

St John's College

Environmental Sustainability Plan

This version includes updated targets for 2024. Targets from 2023 with an update on progress can be read in appendix 1.

The College recognises that climate change is one of the most critical issues facing society. We believe that everyone has an important part to play in tackling the impending dangers of climate change and biodiversity loss, and the College is committed to reducing its negative impacts and improving its positive impacts. We can do this by ensuring that environmental sustainability is at the centre of our day-to-day operations and activities and how we manage our buildings and holdings.

CONTEXT

At the end of 2021, Governing Body approved the College's approach to environmental, social and governance (ESG) matters, which recommended development of an overarching ESG policy, an environmental sustainability plan, a framework for responsible investments and people strategy. The Sustainability Working Group was set up to take forward the development of an environmental sustainability plan. Its Terms of Reference are:

1. The Sustainability Working Group will meet at least once per term. The group will report into the Domestic and Establishment Committee.
2. The group will be responsible for the development of an environmental sustainability plan as set out in the "Approach to ESG" paper that was presented to General Purposes Committee, Finance and Estates Committee and Governing Body.
3. The environmental sustainability plan will establish a timeframe for, and actions needed to achieve net zero carbon and biodiversity gains. Once approved by Governing Body this will then be monitored through reports to Domestic and Establish Committee via the Domestic and Establishment Sub-Committee.
4. The plan will encompass College operations in the first instance, and then consider the broader commercial, agricultural and investment portfolios.

The Working Group comprises representatives from across the College community, including Fellows, staff, students and subsidiary companies, and is chaired by alumna Briony Fitzsimons, an expert on sustainability strategy and policy.

As per its Terms of Reference, the Working Group considered key areas of College operations and activities to identify where and how we can act to reduce our carbon footprint, increase biodiversity and set relevant targets. It was informed by the consultants who are supporting the development of the College Masterplan and the College's land agents. Changes to the College's equity holdings and the development of a Responsible Investment Policy were taken forward by Finance & Estates Committee and Investment sub-Committee, and the outputs of that work are included in this plan.

Alignment to the Oxford University Environmental Sustainability Strategy

As part of the collegiate University, the College is mindful of [Oxford University's environmental sustainability strategy](#). This includes targets “to achieve net zero carbon and biodiversity net gain by 2035”, the University has taken 2009/10 as its carbon baseline, and 2018/19 as its biodiversity baseline. The strategy focuses on ten priorities, of which six are within the scope of St John's Environmental Sustainability Plan (carbon emissions from University buildings, biodiversity, sustainable food, sustainable resource use, international travel and local travel). We are already working with the University and other colleges on joint initiatives, such as purchasing energy and electricity from renewable sources and encouraging more sustainable travel.

CARBON BASELINE AND PROGRESS

To chart the pathway to net zero emissions, an essential first step was to establish the College's current carbon footprint with a baseline survey. Data from the 2018/19 academic year (the last year of normal operations before the pandemic) was gathered and emissions measured across:

- Scope 1 - these are the direct emissions released by the College, primarily from gas boilers used for heating buildings and fugitive emissions from refrigeration systems;
- Scope 2 – these are indirect emissions associated with purchased electricity for use in College buildings;
- Scope 3 – these are all other indirect emissions from College activities, including travel, procurement, waste, and equity and property investments.

A second assessment with 2022/23 data was undertaken at the end of 2023 to measure progress (see appendix 2). This shows that the College has made good progress in reducing its carbon footprint over the last four years, with a reduction of 27% for scope 1 and 2 emissions compared with the 2018/19 baseline, and a 25% reduction in scope 3 emissions, largely as a result of removing fossil fuel holdings from the investment portfolio.

