



Jan Kattein Architects at their studio in Islington, north London. From left to right: Chandni Patel, Gareth Merritt, Surveen Chong, Jan Kattein, Chrysanthia Rishogwari, Rosie Parls, Thomas Butlerworth, Alastair Johnson, Jasmin Ytter.

For us, sustainability is as much a social as it is an environmental challenge. It is one which demands that we continue to support and build capacity of those most vulnerable to the implications of climate change.

Material stewardship is so intertwined with our philosophy that it's hard to pin-point when it began. Recently, we repurposed an antique gramophone horn left over from Jan's university project to feature in our steam-punk toilet refurbishment at the Discover Children's Story Centre.

Why would you ever want to discard a thing that has character, patina and traces of a time gone by? Reused materials have stories to tell and storytelling is a powerful tool to connect people with places.

Retention, repair and repurposing of sanitary ware, doors, windows, flooring, steel, and furniture is only the beginning. We design for flexibility and to accommodate change by using demountable and re-deployable structures, we in-build latent capacity and we share sustainable construction skills through community building.

For 15 years our work has helped to redefine how social and environmental policy is implemented. We have prepared four planning policy guidance documents and spoken to more than 5,000 people in connection with our work.

Case study

Jan Kattein Architects

Portrait by Timothy Soar



Read Jan Kattein Architects' submission to the 2025 Regenerative Architecture Index at www.regenerativearchitecture.org/hedges/jan-kattein-architects

PROJECTS:

Question 1

Can the practice demonstrate projects which strive to match the performance of a mature ecosystem? As a minimum this would mean achieving biodiversity net gain.

Front-runner

Commonfuture

We are working with two separate private clients to develop the concept of the 'smart clachan' – a way of returning small but dense population clusters to the rural Scottish Highlands where previous small historical townships (clachans) have been evicted by the 19th century clearances. Much of the highlands have since been denuded of biodiversity through the twin factors of monoculture forestry plantations and 'sporting' estates. As a means of creating sustainable livelihoods these clachan proposals are seamlessly embedded in permaculture and re-wilding principals, and propose ways in which not only the people but the biodiversity can return to the landscape. Through use of natural and local materials within low-energy constructions and the regenerative forces of food growing, waste composting, and renewable energy we hope to create a replicable model of development that can help to revitalise the biodiversity of rural Scotland.

Runner-up

Feilden Fowles Architects

We recognise that we are part of nature, within integral living systems, not separate from them. Our work actively regenerates ecosystems by learning from and working with nature. We are currently working with the Natural History Museum, we collaborated with scientists to enhance local ecosystems within the museum's wildlife park. Our sensitive design transformation safeguarded existing flora and fauna, doubled the area of native habitats, and expanded the pond by 60 per cent, significantly boosting

biodiversity across the site. Listening and viewing funnels provide people with a closer connection to nature; hearing water move through tree trunks or beetle larvae feeding on decaying wood. 50 monitoring points support ongoing research by scientists at the adjacent Angela Marmont Centre for UK Nature, who were closely involved throughout the project. Their expertise ensured that biodiversity was not only protected but meaningfully supported and expanded during construction.

Ones to watch

DSDHA

An understanding of local ecologies informs all of our projects. This includes analysis of often hidden or lost ecosystems, which our designs strive to return to the site. At 50 Fenchurch Street, this is leading to the creation of a new fen (wetland) habitat in the heart of the City of London; at Euston Tower, we are creating a 'mosaic of habitats' (grassland, moorland, woodland, and wetland) inspired by Hampstead Heath, and at Exchange Square above Liverpool Street Station, we found inspiration in the estuarine landscape of Tollesbury at the end of the trainline. The new park that emerged from this concept has achieved as BNG of 600 per cent. We have recently propagated plants from the Square to be used on the roof terraces of surrounding buildings, including 1 Appold Street on which we are collaborating with Piercy&Company.

The inclusion of a 'snag' (a standing dead tree) as part of our wetland at Euston Tower will provide valuable invertebrate habitat and foraging opportunities for local wildlife, imitating conditions found in natural wetlands.



