutherford's famous saying: "We've run out of money; we'll just have to think." Rutherford's original point was prompted by experiments that weren't delivering the expected results, but the point can be extended to construction too.

> "Digital technologies are evolving to a point where they are deployable in the complex, ambiguous world of construction

Our existing model is not working, so a rethink is needed. Increasingly I think that the fix in 2026 won't come from market forces alone; it will come from changing product and process too – building on some of the changes already introduced into the planning system in London to improve housing viability.

This pattern is not just restricted to the UK. In the US, for example, the housing market has responded to an even tougher squeeze on borrowing costs by pivoting to building smaller, simpler homes, with the number of completions increasing, even as the value of output has remained flat.

As we know, changing designs and specifications in the UK's highly regulated construction sector is hard to do, so I anticipate that efforts to simplify ways of working present the best opportunity to drive down costs – reversing the trend of increased complexity that has bedevilled projects for many years.

Are there grounds for optimism? I believe there are, and I am not just thinking about robot bricklaying. Digital technologies, supported by AI, are evolving real-world capabilities so fast that we are approaching a tipping point where they match the complexities of the construction site.

One deployment example is the autonomous vehicle joint venture between Mercedes and Nvidia, announced this month, built around a brand-new portfolio of AI tools, models and processors called Alpamayo. Alpamayo is specifically designed to provide the reasoning needed to deal with unexpected "long-tail" events – the kind of events that occur on construction projects all the time.

A similar, construction-specific application has been developed by Field AI, adding site, context and risk awareness to the foundation models that robot "dogs" use to learn about and adapt to the sites where they have been deployed. Buildots also supports the development of robot-ready digital twins.

It is conceivable that, as these capabilities are combined, robotics will finally be taken out of the factory and onto the site – inverting the MMC paradigm that automation is best deployed in a factory setting.

The exciting aspect of this development is that the programming load associated with the deployment of construction automation can be expected to fall as systems become more independently intelligent – addressing

RIBA past president Muyiwa Oki's point that construction's "sloppy and tacit process" is unsuitable for digital re-engineering.

Another development that gives me confidence is the expansion of the UK's market for robots as a service (RaaS) into construction, led by machines facilitating demolition and setting out, as well as tricky installation tasks associated with cladding and services builder's work. De-risked investment, maximised utilisation and targeted user support will play a key role in accelerating the deployment of tools like the Hilti Jaibot, used for precise drilling of holes for fixings, which have been available for a number of years.

Innovation is not limited to work on site, of course. Agentic AI is another digital evolution that has tremendous potential to simplify or automate many repeat activities and processes on projects. Agentic AI is designed to work out and plan multi-step activities to meet a goal without human input. Critically, agentic AI uses resources such as the live web or a project database to do its work and is not limited to the training data that large language models rely upon.

Configuring agentic AI can be complex, requiring the setting-up of API data sources and sets of instructions, but it is increasingly built into industry-standard tools including Autodesk, Oracle and Procore.

Too often construction feels resistant to innovation. Unfortunately, the complexity of projects and our lack of standardisation are a source of cost as well as a barrier to innovation. We need to change in order to add more value.

There is no panacea for our cost, value and productivity challenges but, increasingly, digital technologies are evolving to a point where they are deployable in the complex, ambiguous world of construction.

The fix in 2026 is to recognise that construction is not different and that it can benefit from the productivity gains which other sectors have secured for decades. By reducing cost and by freeing up scarce human resource, we can solve the skills shortage as well as the affordability challenge.

Simon Rawlinson is a partner at Arcadis

5 MINUTES WITH ...

Dean Mitchell

Founding partner at 4B

Why did you choose construction as a career?
I was drawn to construction for the diversity it offers. With a lifelong interest in sport, the opportunity to work on stadium projects first pulled me in, particularly the chance to contribute to the London 2012 Olympics. Since then, I have expanded my experience into sectors including commercial offices, retail, hospitality, cultural and many more.

What are you most proud of in your career to date?
Starting 4B Projects in October 2021 with my brothers Gary, Luke and James, who are all quantity surveyors. (Yes, 4B stands for four brothers.) In a short space of time we have delivered high-profile projects in the UK and internationally.

What has been your biggest career challenge?
Working on high-profile schemes of national importance in Saudi Arabia and being answerable to the Crown Prince and members of the royal family; also working on the Tottenham Hotspur stadium (which is incredible, above) while being a passionate Arsenal fan. That was an emotional challenge.

What would you change about the industry?
The efficiency of UK planning authorities in processing approvals. I would also love to see the use of sustainable materials in everyday projects. And I would like to see greater collaboration within the industry in order to better protect contractors.

Name your favourite building in the world?
The Natural History Museum. I also love the St Pancras Renaissance Hotel at King's Cross.

Which building do you most dislike?
The old City Hall building in Southwark. Impressive from the outside, but internally I found the layout very peculiar.

And which do you wish you had worked on?
Emirates Stadium, as I am an Arsenal supporter, or St Paul's Cathedral, the most iconic building in London.

What single piece of advice would you give someone starting out?
Never be afraid to ask questions. The world is continually changing and the construction industry has to adapt. There is always an element of continuous professional development required.

What's the most helpful advice you've been given?
Not to specialise too early. Gaining experience across a range of sectors gives you a more rounded perspective and accelerates learning.

Who do you most admire in the industry?
I have enormous respect for family-owned businesses that have been successful in UK markets: Byrne Group, the Murphys, O'Rourkes and Careys.

What is it like being you (and doing your job)?
We pride ourselves on being a partner-led service provider, so we have a partner on every scheme. I also lead business development operations, from meeting and pitching to clients to bid-writing and tracking opportunities.

Do you have a life philosophy?
"Hard work beats natural talent, when natural talent doesn't work hard."

What do you think your best quality is?
Resilience. Running a young business comes with setbacks. The key is to stay focused, learn from experience and refine the plan for the next time.

What trait do you dislike in yourself? And in others?
In myself, overthinking. In others, not asking questions.

Name three things that you like
Going to the gym, coaching rugby union, and time with family, ideally over a pint of Guinness.

Tell us about a secret skill we don't know you have
I coach the U12s at Finchley Rugby Club and work with the Irish Rugby Football Union to identify young Irish-qualified talent in the UK.

What is your most prized possession?
My signed football shirt collection, or the Ireland caps I have hanging on the wall.

Early bird or night owl?
Early bird catches the first worm.

What is your favourite food?
Italian food all the way!

What would your superpower be?
Teleportation. Commuting from Warwickshire to London can be very time-consuming.

SHUTTERSTOCK

Opinion / Denise Chevin

Will lofty aspirations be derailed by hard-pressed planners?

Pro-building planning reforms are a good thing for our industry but we must be careful to ensure that legitimate community concerns can still be heard

Unveiling planning reform is becoming a bit of a Christmas tradition. December 2025 marked the third year in a row that the government unwrapped yet another National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), its rulebook for planning and development in England.

This version certainly brought developers some festive cheer. It is proudly pro-building, with a default approval stance for schemes near transport hubs, streamlined decision-making, more delegated planning powers to speed up approvals, limits on councils adding extra demands beyond national standards, and exemptions such as biodiversity requirements being eased for smaller sites to cut costs.

But in the headlong dash to hit housing targets, is Steve Reed, the secretary of state for housing, in danger of treating local democracy as collateral damage? And does this latest reboot of the NPPF – bolstered by the loosening of constraints in the Planning and Infrastructure Act – genuinely weigh real community concerns, or simply clear the way for building anything that will stand upright?

The government insists that there are still strong protections for good design. The new NPPF again talks about design quality and placemaking, including visual quality. It champions community engagement, design review panels and design codes.

Planners are encouraged to ask sensible questions: does the development create a pleasant place to live? Will it age gracefully? Or is it a cheap-and-cheerful box destined to deteriorate? Alongside this will sit updated design and placemaking guidance which will pull together previous design documents into a single reference point when it is published in the coming weeks. On paper, at least, it all sounds encouraging.

But can we really be confident that these carefully crafted ideas from Whitehall filter neatly into reality in district planning departments? I suspect not – they are, after all, not mandated and councils are under so much pressure.

In my own district, housing targets are more than three times what actually gets built in a typical year. Developers are battling squeezed margins and viability challenges.

> “Even when schemes look respectable in principle, corners are cut once they reach site – and those supposedly minor changes somehow go unchallenged

On top of that, there is evidence that, even when schemes look respectable in principle, corners are cut once they reach site – and those supposedly minor changes somehow go unchallenged.

Perhaps I am coloured by local experience. Good architecture too often means a kind of suburban Greek revival cosplay – houses with absurdly oversized columns stuck on like props from a pantomime. At the other end of the spectrum, as the council scrambles to meet housing numbers, we have been handed what feels like a 100-unit residential battleship plonked unceremoniously in the town centre.

Aside from the odd elegant private house and some handsome additions to a well-funded public school, the town is largely a contemporary architecture desert. I am not expecting Stirling Prize winners on every corner, but the occasional Housing Design Award would be nice.

I do not doubt that local planners and councillors are, broadly speaking, well intentioned. Many simply lack the resources, confidence or specialist design knowledge to champion excellence consistently. There are, however, encouraging exceptions.

Winchester city council has developed its own design codes derived from the National Model Design Code, helping to ensure new developments are better designed, more context-sensitive and sympathetic to local character. And, as Design for Homes chief executive David Birkbeck points out, judging the Housing Design Awards over the past 20 years has shown real progress, with far more strong contenders now than in previous decades.

Birkbeck also makes an important point: the leap from perfectly adequate to genuinely excellent often comes down to money. It may depend on whether the land deal left a developer some breathing space to invest in landscaping and quality materials. Or whether the scheme is being delivered by a not-for-profit organisation not beholden to shareholders demanding a 20%-30% return.

In some places, it is councils themselves that raise the bar. Cambridge, for example, used higher environmental standards and 40% affordable housing requirements as a spur rather than a burden – helping to shape the innovative and award-winning development at Great Kneighton. So, yes, the NPPF makes polite noises about good design and landscaping. But delivery remains patchy for a host of reasons.

We all like to talk about tree-lined avenues – but who pays for maintaining them? We all say we want development that respects scale and context – but councils under pressure end up accepting bulk. It is hard not to feel nostalgic for the days of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, when Blair-era Britain treated design quality as a national mission rather than a nice-to-have.

We desperately need new homes, and many will be denser and taller than what people are used to. But wanting a say in what gets built – and lacking confidence that councils can always tell the difference between thoughtful architecture and lazy design – should not automatically earn people the label of nimby.

At best, one hopes that Whitehall’s lofty aspirations for good design do eventually trickle down into town halls, supported by properly resourced planning departments, braver design reviews, credible design codes, inspirational developers and genuinely engaged communities. Hope, admittedly, is doing a lot of heavy lifting there – but hey, it’s a new year.

Denise Chevin is a writer and policy adviser on the built environment. She is a former editor of Building

Opinion / Chris Williamson

Why I have decided I will no longer be called an architect

We need a new system of registration that focuses on the competence of all professionals if we are to ensure our buildings are safe and of high quality

Last month I wrote to the Architects Registration Board (ARB) outlining my decision to remove myself from the architects' register, meaning that from the start of this year I am no longer able to call myself an architect. The current regulatory system does nothing to ensure quality or safety for those who procure architectural services – the public – and, although I feel sad to have lost my title, in practice I can still perform all of the work of an architect.

The system makes little sense, so it has been encouraging to see that my announcement has – broadly – been well received by architects. But one of the most common questions I have been asked is: what's next?

It is time for a new system that focuses on competence – not just competence of architects, but competence of all built environment professionals who strive to build quality homes and places every day. A system that outlines defined activities, reserved for suitably competent professionals, should be implemented.

The RIBA defines these activities as submitting full planning applications, building control applications and final compliance certificates. These are three key touchpoints throughout the lifecycle of a project. Ensuring that those who undertake this work are competent can only help to drive quality and safety.

As I said, this is not just about architects. Planners, engineers and surveyors may also wish to undertake this work – but whoever does so must be competent and able to prove it.

To achieve this there is a vital first step – repealing the Architects Act 1997, the current legislation which regulates the use of the title "architect" in the UK. This may seem radical, but we need to acknowledge that the status quo is not working.

In its place, we need a new piece of legislation for the built environment. This could be modelled on the Legal Services Act, which restricts certain legal activities to various groupings of qualified professionals. The new legislation would set out exactly which suitably competent professionals are able to undertake the reserved matters set out above. If applied to all significant building works, this would provide a high level of accountability right across the sector.

> "A vital first step is repealing the Architects Act 1997… This may seem radical, but we need to acknowledge that the status quo is not working

You then need a method to prove who is suitably competent. The built environment professional bodies have already been doing this for decades – through education standards and continued professional development (CPD), for example.

But, to ensure that we are all working at the same high level, we suggest creating a built environment council. Such a council would oversee the construction industry chartered professional bodies, whose members are the suitably competent professionals, such as the RIBA.

Each built environment professional body would have to show that it has robust processes in place to ensure that its individual members are competent. These individuals are the chartered members who are then able to undertake the reserved matters set out in the new legislation. This moves the regulation from the individual to the oversight of the relevant professional body.

This new system would be a significant change from where we are today, but it is a change that we need. I stood for president of the RIBA on a platform of driving, improving and celebrating lifelong learning. This, and proving competence, are inextricably linked.

From meeting our net zero obligations to delivering 1.5 million homes and the next generation of new towns, the built environment is central to the government's ambitions. I do not want to see homes being built that no one wants to live in because they are of low quality or cause health issues due to overheating or damp.

Quality and safety are at the heart of what chartered built environment professionals do. Now we need to establish a system which supports this.

Chris Williamson is a founding partner of WW+P and current president of the RIBA

Brave stance or missing the point?
Readers' views, Opinion, page 27

Opinion / Mimi Dietrich

How to navigate uncertainty with confidence in 2026

Volatility is reshaping our industry, leaving many people overwhelmed. But we can replace anxiety-driven reactions with clarity and resilience

The UK built environment never stands still. From post-Grenfell fire regulation shake-ups and the Building Safety Act to global economic uncertainty, supply chain disruption, property tax changes and shifting environmental targets… the pace of change is relentless.

Projects stall or are redesigned, roles shift and teams are left in limbo. For many, this unpredictability fuels stress, burn-ou, and poor decision-making. It comes up consistently with my coaching clients, and I have experienced it firsthand on the ground throughout my time in the industry.

A development director recently told me that they felt like they were treading water, constantly reacting rather than leading their project, while a young management graduate said they felt pulled in all directions while the project changed daily.

One of the best pieces of advice I received in my career was simple: flow like water. In an industry where things keep changing, adaptability is everything. At first, it felt foreign as I craved clear structure and predictability; with clear RIBA stages, defined site programmes and a mapped-out career plan. But reality has a habit of changing the rules mid-game, and I later discovered that rigid plans rarely survive contact with reality.

> “One of the best pieces of advice I have received in my career was simple: flow like water. In an industry where projects change daily, adaptability is everything

What happens when those of us who crave structure are thrust into uncertainty?

Stress spikes. We may cling to outdated processes, over-plan to compensate, or push for premature decisions to regain a sense of control. Neuroscience explains why: the brain’s priority is survival under uncertainty, defaulting to fast, automatic thinking; what Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman calls “system one thinking”.

The brain leans on past experiences, ingrained habits, unconscious biases and social norms that once kept us safe. Because those responses worked before, it instinctively replays them, even when they may no longer fit.

By relying only on fast thinking, it may narrow our focus, elevate stress hormones and weaken our decision-making. Left unchecked, this can lead to burnout and mistakes, especially during turbulent times.

For example, when procurement delays hit, teams may instinctively order a “close enough” alternative product which worked previously, without verifying its full compliance. Or, when a construction programme slips, managers may instinctively compress critical path activities without fully reassessing site risks and sequencing knock-on effects.

During the early days of covid, system-one patterns were on full global display:

- Status quo bias: clinging to familiar ways of working, even when ineffective.
- Herd bias: waiting for others to adopt new practices first, before taking the leap.
- Loss aversion: avoiding new processes for fear of mistakes, instead of adapting to change.

So, what is the antidote?

To navigate uncertainty, it helps to pair this instinctive fast, system-one thinking with slower, more deliberate system-two thinking. Yes, it takes more energy, but it engages rational logic and deliberate thought.

With my clients, I use practical tools such as:

- Cognitive reappraisal, which reframes challenges as opportunities, not threats. For example, when a late design change lands, see it as an opportunity to improve co-ordination or optimise the build sequence, rather than a deadline threat.
- Micro-decisions. These allow you to prioritise what you can influence yourself and let go of what you cannot. For example, identify the single task that you can move forward today, and release the noise of broader issues you cannot personally solve and that are outside your control.
- Mindfulness pauses, involving breaks to reset focus and shift your brain from reactive to deliberate thinking. For example, take short walks or set 15-minute buffers between meetings to reset with intention before diving into the next crisis.

Leadership plays a key role too. As business author Simon Sinek says: “Leadership is not about being in charge. It’s about taking care of those in your charge.”

Supportive leaders can help to create calm for their teams during uncertainty by setting clearly defined priorities, clarifying responsibilities, and delegating effectively. Small, repeated practices can help to reduce stress, restore control, and build resilience within yourself and your project teams across the wider industry.

Change is constant in the built environment. Learning to refine your thinking and behaviours during uncertain times helps to build resilience and agility. I return to these tools whenever my fast, system-one thinking creeps back in. Try asking yourself:

- What is within my control right now, and what can I let go of?
- How can I pause or reset today to think more clearly?
- What is one small action that moves me forward and restores my sense of control?

Leaders who cultivate clarity, calm and control not only improve project outcomes but also foster healthier, more resilient teams. The benefits ripple far beyond individual projects, down to real people and teams on the ground, shaping the built environment.

And on a personal note, the lesson I carry forward is simple: prepare, plan, but stay nimble and curious – the real skill in the built environment is not predicting every move, but responding thoughtfully when the game changes, and uncovering opportunities you might never have imagined.

Mimi Dietrich is a leadership coach, founder of Foundry of Thought, and worked for over 25 years in property, design and construction

Readers' views

These contributions are taken from emails to the editor, and comments on our websites or under LinkedIn posts. Do write to us at newsdesk@building.co.uk or get hold of us on Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn

Old problems need new solutions

[Richard Steer comment, December magazine and Building website] You are right, Richard, that new homes don't build themselves, but one of the impediments is our planning regime. The Building Safety Act and insistence on extra staircases in taller buildings were not recommended by the Grenfell Inquiry. We did perfectly well without either, but now in London the BSA process can delay a project by nearly a year.

Both of these were introduced by the Conservative government. Labour should scrap both and get real on bats and great crested newts, which they said they would but failed to do so in the Planning and Infrastructure Act. When volume housebuilders prefer to build single family homes in the Home Counties rather than building in London where demand is highest, we should recognise we have a real problem.
Steve Norris

Planning and Infrastructure Act

[Building website] The Planning and Infrastructure Act will help smooth out some of the bigger bumps in the planning process; however, on its own it cannot resolve the systemic woes that beset the system. Achieving that will require much more radical thinking and a firm commitment to effective resourcing.
Paul Maile, head of planning and infrastructure consenting, Eversheds Sutherland

We support the act and its aim to remove blockages and speed up decisions. The focus now must be on delivery. The regulations must be clear and workable, and councils properly resourced, otherwise uncertainty and delay get baked back into the system.
Lawrence Turner, director, Boyer

NPPF revisions

[Building website] It is welcome that the changes emphasise support for rural, social, and affordable housing, and are focused on minimising disruption and delay in the planning process. At present, the system often holds up the delivery of affordable housing and, in our experience, schemes take considerably longer than the 13-week target for all applications with 10 or more homes.

Planning reform is crucial to getting more homes built and speeding up the system. We welcome the clarity ministers have provided, again highlighting their commitment to tackling the housing crisis and giving the sector the tools we need to best support the government with its housebuilding targets.

We believe a zonal system would bring much-needed speed to the process, helping us to deliver more homes on time. It would also mean earlier and more effective public engagement in the planning process, with local stakeholders being able to set the rules developers must abide by up front.

Of course, planning is just one piece of the puzzle. Long-term certainty in funding remains a critical issue in the affordable housing sector… while we need more workers coming into the industry.
James Bradbury, group director of growth and development, Stonewater

The government needs to focus on getting homes built on sites that already have permission, rather than releasing greenbelt land to hit housing numbers. The problem is not that the planning system is blocking homes – last year over 75% of housing applications were approved. The real issue is that private developers alone cannot deliver this scale of housebuilding. Continually tinkering with national policy while under-resourced councils are pushed to approve applications will not fix stalled delivery.

Steps to improve housing resilience to climate change and stop development from contributing to the extraction of more fossil fuels are welcome but the government must go further, especially in supporting delivery of social and affordable homes.

Good planning is so much more than hitting targets. It is about creating thriving communities. Constantly moving the goalposts to favour housebuilders risks unbalancing the social, environmental and economic foundations of well-planned communities.
Magnus Gallie, senior planner, Friends of the Earth

RIBA president is no longer an 'architect'

[Chris Williamson comment, page 24 and Building website] I commend this act. So many times I see bad practice from non-qualified "architects" in the role of an architect. ARB-regulated architects are being made responsible for more and more in the built environment while the other trades are being left to do as they wish.
Robert Kerr, via Building Design

Chris Williamson's brave move shines a light on the confusion that has arisen by the passing of the Building Safety Act in the realm of competence. In my view, the professional institutions involved in design need to be (re)affirmed as the sole controller of the competence of their members, and use of the title "architect" or "engineer" should only be legal if the professional is chartered. The government should abolish the ARB after making this change.

On the question of safety, the BSA should be amended to make chartered engineers responsible for making Building Regs applications. This would ensure that facades are properly engineered for safety/longevity and developers will no longer be able to cut corners by putting pressure on architects to incorporate inappropriate materials into rainscreen-type systems. This simple change might create the confidence for the government to remove the insanely bureaucratic gateway system.
Bernard Rimmer

An interesting stance to take in light of the plan for a single construction regulator. Perhaps the new regulator should be the "built environment council" that Chris Williamson suggests.
Chris Dixon, via Building Design

Royal Institute of British Architects – the clue is in the name. I cannot see how he can continue as president if he is not an architect.
Tom, via Building Design

This debate misses the wider trajectory now unfolding. In my own work in the construction sector most are unaware of the ARB, but they all know about the RIBA. That is simply a function of visibility. The RIBA has existed for nearly two centuries; the ARB has only existed since 1997 and is largely known only within the profession. As a result, RIBA membership already implies "architect", without the word ever needing to be stated.
Marcus Aurelius, via Building Design

I discussed this issue with a structural engineer colleague, who was surprised by the level of concern. In their view, not only is the role of "structural engineer" unprotected, but so is the title itself. Given the clear safety implications involved, that feels like a more immediate and pressing issue.
Chris Medland, via Building Design

IN BUSINESS SCOTT BROWNRIGG

‘THE UK HAS DONE NOTHING TO SUPPORT US’... SCOTT BROWNRIGG’S DARREN COMBER TAKES AIM AT GOVERNMENT POLICY

The practice’s chief executive talks to **Tom Lowe** about the government’s decision on a third Heathrow runway, the impact of Rachel Reeves’s tax policies on business and how the practice has managed to survive for a remarkable 115 years

Darren Comber became chief executive of Scott Brownrigg in 2011 – but only because no one else wanted the job, he says

SCOTT BROWNRIGG

Right: Darren Comber is critical of what he sees as the government's lack of business nous

Right middle, top: The Optic, Cambridge, provides 95,000ft² of lab-enabled workspace located on Peterhouse Technology Park

Right middle, bottom: Heathrow West, Scott Browrigg's alternative scheme for the expansion of the airport

Far right: Scott Brownrigg was architect and lead designer for the Vista Battersea project, a luxury residential development in south-west London

Scott Brownrigg recently celebrated its 115th anniversary, an impressive achievement not just for the architecture profession but for the construction industry as a whole. The firm has survived two world wars, 11 recessions, a near collapse in the 1990s and, most recently, the covid pandemic. This heritage gives it a legitimate claim to be the guardian of one of the most venerable brands in the built environment sector.

Last autumn, the practice launched a book, Scott Brownrigg: Architecture + Progression, charting the history of the practice and offering a few words of advice on how to maintain a business into its 12th decade. In his speech to 200 guests from across the industry at the book's buzzy launch party in Fitzrovia, the firm's chief executive Darren Comber spoke of the secret of enduring success as being "proactive rather than reactive" in the face of constant change.

Comber stood on the stage next to the man who had introduced him – Surinder Arora, the billionaire hotel magnate who had appointed Scott Brownrigg to design a £25bn alternative to Heathrow Airport's third runway expansion.

> ASK YOURSELF, WHY ARE WE DOING 50% OF OUR WORK OVERSEAS NOW, AND WE'RE TAKING OUR TALENTS ELSEWHERE? BECAUSE THE UK HAS DONE NOTHING TO SUPPORT US
>
> **DARREN COMBER, CEO, SCOTT BROWNRIGG**

At the time of the book launch, the government was in the final stages of deliberation between the proposal and the airport's own more expensive £49bn scheme, which featured a longer runway.

The project would have marked a symbolic return for Scott Brownrigg to the site of its heyday in the 1980s, when it was the second-biggest practice in the UK behind BDP. That decade saw a string of high-profile civic infrastructure projects, starting with Heathrow Terminal 4, completed in 1986, to Manchester Airport Terminal 2 in 1989 and the BBC White City broadcast centre in 1990.

It was not to be. At the end of November, the government announced it had picked the more expensive version of the runway expansion, despite concerns over the disruption that will be caused by the need to reroute the M25 to accommodate the scheme's 3.5km runway.

Building sat down with Comber at Scott Brownrigg's London headquarters in Covent Garden about four hours after the decision was

> IF WE SEE ANY MORE INCREASES IN NATIONAL INSURANCE AND INCOME TAX, THEN IT'S GOING TO BE QUITE PROBLEMATIC FOR EVERYBODY, BUT SPECIFICALLY FOR US AS A BUSINESS
>
> **DARREN COMBER**

announced. It is fair to say that the 52-year-old was somewhat frustrated by the government's choice. There have been promises, including from chancellor Rachel Reeves, that taxpayers will not foot the bill for the expansion, a claim Comber describes as "complete nonsense".

"Every time you fly, you're going to be paying," he says. "It's yet one more government stealth tax."

Then there is the issue of the disruption caused by the construction of the longer runway, a factor that Comber suggests the government has minimised out of political expediency. "The fact that, for the next 10 years, you and I are not going to be able to drive around the M25 [without disruption] – no one cares about that because this government won't actually have to address that."

For Comber, the decision feeds into his wider frustration with the government and what he sees as Reeves's lack of appreciation for what motivates businesses to invest. He is speaking the day before the autumn Budget, which included an extension of the freeze on national insurance and income tax by three years to 2031, coming on top of the 1.2% hike in employers' national insurance contributions announced last year.

"If we see any more increases in national insurance and income tax, then it's going to be quite problematic for everybody," Comber says. "But specifically for us as a business, that will impact everybody.

"Obviously people want to get paid more, but we won't have the funds to actually pay people more, because your margins will get slimmer and slimmer."

Comber's comments belie the fact that the practice has actually been doing relatively well in recent years. It was the third most profitable practice in the UK last year, while its turnover increased by 29% compared with the previous 12 months, from £21.7m to £27.9m.

Much of this was driven by a near fivefold increase in its turnover outside Europe, which rose from £2.4m to £11.5m.

Closer to home, the practice was a little less successful, with revenues falling from £17.6m to £15.8m in the UK and from £1.6m to £630,000 in Europe. Comber sees the figures partly as a result of a more investment-friendly business environment overseas.

"We need to see incentives for us to invest in the UK and do our work in the UK," he says. "Because ask yourself, why are we doing 50% of our work overseas now, and we're taking our talents elsewhere? Because the UK has done nothing to support us."

Growth story

The origins of Scott Brownrigg can be traced back to the firm founded by 28-year-old Annesley Harold Brownrigg in 1910. From 1918, after serving in the First World War as a major in the Royal Garrison Artillery, Brownrigg joined up with another architect, Leslie Hiscock, and started to expand the practice from its base in Guildford.

The firm grew in size over the following »

SCOTT BROWNRIGG; DANIEL HUNDVEN CLEMENTS

Right: Scott Brownrigg's Sea Breeze masterplan for a residential, cultural and commercial development is an 18km area of land alongside the coast of the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan

Right middle, top: Scott Brownrigg was architect for Shinfield Studios' creative media hub at the Thames Valley Science Park in Reading

Right middle, bottom: The University of Reading's first multidisciplinary overseas campus in Malaysia

Far right, top: Columbus Courtyard, Canary Wharf – the architect transformed an existing building into a life science and technology hub

Far right, bottom: Istanbul airport was designed by Grimshaw, Nordic Office of Architecture and Haptic Architects, while Scott Brownrigg served as the lead delivery architect for the terminal

» decades, adding Turner to its name in 1946 and then finally Scott in 1958 to form Scott Brownrigg and Turner, becoming known later as SBT.

At its height in the 1980s, SBT employed 400 people. Its decline, caused by a combination of the early 1990s recession and a quick succession of retiring partners taking money out of the business, was precipitous.

By 1995, when Comber joined as an entry-level architect, its staff count had plummeted to just 45 and it was £3m in debt, equivalent to £6.2m in 2025 prices. On the Friday of the week that he started, the practice received a letter from the bank threatening to shut the business down. The firm only survived because it had a job in Abu Dhabi on the artificial Al Lulu Island which had a £2m fee.

"So, we went to the bank and said, look, if you shut us down, we've got this £2m fee. You're going to get nothing because there's no money to take. Or you let us trade out of it, and you get your money," Comber recalls. "And that's what the bank did. And so the rest is history."

Rebuilding process

The practice was lucky to have an esteemed brand on which to rebuild, although that came with complications. In the early days, the firm's remaining staff went to great lengths to conceal its diminished size in an industry which assumed that it was still a behemoth, often resorting to drafting in friends to fill up the office when clients came to visit.

"We had like five people, but people thought we were like 500 still," Comber remembers. "I would ring up my friends and say 'what are you doing this afternoon. Are you close by?' … So we would literally fill it up with people.

"Clients would go, 'it's really busy, isn't it, your office'. And we'd go, 'yeah, normally it's busier than this, but everyone's at lunch'."

Despite the staff being untroubled by the prospect of a pay rise during the lean years, Comber stuck at it. Was he ever tempted to leave? "I liked the people I worked with," he says.

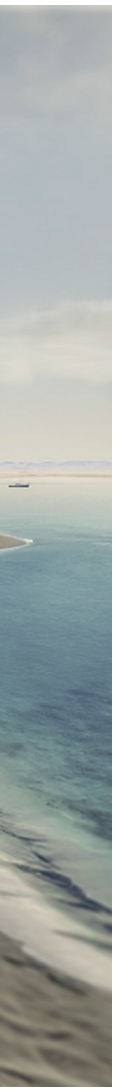
"We all had a common goal, and we thought, do you know what? We've got a brand that was once something. It's now not. We've got a real opportunity to turn that brand into a global brand again. So it was kind of exciting for us".

The more he invested himself in the business, the more he felt he had personally created and the less he wanted to leave. Comber says he never felt a strong urge to set up his own practice with his name above the door: "I never had that sort of sense that that was my calling. I didn't have that ego," he adds.

At the age of 27, five years after joining SBT, Comber became the youngest-ever member of the firm's board. A decade later he was chief executive, a job he says he was only offered because nobody else wanted to do it.

It was 2011 and by this time the firm's position had improved, with around 200 staff now on the payroll. But, with the recession in full swing, everyone knew the chief executive job would involve difficult decisions on redundancies. "At those sorts of times, you are literally no one's friend," Comber recalls.

If readers of Scott Brownrigg's new book are wondering why the practice chose to



commemorate its 115th year rather than, say, the more obvious figure of 100 years, this is because "no one had the appetite for it" in 2010. Plans to mark the 110th anniversary were then derailed by covid, and were not revived until two years ago, when the practice started to put together materials for the weighty, 239-page hardback, which tells the story of the practice from its founding to the modern day, including its plans for Heathrow with Arora Group.

The practice now employs around 200 people across eight offices, four in the UK – in London, Guildford, Cardiff and Edinburgh – and four overseas, in New York, Singapore, Riyadh and Amsterdam. Its biggest sectors in recent years have included life sciences, with the practice securing planning approval for a string of laboratory projects across the Oxford-Cambridge arc including a £150m scheme at Oxford Science Park. Its biggest growth sectors include data centres, central to the AI boom, and advanced tech schemes including hydroponic towers for vertical farming.

> WE'RE BIG ENOUGH TO COMPETE WITH THE BIGGEST AND BEST IN THE WORLD, YET WE'RE NOT SO BIG THAT IT'S KIND OF LIKE, GET ANOTHER PROJECT, CHUCK IT ON THE FIRE
>
> **DARREN COMBER, CEO, SCOTT BROWNRIGG**

The next decade

Where does Comber see the practice going in the next 10 years? He is reluctant to drive too much growth, preferring to keep the practice closer to what he describes as its £30m-turnover "sweet spot".

"We don't feel that we need to be in a position where we've got to be 1,000-strong to go up against some of the big US corporates," he says.

Comber says his experiences of working in the practice at times when it has been bigger have not always been positive. "You take work which sometimes you don't really want, because you know that you have just got to keep feeding the machine. We don't want to be like that."

"We're quite happy with where we are. We're big enough to compete with the biggest and best in the world, yet we're not so big that it's kind of like, get another project, chuck it on the fire."

After the firm's seesawing fortunes over the previous three decades, an experience that Comber describes as being like working for "five or six different practices", he is now appreciating a bit of stability. "We're planing now," he says, comparing the practice in its current state to a speed boat.

"We've got out of the choppy water and we're doing some really lovely things. And we're enjoying it like, 'wow, this feels so much better'."

SCOTT BROWNRIGG; AARON POCOCK PHOTOGRAPGHY

COULD YORK CENTRAL BE THE MODEL THAT SOLVES THE HOUSING VIABILITY PROBLEM?

A long-abandoned site next to York Station and double the size of King's Cross Central is being transformed through a public-private partnership that de-risks the project for joint venture developer McLaren Property and Arlington Real Estate, thanks to £135m of public sector infrastructure investment. **Thomas Lane** reports

The site is enclosed by railway lines with the only existing access under a small, low bridge at the bottom right side of the image. The masterplan was drawn up by Allies and Morrison and has outline planning permission. The more recent detailed planning application for the first phase includes commercial buildings near the station and 1,000 homes towards the far end of the site. The later phases are greyed out

Sitting right next to York station is a site that is 60% of the size of the old, walled city centre. It has been empty and largely unused since the glory days of steam power.

Just a five-minute walk from the city walls, what makes the fact that this site has been abandoned for so long all the more remarkable is the city is desperate for somewhere to build in order to meet demand for more commercial premises and housing.

This site extends to 45 hectares, which is double the size of Argent's King's Cross Central development in central London, and would go a long way towards providing the space to meet that demand. Like King's Cross Central, this site belongs to Network Rail and was used for storing coal, housing water tanks and as a place to park railway rolling stock.

Not for much longer. Work has started on preparing the ground to transform this site into a new city quarter which will include up to 3,000 homes and 1.4 million ft² of commercial space. Called York Central, the site has outline planning permission, with the reserved matters application, which defines the detail of the first phase of the scheme, having been submitted in mid December.

> WE HAVE GOT A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY FOR A SITE NEXT TO A RAILWAY STATION ON A PUBLICLY OWNED SITE WITH PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE ALREADY IN THE GROUND
>
> **EDWARD TWIDDY, CO-FOUNDER OF ATOM BANK AND ADVISER TO THE TREASURY**

The development is a good example of how the public and private sectors can work together to unlock sites such as York Central. The scheme is a public-private partnership between Network Rail and Homes England, and a joint venture between developers McLaren Property and Arlington Real Estate.