As the assessment did not include the carbon footprint from the College's property portfolio, the land agents Savills were asked to update with 2023 emissions data from the residential, commercial and rural portfolio. This table combines the data from both assessments, all property and rural holdings are reported under scope 3:

	2022/23 emissions (tCO ₂ e)	2018/19 emissions (tCO ₂ e)
Scope 1	1,100	1,242
Scope 2	339	722
Scope 3	20,432	27,069
Total	21,872	29,033
Property portfolio (scope 3)	12,206	12,749
TOTAL	34,078	41,782

NET ZERO ACTION PLAN

The College has not yet set a net zero target as data collection is still ongoing. This environmental sustainability plan is intended to be a living document that will be amended as more data becomes available, which will allow us to set meaningful and realistic targets on our pathway to net zero.

To be in line with a 1.5°C reduction pathway as defined by the Paris Agreement, the College will need to reduce its scope 1 and scope 2 emissions by more than 46% by the academic year 2029/30 compared to an 2018/19 baseline, in line with the absolute reduction pathway outlined by the Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi). Under the SBTi initiative's guidance with respect to net-zero, a 27.5% reduction would be required for scope 3 over the same time period.

Governing Body agreed the first version of the Environmental Sustainability Plan in early 2023. It focuses on ten areas to reduce emissions with the aim of achieving net zero as soon as possible, but by 2040 at the latest, and contribute thought leadership. Some of these are under direct College control, whereas others will require increased engagement and cooperation with suppliers, advisers and tenants.

Operational Impacts & Upstream Value Chain

1. Reduce our carbon emissions from College buildings
2. Reduce the amount of waste we generate and maximise recycling
3. Reduce emissions related to travel
4. Increase the use of sustainable food in College
5. Increase sustainable resource use in procuring goods and services
6. Increase overall biodiversity on the College site

Downstream Value Chain

7. Develop and implement a responsible investment policy for College equity holdings – was taken forward by Finance & Estates Committee and now agreed by Governing Body
8. Develop and implement a comprehensive ESG approach for College developments – taken forward through the Oxford North development
9. Support College tenants in their operations to reduce carbon footprint and increase biodiversity – taken forward with the support of the College's land agents

Sustainability Purpose

10. Increase research and engagement on environmental, net zero and biodiversity gain initiatives

This plan fleshes out in more detail the actions the College will undertake to make progress on these areas to achieve its net zero target. The plan and targets will evolve as we are gathering more data, especially from the Masterplan and from our property managers.

Progress will be monitored by Governing Body.

OPERATIONAL IMPACTS & UPSTREAM VALUE CHAIN

1. Reduce our carbon emissions from College buildings

Target: Reduce scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions associated with College buildings on the central site owned and operated by the College by 80% by 2035 against a 2022 baseline, subject to a detailed programme and recommendations from the Masterplan.

The target will be achieved through the implementation of fabric improvements and greater use of self-generated renewable energy. Interim targets will be further defined and quantified based on the Masterplan outputs but are expected to include improvements to insulation and switching to LED lighting in the least energy efficient Quads by the end of 2025.

Target lead: Works Bursar

Adapting historic and listed buildings to make them more energy efficient has its challenges. Such works will also need to be considerate of the wellbeing of staff and students living and working on the site. The College has a proud record of sustainable construction of its more recent buildings. Kendrew Quad, completed in 2010, includes solar panels, geothermal heat pumps and a biomass boiler. The new Library and Study Centre, opened in 2019, is carbon-neutral as it incorporates passive environmental control measures to reduce energy consumption, and is heated by ground-source heat pumps that were installed on the Great Lawn and photovoltaic roof panels.

The Masterplan includes a thorough assessment of College buildings, facilities and use of spaces to ensure they meet current and future needs. A College working party was set up in 2023 to scrutinise and move forward the various elements of the Masterplan. Detailed fabric studies and a performance assessment of electricity and gas usage of College buildings and off-site accommodation have been undertaken during 2023. This allowed us to prioritise opportunities for reduction in energy usage and develop a phased roadmap to achieve net zero carbon. During 2024 we will continue developing the programme of works for the Masterplan, focusing on fabric and energy improvements to existing buildings. The tender process for the first major project is expected to start in the first half of 2024, subject to Governing Body approval.

