Data centres

Our expertise

Turley

About Turley

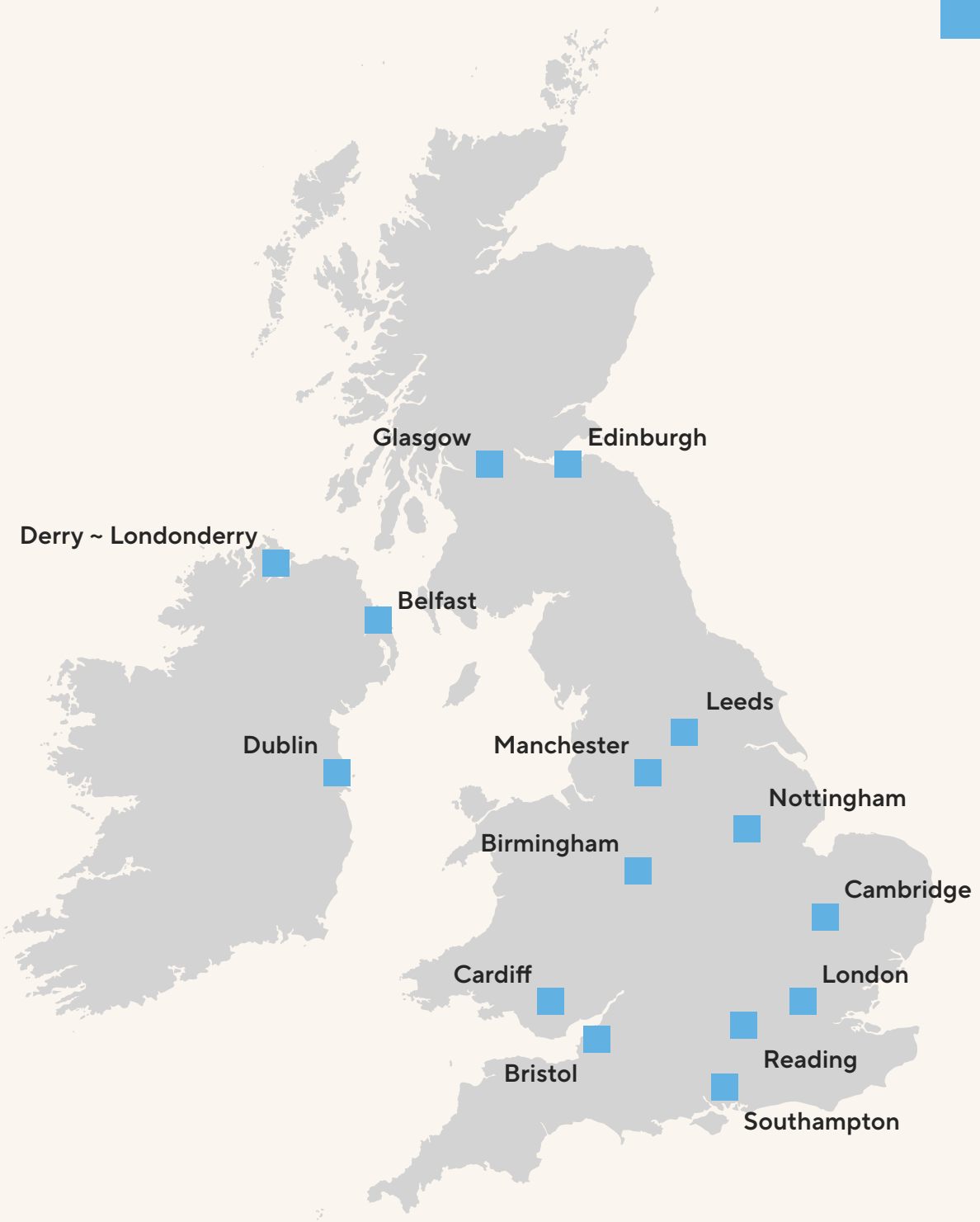
Trusted independent advisors with restless ambition to shape a more sustainable future.

We work collaboratively with our clients to deliver places and communities that thrive.

We are rooted in the places we work through social and business connections.

Our people invest in positive relationships with local authorities, decision makers, communities and co-professionals across the UK and Ireland.

