

# SUSTAINABILITY & DECARBONISATION POLICY

## OUR VISION: THE ROADMAP TO 2030 AND BEYOND

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Waltham Forest College is committed to leading the transition to a more sustainable and decarbonised future. This policy sets out the College's strategic commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions across all operations by 2035, providing a framework for action across estates, curriculum, community engagement, and institutional culture. It focuses on embedding sustainability across the College's curriculum, operations, and community engagement while prioritising energy efficiency, renewable energy, carbon reduction, and waste management.

The College will make every effort to conserve and enhance natural resources to create a sustainable environment both in its current and future estates. It is acknowledged that climate change is a major and urgent sustainability issue and seeks to responsibly use resources and to strive to continually improve its environmental efficiency performance.

### Sustainability

The EAUC (Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges) defines sustainability as:

*".... about ensuring that the way we live, work and learn does not compromise the planet or the ability of future generations to meet their needs. In the education sector, this means embedding sustainability across all aspects of our institutions - through leadership, teaching and learning, operations, research, and partnerships."*

### Decarbonisation

The UK Government's Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) defines decarbonisation as:

*"... the reduction or removal of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions resulting from human activity, particularly from the energy, transport, industrial and building sectors."*

This definition is aligned with the UK's legal commitment to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, as set out in the Climate Change Act 2008. Decarbonisation is a central pillar of the UK's Net Zero Strategy, which outlines sector-specific pathways to reduce emissions through clean electricity, energy efficiency, electrification, and innovation.

## 2. POLICY STATEMENT

As a leading provider of education, we recognise our responsibility to lead by example in supporting a just and sustainable transition. We are committed to reducing our carbon footprint across all areas of college activity, including estates, transport, procurement, curriculum, and operations, and to proactively promote awareness of environmental responsibilities among all staff and students.

To achieve this, the College will:

- a) Reduce its environmental impact by improving energy efficiency, minimising waste, conserving water, and enhancing biodiversity on campus.
- b) Deliver a curriculum that equips students with the skills, knowledge and values to thrive in a sustainable, net zero economy.

- c) Develop and implement a structured Decarbonisation Plan for the estate which is aligned with recognised national frameworks.
- d) Support active travel, low-carbon commuting, and sustainable transport solutions for staff, students, and visitors (Green Travel Plan).
- e) Prioritise energy efficiency, low-carbon technologies, and renewable energy in our infrastructure and refurbishment projects.
- f) Reduce reliance on fossil fuels (gas) as part of a phased transition to clean energy.
- g) Improve data monitoring and reporting to track energy consumption, emissions, and waste, to identify opportunities for reduction, and ensure accountability.
- h) Annual performance will be benchmarked using sector-recognised tools and published on the College website to demonstrate transparency and accountability (SECR)
- i) Engage staff, students, and stakeholders in supporting carbon reduction behaviours and embedding sustainability into all curriculum areas.
- j) Engage with external partners and seek funding opportunities to accelerate decarbonisation and deliver long-term impact.

This policy is endorsed by the Senior Leadership Team and will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains aligned with national guidance and sector best practice.

### **3. STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The United Kingdom has set itself a vision to have the world-leading education sector in sustainability and climate change by 2030. In order to achieve this the UK has set itself the following strategic aims:

- a) Excellence in Education and skills for a changing world: preparing young people for a world impacted by climate change through learning and practical experience.
- b) Net zero: reducing direct and indirect emissions from our buildings, driving innovation to meet legislative targets and providing opportunities for students to engage practically in the transition to net zero.
- c) Climate resilience: adapting our buildings and systems to prepare for the effects of climate change.
- d) A better environment for future generations: enhancing biodiversity, improving air quality and increasing access to, and connection with, nature in and around our site.

#### **Our aims**

Our strategic aims reflect our alignment with national and local priorities, including the Department for Education's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy, the EAUC/AoC Climate Action Roadmap, and the London Borough of Waltham Forest's Climate Action

Plan. These aims guide our journey toward becoming a low-carbon, climate-resilient, and environmentally responsible educational establishment.