PHOTOGRAPH BY NIEL FERGUSON/STOCK COMMUNITARIEN



Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios
Biodiversity and collaboration with landscape designers is a key part of our work. We strive to achieve 20 per cent BNG or more on all projects, above regulations.

Researcher Jamie Anderson studied residents at Accordia, and found that living in a neighbourhood with a higher ratio of communal gardens is associated with higher levels of wellbeing and community. Our current work at Brabazon evolves some of these ideas at both masterplan and neighbourhood scale.

We are working with the Eden Project on a regenerative scheme on a former gasworks in Dundee, as a place to explore how we can learn from and reconnect with nature to achieve a regenerative future.

We aim to retain mature trees on our sites. Currently on site, our 1,200 student bed scheme for the University of Sussex, retains more than 50 existing trees between the buildings, and creates a scheme in sympathy with the adjacent South Downs National Park.

Jan Kattein Architects

In Wilderness Street, we temporarily revived landscapes lost to large-scale urbanisation by creating an 80-metre-long living urban landscape on a road surface in Ilford Town Centre. Using the Uphall Camp Beacon, the former Royal Forest of Haifaunt, the Essex Grazing Marshes as blueprints for plant species and landscape character, we tried to replicate these ancient forests and marshlands on Oakfield Road. The project advocated for the preservation of ancient natural landscapes and their role in maintaining biodiversity and supporting well-being. A series of community events and workshops around the theme of landscape, including planting workshops, were programmed for the duration of the project. The legacy saw all planting given away to community organisations and Ilford residents at the end of the project. Enticing local people to adopt the plants meant that elements of the ancient Essex landscape were reinstated in public places, gardens, planters, and allotments.

Natural Building Studio

Yes, we are deeply guided by the ecosystem of our sites. We design to always improve the habitat offering on a site and integrate it into the architecture as a defining principle at the start of the project, rather than a bolt on addition. We work closely with ecologists to assess the existing conditions and make informed decisions about how the architecture can improve the ecosystem. For example, in our project with Tiggins Meadows, we applied a number of measures. First, we raised the barn off the ground to provide a sheltered habitat below it. Second, we captured the rainwater from the roof, slowed it down through retention, and then managed its release into a new pond, which supports insect and bird life. Third, we provided a traditional barn owl habitat within the roof volume, on the gable end looking out over hunting ground. It was occupied before construction was finished.



Left: Jan Kattein Architects actively seeks out opportunities that align with its principles of sustainability, fairness and social responsibility. The Paper Garden in Canada Water, London, includes a garden and an educational community building.

PRACTICE

Question 4

Does the practice publicly refuse to work with certain clients, suppliers or organisations on ethical grounds?



Front-runner

Collective Works

We regularly review new projects within the practice and have two forums for ethical discussion: weekly partner meetings and fortnightly whole team design reviews.

We have developed a framework for ethical review, and have shared this with other practices. It allows us to consider contentious projects systematically, considering the alignment with our values, our need for experience, and economic factors. It moves beyond a binary yes/no approach and gives individuals the chance to veto a new project on moral grounds. This has led us to jointly agree about and refuse a recent project for ethical reasons. We discussed this with those involved and shared the news with our team. We'll continue to develop the framework to ensure transparency as we deal with contentious issues. We are also happy to continue sharing the framework with other practices, and plan to share it publicly in the coming months.

Runner-up

ritchie's studio

We publicly declare that we will not accept commissions that we consider may irrevocably damage the environment: involve military activity or the marketing of civilian firearms; undermine successful democratic or indigenous sovereignty; engage with countries, authorities or companies that are known to be party to the abuse of human rights; contravene international treaties; or promote adult entertainment, predatory lending, tobacco, and other addictive drugs. This is part of our Ethical Policy published on our website.