Our national experience is complemented by our local knowledge and networks.



Our services

We offer expert advisory services for the built environment and beyond.

Combining professional expertise with in-depth market knowledge we work with clients to deliver thriving places and communities across all sectors.

We bring deep thinking; smart strategy; and expert delivery.

Design

Planning

Economics

EIA

Strategic Communications

Expert Witness

Heritage, Townscape and Landscape

Sustainability and ESG

Our expertise

Data centres are critical infrastructure for businesses and commercial growth.

In today's digital age, data is the world's most mobile and valuable asset—and modern data centres are the engines driving its potential. Fuelled by growing social and economic demand, data centres contribute £4.7 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) to the UK economy each year, supporting 43,500 jobs and generating £640 million in tax revenue.[1]

We're proud to support data centre developments that not only meet today's digital demands but also drive long-term, sustainable growth.

Our multi-service team offers the flexibility, insight, and specialist knowledge needed to support the unique demands of each project.

Our integrated approach provides the insight and strategic guidance needed to guide developments from concept to completion.

More information on our expertise in these key service areas is outlined on the following pages.

1. techUK Report - Foundations For The Future: How Data Centres Can Supercharge UK Economic Growth

Planning insights

Planning has a vital role to play in promoting this critical infrastructure, facilitating the delivery of modern data centres and managing their integration into urban environments.

National policy frameworks are recognising the strategic importance of data centres in driving economic growth, supporting digital services and underpinning a more technologically enabled economy.

This shift is reflected across planning systems. In England, recent updates to the National Planning Policy Framework clearly recognise the vital role data centres play in generating economic growth and facilitating our daily lives. Notable updates include:

- Paragraph 86c identifies data centres, along with labs, gigafactories, and digital infrastructure, as essential to a modern economy.
- Paragraph 87a calls for planning policies to actively support data centres and grid connections as critical infrastructure.
- The AI Opportunities Action Plan further reinforces this, highlighting data centres as central to accelerating AI adoption.

In Scotland, National Planning Framework 4 identifies "green data centres" as a National Development, establishing the principle of development for such proposals – although a definition of what constitutes "green" is still to be clarified. Proposals that include onsite or linked electricity generation may additionally engage the energy consenting regime, adding further complexity to the planning pathway.

Together, these developments signal a clear direction of travel: stronger policy support for data centre development, with an expectation that planning authorities and industry work collaboratively to deliver this mission-critical infrastructure.

However, challenges remain consistent across jurisdictions and demand clear planning strategies. Determining the most appropriate use class for data centres continues to prompt debate and requires careful navigation of the planning process, whilst misconceptions around job creation, power availability and cooling persist.

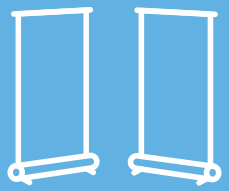
Addressing these issues, while aligning national ambition with local delivery, will be essential to unlocking the full potential of data centre development.

Economics and development case making

With the data centre sector often being misunderstood, particularly in relation to the perceptual barriers around job creation, we regularly support clients to demonstrate not only the market need (to inform policy and plan-making) but also the range of benefits which the sector can bring.

We are experienced in undertaking employment land analysis and advising on market demand for land and floorspace in different geographies.

We provide economic and social value strategy to inform scheme vision and delivery, as well as demonstrating the economic impact and social value of schemes as part of plan promotions, planning applications and site bids.



We undertake Health and Wellbeing Assessments to consider the proposals against local issues and policy priorities. It involves a multi-disciplinary approach combining qualitative and quantitative evidence from a range of technical experts.

We undertake in-depth analysis around particular issues such as labour market availability, job densities and occupation/skills.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Setting the right strategy and approach to the EIA at an early juncture is key to avoiding regulatory risk and realising positive project outcomes.

Establishing whether an EIA is required for a data centre project requires careful consideration at the outset. A clear understanding of the regulatory process and early engagement with relevant guidance can help ensure a proportionate and robust approach.

We are familiar with the specific environmental impacts associated with data centres, including employment generation, noise generation, water use, and the implications of any project lifecycle analysis (such as potential energy sources). These factors inform early navigation of the EIA regime and help define the level of information needed to inform this.