**a) To embed climate education and environmental awareness across the College**

Promote a culture of sustainability by improving understanding of climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable development among staff, students, and stakeholders.

**b) To engage staff and students as active participants in sustainability initiatives**

Empower the College community through campaigns, volunteering, student voice, and green projects that contribute to environmental improvements and climate action.

**c) To improve the environmental performance of our campus and operations**

Implement resource efficiency, renewable energy, waste reduction, sustainable travel, and nature enhancement measures across the College estate.

**d) To integrate sustainability into all aspects of College operations and decision-making**

Embed sustainability in procurement, accommodation planning, curriculum development, catering, and capital projects, aligning with best practice and sector frameworks.

**e) To reduce carbon emissions and improve energy performance**

Deliver energy efficiency upgrades, monitor carbon performance, and invest in low-carbon technologies.

**f) To collaborate with local, regional, and national partners**

Work with Waltham Forest Council, local businesses, the community, and sector bodies (EAUC, AoC) to deliver shared sustainability goals, contribute to London's Net Zero 2030 target, and support a just transition.

## **Objectives**

As part of our vision to become a low-carbon, climate-resilient, and environmentally responsible institution, Waltham Forest College has developed the following sustainability objectives, aligned with national and local strategic goals.

**a) Environmental Awareness and Education**

- Promote a culture of sustainability across the College by raising awareness of climate change, biodiversity, and resource conservation.
- Encourage all staff and students to take personal responsibility for environmental impacts and sustainability practices.
- Integrate sustainability and environmental themes across all areas of the curriculum, embedding the knowledge, skills and values needed for a net zero future.
- Provide staff with training and development opportunities related to environmental sustainability and climate action.
- Organise and support events, campaigns, and activities to raise awareness and engagement in sustainability.
- Minimise the use of environmentally damaging products and promote low-impact alternatives.

**b) Engagement and Leadership**

- Establish clear roles and responsibilities for sustainability across all relevant job descriptions and contracts.
- Encourage staff and students to propose and lead environmental initiatives.

- Plan, review, and monitor progress through the Sustainability Committee, ensuring regular reporting and accountability.
- Actively engage with the local authority, community partners, and regional networks to share good practice and deliver collective impact.

## **c) Environmental Management and Carbon Reduction**

### **Energy and Water**

- Improve the energy efficiency of College buildings through modernised systems, including heating, cooling, lighting, and insulation.
- Implement energy and carbon monitoring tools to track performance and support reduction targets.
- Conserve water by installing water-efficient devices, monitoring usage, and addressing inefficiencies.
- Investigate opportunities for renewable energy, heat recovery, and low-carbon technologies in alignment with the UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard.

### **Buildings and Grounds**

- Ensure all refurbishment and construction projects apply sustainability principles and, where applicable, meet BREEAM or equivalent high standards.
- Maximise natural ventilation in design to reduce reliance on mechanical systems.
- Enhance biodiversity by protecting green spaces and managing grounds to support habitats, reduce chemical use, and promote nature connection.

### **Waste and Recycling**

- Develop and maintain a comprehensive Waste and Resource Management Plan, in line with circular economy principles.
- Promote reduction, reuse and recycling of materials, with accessible and standardised facilities for collecting recyclable items (e.g. batteries, furniture, electronics, paper, plastics).
- Ensure safe and compliant disposal of hazardous and electrical waste (in line with WEEE regulations).
- Foster behavioural change by promoting waste minimisation campaigns and education.

### **Sustainable Procurement**

- Embed sustainability criteria into all purchasing and contracting processes.
- Prioritise local, ethical, and environmentally responsible suppliers and products.
- Reduce procurement of items with excessive packaging or embedded carbon.
- Use biodegradable and non-toxic cleaning and maintenance products wherever possible.