Although not a relevant organisation under the Modern Slavery Act, we also operate an Anti-Modern Slavery Policy. Accordingly, we ensure we are aware of and fully consider potential clients' project funders' and subcontractors' policies and ethics in relation to labour protection, and we do not take commissions or enter contracts where either is questionable.

Ones to watch

Barr Gazetas

We only work with clients whose values align with our own, and we would decline opportunities that conflict with our ethical standards. While such refusals are handled privately and professionally, our stance is clear. As a certified B Corp, we are publicly committed to upholding high ethical and environmental standards in all our work and relationships. This certification reinforces our dedication to partnering with organisations that share our values around

sustainability, social impact, and responsible business practices.

Donald Insall Associates

We have an ethics policy which assesses and governs our decisions around working with certain client types or regions. These are considered on a project-by-project basis. Our approach is to consider a detailed report by consulting subject matter specialists in order to establish whether or not we wish to pursue the opportunity. A final decision is taken at the highest level of the practice.

Jan Kattein Architects

Our Corporate Social Responsibility Policy and our Ethical Policy inform our decision-making at every level: from selecting who we bank with to determining the types of commissions we accept. In practice, this means we may earn lower financial returns by choosing banks that do not support arms dealing, or that we must decline opportunities, such as competitions funded by petroleum companies, or projects that conflict with our values. Some might argue this approach is detrimental to business, but we view it as essential for maintaining our integrity.

Our commitment to ethical practice shapes our relationships with clients, partners, and the broader community. We actively seek out collaborations and initiatives that align with our principles of sustainability, fairness, and social responsibility, guiding us to support and articulate what aspects resonated or fell short. This process has resulted in us turning down projects, changing our suppliers, not participating in invited competitions and removing our work from international exhibitions.

Material Cultures

We have a robust Project Evaluation and Selection Policy for evaluating potential partners and funders. In terms of ethics and environmental standards, we refuse to work with developers or suppliers who exploit labour, greenwash, or disregard fair practice. This applies equally to small contractors and international developers. For 30-plus years, we've stood by the belief that who we work with matters as much as what we build. We foster a democratic culture in which staff are empowered to speak up and challenge ethical concerns. In a regenerative practice integrity is non-negotiable, and we're proud to protect that standard at every level.

RDA Architects

Ethics are embedded in every decision we make at RDA. We've turned down high-profile projects, including a major development in Saudi Arabia, because they conflicted with our values around human rights, gender equity, and ecological responsibility. This wasn't a top-down directive – it was a unanimous team decision, reflecting our studio's shared ethical compass.

We regularly screen clients and collaborators for alignment with our social and environmental standards. We refuse to work with developers or suppliers who exploit labour, greenwash, or disregard fair practice. This applies equally to small contractors and international developers.

For 30-plus years, we've stood by the belief that who we work with matters as much as what we build. We foster a democratic culture in which staff are empowered to speak up and challenge ethical concerns. In a regenerative practice integrity is non-negotiable, and we're proud to protect that standard at every level.

Sheppard Robson

The practice has project selection criteria shared on our intranet, which allows the leadership to evaluate new projects more rigorously. This includes a review of the commissioning client, the social impact of the projects, and whether the brief is aligned with our sustainability ambitions and Charter, like the IFC Performance Standards, are adhered

which include questions on environmental management and social responsibility. These are sent to our subconsultants to complete annually as part of our ISO 9001 Quality Management System procedures.

We also have supply chain questionnaires on aspects of environmental and social sustainability for our smaller business suppliers. The initial format of these is intended to gather relevant information and encourage participation. Following this engagement, we will look to introduce thresholds and targets. These are sent out to key suppliers annually as part of our ISO 14001 Environmental Management System procedures.

SVN Architects

We operate under an evolving ethical policy that dictates specific project types we will not pursue. This commitment extends to the extraction of unconventional fossil fuels, such as tar sands and shale oil, as well as the development of new greenfield oil projects and any undertakings directly involving oil extraction, processing, or combustion. Furthermore, we refrain from engaging in 'moss fossil projects' that are projected to exceed 1 giga-ton of CO₂ equivalent emissions.

