The Ebbsfleet AI Data Centre Campus

An update for residents, parish councils and elected representatives

Clearstone is bringing forward proposals for an AI data centre campus to the north of Southfleet Village, on the Dartford and Gravesham border.

WHY THIS PROJECT MATTERS

The UK currently relies heavily on computing power located overseas. This means that the data behind everything from public and financial services to NHS diagnostics and scientific research increasingly sits outside the UK, on infrastructure the UK does not control.

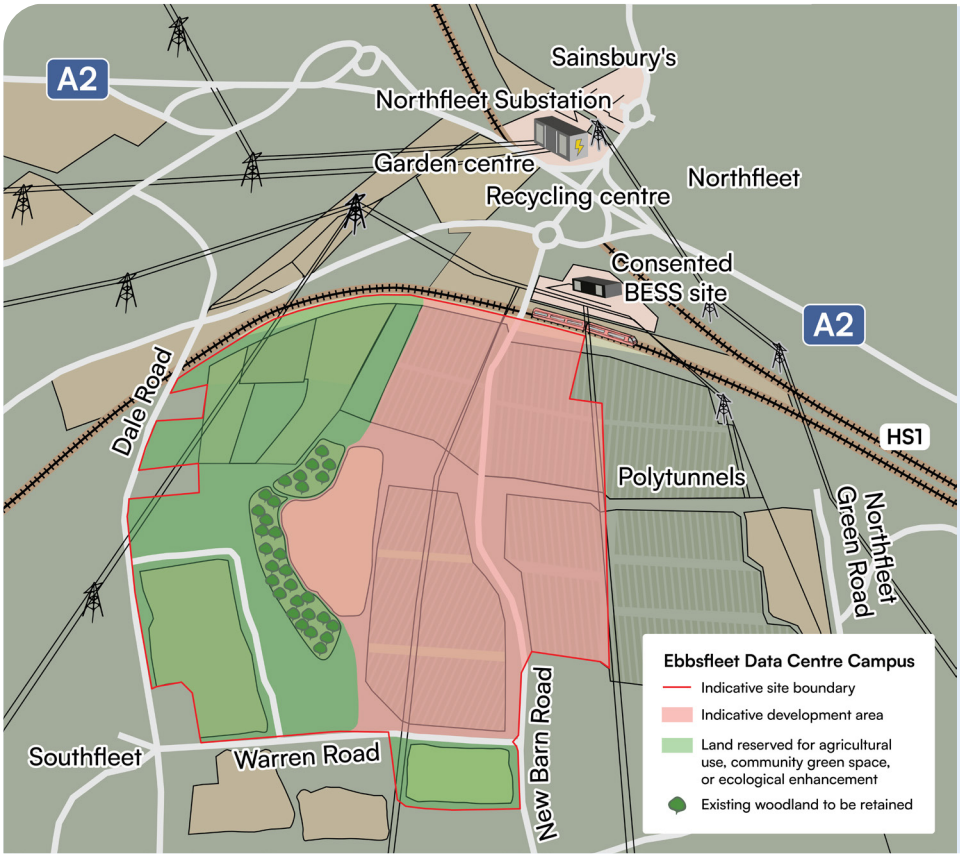
If approved, the Ebbsfleet AI Data Centre Campus would provide a significant domestic computing facility that would keep British data on British soil, under UK law and UK security standards.

It would be among the first facilities in the country purpose-built for AI at this scale, helping to drive economic growth and improve public services.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Infrastructure of this kind is of national importance, as such, the Secretary of State directed in July 2026 that the project be determined as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), rather than through the local planning system. This project, if approved, will be consented through a Development Consent Order (DCO). Our application will go to the national Planning Inspectorate, which examines it in public and makes a recommendation to the Secretary of State, who takes the final decision. Whilst the final decision may be at government level, local stakeholders, including Dartford, Gravesham and the Parish Councils all play a role as a consultee on the project and have the opportunity to provide their views on the plans.

In October 2026 the Government published a draft National Policy Statement (NPS) for data centres, setting out the criteria against which the Secretary of State will decide applications of this kind. It was published alongside a Data Centre Covenant, which sets out what Government expects developers to deliver in return. **The draft NPS is open for public consultation until 8 January 2027 and anyone can respond.** Links are on the back page.



