B Corporation
October 2024

Impact Report 2024

Certified B Corporation

Churchman Thornhill Finch



Thames Path, Wandsworth, London

About us

Churchman Thornhill Finch is a landscape design practice working from studios in London and Bristol.

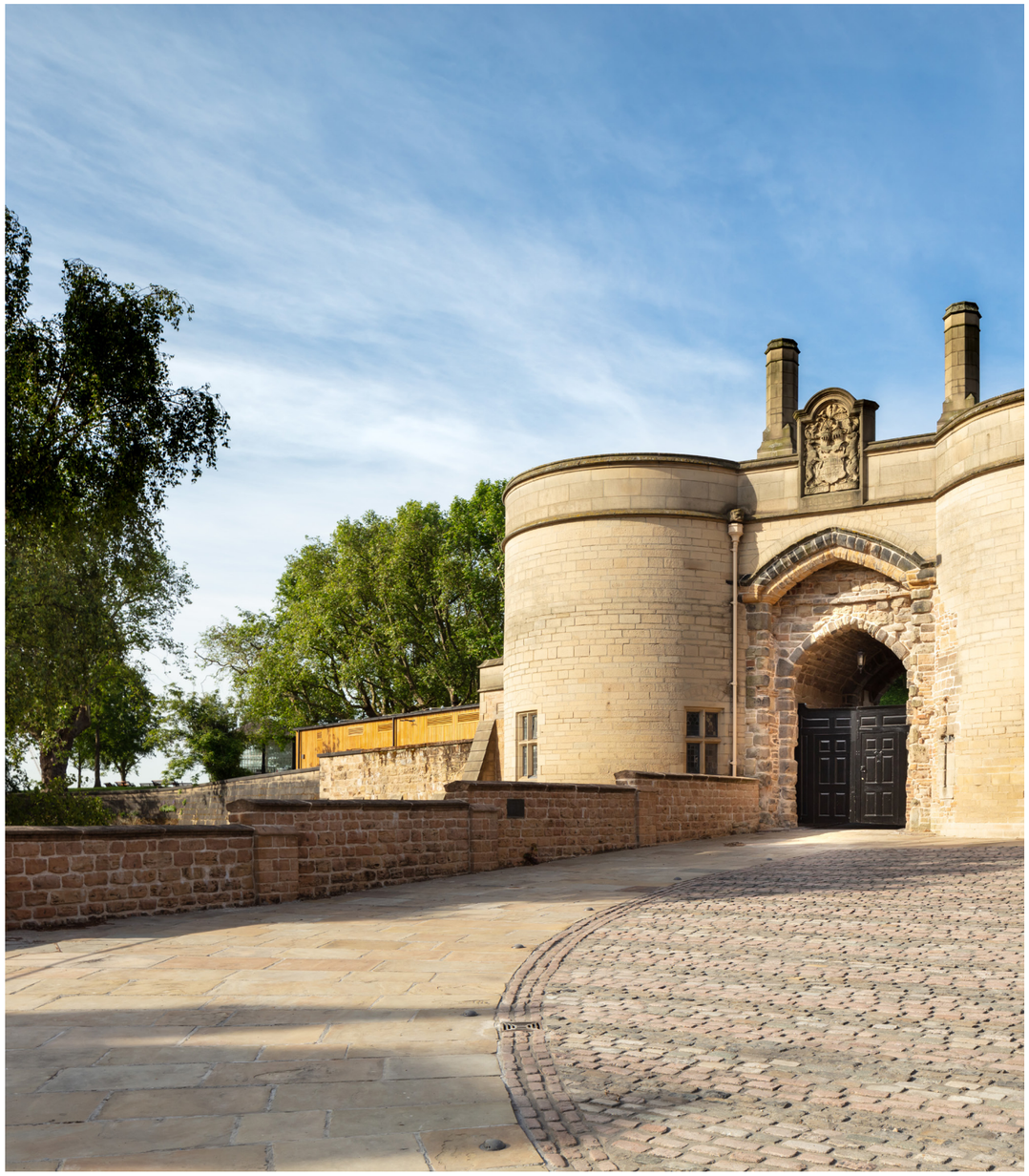
We craft places for people and nature, bringing together traditional placemaking, research and technology with a careful response to the sites, communities and materials we work with.

