Foster + Partners in-house AI tools

IMPLEMENTED 2024–2026 · CONSTRUCTION AND PROPERTY · UK · BAND C · CLAIMED ONLY
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Foster + Partners' Applied Research and Development group built in-house AI tools: a secure AI Portal for image generation, Ask F+P for searching design guides, and a statistical model for proposals. The practice's account is detailed on design and controls and gives no measured saving.

ABOUT THIS SYNOPSIS

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NOTICE WORDING LAST UPDATED 16 NOVEMBER 2026

AT A GLANCE

AI and automation used: Generative and predictive tools built in-house: an AI Portal for image generation, language-model search of design guides, and an interpretable statistical model for proposals.

Implemented: 2024–2026. Grade: band C, Process change, Claimed only.

Headline result, as reported: In-house AI Portal, design-guide search and proposal model; the practice reports compelling results but publishes no measured saving

1 · The case

The facts, as reported by the 4 sources listed at the end. Where a source is silent, the field says "Not reported".

Organisation

Foster + Partners. London architecture practice. The Applied Research and Development group is led by Martha Tsigkari, senior partner, with Sherif Tarabishy, associate partner. Canvas block: 4. Operations and process. Also 6. Data and technology.

Business challenge

The challenge. By the practice's account, many projects are covered by NDAs, and it has seen designers elsewhere unknowingly breach terms of service by using external AI tools. Its design guides, built up over decades, were hard for new staff to search, and tacit knowledge created bottlenecks. Tsigkari told BIMplus that ideation on online tools risks losing IP and copyright.

Who implemented it

In-house (In-house): Built the AI Portal, Ask F+P, Hydra and the proposal model..
Third-party proprietary models are used when needed and are not named in the sources opened; Stable Diffusion was used locally in 2024.

Technology (SEAM pillar E)

SEAM types: T4 RAG / vector search over your own data, T6 Open-source / locally hosted models, T8 Predictive / ML models. Deployment: Mixture. Vendors and products: AI Portal (internal), Ask F+P (internal), Stable Diffusion (locally hosted, 2024), Hydra (internal), Proposal statistical model (internal).

Where it was built in: The AI Portal integrates with Rhino, the primary design tool. Ask F+P searches the practice's design guides. The proposal model uses historical project data on location, typology and area.

What changed

Before: designers searched PDF design guides by hand, and external tools carried IP and confidentiality risk. After, by the practice's account: designers query the guides in natural language, explore AI-generated variations in a portal that keeps a visual version history, and proposal teams get a model-based estimate of resourcing, cost and duration. At Al Sa'ad Plaza Tower in Qatar, the practice says automated systems regenerated geometry and documentation after late height changes, through automation that may be AI-driven or algorithmic. [1] [2] [3] [4]

What it cost

Not reported.

What it saved

No measured figure. The practice says operational AI has given compelling results, and AECbytes reports that predictive models give analysis results within seconds rather than hours at 95% to 98% accuracy. [1] [2] [3] [4]

Governance and control

By the practice's account, the AI Portal exists to meet NDA confidentiality, open-weight models are customised in-house to keep control of IP, Ask F+P attributes answers to source locations with a confidence score and expert validation, and the proposal model is interpretable so each prediction can be traced. Written policy, monitoring and incident records: Not reported in the

S2 · Accountable owner · Claimed
The Applied R+D group, led by Martha Tsigkari, builds and runs the tools; a named owner for AI risk across the practice is not reported. [1] [3]

A1 · Safe use · Claimed
By the practice, the AI Portal is built to keep within NDA confidentiality, because designers elsewhere have unknowingly breached terms of service with external tools. [1]

A2 · Human in the loop · Claimed
By the practice, Ask F+P answers were reviewed by domain experts and each answer shows its source location and a confidence score. [1]

A3 · Monitoring and assurance · Not reported
Not reported.

A4 · Vendor AI · Claimed
By the practice, it uses open-weight models customised in-house, and third-party proprietary models when needed. [1]

A5 · Agent controls · Not reported
No agents described.

A6 · Standards and regulation · Not reported
Not reported.

