

# CASE STUDY

## JLL UK: EMBRACING THE CIRCULAR OFFICE

This case study outlines how JLL has used circular thinking in the refurbishment of their Manchester office to reduce preventable carbon emissions, save money, and improve employee wellbeing.

### About JLL

JLL is a global commercial real estate services company, founded in the United Kingdom with offices in 80 countries. The company also provides investment management services worldwide, including services to institutional and retail investors.

### The issue

Construction is a major contributor to climate change which means it is also a sector that can play a massive role in tackling it. Almost 40% of carbon emissions come from the built environment in the form of 'embodied carbon'<sup>i</sup>. Furthermore, building developments are responsible for more than 40% of raw materials consumed globally<sup>ii</sup>.

#### What is embodied carbon?

'Embodied carbon' is the term applied to carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions that occur during the construction process itself. In other words, it is the carbon footprint of a building before it becomes operational; it also refers to the CO<sub>2</sub> produced by maintaining and eventually demolishing the building, transporting waste and recycling.

### What did JLL do?

When JLL UK relocated its Northwest office in Manchester, their ambition was to build JLL UK's most energy efficient workspace and to use the project to measure and establish a baseline for embodied carbon in their fit-outs (i.e. preparing a building for commercial occupation).

A key element of the strategy was to upskill the project team in their understanding of the circular economy, embedding the principles into design, procurement and fit-out itself. This led to an innovative design approach that included:

- Implementing life cycle thinking into design and specification.
- Eliminating materials where not needed e.g. exposed services, less partitions, self-finishing surfaces.
- Reusing products from existing offices where possible e.g. desks, chairs, and AV equipment.
- Procuring over 200 remanufactured and reuse items.
- Specifying new products with a high recycled content, including desktops for the reception, kitchen and meeting rooms which are made from recycled yoghurt pots and plastic packaging.



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- Repurposing materials from the old office, including glass tabletops which were laser cut and now serve as signage.
- Specifying low carbon flooring material from Interface which is [Cradle to Cradle certified®](#).

**185kg CO<sub>2</sub>e/m<sup>2</sup>**

*embodied carbon in a standard office fit-out*

**120kg CO<sub>2</sub>e/m<sup>2</sup>**

*embodied carbon in the Manchester office  
using circular design principles*



### What did JLL learn?

From this process, JLL learnt that a critical part of moving to a circular approach was:

- Upskilling employees in their understanding of the circular economy
- Developing a shared language
- Bringing to life a sense of shared mission

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<sup>i</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, December 2020. Available online <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/building-sector-emissions-hit-record-high-low-carbon-pandemic>

<sup>ii</sup> The Circularity Gap Report, January 2019. Available online: [https://assets.website-files.com/5d26d80e8836af2d12ed1269/5dea43f562f8ac3e3113fe51\\_ad6e59\\_ba1e4d16c64f44fa94fbd8708eae8e34\\_copressed.pdf](https://assets.website-files.com/5d26d80e8836af2d12ed1269/5dea43f562f8ac3e3113fe51_ad6e59_ba1e4d16c64f44fa94fbd8708eae8e34_copressed.pdf)