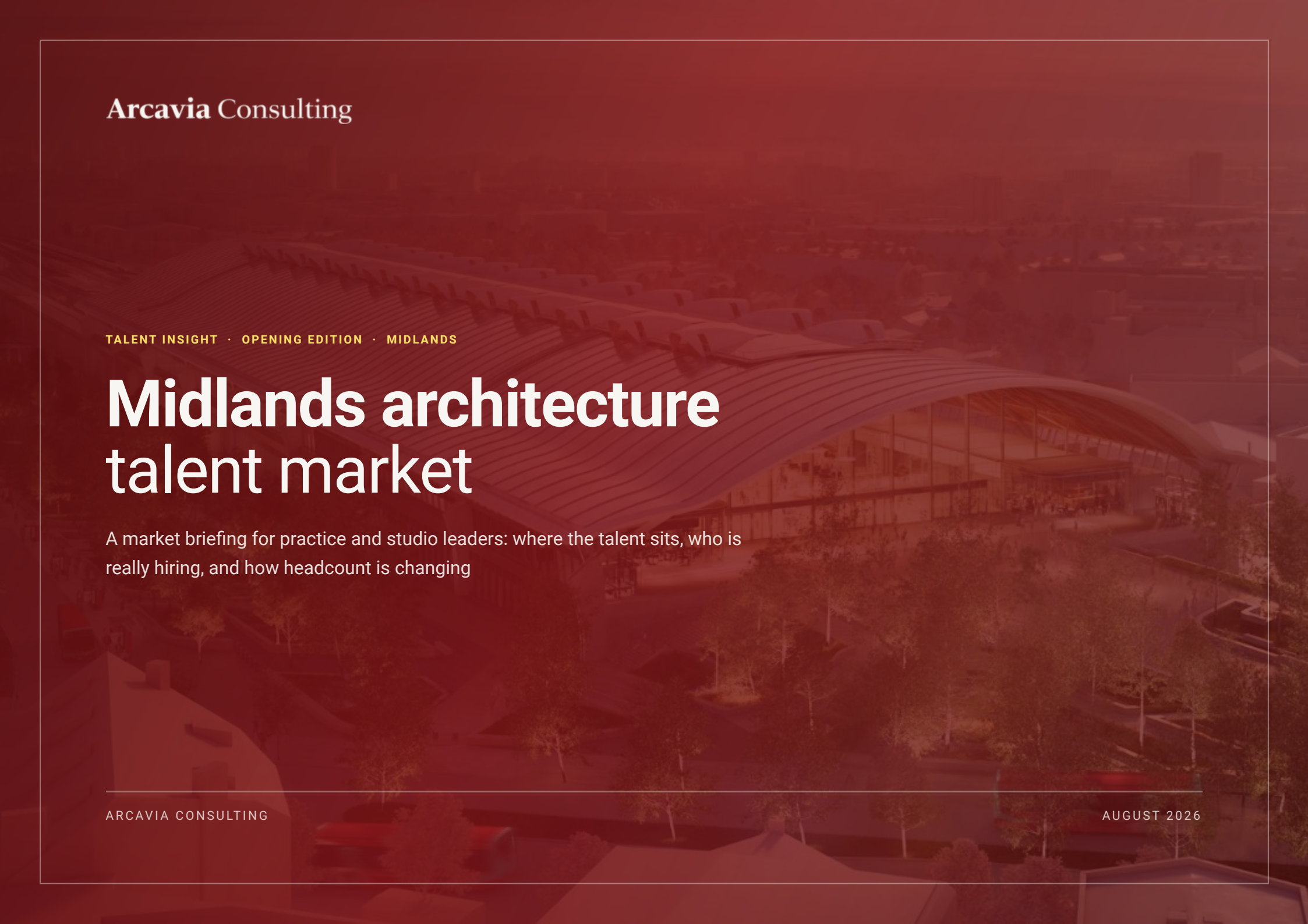




Arcavia Consulting

TALENT INSIGHT · OPENING EDITION · MIDLANDS

Midlands architecture talent market

A market briefing for practice and studio leaders: where the talent sits, who is really hiring, and how headcount is changing

ARCAVIA CONSULTING

AUGUST 2026

What the market is doing

Three findings that shape hiring in the region this year.