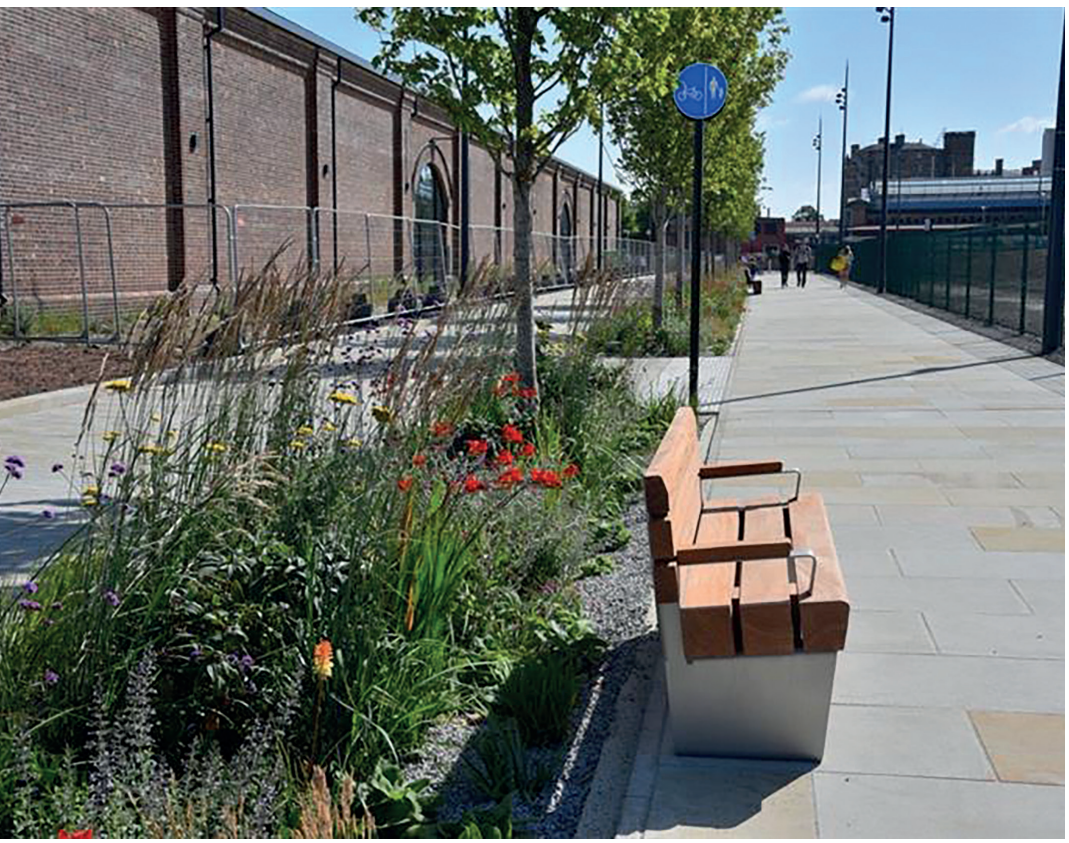
Homes England, York council and the West Yorkshire combined authority have invested £135m into the infrastructure needed to make the site more accessible and secured outline planning approval.

The reason the site has lain abandoned for so long is that the only access was via a narrow, height-restricted bridge on Leeman Road under the railway lines at the south-eastern corner of the site near York Station. Homes England has provided the funding for the construction of a new bridge over the East Coast Main Line, which will link the other end of the site to Water End and the A59.

While this bridge has yet to be built, the road linking it to the site is finished and in use, with access to the city currently under the height-restricted bridge. There will also be a new pedestrian bridge.

Other improvements include closing a section of Leeman Road in front of the National Railway Museum, which is adjacent to the old bridge. The museum will provide a cultural element to the development, broadening its appeal. It is undergoing a major reorganisation, including new buildings to provide more space and a better experience for visitors. »

YORK CENTRAL / ALLIES AND MORRISON



» Traffic will be diverted onto the new road to access the other end of the site, allowing a new public square complete with cafes to be created in front of the museum. Homes England has also provided funding for Hudson Boulevard, a pedestrian and cycling route through the site which will feature attractive landscaping.

This public sector investment and outline planning approval takes much of the risk out of developing such a scheme, making it a far more viable proposition than one where the developer has to take planning risk and pay for all the upfront costs of infrastructure before getting any return on investment. This made it very appealing to the JV, as non-executive director and adviser Edward Twiddy, who is the co-founder of Atom Bank and adviser to the Treasury, explains:

"This is a strategic site for Homes England and Network Rail, so there is an opportunity for us to look at how to make sure the site remains viable – and they get the return that they are looking for, while also balancing off the price that we have to present to the market," he says. "We have got a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a site next to a railway station on a publicly owned site with public infrastructure already in the ground.

"This presents us with a wholly different

Far left: The first phase of the scheme will include 1,000 homes designed by several different architects. This scheme is by Haworth Tompkins

Middle: Commercial and retail space surrounds the public square

Left: York Central is being developed by a joint venture between Arlington Real Estate, which is headed by Allan Cook (left), and McLaren Regeneration, whose managing director is Tom Gilman (right)

Far left, bottom: A linear park runs through the site connecting the National Railway Museum on the south-eastern side to the north of the site. This includes Hudson Boulevard, a pedestrian and cycle route

equation than in other places, where people are dealing with sites that have not yet been provisioned and are having to wait for electricity connection – or whatever it is that's giving them additional costs – before they can start on site. Fortunately, that's not the situation for us.

"The JV is basically there to build on top of a substantial investment by the public sector in the land and in the infrastructure that's required for us to get the site away."

Another big benefit for the developer is the JV buying the land from the landowners plot by plot as the site is developed, which saves it from having to pay interest on loans to purchase a whole site that could take decades to build out. The JV takes the risk on the reserved matters application, potential problems in the ground and getting funding, and general development risk such as market conditions.

The JV was appointed as developer with the masterplan already in place, as this was necessary for outline planning. Drawn up by Allies and Morrison, the architect was retained by the JV and has refined its masterplan to match their aspirations.

Two multistorey car parks which were included for commercial occupiers have been removed, allowing the commercial element to be increased by 40% from 1 million ft² to 1.4 million ft². Allan Cook, the managing director of Arlington Real Estate, says the long development timeline of York Central means the masterplan can flex according to changing circumstances. "This is going to be delivered over a number of phases," he says. "If we are wrong, and need more parking, we've still got the flexibility in later phases to incorporate it."

> WE DON'T WANT THIS TO BE A LITTLE ISLAND OF PRIVILEGE THAT THE PEOPLE OF YORK DON'T REALLY THINK IS FOR THEM. THIS NEEDS TO BE FOR ANYBODY AND EVERYBODY IN YORK
> **ALLAN COOK, MANAGING DIRECTOR, ARLINGTON REAL ESTATE**

The total number of homes has also been increased from 2,500 units to up to 3,000 units. There is a section 106 20% affordable housing requirement, but Tom Gilman, managing director of McLaren Regeneration, says the JV – and the public sector partners – would like to go above this regulatory minimum.

"We have an aspiration, which is shared by Homes England and the council, to increase the amount of affordable housing," he says. "Through negotiation with Homes England, we're trying to push the amount of affordable housing up to 40%, although that is clearly dependent on the commercial deal we do with Homes England as a registered provider."

The extra costs of additional affordable housing will be met by mechanisms that could include reduced land prices or a direct grant from Homes England.

Other tweaks included reducing the height of some of the housing blocks from 20m to just under 18m to remove the potential delays of going through the Building Safety Regulator gateway process. Gilman says this was easily accommodated as it meant losing just one floor from some of the blocks, which could be made up elsewhere.

There will be plenty of public space. Hudson Boulevard forms part of a linear park running through the site as far as the National Railway Museum. The old railway lines used for moving rolling stock also extend this far and will be retained, allowing attractions such as the »

YORK CENTRAL / THE COLLECTIVE; HOMES ENGLAND

Right: The apartment blocks in this image were designed by architect Cartwright Pickard

Far right: The current car park next to the back entrance to York Station will become a public square designed by Grant Associates. The area will include commercial and retail space

WHO WILL LIVE AND WORK AT YORK CENTRAL?

York is a beautiful city in a great location with plenty of cultural activities, shops and restaurants. This makes it a popular – and expensive – place to live. York Central will boost the availability of housing in the city and, if the developers and public sector backers achieve their aspiration of 40% affordable housing, should help lower-paid people to find homes, especially as 80% of that figure is social rental.

"One of the things that we agreed was we don't want this to be a little island of privilege that the people of York don't really think is for them," says Arlington Real Estate's Allan Cook. "This needs to be for anybody and everybody in York.

"We think the affordable housing element is the critical piece that should make it affordable for someone leaving university or leaving school, or somebody who's selling up in London to move back home again."

York is also short of commercial space, with Edward Twiddy citing research commissioned by York Central that this is holding the city's economy back. He says that York is unusual in having a highly skilled population with a skills base comparable to Cambridge. Yet York's gross value added per person is on a par with Sheffield or Newcastle, not Cambridge.

"One of the key things we found is that the central business district in York is, frankly, non-existent," Twiddy says. "Business activity and the commercial property offer is dispersed and lower quality and quantity than other northern cities.

"This has actually fallen as a proportion of the city's built environment over the last 15 years. Consequently, it appears that the planning constraints of the medieval city of York have been a barrier to its growth – not the people, which is normally the case."

The new business district at York Central combined with the dark fibre network, data centre and excellent transport connections should, hopefully, change that.

» Flying Scotsman steam locomotive to be exhibited at the museum.

The new square by the museum will extend up to the railway station and will be built over the existing station car park. A new multistorey car park is being built as part of Network Rail's York Station improvements.

The commercial elements of the scheme are clustered around the station end of the development, with the residential parts of the scheme focused on the Water End section of the site. The commercial district will include a hotel, an innovation centre and the Government Property Agency.

Gilman hopes the scheme will also include a data centre, because Network Rail's largest operating centre is located in York and sits over a dark fibre network – which is an ideal location for a data centre because of very fast internet with low latency. "We are looking at a local data centre network in this location, which can then help businesses to operate here," he says. "It's a big tick in the box for occupiers.

"But what it also does is provide heat. We can use that heat, for heating homes at a reduced cost from the open market value of gas."

Gilman is sufficiently confident about the data centre that the scheme is being designed to take advantage of the waste heat, which will also help the sustainability credentials of the project.

The scheme will be built out in phases, with the ambition to complete the whole project in the mid to late 2030s. The first phase comprises 30% of the overall plan.

The museum square and Government Property Agency building, which was designed by Sheppard Robson, already have planning approval. The new application covers the rest of the first phase including the hotel, which has been designed by 3D Reid, the public square by the station, the Allies and Morrison-designed innovation hub, and 1,000 homes which will be split between build to rent and market sale, including section 106 homes.

The homes have been designed by

Corstophine & Wright, Cartwright Pickard and Haworth Tompkins. Grant Associates is responsible for the landscaping and Arup, Buro Happold and Gardiner & Theobald are also working on the scheme.

To ensure that York Central does not get bogged down by planning delays, the JV has entered into a planning performance agreement with the council which allows the JV to fund additional planners to deal with other applications, allowing the core team, who know the area, to focus on York Central. Gilman and Cook expect the planning process to take six months and hope to put spades in the ground in September 2026.

This gives the JV time to get funding and put build contracts in place, with the aspiration to get this phase completed by 2029.

Could York Central be a model for other major developments? Twiddy doubts that it is a good model for new towns, but thinks it is ideal for other brownfield sites.

"It's certainly a model for other sites on railway land, where you are looking at mixed development, and dealing with access, remediation and putting infrastructure into the ground," he says.

> WE ARE LOOKING AT A LOCAL DATA CENTRE NETWORK IN THIS LOCATION, WHICH CAN THEN HELP BUSINESSES TO OPERATE HERE. IT'S A BIG TICK IN THE BOX FOR OCCUPIERS
>
> **TOM GILMAN, MANAGING DIRECTOR, McLAREN REGENERATION**

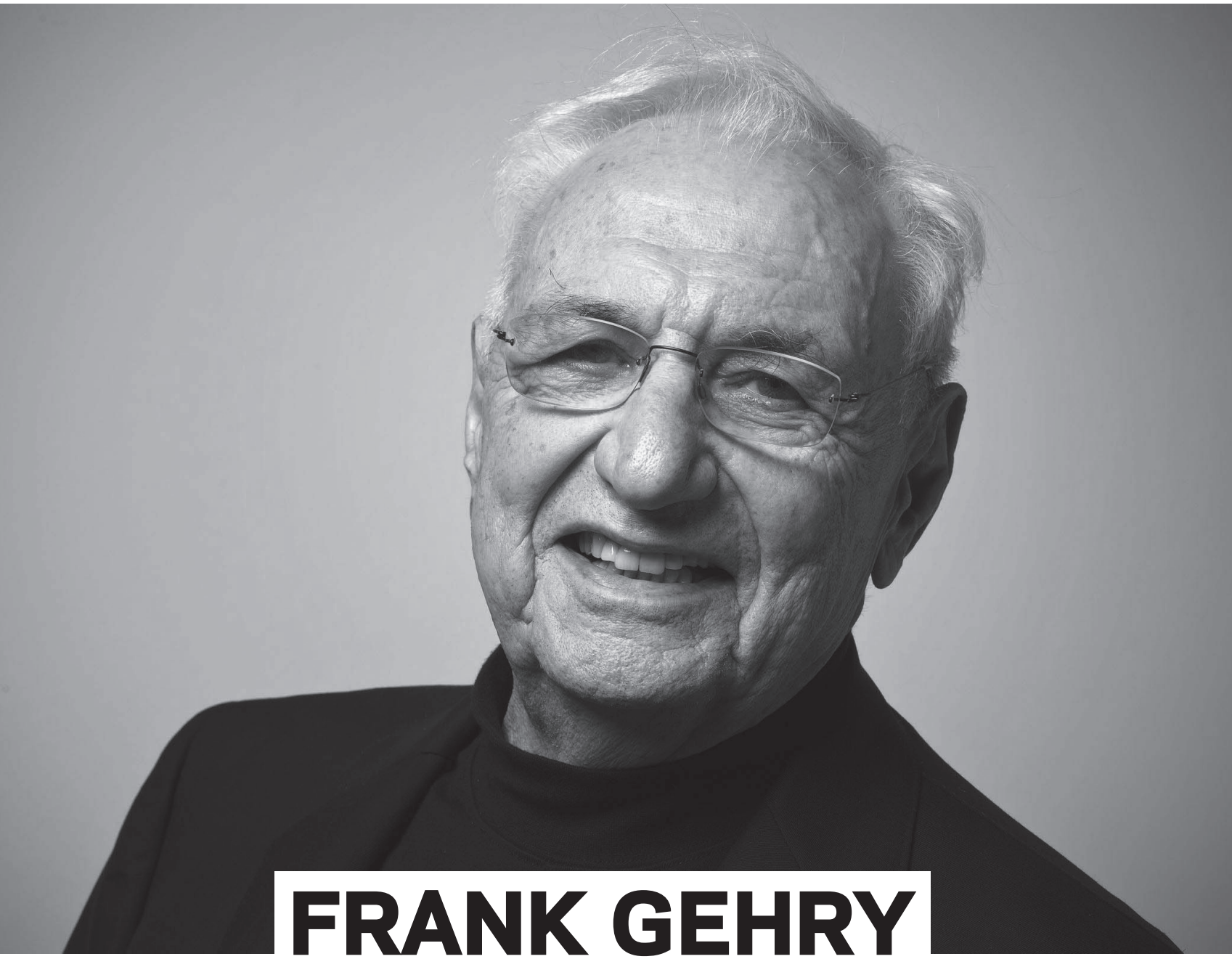
"If you are dealing with a greenfield site for a new town, then I think a lot of the issues that York Central has had to deal with will be much less relevant."

Similar schemes to York Central include Temple Meads Quarter, the area around Bristol Temple Meads Station which is a partnership between Network Rail, Homes England, Bristol council and the West of England combined authority. There are aspirations to build 10,000 homes on the 135ha site.

Network Rail and Homes England are also using the York Central model in Newcastle to develop the Forth Good Yards site, which is part of the wider Forth Yards development and will be built on the site of a former leadworks. The 50ha site has enough space for 2,500 homes and a developer is currently being sought to build the initial tranche of 1,100 homes.

While this model cannot deliver all the 1.5 million new homes the government wants, it is a great example of public and private sectors leveraging their respective resources and skills to build homes on forgotten, derelict land where people actually want to live.

YORK CENTRAL / THE COLLECTIVE



FRANK GEHRY
FROM LOS ANGELES EXPERIMENTALIST TO THE ARCHITECT OF THE BILBAO EFFECT

Ben Flatman examines how Gehry's work evolved from local, materially driven invention into one of the most recognisable architectural vocabularies of his generation

HIS COURAGE TO CHALLENGE TRADITION SHAPED SKYLINES AND MINDS ALIKE, SETTING A NEW STANDARD FOR CREATIVITY IN OUR FIELD. FRANK'S LEGACY LIVES ON IN EVERY ARCHITECT HE INSPIRES AND EVERY CITY FOREVER CHANGED BY HIS WORK

STEPHEN AYERS, INTERIM CEO OF AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

Dancing House, Prague

Luma Tower, Arles

Frank Gehry, who has died aged 96, was one of the few architects whose buildings became part of global popular culture. From his own house in Santa Monica to the glinting upturned hulls of the Guggenheim Bilbao, his work reshaped expectations of what a building could look like and what it could do for a city. He turned architecture into spectacle and, for better and worse, into a brand.

Over time his language hardened into a repertoire that clients could order almost off the shelf. The architect who once wrapped a cheap timber house in chain link and corrugated metal would end up providing the global art market and luxury brands with ever more elaborate vessels for culture and consumption. Yet for all the fame and the titanium billows, Gehry's most lasting legacy may lie in earlier, smaller projects where the work still feels close to the specifics of place.

Los Angeles beginnings

Frank Owen Goldberg was born in Toronto in 1929 to a Polish-Jewish mother, who had emigrated from Łódź, and an American father, Irving Goldberg, whose parents were Russian-Jewish immigrants. His childhood interest in the built environment was partly shaped by his grandmother, Leah Caplan, who encouraged him to build small cities out of the offcuts and scraps brought home from his grandfather's hardware store. Hours spent assembling these improvised models on the living room floor formed his earliest experience of making spaces and imagining buildings.

The family moved to Los Angeles in 1947. In the 1950s he changed his surname from Goldberg to Gehry, a decision not uncommon among Jewish Americans at a time when »

LIONEL BONAVENTURE / GETTY IMAGES; SHUTTERSTOCK

14 INTERVIEW

GEHRY REVISITED

In 1972 *BD* published the first interview with the up-and-coming Frank Gehry. Twenty-two years on Peter Murray retraces his tracks to see how Gehry has fulfilled his promise.

Twenty-two years ago *Building Design* published the first recorded interview with Frank Gehry in a British magazine. At that time he was little known outside the States. He had designed a few houses and a range of curvilinear furniture cut out of blocks of corrugated cardboard. In 1972 I went to Los Angeles to write a series of articles for *BD* on West Coast architecture and architects. I contacted Gehry on the recommendation of Michael Davies, now partner of Richard Rogers, who was then completing a master's at UCLA before he moved to Paris to work on the Pompidou Centre.

Davies assured me that Gehry was an architect to watch. Then, his main contribution to the architecture of Los Angeles was the Danziger House designed in 1965. This simple rendered house of a windowless interlocking cube and double cube sits on Melrose Avenue, a fashionable shopping street in West Hollywood. It is highly restrained, particularly in view of Gehry's later work. The orthogonal forms and geometric steel windows have a resonance with the Californian tradition of Schindler and Neutra. It is in good shape today and has aged much better than others of the period. In the seventies Gehry worked in a spacious open studio with few visible staff, and his chair shapes spread around the floor – more like a workshop than an office.

Recently I returned to LA for the opening of the Royal Academy's exhibition Contemporary British Architects that forms a part of the LA UK Festival. While there I took the opportunity to see how Gehry had lived up to Davies's recommendation. Today he works from larger premises in Santa Monica which were hit by the recent earthquake and he is keen to move to a fault-free zone.

It is rumoured he is hoping to get a building in Conjunctive Points – the trendy area of Culver City under development by Renaissance man Frederick Smith who has been commissioning Eric O Moss to deconstruct industrial sheds and turn them into studios and offices for a creative mixture of occupants including film people, designers, ballet companies, as well as mathematicians and physicians.

Culver City has, so far, been quake-free. The Gehry office is now sixty-five-strong, with eleven support staff. His relations with the outside world are handled by a communications officer whose role seems more one of protection than communication. Gehry's working methods still have the air of the workshop about them. He designs with models, with cut-out wooden shapes and with sketches. Once he is satisfied with a design, the models and sketches are passed on to others to be drawn up and made to work. In the old days Gehry was free with his renderings. Today, an assistant whisks away each sketch and a photocopy only is passed to any outside consultants who are working on a project. The originals are carefully filed for posterity.

The biggest job in the office at the moment is the Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, although Gehry is rather gloomy about it because of funding problems and accusations that it is $50 million over budget. The car park has been completed, but that is all. The concert hall is set within a dramatic limestone shell of overlapping, curving shapes. Calculating the curves on the external facings is a major task, that makes the analysis of the Sydney Opera House seem like child's play. Steel fixings behind the limestone are also highly complex – a tough job to keep within the limit of sensible costs.

Other buildings in Los Angeles on the drawing board include the Mighty Ducks Rink for the new Disney-backed ice hockey team, a building for Loyola Law School (for which Gehry designed the masterplan in 1982) and an office building.

Internationally, the Gehry office is working on a housing project and a technology centre in Germany, an office building in the Czech Republic, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and the Montreal Museum of Decorative Arts. There is no doubt that Los Angeles is one of the high points on the current world architectural scene and its liveliness is due in no small measure to Gehry's influence. As James Steele comments in his excellent book *The Contemporary Condition – The Architecture of Los Angeles* (Phaidon): "Any discussion of contemporary architecture in Los Angeles must include Frank Gehry, who is the lodestone which others use to navigate whether in a similar or opposite direction."

He describes Gehry as "the widely acknowledged medium for the psyche of Los Angeles, and sometimes more to successive generations of its architects". Since the completion of his own house in Santa Monica in 1978 (recently updated to match his changing life pattern) with its clashing, angular, deconstructive add-ons to a suburban bungalow, he has inspired a generation of Gehry's kids of which Eric O Moss is currently the most fashionable.

In an interesting recent case Moss and developer Smith won a claim that he should be exempt from paying the obligatory one per cent for art on the basis that the architect was an artist. This approach provides an interesting contrast with Gehry's collaboration with artists. The Chiat Day building in Venice is the most successful integration of work by artist and architect of recent times. The giant binoculars by Claes Oldenburg that form the entrance to the car park sit between an almost conventional white building and the expressionist executive offices constructed to form abstract trees designed to evoke the forests that once stood on the site.

Chiat Day is one of the few office buildings that appear in Steele's comprehensive volume. Most of the work illustrated is houses, a few educational buildings and the odd museum. The building boom of the eighties in downtown and century city remained the prerogative of the SOM, Pei Cobb Freed & Partners and firms of that ilk. Gehry's kids have yet to move into the large-scale projects, and while the present economic situation obtains – local architects seem even more gloomy about their economy than we do over here – things are likely to stay that way.

Chiat Day headquarters, Los Angeles.

Danziger House.

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HART

BUILDING DESIGN OCTOBER 14 1994

Far left: Frank Gehry (right) with Peter Eisenman (left) and Philip Johnson (centre) in New York in 1991

Left: BD's 1994 article recalling Peter Murray's 1972 interview with Frank Gehry

Right top: Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao

Right bottom: Maggie's Centre, Dundee

FOR THE GENERATIONS OF ARCHITECTS INSPIRED BY HIS WORK, FRANK GEHRY'S MEMORY WILL ALWAYS REMIND US TO THINK BOLDLY, DREAM ENDLESSLY, AND CREATE WITH COURAGE

NORMAN FOSTER'S TRIBUTE TO FRANK GEHRY

» antisemitism remained a barrier in professional life. He later said he regretted it, and in later years sought more actively to embrace his Jewish identity.

In Los Angeles he studied architecture at the University of Southern California, where the stripped modernism of figures such as Raphael Soriano left its mark, even if he later pulled hard away from modernist orthodoxies. A short spell studying planning at Harvard followed, after which he returned to California and went to work for Victor Gruen, the Austrian-born pioneer of the American shopping mall. Here Gehry saw at first hand how architecture served the new suburban economy, packaging shopping and leisure as a managed interior world.

He opened his own office in Los Angeles in 1962. Early work such as the Danziger Studio on Melrose Avenue, completed in the mid 1960s, consisted of simple rendered cubed forms. The project that first drew serious attention in Britain, when Peter Murray interviewed him for Building Design in 1972, showed none of the later swoops and curls.

In these years Gehry moved in a circle of Los Angeles artists, among them Ron Davis, Ed Ruscha and Claes Oldenburg. Their work with collage, found materials and deliberate roughness fed directly into his architecture.

Santa Monica house and the artists' city

The turning point was his own house in Santa Monica, bought in 1977 and reworked over the next year. Gehry took a modest timber home and wrapped it in new layers of structure and skin: plywood, corrugated metal, exposed joists, tilted glass and lengths of chain link fencing more usually seen around car parks. Parts of the original house were left visible inside this new carapace, so that old and new jarred together. Neighbours were appalled, but for younger architects and critics the house became a manifesto for a more open, improvisatory way of building.

The house crystallised ideas he had been testing in small projects across southern California. It drew on the makeshift character of Los Angeles itself: a city of fragments, signage, service yards and provisional structures. It also owed a debt to the west coast funk art scene, treating cheap materials as a legitimate starting point for serious work rather than as something to be hidden.

Gehry always rejected the neat theoretical labels that others tried to pin on him, but by the late 1980s his work was inevitably folded into the narrative of deconstructivism. The 1988 Deconstructivist Architecture exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art, curated by Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley, grouped him with Peter Eisenman, Zaha Hadid, Rem Koolhaas and Daniel Libeskind as part of a loose tendency towards fragmentation and controlled disorder. Gehry insisted he was simply following the logic of his models, while Johnson and Wigley saw the show less as defining a style than as a deliberate provocation, intended to unsettle a discipline they believed had drifted into predictability and caution.

Vitra, Prague and the European turn

Gehry's first European project was the Vitra Design Museum at Weil am Rhein, completed in 1989. The campus had begun with Nicholas Grimshaw's crisp factory shed; Gehry's addition was something else entirely. White rendered forms twist and collide under zinc roofs, a small museum that reads as frozen movement. It was his first European building and signalled a shift from the raw bricolage of Los Angeles towards a more sculptural, self-conscious language.

A series of projects followed in the early 1990s that showed him testing how far this approach could stretch. In Venice, Los Angeles, the Chiat Day offices, completed in 1991, incorporated a huge binoculars sculpture by Oldenburg and

FRANK GEHRY – WHO POSSESSED AN UNPARALLELED GIFT FOR SHAPING FORMS, PLEATING GLASS LIKE CANVAS, MAKING IT DANCE LIKE A SILHOUETTE – WILL LONG ENDURE AS A LIVING SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR LOUIS VUITTON

BERNARD ARNAULT, LVMH, TRIBUTE TO FRANK GEHRY

Coosje van Bruggen on the street front, the everyday office floors slipping in behind. The building, now part of Google's campus, was a wry fusion of art and commerce.

In Prague he produced one of his most persuasive European works. The so-called Dancing House, designed in collaboration with Vlado Milunić for the Dutch insurer Nationale Nederlanden and completed in 1996, sets a swaying glazed tower against a more solid rendered block. It acknowledges the party walls and cornice line of the riverside, picking up something of the city's baroque idiom while developing its own, more contemporary rhythm. In a newly post-communist city, the building's humour and lightness felt politically as well as architecturally pointed.

Bilbao, Disney and the age of digital form

The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, opened in 1997, changed not only Gehry's career but also the political economy of architecture. The museum's billowing titanium surfaces and looping internal promenades were developed from handmade cardboard and paper models, which were then digitised using advanced aerospace software. Gehry was among the first architects to understand how such tools could turn complex curves into buildable form, and through Gehry Technologies he helped bring that capability into mainstream practice.

Bilbao did more than show off a new geometry. It became the emblem of a wider shift in which cities sought salvation in cultural flagships and global tourism. The so-called Bilbao effect, in which a single spectacular building was expected to relaunch a moribund city, turned architects into key players in the global competition for attention, investment and visitors. Gehry found himself at the centre of this new economy, whether he liked it or not.

More than any other building of its era, the Guggenheim Bilbao became a kind of visual shorthand for the city itself. Long before social media turned architecture into global currency, its titanium folds circulated through newspapers, guidebooks and travel supplements as a readymade symbol of reinvention. The building's image travelled faster and further than the art it contained, fixing Bilbao in the public imagination and demonstrating how a single work of architecture could stand in for an entire place.

The Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles, conceived in the late 1980s and completed in 2003 after a long and difficult gestation, is often read as a twin to Bilbao, though in fact it was designed first. The two buildings share a common language of flowing metal surfaces and tightly choreographed interiors, but at Disney this vocabulary is tied back to the city that shaped him, with curling stainless steel volumes wrapped around a »

SHUTTERSTOCK

Right: Prospect Park, Battersea – one of Gehry's few UK projects was his two-block Prospect Place residential scheme at Battersea Power Station

Below: Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles

Middle: The Binoculars Building is Google's campus in Los Angeles

Far right: Norman Foster and Frank Gehry celebrating together at the opening of Gehry's Luma cultural complex in the south of France

» warm, timber-lined auditorium. Here the approach finds one of its most convincing expressions, rooted in a place that Gehry understood intimately.

Maggie's and the quieter projects

If Bilbao and Disney defined Gehry for the wider public, the small Maggie's Centre he designed at Ninewells Hospital in Dundee, opened in 2003, shows another side of his work. Influenced by the traditional Scottish "but and ben" cottage, it resembles a small white house under a folded metal roof, opening to generous views over the Tay. It is domestic and precise, a rare moment when his sculptural impulses sit comfortably within a small building shaped by landscape and use. A decade later he followed it with another Maggie's in Hong Kong, a pavilion inspired by traditional Chinese architecture and arranged around gardens and terraces.

These quieter works are reminders that Gehry could still pare back when the brief demanded, a side of his output sometimes overshadowed by the otherwise growing sense of spectacle.

The 2008 Serpentine Pavilion translated Gehry's familiar interest in layered surfaces and improvised structure into a temporary timber and glass shelter in Kensington Gardens. Its translucent canopy and timber-clad supports framed a central gathering space, providing a brief London outing for the processes that shaped his larger work.

HIS VISIONARY APPROACH TO ARCHITECTURE TRANSFORMED SKYLINES AROUND THE WORLD AND INSPIRED GENERATIONS OF DESIGNERS TO THINK MORE BOLDLY AND COMPASSIONATELY ABOUT THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

US PRACTICE GENSLER

Brand Gehry and the problem of repetition

As digital tools improved and global capital sought icons, Gehry's language spread across the world. Residential towers in New York, brick folds in Sydney, a museum of pop culture in Seattle and a neurological centre in Las Vegas each took the familiar ingredients and recombined them. The results were energetic and at times exhilarating, but there was also a growing sense of déjà vu.

The Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris, opened in 2014 for Bernard Arnault's LVMH group, is in many ways the emblem of this late phase. A solid concrete core, the so-called iceberg, is wrapped in vast glass sails that rise above the Bois de Boulogne, a literal vessel for luxury. Technically it is highly complex, with double curved panels and a forest of engineered timber and steel. Yet the visual effect feels like a reworking of known moves, this time in the direct service of a global brand whose own logo incorporates Gehry's squiggle.

The Luma tower in Arles, completed in 2021 for the Luma arts foundation, compounds this unease. A jagged stainless steel shaft rising above the low roofs of the city, it is justified by reference to Van Gogh's paintings and local geology. It reads more as an assertion of authorship than a response to brief and site. It is hard to escape the sense that, at this late stage, the Gehry studio had become detached from place and programme and begun to produce work that was a commodity in its own right.

In this Gehry was far from alone. His generation helped define the architecture of globalisation, as cultural institutions and corporations alike sought distinctive silhouettes to mark their presence in the world's cities. Gehry's early insistence on the specificities of Los Angeles sat uneasily with a later career in which similar formal vocabularies appeared in widely different contexts, often at the service of the very wealthy and cultural tourism.

Rage, rigour and legacy

Gehry was acutely aware of the charge that his buildings were about spectacle. At a press conference in Spain in 2014, asked what he would say to those who dismissed his work as showy, he snapped. He told reporters that 98% of what was built in the world was, in his view, "pure shit", accused the question of being stupid, and raised his middle finger before explaining that only a small number of people were trying to do something worthwhile. He later apologised and blamed jetlag, having just flown in from the opening of his Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris, but the episode revealed how sharply he felt such criticism.

Behind the response was a real sense of grievance. Gehry saw himself as working painstakingly with models, collaborators and clients who cared, and he bristled at any suggestion that he was simply chasing attention.

However, the longer his career went on, the harder it became to separate the architect from the brand. He appeared in the Simpsons and lent his now familiar curves to ever more far-flung commissions. Yet the story is not simply one of self-parody. Across six decades of work he showed that architecture could be both tough and playful, and technically exacting.

For younger architects, the most inspiring part of Gehry's legacy may not be the crystallised brand of Fondation Louis Vuitton or Luma, but the restless figure in a modest Los Angeles office, cutting and taping scraps of card, asking what more might be made from ordinary materials and an awkward corner site.

CHARLIE ROUND-TURNER; BENNY MARTY; SHUTTERSTOCK; NORMAN FOSTER FOUNDATION

HOW CAN **WALES** BUILD THE HOMES THAT IT NEEDS?

At a Building the Future Think Tank regional roundtable in Cardiff, industry leaders warned that Wales' push for affordable, low carbon homes risks stalling unless policy, funding, infrastructure and skills are better co-ordinated. With ambition in place, the challenge now is turning strategy into delivery

"The ambition is there in Wales," said Catherine Griffith-Williams, chief executive of Construction Excellence in Wales, "but ambition on its own doesn't deliver homes." That observation framed the final discussion in the 2025 Building the Future Think Tank regional roundtables tour, run in partnership with Constructing Excellence, Gleeds and Fenwick Elliott.

Held in central Cardiff and chaired by Building deputy editor Carl Brown, the session brought together public and private sector leaders to examine how Wales can accelerate the delivery of affordable, low carbon housing while navigating land constraints, rising costs and increasingly complex policy demands.

Wales faces a well-documented housing crisis. Demand for affordable and social housing continues to outstrip supply, even as the Welsh government targets 20,000 new low carbon homes for social rent by 2026. At the same time, national commitments to net zero by 2050, reinforced through planning policy and building regulations, are reshaping expectations around how homes are designed, built and retrofitted.

> WHEN POLICY, PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE MOVE AT DIFFERENT SPEEDS, IT BECOMES MUCH HARDER TO INVEST AT SCALE
>
> **CENYDD ROWLANDS, DEVELOPMENT BANK OF WALES**

What emerged from the discussion was not a lack of intent, but a growing concern that fragmentation across planning, funding, infrastructure and delivery is slowing progress at precisely the moment greater co-ordination is required.

Pressure on delivery from all sides

There was a clear sense around the table that public bodies are being asked to deliver more, faster and to a higher standard, often without funding, land or procurement models aligning with that ambition.

Rising costs were repeatedly cited as a major constraint. Shane Jay, project director at Lovell, warned that viability is becoming increasingly fragile. "Material inflation hasn't gone away," he said. "When you combine that with higher sustainability standards, schemes can tip very quickly from viable to undeliverable."

That pressure is felt particularly acutely in affordable housing, where margins are already tight. Stuart Jones, regional development director at Wates Group, noted that while the sector is committed to low carbon delivery, cost certainty remains elusive. "We all support the direction of travel," he said. "But we need mechanisms that recognise the additional

ATTENDEES

Chair: **Carl Brown**, deputy editor of Building
Andrew Dobbs, director of LiteSteps Consulting
Mike Edmonds, director of construction management consultancy at Altmore Partnership
Catherine Griffith-Williams, chief executive of Construction Excellence in Wales
Mark Harris, planning and policy adviser for Wales at the Home Builders Federation
Shane Jay, project director of Lovell
Stuart Jones, regional development director at Wates Group
Cenydd Rowlands, property director at the Development Bank of Wales
Andy Sutton, co-founder and chief innovation officer of Sero
Jake Thompson, property programme manager at Cardiff Capital Region
Simon Tolson, partner at Fenwick Elliott
Chris Wheeler, regional land and development manager at Willmott Dixon

cost and risk being pushed into schemes."