Our approach to landscape architecture is both intuitive and technically informed. We are interested in how places are experienced, how they are made and how they change over time. That same enquiring attitude shapes the way we think about the practice itself.

Becoming a B Corp in 2023 gave us a useful framework against which to test how we work: what we do well, where we can improve and where our intentions need to translate more clearly into action.

We don't expect improvement to happen all at once. We do expect to keep working at it - questioning established habits, testing better ways of doing things and learning as we go.

This report records where we have got to, what we have learned and what we want to do next.



Nottingham Castle

Leadership letter

It has been a year since we became a certified B Corp.

During that time we have begun to understand more clearly how the framework can help us look critically at the practice - how we work together, how decisions are made, our environmental impact and the contribution we can make beyond our projects.

It has also been a significant year for CTF.

In the same month that we gained certification, our founding director, Chris Churchman, left the practice after 30 years. It marked the end of an important chapter and gave us cause to reflect on what we want to carry forward, what needs to evolve and the kind of practice we want CTF to become.

The B Corp framework has been useful in that process. It asks structured questions about areas of the business that can otherwise be easy to overlook and gives us a way of turning intentions into measurable actions.

We have not progressed everything as quickly as we intended. Adjusting to Chris' departure required considerable focus from the directors and the wider practice. But we have used the year to take stock, strengthen the way the practice is led and establish clearer priorities for what comes next.

We go into the next year with a stronger sense of direction and the same ambition that has shaped the practice since 1993: to make good work, to keep learning and to leave things better than we found them.

Andrew Thornhill and David Finch
Directors



Fellowship Square, Walthamstow

What has changed since we certified

A year into certification, we are beginning to see how B Corp can become part of the way we develop the practice rather than something that sits alongside it.

It has encouraged us to question established habits, gather better evidence and be clearer about where we still have work to do.

That has been particularly useful during a period of change. Following Chris Churchman's departure, we have been thinking carefully about CTF's purpose, values and future direction. B Corp has provided one framework for those conversations - helping us consider not only the quality of the landscapes we design, but the quality and impact of the practice behind them.

We did not become a B Corp because we expected it to bring us more work. What it has already brought are different conversations: with clients interested in what certification means to us, and with other organisations willing to share what they have learned.

That exchange of ideas matters.

We have always believed it is as important to listen as it is to talk. B Corp has introduced us to people and businesses beyond our usual professional circle and given us another way to learn from how others are approaching similar challenges.

There is plenty more to do. But the framework is beginning to do what we hoped it would: help us ask better questions of ourselves and turn the answers into action.

Governance
Sharing responsibility



Hackbridge Primary School, Surrey

A healthy practice depends on people understanding how it works and having opportunities to contribute to where it goes next.

This year we introduced Practice Quarterly Reviews, bringing the whole practice together to discuss our financial position, current priorities and future direction.

Being open about the business helps people understand the context behind decisions and builds greater trust and shared responsibility. The reviews also give us time to recognise what has happened across the practice - project completions, new appointments and promotions, as well as welcoming new colleagues and saying goodbye to others.

We have also established a Leadership Team comprising the two Directors and four Associates. Its purpose is to broaden the experience and perspectives involved in leading the practice and to share greater responsibility for decision-making.

We began that process with an away day in Oxford, exploring our values, purpose and ambitions for CTF. The next step is to develop this thinking with the wider team so that there is a shared understanding of what matters to us and the practice we want to build together.



Practice summer day out in Oxford

Workers
Working at CTF

We want people across CTF to have opportunities to contribute not only to projects, but to the development of the practice itself.

Our B Corp working groups are one way of doing this. They bring together people from both studios to look at areas where we can make practical changes and identify longer-term priorities.

The groups currently cover:
- Governance
- Workers
- Community
- Environment (Projects)
- Environment (Practice)
- Customers

Each has a lead and members from both studios. As well as progressing specific actions, they give more people the opportunity to develop ideas, take responsibility and influence how CTF works.

We have also introduced quarterly one-to-one conversations, one of which forms the annual review. More regular conversations allow us to discuss progress, training and emerging opportunities throughout the year rather than waiting for an annual review. They also give us a better chance of identifying difficulties early and providing support when it is useful.