4/12

01

Most of the hiring is not architectural

Twelve firms in the region carry live job posts. Checked against their own careers pages, only four are advertising architecture roles in the Midlands: Gensler, Harrison., Stephen George + Partners and IDP.

The rest are engineering, planning, product design and interior furnishings businesses. Their posts inflate the apparent demand for architects and distort any benchmark drawn from job-board volume.

95

02

The largest practice is contracting

Corstorphine & Wright is the biggest practice in the pool and the only firm of that scale contracting — down 5.9% with 15.3% attrition. That is roughly a dozen people leaving over the year against a shrinking base.

Pegasus Group is the only other practice above 60 people also contracting, at 1.6% down with 17.3% attrition. Howells, the third, grew 11.3%.

5/20

03

One practice is absorbing the market

Gensler received five of the twenty moves identified — a quarter of all movement, into one studio, at every level from Architect to Technical Director. Its 33.3% headcount growth is corroborated independently.

Any practice recruiting architects in Birmingham is competing with Gensler for the same people.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PRACTICE LEADERS

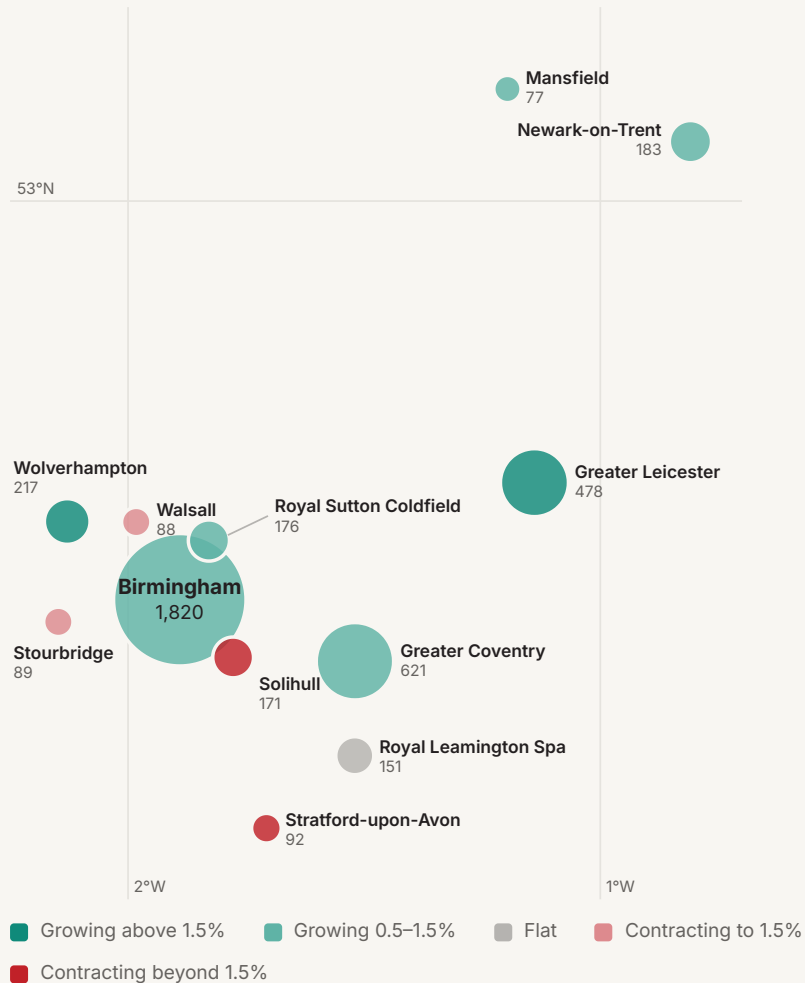
Advertised roles are a poor proxy for demand. Strip out the engineering and planning businesses and the region has advertised roughly twenty architecture positions in twelve months. Seven of the eight fastest-growing practices grew with no advertised roles at all, which means the appointments that matter are being made through referral and direct approach. A practice that recruits only through advertising is competing for a small and unrepresentative slice of the market.