We have experience preparing EIAs for data centres either as separate, detailed planning applications or where they are part of a wider project requiring greater flexibility in terms of land uses. These complexities often introduce nuances that demand careful navigation throughout the EIA process.

Our team are well placed to advise on emerging regulatory changes, procedural risk and emerging guidance. The Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals (ISEP, formerly IEMA) has awarded Turley the EIA Quality Mark in recognition of our technical quality and commitment to improvement in practice. We have a leading role within the Institute on the national steering group and continue to author national guidance, including on design, environmental management plans, climate change and cumulative impact assessment.

ISEP EIA QUALITY MARK

ESG considerations

Our Sustainability and ESG team work with clients to maximise sustainability benefits; providing market leading advice on ESG strategies taking into account the unique challenges of data centres around energy demand, resilience and water.

Meeting evolving ESG expectations

With growing requirements and expectations from investors, planning policy, and consumers, ESG has never been more important. It must be implemented in a way that is both robust and transparent. We support clients in developing ESG strategies that deliver real value. By reducing operational and embodied carbon, offsetting using high-quality projects, and purchasing renewable energy, buildings can achieve net zero emissions in line with the UK's 2050 legal net zero commitment.

UK Sustainability Reporting Standards (UK SRS)

From financial years beginning 1 January 2027, the UK will introduce mandatory Sustainability Reporting Standards (UK SRS S1/S2). These will require detailed disclosure of Scope 1, 2 and 3 greenhouse gas emissions, with direct implications for data centres. UK SRS 2 mandates reporting on energy consumption - including purchased electricity and cooling - directly covering data centre operational energy use.

Climate Change Environmental Statement (ES) Chapters

Through our contribution to the Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals (ISEP) guidance on 'Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience', we help clients ensure developments are resilient to climate-related risks, reducing long-term exposure to climate impacts. We also provide advice on climate mitigation in response to increasing scrutiny, aligned with best-practice guidance from the ISEP EIA Guide to 'Assessing Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Evaluating Their Significance'.

Whole Lifecycle Carbon and Circular Economy

Whole Lifecycle Carbon and supporting the objectives of the Circular Economy is an increasing objective for new development. In line with the London Plan and UKGBC guidance, we support clients in considering a buildings full lifecycle, including end-of-life impacts. Embodied carbon is set to become the largest contributor to building-related emissions, and local authorities across the UK - including Edinburgh, Manchester, Nottingham, Bath, Bristol, London and Southampton - are increasingly adopting planning policies focused on embodied carbon reduction.

UK Net Zero Carbon Aligned Building Verification

Our team has been at the forefront of developing the UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard, representing Turley on the Delineation Working Group, Practical Completion Working Group, Embodied Carbon Task Group and Top-Down Task Group. We have also participated in the rigorous pilot-testing process, supporting Industrial and Logistics clients such as IM Properties and McCormick & Company. This experience places us in a strong position to act as Net Zero Carbon Co-ordinators, advising and guiding data centre design teams on achieving compliance against the Standard.

BREEAM Certification

Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) is a globally recognised sustainability certification that assesses the sustainability performance of buildings. Our experienced certification team supports data centre developers and operators in demonstrating their commitment to sustainable design and reduced environmental impact.

This includes:

- Achieving higher levels of energy efficiency, reducing consumption and operating costs.
- Promoting water-conservation measures.
- Integrating developments with local ecosystems through green spaces and biodiversity enhancements.

GIS

Site searching for data centres using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) involves several key steps to ensure optimal location selection.

First, our GIS tools are utilised to analyse tabular and spatial data, assessing factors such as proximity to power sources, cooling resources, and fibre optic infrastructure. Data layers related to environmental conditions, such as temperature, natural disaster risks, and elevation are also evaluated to mitigate potential hazards. Additionally, GIS allows for the analysis of land use patterns and property costs to identify areas that meet financial requirements. By integrating these diverse data sets, GIS provides a comprehensive overview that supports decision-makers in selecting the most suitable and efficient sites for data centres, balancing operational needs with cost-effectiveness and risk mitigation.

Heritage, Townscape and Landscape

Our Heritage, Townscape and Landscape team provide expert advice on developing data centres in proximity to heritage assets and sensitive landscapes and views.