The longer-term plan is to move towards more self-generated energy, phasing out gas boilers and installing solar PV panels on suitable roofs. We are undertaking a feasibility study on creating a single energy centre on the College site with air source heat pumps.

2. Reduce the amount of waste we generate and maximise recycling

Target: Reduce waste that goes to landfill by 10% during 2023/24 by reducing single-use/non-recyclable packing. Improve data collection and analysis by working with a new waste contractor.

Target lead: Domestic Bursar

We are encouraging recycling and have placed bins for recyclables, food waste and general waste in College areas. We have already phased out plastic bottles in all catering areas. Staff and students receive a free reusable water bottle and Keep Cup for hot drinks, and water fountains have been installed in all main College areas. Prior to this, 1,000 plastic bottles of water were purchased per week on average. Sparkling and filtered water for events is produced onsite and provided in reusable glass bottles.

In 2024 we will:

- Introduce dispenser systems for more products currently available in single use/non-recyclable format, including all common chemicals;
- Reduce take-away disposables and only use take-away containers when no eat-in is offered and limit use of take-away cups to the Café;
- Change to a chemical supplier with more sustainability practices and increased use of recycled materials;
- Stop the historic practice of disposing of all bedding at the end of each year and introduce washable pillow protectors to extend life of pillows;
- Work with local charities to donate items left by students at the end of the academic year.

3. Reduce emissions related to travel

Target: Increase sustainable commuting to work by promoting more environmentally friendly alternatives.

Target lead: Bursary Manager

We encourage staff to use public transport, walk or cycle to work. The College offers a discounted bus pass scheme and interest free loans to purchase a rail season ticket or a bicycle. We will transition to electric vehicles for our works, Bagley Wood and garden operations when replacements are due. A salary sacrifice bicycle scheme was implemented in December 2022 and an electric vehicle scheme in February 2024 to encourage more staff to make the switch to more sustainable travel. The installation of electric charging points at the College and suitable outlying buildings will support the transition to cleaner transport.

As part of a global University, the College attracts students from around the world. For many there is no alternative but taking a flight at the beginning and end of each term or academic year. Our academics travel to attend international conferences and to conduct their research. However, we would like to address emissions from aviation and work with the University on the implementation of a travel policy that incorporates a travel hierarchy for domestic and international travel for staff and students as follows:

- Avoid travel;
- Reduce travel demand to and from the College;
- Travel without flying;
- Fly when there are no alternatives.

We will keep under review schemes to offset aviation emissions resulting from necessary travel on College business and students flights.

4. Increase the use of sustainable food

Target: Introduce five new Fairtrade products by the end of 2024. Track Fairtrade sales of new products and aim for a 3% year-on-year increase.

Target lead: Domestic Bursar

The College is now Fairtrade and Kale Yeah accredited. We are increasingly using seasonal products, often sourced from local suppliers thus reducing the number of food miles. The kitchens have greatly increased the choice of vegetarian and vegan meals, which are now available at every meal.

In terms of food procurement, the College is part of the collegiate procurement group, allowing better tracking of the supply chain.

5. Increase sustainable resource use in procuring goods and services

Target: Identify the top 50% suppliers (by spend) of non-food items and actively engage with them to align our sustainability targets. Procure at least 50% of office supplies from recycles or sustainably sources materials by 2025.

Target lead: Domestic Bursar

Everything the College purchases has an associated carbon cost. These represent a large portion of our scope 3 emissions (nearly 37%) but are often out of our direct control. Reducing the environmental impact of our consumption and procurement can be achieved by increased recycling, engagement with and scrutinising of our supply chain and sharing best practices within the collegiate University.

We are part of the colleges shared procurement group for which a University research team is developing a web portal. This will lead to improved data analysis of supply chains and eventually allow us to calculate carbon cost per menu dish.