From a funding perspective, Cenydd Rowlands, property director at the Development Bank of Wales, stressed that certainty is critical. "Developers and housing providers need confidence," he said. "When policy, planning and infrastructure move at different speeds, it becomes much harder to invest at scale."

Planning, land and the limits of policy

Planning policy was a recurring theme throughout the discussion. Mark Harris, planning and policy adviser for Wales at the Home Builders Federation, argued that the system is struggling to reconcile national ambition with local delivery. "Future Wales sets out a clear vision," he said, "but translating that into allocated, viable sites on the ground is still incredibly difficult."

Land constraints were highlighted as a particular issue in urban areas. Chris Wheeler, regional land and development manager at Willmott Dixon, said that unlocking sites often depends on infrastructure that sits outside individual schemes. "We see opportunities that can't move forward because transport, utilities or schools aren't in place," he said. "Without that wider investment, housing delivery stalls."

Rowlands added that uncertainty around timescales undermines confidence. "Delays create risk," he said. "That risk feeds directly into cost and appetite to invest."

Sustainability targets meet delivery reality

Alongside housing numbers, the push for net zero carbon is reshaping expectations across the sector. Andy Sutton, co-founder and chief innovation officer at Sero, argued that Wales has an opportunity to lead on low carbon housing if delivery models evolve. "We know how to build homes that perform better," he said. "The challenge is scaling that approach affordably and consistently."

Retrofitting existing stock was identified as one of the biggest hurdles. Sutton noted that much of Wales' housing pre-dates modern energy standards. "New-build is only part of the picture," he said. "If we're serious about net zero, retrofit has to move from pilot projects to mass delivery."

However, Mike Edmonds, director of construction management consultancy at Altmore Partnership, cautioned that retrofit brings significant risk. "The technical challenges are real," he said, "but so are the commercial ones. Without clear funding and procurement routes, confidence is hard to build."

Modern methods and supply chain resilience

Modern methods of construction were widely discussed as part of the solution, but not a silver bullet. Jay emphasised the importance of context. "MMC can absolutely help," he said. "But it has to be the right solution for the site, the client and the end user."

Supply chain resilience emerged as a parallel concern. Jones warned that increased demand for low carbon components could expose weaknesses. "If everyone moves at »

Right: Andy Sutton and Mark Harris

Far right, top: Jake Thompson and Stuart Jones

Far right, bottom: Simon Tolson and Shane Jay

Below: Mike Edmonds and Andrew Dobbs

WALES NEWS SERVICE

IF LOW CARBON STRATEGIES ARE BOLTED ON LATE, THEY CREATE RISK. IF THEY'RE EMBEDDED EARLY, THEY BECOME MUCH EASIER TO MANAGE

SHANE JAY, LOVELL

» once, the supply chain has to be ready," he said. "Otherwise, delays and cost escalation undermine the benefits."

From a regional perspective, Jake Thompson, property programme manager at Cardiff Capital Region, highlighted the need for long-term thinking. "We need to look at skills, manufacturing capacity and infrastructure together," he said. "Housing doesn't exist in isolation."

Capacity, skills and delivery confidence

Beyond policy and funding, several contributors highlighted capacity as a quieter but equally pressing constraint. The demand for affordable, low carbon homes is rising at a time when the sector is grappling with skills shortages and stretched local authority teams. As one participant observed, even where funding and land are available, the ability to mobilise projects at pace cannot be taken for granted.

Jones noted that delivery confidence is becoming a differentiator. "Clients want certainty," he said. "They want to know not just that a scheme meets policy, but that it can actually be built, on time and to the required standard." That confidence, he suggested, depends on early engagement across planning, design, construction and operation.

Jay agreed, pointing out that late-stage changes driven by sustainability requirements can undermine programmes. "If low carbon strategies are bolted on late, they create risk," he said. "If they're embedded early, they become much easier to manage."

That need for early alignment was echoed by Edmonds, who argued that procurement models must evolve alongside technical ambition. "We still procure many projects in ways that discourage innovation and collaboration," he said. "If we want different outcomes, we need different behaviours from the outset."

From a funding perspective, Rowlands returned to the importance of scale. "Small, fragmented schemes are harder to finance and harder to deliver," he said. "There's an opportunity in Wales to think more strategically about pipeline and aggregation."

Thompson added that regional collaboration could play a larger role in building that pipeline. "When local authorities work together, they can create programmes that justify investment in skills, manufacturing and infrastructure," he said. "That's where momentum starts to build."

What linked these points was a shared concern that, without sufficient capacity and co-ordination, even well-designed policy risks underperforming. As Griffith-Williams put it, "Delivery is where ambition is tested. If we don't strengthen the system around it, the pressure will keep falling on individual projects."

The challenge of silos

Despite shared goals, participants repeatedly returned to the problem of siloed working. Griffith-Williams described fragmentation as one of the biggest barriers to progress. "We have strong policy and committed organisations," she said. "But too often they operate in parallel rather than together."

That concern was echoed by Simon Tolson, partner at Fenwick Elliott. "When responsibilities are unclear, disputes become more likely," he said. "Alignment reduces risk for everyone."

Several participants referenced the need to align delivery with the Built Environment Missions Statement and the Digital Action Plan for Wales, both of which aim to improve co-ordination across the sector. While these frameworks set a clear direction, their impact depends on consistent adoption at project level.

WALES' BUILT ENVIRONMENT MISSIONS STATEMENT AND DIGITAL ACTION PLAN

The Welsh government's Built Environment Missions Statement sets out a shared vision for the nation's construction and property sectors, focusing on decarbonisation, productivity, social value and collaboration. It aims to align public and private sector activity around common outcomes and reduce siloed working.

The Digital Action Plan for Wales supports this ambition by promoting consistent use of digital tools and data across the built environment. Its focus includes improving information-sharing, enabling better decision-making and supporting modern construction methods.

Together, the two frameworks seek to create a more co-ordinated, efficient and transparent construction ecosystem. As highlighted during the roundtable, their success depends on adoption at project and organisational level.

Top row: Sero's Andy Sutton, Cenydd Rowlands of the Development Bank of Wales, Catherine Griffith-Williams of Construction Excellence in Wales and Lovell's Shane Jay

Middle row: Altmore Partnership's Mike Edmonds, Jake Thompson of Cardiff Capital Region, Fenwick Elliott's Simon Tolson and Stuart Jones of Wates Group

Bottom row: Building's Carl Brown, Andrew Dobbs of LiteSteps Consulting, Mark Harris of the Home Builders Federation and Willmott Dixon's Chris Wheeler

DELIVERY IS WHERE AMBITION IS TESTED. IF WE DON'T STRENGTHEN THE SYSTEM AROUND IT, THE PRESSURE WILL KEEP FALLING ON INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

CATHERINE GRIFFITH-WILLIAMS, CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE IN WALES

Infrastructure as the missing link

Infrastructure was repeatedly described as the key to unlocking housing supply. Wheeler argued that without upfront investment, even allocated sites struggle to progress. "Housing follows infrastructure," he said. "If that investment doesn't come first, delivery slows down."

For Thompson, regional collaboration is essential. "Local authorities, developers and infrastructure providers have to plan together," he said.

"Otherwise we keep solving the same problems scheme by scheme."

BUILDING the FUTURE THINK TANK

THINK TANK UPDATE

Our editorial research hub, the Building the Future Think Tank, is dedicated to producing in-depth research and reports on behalf of the industry. It follows on from the success of the Building the Future Commission, which in 2023 reported on the challenges facing the built environment sector.

The think tank's focus has so far been on five key areas: AI and digital construction, sustainability and implementing net zero, workplace and productivity, building safety, and people and skills.

This year will see a variety of events planned, with details yet to be announced.

You can read more about Building the Future and its associated reports here: building.co.uk/building-the-future

We would like to thank our headline supporters Fenwick Elliott and Gleeds for their continuing support.

From ambition to action

As the discussion drew to a close, the focus shifted from diagnosis to delivery. Edmonds summed it up succinctly: "We don't need more strategies. We need to make the ones we have work on the ground."

Rowlands stressed the importance of confidence. "When policy, funding and delivery line up, investment follows," he said. "That's when scale becomes possible.

Returning to the theme that opened the session, Griffith-Williams said collaboration would determine success. "If we break down silos and work towards shared outcomes," she said, "Wales can deliver homes that are affordable, sustainable and fit for the future."

As the final regional roundtable of the 2025 tour concluded, the message from Cardiff was clear. The ambition exists. Turning that ambition into homes on the ground will depend on co-ordination, capacity and the willingness to work differently.

WALES NEWS SERVICE

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY'S RAY DOLBY CENTRE SEE IT AS AN INCUBATOR FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS

Architect Jestico + Whiles was tasked with 'showcasing the science' of the Cavendish Laboratory to the general public while meeting the exacting requirements of its world-respected scientists. **Daniel Gayne** visited the lab to find out how it rose to the challenge

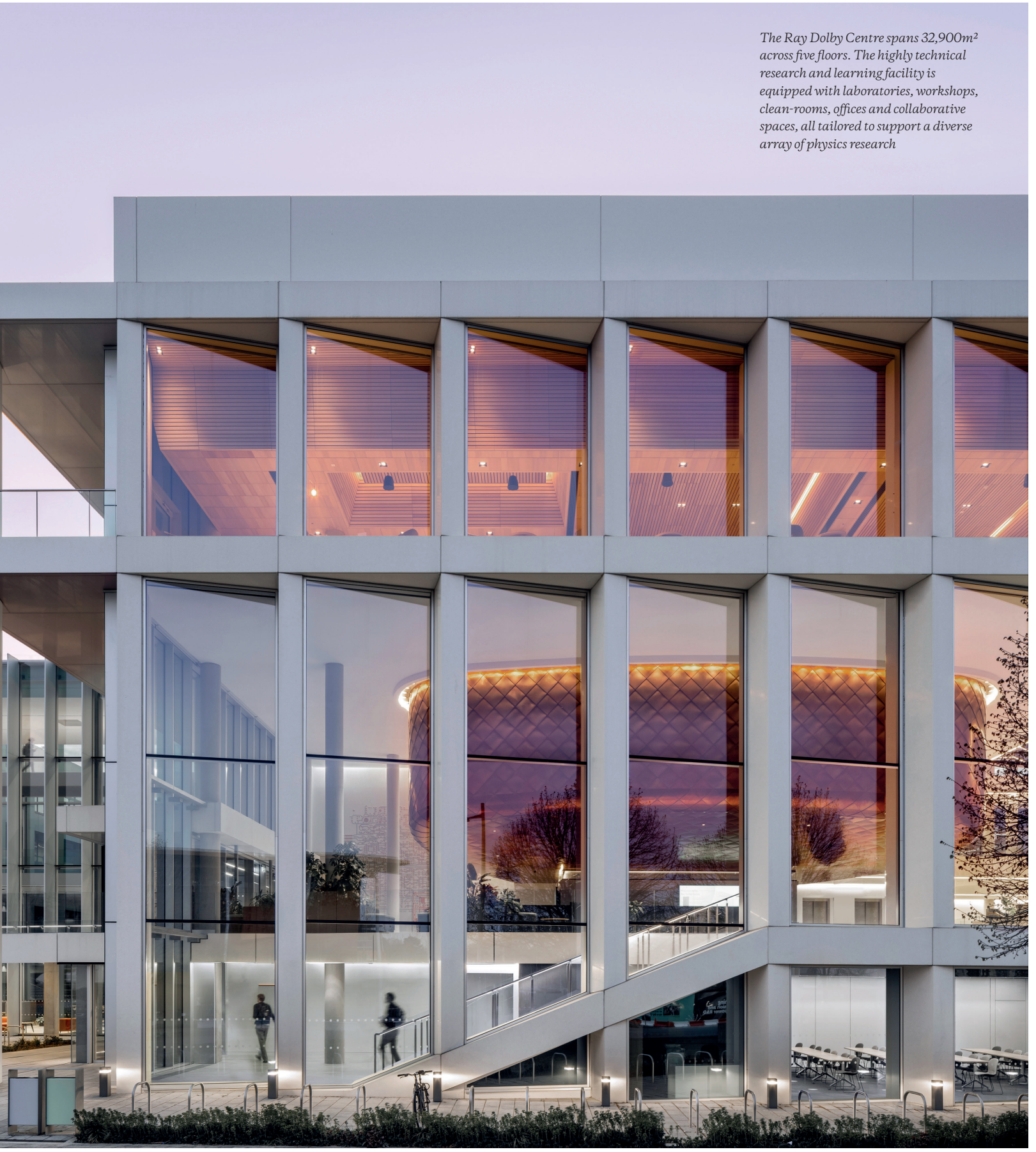
How was your Christmas? Got all the gifts you were after? Any surprises? Well, unless you are the University of Cambridge's physics department, you probably don't expect your gifts to come in the shape of an £85m cheque.

To be fair, the donation made by the Ray Dolby (of surround-sound fame) estate in 2017 was large even for the famous university. In fact, it was the biggest philanthropic donation ever made to UK science. Dolby's gift was to be spent on building a new home for the Cavendish Laboratory, where he received his PhD in 1961.

If you find it hard to imagine giving so generously to your own place of education, you might want to bear in mind the lab's history. Few research organisations can claim a connection to so many Nobel Prize winners that they lose count. The current tally is 31, after staff found a winner down the back of the sofa. "Someone had got the Nobel Prize back in the 1950s and we figured out he was a Cavendish alumni," a university staff member tells me.

Today, the Cavendish is home to cutting- »

The Ray Dolby Centre spans 32,900m² across five floors. The highly technical research and learning facility is equipped with laboratories, workshops, clean-rooms, offices and collaborative spaces, all tailored to support a diverse array of physics research



JESTICO + WHILES

» edge research at the forefront of experimental and theoretical physics. But, despite its illustrious past and highly regarded present, "the Cav" has long been put up in rather inelegant quarters. "This, to us, is Cavendish III," says Jude Harris, director at the new building's architect, Jestico + Whiles. The original lab was set up in 1874 in Old School Lane in the centre of town, establishing its reputation as an academic heavyweight. That is where JJ Thomson discovered the electron, Ernest Rutherford split the atom, and Crick and Watson decoded the structure of DNA.

But, in the 1970s, the lab moved to its second home, a rather inelegant prefabricated building in west Cambridge. Despite its shabbiness, Cavendish II was in many respects a functional building. "It was quite a low-grade building, but actually really good for the Cavendish because it was very flexible," Harris explains. "They could just kind of change it around and plug bits of plant onto the side."

It provided the Cavendish's 16 research groups with a space which could adapt to the varied and highly specific needs of their respective experiments.

> THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT HERE SAID HE HAD SEEN MORE PEOPLE IN THE FIRST TWO WEEKS IN THIS BUILDING THAN HE FELT HE HAD SEEN IN THE PAST YEAR
>
> **JUDE HARRIS, DIRECTOR, JESTICO + WHILES**

Meeting scientists' exacting standards

The challenge for the designers of Cavendish III, now known as the Ray Dolby Centre, was to create a facility that replicated and improved on the old Cavendish's offer to the scientists, but with a more presentable face for a prestigious institution looking to draw in talent from across the world. Delivering the brief began at the front door.

In the old Cavendish, there were 22 separate entrance-exits to the building. "It was a key part of the brief that we bring everyone through a single entrance," Harris tells me, explaining that the university wanted a building that encouraged "interaction and serendipitous encounters" between colleagues.

Everyone arriving at the Ray Dolby Centre approaches via a grand staircase and raised piazza, before entering what the architects describe as a "fluid arrival space" dominated by the two lecture theatres, clad in brass fish-scales and seeming to defy gravity, floating in the middle of the quadruple-height atrium. Harris says their design for this space seems to have succeeded in creating the encounters they had been hoping for.

"When the building was opened back in May, the head of department here said he had seen more people in the first two weeks in this building than he felt he had seen in the past year," he recalls.

Creating connections: the public wing and collaborative spaces

This entrance area is the "public wing", which occupies roughly a fifth of the whole centre and, as the name suggests, is almost entirely accessible to the public. It is meant to help "showcase the science" to the wider public, with

PROJECT TEAM

Architect Jestico + Whiles
Executive architect NBBJ
Contractor Bouygues
Structural engineer Ramboll
M&E engineer Hoare Lea
Project manager Currie & Brown
Quantity surveyor Aecom

Far left: The grand entrance to the Ray Dolby Centre replaces the 22 entrance-exits in the previous Cavendish Laboratory building

Left: The "floating" lecture theatre and staircase in the Ray Dolby Centre's public wing

JESTICO + WHILES

selected exhibits from the Cavendish Collection displaying scientific material and apparatus past and present. The public wing includes 120- and 450-seat lecture theatres, as well as the library and an 80-seat cluster seminar room.

Most of the Dolby building, however, is beyond a "secure line" intended to protect scientists' research and the safety of the public. This part of the building contains research labs, along with workshops, clean-rooms, cryostat halls, microscopy suites, offices and collaboration spaces, as well as the services needed to facilitate all this.

It is divided into four principal research wings, separated by three courtyards and each with its own "central utility building" attached at the rear. As is typical in science schemes, offices are on the higher floors and labs lower down, with the most prized space in the basement where conditions can be most easily controlled.

The architects have done their best to reduce replication and the inefficiency created by the old Cavendish's hodge-podge expansion. While that building was adaptable, it "had its flaws", with permanent and temporary plants scattered across the building, increasing energy bills and sometimes interfering with work. In the new building, the designers have tried to break down silos between research groups by creating shared facilities.

"The philosophy of the building is that, yes, there are research groups, but trying to break down the barriers and [...] actually sharing and interacting with one another," says Harris. He explains that where they now have 14 cryostats across two halls, "before they might have been in 14 different laboratories scattered around".

They have also centralised the permanent services in the aforementioned utility buildings and set aside so-called "grey spaces" outside laboratories for temporary "process" plant. The building has been designed for 30% capacity and there is a corner where an additional wing could be added if needs change in the future.

While the active research parts of the building are restricted, the principle of showcasing the science has still been considered. The first thing you come to after passing through the secure line on the ground floor is the "public street".

"The idea is that the department can bring visiting academics, visiting members of industry, around the building, but actually can see what's going on," Harris explains.

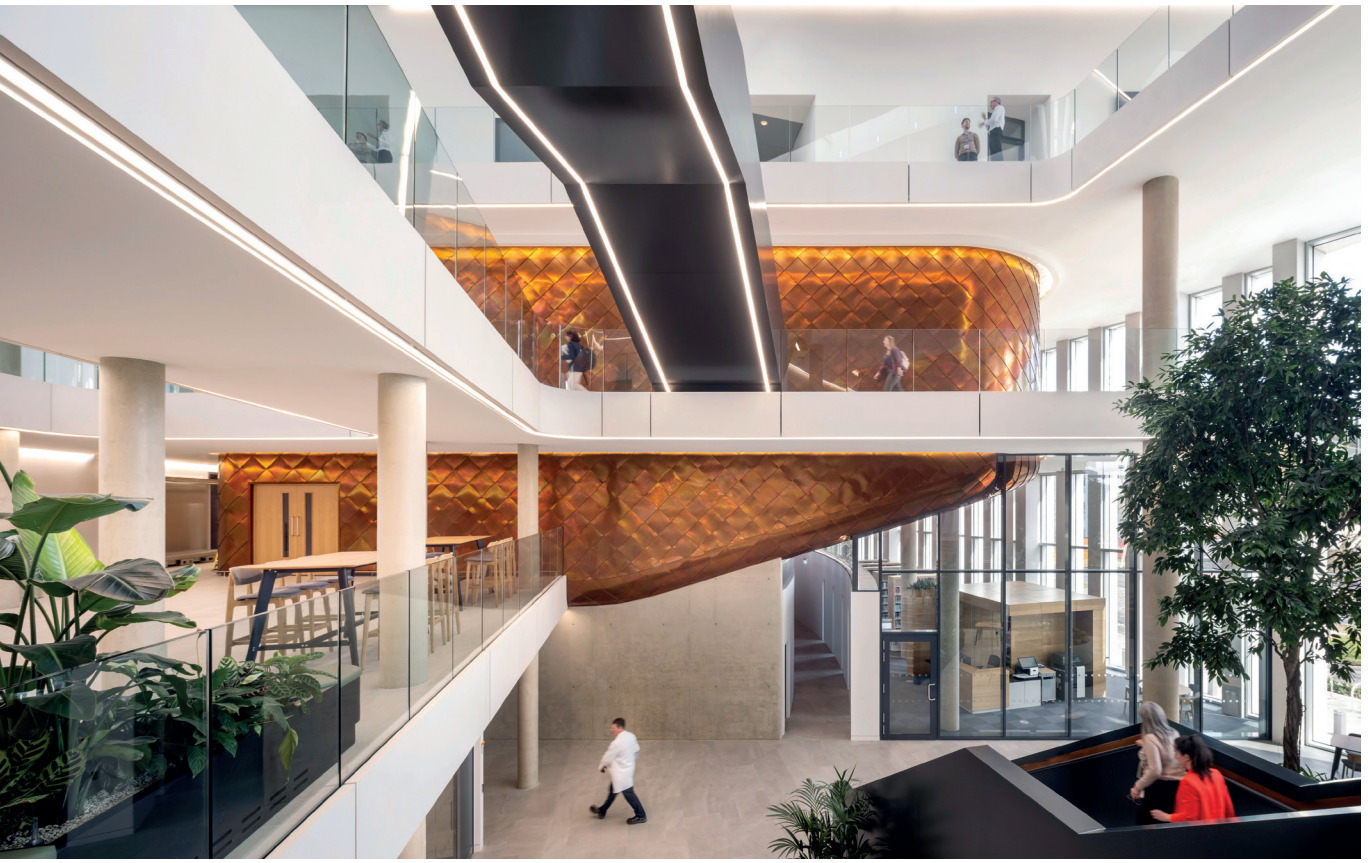
Large glass windows look into clean-rooms, where scientists use lasers to etch circuits onto silicon wafers – a three-metre plant room hangs in an interstitial floor above, maintaining a laminar flow of air to keep the environment clean.

Historically, says Harris, this kind of work would be done in "big industrial sheds" but in the Dolby Centre they have "kept that visual connection" to these highly controlled environments and "give people an insight into what's going on". The floorplan of the building is "almost like a figure of eight", with the public street running parallel to a "movement corridor". The two roads connect in between the clean-rooms via "clean" and "dirty" corridors.

This was another way the building is meant to encourage interaction between researchers. "They wanted it to be very circuitous," says Harris; "they didn't want any dead-end circulation routes."

The movement corridor, which backs onto the four central utility buildings, is where the building receives deliveries of equipment »

CAVENDISH CAFÉ MENU
OPENING OFFER



Clockwise from top left: Extensive seating is available at the Rayleigh Library; the Cavendish Cafe is a modern, comfortable space with panoramic views of the city; the copper-clad small lecture hall floats above the first-floor public reception; the public wing includes 120- and 450-seat lecture theatres; the Cavendish Cafe is also part of the public wing

» and dispatches manufactured goods. Its wide corridors and tough resin floors were intentionally designed for this purpose, which was essential to enabling the move from the old lab in the first place.

While the Dolby building was completed in 2024, it has only been in partial use – largely for teaching – during the past academic year. That's because it has taken a full year for the research laboratories to make the transition from the old building.

This, Harris explains, was a "huge logistics operation", in part due to the 98 optical laser tables that had to be moved into the lab. These tables, which are three metres by one metre in size, were part of ongoing experiments and could not be tilted even slightly without disrupting the results. Experiments like these can take a year or more to set up and run, and the scientists were not about to have their hard work squandered by sloppy designers or movers.

Facilitating this logistical move was therefore part of the design brief, with the architects drawing up detailed movement diagrams, tracking the potential movement of laser tables around the building.

Solving the vibration problem

Demonstrating this was one of many things the designers of the building had to do in order to get the scientists on side. "They're a very demanding group of people," says Harris. "They have this amazing track record in science to maintain."

> THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE BUILDING IS THAT, YES, THERE ARE RESEARCH GROUPS, BUT TRYING TO BREAK DOWN THE BARRIERS AND […] ACTUALLY SHARING AND INTERACTING WITH ONE ANOTHER
>
> **JUDE HARRIS, DIRECTOR, JESTICO + WHILES**

As part of the design process, the architects collected room data sheets for every laboratory, which included things like temperature criteria, humidity criteria, power requirements, and something called "clean earth". All the partitioning around the cryostat rooms is timber with non-ferrous screws and stainless steel reinforcement in the slab, while a high-voltage cable has been "deliberately located" to the west of the site – all to avoid electromagnetic interference.

But perhaps the most important criterion of all was vibration. "The physicists basically said, 'we're not going to take that site unless you can prove to us that it's as good, if not better, vibration than Cavendish II'," says Harris.

For scientists conducting experiments at the tiniest scales, vibration is poison. A great deal of testing was done on the site before construction to demonstrate that it was suitable. Broadly, it seemed to be, apart from a "massive blip" which kept turning up on the graphs. "It turned out it was the double-decker bus going over the speed bump" on JJ Thomson Avenue just in front of the building.

After some adjustments to the road design, they turned their attention to construction solutions to the vibration problem.

Isolating those utility buildings formed part of the solution. Containing fire escapes, plant rooms, elevators, a ground-source heat pump and a data centre, they are a hive or disruptive vibrational and electromagnetic interference – what is known in this world as a "bad neighbour". As such, they are set to the side of the building and are structurally isolated, with steel-frame construction so they can be "shaking away" independently of the labs.

For the main bulk of the Dolby, structural engineer Ramboll was faced with two options for minimising vibration.

"One is what's called a keel slab solution, which is basically like a boat where you have a keel which kind of stabilises it," explains Harris. "That's quite an expensive solution, because it's quite difficult to create the profiles of the keel slab and anchor it into the ground." »

JESTICO + WHILES, STÅLE ERIKSEN

Right: The building has achieved BREEAM Excellent certification and features a ground-source heat pump system that will reduce energy consumption throughout the building's lifespan

Middle: The building includes 770 cycle spaces discreetly located beneath the raised public piazza

Far right: Possible future Nobel Prize winners leave lectures and research labs. Above them, others linger on the roof terrace accessible from the top-floor cafe/dining room in the public wing of the building

IN NUMBERS

£85m donation from the Ray Dolby Foundation

32,900m² total space

173 laboratories

1,100 members of staff

400 seats in the large lecture theatre

770 cycle spaces

2,500m² clean-room facilities

+/-0.1°C close temperature control in laser labs

» The alternative, which the project team ultimately opted for, was simply to put in an incredibly heavy concrete base – in this case a two-metre slab under the basement, which itself is eight metres below grade.

They have left "a pocket out of the slab" in one corner of the building, so that, if they need greater vibration requirements in the future, they can install a keel slab at a later date.

However, Harris seems satisfied with achieving VCH vibration criteria, allowing research at the atomic level. "We have some of the best-performing vibration space in the country," he says.

Even after all of this engineering, there was one more vibrational risk. "Some physicists require these very low-vibration, quiet environments, but other physicists like blowing things up," laughs Harris. The solution to this problem was relatively simple, however – keep them as far away from each other as possible.

I am told in vague terms that there is "lots of quantum physics" and that "some elements" of experiments at the large hadron collider in Switzerland are being built in the clean-rooms. Some researchers are working on the materials that go on satellites' solar panels, while others are developing smart toilets to detect infection in urine.

A brief introduction to a researcher called Niamh demonstrates that it is probably a fool's errand trying to explain it to me in any more detail than this.

"The main thing that I'm working on is the tonic-integrated circuits with defects in diamond," Niamh says. "So what we have is a set of wave guides with implanted tin vacancy defects, which can make a really nice platform

IT'S NOT A BUILDING TYPE THAT CAMBRIDGE HAS REALLY DONE BEFORE. A LOT OF ITS WORK IS FOCUSED ON THE COLLEGES, WHEREAS THIS IS A NON-COLLEGE, PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE TEACHING AND LEARNING BUILDING

JUDE HARRIS, DIRECTOR, JESTICO + WHILES

for qubits. It's nicely packaged into this circuit design such that we could interface it with other devices.

"We cool it down to 10 millikelvin, so that's what the fridge over there is for. So it gets to really low temperatures, and then all of the sort of control of the qubits is done with the optics on the table over here."

After saying my thank-yous and goodbyes with a look of blank incomprehension plastered across my face, I leave Niamh's lab and am told simply that she is working on "quantum networking".

Whatever is going on in these laboratories, it was important enough for the government's engineering and physical sciences research council to splash out £75m to go along with Dolby's gift (the rest of the £300m budget was made up from other donors and the university's own resources).

The Dolby Centre is a national facility, which means that 20% of the equipment in the laboratory is to be shared with other scientists across the UK.

Upstairs and out of the labs, there are a few floors of smart but unremarkable office space, set between courtyards and bright, spacious corridors. On the top floor, back on the public side of the secure line, is a large cafe-dining room with a roof terrace for those willing to brave the biting easterly winds, as well as an amazing view out to King's College and the university library in the distance.

West Cambridge development plans

It is, however, the immediate view out onto west Cambridge that will see the most change in the coming years. The university has an approved masterplan for the expansion and development of the site, for which the Ray Dolby Centre is a kind of precursor. Across the road is the West Hub, also designed by Jestico + Whiles, which was been built to service the coming development in an effort to satisfy the council.

"The planner said they were not going to give us permission for the 61 hectares of development unless there's some kind of amenity space," says Harris. "It's not a building type that Cambridge has really done before. A lot of its work is focused on the colleges, whereas this is a non-college, publicly accessible teaching and learning building."

The hub is a multifunctional building that includes a canteen, bar and restaurant, teaching rooms, office space and a library as well as public working spaces. There is little detail yet on what future development might look like, but the university's outline permission includes 370,000m² of academic floorspace, as well as a nursery, and retail and leisure space.

As we turn our backs on this vista and loop our way back to the new Cavendish's single grand entrance-exit, our university guide gets a notification on her phone. "32!" she says, happily but not altogether surprised.

Professor John Clarke, another Cavendish alumnus, had just been awarded this year's Nobel Prize in physics. With this impressive new home, it is not hard to imagine that there will soon be a thirty-third prize-winner on their list.

JESTICO + WHILES, STÅLE ERIKSEN

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WA 100 2026

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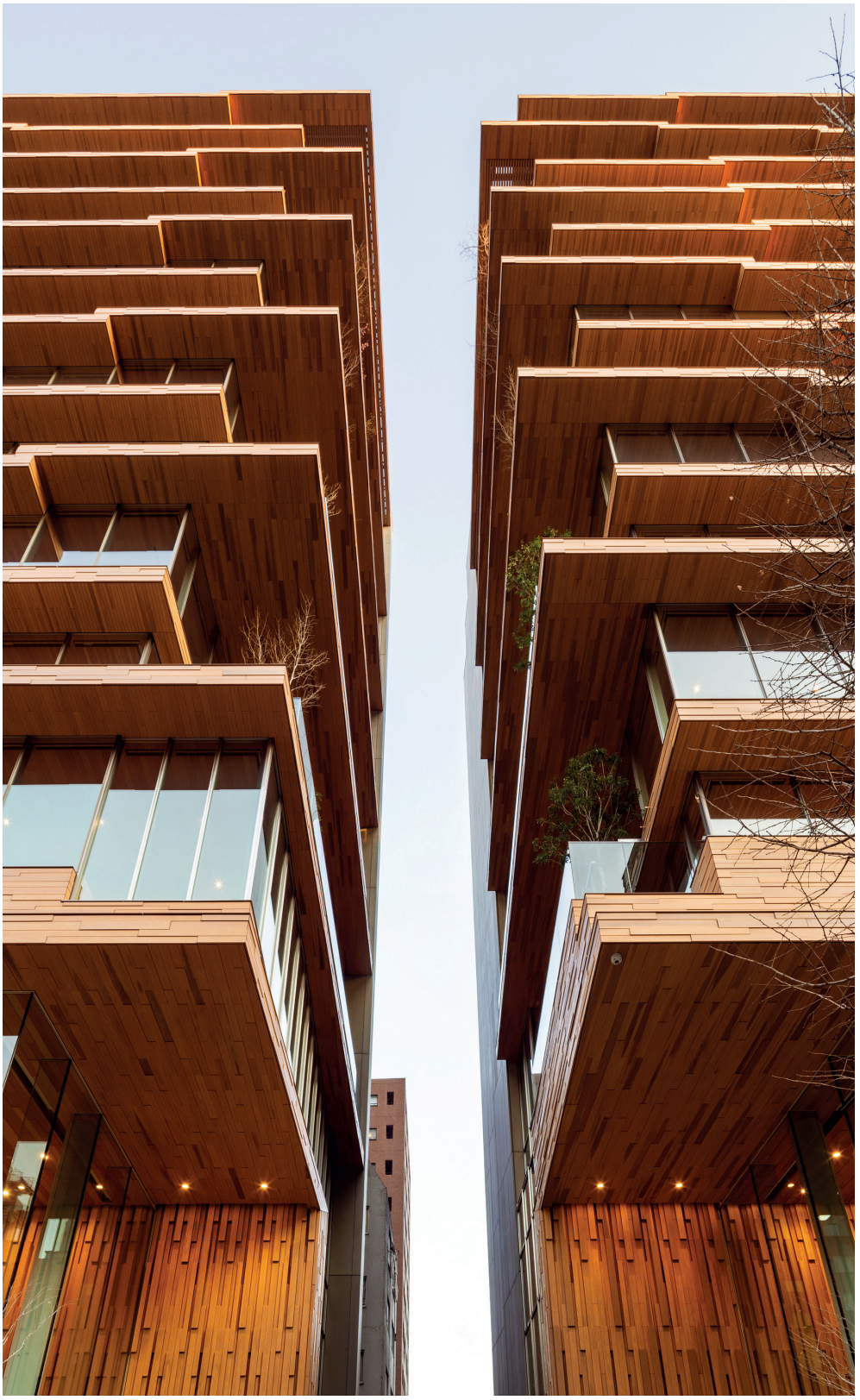

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THE BEST GET BETTER

Despite volatile times, architects are the most optimistic they've been about prospects for the year ahead since the post-covid bounce of 2022. Although optimism on growth dropped sharply back in 2023, this has steadily increased each year to almost match that of 2019. This is reflected in the number of architects employed by the world's 100 biggest practices, which grew by 8.2% over the year. As in previous years, the expansion of the top 10 firms was proportionately greater than the rest as their numbers increased by 35% over 2025. All the signs are that this trend will continue in the year ahead, as our recruitment survey shows 40% of firms expect to hire 11-30 architects this year and 20% to hire more than 50 architects.

A closer look at the data shows a more mixed picture of some sectors and regions performing strongly and others less so. Arcadis dropped from second to third place in the rankings, thanks to a fall of over 100 architects, the biggest reduction among the top 10 firms. Arcadis has been affected by a slowdown in the North American residential market, whereas firms operating in sectors such as technology, healthcare and aviation have done well. Second-placed HDR, which displaced Arcadis into third place, reports that growth in demand for healthcare facilities, a sector in which it specialises, has been particularly strong.

Optimism about already strong markets has increased this year in North America, where 57% of architects are positive about growth prospects, and in the Middle East, where the figure is 85%. Central Asia including India is also strong with 81% of architects expecting growth, while 71% say the same about Africa – both up on 2025.

On the flip side, optimism about already weak markets has slumped even more. Optimism about growth in Western Europe, which has been perceived as the weakest market by architects for several years, dropped from 41% last year to 35% for 2026. Optimism in the Pacific Rim, which includes China, has ticked up this year from last year's 41% to 49%. But many architects in our survey have all but given up on China as a growth market, with many Western firms pulling out of the country and Chinese firms looking for work outside in places like the Middle East. This is unlikely to change soon, as the new five-year plan focuses investment into electric vehicles and battery technology, robotics and AI. Real estate, which enjoyed a long boom followed by the bust over five years ago, doesn't get a look in.

What are the risks that could dent architects' optimism about 2026? When asked this question, architects identified negative macro-economic conditions impacting on the markets in which they operate as the biggest risk. Following closely behind, and inextricably linked, were concerns about the impact of geopolitical events including tariffs and potential conflicts. Attracting and retaining staff was identified as the third-biggest risk.