We have a strong track record in supporting the successful promotion of data centres and other large-scale developments. Given the large-scale and typically utilitarian nature of logistics developments, we recognise that data centres are not defined solely by efficient layouts and connectivity, but also by a thoughtful response to context and a well-considered landscape strategy to mitigate potential landscape, visual and heritage impacts. This approach supports sustainable development and maximises the likelihood of securing successful planning outcomes.

While heritage and landscape considerations are sometimes viewed as constraints, we believe they can also act as positive drivers of design quality. Our integrated heritage and landscape services assist in early design and case-making for schemes. We help identify opportunities and constraints early in the site promotion process through preparation of heritage appraisals, landscape and visual impact assessments, grey belt appraisals and strategic design input. This ensures that proposals are informed, robust, and pragmatic. We also have extensive experience of providing Heritage and Landscape expert witness services for planning appeals should this be required.

Strategic Communications

Whilst the national and strategic case for data centres is clear, this does not often translate to political and community support at a local level where the understanding of data centres is low. We regularly support clients to engage local councillors, key stakeholders and the community to clearly communicate and collaborate on local benefits and secure political support.

We develop a convincing and comprehensive narrative for delivery of data centres in a local context, building understanding of data centres and clearly stating local benefits.

We engage early with key local decision-makers including councillors and Members of Parliament to make the case for delivery of data centres and explore local benefits that align with their priorities.

We undertake digital and in-person community engagement to meet council's pre-application expectations, address concerns and feedback, seeking to set a most positive community context for data centre proposals.

We develop and deploy influencing campaigns across local media and social media, planning committee engagement and other communications activities to minimise objections and generate support.

Our track record

Land at Akzo Nobel, Slough

Redevelopment of a former paint works factory with significant contamination issues to provide flexible commercial floorspace including for up to 70,000 sq m of data centre floorspace and up to 1,000 residential dwellings as well as full decontamination of the site. The site formed a protected employment site within the council's adopted Local Plan and a proposed residential site within a very early emerging plan. Through collaborative working with the council, we secured outline planning permission for a mixed-use site with flexible parameters, maximising the potential for future occupiers to bring forward development to meet their needs.

Client: Panattoni

LPA: Slough Borough Council

Status: Planning permission granted in November 2020

Services: Planning, Economics, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, EIA, Sustainability, Economics, Strategic Communications

Thorney Business Park, Iver

We led on the provision of planning consultancy advice for a new 1 million sq ft data centre complex at Thorney Business Park, Iver, Buckinghamshire. The proposal was a cross-boundary planning application submitted in hybrid form, with one data centre submitted in detail and the second phase secured via an outline permission allowing maximum flexibility for future tenants. The development secured a net reduction in HGV movements, significant economic benefits and was air quality neutral – all seen locally as issues to be resolved.

Client: SEGRO

LPA: Buckinghamshire Council

Status: Planning permission granted in June 2024

Services: Planning, Economics, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Strategic Communications, Heritage

South Mimms Data Centre, Hertfordshire

Outline planning permission was granted in February 2025 for a new data centre campus east of South Mimms Motorway Services in Hertsmere. The facility will have up to 2 million sq ft of space, and a power reservation of 400 MVA from the National Grid. The development of the campus prioritises responsible investment and operations. The data centre will use dry, air-based cooling that requires no water. The site will be powered by 100% renewable electricity procurement and developed to support a heat export scheme. The scheme is set in 85 acres of grounds, 54% of which will be retained as green, open space.

Client: DC01UK (Griggs Group and Chiltern Green Energy)

LPA: Hertsmere Local Plan

Status: Planning permission granted

Services: EIA, Sustainability

Our track record

Elstree Way, Borehamwood

We gained planning permission for a large-scale, multi-phased redevelopment of a former Sainsbury's distribution depot in 2019.

In 2021, we led on a revised scheme for parts of the site to deliver a 40,000 sq m data centre facility with ancillary infrastructure which ultimately gained full planning permission in April 2021.

Client: Pure DC

LPA: Hertsmere Borough Council

Status: Planning permission granted April 2021

Services: Planning, Economics

University of Birmingham Data Centre

Provided planning advice for a new data centre facility at the University of Birmingham to form part of a wider programme of major investment in IT infrastructure by the university. The Research Data Centre will provide data storage for internationally important research projects which are undertaken by the university. It was to be linked to the university's existing data centre at Elms Road.