6. Increase overall biodiversity on the College site

College gardens Target: Use recommendations from the biodiversity baseline assessment to inform best options to enhance biodiversity and create a more wildlife friendly garden. Upskill and train garden team to increase knowledge.

Target leads: Domestic Bursar, Keeper of the Groves

The large College gardens provide a peaceful space in the City centre. In addition, the College owns Bagley Wood in Kennington on the outskirts of Oxford. Future Nature WTC, the trading subsidiary of the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust,

undertook a baseline assessment of the gardens and of Bagley Wood to inform best options for a more wildlife friendly spaces.

In the College gardens, further green spaces will be developed, in particular in Dolphin Quad, Holmes garden and Kendrew Quad to increase bird and insect population and encourage the introduction of species.

Bagley Wood Target: Deliver woodland management in line with the approved grant scheme to manage and enhance fauna and flora.

Target leads: Works Bursar, Keeper of Bagley Wood, Forestry Consultant

In Bagley Wood, areas will be identified in which species can be supported and enhanced above and beyond the minimum requirements of the woodland management plan. We will also be commencing to monitor flora and fauna through a series of ecology surveys to record changes in species type and density as a direct outcome of the woodland grant scheme works.

DOWNSTREAM VALUE CHAIN

7. Develop and implement a responsible investment policy for College equity holdings

Target: Ensure equity holdings are compatible with the College's Responsible Investment Policy through annual monitoring.

Target lead: Principal Bursar via Investment sub-Committee and Finance and Estates Committee

The College has a large portfolio of equity investments and relies on investment returns to fund its operating and academic activities. Significant progress has been made to reduce the carbon footprint of our equity investments from 23,011 tCO₂ in 2018/19 to 12,397 tCO₂ in 2022/23, largely by removing fossil fuel companies from the portfolio.

In 2020, the College evaluated its approach to ethical investments and established a framework for considering investment in certain asset classes. The [report](#) is available on the College website. As a result, Governing Body decided to divest from tobacco and to limit investment in arms companies. It further commended the Oxford Martin Principles for climate-conscious investment as a framework to consider engagement.

The equity portfolio was restructured during 2022 to focus on a few select funds with strong ESG credentials that invest in sustainably-run companies and offer superior growth and stable long-term returns. A [Responsible Investment Policy](#) has been agreed by Governing Body, setting out the College's approach to responsible investments, engagement and monitoring of equity holdings. The College has joined the [Responsible Investment Network – Universities \(RINU\)](#), which is run by Share Action. This forum enables the College to achieve greater impact than it would from acting alone and offers additional means of monitoring and engaging with institutions with similar aims. As part of the policy, the

College is committed to an annual screening of its equity holdings to determine if adjustments are needed to certain asset classes. The 2023 screening resulted in a change in one fund manager that exceeded our limits on arms manufacturers. The policy also requires all managers holding over 5% of total invested value to provide an annual report on their ESG activities and engagement.

8. Develop and implement a comprehensive ESG approach for College developments

Target: Ensure that environmental sustainability principles are a key part of each development and contractual commitments are fulfilled by developers.

Target lead: Principal Bursar via Oxford North Committee and TWO Board

The College owns a number of development holdings. Oxford North is the most advanced with planning consent in place and development partners appointed. However, there are a number of other developments likely to come forward in the coming years. It is recognised that developments will have an impact on the College's carbon footprint as part of scope 3 emissions.

A comprehensive ESG strategy was agreed for Oxford North with its joint venture partners with standard legal requirements. There is a commitment that the development will be operationally net-zero and offsetting some of the built carbon is being investigated. Sustainable living and working at the site as well as environmental-friendly connectivity to other areas of Oxford are at the heart of the strategy. There will be significant investment in improving walking, cycling and bus services to and from Oxford North.

9. Support College tenants in their operations to reduce carbon footprint and increase biodiversity

Target: Develop an environmental policy for farm tenancies. Share best practices and increase knowledge amongst tenant farmers on carbon reduction strategies and biodiversity gains. Upgrade buildings that do not meet current regulations and are not exempt.