Recognizing the importance of biodiversity conservation, we will not participate in projects that negatively affect critical habitats unless stringent interventions and Charter, like the IFC Performance Standards, are adhered

to and a demonstrable net positive outcome for biodiversity can be achieved.

In alignment with global efforts towards peace and security, we uphold a zero-tolerance policy concerning projects associated with controversial weapons, including cluster munitions, landmines, and chemical and biological weapons. This ethical framework reflects our dedication to responsible and sustainable practices within the built environment.

We Made That

We work exclusively for the public sector and charities. All projects (and clients) are appraised for social value, environmental impact, provenance of finance, destination of profits, and human rights record.

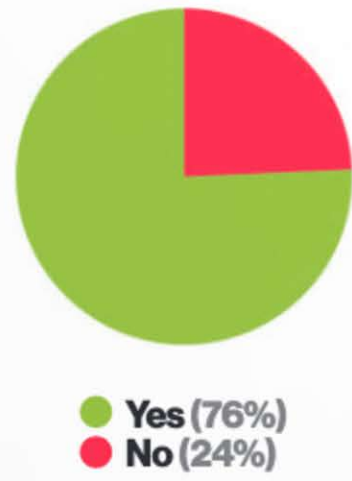
We have robust supply chain processes too. As part of our contract start-up processes as a B Corp, appointed subconsultants provide details on ownership diversity, social and environmental impact. This enables us to take evidence-led decisions on our supply chain makeup and identify areas for proactive attention. This has enabled us to talk to specialist suppliers about securing team members with different lived experiences.

We are committed to leveraging our operational spending with a local, independent and impactful supply chain. We have a stated target to support spending with local and independent suppliers. In 2024 this included a £526,000 supply chain spend with local independent suppliers.

PROJECTS

Question 1

Do the projects demonstrate deep engagement with local stakeholders and end users? For example, is there evidence that your project engagement goes beyond consultation towards co-design?



Front-runner

Jan Kattein Architects

At The Paper Garden, we integrated a volunteer-build component, engaging over 3,000 volunteers who became ambassadors for natural building techniques. At the Triangle Site, 409 volunteers learned sustainable construction techniques across 49 events. In Thamesmead, we partnered with Windrush Primary School to create a school garden, collaborating with teachers to align the project with curriculum objectives. This led to garden activities being woven into the school's STEM curriculum. In Edmonton, our work with St Peter's and St Paul's Primary School centred on a teaching programme about sustainability and well-being. Through practical and storytelling sessions with teachers, we developed a strategy for rewilding the street outside the school, directly incorporating children's imaginative ideas about monster habitats in the completed School Street. Each initiative not only translated co-designed visions into tangible projects, but also demonstrated how hands-on creative approaches can embed sustainability and well-being, making a lasting impact on our environment.

Runner-up

DSDHA

DSDHA is a champion of co-design and recently published *Towards Spatial Justice: A Guide for Achieving Meaningful Participation in Co-Design Processes*.

This was the outcome of two years of research funded by the RIBA and UCL, and builds on the studio's nearly 25 years' experience in pioneering innovative participatory design practice. As part of this, we have launched a website – www.codesigning-space.com – which provides open-source access to a co-design checklist and co-design assessment tool. The research also informed the recently released co-design overlay for the RIBA Plan of Work.

Projects that have utilised co-design include White Horse Square youth space (with Julia King/Make Space for Girls), British Library landscape and public realm (with Global Generation), Eastern Tower (with Beyond the Box), and Central Somers Town (with Edit Collective).

These projects demonstrate our ambition to not only engage local communities in co-design, but also to provide opportunities for young practices and SMEs as part of the process.