The pressure sits on retention rather than recruitment. Mean attrition across the region ran at 10.6%, but the spread is wide. Of the 29 practices large enough to report it, six lost a fifth or more of their people over the year and six recorded none at all. Where a studio sits on that spread is a better predictor of its hiring burden next year than the number of roles it is currently advertising.

Where the talent sits

One city holds nearly two fifths of the region.

REGIONAL TALENT POOL — CIRCLE AREA IS HEADCOUNT, FILL IS TWELVE-MONTH GROWTH



4,742

PROFESSIONALS

38%

IN BIRMINGHAM

What it tells us

Birmingham is the market. At 1,820 professionals it holds 38% of the region, and the three largest cities hold 61% between them. A Midlands search that does not start in Birmingham is starting in the wrong place.

Growth sits on the northern and western edges. Leicester and Wolverhampton are the fastest-growing locations; Solihull and Stratford-upon-Avon are contracting.

Sourcing pressure and advertised roles do not align. Ten locations show very high recruiter competition per available professional, but only four carry advertised roles at all.

WHAT THIS MEANS

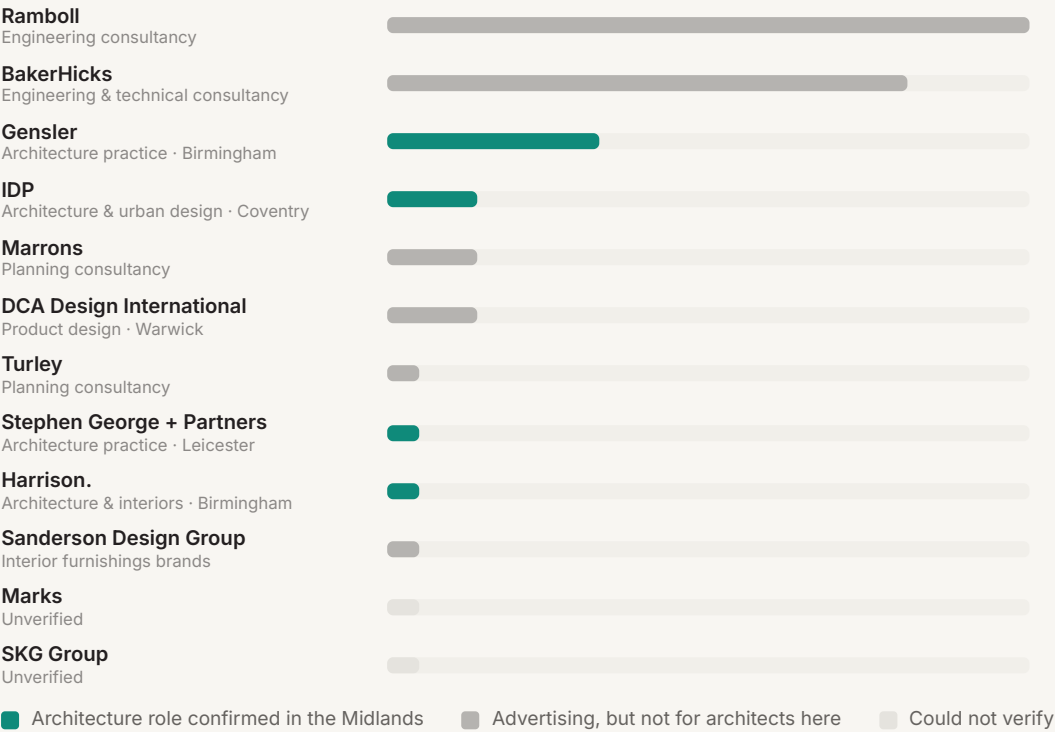
Birmingham is the core catchment for any Midlands studio. Coventry and Leicester behave as separate markets rather than commuter extensions of it — the flow data overleaf shows Coventry losing people to its neighbours rather than sharing them. A studio drawing from all three is running three recruitment markets, not one.

Twelve towns plotted at true positions. A further 26 locations hold fewer than 60 professionals each and are not shown; together they account for around 550 people.

Who is really hiring

We checked every claim against the employer's own careers page.