Architects are right to identify geopolitical risks as their top concern as the world fragments into three power blocs – China, the US and Russia – jostling for supremacy. Europe has been left to its own devices militarily by Trump and is also economically weak, thanks to bloated welfare spending, growth-stifling levels of taxation and regulation, and political leadership too weak to tackle these challenges. It is no surprise that 64% of architects expect stagnation or decline in Western Europe in the coming year. Much of China's huge investment into electric vehicles will end up being dumped in Europe as it is frozen out of the US by tariffs, further undermining European car manufacturing.

OPTIMISM ABOUT ALREADY STRONG MARKETS HAS INCREASED... ON THE FLIP SIDE, OPTIMISM ABOUT ALREADY WEAK MARKETS HAS SLUMPED EVEN MORE

Although the US looks solid, the risk is it has placed all its eggs into the AI basket, and for architects specifically the boom in data centres. US growth would be almost stagnant without the technology boom – growth of 4.3% in the three months to September was almost entirely driven by investment in data centres and consumer spending, thanks to soaring technology company stock market valuations. Relying on growth from one sector is always going to be risky, particularly as there are widespread concerns the AI bubble could pop at any time.

Is the AI hype inflated, potentially leading to a crash? Although it is hard to say if the benefits are overstated, architects are making the most of AI. Many firms have established dedicated teams to develop their own AI tools and to embed these and those that are commercially available into their organisations. Firms are using generative design tools that test hundreds of possibilities in minutes, and the technology helps produce sophisticated visualisations that enable clients to more closely experience what spaces might be like, building confidence in the final product. There are many other applications – AI automates repetitive tasks, helps with administration and the translation of documents, and in streamlining building regulation and code compliance. What is notable is not a single practice said technology would replace architects; rather, it could automate dull tasks and support better designs without replacing the invaluable contribution of skilled designers. This, and the impact AI is having on other professions, suggest that it is very much here to stay and architects who aren't making the most of the benefits risk losing competitive advantage.

Thomas Lane, WA100 editor

HOW THE RANKINGS AND DATA WERE COMPILED

The data for the rankings and tables in this publication are the results of a survey conducted by Building Design. The survey was sent out to architecture practices worldwide in September and October 2025 and analysed the following month. The listings contained within this publication are therefore based on declarations from the practices themselves.

2027 survey To take part in next year's WA100 survey, please email us on WA100@assemblemediagroup.co.uk

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1

3

2

4

1 OC San Headquarters Complex — Fountain Valley, CA, USA

2 Mayo Clinic Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Building — Rochester, MN, USA

3 Milton Keynes, New Hospital Programme — UK

4 Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness — Geelong, VIC, AUS

HEADING ON UP

The latest WA100 survey of top architecture firms shows a global uplift in sentiment, with the Middle East leading the way and cautious optimism on India, writes David Blackman

The good news for architects worldwide is that sentiment about the global construction economy has improved among respondents to the annual WA100 survey.

Just under two-thirds (65%) believe 2026 will see growth, with 8% expecting this expansion to be strong. This is an improvement on last year's finding that 59% expected growth in 2025, making it the most positive sentiment since 2022's post-covid rebound.

The proportion anticipating stagnation has fallen to 30%, compared with 33% last year. And those expecting a decline in the construction market worldwide have decreased from 8% to 5%.

Helping to fuel this more confident outlook are improved growth expectations in the global economy's core regions of North America and the Pacific Rim.

The proportion of respondents expecting growth in North America has risen from 53% last year to 57%, although the share of those anticipating stagnation has remained steady at 38%.

Confidence in the Pacific Rim, which is centred on China, has seen a rebound with just under half (49%) anticipating growth in 2026, up from last year's figure of 41%.

The brightest spot for architects, like last year, is the arc of countries running through India from the Middle East to Central Asia. Confidence in the WA100's Middle East and Central Asia regions is even stronger than in 2025's survey. The proportion of architects who feel that the Middle East construction market will grow in 2026 has climbed to 85%, with just 1% forecasting decline. Nearly half of those expecting growth in the region expect it will be strong. And the Central Asia region is not far behind, with 81% of those surveyed expecting its construction market will grow in 2026.

Western Europe remains the region that WA100 respondents are least confident about, with barely a third feeling its construction market will grow in 2026, a lower proportion than last year's 40%.

THERE'S STILL A LOT OF POTENTIAL DOMESTICALLY FOR US [IN THE US]

DOUG WIGNALL, HDR

US markets are good in parts

Elizabeth Brink, co-CEO of Gensler, says that while some US markets remain "pretty sluggish", there is a lot of activity from financial services and technology clients across the US's major centres.

Sarah Kay, CEO of Australian architect Woods Bagot, says that while there is much variation across North American markets, the tech boom on the US West Coast is "insane", as is growth in the country's aviation sector.

Steve McKay, chief executive of Seattle-headquartered DLR Group, says that the "smile of the US" – the arc running around the country's east and west coasts via the southern states – is still "very busy".

Even Detroit, long a byword for urban decay, is "back on the map", he says. "As a city it's gone through two decades of challenge but now it is bubbling. There's still a lot of potential domestically for us."

However, Doug Wignall, president of US-headquartered HDR, says that while the areas his firm specialises in – like healthcare and life sciences – are booming, those working in commercial and retail will probably tell a "radically different" tale.

As Phil Harrison, CEO of Perkins&Will, says: "Our industry tends to be a bellwether for general economic confidence and optimism about the future."

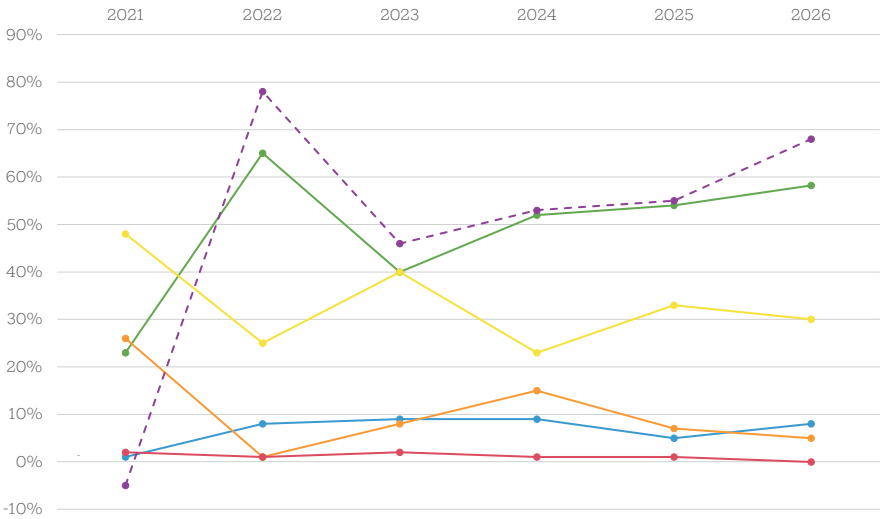
The small rise in architects' growth expectations for North America betrays how confidence remains a "little bit shaky", with the trade war between the US and Canada already depressing the latter country's economy, he says.

And the recently concluded federal government shutdown in the US means many public clients were not even at their desks for more than a month, Harrison says.

This is one of the reasons why clients have been moving »

Sentiment is recovering in China, where Aedas's innovation and business hub Chengdu Intelligent Harbour – designed in collaboration with China Southwest Architectural Design and Research Institute – was completed last year

What are your feelings about the health of the global construction economy over the next 12 months?
Responses as tracked over the past six years



KEY

- Strong growth
- Growth
- Stagnation
- Decline
- Strong decline
- Balance

65%
of respondents predict global construction growth, the strongest showing since the post-pandemic rebound in 2022

85%
predict growth or strong growth in the Middle East

» "more slowly than normal", resulting in large backlogs of work, he says. "It used to be you would be selected for a project, it would take a month or two to get through contract negotiations and firm up the work plan, and then you would get to work. These days that one to two months has become six to 12 months, and that's the new normal. The result is we're typically carrying about three or four or five months of additional backlog on our books. That's work under contract, not yet committed.

"That's nice, and we like to know that the work is there – and it makes our businesses easier to manage because we can predict the work that will be happening, especially once it starts moving. On the other hand, the vulnerability for any business is if these projects go on hold again or are cancelled altogether."

Awaiting China's reawakening

While the WA100 survey shows signs of resurging confidence in the Pacific Rim construction market, the chief executives of big architecture practice are less bullish about China.

Keith Griffiths, chair of Hong Kong-headquartered Aedas, says a recent meeting of the firm's mainland China directors and business development executives concluded that they expect less work in the country next year.

The Chinese government's next five-year plan doesn't mention state aid to the property market and is instead focused on strengthening the country's position in value-added technology industries, like electric cars and batteries, he says. "There's a bunch of points in the next five-year plan, and recovering a property market is not one.

"There's little or no construction activity in mainland China," he says, adding that the country has already got more airports, railways and shopping centres than it needs, meaning there is "no point" building more.

Around a third of the company's work is still in China, including Hong Kong. However, Aedas has expanded into new markets, like the Mongolian capital Ulaanbaatar and the Central Asian republics, to keep the company's staff in mainland China busy, he says.

The continued stagnation of the Chinese market means Griffiths doesn't see many US architects going back into that market.

Kay agrees. "It [the Chinese market] is not booming and it's a lot more localised. There's a huge amount of local talent, so there's less call for the internationals coming in."

HDR has largely run down its Chinese office, admits Wignall.

But there are exceptions, such as Foster + Partners, which still has "a lot of work" in China, says Griffiths.

Stuart Latham, managing partner at Fosters, says he is aware of some of the larger US practices withdrawing from China but has no plans to follow them.

"We have got a lot of Chinese nationals that have all been decades in London who have returned home and understand our way of working and our culture," he says.

"We don't want to close those offices. We believe that market is strengthening, and we want to stay there. We've made mistakes by coming home in the past. We have to show loyalty to these markets, and these markets will show loyalty to us."

THERE'S A BUNCH OF POINTS IN [CHINA'S] NEXT FIVE-YEAR PLAN, AND RECOVERING A PROPERTY MARKET IS NOT ONE
KEITH GRIFFITHS, AEDAS

DLR's McKay is keen too to retain a foothold in China, pointing to the "good run" of projects that the company has had in the country, including several that have opened over the last year.

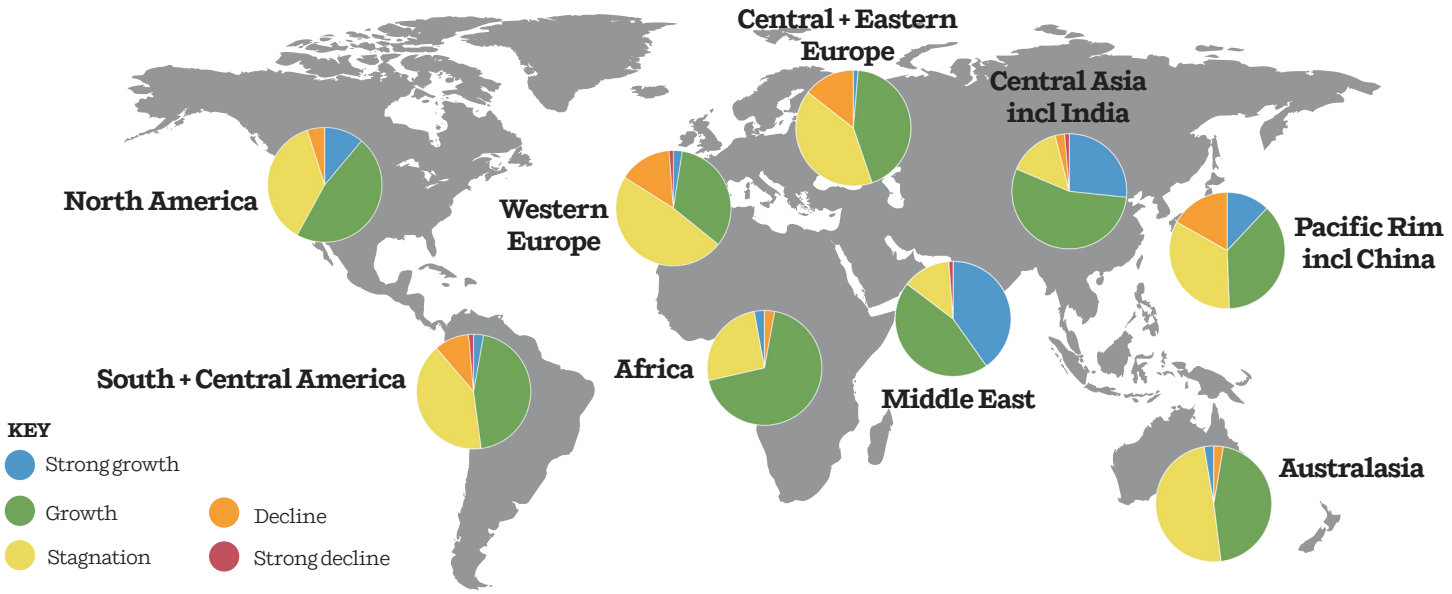
"There's no question that the economy is still a little soft, but there's work there," he says, pointing to the culture sector as a growth area for the company.

Much of the inward investment pulled out of China has gone into Australia and South East Asia, which are "doing really well", says Griffiths.

Aedas has rebalanced its work pipeline, with around a third now being in each of the Middle East and South East Asia regions.

However, developers across East Asia want lower-cost buildings, meaning there is "no demand for starchitects", he says. "Developers have no excess funds to spend. They want practical buildings that are not going to attract high construction costs."

What are your feelings about the health of the construction economy in different regions in the next 12 months?



Even China's local design institutes are seeking work outside the country, often on the coat-tails of Chinese contractors, Griffiths says: "You'll find a lot of Chinese contractors in the Middle East, especially in Saudi, together with the local design institutes."

Middle East still booming

And McKay says DLR's Shanghai office is being "retooled" to support what is expected to be continued growth in the Middle East.

This is partly because time differences between China and the Middle East are easier to manage than those with the US. In addition, Asian offices' project teams have a "much clearer understanding" of Middle Eastern clients' delivery requirements, he says.

This is part of a wider realignment of DLR's non-US footprint, which is driven by the work that the architectural and engineering consultancy is picking up in the Middle East, not only in Saudi Arabia but in neighbouring countries, such as Egypt, the Gulf states and Iraq.

DLR may open a UK office to service three big Middle Eastern projects potentially in the pipeline, says McKay. "If they are successful, then they will require us to open a European office – and if we need people in Europe, those people will be in the UK."

Fosters is a clear beneficiary of the "huge growth" being seen in the Middle Eastern and particularly Saudi Arabian construction markets, says Latham.

The British company's success winning a number of "very large, notable" design competitions in the Middle East has fuelled an increase in Fosters' qualified architect headcount of nearly 200 over the last year, he says.

As well as the UAE's Zayed National Museum, which opened at the beginning of December, the company's other major projects in the region include Riyadh's King Salman International Airport and Kuwait International Airport.

Perkins&Will and Woods Bagot are among the big international practices that have opened offices in Riyadh over the past year.

The Saudi government is keen for architecture practices to set up offices in the country rather than have design professionals "fly in" every few months, says Harrison. "When you need them, you need them, and it's better to have them in the corner."

> **THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT THE [CHINESE] ECONOMY IS STILL A LITTLE SOFT, BUT THERE'S WORK THERE**
>
> **STEVE MCKAY, DLR**

However, Griffiths says that even though his company is supporting architectural education in Saudi Arabia, there are still "not enough" trained architects to run full-blown offices in the country.

And amid recent gloomy headlines about stuttering progress on the Saudi showpiece Neom project, he predicts that a number of companies will be "rapidly downsizing" their presence in the region.

Woods Bagot's growth across the Middle East has rebalanced during 2025 from Saudi Arabia towards Abu Dhabi and Dubai, which are "really booming", says Kay.

Firms moving into India

Big architecture firms are becoming less hesitant about opening up operations in India.

Fosters is considering launching an office in India to serve the company's project to build the new Amaravati government complex in the state capital of Andhra Pradesh, says Latham.

"No decisions have been made on India but we want to follow the work and to service our projects and support our clients," he says. "Probably the best way to do that on these larger projects is to actually put a permanent presence in the country."

And Brink says that Gensler, which already has offices in Bangalore and Mumbai, has opened a Delhi location during the past year in order to serve the work it is doing in the Indian capital with an "on-the-ground presence".

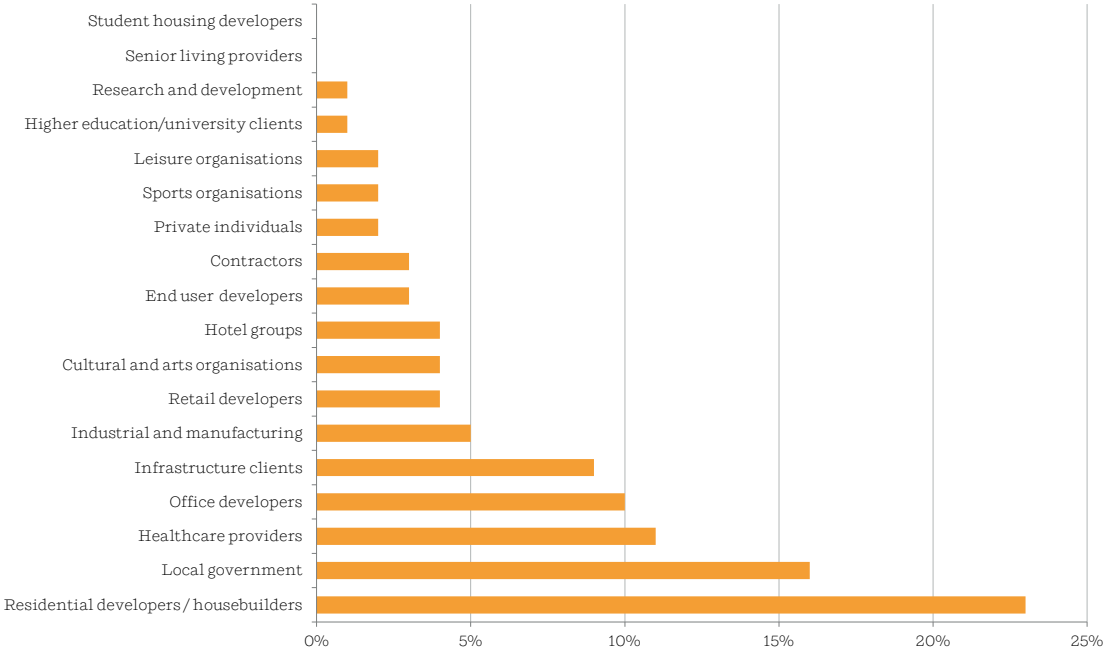
But others remain more hesitant about expanding in India. While Perkins&Will does operate in the country, it has yet to build a significant practice there, says Harrison. "It's a difficult market to work in relation to business practices and it tends to be a lower fee environment, so it's hard to compete for us in that context. In time, I'm sure we will be in India: it's just a matter of the right time to enter the market," he says. »

» Aedas's Griffiths says that the "incredibly low" fees on offer in India mean "it's not a market that international companies can compete in".

Mansoor Kazerouni, Arcadis's global director of architecture and urbanism, says that while the multidisciplinary giant has a "sizable presence" in India, which he visited recently, the company remains "very cautious".

"The kind of infrastructure projects you see there are enormous. They're building roads and highways and bridges, subways and airports, all at the same time – so there's a phenomenal amount of growth and opportunity. We continue to operate there but definitely are not going into that market super-aggressively."

Which sector has been your best client this year?



PRACTICES' RECRUITMENT PLANS ECHO THE UPLIFT IN OPTIMISM

The generally bullish outlook of global architects on the sector's growth prospects in the WA 100 survey is echoed by its findings on practices' hiring and firing plans.

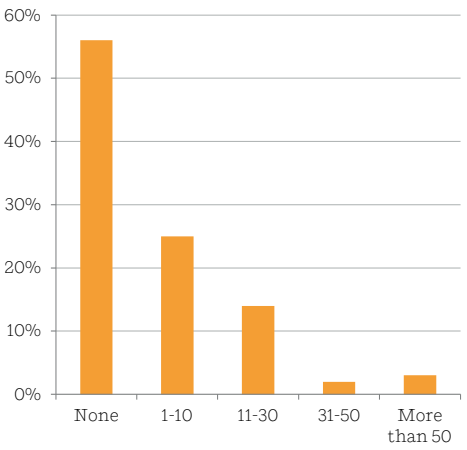
Only 2% of practices that responded to the recruitment section of the WA 100 survey said they don't expect to hire any architects over the next 12 months, which is less than last year.

The most popular answer to this question, at 40% of respondents, was that practices expect to recruit 11-30 architects. And a fifth (20%) said they expect to hire more than 50 architects in the coming year.

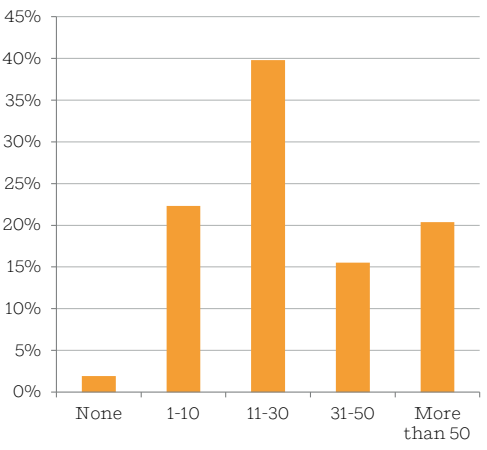
A further sign of confidence is that more than half of practices surveyed (56%) said they expect to let no architects go over the next 12 months, which is a higher proportion than last year's 46%. And 25% said they expect to fire between one and 10 architects, which is the same proportion as two years ago after rising to 37% in 2025's survey.

Gensler CEO Elizabeth Brink says the world's biggest practice will be hiring next year in key areas, where additional expertise is required, naming healthcare, data centres and aviation. In addition to hiring in these sectors, Gensler will be on the hunt for architects with skills in "advanced" tools and technologies", reflecting the industry's embrace of AI.

How many architects do you expect to let go over the next 12 months?



How many architects do you expect to be hiring over the next 12 months?



Perkins&Will CEO Phil Harrison says the nine-strong drop in the US practice's qualified architect headcount to 886 mainly reflects some "hesitancy" about hiring combined with the "normal" attrition that any workforce experiences. "When we stop hiring, we shrink," he says, adding that this dip is likely to reverse as projects pick up and additional architects come into the firm following recent mergers over coming months.

And despite the gloomy headlines about AI's encroachment in the workplace, the architecture recruitment market remains tight, according to DLR Group CEO Steve McKay. "There's not enough great folks in the A&E space," he says.

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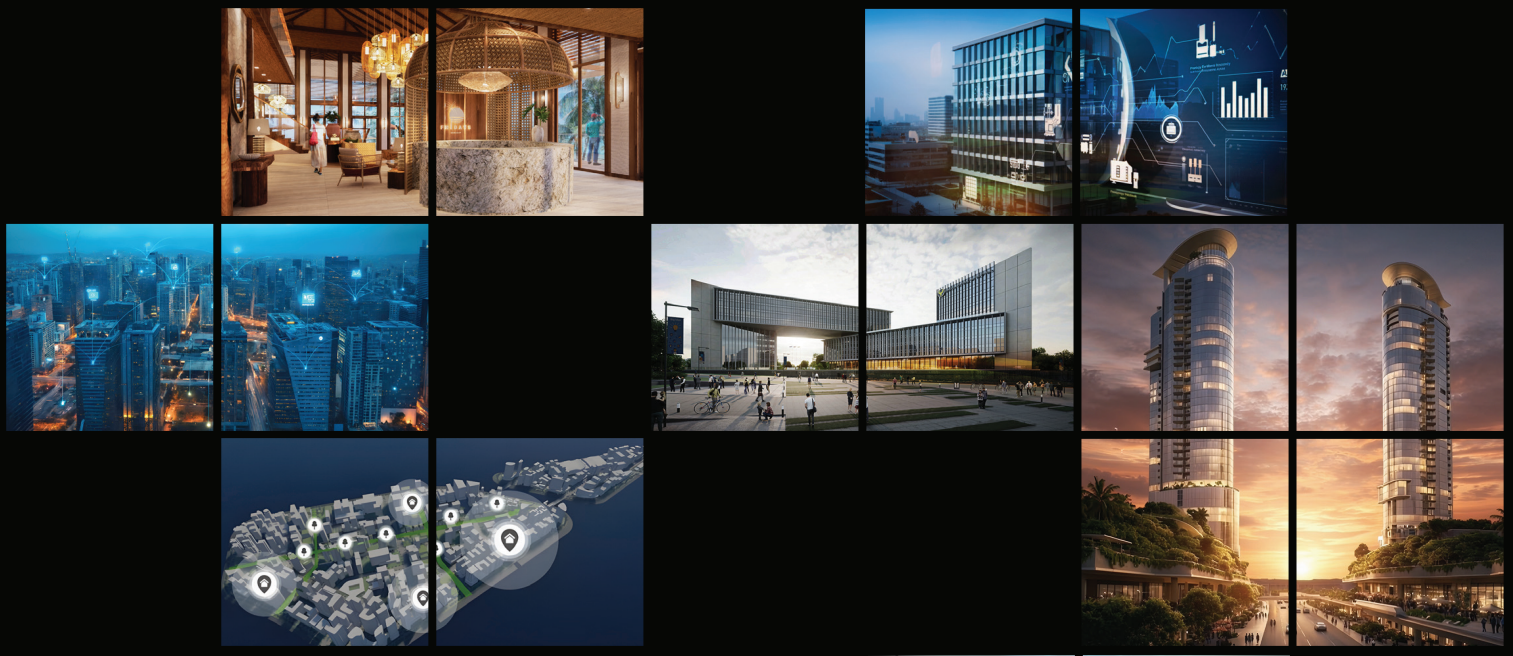

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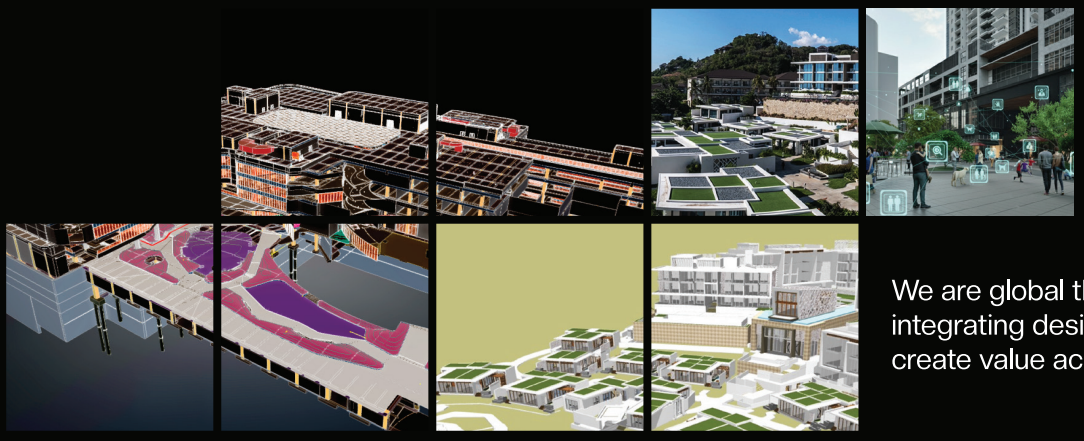

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The big list The WA100 is an annual survey of the world's largest practices ranked by the number of fee-earning architects they employ. This year, the very top of the table remains largely unchanged, with last year's top nine reshuffling themselves.

RANK 2026		RANK 2025	COMPANY NAME	COUNTRY	ARCHITECTS EMPLOYED	FEE INCOME US$
1		1	Gensler	US	2,716	Above 1.5bn
2		3	HDR	US	1,868	800m-899m
3		2	Arcadis	Netherlands	1,781	330m-339m
4		4	Aecom	US	1,529	500m-599m
5		6	Sweco Group	Sweden	1,491	190m-199m
6		5	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	1,427	400m-499m
7		9	DLR Group	US	901	500m-599m
8		7	Heerim Architects & Planners	South Korea	887	160m-169m
9		8	Perkins&Will	US	876	400m-499m
10		13	CannonDesign	US	875	280m-289m
11		11	Haeahn Architecture	South Korea	855	170m-179m
12		14	Aedas	China	843	270m-279m
13		23	Foster + Partners	UK	725	800m-899m
14		17	SJ Group	Singapore	674	100m-109m
15		15	ATP Architects Engineers	Austria	663	180m-189m
16		12	HKS	US	661	390m-399m
17		16	Tianhua	China	655	200m-209m
18	=	18	Stantec	Canada	609	400m-499m
19	=	18	GMP Architekten	Germany	598	80m-89m
20		22	Nihon Sekkei	Japan	548	140m-149m
21		28	AtkinsRéalis	UK	521	100m-109m
22		24	HOK	US	511	360m-369m
23		21	BDP	UK	493	90m-99m
24		25	Mitsubishi Jisho Design	Japan	458	160m-169m
25		29	SmithGroup	US	451	360m-369m
26	=	35	Ehaf Consulting Engineers	Egypt	442	130m-139m
27		30	Lemay	Canada	435	120m-129m
28		20	HPP Architekten	Germany	422	80m-89m
29		45	RSP Design Consultants (India)	India	402	20m-29m
30		26	ZGF	US	391	140m-149m
31		33	Zaha Hadid Architects	UK	390	100m-109m
32		41	Dewan Architects + Engineers	UAE	385	120m-129m
33		31	Azusa Sekkei	Japan	380	120m-129m
34		38	Link Arkitektur	Norway	370	60m-69m
35		39	National Engineering Bureau	UAE	364	70m-79m
36		34	Kunwon	South Korea	356	110m-119m
= 37		32	LWK + Partners	China	350	40m-49m
= 37	=	35	PBK	US	350	230m-239m
39		42	GHD Design	Australia	345	100m-109m
= 40		40	Aidea	Philippines	342	10m-19m
= 40		-	Woods Bagot	Australia	342	130m-139m
42		43	DSP Design Associates	India	327	40m-49m
43		37	DLN Architects	China	325	
44		49	JZFZ Architectural Design	China	322	210m-219m
45		44	RSP Architects Planners & Engineers	Singapore	314	70m-79m
46		46	Idom	Spain	294	60m-69m
47		64	WW+P Architects	UK	280	30m-39m
48		51	Corgan	US	274	280m-289m
= 49		54	KEO International Consultants	Kuwait	252	190m-199m
= 49		53	Ronald Lu & Partners	China	252	

RANK 2026		RANK 2025		COMPANY NAME	COUNTRY	ARCHITECTS EMPLOYED	FEE INCOME US$
=	51		50	P&T Group	China	250	110m-119m
=	51		56	Visionarch - Visionary Architecture	Philippines	250	5m-9m
	53		48	10 Design	UK	249	70m-79m
	54		-	Itten+Brechbühl	Switzerland	244	70m-79m
	55		80	WTA Architecture and Design Studio	Philippines	238	10m-19m
	56		58	Allford Hall Monaghan Morris	UK	234	50m-59m
	57		60	AXS Satow	Japan	232	50m-59m
	58		70	INI Design Studio	India	231	
	59		52	NBBJ	US	230	200m-209m
	60		62	Wong Tung & Partners	China	224	40m-49m
=	61		63	AD&R Institute of Zhejiang University	China	223	130m-139m
=	61		74	Ayesa Ingeneria y Arquitectura	Spain	223	60m-69m
	63		69	SSH	Kuwait	212	80m-89m
	64		-	Grimshaw	UK	209	60m-69m
	65		55	Lacime Architects	China	199	20m-29m
	66		66	Built Cybernetics (formerly Aukett Swanke)	UK	190	20m-29m
	67		65	Archetype Group	Vietnam	186	20m-29m
	68		72	PM Group	Ireland	185	30m-39m
	69		-	KPF	US	184	150m-159m
	70		82	Morph	Spain	182	10m-19m
	71	=	67	Progetto CMR	Italy	180	40m-49m
	72		-	China United Engineering Corporation	China	176	500m-599m
=	73	=	76	Purcell	UK	173	30m-39m
=	73		73	Saota	South Africa	173	10m-19m
=	75		79	Hyphen	UK	172	30m-39m
=	75		59	Wilmotte & Associés Architectes	France	172	40m-49m
	77		54	Asya Design	Philippines	166	5m-9m
=	78	=	76	C P Kukreja Architects	India	165	10m-19m
=	78		71	Jaspers-Eyers Architects	Belgium	165	20m-29m
	80	=	67	Morphogensis	India	154	10m-19m
	81		75	Henn	Germany	152	70m-79m
	82		81	Valode & Pistre Architectes	France	149	20m-29m
	83		-	Drees & Sommer	Germany	140	30m-39m
	84		83	Sikka Associates Architects	India	139	5m-9m
	85		86	Arch-Age Design	China	136	30m-39m
	86		88=	Stride Treglown	UK	128	30m-39m
	87		85	Richez_Associés	France	127	10m-19m
=	88		87	A26 Architectures	France	125	20m-29m
=	88		91	DSA Architects International	UAE	125	20m-29m
	90		93	EPR Architects	UK	122	30m-39m
=	91		-	Dar Al Omran Rasem Badran	Jordan	121	30m-39m
=	91		84	Leigh & Orange	China	121	30m-39m
	93		96	HCP Architecture & Engineering	Spain	117	10m-19m
	94		94	Diamond Schmitt	Canada	116	60m-69m
=	95		97	Killa Design	UAE	113	30m-39m
=	95		92	PRP	UK	113	30m-39m
	97		61	Gerber Architekten	Germany	112	20m-29m
	98		100	Sanjay Puri Architects	India	108	5m-9m
	99		95	Scott Brownrigg	UK	105	30m-39m
	100		57	UNS	Netherlands	104	70m-79m

Gensler is working on Baghdad Sustainable Forests, creating a new urban forest as part of the environmental repair and long-term enhancement of the city

GENSLER IS STILL TOP DOG

There's only one new entry into the top 10 this year, with the other nine slightly reordered

→ 1 GENSLER **US**

LAST RANKING 1 ARCHITECTS 2,716

Gensler retains its position at the top of the WA100 tree, despite seeing its qualified architect headcount drop by 30 since 2025. However, given that the San Francisco-headquartered firm still has 2,716 qualified architects on its roll, it still stands head and shoulders above the competition.

Some of this decline in the number of qualified architects reflects "natural churn", says co-CEO Elizabeth Brink. However, Gensler's overall headcount is up, including interiors design and digital professionals: "It's just a balancing; there's no real shrinkage."

Pointing out that Gensler now employs around 1,500 interior design professionals, Brink adds: "They may not be architects, but they are qualified as interior design professionals."

Gensler's California headquarters means the practice has been well-placed to tap into the booming demand from technology companies for data centres reported by many leading architects as the chief source of growth in the construction market.

The company's practice highlights over the past year include designing mass timber hyperscale data centres for Microsoft, using cross-laminated timber (CLT). The use of this construction system is designed to cut the embodied carbon involved in building these data centres by 35% compared with conventional steel and by 65% compared with typical precast concrete, helping Microsoft to close the gap between its stated sustainability goals and the huge energy demand created by these facilities.

Other US markets remain "sluggish", says Brink, such as speculatively developed offices, as opposed to those purpose-built for clients. But workplace developments for tech companies are benefiting from that sector's wider boom, while demand from financial service companies has begun to recover.

Aviation is another strong growth area for Gensler, says Brink. The first phase of its transformation of San Diego International Airport has just been completed with the opening of Terminal 1, which has replaced the original 1960s-era structure with a facility nearly three times larger.

Brink identifies sports as another growth area for Gensler, which has been appointed to help design leading Egyptian team Al-Ahly Football Club's first home stadium, which will be located between Cairo and Alexandria.

And in the Midde East, the firm announced what it described as a "significant" leadership transition in the region in July. Todd Pilgreen replaced Tim Martin as co-managing director of Gensler's Middle East offices. Referring to Pilgreen and his fellow co-Middle East MD Tariq Shaikh, Brink says: "These are people who know the firm and have all the resources."

Gensler

↑ 2 HDR — US

LAST RANKING 3 — ARCHITECTS 1,868

HDR continues its long climb up the WA100 top 10, overtaking Arcadis to become the globe's second-biggest architectural practice this year. The US architectural and engineering consultancy giant saw its headcount of qualified architects rise by nearly 200 from 1,698 to 1,868 this year.

The company says its recently established architecture studios in Raleigh, North Carolina, San Diego, California, and Kansas City have all experienced "significant" growth and project wins. And in the past year HDR has continued to extend its footprint by opening new studios in Columbus, Ohio, and Detroit, Michigan.