Ones to watch

Buckley Gray Yeoman

Our projects embrace genuine co-design, moving beyond token consultation to forge lasting partnerships with end users and

local communities. For Brixton International House, we ran a series of themed workshops, inviting paid participants drawn from the surrounding neighbourhood to critique plans and elevations, explore precedents, and articulate what aspects resonated or fell short. Their insights didn't just inform but shaped the final proposals, ensuring the design truly reflects local needs and aspirations. Similarly, in collaboration with Homes Energy Action Lab, we undertook deep engagement with community groups in Hackney to develop retrofit action plans. Rather than delivering off the shelf reports, we conducted in-depth dialogues about how each building is used, mapped pain points, and co-designed 'quick wins' for energy efficiency. This immersive process fostered ownership among stakeholders and ensured that our technical recommendations aligned with on-the-ground realities.

dRMM
dRMM projects consistently demonstrate deep stakeholder engagement that transcends conventional consultation to embrace genuine co-design principles. We develop comprehensive engagement strategies with our clients, beginning with thorough stakeholder mapping to ensure inclusive representation.

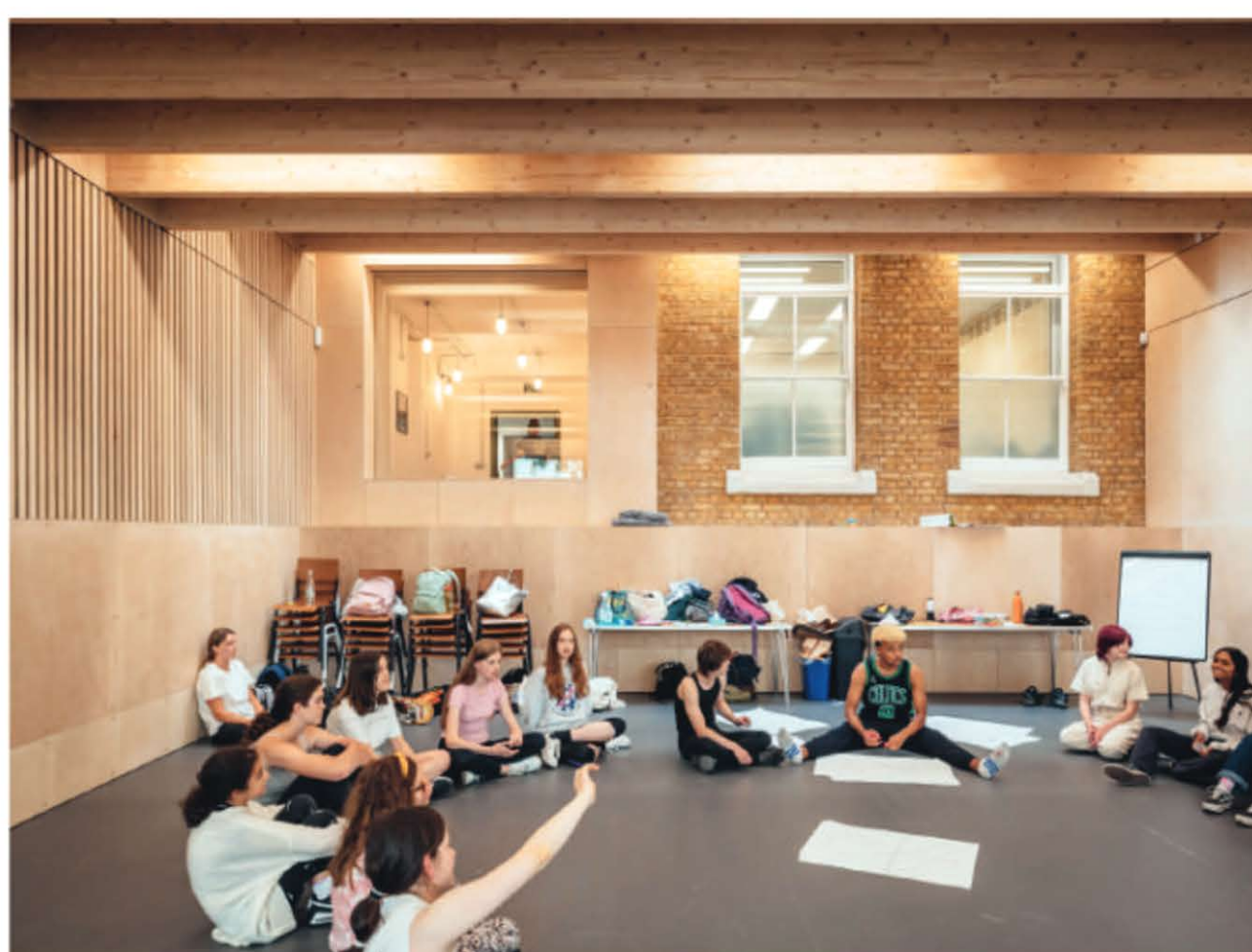
Our co-design workshops address topics most relevant to communities, creating meaningful dialogue that directly influences design outcomes. We are particularly committed to engaging hard-to-reach groups through innovative approaches.