ADVERTISED POSTS IN THE REGION, AND WHAT THE CAREERS PAGES ACTUALLY SHOW



The four that count

NAME	APPOINTMENT	MOVED FROM
Simon Reid	Studio Director, HLM Architects — Birmingham (opens the practice's eighth UK and Ireland studio)	Managing Director, Lungfish Architects
Barry Gaffney	Director, edgeUD — Birmingham (urban design practice expanding in the Midlands)	Not stated in the announcement

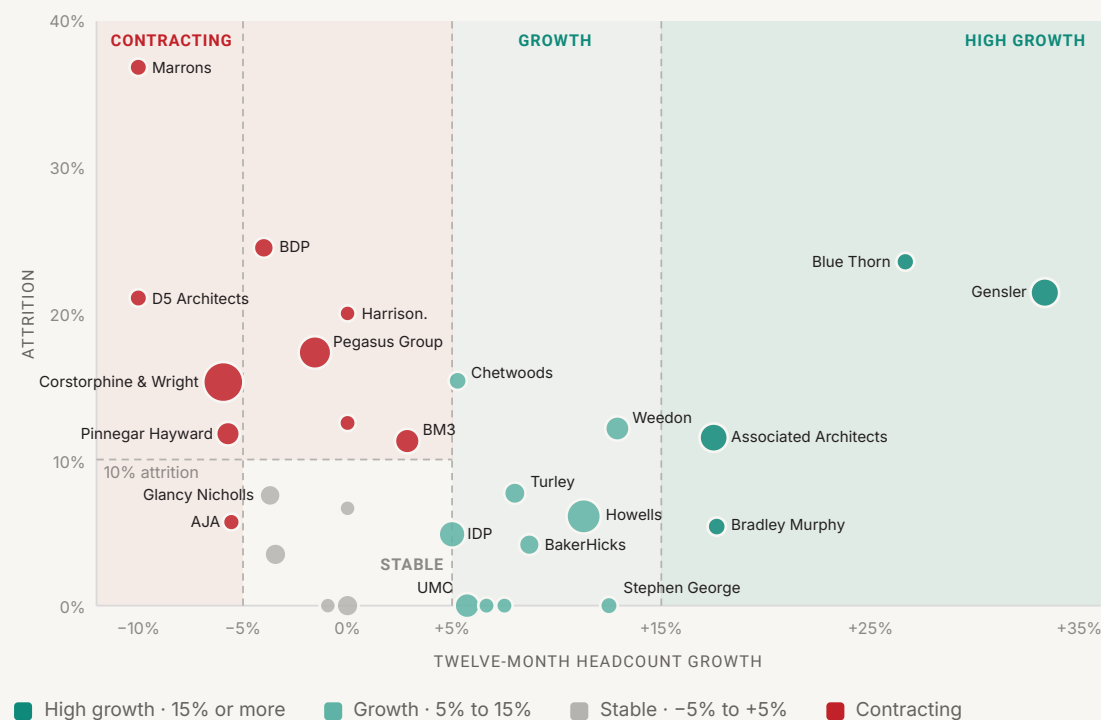
THE OTHER EIGHT

Turley, Marrons, Ramboll, BakerHicks, DCA Design International and Sanderson Design Group are all advertising, but for planners, engineers, product designers and textile designers. Marks and SKG Group could not be verified.

Growth and retention

Growth against attrition sorts the region into four bands.

EVERY FIRM OF 15 PEOPLE OR MORE · CIRCLE AREA IS HEADCOUNT



The four bands

High growth, 15% and above. Gensler, Blue Thorn, Bradley Murphy Design and Associated Architects. Four practices are carrying the top of the regional growth curve between them.

Growth, 5% to 15%. Howells, Weedon, Stephen George + Partners, BakerHicks, Turley, UMC, IDP, Chetwoods, Fira Landscape and Synergy — ten firms adding people at a sustainable rate.

Stable, -5% to +5%. Benoy, Glancy Nicholls, Define, Richborough and William Saunders are holding position, and all five are keeping attrition in single figures.