The company has "probably" grown by another 100 architects since submitting its WA100 entry, says Doug Wignall, president of US-headquartered HDR.

HDR has not been involved in any mergers or takeovers in the past year. But while it has made acquisitions in the past, the company has recently eschewed this approach to growth, meaning its increase in headcount over the year has been "purely organic", says Wignall.

"We have never had a backlog this big, and our margins have never been this strong. We've never seen growth trajectories this acute. I've been in this position for almost 15 years, and this is clearly the best market."

Much of that growth is spurred by strong demand for healthcare work, a long-time specialism of HDR. In the UK, HDR has been appointed by the National Health Service to advise on aging hospitals that need to be replaced because they were built using RAAC.

And in the US, the company's healthcare projects include the replacement of the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, built for the eponymous automobile giant's workforce, which will involve the regeneration of several blocks in the city's downtown area.

And HDR, like many other architects contacted for the WA100 survey, is seeing big growth opportunities in data centre developments, says Wignall. "We've seen tremendous growth, like I've never seen in any market in my 40-year career. It's going to plateau and drop off eventually, but not for probably seven to 10 years."

The HDR-designed Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center New Hospital Tower in Columbus, Ohio, was completed in 2025. The design team used parametric modelling to effectively address phasing strategies, optimised functional flows, travel times and distances throughout the campus. This data-centric approach allowed them to evaluate various options relative to project operational goals and cost targets, thereby managing costs from the early stages of design documentation

HDR / Lauren K Davis / Feinknopf

↓ 3 ARCADIS — NETHERLANDS

LAST RANKING 2 — ARCHITECTS 1,781

Arcadis drops one place in this year's WA100 top 10 from second to third place. This stems from a reduction of over 100 qualified architects employed by the multidisciplinary giant to 1,781.

Mansoor Kazerouni, Arcadis's global director of architecture and urbanism, speaking upon his return from a month-long round-the-world trip to Arcadis's offices, admits that the multidisciplinary giant's architecture business has been hit by the ongoing trade wars between the US and Canada, where around 1,000 of the firm's architects are employed.

Arcadis has been hit by a slowdown in investor appetite for the multi-family residential market, which has had a "direct impact" on the living division that makes up nearly 30% of the company's architectural business.

As well as tariffs, this market is facing a "perfect storm" from rises in construction costs, interest rates and land prices, combined with an "unfavourable" regulatory environment, Kazerouni says. "What was the perfect formula is now slightly shaken and there's a retrenching happening in the marketplace.

"All of those market challenges are tempering growth a little bit in in that sector.

"There's a real rethinking of the model happening," he says, noting that more institutional and owner-operator clients are coming forward as investors' appetite wanes.

The result is a shift from an investor-driven, "very generic" building type, which has characterised the residential market over the last two decades, to more specialised student housing, senior living and purpose-built, rental condominium developments, Kazerouni says.

However, he is "optimistic" that a "real rebound" will start to happen in this market from the mid 2026 onwards. "It will come back," he says.

Arcadis is also "super optimistic" about healthcare new-build and facility modernisation projects in the US – and also in the UK, thanks to promises of investment by the NHS. Other areas where it spies architectural opportunities are data centres, aviation and rail projects, including in North America.

→ 4 AECOM — US

LAST RANKING 4 — ARCHITECTS 1,529

Aecom retains its position as the fourth-biggest practice in the WA100 this year, despite seeing its qualified architect headcount drop slightly from 1,554 to 1,529. The company says it has had no large-scale strategic closures or opening of offices in 2025 but says that margins on its architectural work have been under most pressure in the Middle East.

The multidisciplinary giant's upcoming

architectural highlights include facilities for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Other key projects include the Galaxy Twin Towers in Shenzhen, China, and the Gordie Howe International Bridge, which will link Detroit in the US with nearby Windsor in Canada when it is open.

↑ 5 SWECO GROUP — SWEDEN

LAST RANKING 6 — ARCHITECTS 1,491

Sweco rises one place in this year's WA100 from sixth to fifth place, entrenching its position as Europe's second-largest architecture and engineering practice. The number of qualified architects employed by the Swedish company rose from 1,342 to 1,491.

This increase was fuelled by a fresh string of acquisitions by Sweco in 2025. These included the purchase in July of Volantis, a Dutch company specialising in engineering and architectural services for the industry and healthcare sectors, which has become part of Sweco Netherlands. And October saw the acquisition of Belgian practice Assar Architects, which is designed to broaden Sweco's architecture offering in Belgium and Luxembourg.

↓ 6 NIKKEN SEKKEI — JAPAN

LAST RANKING 5 — ARCHITECTS 1,427

In 2025, Nikken Sekkei marked the 125th anniversary of its founding in 1900. However, Japan's leading architectural practice continued its gradual slide down the WA100 top 10 this year, dropping from fifth to sixth place. This decline occurred despite the company seeing the number of qualified architects it employs rise from 1,370 to 1,427.

The biggest development within the company was the merger of Nikken Housing System with its parent company Nikken Sekkei at the beginning of April.

Practice highlights in the upcoming year include the Nihonbashi 1-Chome Central District Redevelopment Project, a large-scale urban redevelopment in Tokyo, which is scheduled for completion in 2026.

↑ 7 DLR GROUP — US

LAST RANKING 9 — ARCHITECTS 901

DLR Group continued its steady ascent up the WA100 rankings this year. After breaking into the top 10 last year, 2026 sees the architectural and engineering consultancy rise two places from ninth to seventh.

DLR acquired two firms in 2025. In January, Boston-based healthcare and life sciences planning and design firm Tsoi Kobus Design joined DLR Group, entrenching the company's position in both sectors. Then Atlanta-based education design firm Collins Cooper Carusi Architects joined in August, expanding the group's presence in the south-eastern US by establishing a permanent operation in Atlanta.

Besides the Georgia state capital, DLR added offices in Durham, North Carolina, in Fort Worth, Texas, and in Boston over the past year.

Aedas's Yohoo Museum in Hangzhou is designed as two interlocking rings that create a dynamic, cohesive form. Conceived as a singular steel-frame structure, the museum's edges are raised so that it appears to float above the lake. The shape also creates interconnected open spaces, providing diverse spatial experiences and outdoor recreational areas. The smooth architectural contours enclose two public courtyards, with a circular lightwell that symbolises the connection between heaven and earth

Terrence Zhang

↓ 8 HEERIM ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS — SOUTH KOREA

LAST RANKING 7 — ARCHITECTS 887

Heerim is still South Korea's biggest practice but has slipped one place from seventh to eighth in this year's WA100 top 10. The Seoul-headquartered company saw its qualified architect headcount drop from 900 to 887.

Practice highlights in 2025 include the signing in July of an agreement to help design New Murabba, a 19km^2 urban quarter in the Saudi capital Riyadh. Heerim also completed a Shilla Monogram resort in South Korea in September and is due to complete another in the Vietnamese capital, ,Hanoi next year.

The company works across Asia, where it says margins are under most pressure in the Philippines, Uzbekistan and the Middle East.

↓ 9 PERKINS&WILL — US

LAST RANKING 8 — ARCHITECTS 876

Perkins&Will slips one place from eighth to ninth after seeing a net reduction of nine in the number of qualified architects it employs. However, the 90-year-old firm has been on the acquisition trail this past year.

The first merger of the year saw Perkins&Will's merger with Abramson Architects, which has been a fixture in the southern Californian architecture scene for nearly 40 years. Trevor Abramson, who founded his eponymous firm in 1987, has become managing director of the two firms' combined Los Angeles and San Diego studios.

Soon after, Copenhagen-based Rørbæk og Møller Arkitekter merged with Schmidt Hammer Lassen, the Danish architecture studio that has been part of Perkins&Will since 2018. And in mid-September Perkins&Will's merger closed with New York-based workplace strategy and design firm AI.

Perkins&Will has also opened an office in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, during the past year.

↑ 10 CANNONDESIGN — US

LAST RANKING 13 — ARCHITECTS 875

CannonDesign is the only firm to have broken into the WA100 top 10 this year. The Texas-

Laura Peters / CannonDesign

CannonDesign's renovation of the Gregory Bateson Building in downtown Sacramento was completed in 2024. The original building – a historic structure owned by the state of California spanning an entire city block, built in 1981 – was one of the first examples of sustainable architecture. The goal of the renovation was to transform the building into a modern, LEED Platinum workplace

headquartered company rose from 13th to 10th place after its number of qualified architects grew from 750 to 875 over the course of last year.

Cannon executed three mergers in 2025. In April, smart buildings consulting and technology engineering consultancy Clarient Group joined the company. Then in August, healthcare transition specialist Yellow Brick Consulting was acquired. The mergers were rounded off in September, when Cannon announced St Louis-based Christner Architects had become part of the firm, strengthening its presence in Missouri's gateway city.

Over the last year, Cannon also opened a new office in Minneapolis city centre and expanded its presence in Rochester, Minnesota, thus strengthening the firm's ability to serve clients across the US Midwest's twin cities.

→ 11 HAEAHN ARCHITECTURE — SOUTH KOREA

LAST RANKING 11 — ARCHITECTS 855

Haeahn employs a total of 1,416 people, with overseas offices in Iraq, Vietnam, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the US (two) in addition to its headquarters in Seoul.

In terms of sectors, the South Korean practice reports strength in data centres and industrial facilities, and sees potential in the high-end residential market. Recent competition success includes the Pyeongtaek-si administrative town in Gyeonggi, Korea, due for completion in 2027, and the K-water Innovation Centre in Sejong-si. Completions include Daejeon Hanwha Life Ballpark, a baseball stadium located in Daejeon, Korea.

Haeahn has embraced AI with the launch of its own AI portal to give staff easy access to AI tools. These include more than 10 generative AI services to assist architectural design. Haeahn has also developed an AI-powered design automation process.

↑ 12 AEDAS — CHINA

LAST RANKING 14 — ARCHITECTS 843

The growing practice plans to open an office in Cairo to supplement its 12 others worldwide. Aedas sees the Middle East as offering the most scope for growth, and hopes to strengthen its presence there as well as in Asia. However, it feels opportunities in China are more limited, due to changing urban development policies.

The practice works across diverse sectors, with hospitality its largest market in 2025. Recent completions in China include Changshu Jinmao Living Hub, which supports an emerging lakeside community, the Chengdu Intelligent Harbour innovation hub, and the Yohoo Museum in Hangzhou. Ongoing projects include a learning resource centre for the Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University in Zhuhai.

↑ 13 FOSTER + PARTNERS — UK

LAST RANKING 23 — ARCHITECTS 725

The UK practice moves nearer to the top 10 with the addition of 210 architects, plus a sharp rise in fee income – thanks to winning several large design competitions in the Middle East.

Its busiest region in 2025 was the Middle East, where it is the top earner by far. Upcoming completions include the Zayed National Museum in Abu Dhabi and the Magdi Yacoub Global Heart Centre in Cairo. In North America, key developments include 270 Park Avenue, JPMorganChase's new 60-storey global headquarters. Transport was a particularly fertile market, with projects including the recently completed Techo International Airport in Cambodia.

Prestigious new wins include a national memorial to Queen Elizabeth II in St James's Park, London, and a stadium for Inter and AC Milan on the site of the San Siro. The practice also revealed designs for Manchester United's new football stadium at Old Trafford.

↑ 14 SJ GROUP — SINGAPORE

LAST RANKING 17 — ARCHITECTS 674

The international built environment consulting group has more than 100 offices outside its Singapore base, with a total of 16,520 staff. It added another 70 architects last year, including at SAA Architects in Singapore and Canadian firm B+H, both part of the SJ Group.

Healthcare was its strongest sector in Canada, where it completed the Newfoundland Mental Health and Addictions Centre, a six-storey, 102-bed hub for mental health and addictions care. Construction is under way on the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre in Halifax.

In Singapore, SAA Architects is working on both Changi Airport Terminal 5 and Turf City, a new station on the MRT network, which

have both started construction. The practice also worked on new healthcare facility design standards for the Ministry of Health Holdings. Adaptive reuse projects included Temasek Shophouse, which restores and expands four heritage buildings.

→ 15 ATP ARCHITECTS ENGINEERS — AUSTRIA

LAST RANKING 15 — ARCHITECTS 663

Science and technology was the busiest sector last year for Austrian practice ATP Architects Engineers, which remains by far the biggest earner in Western Europe.

Projects include the Bora automated warehouse in Niederndorf and a high-tech production plant for Swacrit Systems in Nassereith, both in Austria. Key transformation projects include the repurposing of the Rupprecht-Haus department store into a culture and community centre at Gevelsberg in Germany, and Vienna Green Hub for the European Patent Office.

ATP has merged its ATP Zero subsidiary into ATP Sustain, a consulting company for sustainable construction and building physics.

Albert Achammer has taken over as chair of the ATP Group board, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, who founded the practice in 1951.

↓ 16 HKS — US

LAST RANKING 12 — ARCHITECTS 661

The American practice slips four places after reporting a decrease of 91 architects across its 20 US and nine overseas offices. HKS works in a wide range of sectors; it is by far busiest in the health and hospitals area, and in its home market of North America. In the UK, it is a consortium partner to the joint venture delivering NHS England's New Hospital Programme. In other sectors, it has been appointed lead architect for the new Washington Commanders NFL stadium in Washington DC, and is designing the mixed-use Preston Center Redevelopment in Dallas, which includes a luxury residential tower as well as offices, retail and restaurants.

HKS starts 2026 with a new chief executive, Heath May, who was formerly global practice director of HKS LINE (Laboratory for Intensive Exploration).

↓ 17 TIANHUA — CHINA

LAST RANKING 16 — ARCHITECTS 655

Founded in 1997, Tianhua has an extensive network of offices across China.

While its busiest sector is residential – where it ranks second-highest in fee income – the practice is seeking to increase its work in public architecture sectors such as cultural complexes, educational facilities, offices, super-tall buildings, and scientific research and industrial parks.

It aims to explore new paths in architectural design that balance "the spirit of modernism and local culture". Key projects include the 399,000m² Shanghai Midea Global Innovation Park and phase one of the CAS Shanghai Drug Discovery Enhancement Platform, a municipal project for a "human-centred, future-oriented pharmaceutical research institute".

Tianhua has established an AI research centre and is building a full-lifecycle intelligent construction service system.

→ 18 STANTEC — CANADA

LAST RANKING =18 — ARCHITECTS 609

The Canadian architecture, engineering and environmental consulting firm added another 1,400 people last year with the acquisition of Page, which has offices in 20 cities across the US and Mexico. The move increased Stantec's US design practice by approximately 35%.

Stantec's strongest market continues to be North America, with its key sectors remaining healthcare, science and technology, along with government. Ongoing projects include Los Banos Hospital with an associated medical office building for Sutter Health in California, and a sports and entertainment centre for the City of Brantford (with Populous) in Ontario.

Notable recent completions by the practice include the Anishnawbe Health Toronto community health centre, designed with Two Row Architect to promote indigenous community wellness.

In the Middle East, projects include the Hamdan Bin Rashid Cancer Centre in Dubai.

↓ 19 GMP ARCHITEKTEN — GERMANY

LAST RANKING =18 — ARCHITECTS 598

The practice has opened a new office in Munich, its fourth in Germany. While Western Europe remains its largest market, this is closely followed by the Pacific Rim region, where GMP has an office in Vietnam (Hanoi) and three in China (Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen).

Offices/corporate was GMP's busiest sector, with completions including the CITIC International Building, a 258m office tower in Shenzhen, and the SCEC headquarters in Guangzhou. In other sectors, it has completed the Yellow River National Museum in Zhengzhou, the Kunshan Olympic Sports Centre football stadium in Jiangsu Province, and a children's hospital at Lausanne University Hospital in Switzerland.

The practice last year continued its long-running Umbau Nonstop Transformation exhibition tour promoting the conversion of existing structures.

Masaki Hamada

Nihon Sekkei worked on the development of new facilities for the Indian Institute of Technology at Hyderabad

BDP's Dublin Children's Hospital, located on the St James's Hospital campus, is Ireland's new children's hospital, uniting paediatric services within a single healing environment. Its curved ward pavilion and extensive rooftop garden enhance wellbeing, connection and clinical excellence for patients and families

Michael Conlon

↑ 20 NIHON SEKKEI — JAPAN

LAST RANKING 22 — ARCHITECTS 548

Office developers were the Japanese practice's best clients in 2025. Ongoing projects include the Ningbo Greenland Centre in Ningbo, China, a 400,000m² office and retail transit-oriented development project to redevelop former docklands. The practice is on the design team for Takanawa Gateway City, a major urban redevelopment which is due to fully complete this year.

Competition wins last year include the masterplanning of the Long Thanh Airport urban area outside Hi Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

The practice's own headquarters in Tokyo recently achieved Gold certification under the international WELL building standard. This is one of seven offices in Japan, with a further two in Shanghai and Hanoi.

↑ 21 ATKINSRÉALIS — UK

LAST RANKING 28 — ARCHITECTS 521

An increase of 82 architects last year propelled AtkinsRéalis seven places up the rankings towards the top 20. The engineering services and nuclear organisation anticipates North America as having the best growth potential for its architectural services in the future.

Infrastructure organisations were AtkinsRéalis's best clients in 2025. Recent projects in this sector include Canada Line, an automated commuter rail line connecting downtown Vancouver with existing heavy rail lines, bus services, commuter rail, sea bus and the airport.

In other sectors, ongoing work includes Mukaab Riyadh, a cube-shaped, mixed-use skyscraper proposed for Riyadh in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Al Qasimi Building at the University of Exeter's Streatham campus, due to complete next year.

↑ 22 HOK — US

LAST RANKING 24 — ARCHITECTS 511

The US design, architecture, engineering and planning firm last year celebrated its 70th anniversary. HOK's strongest areas of work in 2025 were sports and entertainment, healthcare, and science and technology. Ongoing projects include the 16,000-seat Primavera Arena in Medellin, Colombia, and UK projects the Merlin Place research lab in Cambridge and The Wilderly residential development in London's Elephant Park.

The practice, which has a network of 27 offices on three continents, says it is on course to exceed energy reduction targets set by the American Institute of Architects ahead of the 2030 deadline. Initiatives include leveraging lifecycle analysis assessments to optimise embodied carbon in structural systems on all new buildings over 5,000m² tall.

↓ 23 BDP — UK

LAST RANKING 21 — ARCHITECTS 493

Architect numbers fell by 61 in 2025, along with a dip in fee income. BDP reports its strongest sectors were workplace, health, residential and education; however, workplace and residential declined compared with 2025. In the UK, the company experienced a drop in performance overall, although it remains a key region along with Canada and Ireland.

Completions in 2025 include a high-profile new stadium for Everton FC on the banks of the Mersey, a new children's hospital in Dublin, and leisure destination Surf Abu Dhabi, which features the world's largest artificial wave pool.

BDP, which last year unveiled a new brand identity, has been acquired by global insurance group Tokio Marine Holdings along with its parent company Integrated Design & Engineering Holdings.

↑ 24 MITSUBISHI JISHO DESIGN — JAPAN

LAST RANKING 25 — ARCHITECTS 458

High-profile projects include the Mitsubishi Pavilion at the 2025 Expo Osaka in Japan. For this, the practice created a demountable design comprising fully reusable structural materials. Site disruption was minimised, with excavated soil retained and returned at the end.

The office/corporate sector was the busiest for Mitsubishi Jisho Design, which ranks third-highest in the WA100 sector tables for that kind of work. Completions include the global HQ of optics and photographic equipment manufacturer Nikon Corporation in Tokyo, and a campus for IT firm ByteDance in Chengdu.

Construction is under way on Torch Tower, a 390m-high mixed-use skyscraper in Tokyo which will be the tallest in Japan when it completes in 2028.

↑ 25 SMITHGROUP — US

LAST RANKING 29 — ARCHITECTS 451

The long-established US group added another 49 architects last year across its network of 21 offices. While health and hospitals continue to be its strongest market by far, the practice has extensive work across the sectors, including government and technology. Key completions include the 11-storey Academic Building One, part of the new Virginia Tech Innovation Campus in Alexandria, Virginia.

SmithGroup has identified integrated thermal and district-energy innovation as an area of opportunity, and has hired its first director of power, utility and infrastructure to lead work in this area. It is also working on a data and AI initiative to accelerate its competitive advantage in addressing its clients' "complex, often cross-market, transdisciplinary challenges".

Anne Bråtveit / Link Arkitektur

Link Arkitektur's Construction City project, completed last year, is a hub for collaboration and innovation in Oslo and is Norway's largest meeting place for construction, civil engineering and real estate, providing around 103,000m²of space. The extensive interior use of wood, high ceilings and expansive windows lend a strong Nordic character to the design

↑ 26 EHAF CONSULTING ENGINEERS — EGYPT

LAST RANKING =35 — ARCHITECTS 442

The Egyptian multidisciplinary group is expanding, having added 92 architects in 2025, and anticipating the addition of another 50 more this year.

It reports its strongest recent sectors to be infrastructure, urban development and large-scale mixed-use projects, particularly in its two key markets of Egypt and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Education and healthcare are other important sectors, with the latter including its most high-profile completion of the year, the Magdi Yacoub Global Heart Centre in Cairo. Ehaf was responsible for site supervision and project construction management of the project, which was designed by Foster + Partners.

Looking ahead, Ehaf aims to strengthen its presence in the KSA. Already the top earner in Africa, it is looking to expand further in North and East Africa.

↑ 27 LEMAY — CANADA

LAST RANKING 30 — ARCHITECTS 435

Lemay has acquired Danish architecture studio Cebra, which has offices in Copenhagen and Aarhus. The Canadian architecture and design practice has also formed a strategic alliance with FX Collaborative, a New York-based architecture and design firm.

While transport, health and hospitals, and mixed use were its strongest sectors, Lemay works broadly across most sectors. In Canada, it last year completed the high-rise Maestria residential development in Montreal, the Théâtre de Verdure outdoor performance space, and a reception pavilion for the Saint Joseph Oratory at Place des Montréalaises, all in Montreal.

International projects include the Gold Commercial Centre, a retail and entertainment venue in Khobar in the east of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Looking ahead, Lemay is targeting masterplans in the tourism sector in Brazil, and mixed-use projects in Dubai.

↓ 28 HPP ARCHITEKTEN — GERMANY

LAST RANKING 20 — ARCHITECTS 422

The German practice drops eight places after a fall of 133 in architect numbers during 2025.

HPP's strongest sector was healthcare, and Germany its most active and resilient market. However, it detected a contraction in the office and corporate sectors. Looking ahead, the practice hopes to expand in education, logistics and data centres.

HPP has three offices in China, where recent projects include the Jinyu Xingfa Science Park in Beijing and the Zhanjiang Cultural Centre in Tiaoshun. In its home market, it will soon complete FOUR Frankfurt, a 200,000m² new mixed-use quarter. The development includes four high-rise towers and is a collaboration with UNS. Competition wins include Level Up, a car park in Rotterdam which will feature a building envelope with a fabric made from recycled PET bottles.

↑ 29 RSP DESIGN CONSULTANTS (INDIA) — INDIA

LAST RANKING 45 — ARCHITECTS 402

Now the highest-placed Indian practice, RSP Design shoots up the rankings after expanding by nearly 100 architects in 2025.

Its strongest region was western India, where it has established new offices in Pune and Ahmedabad. The practice's biggest sector was offices/corporate, followed by residential. Last year it completed the first phase of SAP Labs Innovation Park in Bangalore, a high-tech campus set across 17ha. It is also designing facilities for both Infosys and Microsoft in Hyderabad, and recently finished the tallest IT building in south India, Lulu IT Twin Towers in Kochi, Kerala.

The practice is eyeing Dubai and the Kingdom of Saudia Arabia as areas of potential future growth.

↓ 30 ZGF — US

LAST RANKING 26 — ARCHITECTS 391

The US practice slips four places following a fall in architect numbers of 64 in 2025. Health and hospitals, science and technology are its highest-performing sectors.

Recent projects include the Aggie Square innovation district in Sacramento for Wexford Science + Technology and the University of California, Davis. In Baltimore, ZGF completed the renovation of the Baltimore Ravens' Under Armour Performance Center, which includes a new hydrotherapy suite featuring cryotherapy plunge pools and infrared saunas for the American football players.

Airports are another area of expertise. ZGF has completed the first phase of the ongoing expansion of Portland International Airport's main terminal and has been appointed to design a new terminal for the Aspen/Pitkin County Airport.

↑ 31 ZAHA HADID ARCHITECTS — UK

LAST RANKING 33 — ARCHITECTS 390

ZHA reports significant growth in the Middle East over the past year. The practice is designing Oystra, a 128,000m² seafront development on Al Marjan Island in the UAE and has completed the King Abdullah Financial District (KAFD) Metro Station in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Its strongest market, however, remains Asia, where recent work includes the Danjiang Bridge in Taiwan, the world's longest single-tower, asymmetric cable-stayed bridge. In China, it last year completed the Shenzhen Science & Technology Museum, the Xi'an International Football Centre, and the Capital International Exhibition and Convention Centre in Beijing.

New commissions include the Nikola Tesla

Museum – a renovation of a historic paper mill in Belgrade – and a masterplan for Napoli Porta Est in Naples.

The practice's strongest sectors in 2025 were transport, cultural, commercial and residential developments.

↑ 32 DEWAN ARCHITECTS + ENGINEERS — UAE

LAST RANKING 41 — ARCHITECTS 385

The UAE firm, which added 61 architects during 2025, has acquired a majority stake in Singapore-based hospitality design firm DesignLab as part of its global expansion plans.

Dewan's busiest sectors are hospitality and residential. The practice is executive architect on Oystra, a seafront development by Zaha Hadid Architects of 800 apartments in four interconnected towers on Al Marjan Island in the UAE. In Vietnam, Dewan is lead architect and interior design consultant for the Maia Ho Tram hospitality and residential development on Vietnam's southern coastline.

Looking ahead, it anticipates most growth for its services in the UAE.

↓ 33 AZUSA SEKKEI CO — JAPAN

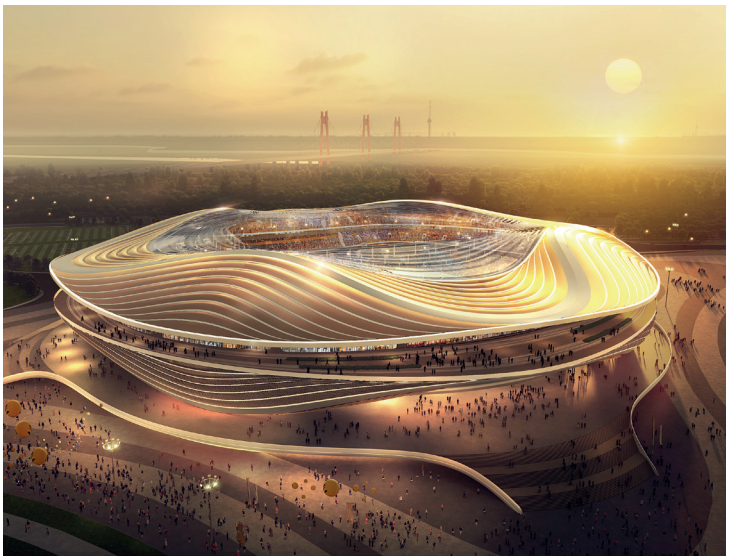
LAST RANKING 31 — ARCHITECTS 380

The Japanese practice collaborated with masterplanner Sou Fujimoto Architects and Tohata Architects & Engineers on one of the most high-profile projects of last year – the Grand Ring at Expo 2025 Osaka. The demountable project had a circumference of 2km and when completed was the largest wooden architectural structure in the world.

Government and transport were the practice's busiest sectors, with recent completions including the 20,000m² Fukuoka Civic Hall in Fukuoka, Japan.

Azusa Sekkei Co sees most growth potential for architectural services in Vietnam – where it already has an office – as well as Thailand, the Philippines and France.

Current research activities include mass timber and structural engineering.



HPP Architekten's Soccer Arena at Huanghe Sports Centre is one of the first professional soccer arenas in China for the Club World Cup. Due for completion this year, it is part of a new sports complex in Jinan near the Yellow River, and features a circular volume and a roof system that highlights its curved outlines

HPP

↑ 34 LINK ARKITEKTUR — NORWAY

LAST RANKING 38 — ARCHITECTS 370

The growing Norwegian practice has added another office in its home country after parent company Multiconsult's acquisition of architect Petter J Rasmussen. The Haugesund office in the south-west of the country takes its number of Norway offices to seven, with nine more across Sweden and Denmark.

Health and hospitals and residential were its strongest sectors in 2025, with projects including the ongoing Rikshospitalet in Oslo, and Parkside, residential-led mixed-use scheme in Gothenburg, Sweden. Due to complete in 2027, this will be the highest building in Sweden built with recycled bricks. Recent completions include the 27,300m² Lidl HQ in Aarhus and Fyrstikkbakken 14, an Oslo housing development designed with apartments that can easily be combined or transformed to suit changing living situations.

↑ 35 NATIONAL ENGINEERING BUREAU — UAE

LAST RANKING 39 — ARCHITECTS 364

The UAE architect and engineer's best clients last year were residential developers/housebuilders, with branded residences a particularly strong area.

NEB's flagship ongoing project is the Tiger Sky Tower, proposed for Dubai's Business Bay. At 532m high and 122 floors, it will be the tallest residential tower in the world when complete.

In other sectors, NEB has been appointed as design and supervision consultant for Crypto Tower, a commercial space for companies in crypto and advanced web technologies planned for the Jumeirah Lakes Towers area of Dubai.

In addition to its UAE offices, NEB has four further offices in the Middle East, plus Tanzania in East Africa and India.

David Boyer / Lemay

Lemay's Maestria residential complex sits at the heart of Montreal's Quartier des Spectacles. With over 60 levels and 1,700 housing units, its two towers are connected by a 25th-floor walkway and sky lounge, inspired by the area's many festivals. Their silhouettes and colour scheme are intended to evoke the keys of a piano. Public spaces at ground level act as an extension to the Place des Festivals, welcoming festival-goers and passers-by

↓ 36 KUNWON — SOUTH KOREA

LAST RANKING 34 — ARCHITECTS 356

Residential work is the mainstay for the South Korean architect, engineer and planner, which is positioning itself as a total design solution provider. Recent competition wins include the Mokdong 6 redevelopment project in Seoul, which will provide new 2,173 homes.

Kunwon has also won competitions to masterplan the Indeokwon Compact City in the city of Anyang and to design a new city hall complex in Seosan.

Established in 1984, Kunwon has grown to more than a thousand employees. Aside from its Seoul headquarters, the practice has one overseas office, located in Lima, Peru

↓ =37 LWK + PARTNERS — CHINA

LAST RANKING 32 — ARCHITECTS 350

The Chinese practice describes 2025 as a year of strategic acceleration, with steady growth across the Middle East and North Africa region and renewed momentum in high-value design and planning sectors.

It experienced strongest growth in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with success in residential, mixed use and hospitality. In Dubai, projects include the 178-home LUME Residences in Jumeirah Village Circle, launched last year and due to complete in 2027. While China easily remains its key market, LWK sees most potential for growth in KSA, and is also looking to expand in Qatar, Egypt and North Africa.

As well as its leading sector of residential, LWK cites hospitality and urban planning as strong-performing areas. A softening of the commercial office sector has prompted a strategic pivot toward adaptive reuse and workplace innovation.

Ayala Land

Aidea's Laurean Residences in Makati, Philippines

RSP

RSP Architects & Planners is responsible for masterplanning Guangzhou Knowledge City in China

↓ =37 PBK — US

LAST RANKING =35 — ARCHITECTS 350

The US practice last year opened new Texas offices in Katy and Denton, and also acquired Craig Gaulden Davis Architects, a practice based in South Carolina and Maryland. This activity brings its total offices to 33 across the US.

PBK has a particular expertise in education design, and ranks second in that sector for fee income in the WA100. Recent completions include Galveston College Health Sciences Education Center, which provides advanced education settings including simulation labs and immersive spaces. The building was designed with resilience against the growing threat of hurricanes and flooding on the Texas Gulf coast.

Also in Texas, the newly completed Carla Brosnahan Elementary School campus in Cypress-Fairbanks serves 1,092 students and is designed as a series of self-contained learning pods.

↑ 39 GHD DESIGN — AUSTRALIA

LAST RANKING 42 — ARCHITECTS 345

The highest-ranked Australian practice added another 30 architects in 2025 and reports that its home market - where it has 11 offices - remained strong. This was complemented by significant growth in Canada (Ontario) and the UAE (Abu Dhabi). GHD Design is also expanding across the US West and Pacific regions.

Infrastructure projects have been a recent focus, with the completion in Australia of Pimpama Station in Gold Coast and Rochedale Bus Interchange in Brisbane. Exhibition Station in Toronto is under construction.

Education work includes Oteha Valley School in Auckland, New Zealand, and the Waratah Special Development School in Ivanhoe, Victoria, for students with intellectual disabilities. The practice's busiest sector last year was government, including confidential major defence projects.

→ =40 AIDEA — PHILIPPINES

LAST RANKING 40 — ARCHITECTS 342

The Philippines firm is continuing its evolution into a design and technology group with the establishment of Aidea Sync, a subsidiary focused on intelligent buildings and cities design, systems integration and digital performance certification. It has also set up a subsidiary for strategic design management and BIM management.

It reports its strongest sectors as being government, residential, office, healthcare and hospitality, with key projects last year including Laurean Residences, a 67-storey building in Makati, and the under-construction Bank of the Philippine Islands headquarters (in collaboration with SOM).

Looking ahead, it is focusing on diversification, adaptive planning, and strengthening resilience through strategic partnerships and technological innovation.

NEW =40 WOODS BAGOT — AUSTRALIA

LAST RANKING NA — ARCHITECTS 342

The Australian practice has added a 13th international office, in Riyadh, to supplement its two offices in the UAE. The Middle East is already a major market for Woods Bagot, with masterplanning strong last year, and the practice sees potential for growth in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in particular.

While offices and residential were Woods Bagot's strongest sectors last year, transport was another fruitful area. The practice was appointed to redesign Perth Airport's new

terminal and has completed the first stage of Western Sydney Airport, which is due to open at the end of this year. In America, it is working on the LAX Midfield Satellite Concourse South project, which uses offsite construction and relocation techniques.

↑ 42 DSP DESIGN ASSOCIATES — INDIA

LAST RANKING 43 — ARCHITECTS 327

DSP ranks highest for fee income in Central Asia in the WA100 survey. The practice operates from five offices in India plus one in Singapore and reports strong momentum in the hospitality, industrial and residential sectors. Projects in the latter area include Central Park in Mumbai and Altis Ocean Cliffs, a 130,000m² premium residential development in Chennai.

However, the offices/corporate sector remains DSP Design Associates' largest area of work, with projects including a headquarters for Lubi Pumps in Ahmedabad and ongoing commercial offices for the Sattva Group in Pune and Bengaluru.

Looking ahead, the practice is eyeing opportunities in the Gulf area.

↓ 43 DLN ARCHITECTS — CHINA

LAST RANKING 37 — ARCHITECTS 325

The Chinese practice identified residential developers/housebuilders as its best clients last year.

Established in Hong Kong in 1972, DLN Architects has grown to 524 staff across four offices in China. The practice has a track record in complex and super-tall buildings and of working across multiple sectors, from commercial through to spiritual. Recent completions include the Cheung Kong Center II office building, rising 41 storeys and overlooking Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour.

DLN slips down the rankings this year after its architect numbers fell by 24 during 2025.

↑ 44 JZFZ ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN — CHINA

LAST RANKING 49 — ARCHITECTS 322

The design, consulting and management practice, which operates from 23 offices across China, saw growth in both fee income and architect numbers, with the addition of another 52 last year.

JZFZ was busiest last year in residential work. Completions include Egret Bay, a boutique residential development in a wetland park, and Pidu District Social Housing, both in Chengdu. In other sectors, large-scale mixed-use developments include the Centre Culture Business District in Xi'an (as local design institute in collaboration with Heatherwick Studio), and Century Space in Chengdu, a 600,000m² campus comprising boutique hotels, apartments, offices and retail. Also in Xi'an, JZFZ completed the first phase of the Mall of China urban renewal scheme at DongFang high street.

The practice hopes to expand its work beyond China into other regions including South East Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East.