Target lead: Principal Bursar with Savills land agents

A baseline survey was commissioned in 2022 to assess operational emissions from the College's residential, commercial and rural Savills portfolio. A follow-up assessment with 2023 data shows that emissions from property holdings have slightly decreased, mainly due to improvements from scope 1 emissions. Scope 3 improvements will take more time since they require longer-term changes in farming practices and fabric improvements.

Development of long-term sustainability and decarbonisation strategies across the portfolio will be the next step. For the built environment, this will include a focus on those buildings

with the lowest EPC score, in particular improving and upgrading existing fabric and investigating methods to reduce carbon.

For the rural portfolio, we will use the output of the three detailed farm studies to help us develop a carbon reduction strategy by farm type (dairy and arable), including principles of landlord and tenant responsibilities. We will work closely with our tenant farmers to support them in their carbon reduction activities. In addition, we will support measures to encourage uptake of stewardship programmes, currently 32% of holdings are operating under such a programme.

Three pilot studies have been undertaken with local Wildlife Trusts on two parcels of College land to assess options to enhance biodiversity. The appraisals have shown a number of good opportunities to achieve BNG and options will be further developed during 2024.

EPCs currently only look at the built property but do not consider the green space with a property, such as gardens. These spaces provide opportunities for biodiversity net gain or enhanced carbon sequestration that we will consider as part of our strategy, for example: planting hedges rather than boarded fenced, putting up bird boxes in gardens, placing solar panels on fields and non-listed houses.

SUSTAINABILITY PURPOSE

10. Increase research and engagement on environmental, net zero and biodiversity initiatives

Enabling excellence in academic research and developing strategies to support innovation and knowledge transfer are two core pillars of the College's strategy. The College appointed its first Net Zero Fellow in 2021 who is a Research Fellow on Inclusive Net Zero and for the Oxford Net Zero Initiative. College funding has been granted for an interdisciplinary research project to identify policy bottlenecks and knowledge-gaps that are delaying the transition to net zero emissions. The project will bring together social and physical Oxford scientists with key decision-makers in the public and private sector as well as civil society to better understand those principles and arguments that are efficacious in bringing about the necessary change in societal and governmental behaviour to avert catastrophic climate change.

January 2024

Appendix 1: 2023 Targets and Updates

Appendix 2: 2022/23 Carbon Assessment summary

Update on 2023 Targets

2023 Targets	Target Lead(s)	2023 Updates
<p>1. Reduce our carbon emissions from College buildings <i>Reduce scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions associated with College buildings on the central site owned and operated by the College by 80% by 2035 against a 2022 baseline, subject to a detailed programme and recommendations from the Masterplan.</i></p>	Works Bursar	<p>Undertook detailed fabric studies and performance assessment of electricity and gas usage of College buildings and off-site accommodation.</p> <p>Reduced our energy consumption over 2022/23 by 473,400 kwh as per SECR reporting.</p>
<p>2. Reduce the amount of waste we generate and maximise recycling <i>Reduce waste that goes to landfill by 10% during 2022/23 and increase recycling, especially of food waste. Reduce mixed recycling by 5%.</i></p>	Domestic Bursar	<p>Installed food waste bins in all student and common staff areas and improved kitchen preparation techniques and portion control. Achieved 5% reduction in food waste and better separation of waste.</p>
<p>3. Reduce emissions related to travel <i>Increase sustainable commuting to work by offering cycle-to-work and electric vehicle salary sacrifice schemes in the first half of 2023.</i></p>	Bursary Manager	<p>Implemented cycle-to-work scheme in early 2023, recently increased maximum amount to £4,500. Agreed to join electric vehicle salary sacrifice scheme.</p>
<p>4. Increase the use of sustainable food <i>Achieve Fairtrade accreditation and Kale Yeah accreditation in the first half of 2023.</i></p>	Domestic Bursar	<p>Achieved Fairtrade and Kale Yeah accreditation. Kendrew Café offers mostly plant-based food and no more red meat. Use of Fairtrade products across all College areas.</p>
<p>5. Increase sustainable resource use in procuring goods and services <i>Identify the top 50% suppliers (by spend) of non-food items and actively engage with them to align our sustainability targets. Work with other colleges and the University to identify shared procurement routes that have more advanced sustainability plans.</i></p>	Domestic Bursar	<p>Most goods now procured through the colleges shared procurement group.</p>
<p>Increase overall biodiversity on the College site</p>	Domestic Bursar, Works	<p>Made changes to garden management to allow some</p>