During the year we formalised our approach to flexible working. Our normal pattern is four days working together in the studio, with the option to work from home for the remaining day. We continue to offer a week of remote working each year and flexibility around working hours for appointments and family commitments.

We value the benefits of being together, sharing ideas, learning from each other and supporting projects, while recognising that people also need flexibility in how work fits around their lives.

Community
Beyond the practice



Kennington Oval Reimagined, Lambeth, London

The places we design are part of communities. We believe the practice should be too.

This year we introduced the option for people to include their pronouns in email signatures as a simple way of respecting individual identity. We recognise that this is a personal choice and it is not a requirement.

Our community work is more directly connected to what we know and what we can contribute as landscape architects.

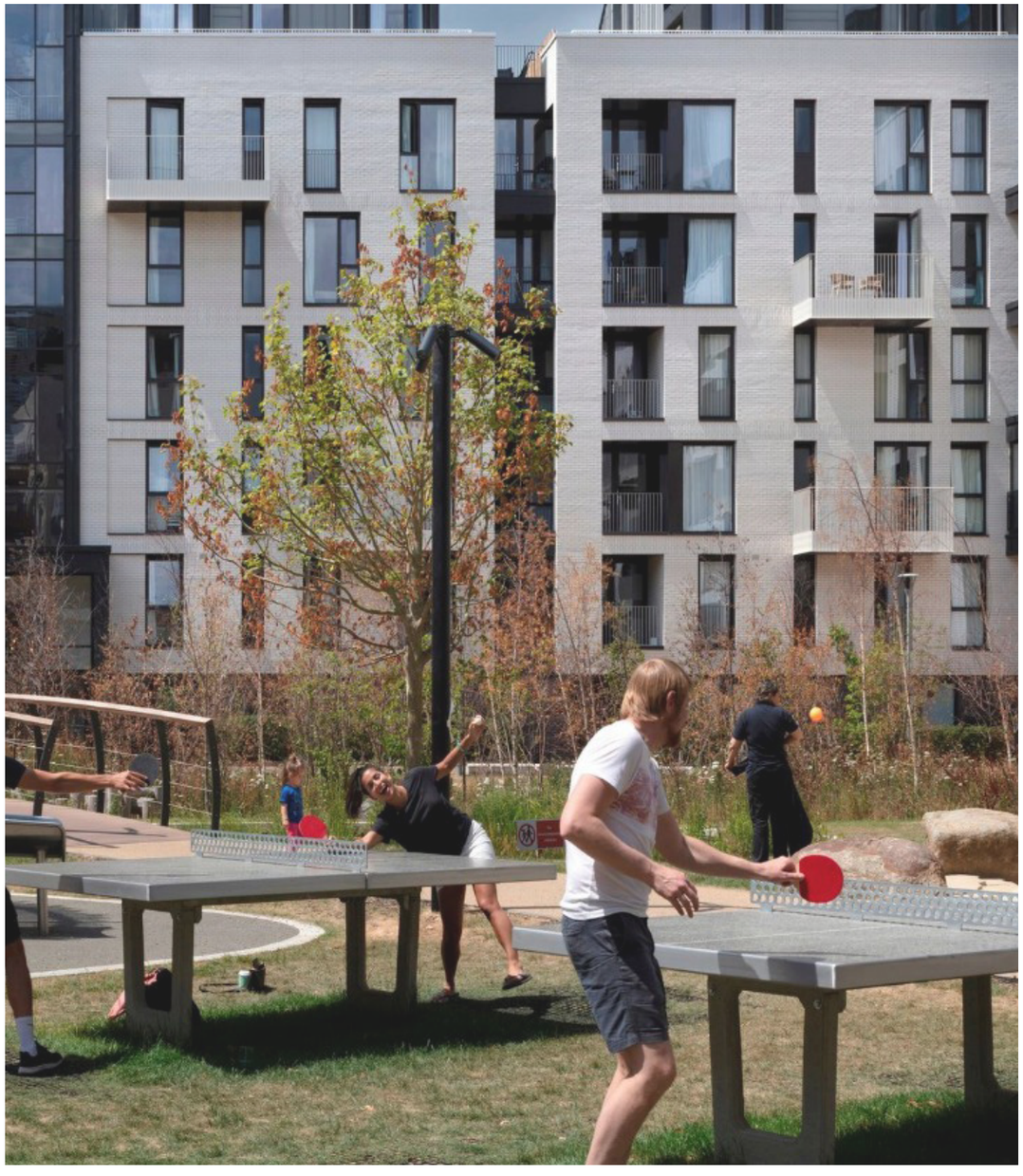
In London, we continued our work with Lambeth Council on Kennington Oval Reimagined, an interim transformation of streets and public spaces around the Oval cricket ground.