↓ 45 RSP ARCHITECTS PLANNERS & ENGINEERS — SINGAPORE

LAST RANKING 44 — ARCHITECTS 314

The practice reports an "exceptional year of project delivery", with Singapore completions including the Singapore Oceanarium at Resorts World Sentosa and the Mandai Wildlife East nature precinct. In China, where it aims to increase its presence, the practice completed the 276-room hotel Wyndham Grand Plaza Royale Jiaxing.

RSP reports that growth has been strongest in the Middle East, where it has two offices.

In Dubai, the practice delivered luxury residential projects Ellington Beach House and A1 Badia Living, and it is due this year to complete Nobu Hotel and Branded Residences in Abu Dhabi.

While science and technology and residential were its strongest sectors, RSP reports strong momentum in mixed use and infrastructure. Ongoing projects include the King Albert Park Station Interchange, which will be Singapore's deepest station upon completion in 2032.

→ 46 IDOM — SPAIN

LAST RANKING 46 — ARCHITECTS 294

The international multidisciplinary firm has a global network of 40 offices. While Western Europe remains its leading market, Idom reports strong activity in the Middle East, where projects include the conceptual masterplan for Jubail West in the city of Jubail, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Idom is leading the transformation of Abando Station in Bilbao, Spain, to facilitate not only the arrival of a new high-speed service to the city but also urban integration, linking two districts previously separated by the railway infrastructure. The configuration of the station below ground level will also free up 130,000m² of space that the city council will use to generate a new centrality in Bilbao around the new intermodal complex

Idom

Other key projects in 2025 were Abando Station in Bilbao and the Pasrel research training and innovation building in Paris-Saclay. In Gran Canaria, it designed the Infecar pavilion for the island's trade fairgrounds (with Onda Arquitectura). Sports projects include Getafe's new Coliseum football stadium in Madrid, which started construction last year.

Idom says it is incorporating standardised processes of design from the early stages onwards, and is leveraging AI for design optimisation and exploratory processes

↑ 47 WW+P ARCHITECTS — UK

LAST RANKING 64 — ARCHITECTS 280

The transport specialist climbs up the rankings with the addition of 90 architects. This follows its merger with Canadian practice SvN Architects + Planners, a fellow member of the Egis group. WW+P, which retains its brand name, also opened a new studio in Manchester and celebrated its 40th anniversary.

The practice identifies North America and Latin America as key targets for growth this year, along with growth in the aviation sector and an expansion of planning and masterplanning as services.

Recent transport completions include the entrance to Old Street Station in London, Metro Line 11 public realm in Guangzhou, China, and five stations for the Melbourne Metro in Australia (with Hassell and RSHP).

WW+P Architects worked on five stations for the Melbourne Metro, including Anzac Station, a new underground railway station that opened in November 2025. It features the first platform-to-platform connection between trains and trams in Melbourne, with half of passengers expected to interchange between the two modes of transport

↑ 48 CORGAN — US

LAST RANKING 51 — ARCHITECTS 274

Founded in Dallas in 1938, the US practice has a network of 20 offices including overseas bases in London, Dublin and Singapore. In 2025, the practice made its first acquisition, expanding its workplace design practice with the addition of Boston-based Dyer Brown. It also became carbon neutral across its global operations.

Corgan's biggest sector remains science and technology, fuelled by its expertise in data centres. Aviation was another particular strength, with recent projects including concourse expansions at Syracuse Hancock International Airport, and the ongoing JFK Terminal 6 phase one. Corgan reports good results in education and workplace, where it has completed the Wells Fargo Corporate Campus, a "net-positive" development in Las Colinas, Texas.

↑ =49 KEO INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANTS — KUWAIT

LAST RANKING 54 — ARCHITECTS 252

The multidisciplinary consulting firm, which is headquartered in Kuwait, has opened an office in London as well as acquiring Dublin sustainability consulting business Meehan Green.

All its work is in the Middle East, where KEO has eight offices. Residential and commercial sectors were strongest last year, with key projects including U-View Tower, a 52-storey skyscraper proposed for Jeddah in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The development will include the St Regis hotel and residences and is scheduled to open in 2030.

In Kuwait, KEO International Design Consultants is designing the Al Humaidhi commercial building, while Dubai projects include the Al Tayer mixed-use tower.

↑ =49 RONALD LU & PARTNERS — CHINA

LAST RANKING 53 — ARCHITECTS 252

Founded 50 years ago, the practice has nearly 600 employees across five offices in China and one in London.

Its major completion in 2025 was One Causeway Bay, a 24-storey office tower in Hong Kong designed in collaboration with KPF. The 64,000m^2 development has a four-level retail podium and a rooftop terrace overlooking Victoria Harbour. The practice also completed Hong Kong Science Park Building 18W, which it describes as the first lab building in Hong Kong with a high-performance precast facade.

In mainland China, Ronald Lu & Partners completed Poly Arche, a landmark development of two interlinked towers in Foshan. Ongoing projects in Shanghai include the Todtown transit-oriented development and several sites in the emerging Westbund Central neighbourhood.

Kris Provost

Ronald Lu & Partners was lead architect, authorised person and executive interior designer on One Causeway Bay in Hong Kong, a people-centric, sustainable workplace that sets a new benchmark for carbon neutral development and urban connectivity. It was completed in 2025

Foster + Partners
fosterandpartners.com
Storytelling
through space

↓ =51 P&T GROUP — CHINA

LAST RANKING 50 — ARCHITECTS 250

The Chinese practice reported its strongest growth last year in Singapore, where it has one of several overseas offices. Projects include Clementi NorthArc, a six-block residential development comprising nearly 1,200 flats.

Residential was its strongest sector overall, with Sierra Sea in Hong Kong a particularly significant project. It combines high-rise residential with commercial and sports (including golf) facilities. Also in Hong Kong, Novo Land consists of 14 residential towers with associated amenities. In Vietnam, P&T last year won an international competition for 448 Nguyen Tat Thanh, a residential waterfront high-rise in Ho Chi Minh City.

In addition to its core Pacific Rim region, P&T has a secondary market in the Middle East, where it has three offices.

INI Design Studio's Mawkhanu Memorial Park in New Shillong, Meghalaya, India, is a US$46m ongoing iconic tourism destination development due to be completed in 2030

↑ =51 VISIONARCH – VISIONARY ARCHITECTURE — PHILIPPINES

LAST RANKING 56 — ARCHITECTS 250

Retail developers were the Philippines firm's best clients last year, with the practice working on several Ayala Malls redevelopments including the Greenbelt and Glorietta sites, both in Makati, and Fairview Terraces in Quezon City.

Commercial mixed-use development remains its strongest sector, however. The Caloocan transit-oriented development is a mixed-use district planned around a major transport interchange and conceived as an integrated urban hub connecting commuters, residents and businesses. Construction started last year on Olin Tower, a 52-storey residential tower in Ortigas that includes shared offices, a function hall and recreational amenities.

Beachfront projects include The Spinnaker, a residential tower at Laiya in Batangas whose design is inspired by the form of a sail.

Visionarch employs 322 staff across five offices in the Philippines.

↓ 53 10 DESIGN — UK

LAST RANKING 48 — ARCHITECTS 249

The firm, which has nine studios across Europe, Asia, the Middle East and the Americas, has appointed a new CEO, Sabrina Klor, and has designated its London studio as a global headquarters to lead its next phase of expansion.

Hospitality and mixed use were 10 Design's busiest sectors in 2025. Key projects include Huafa Snow World in Shenzhen, China, the Nekajui resort for Ritz-Carlton Reserve in Costa Rica, and a 193,500m² extension to Dongguan University of Technology.

Completions due this year include a 257,250m² mixed-use development on the waterfront of Lihu Lake in Wuxi, China.

10 Design identifies future growth areas as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, India, Oman and North America.

RE-ENTRY 54 ITTEN+BRECHBÜHL — SWITZERLAND

LAST RANKING NA — ARCHITECTS 244

Completions last year included two major residential projects. In Geneva, the Swiss practice concluded the lengthy renovation of La Tourelle, a 415-unit modernist complex designed between 1965 and 1973. In Lausanne, it completed Oree, a new residential quarter.

Other recent projects reflect the breadth of Itten+Brechbühl's work – a senior living residence in Canobbio, renovation of the headquarters of the WHO in Geneva, and a new headquarters for Bosch/Scintilla. It also won a competition to design the new Bruderholz Hospital.

The practice, which has seven offices across Switzerland, has an internal sustainability research group and has recently developed a new technology for low carbon floor slabs.

↑ 55 WTA ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN STUDIO — PHILIPPINES

LAST RANKING 80 — ARCHITECTS 238

The Philippines practice shoots up the table after increasing its architect headcount by 90 last year. This reflects an increase in hospitality work as well as large-scale masterplanning and infrastructure work for the national government and ADB (Asian Development Bank). The practice has also restructured its project and construction management division into an architect-led model and has grown its research team.

Ongoing work includes the Hall of Justice

Rex Chu / OS Studio

ASX Satow's Taichung International Convention and Exhibition Centre in Taichung City, Taiwan, completed last year

in San Pablo City, and the Philippine International Exhibition Centre in Manila, both due to complete in 2028.

WTA hopes to strengthen its expertise in civic, institutional and hospitality design and is looking to new markets in Asia and the Middle East, particularly the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is also looking to acquire an office in the US.

↑ 56 ALLFORD HALL MONAGHAN MORRIS — UK

LAST RANKING 58 — ARCHITECTS 234

The UK practice has overseas offices in three continents – at Oklahoma City in the US, Madrid in Spain, and Sydney in Australia.

It is busiest in the offices/corporate sector, with recent projects including the refurbishment and extension of Sir Denys Lasdun's brutalist 76 Southbank on London's South Bank, and 1 Broadgate in the City of London. Mixed-use recent completions include Mason & Fifth Westbourne Park, a hotel-led development along the Grand Union Canal in west London, and The Citizen in Oklahoma City. This includes a banking hall, a hotel, co-working space, a members' club and a business incubator and offices.

In 2026, AHMM hopes to grow in the schools and higher education markets.

↑ 57 AXS SATOW — JAPAN

LAST RANKING 60 — ARCHITECTS 232

The Japanese practice, which last year celebrated its 80th anniversary, cites local government as providing its best clients last year, with completions including the Ube City Hall, and library complexes in both Myoko and Fujioka.

While its busiest sectors were education and culture, the practice also had success in the healthcare market, winning design commissions for three major hospitals – Yamaguchi Prefectural Grand Medical Centre, Sanda City Integrated Hospital and Aomori Prefectural and City Integrated Hospital. Despite growth in Japan, the practice reports a decline in projects in China, where it has an office in Beijing.

AXS Satow last year launched its Collaborative Ecological Zone research proposal, an urban environmental planning concept to return paved ground surfaces to soil and green areas.

↑ 58 INI DESIGN STUDIO — INDIA

LAST RANKING 70 — ARCHITECTS 231

The expanding Indian practice reports robust performance across healthcare, education, sports and entertainment, data centres and large-scale infrastructure. This is driven, it says, by both public investment and a renewed private sector push towards resilient and future-ready facilities.

Tourism is another area of momentum. INI Design Studio is currently working on spiritual hill-town projects in Jageshwar Dham and Badrinath as well as a temple precinct masterplan at Ambaji and the Beyt Dwarka Island spiritual tourism and waterfront development. Key recent commissions include multiple Adani Airport terminal developments and large-scale corporate and mixed-use projects at GIFT City in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

In 2026 the practice says it is steering towards markets that combine sustainability with innovation and cultural resurgence.

Zhaoqiang Photography

AD&R Institute of Zhejiang University last year completed Dinghai Zhenshen Church in Dinghai, Zhoushan, China

↓ 59 NBBJ — US

LAST RANKING 52 — ARCHITECTS 230

NBBJ has a particular expertise in healthcare architecture, ranking seventh in fee income for this sector as well as for offices. Recent projects include the UCSF Pediatric Stad Center in San Francisco, and the Atrium Health Carolinas Medical Center, which is billed as the largest healthcare prefabrication initiative in the US. NBBJ is working with Stanford University on The Hospital of the Future, a research project that will consider how hospital design can respond to advances in digital healthcare technology.

In other sectors, the practice last year completed the Life and Mind Building for the University of Oxford, the UK's largest laboratory designed to Passivhaus principles.

The practice has opened two new offices in Charlotte, North Carolina, and San Diego, California, increasing its North American total to nine.

↑ 60 WONG TUNG & PARTNERS — CHINA

LAST RANKING 62 — ARCHITECTS 224

Founded in 1963 in Hong Kong, the practice has 357 employees across four offices in China.

While it provides architectural and masterplanning services across many sectors, its busiest areas last year were residential and health and hospitals, with local government identified as its best clients.

Recent Hong Kong projects include Grand Victoria, a luxury development of 11 residential towers on the waterfront in West Kowloon, and Monaco One in the Kai Tak area of Hong Kong. In the New Territories, Kong Ha Wai Transitional Housing provides 2,000 units of short-term housing for those waiting for public rental housing accommodation. In Shanghai, a four-storey former department store has been transformed into a mixed-use hub in the podium renovation of Kerry Everbright City phase one in Jinan.

↑ =61 AD&R INSTITUTE OF ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY — CHINA

LAST RANKING 63 — ARCHITECTS 223

The Architectural Design & Research Institute of Zhejiang University now has 18 offices and more than 1,450 staff, after the opening of new branches last year in Guangdong, Fujian, Jinhua and Chongqing.

While its strongest work areas have been industrial park/office campus and educational projects, the institute has an extremely broad portfolio. Recent completions include the Dinghai Zhenshen Church in Zhoushan, a centrifugal hypergravity and interdisciplinary laboratory in Zhejiang, and a 3D-printed

SSH was lead consultant on the Social Habilitation Centre in Alula, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The facility aims to integrate people with disabilities into supportive communities through a range of comprehensive services

footbridge on its own Ningbo campus.

The institute has established two new taskforces for AI applications, one for smart city urban planning and another for safety and monitoring.

In the next year, it hopes to grow in the Pearl River Delta area in addition to its solid base in the Yangtze River Delta region.

↑ =61 AYESA INGENERIA Y ARQUITECTURA — SPAIN

LAST RANKING 74 — ARCHITECTS 223

The Spanish technology and engineering group has made two acquisitions in the buildings and architecture sector, Australian building services and sustainability firm ADP Company and lean construction firm Core Company in Spain. It has also opened three new offices in Jeddah, Dammam and Buraidah in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where it anticipates future growth. This expansion has helped boost its architect numbers from 159 to 223, sending Ayesa 13 places up the WA100 league.

The group reports strength in the sports sector, where projects include refurbishment of the Olympic stadium in Seville, and the Aramco Stadium in Dammam. The life science and data centre sectors are also targeted as future growth areas.

↑ 63 SSH — KUWAIT

LAST RANKING 69 — ARCHITECTS 212

The Kuwaiti practice employs more than 1,000 staff across nine offices in the Middle East and North Africa.

SSH says its strongest market last year was the UAE, supported by steady investment and diversification in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Ras Al Khaimah. While the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia remains a strategic priority market for SSH, market growth has been impacted by reduced public sector design activity, although new opportunities are emerging in the private sector.

Residential work is the practice's biggest sector, followed by hospitality and offices/corporate. Recent completions include phase two of Kuwait Waterfront Development, a 9.7km leisure initiative combining public plazas and children's play areas along with sports, restaurants and cafe facilities. In Kuwait City, SSH delivered the 34-storey Boubyan Bank Headquarters, in collaboration with Perkins Eastman.

NEW 64 GRIMSHAW — UK

LAST RANKING NA — ARCHITECTS 209

The transport sector was the busiest last year for the UK international practice, which also reported strength in logistics and data centres but a shrinking in the cultural sector.

Key recent completions include LAX/Metro Transit Center in Los Angeles, Robert Poujade Pedestrian Bridge in Toulouse, and Colne Valley Viaduct, which spans 3.4km on the HS2 rail line in the UK. Airport commissions include the expansion of Athens International Airport, due to complete by 2032.

Grimshaw last year launched Minoro, an online platform designed to accelerate building decarbonisation. The practice has also established a firmwide AI steering group to guide the responsible adoption of AI.

Practice founder Sir Nicholas Grimshaw, who set up the practice in 1980, last year died at the age of 85.

↓ 65 LACIME ARCHITECTS — CHINA

LAST RANKING 55 — ARCHITECTS 199

Based in Shanghai and Hong Kong, Lacime drops down the rankings after a decrease of 41 architects in 2025.

The practice's strongest sector by far was the heritage sector, with hotel groups cited as its best clients. However, it reports that the traditional residential development sector shrank last year, with margins under particular pressure in Chinese inland cities.

Key projects include Riverville, which it describes as the first residential complex in Shanghai to be delivered with fully preserved historical features. The development is a collection of 90 garden villas.

Lacime is currently not using AI, which it says offers limited efficiency gains for its specialised work in heritage protection architectural design.

→ 66 BUILT CYBERNETICS — UK

LAST RANKING 66 — ARCHITECTS 190

Aukett Swanke Group has rebranded as Built Cybernetics, a name that better reflects its proptech business. The group includes London-based Aukett Swanke and executive architect Veretec, as well as Berlin and Frankfurt practice Aukett + Heese.

Offices are its mainstay, with recent Aukett Swanke completions including 7 Princes Street, a 5,000m² back-to-frame refurbishment and extension of a 1970s office building opposite the Bank of England in the City of London. Near St James's Park, the practice extended and refurbished the Asticus building, raising the top floor and inserting a new floor underneath it.

Other core sectors include residential and hospitality. Aukett Swanke has refurbished the grade II-listed Beaumont Mayfair hotel in central London and submitted a planning application for a new hotel on Holborn Viaduct for Staycity Wilde.

↓ 67 ARCHETYPE GROUP — VIETNAM

LAST RANKING 65 — ARCHITECTS 186

The Vietnam-based multidisciplinary firm is optimistic about growth, reporting significant opportunities in Africa and the Middle East, with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia offering the best growth potential. The exception is Western Europe, where Archetype anticipates the construction economy will decline.

While science and technology was its largest sector in 2025, followed by hospitality, Archetype's ongoing work reflects its diverse portfolio. In Vietnam it is working on a US$100m crafting plant for jewellery brand Pandora, while in Mongolia it is designing the Poma Cable Car system in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar. In Côte d'Ivoire, the practice has

completed Playce Palace, a premier shopping mall in Abidjan.

Archetype has launched an interior design hub in Thailand and made an equity investment in the Chinese subsidiary of French practice Arte Charpentier.

↑ 68 PM GROUP — IRELAND

LAST RANKING 72 — ARCHITECTS 185

The Irish firm specialises in the design, construction and commissioning of high-tech facilities, with 13 overseas offices to supplement those in Dublin and Cork.

Recent projects include the Astellas R&D and Product Fill Facility for aseptic drug production in Tralee, Ireland, and two Modulus biopharmaceutical production units for Sanofi in France and Singapore. These enable the production of multiple vaccines and biologic drugs simultaneously. Also in Singapore, PM Group is masterplanning and designing a new industrial park with manufacturing facilities, warehousing, quality control laboratories and administrative offices.

The practice last year achieved the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi) Net-Zero Standard validation. It is also in the process of expanding its more than 40-strong sustainability team.

NEW 69 KPF — US

LAST RANKING NA — ARCHITECTS 184

The US firm has experienced significant growth in India and the Middle East, where it recently began its first projects in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and hopes to further expand in these regions in 2026. It reports fewer new opportunities emerging in the Chinese and European markets, which have been largely stagnant. Overall, it experienced resilience and high demand in the residential, hospitality and mixed-use sectors.

Notable ongoing projects include North Bund Lot 91 on the Shanghai waterfront, which will be the world's tallest all-electric building when it completes in 2029. A new terminal at Singapore's Changi Airport broke ground last year. Recent completions include the CPIC Xintiandi Commercial Centre skyscraper in Shanghai and Oriente Green Campus, a transformation of a shopping mall in Portugal into a tech office and academic campus.

↑ 70 MORPH — SPAIN

LAST RANKING 82 — ARCHITECTS 182

The Madrid architecture and engineering practice increased its architect headcount by 40 last year, moving it 12 places further up the WA100 rankings. The vast majority of its work is residential, primarily in Western Europe and in particular its home country of Spain. Recent projects include Nido Principe Pío, a student housing community in Madrid with gym, social, dining, study and co-working facilities. In Jaén, it is working on the Cetedex Technological Development and Experimentation Centre, designed for future adaptability and disassembly.

Morph's second-biggest market is South and Central America, where the practice has an office in the Dominican Republic. Looking ahead, Morph sees the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a promising region for growth.

Dirk Lindner

KPF's Ziraat Bank Headquarters in Istanbul, Turkey, which was completed last year, is a wellness-oriented office and the anchor of the city's new finance district

↓ 71 PROGETTO CMR — ITALY

LAST RANKING 67 — ARCHITECTS 180

The multidisciplinary Italian practice reports continued growth across all business units. Its biggest sector by far remains offices/corporate, with recent landmark completions including the opening of L'Oreal's new headquarters The Sign in Milan. Other key office projects include the 20,000m² BNP Paribas HQ in Florence and the Harmonic Innovation Hub in Catanzero, a 40,000m² digital innovation district for start-ups. Projects in other sectors include the NZEB-certified Italian Rugby Federation Training Centre near Milan and a 7,000m² Department of Medicine at the University of Udine.

The practice says it is strengthening its international presence – it now has six offices overseas, including its newest in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia – and expanding its strategic partnerships. Other focus areas are digital transformation, energy efficiency and human-centred design.

NEW 72 CHINA UNITED ENGINEERING CORPORATION — CHINA

LAST RANKING NA — ARCHITECTS 176

The WA100 newcomer is a scientific and technology company with nearly 6,500 employees across 37 offices around China, plus another in Colombia.

The group's architecture division was busiest last year in infrastructure and science and technology work, with projects including the Binjiang District Science and Technology Innovation in Hangzhou and the Yangtze River Delta R&D Headquarters Base.

It also works broadly across other sectors, and reports strong performance in healthcare and elderly care, urban renewal and existing asset redevelopment, as well as transport-oriented development and infrastructure work and new energy and industrial upgrading. Recent completions include the Liangzhu 5000+ Art & Creativity Park in Hangzhou and the Tibet Enterprise World office and residential complex in Lhasa, Tibet.

Looking ahead, the practice is hoping to

expand in cultural tourism and wellness, "low-altitude economy", urban renewal and innovative industrialised construction.

↑ =73 PURCELL — UK

LAST RANKING =76 — ARCHITECTS 173

The heritage specialist continues to secure an enviable selection of high-profile commissions. Competition wins in 2025 include the Queen Elizabeth II National Memorial competition (with Foster + Partners) and the British Museum's new Western Range (with Lina Ghotmeh Architects), both in London.

Purcell also completed the transformation of the Sainsbury Wing at the National Gallery (with Selldorf Architects) and designed the Shoemakers Museum in Somerset. Its restoration of the Queen Elizabeth Tower was the first heritage project to be shortlisted for the RIBA Stirling Prize.

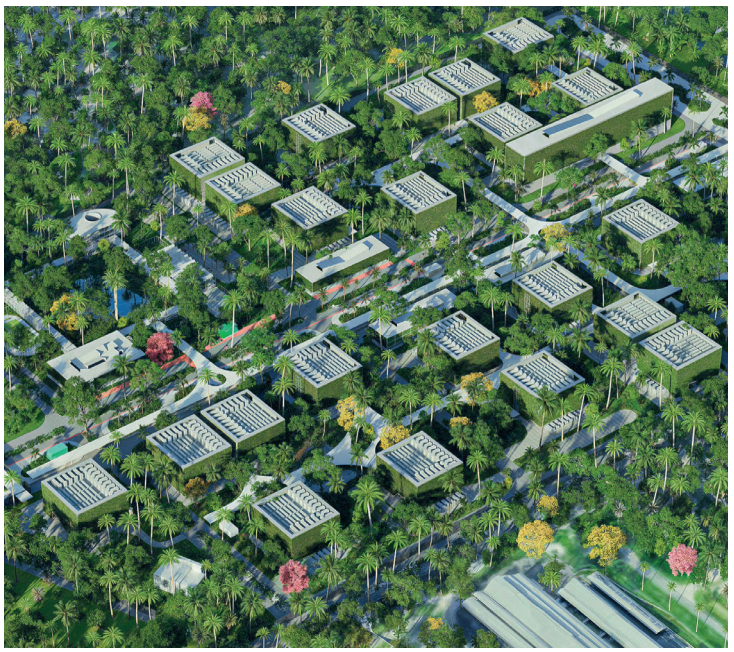
Overseas, it is restoring the post-war modernist State Theatre in Hong Kong and converting Sydney's former Department of Lands into a hotel.

The practice has entered the life sciences sector with its successful planning application for the Bridge Labs development in Oxford, and has opened a new office in Edinburgh.

→ =73 SAOTA — SOUTH AFRICA

LAST RANKING 73 — ARCHITECTS 173

The Cape Town practice's biggest market is the Middle East, followed by Africa and North America. Saota is busiest in the residential sector, with ongoing work including Six Senses Residences, a development of luxury villa, residences and hotel suites on Dubai's Palm Jumeira due for completion this year.



Hyphen led the concept design and masterplan for Rio AI City, an ambitious data centre ecosystem under development in Rio de Janeiro for Elea Data Centers. With the capacity for up to 3.2GW of energy, powered entirely by certified renewable sources, this new digital city is is designed to support the rapid growth of artificial intelligence and cloud computing in Latin America and beyond

Hyphen

Wilmotte & Associés Architectes won the competition to design anew the Théâtre de l'Olivier in Istres, France; the current theatre is to be demolished and completely rebuilt. The new design's organic curves are intended to soften the frontage on Avenue Leon Blum and allow fluid circulation around the building. Facade materials are concrete and glass

Wilmotte & Associés

The practice is also working on two branded residences projects for client Aman – Amanruya in Bodrum, Turkey, and Amanjena in Marrakech, Morocco. Individual homes include Island Villa, a recently launched concept for a 3,000m² home in Dubai.

In additional to residential, Saota's strongest sectors have been hospitality and commercial offices. Looking ahead to this year, the practice is hoping to get into the China market.

↑ =75 HYPHEN — UK

LAST RANKING 79 — ARCHITECTS 172

Hyphen has expanded into the Asia Pacific region, with the opening of an office in Adelaide, Australia, bringing the practice's total number of overseas offices to eight.

It identifies it strongest sector last year as digital critical infrastructure, with projects including the concept design and masterplan for Rio AI City for Elea Data Centers. Now under development in Rio de Janeiro, this data centre ecosystem is designed to support the growth of AI and cloud computing in Latin America.

Another growth area was hospitality, which Hyphen hopes to strengthen in the coming year. In other sectors, ongoing projects include the reimagining of the 1930s Berlin office complex Lotte Gold. This involves upgrading the facade, reorganising floorplans and carrying out a feasibility study for roof expansion for residential use.

↓ =75 WILMOTTE & ASSOCIÉS ARCHITECTES — FRANCE

LAST RANKING 59 — ARCHITECTS 172

The highest-placed French practice said its best clients in 2025 were cultural and arts organisations. Significant completions in France include the Soisy-Sous-Montmorency's Le Trèfle cultural centre, which includes a music and dance school, and Theatre De L'Olivier in Istres. In Uzbekistan, Wilmotte & Associés is working on the Silk Road Museum in Samarkand, a 10,000m² building designed as a tribute to the historic caravanserais along the key trading route.

In other sectors, the practice completed the Forest Hill residential complex in Meudon, and it says it remains busiest in the offices/corporate market.

Wilmotte & Associés plans to open a new innovation department this year incorporating AI and other technologies. Established in 1975, the practice has overseas offices in London, Milan, Venice and Seoul in addition to those in Paris and Nice.

Leigh & Orange

Kai Tak Sports Park / Hong Kong, China

Studio City Phase 2 / Macau, China
(In collaboration with Zaha Hadid Architects)

Hangzhou Wangjiang New Town Project / Hangzhou, China

Founded in Hong Kong in 1874, Leigh & Orange is an award-winning international architectural design practice providing innovative and sustainable designs tailored to each client's specific requirements. We deliver our professional design and project management services across the full spectrum of market sectors from our offices in Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Beijing, Shanghai, Fuzhou, Macau and Doha.

INSPIRED *by* HUMANITY,
SUSTAINED *by* CREATIVITY.

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↓ 77 ASYA DESIGN — PHILIPPINES

LAST RANKING 54 — ARCHITECTS 166

The practice drops down the rankings after its architect headcount fell by 81 last year. Asya has five offices in its Philippines homeland and provides a multidisciplinary service, from architecture, engineering and interior design through to construction management, brand design and property management.

In addition to its mainstay of residential work, Asya Design's other key sectors include retail, with recent projects including Opus Mall, a lifestyle and retail destination in Pasay City. In the sports sector, it is working on the 8,000-seat UAAP Arena, a collegiate sports venue for the University Association of the Philippines due for completion in 2029 in Quezon City.

↓ =78 C P KUKREJA ARCHITECTS — INDIA

LAST RANKING =76 — ARCHITECTS 165

The multidisciplinary practice has opened new offices in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, bringing its total in India to 15, with four more overseas. It reports increased demand in public sector projects such as healthcare, education and civic infrastructure, with solid growth in hotels and leisure/amusement facilities. It has a strong track record in school design, including the Harow International School in Bengaluru.

The practice singles out its ongoing ONGC Convention Centre in Goa as its most significant project last year. Recent commissions include the expansion of the five-star Taj Mahal Hotel in Lucknow and a new terminal at Bagdogra Airport in north Bengal. Inspired by Himalayan landscape, this is due to complete by 2027.

↓ =78 JASPERS-EYERS ARCHITECTS — BELGIUM

LAST RANKING 71 — ARCHITECTS 165

The Belgian practice describes 2025 as a landmark year, marked by continued focus on sustainable urban design and recognition for its recently completed ZIN mixed-use development in Brussels, which was awarded World's Best Tall Building 2025 by the Council on Vertical Urbanism. The project, designed in collaboration with architects 51N4E and l'AUC, reimagines two outdated office towers.

Ongoing work includes a Brussels headquarters for broadcaster VRT (with Office Kersten Geers David Van Severen) and The M, a riverside residential development in the Landbouwbelang area of Maastricht, The Netherlands (with Tunon Y Albornoz Arquitectos and Dhoore-Vanweert Architects). Jaspers-Eyers is at the design phase of Ilot 130, an office, residential and retail development in Brussels (with A20, Morris+Company and Veld Architecten).

↓ 80 MORPHOGENESIS — INDIA

LAST RANKING =67 — ARCHITECTS 154

Residential developers and housebuilders were identified as its best clients last year by the Indian practice, with ongoing projects including the Trump Towers in Gurugram, set to become the tallest twin towers in north India.

Morphogenesis says it has strengthened its position in the residential, workplace and commercial sectors, and also saw growth in hospitality work, with projects under way in Bangalore and Kolkata as well as in Sri Lanka. Looking ahead, it hopes to expand its work for institutional clients.

Work is continuing on one of the practice's key recent projects, the 17-acre ITC Campus in the Rajarhat suburb of Kolkata. This phased development combines IT and corporate offices, a hotel, a knowledge centre and residential towers.

↓ 81 HENN — GERMANY

LAST RANKING 75 — ARCHITECTS 152

Science and technology was the leading sector for Henn last year. Last year the German practice broke ground on IQ Space Berlin, a major biomedical research innovation centre due to complete in 2028 in the German capital, and laid the foundation stone for the Brainergy Hub, a circular hybrid timber building in Jülich, western Germany.

Completions this coming year will include the Merck Life Science Advanced Research Centre in Darmstadt, Germany.

The practice also reports strength in the cultural sector, with new wins including the renovation and expansion of the listed 19th-century Staatstheater Augsburg, due to complete in 2030. In the offices sector, notable completions include Edge HafenCity

Asya Design

Asya Design's UAAP Arena sports venue in Quezon City, for the University Association of the Philippines, is due for completion in 2029. As a world-class collegiate sports venue seating 8,000 spectators, it aims to elevate university athletics

in Hamburg, Germany, and China projects Kingdee Cloud Tower in Shenzhen and the Zoomlion headquarters in Changsha.

Looking ahead, Henn is hoping to get into leisure market.

↓ 82 VALODE & PISTRE ARCHITECTES — FRANCE

LAST RANKING 81 — ARCHITECTS 149

Competition wins in 2025 include the transformation of Toulouse's former city administrative complex into a mixed-use neighbourhood including family and student housing, offices, retail and a health centre.

The practice is on site with a Midi-Pyrénées headquarters for bank Caisse d'Épargne and is designing a 50,000m² exhibition hall and event centre at the Paris Exhibition Centre. In Monaco, its Mareterra project, a new district planned by the practice on a land extension into the sea, has been inaugurated.

Valode & Pistre sees most growth potential in China, where the practice has an office in Beijing. Recent projects include the 200,000m² Jinan Expo exhibition halls.

NEW 83 DREES & SOMMER — GERMANY

LAST RANKING NA — ARCHITECTS 140

Architecture is just one facet of the global consulting company's broad built environment expertise. The WA100 newcomer describes itself as providing a single source of consultation and implementation service for the real estate, infrastructure and industrial markets. Founded in 1970, it has 6,500 staff across 23 domestic and 47 international offices, including 350 creative staff.

Drees & Sommer is busiest in the science and technology market, and identified companies in the industrial and manufacturing sector as its best clients last year. The group sees most potential for growth in the US, where it recently merged with VVA, a 12-office project management and cost consulting company.

↓ 84 SIKKA ASSOCIATES ARCHITECTS — INDIA

LAST RANKING 83 — ARCHITECTS 139

The Indian practice has a network of seven domestic offices plus another in Bhutan.

Sikka reports that residential and offices have been its strongest sectors in the last year, and has plans to get into the industrial sector too. Recent residential projects include the luxury DLF One Midtown in New Delhi, which provides more than 900 units with amenities including an infinity pool and expansive landscaped green spaces.

Sikka's most significant recent development is the World Trade Centre in New Delhi. which was inaugurated last year. Spread over 10ha, the centre incorporates offices, event venues, business clubs and lounges, retail and food and beverage outlets, and a landscaped plaza.

Jaspers-Eyers' Landbouwbelang in Maastricht, the Netherlands – designed in co-operation with Tunon Y Albornoz Arquitectos and Dhoore-Vanweert Architects – is a transformative redevelopment of a former industrial site into a vibrant, sustainable urban hub that includes educational buildings, sports and hospitality facilities, student housing and apartments

↑ 85 ARCH-AGE DESIGN — CHINA

LAST RANKING 86 — ARCHITECTS 136

The practice has 15 offices across China plus one in Paris. Its biggest sector by far is residential. Recent projects include Jiangyu Haitang Riverside, a cluster of residential buildings in the mountain city of Chongqing, and the Lanyue Mansion development of residences around a water garden in Changsha City.

Arch-Age Design names its most significant project last year as the Shanghai Merchants Times Chaopai Demonstration Zone, a mixed-use development located in Chongqing.

The practice has set up an AI R&D team and says it is already finding AI particularly effective during the conceptual stages of design

↑ 86 STRIDE TREGLOWN — UK

LAST RANKING =88 — ARCHITECTS 128

Stride Treglown has become a full employee ownership trust and has been recertified as a B Corp, four years after the practice first gained B Corp status.

Its strongest sectors last year were education and healthcare. Completions included Purdown View, a 900-bed student accommodation scheme for UWE Bristol and the UK's largest certified Passivhaus development. In London, Devonport House is an ongoing transformation of a grade II-listed former naval hospital nurses' home into teaching and community space for the University of Greenwich.

Stride Treglown is expanding in the science and technology and defence sectors, and hopes to grow its regeneration and development work too.

Last year it collaborated with social landlords and the Welsh government to create the Tai ar y Cyd Pattern Book for timber-based, affordable homes.

↓ 87 RICHEZ_ASSOCIÉS — FRANCE

LAST RANKING 85 — ARCHITECTS 127

The French multidisciplinary practice has opened an office in Montreal, Canada, to add to its other international branch in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Transport sector work remains strong, with projects including four metro stations and a maintenance and storage centre for the Grand Paris Express and, in the Alps, a new station for Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne.

In other sectors, new project wins include the Toulouse Energy Recovery Unit, a waste treatment plant due for completion in 2032, and a coastal masterplan for the City of Marseille. The practice reports a decline in urban design and masterplanning work but is hoping to move into the health sector.