2023 Targets	Target Lead(s)	2023 Updates
<i>College gardens: Use outputs from the baseline assessment to develop strategies and actions for a more wildlife friendly garden during 2023.</i>	Bursar, Keeper of the Groves, Keeper of Bagley Wood	rewilding and encourage wildflowers. Mapped all trees in the gardens to provide a basis for future planting strategies.
Develop and implement a responsible investment policy for College equity holdings <i>Ensure equity holdings are compatible with the College's Responsible Investment Policy.</i>	Principal Bursar	Agreed responsible investment policy and undertook first screening of equity holdings at 31 July 2023, resulting in one change of fund manager.
Develop and implement a comprehensive ESG approach for College developments <i>Ensure that environmental sustainability principles are a key part of each development and contractual commitments are fulfilled by developers.</i>	Principal Bursar, Victoria Collett, Savills	Agreed an ambitious ESG policy for Oxford North with standards beyond legal requirements.
Support College tenants in their operations to reduce carbon footprint and increase biodiversity <i>Obtain EPC ratings for all residential and commercial buildings. Upgrade buildings that do not meet current regulations and are not exempt. Closer engagement with tenant farmers on carbon reduction strategies. Enhance biodiversity net gain or carbon sequestration.</i>	Principal Bursar, Savills	Obtained EPC ratings for all buildings. Carried out cost/benefit analyses of decarbonising and EPC compliance by specific property types. Started engagement process with tenant farmers in summer of 2023. Undertook 3 detailed farm studies to help us develop a carbon reduction strategy by farm type. Commissioned three studies looking at biodiversity net gain options at College holdings.
Increase research and engagement on environmental, net zero and biodiversity initiatives	Academics	Funded a research project to create a portfolio of sustainable offsets that follow the Oxford Offsetting Principles (in relation to Oxford North development)

Carbon report summary:

This carbon footprint inventory was prepared for St John's College, Oxford by Greener Edge for the reporting period 1st August - 31st July 2023.

Organisation Background

Name:	St John's College, Oxford
Business Area:	Academic Institution
Business Description:	Part of a public research university, University of Oxford, St John's College provides college courses to undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Organisational Boundary

This measurement covers all operational sites of the college, including emissions occurred during business travel

Report Period

1st August - 31st July 2023

Reporting Boundary

Scope 1: Direct Emissions

- Fuel combustion in organisation's facilities
- Organisation's vehicles
- Fugitive emissions from organisation-controlled source

Scope 2: Indirect Emissions from Energy

- Purchased electricity, steam, heating and cooling for own use

Scope 3: Indirect Emissions

- Purchased goods and services
- Waste generated in operations
- Fuel and energy-related activities
- Employee commuting
- Business travel
- Investments

Reporting Omissions

Employee wages, student commute

Total Emissions

34,077.85 tCO₂e

Scope 1 Emissions

1,100.41 tCO₂e

Scope 2 Emissions¹

339.48 tCO₂e

Scope 3 Emissions

20,431.96 tCO₂e

Scope 3 property portfolio²

12,206 tCO₂e

Student Commute³

595.90 tCO₂e

Emissions / Student

51.40 tCO₂e / student

¹ Location-based emissions

² Property portfolio emissions calculated by Savills UK

³ Student commute is not included in an organisational boundary of St John's College