AT A GLANCE

300MW
connection to the high voltage electricity network

90 acres
plot for buildings and landscaping

55 acres
green space between site and village

250m
minimum distance from edge of village

£3bn
anticipated inward investment

400
permanent jobs

600
construction jobs

Early 2030s
targeted operational date

WHAT THE PROJECT WOULD MEAN LOCALLY

A project of this scale delivers benefits locally as well as nationally. As part of our proposal we are working on plans to open up the land between the campus and the village for community usage. We will set these out in full at our formal consultation stages during 2027. In addition, the facility would generate value across the community in the following ways:



Local jobs and local firms

Building the data centre campus would provide skilled work across groundworks, civils, electrical and mechanical trades. We will set a target for the proportion of that work going to businesses based in Kent, and we will report publicly against it.



Long-term skilled employment

Once operational, the campus would support permanent roles on site such as AI specialists, data centre technicians, electrical and cooling engineers, security and facilities staff, alongside further jobs in the local supply chain. These are skilled, well-paid roles of a kind that are currently scarce in this part of Kent.



Skills and training

We are developing a skills programme with local education providers to create a route from local schools and colleges into data centre careers, including apprenticeships, T-level placements and site visits. Our intention is that young people growing up in Southfleet, Northfleet, Gravesham, and Dartford can build a career on their doorstep.



Business rates

The campus would generate substantial additional business rates revenue for the local authority, a share of which is retained locally to fund local services.



Investing in the community

We believe a project of this scale should leave the community around it materially better off, for as long as it operates. We are therefore proposing a Community Benefit Fund, financed by operational revenues from the project and running for the operational life of the campus. We want to design this fund with the community rather than present it fully formed, and we will be asking for views on how it should be structured, who should sit on the decision-making panel for the funds and what it should prioritise at our November session and the consultation that follows.

We will set out firm commitments on each of these at public consultation and, if consent is granted, secure them through commitments with local councils.

EARLY-STAGE ENGAGEMENT

We have initially invited residents living within 100 metres of the site boundary to one-to-one meetings to discuss the proposal. These meetings took place in August and September.

The project team has also held introductory meetings with the Dartford and Gravesham MPs and with councillors representing Southfleet, Bean and Hartley parish councils, Dartford and Gravesham borough councils and Kent County Council.

Our first community information session will take place on Friday 27 November 2026 at Southfleet Village Hall, 3pm to 8pm.

The session is a drop-in, so you are welcome at any time that suits you. The project is at an early stage, so this is a chance to provide inputs that we take into the design rather than to comment on a finished scheme. Full details, timings, and how to give us your views if you cannot attend in person, are on the back page of this newsletter.

RESPONDING TO COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The issues and responses below reflect the most common topics raised during introductory meetings with near neighbours and elected representatives.

More detail is available at **www.ebbsfleetdc.co.uk**.

A 55 acre, 250 metre green buffer will separate the campus from Southfleet village

Data centre buildings will sit on the land currently occupied by polytunnels in the east of the site, not immediately adjacent to the village. We have committed to retaining a 55 acre (250 metre wide) green buffer between the campus and Southfleet village (shaded green in the illustrated map on the first page of this newsletter). Footpaths will be retained and community access enhanced. We welcome ideas on potential community usage of this area.

There is no alternative site within suitable proximity to Northfleet East that meets project requirements

There have been several suggestions of brownfield sites that would be more suitable for the project. Northfleet East substation is one of the very few locations on the borders of London and the Home Counties able to meet our power requirements. We conducted a comprehensive search for a suitable site near the substation that prioritised brownfield sites; however, these sites were either unavailable or unsuitable. An Alternative Site Assessment will be submitted with the application and tested in public examination.

The project will not affect local water or power supplies or increase the price of electricity

Water and electricity companies will only provide supply agreements for the project if our requirements can be delivered alongside existing commitments to the homes and businesses they already supply.

We are committed to ensuring that water use is sustainable. The two cooling options currently under consideration are closed loop cooling, where water is charged into the cooling system once and recirculated, and air cooling.

We also want to be clear that the data centre will be connected to a different electricity network from the one that powers local homes and businesses so its presence would not affect local electricity supplies.