Client: University of Birmingham

Services: Planning

Land to west of Pinewood Road, Iver

We are leading on the provision of planning consultancy and wider associated development advice for a new circa 150MW data centre complex at land to the west of Pinewood Road, Iver. The site sits within the Green Belt and our case has centred on the significant need for data centres nationally, their economic benefits and the ideal location of the site within the Slough and Hayes Availability Zone, as well as a grey belt case. The application received planning permission in February 2026 under delegated powers.

Client: Pinewood Studios

LPA: Buckinghamshire Council

Status: Planning permission granted

Services: Planning, Strategic Communications, Heritage, EIA

Our track record

Data Centre Socio-Economic Study

Our Economics team was instructed on a confidential basis for a private client to complete an assessment of the socio-economic impacts of data centre clusters. The aim of this study was to describe the potential consequences, both positive and negative, of the construction and operation of data centres. It involves a multi-disciplinary approach combining qualitative and quantitative evidence from a range of credible published data sources. The broad purpose of the research was to highlight and raise the profile of data centres to demonstrate their importance to policy makers, case officers and politicians and inform a series of implications and recommendations that the client could commit too.

Client: Confidential

LPA: Slough Borough Council

Status: Complete

Services: Economics

Mercure Site Data Centre, Watford

We provided strategic Sustainability advice and a Climate Change Environmental Statement (ES) to support the planning application for a 200 MW data centre campus on the site of the now vacant Mercure Hotel on Tylers Way, alongside adjoining land to the southeast. The proposed development is designed to support high-demand computing needs but balances climate change impacts. The facility will use sustainable modular steel architecture for rapid deployment and reduced environmental impact. Cooling technologies include direct air, indirect air, and liquid cooling systems, each optimised for high efficiency and low Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE). These systems will support the dense compute environment while minimising energy consumption and carbon footprint.

Client: Ark Data Centres

LPA: Hertsmere Local Plan

Status: In progress

Services: Sustainability

Land at Eastman Way, Hemel Hempstead

We gained planning permission in May 2024 for the construction of a 128,950 sq ft commercial unit within the Maylands Business Park. The proposal was framed to maximise the potential future tenant options for the client and gained consent for Class E(g)(iii), B2 and B8, with explicit reference to data centres forming part of the B8 use class for the proposals.

Client: IM Properties

LPA: Dacorum Borough Council

Status: Planning permission granted in May 2024

Services: Planning, Sustainability, Economics

Our track record

Whole Lifecycle Carbon Assessments (WLCA)

Our Sustainability team undertake a number of Whole Lifecycle Carbon Assessments for a data centre client's developments across the UK, Ireland and Asia.

The primary purpose of WLCAs is to calculate the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the construction and operation of the data centres. We have also advised on options appraisals of key elements within the data centres, including steel procurement, cement alternatives, external and internal walls, staircases, and MEP equipment to assist the project team with design development and to save carbon during construction.

To undertake the WLCAs, we utilise a number of industry guidance including from RICS, CIBSE, EU Level(s), and The Green Grid. As WLCA experience in the data centre industry is limited, we worked with the client to define a scope and approach which was most relevant to each development depending on location. This exercise was key in determining an approach which can be replicated across the portfolio, using the results from this assessment as a benchmark for comparison against future projects.

Services: Sustainability

Bootle Data Campus

On behalf of L51 Developments, we secured full planning permission for the redevelopment of the former HSBC Data Centre on Bridle Road in Bootle to provide a 180,000 sq ft data campus and technology hub, including office space. We provided expert Planning services to manage the preparation and submission of the full planning application and also secured prior approval for demolition works. The £70 million project formed part of the Sefton Strategic Recovery Plan and will target robotics and high-tech manufacturing uses.

Client: L51 Developments

LPA: Sefton Council

Status: Planning permission granted

Services: Planning, Economics, EIA, Strategic Communications, Sustainability

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Contact us

For advice or enquiries, please reach out to Taylor Cherrett or Catriona Fraser who will connect you with our local experts across our services.

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