At Justin Estate, we organised a week-long creative workshop series specifically targeting younger community members. These sessions, led by our team alongside local artists, taught design skills while gathering authentic input. The initiative culminated in a design competition with the winner receiving prize money and a paid work experience placement in our studio. This exemplifies our approach: creating engagement pathways that not only inform our designs but also build skills, create opportunities, and establish lasting relationships with the communities we serve – ensuring their voices genuinely shape project outcomes.

HKS

We demonstrate deep, multi-layered engagement with local stakeholders and end users moving beyond consultation into meaningful co-design.

Our Nature of Place (NoP) framework is central to this approach. It guides design teams in uncovering the unique character, challenges, and opportunities of each location – ranging from the hyper-local to the regional scale. This process integrates insights from five key



stakeholder groups: the earth, clients and users, investors, the broader community, and the design team itself.

The NoP is more than a checklist, it's a collaborative discovery tool used before design begins. It fosters informed, inclusive decision making through eco-charrettes and high-performance design workshops, where local voices help shape the vision, goals, and strategies for each project.

By using NoP, HKS ensures that every project is rooted in place, purpose, and shared understanding. This delivers lasting social and environmental value through truly co-created design.

Office S&M

We have a clear and structured approach called Deep Listening, which helps us deliver meaningful engagement for public groups and communities. Our process goes far beyond consultation, working towards genuine co-design by empowering those who will use the spaces to shape their future environment. We have worked with one third of London's boroughs, helping clients harness budgets and deliver community benefit with confidence.

We prioritise inclusive engagement, both digital and physical, with a focus on reaching underrepresented groups. We celebrate cultural heritage and local character through initiatives that foster a continued sense of ownership. Our process builds social value by championing community wealth building, diversity, and social sustainability. We believe that the most successful designs are created with the communities who will use them, and we work to ensure their voices shape the outcome from the start.

PRP

PRP is an expert in community partnerships and engagement. Each project, regardless of size, requires a bespoke approach to community engagement to create a truly inclusive design. For our project at High Path Estate, the PRP team used an innovative tool kit of engagement techniques, including co-design to encourage genuine participation and meaningful conversation between varied stakeholders from the very early stages. We encouraged different methods of capturing, recording and presenting feedback. We held co-design and 3D model-making workshops, including a 'Self Build Play' workshop, with children aged 8-11 years old, to get them involved in designing for their community. We also hosted 'How you say' exhibitions for the community, so local stakeholders and residents' groups could share their thoughts with our team and have an impact on the final design. PRP's approach is consultative and collaborative, and we will always involve the community where possible in influencing the design development journey.

Studio 8FOLD

We are a process-focused practice, where we engage without a predetermined outcome. A deep engagement with local stakeholders and end-users is fundamental to the practice's objectives.

We worked together with Architecturburo Lindstedt on a project in Nettlesfield called Dorf in Dorf (Village within a Village), proposing an intergenerational co-living project, deeply embedded in a small town community. We had community-wide workshops and presentations, along with smaller focus-groups, looking at exactly

Left: DSDHA's National Youth Theatre on Holloway Road, London, is an accessible, inclusive, and sustainable retrofit project that provides facilities that can be shared with the local community, supported by a new spatial-sharing network that ensures long-term financial stability through creative partnerships.

what co-living and intergenerational really meant to them, and understanding both long-term views, budgetary constraints, and greatest concerns. One outcome was a request for a training session on how to do co-living, explaining how the community garden and workshop should be used and engaged with.

