# Regent's Park College

## Sustainability Policy

## 1. Introduction

Regent's Park College recognises the urgent global challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion. The College is committed to contributing fully to the University's Environmental Sustainability Strategy (15 March 2021) and its 2035 net-zero carbon and biodiversity net-gain targets.

## 2. Vision and Objectives

Regent's Park College aims to:

- Support the University's net-zero carbon and biodiversity net-gain targets.
- Reduce the College's environmental footprint across energy, travel, food, waste, procurement, and estate management.
- Enhance the ecological value of College sites and promote nature-positive practices.
- Embed sustainability into College culture, decision-making, and community life.
- Foster student and staff engagement in sustainable behaviours and initiatives.

These objectives align with the University's ten environmental sustainability priority areas, including carbon reduction, biodiversity, sustainable food, sustainable travel, waste minimisation and sustainable resource use, and sustainable procurement.

## 3. Governance and Accountability

Recognising that Oxford's collegiate structure requires distributed but co-ordinated action, Regent's Park College has the following governance model:

### 3.1 Sustainability Working Group

- Meets termly.
- Chaired by the Director of Operations.
- Membership includes staff and students.
- Oversees implementation of this policy and monitors progress towards net zero and biodiversity net gain. Reports regularly on progress to the Estates Committee.

### 3.2 Estates Committee

- Reports to Governing Body.
- Receives reports from the Sustainability Working Group. Recommends investment, policy changes, and sustainability-related strategic priorities.

### 3.3 Operational Responsibility

- The Operations and Catering teams hold lead responsibility for operational delivery, supported by others where appropriate. However, this should be a whole College initiative.
- Student representatives (JCR/MCR) support engagement, communication, and behavioural change across the College student community.

## 4. Priority Areas

### 4.1 Carbon Reduction and Energy Efficiency

The College will work towards the following:

- Developing a carbon-reduction pathway aligned with the University's 2035 net-zero target.
- Improving energy efficiency (e.g., through insulation, heating controls, LED lighting, user approaches and building management systems, where possible).
- Ensuring refurbishments and new developments adopt low-carbon design principles wherever practicable.
- Exploring renewable energy generation (e.g., solar PV) where feasible.
- Reducing emissions from College-funded travel by promoting virtual meetings and low-carbon alternatives.

### 4.2 Biodiversity and Estate Management

The College will work towards the following:

- Contributing to the University's biodiversity net-gain target by enhancing green spaces and supporting pollinators.
- Managing grounds using environmentally sensitive practices, minimising chemical use, and protecting habitats.
- Integrating biodiversity considerations into all estate planning, development, and maintenance.

### 4.3 Sustainable Food and Catering

The College will:

- Continue to reduce food waste through effective meal booking system and redistribution where possible.
- Continue to offer plant-based food options for all meals.

- Use herbs and produce grown on site where possible.
- Minimise single-use items and promote reusable alternatives.

### 4.4 Waste Reduction and Circular Resource Use

The College will work toward the following:

- Reduce waste generation and increase reuse and recycling rates.
- Implement clear waste-sorting systems and provide guidance and training for staff and students.
- Apply circular economy principles in procurement, favouring durable, repairable, and sustainably sourced goods.
- Continue to reuse furniture across the College estate and opt, wherever possible, for recycled materials when furnishing spaces (such as the move to using curtains made from recycled material in study bedrooms).
- Work with suppliers to reduce packaging and improve environmental performance.

### 4.5 Sustainable Travel

The College will:

- Continue to encourage active and low-carbon travel by providing secure cycle storage and supporting cycling and other facilities that support walking, cycling, and public transport use.

### 4.6 Education, Culture, and Community Engagement

The College will:

- Integrate sustainability awareness into student induction and staff training, as appropriate.
- Support sustainability initiatives, projects, and research, as appropriate and aligned with College aims and resources.
- Promote participation in University-wide programmes such as Green Impact.
- Continue to encourage use and stewardship of the College's green spaces, allowing students, staff and visitors to make use of all areas of the quad.
- Communicate progress and opportunities for involvement through relevant channels.

### 4.6 Mental Capital and Community Resilience

The College recognises that environmental change and the transition to a low-carbon, nature-positive society affect mental health & wellbeing, social cohesion and the resilience of

communities [1, 2]. Mental capital (understood here as the combination of cognitive and emotional capacities that enables people to learn, manage emotions, sustain relationships and cope with challenges[1]) is therefore an important foundation for community and societal resilience.

The College will work toward the following:

- Include students and all staff (academic and professional services) in sustainability-related activities that build shared understanding, skills and a sense of collective agency where possible.
- Recognise the contribution that healthy ecosystems and accessible green spaces can make to human wellbeing, and reflect this in the stewardship and use of College grounds [3, 4].
- Engage, where appropriate, with University research initiatives that explore links between environmental change, mental capital and societal resilience, and use emerging insights to inform College practice where feasible (e.g., Oxford Human-Nature Health Research Platform).

## 5. Targets, Data, and Monitoring

The College will work towards setting measurable, time-bound targets aligned with relevant University frameworks and reporting requirements:

- Develop annual indicators for carbon, energy, waste, biodiversity, travel and food, as data capacity allows.

Initial target areas include:

- Annual carbon-reduction milestones.
- Waste-reduction and recycling targets.
- Qualitative or quantitative biodiversity enhancement goals.

[1] Definition adapted from the UK Government Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project (2008), which described mental capital as the totality of an individual's cognitive and emotional resources. (The Government Office for Science (2008). Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project (2008). Final Project report. London).

## 6. Compliance and Legal Responsibilities

The College will comply with all relevant environmental legislation and University-wide sustainability requirements. Policies and procedures will be updated as standards evolve and as new University guidance is issued.

## 7. Review Cycle

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if required by changes in legislation, University strategy, or College priorities.

The Sustainability Working Group will lead the review and propose revisions to the Estates Committee and Governing Body.

## Bibliography

1. Mishra, J., H. Han, and V. Ramanathan, *A mental health focus to amplify climate resilience actions.* npj Climate Action, 2025. **4**(1).
2. Lawrance, E.L., et al., *The Impact of Climate Change on Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing: A Narrative Review of Current Evidence, and its Implications.* Int Rev Psychiatry, 2022. **34**(5): p. 443–498.
3. Moore, J., et al., *Ecological-Collective-Flourishing: A radical proposal for research and policy to develop and sustain human and environmental flourishing (pre-print).* 2025.
4. Wilhelm, K., et al., *The role of Hybrid Green Spaces in secure psychiatric care.* Wellbeing, Space and Society, 2026. **10**: p. 100348.