↓ =88 A26 ARCHITECTURES — FRANCE

LAST RANKING 87 — ARCHITECTS 125

Residential, industrial and data centres remain strong areas of work for the French practice, which reports a slowdown in all market sectors due to both international and national political uncertainty. Recent projects include the Recygénie residential development in Gennevilliers to the west of Paris, constructed using 100% recycled concrete – billed as a world-first.

In Bordeaux, A26 completed a 4,600m² laboratory building for Merck wrapped in a perforated metal screen. In Lille, it has converted an art deco former bank headquarters into the high-end Hôtel Les Augustins, with a pool in the former vaults.

The practice plans to open a new regional office in Brittany.

↑ =88 DSA ARCHITECTS INTERNATIONAL — UAE

LAST RANKING 91 — ARCHITECTS 125

Founded in Johannesburg, DSA Architects now works primarily in the Middle East, where it has offices in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Oman. It is particularly focused on the KSA market, where it is working with several PIF (public investment fund) developers on projects in line with the Saudi Vision 2030 transformation strategy.

Leisure and hospitality are key sectors. The practice is due to complete Raffles Jeddah hotel and residences and the Four Seasons Hotel in Jeddah this year, and is also under construction on the mixed-use Livein Liwan, Riyadh. Elsewhere, work includes the Tilal Al Ghaf luxury residential development in Dubai, the Crescent Development on the Caspian Sea in Baku, and new projects in Egypt.

DSA has developed Daria (DSA Architect of Record Intelligent Assistant) to leverage AI to ensure compliance with evolving codes and regulations.

↑ 90 EPR ARCHITECTS — UK

LAST RANKING 93 — ARCHITECTS 122

Hospitality work remains strong for the UK practice. This year it is due to complete Six Senses at The Whiteley, part of a reimagining of the former Whiteleys department store on Queensway, London. EPR Architects is also designing the internal fit-out of two hotels within the Olympia site redevelopment – Citizen M London and the 204-key Hyatt Regency London.

In other sectors, London completions include Loveday Belgravia, a wellness-led new-build care home, the Osmo office development in Battersea, and the first phase of the Manor Road residential quarter in Canning Town.

EPR reports growth in its Manchester studio and interior design work, and has opened a new office in Nicosia, Cyprus. The practice now has its first level 6 and 7 apprentices in London.

NEW =91 DAR AL OMRAN RASEM BADRAN — JORDAN

LAST RANKING NA — ARCHITECTS 121

Founded in 1979, the WA100 newcomer is a multidisciplinary firm spanning architecture, engineering, urban planning and cultural consultancy, with six offices across the Middle East region.

The practice reports booming cultural and residential projects. These include the 1,000m² Wadi Safar Experience Centre in Diriyah, inspired by traditional Najdi architecture. Dar Al Omran Rasem Badran has a diversified portfolio across many other sectors, from offices and healthcare to education and religious buildings. The practice recently oversaw the construction of the National Seed Bank in Jordan and is working on the Budoor Al-Najaf housing project in Iraq.

Practice founder Dr Rasem Badran was last year awarded the Career Prize by the International Academy of Architecture.

HCP Architecture & Engineering is collaborating with Bjarke Ingels Group on the Joint Research Centre in Seville for the European Commission. Combining tradition and avant garde approaches, it is due to be built in August 2027

↓ =91 LEIGH & ORANGE — CHINA

LAST RANKING 84 — ARCHITECTS 121

The sports sector was busiest for Leigh & Orange last year, with the completion of Kai Tak Sports Park in Hong Kong, which includes a 50,000-seater main stadium, and the redevelopment of Yuen Long Stadium. The Hong Kong practice also reports strength in the cultural and entertainment sector, and in work in the Middle East, where it has an office in Doha.

Other recent work reflects Leigh & Orange's diversified portfolio. Projects include an expansion of the Legislative Council Complex in Hong Kong, student residences for the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, the mixed-use K11 Elysea development in Shanghai, and the Future Times twin office towers in Shenzhen, China (with A+E Design). Looking ahead, the practice is hoping to also get into research and advanced technology development work.

↑ 93 HCP ARCHITECTURE & ENGINEERING — SPAIN

LAST RANKING 96 — ARCHITECTS 117

The growing Malaga-based multidisciplinary practice is now in its 40th year.

As well as consolidating its presence in the Middle East, where it has two offices, HCP is planning to open a new office in Melbourne as

Killa Design

Killa Design's Safa Two is an ultra-luxury residential tower in Dubai's Business Bay, currently under construction and due to complete in 2028

part of the practice's international expansion.

Most of its work last year, however, continued to be on the Spanish Costa del Sol and in HCP's core residential sector in particular, with hotels also an area of expansion. Ongoing projects include La Térmica, a development of 870 dwellings in Malaga, and the One Oak residential complex in Torremolinos.

In other sectors, highlights in 2025 included the 27,000m² UAX Mare Nostrum university campus, which has opened in Málaga. The practice is also expanding its work in the commercial sector both domestically and internationally.

→ 94 DIAMOND SCHMITT — CANADA

LAST RANKING 94 — ARCHITECTS 116

Diamond Schmitt's strongest regions in 2025 were western Canada and the southern US, where it was busiest in the healthcare and academic sectors. Projects include the Toronto Metropolitan University School of Medicine, which transformed a former civic centre in Brampton, and the ongoing Myron and Berna Garron Health Sciences Complex at the University of Toronto's Scarborough Campus.

In 2026 the practice hopes to further expand its healthcare portfolio as well as its work in the cultural and social housing sectors. In the latter, it is working on the first passive-house community housing project in Toronto at Alexandra Park.

Diamond Schmitt last year launched Eco-DeX, an internal benchmarking platform created to track and communicate the sustainability performance of its projects.

↑ =95 KILLA DESIGN — UAE

LAST RANKING 97 — ARCHITECTS 113

Established in Dubai in 2015, Killa Design increased its architect headcount by 20 last year and established a new office in Cape Town. It also has ambitions to open in London.

UAE and Abu Dhabi were the strongest markets for the practice, which was busiest with mixed-use and hospitality developments. Notable recent completions include the US$400m Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab hotel and residences in Dubai, and Shebara Resort in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a hyper-luxury sanctuary on the Red Sea.

Outside the Middle East, Killa Design is on site with projects in the Maldives (Zamani resort) and Azerbaijan (Seabreeze Tower residences in Baku). It is also designing the Hilton Luanda in Angola and is working in Brazil and Uruguay.

↓ =95 PRP — UK

LAST RANKING 92 — ARCHITECTS 113

Residential projects continue to be the mainstay for the UK practice. Last year key completions included Huntley Wharf, a 700-home mixed-tenure regeneration scheme in Reading, and Botanical Place, a later-living scheme in West Byfleet. Planning milestones include permission for a 666-bed purpose-built student accommodation scheme in Brent Cross, north London. In other sectors, PRP completed Eastbrook Studios, a television and film facility in Dagenham East.

Looking ahead, the housing design practice sees building remediation, refurbishment and reuse as areas for future growth.

In addition to its projects work, practice initiatives include the new PRP Academy for staff career development, and the introduction of both an AI policy handbook and the practice's own AI platform, Artis.

Diamond Schmitt's four-storey atrium is the centrepiece of its design for Toronto Metropolitan University's School of Medicine. The school combines flexible laboratory spaces, classrooms and offices, with functions that bridge the gap between the university and the community. The atrium features informal seating to encourage interaction and features a natural material palette of wood, weathered steel and stone that reflects the surrounding landscape

↓ 97 GERBER ARCHITEKTEN — GERMANY

LAST RANKING 61 — ARCHITECTS 112

Gerber Architekten drops down the WA100 rankings after a sharp fall in architect numbers at the German practice last year.

Gerber's work is diversified across multiple sectors, with notable 2025 completions including the Allianz Park Stuttgart office campus, the Caldeo research building for Technical University Dortmund, and Sportplatzring, a residential development of 150 flats in Hamburg-Stellingen.

Overseas, it will this year complete the first phase of a health complex at the Southern University of Science and Technology in Shenzhen, China, as well as the first construction phase of King Salmon Park in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Research projects include the development of a software-based planting matrix that uses drone data to monitor growth patterns and make recommendations for maintenance and long-term landscape development.

↑ 98 SANJAY PURI ARCHITECTS — INDIA

LAST RANKING 100 — ARCHITECTS 108

Based in Mumbai, the Indian practice has expanded with the addition of 28 architects in 2025, and the opening of a branch office in Jaipur. It is currently in talks regarding takeovers of structural and MEP firms in India.

Residential remains Sanjay Puri Architects' leading market by far, followed by hospitality. The practice is working on Emami Aastha, a township of 400 luxury villas in Kolkata, and will this year complete the Panache 99 apartment tower in Ranchi, and Miraj, a low-rise villa resort in Udaipur. The first phase of Evos Alchemy, a 42-storey gated community, will complete in Patia. In other sectors, the practice is working administrative offices at the Prestige University in Indore.

↓ 99 SCOTT BROWNRIGG — UK

LAST RANKING 95 — ARCHITECTS 105

The UK practice says it has seen a significant increase in turnover, in particular from overseas markets such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It recently opened an office in Riyadh – its fourth abroad – and hopes to build its presence across the Middle East and Central Asia this year. Ongoing projects in the region include the second phase of an extension to Medina Airport. Over in Singapore, Scott Brownrigg is working on the Tavistock MRT Station and completed offices in Marina Bay for Zoom Singapore.

Life sciences have been strong in the UK, including the Moderna Innovation and Technology Centre (MITC) completed in Harwell and projects at Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Oxford Science Park and Southampton Science Park. Data centres are another strongly performing area, both in the UK and overseas.

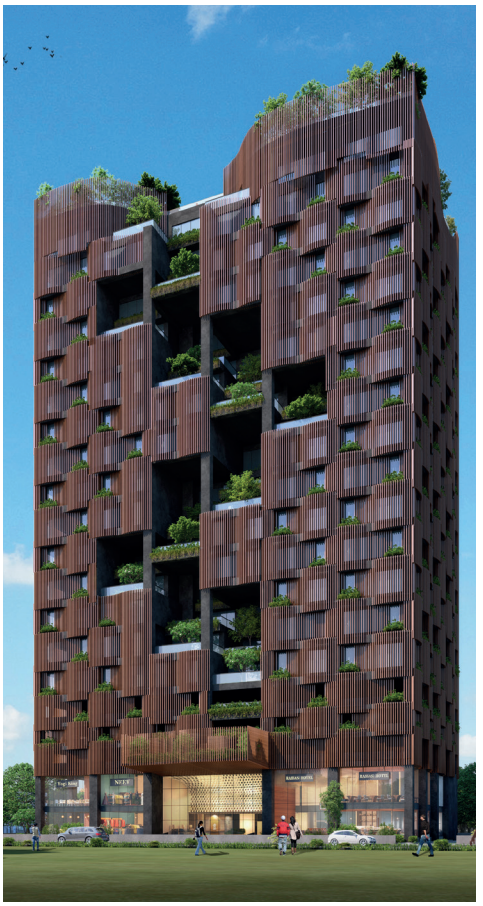
↓ 100 UNS — NETHERLANDS

LAST RANKING 57 — ARCHITECTS 104

The biggest regional market for the Dutch practice also known as UN Studio is the Middle East, where it recently opened an office in Riyadh to supplement its base in Dubai. Last year UNS completed Wasl Tower, a mixed-use tower with the region's tallest ceramic facade, and the legacy masterplan for Dubai Expo City.

While overall the practice works most in the residential and mixed-use sectors, recent projects reflect its highly diverse portfolio. UNS has completed the Korean National Football Centre in Seoul, the One Helix biotechnology laboratory and offices in Amsterdam, and the 18T Mansion residential development in Chongqing, China. Ongoing work includes a renovation and extension for the Franz Marc Quartier in Munich, and the Madrid-Chamartín Clara Campoamor railway hub.

UNS has introduced centres of expertise for sustainability innovation and digital innovation.



Sanjay Puri Architects' Emami Business Bay in Kolkata

Brick Visual / Kris Provoost

UNS's Korean Football Centre in Seoul, South Korea, which provides new training facilities for the women's and men's national teams, along with youth training facilities designed to cultivate top league players. The centre was completed in 2025

REGIONAL TOP 10

Where in the world?

The top architectural firms in each global region ranked by fee income

NORTH AMERICA

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Gensler	US	1,547,449,034
2	HDR	US	615,427,200
3	DLR Group	US	523,000,000
4	Stantec	Canada	445,418,376
5	Perkins&Will	US	425,595,874
6	SmithGroup	US	364,425,000
7	HKS	US	341,496,867
8	HOK	US	330,384,000
9	Arcadis	Netherlands	303,561,987
10	CannonDesign	US	285,000,000

WESTERN EUROPE

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	ATP Architects Engineers	Austria	141,300,000
2	Itten+Brechbühl	Switzerland	77,654,000
3	Henn	Germany	74,270,000
4	HPP Architekten	Germany	73,418,114
5	Gensler	US	68,776,493
6	Link Arkitektur	Norway	66,123,000
7	Foster + Partners	UK	58,837,000
8	Allford Hall Monaghan Morris	UK	48,800,000
9	BDP	UK	48,220,000
10	Progetto CMR	Italy	45,000,000

SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Gensler	US	45,932,038
2	HKS	US	16,610,335
3	Idom	Spain	10,000,000
4	10 Design	UK	7,221,000
5	Perkins&Will	US	7,203,584
6	Foster + Partners	UK	5,545,000
7	Lemay	Canada	5,000,000
8	China United Engineering Corp	China	3,000,000
9	Hyphen	UK	2,121,000
10	Killa Design	UAE	2,000,000

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	HDR	US	136,761,600
2	Foster + Partners	UK	72,938,000
3	ATP Architects Engineers	Austria	38,700,000
4	Drees & Sommer	Germany	26,910,000
5	Gensler	US	6,428,250
6	Aedas	China	4,100,000
7	UNS	Netherlands	3,000,000
8	Heerim Architects & Planners	South Korea	2,666,667
9	HKS	US	2,351,013
10	HOK	US	2,039,000

AUSTRALASIA

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Woods Bagot	Australia	62,946,694
2	HDR	US	59,833,200
3	GHD Design	Australia	55,000,000
4	Ayesa Ingeniería y Arquitectura	Spain	34,695,263
5	Archetype Group	Vietnam	19,200,000
6	Grimshaw	UK	16,764,555
7	Stantec	US	8,723,794
8	WW+P Architects	UK	4,700,000
9	Gensler	US	4,515,661
10	Purcell	UK	970,000

CENTRAL ASIA INCLUDING INDIA

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	DSP Design Associates	India	41,534,091
2	RSP Design Consultants (India)	India	21,793,672
3	Gensler	US	18,353,511
4	Foster + Partners	UK	14,281,000
5	UNS	Netherlands	14,000,000
6	KPF	US	11,233,026
7	Wilmotte & Associés Architectes	France	8,880,000
8	Aedas	China	6,600,000
9	BDP	UK	5,401,000
10	Killa Design	UAE	4,000,000

AFRICA

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Ehaf Consulting Engineers	UAE	9,660,000
2	Gensler	US	7,326,960
3	Killa Design	UAE	5,000,000
4	Dewan Architects + Engineers	UAE	4,000,000
5	Saota	South Africa	3,422,000
6	Dar Al Omran Rasem Badran	Jordan	2,500,000
7	Archetype Group	Vietnam	2,300,000
8	Foster + Partners	UK	2,218,000
9	Lemay	Canada	2,000,000
10	KPF	US	1,415,767

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MIDDLE EAST

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Foster + Partners	UK	444,488,000
2	KEO International Consultants	Kuwait	195,369,000
3	Ehaf Consulting Engineers	UAE	128,340,000
4	Dewan Architects + Engineers	UAE	120,000,000
5	SSH	Bahrain	80,742,000
6	Gensler	US	80,473,932
7	Aedas	China	78,000,000
8	National Engineeering Bureau	UAE	73,000,000
9	UNS	Netherlands	37,000,000
10	Dar Al Omran Rasem Badran	Jordan	29,000,000

PACIFIC RIM INCLUDING CHINA

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	China United Engineering Corp	China	498,899,955
2	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	457,311,000
3	Lacime Architects	China	270,000,000
4	JZFZ Architectural Design	China	215,690,000
5	Aedas	China	187,500,000
6	Haeahn Architecture	South Korea	169,518,867
7	Heerim Architects & Planners	South Korea	149,333,333
8	Nihon Sekkei	Japan	139,807,799
9	Azusa Sekkei	Japan	119,079,195
10	Kunwon	South Korea	117,539,568

MARKET SECTORS TOP 10

Project types

The top architecture practices in each market sector ranked by fee income

CULTURE

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Foster + Partners	UK	33,364,000
2	HDR	US	18,810,000
3	DLR Group	US	18,750,000
4	Idom	Spain	17,200,000
5	Perkins&Will	US	16,307,116
6	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	16,044,000
7	Dar Al Omran Rasem Badran	Jordan	16,000,000
8	Stantec	Canada	15,550,041
9	SmithGroup	US	14,600,000
10	AXS Satow	Japan	12,660,000

EDUCATION

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	DLR Group	US	232,670,000
2	PBK	US	197,000,000
3	Gensler	US	85,579,144
4	Perkins&Will	US	75,972,570
5	Stantec	Canada	67,937,870
6	CannonDesign	US	55,000,000
7	HDR	US	53,000,000
8	SmithGroup	US	51,100,000
9	Corgan	US	41,300,000
10	Arcadis	Netherlands	27,822,429

ELDERLY LIVING

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	SmithGroup	US	7,300,000
2	HKS	US	6,750,830
3	Stantec	Canada	5,952,782
4	Link Arkitektur	Norway	4,555,000
5	PRP	UK	2,836,860
6	Gensler	US	2,652,108
7	Itten+Brechbühl	Switzerland	2,330,000
8	Tianhua	China	2,140,000
9	Lemay	Canada	2,000,000
10	Haeahn Architecture	South Korea	1,711,520

GOVERNMENT

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	DLR Group	US	122,000,000
2	HOK	US	81,732,000
3	SmithGroup	US	65,700,000
4	Gensler	US	60,985,552
5	Stantec	Canada	39,114,364
6	HDR	US	36,420,000
7	GHD Design	Australia	26,100,000
8	Azusa Sekkei	Japan	24,614,921
9	Ehaf Consulting Engineers	UAE	22,840,981
10	Arcadis	Netherlands	18,223,932

HEALTHCARE

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	HDR	US	302,420,000
2	HKS	US	182,723,917
3	CannonDesign	US	160,000,000
4	Stantec	Canada	139,448,728
5	Perkins&Will	US	137,298,458
6	SmithGroup	US	116,800,000
7	NBBJ	US	105,000,000
8	ZGF	US	51,111,278
9	HOK	US	48,785,000
10	Foster + Partners	UK	38,707,000

HERITAGE

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Purcell	UK	30,300,000
2	Lacime Architects	China	20,000,000
3	Gensler	US	14,506,860
4	GMP Architekten	Germany	11,000,000
5	BDP	UK	7,022,000
6	HPP Architekten	Germany	5,375,692
7	Dar Al Omran Rasem Badran	Jordan	2,000,000
8	Itten+Brechbühl	Switzerland	1,553,000
9	Mitsubishi Jisho Design	Japan	1,179,127
10	Lemay	Canada	1,000,000

HOSPITALITY

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Gensler	US	115,294,779
2	Aedas	China	90,700,000
3	HKS	US	65,034,410
4	Dewan Architects + Engineers	UAE	65,000,000
5	Foster + Partners	UK	36,844,000
6	DLR Group	US	33,500,000
7	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	31,906,000
8	10 Design	UK	25,273,500
9	Ehaf Consulting Engineers	UAE	22,271,024
10	SSH	Bahrain	16,723,000

INFRASTRUCTURE

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	China United Engineering Corp	China	121,831,424
2	Idom	Spain	23,000,000
3	Ehaf Consulting Engineers	UAE	19,461,410
4	HDR	US	14,510,000
5	Hyphen	UK	14,306,469
6	Lemay	Canada	11,000,000
7	Kunwon	South Korea	8,294,964
8	SSH	Bahrain	7,935,000
9	KEO International Consultants	Kuwait	7,815,000
10	Mitsubishi Jisho Design	Japan	7,260,634

MASTERPLANNING

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	58,869,000
2	Gensler	US	48,809,981
3	Arcadis	Netherlands	39,281,263
4	Aedas	China	24,100,000
5	Perkins&Will	US	22,748,837
6	HDR	US	22,010,000
7	Foster + Partners	UK	21,445,000
8	KEO International Consultants	Kuwait	19,537,000
9	Nihon Sekkei	Japan	19,373,514
10	SmithGroup	US	14,600,000

MIXED USE

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Foster + Partners	UK	186,683,000
2	Gensler	US	116,385,818
3	KEO International Consultants	Kuwait	91,823,000
4	Aedas	China	52,800,000
5	Haeahn Architecture	South Korea	47,454,710
6	KPF	US	46,320,272
7	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	37,485,000
8	Heerim Architects & Planners	South Korea	35,664,000
9	DLR Group	US	28,180,000
10	10 Design	UK	23,107,200

OFFICES

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Gensler	US	598,604,572
2	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	164,169,000
3	Mitsubishi Jisho Design	Japan	103,508,720
4	Perkins&Will	US	88,123,045
5	Foster + Partners	UK	83,194,000
6	HOK	US	55,185,000
7	NBBJ	US	55,000,000
8	DLR Group	US	52,000,000
9	Nihon Sekkei	Japan	50,946,353
10	HKS	US	49,312,820

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» RESIDENTIAL

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	JZFZ Architectural Design	China	149,363,000
2	Tianhua	China	117,960,000
3	Arcadis	Netherlands	88,137,908
4	China United Engineering Corp	China	77,859,904
5	Kunwon	South Korea	70,647,482
6	P&T Group	China	48,895,000
7	Gensler	US	47,333,043
8	Dewan Architects + Engineers	UAE	45,000,000
9	KEO International Consultants	Kuwait	42,981,000
10	Heerim Architects & Planners	South Korea	42,912,000

RETAIL

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Gensler	US	134,610,198
2	Arcadis	Netherlands	49,823,641
3	Foster + Partners	US	24,094,000
4	Tianhua	China	22,800,000
5	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	19,730,000
6	KEO International Consultants	Kuwait	16,607,000
7	Hyphen	UK	16,239,776
8	10 Design	UK	14,080,950
9	ATP Architects Engineers	Austria	12,600,000
10	JZFZ Architectural Design	China	12,512,000

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INDUSTRIAL

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	HDR	US	305,390,000
2	China United Engineering Corp	China	275,483,549
3	Gensler	US	270,797,081
4	Corgan	US	120,200,000
5	ATP Architects Engineers	Austria	92,400,000
6	Stantec	Canada	84,956,303
7	CannonDesign	US	55,000,000
8	SmithGroup	US	54,750,000
9	HOK	US	50,479,000
10	Perkins&Will	US	40,830,622

SPORT

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Gensler	US	100,920,976
2	HOK	US	32,649,000
3	HKS	US	28,938,531
4	DLR Group	US	27,100,000
5	Perkins&Will	US	26,792,433
6	Leigh & Orange	China	17,000,000
7	Azusa Sekkei	Japan	16,726,111
8	CannonDesign	US	15,000,000
9	PBK	US	15,000,000
10	HDR	US	13,600,000

TRANSPORT

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Foster + Partners	UK	346,682,000
2	Gensler	US	212,636,134
3	Corgan	US	71,000,000
4	HOK	US	62,773,000
5	HDR	US	58,240,000
6	Perkins&Will	US	35,250,690
7	Grimshaw	UK	34,517,623
8	Arcadis	Netherlands	32,069,921
9	WW+P Architects	UK	27,000,000
10	Stantec	Canada	24,485,635

SPECIALISMS TOP 10

Areas of expertise

The top architectural firms in each specialism ranked by fee income

ARCHITECTURE

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Gensler	US	885,489,106
2	Foster + Partners	UK	691,914,000
3	HDR	US	523,967,880
4	Stantec	Canada	374,869,434
5	HKS	US	341,309,435
6	DLR Group	US	336,000,000
7	Perkins&Will	US	335,659,454
8	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	271,411,000
9	Aedas	China	263,600,000
10	Corgan	US	252,400,000

CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Ehaf Consulting Engineers	UAE	121,680,300
2	PM Group	Ireland	99,000,000
3	KEO International Consultants	Kuwait	82,292,000
4	Heerim Architects & Planners	South Korea	77,000,000
5	Kunwon	South Korea	58,129,496
6	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	39,536,000
7	SSH	Bahrain	27,975,000
8	Haeahn Architecture	South Korea	26,228,130
9	National Engineeering Bureau	UAE	23,000,000
10	Archetype Group	Vietnam	19,100,000

CONSULTING

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Gensler	US	127,379,055
2	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	35,375,000
3	HDR	US	25,642,800
4	Nihon Sekkei	Japan	20,176,498
5	ATP Architects Engineers	Austria	8,900,000
6	PBK	US	8,000,000
7	Woods Bagot	Australia	7,978,691
8	NBBJ	US	5,000,000
9	HPP Architekten	Germany	3,298,887
10	HKS	US	2,802,378

ENGINEERING

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Stantec	Canada	3,339,572,194
2	China United Engineering Corp	China	445,387,411
3	PM Group	Ireland	143,000,000
4	Ehaf Consulting Engineers	UAE	121,476,600
5	DLR Group	US	120,500,000
6	HDR	US	111,118,800
7	SmithGroup	US	75,650,000
8	ATP Architects Engineers	Austria	61,500,000
9	Ayesa Ingeniería y Arquitectura	Spain	43,708,824
10	Azusa Sekkei	Japan	40,615,872

ENVIRONMENT

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Stantec	Canada	828,515,769
2	Foster + Partners	UK	73,411,000
3	Gensler	US	35,977,975
4	PM Group	Ireland	14,000,000
5	KEO International Consultants	Kuwait	10,262,000
6	CannonDesign	US	10,000,000
7	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	7,462,000
8	ATP Architects Engineers	Austria	6,100,000
9	Lemay	Canada	5,500,000
10	HPP Architekten	Germany	4,123,609

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	CannonDesign	US	34,000,000
2	China United Engineering Corp	China	27,749,340
3	Gensler	US	15,218,749
4	Lemay	Canada	1,000,000
5	HOK	US	1,000,000
6	HPP Architekten	Germany	824,722
7	Azusa Sekkei	Japan	651,227
8	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	289,000
9	Asya Design	Philippines	603

INTERIOR DESIGN

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Gensler	US	646,228,671
2	HDR	US	119,666,400
3	Perkins&Will	US	95,373,603
4	Stantec	Canada	92,884,900
5	DLR Group	US	80,500,000
6	HOK	US	74,000,000
7	NBBJ	US	73,000,000
8	PBK	US	58,000,000
9	Ehaf Consulting Engineers	UAE	39,650,000
10	HKS	US	36,322,561

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LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Ehaf Consulting Engineers	UAE	19,642,000
2	SmithGroup	US	16,900,000
3	Lemay	Canada	14,000,000
4	HDR	US	10,257,120
5	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	8,178,000
6	KEO International Consultants	Kuwait	7,524,000
7	BDP	UK	7,388,000
8	GHD Design	Australia	5,200,000
9	Link Arkitektur	Norway	4,809,000
10	JZFZ Architectural Design	China	4,497,000

PLANNING

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Gensler	US	69,194,830
2	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	38,464,000
3	Arcadis	Netherlands	32,069,921
4	Perkins&Will	US	31,587,261
5	SmithGroup	US	16,250,000
6	NBBJ	US	14,000,000
7	CannonDesign	US	10,000,000
8	AD&R Institute of Zhejiang Uni	China	9,427,000
9	KEO International Consultants	Kuwait	9,405,000
10	HDR	US	8,547,600

PRODUCT DESIGN

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Gensler	US	9,091,420
2	HDR	US	6,838,080
3	Arcadis	Netherlands	6,095,309
4	Foster + Partners	UK	5,964,000
5	Killa Design	UAE	1,000,000
6	Wilmotte & Associés Architectes	France	659,000
7	Lemay	Canada	500,000
8	Sanjay Puri Architects	India	500,000
9	HPP Architekten	Germany	412,361
10	Progetto CMR	Italy	200,000

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Ehaf Consulting Engineers	UAE	87,000,000
2	PM Group	Ireland	61,000,000
3	KEO International Consultants	Kuwait	35,268,000
4	Henn	Germany	32,110,000
5	Foster + Partners	UK	27,042,000
6	HDR	US	17,095,200
7	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	13,717,000
8	Ayesa Ingeniería y Arquitectura	Spain	12,537,636
9	HPP Architekten	Germany	8,659,579
10	AD&R Institute of Zhejiang Uni	China	8,216,000

SURVEYING

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	10,297,000
2	Azusa Sekkei	Japan	1,560,049
3	HPP Architekten	Germany	1,237,083
4	SmithGroup	US	1,100,000
5	Itten+Brechbühl	Switzerland	777,000
6	Stride Treglown	UK	657,269

URBAN DESIGN

RANK 2026	PRACTICE	COUNTRY	FEE INCOME US$
1	Gensler	US	66,213,486
2	Arcadis	Netherlands	39,281,263
3	Ehaf Consulting Engineers	UAE	31,939,600
4	HDR	US	31,626,120
5	Perkins&Will	US	24,920,945
6	SmithGroup	US	14,600,000
7	Dar Al Omran Rasem Badran	Jordan	10,000,000
8	Nikken Sekkei	Japan	5,825,000
9	Lemay	Canada	5,000,000
10	Dewan Architects + Engineers	UAE	5,000,000

KNAUFINSULATION

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Tony Bingham **When an expert witness changed his mind under cross-examination, should that have impacted the costs award?**

THE PRICE OF A CHANGE OF MIND

DID THE EXPERT BEHAVE UNREASONABLY BY CHANGING HIS MIND? NO, HIS JOB IS A DUTY TO THE COURT. HE WOULD BE BEHAVING UNREASONABLY IF HE KEPT UP HIS SLEEVE A NEW-FOUND OPINION THAT TORPEDOED HIS PARTY'S CASE

MJ Gleeson submitted a planning application for 139 dwellings at Runcorn – or rather, in the vicinity of Runcorn Chemicals Complex. The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) was a tad sniffy and advised against it on health grounds. No matter, said the local council's planning department, adding it had extensive experience and history with the chemicals industry and "had a robust approach to taking risks posed by such developments". On top of that, the council took advice from a specialist risk management consultant firm with extensive experience as expert witness.

Fair enough, methinks. Not so the HSE. It coaxed the secretary of state for housing to call in the planning permission. And so the stage was set for an all-singing, all-dancing piece of litigation with solicitors and barristers and expert witnesses. The case is called: the King (on the application of Halton Borough Council) vs the Secretary of State for Levelling-up, Housing, Communities & Local Government.

Now, here is a spoiler in more than one sense. During the High Court hearing, the very experienced expert appointed by the council and hitherto wholly in support of granting planning permission completely changed his mind! When the HSE's barrister cross-examined him on day three of the inquiry, the expert agreed that if he were in a planning inspector's position, he would have to advise the secretary of state strongly against the grant of planning permission. I bet the council's barrister let out a noise, from somewhere deep down, that echoed across the court. That's a spoiler and a half.

You might guess the expert's concession was enough for the borough council to withdraw its intention to give planning approval – and, yes,

Dan Eley **What umbrella payroll legislation means for construction and why firms need to act now**

GET IN LINE WITH NEW PAYROLL RULES

In April 2026, HMRC is cracking down on rogue providers in the outsourced payroll space in a legal shift that will impact the relationship between construction firms, their recruitment agencies and payroll suppliers. Heavily reliant on an assignment-based workforce, this move could destabilise the multibillion-pound industry if all parties are not prepared ahead of the changes.

What is the issue?

Recruitment agencies across the country typically outsource the payroll function for contract workers to third-party suppliers known as umbrella companies. In construction, this practice is commonplace. Firms that hire without using an agency also often engage umbrella companies. These payroll suppliers act as employment intermediaries that employ and pay contract workers on behalf of agencies and end clients.

Many umbrella companies operate compliantly, providing administrative benefits for agencies and businesses. However, a lack of regulation has led to a proliferation of fraudulent schemes and activities by a minority of umbrella companies, such as incorrect tax deductions, pay skimming and withholding of holiday pay.

This activity incurs significant revenue losses for government. HMRC analysis shows that at least £500m was lost to disguised remuneration tax avoidance schemes in 2022/23, primarily facilitated by umbrella companies. Workers and businesses are put at risk of unexpected tax bills or punitive action if they are caught up in illegal supply chains. Furthermore, non-compliant umbrella companies undercut compliant firms, threatening their viability.

What changes are coming?

To tackle this issue, the government is introducing legislation, in the form of amendments to the Income Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act 2003 (ITEPA) published in July 2025, in relation to PAYE obligations where an umbrella company is used in a labour supply chain. From 6 April 2026, the legal responsibility to account for PAYE will shift from the umbrella company employing the worker to the recruitment agency supplying the worker to the end-client business. Where there is no agency, this responsibility will sit with the end client. Joint and several liability will apply.

This means standard due diligence will no longer be enough to protect agencies and clients from liability. The

it did. The next spoiler is that the HSE was awarded all its legal costs by the High Court judge – but then the three-judge Court of Appeal took them away. Spoilsports, perhaps.

Let's go through the topic of who pays legal costs; more particularly, ask who pays the costs in planning inquiries. The ordinary position in planning is much the same as in construction adjudication. Each side, win or lose, pays its own costs. If, however, a dispute comes to the High Court as a construction dispute, then the rule is that "costs follow the event". This usually means the net winner gets its costs paid by the losing party. But the overarching right of the judge or arbitrator is to apply discretion. In other words, the tribunal can depart from "costs follow the event" if the tribunal sees merit in giving some relief to the losing party for some reason or other.

In the Halton planning case, the first judge, sitting alone, decided that the volte face of the expert, being a complete change of mind, caused the council to quit and concede defeat. So he awarded the HSE its legal costs. He parted company with the usual planning approach of each side paying its own costs.

Ah, but the Court of Appeal took a different approach. First the court explained that in planning proceedings the parties normally meet their own expenses. That's because all parties are expected to behave reasonably to support an efficient and timely process and to encourage local planning authorities to property exercise their development responsibilities so as to stand up to scrutiny. The Court of Appeal began a search for unreasonable behaviour, which, if found, would lead to costs being awarded against the party judged to have been unreasonable.

The temptation is to find that the collapse of the council's case was of the council's own making, given a member of its own team gave evidence that was demonstrably flawed and unsound and admitted so by its own expert. The Court of Appeal said, however: "The mere fact that the evidence of an expert witness being demolished in cross-examination does not, of itself, lead to the conclusion that the party calling that expert has been guilty of unreasonable behaviour. Instead, it may be said that where an expert witness accepts points put to him in cross-examination, which are adverse to the case of the party calling him, he is performing his duty to the tribunal in question."

The Appeal Court pointed to a remark in the case of R vs Cornish, where the well-known construction industry Judge Coulson said, of an expert who proved "obviously unreliable" when giving his evidence: "In my view, it would be unfair to say anything went 'wrong': In some ways, what happened was a good example of the adversarial trial process in action."

It seems to me there are two questions here. First, was it unreasonable for the council to rely on this expert or did it become unreasonable? The answer is no: he was a competent expert. Second, did the expert behave unreasonably by changing his mind? No, his job is a duty to the court. He would be behaving unreasonably if he kept up his sleeve a new-found opinion that torpedoed his party's case. His primary duty is to the court. The HSE did not get its costs.

Tony Bingham is a barrister and arbitrator at 3 Paper Buildings, Temple

definition of umbrella companies has also been expanded in order to close loopholes. In certain arrangements, the agencies themselves could be construed as umbrella companies which, for tax purposes, could transfer liability up to the end client – the construction business.

The rationale for this legal shift is that it will force agencies and businesses to tighten up their supply chains to prevent illegitimate operators from entering the market. The government expects this measure to prevent around £2.8bn being lost to umbrella company non-compliance across the scorecard period to 2030.

What is the risk to construction?

With a workforce of more than two million, construction relies on a busy contract worker supply chain, supplied by more than 800 recruitment agencies. These agencies, and the payroll suppliers they engage, keep the industry moving from project to project.

