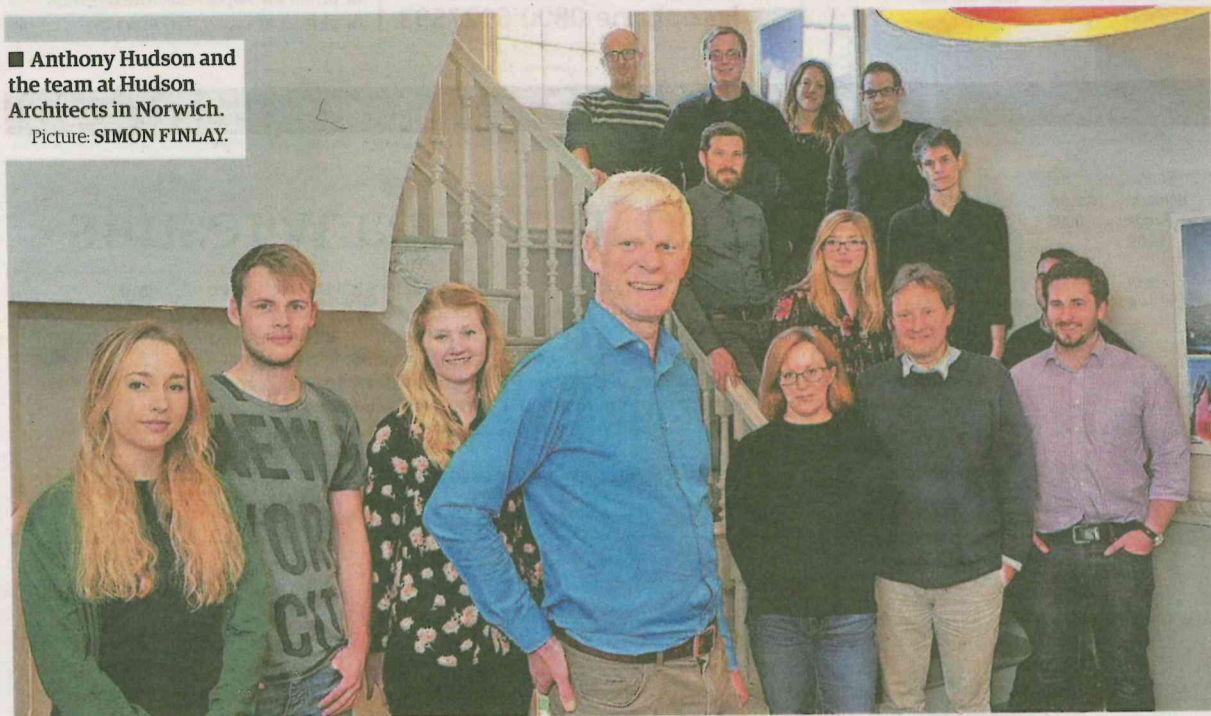


Focus  commercial property and design

■ Anthony Hudson and the team at Hudson Architects in Norwich. Picture: SIMON FINLAY.



Housing breakthrough for growing architects

A Norwich-based architect has ambitions to work with smaller housing developers in a bid to create "beautiful" but "affordable" homes across the region.

Hudson Architects - which has become renowned for delivering bespoke houses at the top end of the market - said more unique and interesting homes could be offered to the mass market if the construction industry was not dominated by big developers.

The firm is eyeing mid-market housing as a potential growth opportunity after it doubled its workforce from 10 to 20 in the past year, and moved to new premises on St Andrews Street, Norwich.

Anthony Hudson, company founder, said the business had benefited from winning contracts with the Norwich University of the Arts (NUA), including a deal to transform Boardman House, on Princes

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Street, into a new architectural school.

Mr Hudson, who helped establish the university's BA in architecture, said the first cohort of graduates to emerge from the course this year would help plug an emerging skills gap across the region for qualified architects.

He said: "The private sector is now coming back because people have more confidence, particularly when it comes to housing projects.

"What we would like to do is to make sure that smaller housing developments go on to get planning permission and get built. "The problem with housing is that it's too dominated by the big housing developers. If a business can profit by supporting smaller develop-

ers, and the product is good, then it shows we can build affordable and also beautiful houses.

"It has been a constant for us that we are building at the top end, and this would show that we can also be done in for mid-market housing as well."

Hudson Architects was first set up in London in 1985 and established a name for itself creating bespoke housing projects.

However, a decision was made to move the practice back to Norfolk when the market place began to shrink due to increased competition in the capital, Mr Hudson said.

The firm recently moved from Redwell Street, Norwich, to new premises, where it plans to create a public gallery which will showcase exhibitions relating to the built environment and new developments in the city.

Businesses move into Beacon Park

Keys were handed over to three energy firms as they moved into new premises at Gorleston's Beacon Park.

Cebo UK Ltd, Magma Products, and Elmdale have set up home in Blackfriars Court industrial campus marking a further step forward for the park.

Representatives from all three firms joined Great Yarmouth Borough Council leader Trevor Wainwright and Paul Pitcher, managing director of Wellington Construction, for the traditional keys handover ceremony.

Magma Products employs 15 people from its Beacon Park base and a further 25 people are expected to be recruited in the next six months. Hayley Cann, from the firm, said: "Our Great Yarmouth office is already playing its part in our company's overall success. In addition, there is a talented local skills base which can help our business grow."

Construction work at Beacon Park continues as builders work on phase three, which will see two more industrial units built on the site.

City architects witnesses appetite for sustainability

A Norwich architect has witnessed an increased appetite for sustainable buildings as the strengthening economy filters down into the construction industry.

David Smith, partner at LSI Architects on Cattle Market Street, said a growing number of organisations were now willing to invest in energy-efficient technologies to save money in the long term.

The upsurge in interest follows a period of change for the firm which saw its balance of work swing towards the public sector during the recession when private sector investment dipped.

Mr Andrews said the region's housing targets presented a huge opportunity going forward because the construction industry had not come close to meeting them.

"We survived the recession because of our business strategy. We were 50pc public sector and 50pc private commercial, and became 80pc to 90pc public sector and

picked up a lot of healthcare work," he said. "The money wasn't there to build new hospitals, but there was a lot of work to be done refurbishing the estates - there was a gap in the market.

"The impact that we see now is that people are able to invest in aspects of their building that will give them more efficiencies," he added. "In the recession people didn't have that money, but now people can now take a longer term view."

"The housing targets for the east of England are huge and we haven't made a dent in them yet."

LSI Architects recently revamped its branding and launched a new website. The company joined forces with students at City College Norwich and Norwich University of the Arts (NUA) to publicise the brand re-launch.

Students at NUA developed a video underscoring the values of the new brand, while City College Norwich delivered catering services at the launch event.



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