No construction or operational traffic will route through Southfleet village

Proximity to the strategic road network was critical to site selection. Direct access to the A2 enables us to commit to construction and operational traffic avoiding village roads. On-site parking will be planned away from neighbouring properties, and we will explore further works to ease traffic congestion and improve road safety in the area as part of the design process.

Protecting the character of the village is a design requirement for this project, not an afterthought

Southfleet is a village with a distinct rural character, long history, and vibrant community, and we recognise this character is a paramount consideration to local residents. In response, we are implementing the following measures to reduce our impact:

- Distance and screening. The nearest built development would sit a minimum of 250 metres from the village edge. We have committed to retaining 55 acres of the site as open land between the campus and Southfleet.
- Public access and landscape. That land would be publicly accessible, with existing footpaths retained and substantial new landscaping and native planting to support biodiversity net gain across the site.
- Views and lighting. In the next stage of the development, we will test building heights and positions against views from the village, the conservation area and listed buildings, and design a lighting scheme that avoids light spill.

The existing mature trees between the village and the site will be retained

Retention of existing woodland between the village and the project site is a key issue raised during early conversations. We are committed to retaining the existing mature trees in this area and enhancing the natural screening they provide.

Extensive ecological, air quality and noise surveys are underway

Ecological surveys are starting this month. We are engaging with Kent Wildlife Trust and other local ecological groups about opportunities to deliver biodiversity-led enhancements in the land between the campus and Southfleet village. We will develop a full Noise Impact Assessment for the project, and will be in contact with residents about monitoring noise levels at appropriate properties in the new year.



PROGRESS SO FAR WITH THE PLANNING APPLICATION

We are currently undertaking baseline site surveys that will inform the design process and the focus areas for our conversations with planning consultees. Alongside desk-based studies, specialists will be on site over the next couple of months undertaking:

- surveys as part of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal for the site
- an aquatic ecology habitat survey
- a wintering birds survey
- surveys to inform a landscape and visual impact appraisal, including the identification of key viewpoints
- initial transport surveys

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

We will be inviting the local community to help shape our proposals over the coming year. The timeline below sets out the main opportunities to get involved.

July 2026
Website, email and phoneline launched

Aug-Sep 2026
Meetings with nearest residents; briefings for MPs and councillors

Nov 2026
Community information session

Spring 2027
First consultation - design direction

Autumn 2027
Second consultation - proposed scheme

2028
DCO application submitted



OUR COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSION

The project is at an early stage. Survey work is underway and the detailed design of the campus has not yet begun — which means there is no fixed layout to show you. What this session will do is explain where the project stands, how the Development Consent Order process works and where your input carries weight, and give you direct access to the project team.

The session will be laid out as themed areas — the planning process, environmental and ecological work, traffic and access, landscape and village setting, and community investment — each staffed by the team members responsible. We will record the issues raised, take them into the design work when it begins, and report back to you.

Friday 27 November 2026

Southfleet Village Hall, Dale Road, Southfleet, Gravesend DA13 9NX

3pm to 8pm

CAN'T MAKE IT IN PERSON?

Everything shown at the session will be published at **www.ebbsfleetdc.co.uk**, and you can send us your views at any time by phone, email or post. Every comment is logged and reported back to the project team.

GET IN TOUCH

We want to hear from you. We will do our best to answer any questions you have about the proposals at this stage, or to provide any further assistance you need.

Freephone **0800 377 7342**

Email **contact@ebbsfleetdc.co.uk**

Website **www.ebbsfleetdc.co.uk**

ABOUT CLEARSTONE

Clearstone is a leading UK developer of large-scale infrastructure that connects to the UK's high voltage electricity transmission network.

We are committed to delivering the infrastructure Britain needs, whilst ensuring our projects are sensitive to the areas they are located in and respectful of the environment and scarce resources. We have increased biodiversity by an average of 30% across our projects.

We also believe our projects should contribute meaningfully to the communities that host them, through long-term community benefit funding for local initiatives.

USEFUL LINKS:

Draft National Policy Statement for data centres (consultation closes 8 January 2027) **www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-national-policy-statement-for-data-centres**

The Data Centre Covenant **www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-centre-covenant/the-data-centre-covenant**