Removing vehicles created space that could be returned to local people. Working with the community and local school helped shape the ideas, and returning afterwards to see people occupying and enjoying those spaces has been an important part of understanding what worked.

In Bristol, we sponsored and led the landscape session for Design West's Shape My City, an award-winning programme introducing 15–18 year olds to careers in the built environment, with a particular emphasis on widening access.

Landscape architecture is still a profession that too few young people know exists. Giving people an opportunity to encounter it, ask questions and imagine themselves within it is one practical way we can help change that.

Our influence as a practice should extend beyond the projects we are commissioned to design.



New Garden Quarter, Stratford, London

Environment
Understanding our impact

As landscape architects, environmental responsibility is fundamental to our work. We also need to understand the impact of running the practice itself.

This year we used Normative's Business Carbon Calculator to make an initial assessment of our operational carbon footprint.

Our first calculation estimated total emissions of 45.2 tonnes CO_2e, comprising:

Scope 1
No direct emissions currently identified from sources controlled by the practice.

Scope 2
Electricity: 7.87 tonnes CO_2e
Heating: 19.8 tonnes CO_2e

Scope 3
17.5 tonnes CO_2e

The first calculation was based on relatively simple assumptions, including staff numbers and industry type. It gave us a starting point, but not yet the level of information we need.

Our next step has therefore been to improve the evidence behind it.

For Scope 2 emissions, we contacted the landlords of our London and Bristol studios to understand opportunities to move towards renewable energy. We have also continued to reduce avoidable electricity use by switching off lights, computers and equipment when they are not required.

For Scope 3, our policy is to use public transport wherever practical for business travel, including our summer and Christmas practice gatherings.

We have not yet established a 2030 carbon target. Rather than set one without sufficiently robust information behind it, our priority is to improve our baseline and use that evidence to establish a meaningful target.

Measure better. Understand more. Then act

Customers
Trust and good work



Green Heart, University of Birmingham

Our clients are central to what we do.

Being trusted with the design of a landscape, a public space, university campus or communal garden for new homes, is a responsibility we take seriously.

Every mark we make on a drawing has consequences. It affects cost, materials, maintenance, ecology and people's experience of the finished place. Good landscape architecture requires us to balance aspiration and design intent with technical understanding, budget and delivery.

Our work is iterative. Ideas develop through research, design, testing and conversation, before being carried through planning, technical design and onto site. By completion, many people will have contributed to the landscape.

That collaboration is fundamental to good work.

Client feedback is therefore important. Until recently we have not gathered it as consistently as we should.

We have begun reviewing our approach so that the questions we ask generate useful and honest feedback: why clients chose CTF, what they value in working with us, what we could do better and whether they would choose to work with us again.

The purpose is not simply to measure satisfaction.

It is to listen, learn and persistently raise the standard of what we do.



Elderberry Walk, Bristol

The year ahead ...

Improvement is part of running a healthy practice. Some changes can happen quickly; others require sustained attention.

Over the coming year our priorities are to:

- develop our leadership team and management structure;
- strengthen reviews, regular conversations and career pathways for our people;
- introduce more young people to landscape architecture through our work in the community;
- build practice-wide knowledge of sensitive water management in landscape design;
- improve the evidence behind our operational carbon footprint and establish the next steps towards a 2030 target; and
- introduce a more consistent approach to client feedback.

These priorities cover different parts of the practice, but the intention behind them is the same.

To keep learning, keep questioning and keep raising the standard in our work and in the practice behind it.

Churchman Thornhill Finch

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