### **Transport and Travel**

- Implement a Green Travel Plan.
- Promote active travel (walking, cycling) through improved communications and targeted events.
- Provide facilities such as bike racks and electric vehicle charging areas to support sustainable commuting.
- Encourage use of public transport and car-sharing schemes to reduce single-occupancy vehicle travel (in line with Green Travel Plan).
- Actively promote the use of local transport networks to support area-wide sustainable transport alternatives.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION PHASES AND REVIEW**

### **Phase 1 (2025-2027)**

This phase builds on previous achievements the College has undertaken in relation to carbon baselines, carbon literacy training, and retrofitting key campus buildings with renewable technologies, such as solar panels and the expansion of the Building Management Systems. Focus continues on working through the 'Emerging' stage of the Climate Action Roadmap, to expand Scope 3 carbon awareness, and to align procurement policies with sustainability objectives. The College is actively involved with the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) as we join communities of good practice and networking groups. Additionally, specialist third party assistance is also being used to better understand how the building can operate more sustainably and efficiently whilst we improve the overall quality of the accommodation on the journey to net zero.

### **Phase 2 (2027-2029)**

The focus will shift towards meeting energy efficiency targets, expanding renewable energy systems, and achieving further reductions in carbon emissions. Curriculum development will be completed, with green skills and sustainability fully embedded into courses across all disciplines. This phase will also include further commitment to meeting the 'Established' stage of the Climate Action Roadmap as previous positive actions become part of every day business.

### **Phase 3 (2029 and beyond)**

By this phase, Waltham Forest College will aim to achieve its carbon reduction targets and meet its sustainability goals by becoming a 'Leading' sustainable College. Full retrofitting of buildings will be completed, and the College will transition to 100% renewable energy. Waste reduction targets will be met, and the Green Travel Plan will be fully integrated into campus operations.

### **Annual Review**

Each year, the College will publish a sustainability progress report, including updates on carbon emissions, renewable energy usage, waste reduction, and curriculum development. This report will be used to assess progress against targets and make adjustments as necessary to ensure that the College stays on track to meet its long-term sustainability and decarbonisation goals.

## **5. STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**

The Sustainability and Decarbonisation Working Group will be created to oversee the implementation of the Sustainability Policy.

### **Terms of Reference**

The Working Group will have the following role:-

- To establish the baselines for environmental performance
- To promote the Sustainability and the Climate Action Agenda within the College, and the Further Education sector
- To promote Local and community engagement and working collaboratively with our Partners
- To set targets for improving performance and preparation of a Sustainability Action Plan
- To identify the resources required for implementation and incorporate these into the College's planning and budgeting process
- To monitor environmental performance
- To produce an annual report on the College's environmental performance for

- consideration by the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body.
- The Sustainability Working Group will meet at least once per term.

## **Membership**

Membership of the Group will aim to include the following roles:-

- Deputy Principal Corporate Resources (Chair)
- Director of Estates, Projects & Sustainability
- HR Manager/Director
- Estates representative
- One Head of School / Service Area
- Marketing department representative
- Up to two members of Teaching staff
- Up to two members of Non-Teaching staff
- One student (nominated by the Student Executive or in their absence, a member of Student Support)

## **Reporting**

The Sustainability and Decarbonisation Working Group will report regularly to the Senior Leadership Team to ensure oversight, transparency, and continuous improvement in delivering the College's environmental, sustainability, and decarbonisation commitments.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Waltham Forest College recognises the vital role it must play in addressing the climate emergency and promoting a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient future. This strategy sets out our ambition to embed sustainability across all aspects of college life.

Achieving our sustainability and decarbonisation goals will require coordinated action, centralised leadership, and active participation from students, staff, partners, and stakeholders. It will also require investment, innovation, and a willingness to embrace change.

This document provides the foundation for that journey. Through the actions and objectives outlined, we aim to reduce our environmental impact, support the development of green skills, and contribute meaningfully to national and local climate goals - including the UK's Net Zero by 2050 target and Waltham Forest Council's ambition to become a net zero borough by 2030.

Progress will be monitored regularly by the Sustainability and Decarbonisation Working Group and reported to the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body where appropriate. The strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant, ambitious, and responsive to emerging priorities.

The College will create a culture of sustainability that inspires current and future generations of learners to lead the transition to a greener, fairer society.

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