What worked, what did not, what is unproven

WORKED

– Ask F+P was in beta and used throughout the office in April 2024 (BIMplus).

– The AI Portal lets designers explore generative AI within confidentiality limits, with shared explorations and a visual version history (practice's account).

– The practice says the proposal model helps teams issue more calibrated proposals and that every prediction can be traced back to its reasoning (practice's account).

DID NOT

– No measured saving in time, cost or fees is published. The practice describes results as compelling without figures.

– The practice says simpler solutions, sometimes traditional algorithms, are often more appropriate than machine learning, so not every tool is AI.

– In Building in February 2026, Tsigkari and Tarabishy wrote that AI outputs are plausible, not reliable and suggestive, not buildable, and that without critical reflection the profession risks becoming a recycling service for historical styles.

UNPROVEN

– How many staff use the AI Portal and Ask F+P, and how often: Not reported.

– Accuracy of Ask F+P against expert answers: Not reported.

– Effect on fees, project outcomes or headcount: Not reported.

– Which third-party proprietary models are used: Not reported.

Timeline

Feb 2024 Practice presents its AI work at the WA100 Live webinar, reported by AECbytes [2]

Apr 2024 BIMplus reports Ask F+P in beta and used throughout the office [3]

Sept 2025 SCOSA report publishes the practice's account of its AI Portal, Ask F+P and proposal model

Feb 2026 Tsigkari and Tarabishy publish a long read on the limits and the future of the architect's role [4]

2 · Grade and SEAM assessment

MarLuc's opinion, made on the evidence above. How cases are graded: marluc.co.uk/case-studies/how-we-rate

Level of change and impact

Claimed: Not applicable. Grade: C, Process change. Proof: Claimed only. Level of change: Process change.

Process change (Level 2, band C), by the practice's account. Several workflows have been rebuilt around in-house tools, but the sources give no measured outcome and no change to roles or structure.

The practice describes mapping processes and rebuilding workflows around data and AI, with several tools in use. It gives examples and no measured results, so the marker is Claimed only. Some tools are statistical or algorithmic rather than AI, so the case is marked as partly AI.

The SEAM view and lessons learnt

This is a detailed first-hand account. It starts from process mapping, keeps IP and confidentiality in view, and uses extractive search and interpretable models where accountability matters. It gives no measured results, and the practice itself warns that AI outputs can look resolved when they are not. For a mid-sized or larger organisation, the transferable point is to pair a secure internal platform with published measures, so claims of gain can be checked.

1. Map the process before choosing the tool.
2. Use extractive search and interpretable models where answers need an audit trail.
3. Publish a baseline and a measure with each claimed gain.

Evidence

Score 1 of 4. Own account: a chapter written by the practice in a schools-of-architecture report, interviews, and a trade report of its webinar. No independent measurement.

Evaluation method. Practice's published account and interviews reported by trade press; no baseline, comparison group or audit.

Status. Ongoing. Latest source: Building, 13 February 2026. Later results: Not reported.

3 · Original sources

Read these in full. To challenge a fact or a grade, use the contact form at marluc.co.uk or the link on https://marluc.co.uk/case-studies/foster-and-partners-in-house-ai

[1] SCOSA AI Working Group: AI and the Future of Architectural Education in the UK, September 2025 (practice case study by Foster + Partners)
https://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/232626/1/AI_ARCHITECTURAL_EDUCATION_REPORT.pdf

[2] AECbytes: WA100 Live 2024 Webinar: Exploring the Impact of AI on Architecture (15 February 2024)
https://aecbytes.com/newsletter/2024/issue_130.html

[3] BIMplus (Construction Management): Foster + Partners R&D: taking AI and digital twins to the next stage (16 April 2024)
https://bimplus.co.uk/foster-partners-rd-taking-ai-and-digital-twins-to-the-next-stage

[4] Building: In the age of artificial intelligence, what remains of the architect? (13 February 2026)
https://www.building.co.uk/in-the-age-of-artificial-intelligence-what-remains-of-the-architect/5140368.article

Foster + Partners website: https://www.fosterandpartners.com

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