Contracting. Attrition above 10% on growth under 5%: Corstorphine & Wright, Pegasus Group, BM3, BDP, Pinnegar Hayward, Marrons, D5 Architects, Harrison. and Design Buro. AJA joins them on headcount alone, easing back 5.6% without a retention problem.

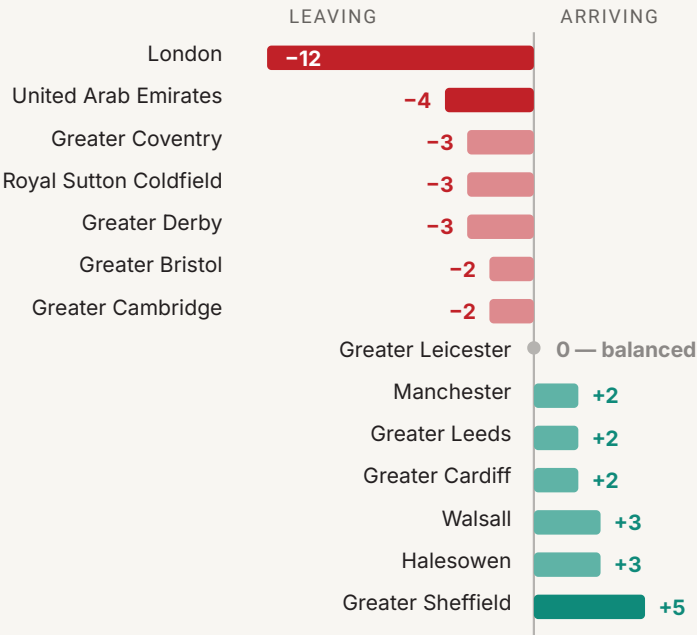
WHAT THIS MEANS

Gensler sits alone in the far right of the high growth band at 33.3% growth and 21.4% attrition. Scaling at that rate while replacing a fifth of the studio each year is the defining pattern in this market, and it sets the pace every other Birmingham practice is hiring against.

Talent flow in and out

London is the only competitor that matters.

NET MOVEMENT ACROSS THE REGIONAL BOUNDARY, TWELVE MONTHS



303

CROSSINGS

-13

NET CHANGE

The shape of it

158 people left the region over twelve months and 145 arrived. Flat overall on a base of 4,742, but the composition is what matters.

London accounts for almost the whole net loss. Fifty-eight of the 303 crossings involve London, nearly one in five, and it delivers all but one person of the net deficit.

The northern cities feed the region. Sheffield, Leeds, Manchester and Cardiff are all net contributors. Sheffield sent five people over the year and took none back.

ONE CAVEAT

This measures movement across the regional boundary only. It does not capture architects moving between two Midlands practices, which is the larger share of real movement. The named moves on page 08 show that pattern directly.

Headcount changes across the region

Sixteen firms grew, nine shrank and five held position.

#	FIRM	GROWTH	#	FIRM	GROWTH
1	Gensler	+33.3%	16	BM3 Architecture	+2.9%
2	Blue Thorn Technology	+26.7%	17	Define Planning and Design	0.0%
3	Bradley Murphy Design	+17.6%	18	Design Buro	0.0%
4	Associated Architects	+17.5%	19	Richborough	0.0%
5	Weedon	+12.9%	20	Harrison.	0.0%
6	Stephen George + Partners	+12.5%	21	William Saunders	0.0%
7	Howells	+11.3%	22	Pegasus Group	-1.6%
8	BakerHicks	+8.7%	23	Benoy	-3.4%
9	Turley	+8.0%	24	Glancy Nicholls	-3.7%
10	Ramboll	+7.1%	25	BDP	-4.0%
11	Fira Landscape	+6.7%	26	AJA	-5.6%
12	Synergy Architects	+6.7%	27	Pinnegar Hayward	-5.7%
13	UMC	+5.7%	28	Corstorphine & Wright	-5.9%
14	Chetwoods	+5.3%	29	Marrons	-10.0%
15	IDP	+5.0%	30	D5 Architects	-10.0%

READ IT THIS WAY

Growth is the change in a firm's Midlands headcount over twelve months, not a count of moves. It nets joiners against leavers and takes in graduates, retirements and redundancies as well as people moving between practices. Harrison. shows 0.0% having lost a fifth of its people over the year.