Even though umbrella companies are widely used, sector awareness of fraudulent activity is low. Many businesses may not realise they are involved in non-compliant schemes. HMRC has been ramping up its crackdown on non-compliance, including increased public naming of umbrella companies and individuals believed to be involved in fraudulent schemes. This activity is likely to escalate once legislation is introduced. If too many suppliers are caught up in HMRC's crackdown and come under investigation or close down, the impact could be catastrophic for construction's worker supply chain.

Larger recruitment agencies can be complacent and overestimate their ability to adapt to change. The industry also uses hundreds of smaller and medium-sized agencies that may not realise that they, and their end-user clients, are potentially exposed, or that may not know how to safeguard their compliance.

What should firms do now?

Knowledge is key. Recruitment agencies and construction firms should be reviewing their existing agreements and suppliers to establish where there is risk, and then tightening and improving their due diligence processes, including checking every supplier they work with to eliminate red flags. Government guidance is available to help businesses spot signs of illegal payroll operations.

Regular, obligatory in-house training at all levels will ensure that employees involved in umbrella on-boarding can spot and query red flags. Firm-wide policies and engagement around compliance and ongoing monitoring will help build awareness and a proactive approach. Businesses should have a robust whistleblowing procedure to facilitate raising concerns.

Support from independent legal and tax experts is advisable, as well as exploring new tools and technologies to reinforce monitoring processes and considering other ways that compliance can be cross-checked, such as umbrella accreditation through a reputable organisation.

For umbrella companies, the coming months will be vital to demonstrate complete compliance with all tax and employment legislation to show that they remain a viable and transparent payroll partner.

Dan Eley is a board director at the Payroll Compliance Authority, a not-for-profit accreditor of umbrella companies, and head of construction at national recruitment firm Pearson Whiffen

MARKET FORECAST PROACTIVE RESILIENCE

Despite economic uncertainty and market shifts, the UK construction sector showed resilience in 2025. While overall sentiment suggests a slowdown, data indicates output grew faster than services and manufacturing, even amid geopolitical and economic challenges. Aecom's **Pablo Cristi Worm** reports

01 / SUMMARY

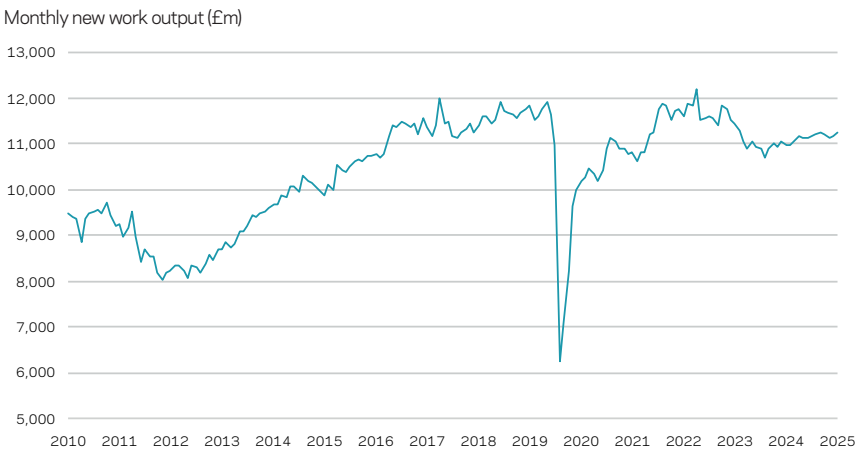
Tender price index ▲
Tender prices increased by 3.0% in 2025, as subdued demand did not translate into cost savings and overall inflation proved more persistent than expected.

Building cost index ▲
Building costs increased by 3.5% in 2025, with imported items such as wood, aluminium and electric water heaters seeing the largest price increases.

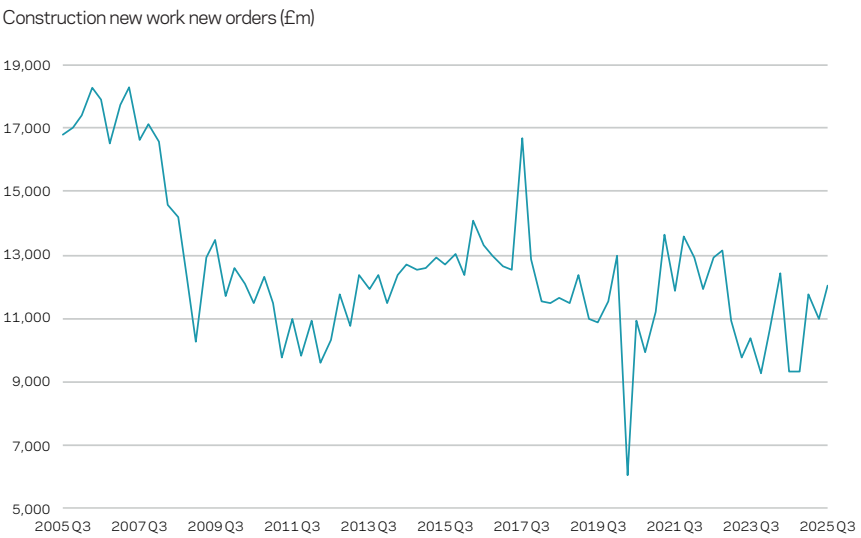
Consumer prices index ▲
Consumer price inflation moderated more than expected to 3.2% in November, down from 3.6% in October. Goods, services and core inflation all declined, signalling a shift in discretionary spending.

02 / OUTPUT AND NEW ORDERS

UK construction output



New orders



Construction showed resilience in Q3 2025, with output up 0.1% quarterly and 1.5% yearly, driven by growth in repair and maintenance (R&M) that offset a slight decline in new work. Year-to-date, output rose 1.1%, with R&M up 2.2%, surpassing the 0.4% growth in new work.

Housebuilding declined slightly in Q3 due to uncertainty ahead of the autumn Budget, with activity falling 1.3% quarter-on-quarter and 1.7% quarter-on-year, and a 0.9% decline year-to-date driven mainly by a 3.6% drop in the private sector, while public housing rose slightly by 0.3%.

Public non-housing, driven by investment in schools, hospitals and defence, saw output increase 4.5% quarterly and 22.5% annually, reaching pre-pandemic levels.

Industrial output fell 1.6% in Q3 but was 20.7% higher than last year and is expected to be 2025's fastest-growing sector. Policy uncertainty hindered commercial investment, with Q3 output up 1.7% but 8.0% lower annually; private commercial new work increased by 0.5% year-to-date. Infrastructure output was constrained by a slowdown in water activity, dipping 1.5% quarterly but up 3.0% annually, with a 0.9% contraction over the first three quarters of 2025.

Private housing R&M grew 2.9% in Q3, up 5.5% from Q3 2024, offsetting declines elsewhere. Year-to-date, non-housing R&M increased 7.4%, while private housing dropped 8.0%, and public housing rose 1.0%.

Construction new orders rose 9.8% on the quarter and by 29.3% on the year, bringing optimism for 2026-27. However, private developers' appetite was hit by uncertainty in the lead-up to the Budget and regulatory delays. Private housing orders fell below £2bn for the first time this year, declining 5.1% in Q3, with a 5.6% drop over three quarters. Public housing orders recovered slightly after a weak 2024, rising 10.4% in Q3 and 43.4% in the first three quarters.

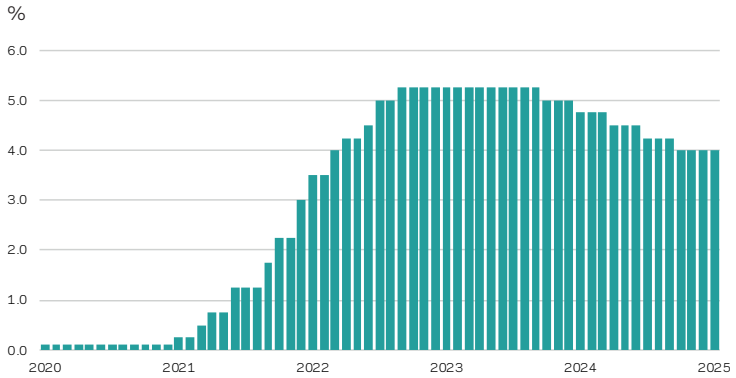
Outside housing, private sector orders were stronger, with commercial surpassing £4bn in Q3, 48.6% up on Q3 2024. Private industrial orders doubled on both quarter and year. Public procurement slowed, with annual orders down 0.7% and a quarterly drop of 40.5%. Infrastructure orders fell by 12.5% in Q3 but remain positive with major activity planned.

03 / ACTIVITY INDICATORS

Business sentiment

CBI Business Optimism Index

UK bank rate



Despite recent sluggishness, Britain's economy continues to expand. The IMF forecasts a 1.3% growth in gross domestic product (GDP) for 2025, making it the second-fastest growth in the G7 after the US and ahead of France, Italy and Germany. Growth slowed to 0.1% in Q3 2025, due to uncertainty ahead of the autumn Budget, causing caution among consumers and businesses.

Inflation is finally declining, with November's data showing further moderation in inflationary pressure. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) moderated to 3.2% from 3.6% in October, mainly due to decreases in food, non-alcoholic beverages, alcohol, and tobacco. The CPI goods annual rate slowed from 2.6% to 2.1%, while the CPI services annual rate slightly eased from 4.5% to 4.4%.

Consumer sentiment has been resilient in the wake of Budget speculation and uncertainty. The GfK consumer confidence index increased marginally in October 2025, by 2.0 points to -17, and a modest improvement compared with October 2024.

Fears that property transactions or wealth might be targeted to boost tax revenue dampened housebuyer activity. RICS survey data showed a decline in demand, sales and new instructions. The autumn Budget's property taxes, including a high-value council tax surcharge for homes over £2m and plans to increase property income tax, were less severe than expected.

In Q3 2025, concerns over taxation, regulation, sticky inflation and weak growth eroded business confidence. The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW)'s UK business confidence monitor fell for the fifth consecutive quarter, slipping to -7.3 from -4.2 in Q2; the lowest confidence was shown in property and retail, and the highest in energy, water and mining, as a consequence of clearer policy and investment prospects.

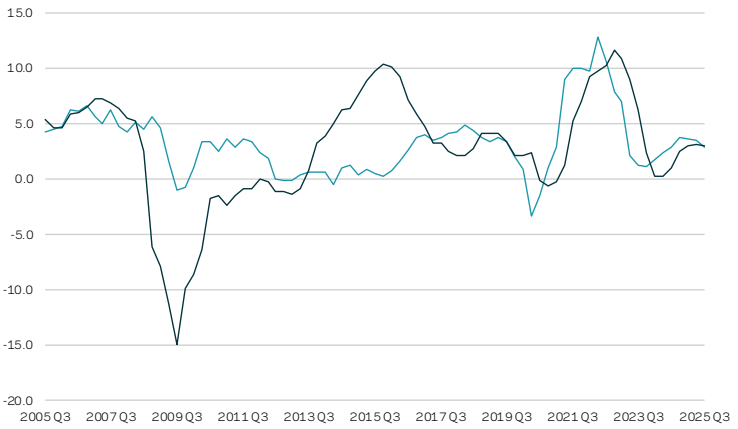
The S&P Global UK Construction PMI has fallen for 11 months, the longest decline since the 2008-09 financial crisis. In November 2025, the index dropped to 39.4 from 44.1 in October, indicating worsening conditions. Civil engineering was weakest at 30.0, showing infrastructure activity remains niche. Residential and commercial sectors also declined, to 35.4 and 43.8 respectively.

Property agents' data shows demand remains strong in 2025. Knight Frank reports a 20% increase in central London office take-up in the first three quarters of 2025, with high-quality rents in the City and West End growing by double digits annually.

04 / BUILDING COSTS

Inputs

Aecom indices – yearly percentage change



Tender price index compiled from analysis of tenders received by Aecom: reflects prices paid by building clients, inclusive of preliminaries, overheads, profits and discounts

Material costs have remained stable, but labour costs are the main inflation driver due to a tight construction labour market with high demand and limited supply.

Despite overall declines in industry employment, the workforce is managing a greater workload. Additionally, since late 2024, sector unemployment rates have been decreasing, in divergence from the national trend. Vacancies fell by 3.3% monthly in October 2025 and 21.6% annually as firms held off hiring, awaiting less market uncertainty. Coupled with lower unemployment, this drop reveals ongoing market tightness. Worker shortages and inflation have pushed wages up since early 2024, but growth has slowed. In Q3 2025, construction's weekly earnings rose 0.6% quarter-on-quarter and 3.4% quarter-on-year.

Basic metals, fabricated metal products, and machinery provided the largest contribution to the change in the annual materials inflation rate between September and October, with prices up 4.1% in the year to October 2025.

US tariffs have had a limited direct impact on the UK construction market. However, anticipation led US importers to stockpile metals such as copper and aluminium, disrupting supply and increasing prices – up by 12.6% and 7.6% respectively in the year to October. This inflation is expected to be temporary.

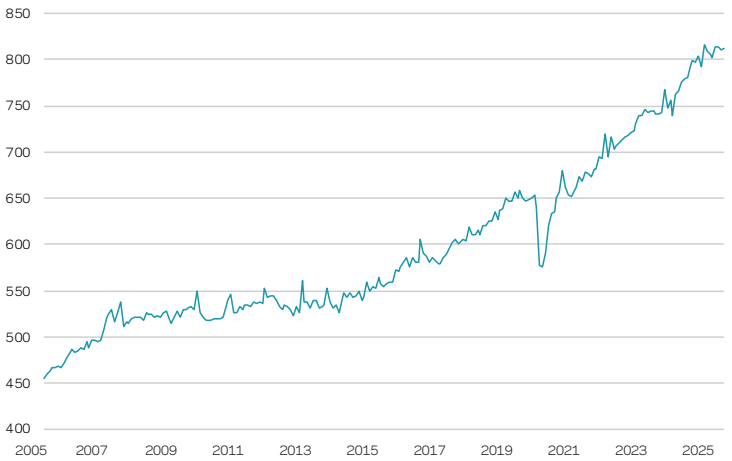
Conversely, oil and natural gas prices were about 15% lower in October. Transportation and shipping costs have decreased, with shipping nearly 50% lower than a year ago. Still, increased geopolitical tensions pose upward risks.

As a result, the Aecom building cost index, a composite index of materials and labour costs, rose 0.7% quarterly and 2.9% yearly in Q3 2025. Items such as wood, aluminium and electric water heaters saw the most significant price rises. »

» 05 / TENDER PRICES

Resources

Construction average weekly earnings (£)



Despite softer-than-expected demand in 2025, project costs remain high due to inflation and challenging economic conditions, testing the viability of new projects. Regardless of negative sentiment indicators, data confirms the construction industry has been resilient. Year-to-date growth in 2025 of 1.1% surpasses the services sector's 0.6% increase and the manufacturing sector's 1.3% decline. Strong project pipelines, shown by Q3 2025 new orders, suggest continued activity.

However, contractors' capacity and the procurement market remain challenged by risk aversion. Specialist contractors hold significant bargaining power and remain selective regarding clients and projects.

Tier 1 and general contractors largely report full order books, leading to less competitive pricing and higher tender costs. However, smaller tier 3 firms face pressure, with reports of insolvencies and capacity squeezes.

The outlook for economic growth and industry demand is uncertain due to global geopolitical tensions and financial market concerns, posing risks to stability. However, pent-up private sector demand might boost growth in 2026. Measures to stimulate London residential development and reduce project backlogs could result in higher private sector construction demand than forecasts in the medium term.

06 / OUTLOOK

The pre-Budget growth forecast was 1.1%, but this could rise if private sector investment improves. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) now predicts 1.4% growth for 2026, and future growth is expected to steady at 1.5%. Most pertinent for construction, the latest Budget reaffirmed the government's commitment to deliver on capital investment promises made in autumn 2024's Budget, the 2025 Spending Review and the 10-year infrastructure strategy. Publicly funded capital investment in schools, hospitals, defence, transport and other social infrastructure rises from £114.5bn in 2025 to £151.9bn in 2030.

Key additional announcements in the November Budget, which should support industry demand during the forecast period, include an extra £890m to progress Lower Thames Crossing design ahead of formal market engagement to appoint a private sector delivery partner next year; £120bn more in capital investment for roads, rail and energy, including £15.6bn for major city-region transport; and £100m to expand EV charging infrastructure. An additional £48m of funding to boost capacity in the planning system is also positive news for the industry.

The Budget explicitly recognises the need for new public-private partnership (PPP) models and builds on the 10-year infrastructure strategy by confirming the use of private finance, including new models of PPPs for health infrastructure for the £300m to deliver 250 new neighbourhood health centres, which colocate local health services such as GPs and physiotherapists. Additionally, the National Wealth Fund and the British Business Bank are being used to catalyse private investment in infrastructure and growth sectors.

The new annual tax on properties over £2m may reduce demand for luxury homes, and higher property income taxes are bad for landlords. However, the sector avoided major tax changes initially feared and saw some improvements.

Ahead of the autumn Budget, industry forecasters downgraded near-term growth projections as uncertainty mounted. The Construction Products Association's autumn view predicts the industry will grow by 7.7% through to 2027, compared with a 9.4% uplift expected in summer. The downgrade was largely due to a weaker outlook for new housing and a slight downward revision of prospects for commercial, and repair and maintenance activity. In contrast, prospects for publicly funded non-housing and infrastructure investment improved. As the winter forecasting round gets under way, optimism is building. Q3 2025 orders surprised on the upside, and conditions are becoming more supportive of private sector investment.

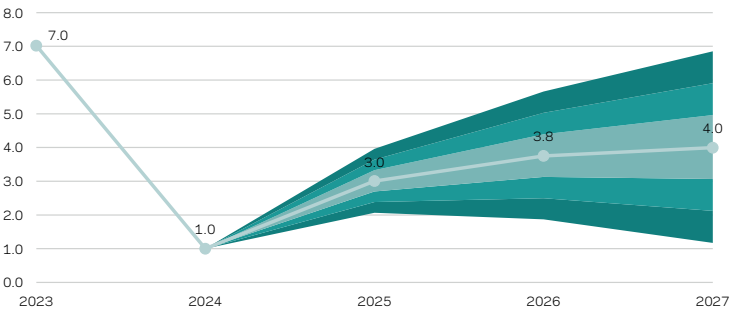
The Building Safety Regulator (BSR) is working to speed up the gateway 2 approval process for high-rise residential buildings. At the start of October, the number of live gateway 2 applications totalled 405, comprising 152 new-build projects and 253 remediation schemes; just under half are in London. Since August, the BSR's new in-house innovation unit has reviewed applications, and developer Morro has secured the fastest Building Safety Act approval in the industry, passing gateway 2 in just 13 weeks for a London co-living scheme. Latest figures suggest the gateway 2 approval pipeline includes 27 new-build schemes under review by the innovation unit. Addressing the backlog of legacy applications is a key priority for the BSR, but building control capacity is a barrier, not helped by the recent failure of Assent Building Compliance, one of the seven firms on a BSR review and inspection framework for higher-risk buildings.

Residential development in London faces severe challenges due to affordability and regulation. NHBC data shows new home registrations plummeted by 47.8% in 2024 and a further 38.6% in early 2025 to historic lows. To address this, the housing ministry and mayor proposed temporary measures, including lowering affordable housing requirements from 35% to 20%, easing design rules, offering relief from development levies, and empowering the mayor to review borough decisions. Additionally, £322m is proposed for a City Hall Developer Investment Fund. While this is a promising idea, support for it remains uncertain.

Given the sustained activity, strong pipeline, pent-up demand and persistent inflationary pressure from the labour market, Aecom is maintaining its TPI forecast at 3.0% for 2025. Moving forward, the central scenario remains at 3.8% in 2026 and a further 4.0% increase in 2027.

TPI forecast

Tender price inflation – yearly run rate and forecasts
Percentage change at Q4 on a year earlier (12-month periods);
baseline forecast + 50/70/90% probability distributions shown



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HOW TO MAKE CHANGE STICK IN CONSTRUCTION

At a recent roundtable, senior industry figures discussed why change fails to stick, the cultural, emotional and organisational barriers that matter more than technology – and how leadership, timing and behaviour-focused strategies can turn pilots into lasting progress

"Construction doesn't struggle with change," said Brett King, Procore's director of industry transformation. "We struggle with making change stick."

It was a deceptively simple point, but one which framed the discussion that followed. Brought together in central London, senior figures from across contracting, consultancy and digital delivery gathered to explore why, despite years of investment in new platforms, processes and pilots, digital transformation in construction so often stalls before it delivers lasting value.

Hosted by Building and sponsored by Procore, the roundtable focused on digital change management rather than specific technologies. The conversation moved quickly beyond software and systems to examine the cultural, emotional and organisational barriers that prevent change from embedding, even when the tools themselves are sound.

> Around 70% of digital transformation failures are people-related ... people don't understand why they're being asked to work differently
>
> **Catherine Thompson, Deloitte**

Across the table, there was broad agreement that construction is already an industry in constant flux. Projects mobilise and demobilise at speed, teams reconfigure regularly, and external pressures continue to mount.

Yet digital initiatives are often treated as isolated events rather than ongoing behavioural change. That disconnect, participants suggested, is where many strategies begin to unravel.

Change is emotional before it is operational

One of the clearest themes to emerge was that digital change fails not because of poor technology, but because of human resistance and fatigue. Catherine Thompson, director of the technology and transformation practice at Deloitte, was direct about the scale of the issue. "As highlighted in Procore's recent industry analysis, research from McKinsey & Company shows that up to 70% of digital transformation failures are people-related," she said. "It's not that the system doesn't work. It's that people don't understand why they're being asked to work differently."

For Chris Hone, IT director at Fortem, the challenge is amplified by scale. Supporting more than 650 operatives working remotely has forced a rethink of what success looks like. "Just because a system is live doesn't mean the change

WILDE FRY

Clockwise from left: Matt Procter of Chasetown Civil Engineering, Deloitte's Stu Collins, Procore's Brett King, Building's Cameron Marshall, Oliver Connew of CRBN Solutions, Andrew Crawford of Graham, Fortem's Chris Hone, Catherine Thompson of Deloitte and SES's Ben Jowett

has happened," he said. "If people aren't feeling the benefit, it hasn't stuck."

That sense of unfinished transformation resonated widely. Rather than neat end points, digital change increasingly feels continuous – and several participants warned this is precisely where leadership attention often falters. Stu Collins, senior manager in Deloitte's major programmes team, described the reality as "unending change", driven by regulation, client demands and rapidly evolving technology. "People are being expected to absorb continuous shifts while still delivering projects," he said. "The risk is that leadership mentally moves on long before teams have adapted. When executives assume the job is done, while delivery teams are still in the dip, that's where change starts to unravel – and the strain really shows."

But Andrew Crawford, head of IT business solutions at Graham, explained that change, and particularly longstanding change, is integral to the industry's efforts to attract young talent.

"I've seen the introduction of technology be an asset but you can also see these changes go away," he said. "What ways do we have to engage people? How do you create that visibility? Meangingful and embedded change is needed for that."

Why pilots rarely become business as usual

So, if change is constant and necessary, why does progress still feel uneven?

One reason, several participants suggested, is the industry's reliance on pilots that never quite translate into everyday practice. King noted that construction is "very good at experimenting and very bad at turning things off", with old and new processes often running in parallel long after decisions have been made.

That tendency to manage perception rather than performance reflects a deeper cultural issue. Oliver Connew, associate at CRBN Solutions, warned that data can sometimes be used defensively. "There's a risk of hiding behind data," he said. "It becomes 'that's what the numbers say' instead of using information to challenge decisions and improve outcomes."

Others argued that shared, transparent data can have the opposite effect. Thompson suggested that when insight is collectively owned, it can create psychological safety. "If everyone knows where the data comes from, it's easier to raise concerns and have honest discussions," she said.

But the consensus was that

> Just because a system is live doesn't mean the change has happened. If people aren't feeling the benefit, it hasn't stuck
>
> **Chris Hone, Fortem**

Left: Catherine Thompson of Deloitte, SES's Ben Jowett and Scott Laird of Reds10

Below: Oliver Connew of CRBN Solutions, Fortem's Chris Hone and Andrew Crawford of Graham

running, and progressing, pilots is one of the best ways to drive change. As Thompson observed, "It is better to fail fast and learn a lesson, than to put off change."

Even when intent is right, timing can derail progress. Hone described how multiple initiatives landing simultaneously can overwhelm delivery teams. "Fifty small changes landing at once isn't small," he said. "At site level, that can fundamentally change someone's role overnight."

That observation prompted a broader discussion about change fatigue. Rather than pushing forward relentlessly, some argued that leaders need to be comfortable slowing down. Hone explained that Fortem has deliberately paused rollouts in the past to allow earlier changes to bed in. "If we don't give people time to adjust, we don't get the benefit," he said. "We just add friction."

Sequencing was another recurring theme. Collins advocated for a portfolio view of change rather than isolated programmes. "You need to look at everything that's landing on the business at once and ask what can realistically succeed now," he said. "Not just what's loudest or newest."

Trust also emerged as a critical factor. Several of the roundtable participants noted that previous failed implementations make teams sceptical. As King put it, "People remember the last system that didn't work. Every new initiative is judged against that experience." »

» Making digital change real on site

For digital transformation to stick, the group agreed, it must be grounded in the realities of site life. Ben Jowett, head of digital transformation at SES, reflected on earlier shifts that paved the way for today's tools. "The move from paper to handheld devices was massive," he said. "We underestimate how much that changed behaviour."

That behavioural focus remains essential. Scott Laird, AI and technical director at Reds10, described how the business invested heavily in training and ownership rather than technology alone. "We took the owner of the business on the journey," he said. "Once that belief was there, it stopped being a digital project and became how we operate."

Capability building was also highlighted as a long-term differentiator. Matt Procter, head of business development at Chasetown Civil Engineering, emphasised the importance of internal support. "You can't just deploy something and walk away," he said. "We've focused on training the trainer so learning continues after the initial rollout."

> You can't just deploy something and walk away. We've focused on training the trainer so learning continues after the initial rollout
>
> **Matt Procter, Chasetown Civil Engineering**

Across the table, there was agreement that digital change must make life easier for site teams. Crawford stressed that if benefits are not immediately visible, adoption falters. "If it feels like extra admin, people will find ways around it," he said.

Leadership and accountability

For senior leaders around the table, the implication was clear: making change stick is not a sponsorship role but a behavioural one. Several participants stressed that transformation fails less because people resist change, and more because leadership reinforcement fades too quickly. New systems are launched, messages are communicated – but leaders revert to old habits under pressure, signalling that the change is optional rather than fundamental.

Thompson argued that digital initiatives fail when they are delegated too far down the organisation. "If leadership isn't actively involved, people assume it's optional," she said.

That message resonated with Collins, who noted that ambiguity quickly undermines momentum. "If people don't know whether this change really matters, they'll default to what they know," he said.

At the same time, several contributors warned against placing the burden solely on digital or IT teams. King emphasised ownership must sit with the business: "Change doesn't belong to IT. It belongs to everyone who delivers work."

Measuring success differently

Another barrier to embedding change is how success is measured. Several participants noted that traditional KPIs often fail to capture behavioural improvement. Hone suggested organisations need to rethink what good looks like: "If we only measure whether a system is switched on, we miss whether it's actually being used well."

Connew added that metrics should encourage learning rather than blame. "If people feel punished for transparency, they'll stop engaging," he said.

When panellists reflected on what needs to happen next if digital transformation is to deliver lasting value, consistency was a priority. Jowett argued the industry must stop reinventing approaches on every project. "We know what works," he said. "The challenge is applying it consistently."

Skills and support were equally important. Procter stressed that ongoing training is essential. "People need to feel confident, not exposed," he said.

For Thompson, the answer lies in honesty. "We need to be realistic about how hard change is," she said. "Acknowledging that makes it easier to manage."

King concluded by returning to the theme that opened the discussion. "Making change stick isn't about chasing the next tool," he said. "It's about aligning people, purpose and process. When those come together, digital transformation stops being something we do and starts being how we work."

Round the table

Stu Collins, senior manager, major programmes, Deloitte
Oliver Connew, associate, CRBN Solutions
Andrew Crawford, head of IT business solutions, Graham
Chris Hone, IT director, Fortem
Ben Jowett, head of digital transformation, SES
Brett King, director of industry transformation, Procore
Scott Laird, AI and technical director, Reds10
Matt Procter, head of business development, Chasetown Civil Engineering
Catherine Thompson, director of the technology and transformation practice, Deloitte

Lessons from the roundtable

1. Change is a people issue first
Most digital initiatives fail because of human factors, not technology. Engagement, trust and understanding matter more than functionality – and require sustained leadership attention.

2. Pilots are easy; embedding is hard
Testing new systems is only the start. Real value comes when old processes are switched off and leaders consistently reinforce new ways of working long after launch.

3. Pace matters
Too many changes landing at once leads to fatigue. Leaders must actively sequence initiatives, not simply approve them.

4. Site reality must lead
Digital tools only stick when they clearly make life easier for delivery teams. If it feels like extra admin, it will be bypassed – regardless of strategic intent.

5. Leadership sets the tone
Visible, consistent leadership behaviour is decisive. When leaders role-model new ways of working and treat transformation as a long-term capability rather than a finite project, change has a far greater chance of sticking.

WILDE FRY

Top row: Matt Procter of Chasetown Civil Engineering, Procore's Brett King and Scott Laird of Reds10

Middle row: Deloitte's Stu Collins and Catherine Thompson, and Oliver Connew of CRBN Solutions

Bottom row: Andrew Crawford of Graham, SES's Ben Jowett and Chris Hone of Fortem

There was a clear sense that the industry is entering a more mature phase of digital transformation. The question is no longer whether construction should adopt new systems or platforms, but whether it has the patience, discipline and leadership to see those changes through.

Several participants reflected that, historically, construction has been good at responding to immediate pressures but less comfortable with long-term behavioural change. Digital initiatives often begin with urgency but lose momentum once the initial rollout is complete. That pattern, the group agreed, is no longer sustainable in a sector facing tightening margins, increasing scrutiny and rising expectations from clients and regulators alike.

Deceleration is not in sight

Collins returned to the idea of "unending change", noting that the pace of external pressure is unlikely to slow. "We're not going back to a stable environment where nothing shifts for five years," he said. "That means organisations have to get better at absorbing change without burning people out."

For Hone, that requires a different definition of success. "We have to stop thinking about transformation as a finish line," he said. "It's a capability we build over time. The better we get at it, the less disruptive it becomes."

> Digital change fails when it's seen as someone else's job. It has to be embedded in how the business operates, not bolted on
>
> **Ben Jowett, SES**

Others pointed to the need for humility and honesty. Connew argued that organisations must be willing to admit when change has not landed as intended: "If we pretend something has worked when it hasn't, we just store up bigger problems for later."

Leadership was repeatedly identified as the deciding factor. Thompson emphasised that sustained change requires visible commitment, not just approval. "People watch what leaders do more than what they say," she said. "If leadership reverts to old behaviours under pressure, everyone else will too."

That responsibility cannot sit only with digital or IT teams. Jowett stressed ownership must be collective. "Digital change fails when it's seen as someone else's job," he said. "It has to be embedded in how the business operates, not bolted on."

Looking ahead, there was cautious optimism. While the challenges of making change stick remain significant, participants agreed that the industry is better equipped than it was even a few years ago. The conversation has shifted from tools to behaviours, from deployment to durability.

As the session concluded, Procore's Brett King returned to his opening theme: "The industry doesn't lack innovation. What it needs now is follow-through. When we focus on people first and technology second, that's when change has a chance of lasting."

PROCORE

HANSOM
OF MOTHS AND MEN

Erland Rendall
Some touching tributes have been paid to Erland Rendall, the former Davis Langdon partner who died earlier this month. "He was a great person with integrity, wit and humanity," remembered CPC partner Mark Cleverly. Make co-founder Ken Shuttleworth said: "Erland was fun to be with and meticulous on the numbers. A great loss." And former DL colleague Iain Parker, now at T&T Alinea, said this: "He seemed to take everything in his stride, a very selfless person. I knew him from a young age at DL and, because we had the same outlook on life, we just got on." He added: "He also gave the best Sean Connery impression – his Scottish roots."

Barbs and the Barbican
I was always told it's best being short and to the point. Pull no punches and say what you mean. Amanda Levete, whose architectural CV means she can, as footballers might say, "show us her medals", takes the same approach, it seems. She's not a fan of the plan to build a new office next door to the Barbican. "This speculative office building is too big and of average quality," she writes in a letter of objection to the City of London. "The Barbican and the City deserve a building of real quality here." Given that more than 1,000 people have sent in objections to SOM's proposal at Silk Street, it's fair to say she's not the only one who feels this way.

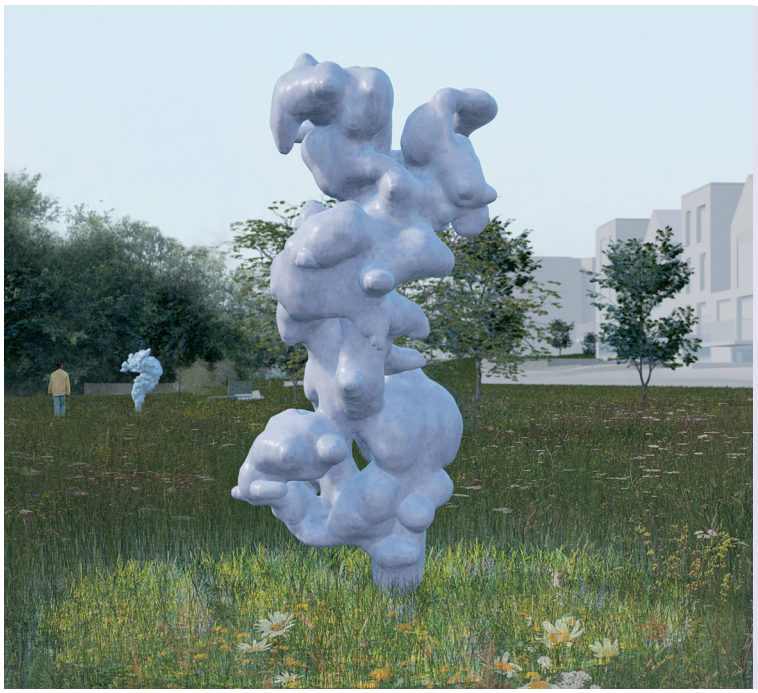
Lap of honour
I'm pleased to see Mark Reynolds has received a gong for services to construction. He's a former international swimmer so was doubtless trained to get up early, putting in the lengths while most of us were still in bed. I think those sessions have come to some good use in later life: his regular appearances before half six in the morning on Radio 4 must be a breeze.

> "If only domestic goddess Nigella Lawson could be persuaded to talk up the pleasures of bubble and squeak

Tangled up in blue
Chris Williamson has said he is feeling "quite sad" about losing his architect title after allowing his ARB registration to lapse in a protest against the profession's regulatory system. "Not being able to call myself an architect after 40 years in a career I have loved feels weird," the RIBA president says. "I'm feeling quite sad about it, to be honest, but that's probably the cold weather and the reflective time of year." His January blues are probably a bit different from most, especially when Blue Monday – the third Monday of the first month of the year and often called the most depressing day of the year – hits. For those who want to know, or maybe hide, this year's is slated for 19 January.

Remains of the day
I've been told that up to 40 million roast potatoes were chucked in the bin on Christmas Day. I know there are problems of waste in this industry, but that really takes the biscuit. If only domestic goddess Nigella Lawson could be persuaded to talk up the pleasures of bubble and squeak, the problem would be solved.

Join the band
I hear a few members of the Building Research Establishment have formed a house band. I'm told they play well-known hits and are a beloved fixture at the organisation's work events. I think we could do with a few more house bands in the construction industry, so maybe I could offer my services as their band manager and secure some



SCENTS & SENSIBILITY
What do you know about moths? Well, a new public artwork by artist Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg, which will celebrate moths as essential pollinators, has been given planning at the £1.2bn Oxford North scheme being developed by the development arm of St John's College. Says the blurb: "The Length of a Moment features three bronze sculptures… which will rise from the wildflower meadow at Canalside Park. Each sculpture will represent the invisible movements of a moth's search for a flower to feed from and pollinate, via the scent it releases." I just thought they ate my clothes.

Send any juicy industry gossip to Mr Joseph Aloysius Hansom at **hansom@building.co.uk**

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