Various iterations of the design were presented and shared with not only the client but the whole community, which was crucial in making sure it was accepted by the community and suited future users.

Tonkin Liu

As architects, we want our work to tell stories about nature, people, and place. All projects demonstrate deep and thorough engagement through the Asking Looking Playing Making design process, setting out four scales: individual, community, company, and society. The engagement is through observations of behaviours as well as direct dialogues. The process uncovers the expression of certain individuals' idiosyncrasies, as well as neighbourhood character and issues, while also encompassing broader views, such as the client's deep-rooted aspirations, and the global responsibilities towards our planet. The co-design process is a co-design with the planet, with a collective value cherishing the planet's objectives over the short-term objectives of human beings. It is through this process of engagement, which though challenging at times, ultimately reaffirms trust. Every project is an opportunity to build an enduring symbol: a symbol of community trust, pride of place, cohesion, and identity; a symbol of communities wanting their voices to be projected and heard.

- Able Partners
- AEW Architects
- Allford Hall Monaghan Morris
- Allies and Morrison
- alma-nac
- Assemble
- Atelier Architecture & Design
- Atelier One
- Atelier Ten
- Austin Design Works
- AWW
- Baillie Baillie Architects
- Barr Brown Studio
- Barr Gazetas
- BD Landscape Architects
- BDP
- Bennetts Associates
- Bond Bryan
- Broadway Malyan
- Buckley Gray Yeoman
- Cairn
- Charlie Luxton Design
- Churchman Thornhill Finch
- Citizens Design Bureau
- City Architecture Office
- Civic
- Clementine Blakemore
- Coffey Architects
- Collective Architecture

- Collective Works
- Commonfuture
- CSK Architects
- Cullinan Studio
- Cura Design
- DaeWha Kang Design
- Digg & Co Studio
- Donald Insall Associates
- dRMM
- DSDHA
- Elliott Wood
- Exploration Architecture
- Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios
- Feilden Fowles Architects
- Foster Perpatidou
- Gale & Snowden Architects
- Greengage Environmental
- Grimshaw
- Hamilton Hay Van Jonker
- Hawkins|Brown
- Haworth Tompkins
- Hayhurst and Co
- HAYKS
- HLM Architects
- Hopkins Architects
- Howells
- Intervention Architecture
- Jamie Fobert Architects
- Jan Kattein Architects

- JTP
- Julia Bennett Architects
- Khadka+Eriksson Furunes
- LDA Design
- Leonard Design
- Maccreanor Lavington
- Marks Barfield Architects
- Material Cultures
- Material Works
- Max Fordham
- Mecanoo
- MICA Architects
- Mitiaditou Cook Mitzman
- MWD Architects
- Natural Building Studio
- Nested Living
- New-works
- Niall McLaughlin Architects
- nintim architects
- ODACE
- Office S&M Architects
- OUBE
- ORBE
- PAD Studio
- Pedder & Scampton Architects
- Perkins+Will
- PLP Architecture
- Positive Collective
- Project Orange

- PRP
- Purcell
- RDA
- ritchie*studio
- RSHP
- Scott Brownrigg
- Scott Whitby Studio
- Sheppard Robson
- Snug Architects
- Stallan-Brand
- Stride Treglown
- studio 8FOLD
- Studio Birk
- Studio Knight Stokoe
- Studio Moren
- Studio Multi
- Studio Otto
- SVN Architects + Planners
- Tate+Co
- Tonkin Liu
- tp bennett
- Transion Design
- Unknown Works
- Urquhart & Hunt
- Useful Simple Trust
- van Heyningen and Haward
- We Made That
- White Arkitekter
- Within Planetary Boundaries