WHAT THIS MEANS

Gensler grew 33.3%, six and a half points clear of Blue Thorn and nearly twice the rate of Associated Architects, the next-fastest practice of comparable size. It is the fastest-growing studio in the region on any measure, and it sets the pace every other Birmingham practice is hiring against.

At the other end, **Marrons and D5 Architects are both down 10%**. More telling for anyone recruiting here, two of the four largest practices in the region are contracting — Corstorphine & Wright by 5.9% and Pegasus Group by 1.6%.

The moves behind the numbers

Twenty named moves across the region in twelve months.

Announced appointments

NAME	APPOINTMENT	MOVED FROM	DETAIL
Simon Reid	Studio Director, HLM Architects — Birmingham	Managing Director, Lungfish Architects	Opens HLM's eighth UK and Ireland studio, targeting twelve people in year one across education, defence, justice and healthcare.
Barry Gaffney	Director, edgeUD — Birmingham	Not stated in the announcement	Urban design practice expanding its Midlands presence from its Hockley office. Nineteen years across planning and urban design.

Further movement identified

NAME	LEVEL	ROLE	NOW AT	NAME	LEVEL	ROLE	NOW AT
Adam Graham	DIRECTOR	Studio Director	ADP Architecture	Keane Yuen	SENIOR	Senior Architect	Ridge and Partners
Martin Rogers	DIRECTOR	Technical Director	Gensler	Annita Liassi	SENIOR	Senior Interior Designer	3DReid
Matt Filer	DIRECTOR	Landscape Director	Marrons	Savita Patel	SENIOR	Senior Arch. Technologist	WSP
David Winter	DIRECTOR	Associate Director, Design	Turley	Paul Wood	SENIOR	Senior Arch. Technician	Stephen George + Partners
Esi Carboo Schaufelberger	PRINCIPAL	Principal Architect, ARB	WSP	Sheikh Tanim Ahmed	ARCHITECT	Architect, ARB RIBA	Gensler
Henry Brook	MANAGER	Design / Project Manager	Ridge and Partners	Aiste Labeikyte	ARCHITECT	Architect, ARB	Gensler
Crispin Ryde	MANAGER	Design Manager, Passivhaus	Gensler	Yan Fan	ARCHITECT	Architect	Gensler
Gerard Evans	SENIOR	Senior Architect	Mott MacDonald	Narain Dagon	TECHNOLOGIST	Arch. Technologist, MCIAT	Bond Bryan
Jamie Leigh	SENIOR	Senior Architect	Associated Architects	Nasir Gamba	TECHNOLOGIST	Arch. Technologist, MCIAT	AtkinsRéalis

Nine of the twenty moves went to planning, urban design or engineering consultancies rather than architecture practices, so architectural talent continues to move out of pure practice. About this analysis: the two announced appointments are drawn from published company and trade announcements and are date-verified; the eighteen further moves come from our own market tracking and show current position only. All figures cover the twelve months to August 2026.

Talent intelligence for the built environment

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Arcavia Consulting is a specialist talent partner to the design and construction market across the UK, Europe and the US. We work with market-leading firms on the hires that move the business, covering project and delivery leadership, commercial leadership, work-winning, planning and design leadership, embedded in our clients' teams and exclusive within each mandate.

Alongside search we provide salary benchmarking, competitive intelligence, market movement analysis and talent process guidance. Roles we recruit include Project and Programme Directors, Commercial Directors and Managers, Estimators, Bid Managers and Writers, Planners, Architects and Urban Designers.

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PROJECT RECRUITMENT

Delivering groups of challenging roles beyond your team's current capacity — often to support project mobilisations. For time-bound project, bid or framework mobilisations.

100+

HIRES DELIVERED

+73

NET PROMOTER SCORE

£4.8bn

PROJECT VALUE SUPPORTED

50–70%

SAVING VS AGENCY

On this briefing

The Midlands architecture talent insight is published monthly, with every firm on the careers-page watchlist re-checked each edition. If you would like your practice included, or want the underlying figures for a specific firm, ask us.