Operational Environmental Policy

– updated June 2024

Introduction

In February 2019, Darwin College approved an Environmental Policy. Since then, the College has made significant progress in improving its environmental sustainability, guided by the 2019 policy document. An important change since 2019 is the publication of the **Darwin College Cambridge Strategic Plan 2022-2032** (Appendix), which included an ambition to increase the College's contributions to the global challenge of sustainability. To reflect the progress made since 2019, and the new context of the Strategic Plan, a new Operational Environmental Policy is proposed which draws on the original 2019 policy document.

Context

Since the creation of the 2019 Environmental Policy, the following relevant milestones have occurred:

- The College **Investment Policy** was updated to include **Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) considerations** (Appendix).
- Darwin Kitchens published and updated their **Sustainable & Ethical Catering Statement** (Appendix).
- The **Environmental Infrastructure Working Group** was formed and reported its recommendations to Council.
- The **2022-2032 Strategic Plan** for the College was published, including the following goal: *To act on and promote solutions to global challenges including sustainability.*
- New appointments have been made, increasing the College's capacity to act on environmental sustainability: a full-time Communications Manager and sole College Gardener, and a part-time Project Manager (Sustainability).
- The College has been awarded more than £500,000 in funding to support the **decarbonisation of its built estate**. Plans include the replacement of gas-fired boilers with air-source heat pumps (Frank Young House and Gwen Raverat House), and the design of an on-site heat network from water-source heat pumps.
- A **2023 Sustainability Progress Report** has been published, assessing the College's progress towards its strategic aim.

Policy

The below is the proposed 2024 **Operational Environmental Policy** for Darwin College.

"Darwin College aims to act on and promote solutions to the global challenge of sustainability. To take responsibility for the environmental impact of its activities, and to reflect our concern for sustainability and our relationship with the environment, we have set out a number of principles which will guide our operational and domestic strategy and decision-making."

Principles

1. *"To protect and enhance the natural environment by reducing our direct environmental impact."*
2. *"To create a culture of awareness, and support the sharing of information to improve the personal and collective practices of Fellows, students and staff."*
3. *"To operate a College which supports environmental sustainability initiatives proposed by its members."*
4. *"To align ourselves with, or exceed where possible, recommended University best practices and comply fully with all environmental legislation."*

Governance

It is proposed that the new policy relates to the Strategic Plan as a sub-category of implementations, as shown in Figure 1.

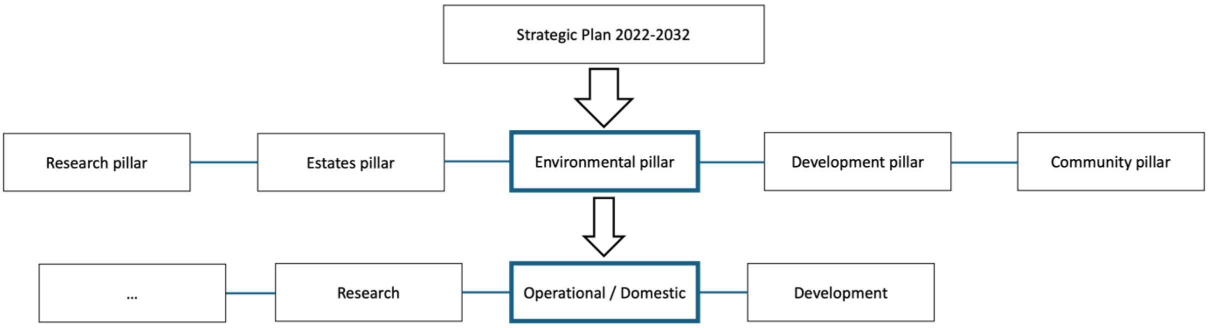

Figure 1 The Governance structure, situating this updated Operational Environmental Policy relative to the 2022-2032 Strategic Plan.

The original proposal, and this updated version, are based on the model illustrated in Figure 2. A general statement of the College position is then elaborated by several principles, which will guide and help define goals and areas of focus for the College.

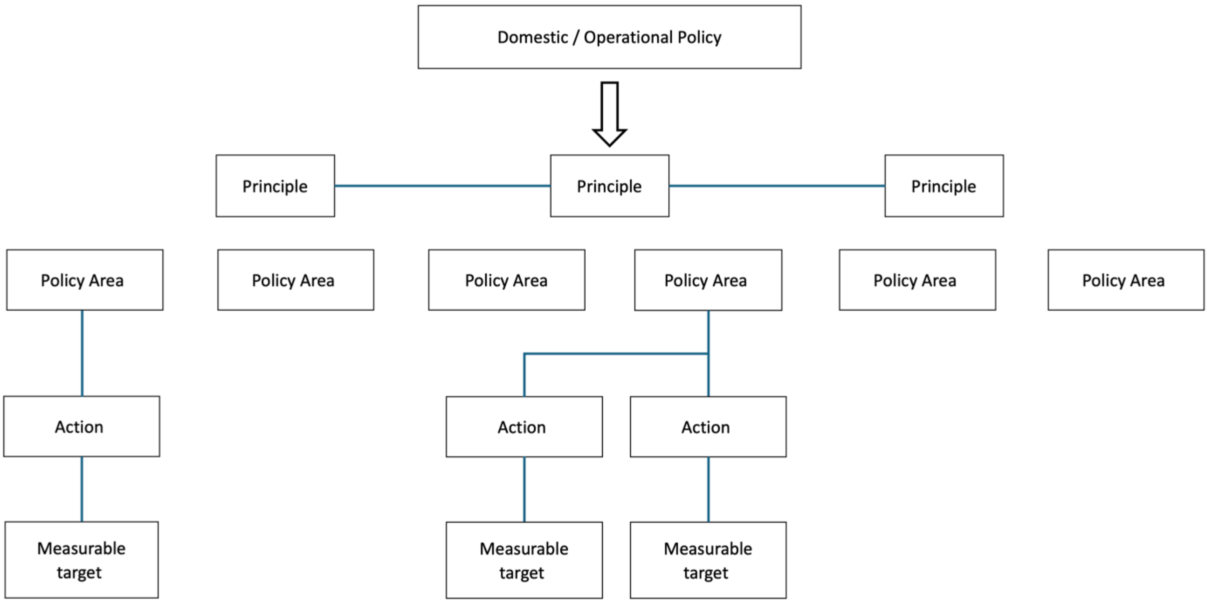

Figure 2 The mode for the operational environmental policy. The principles inform different policy areas, within which the College agrees actions and measurable targets.

It is proposed that a limited number of policy areas should be chosen by College Council with recommendations from key stakeholders[1]. These policy areas will be the focus for change and improvements on an annual or bi-annual basis. For each area, specific actions and measurable targets will be pre-agreed and reported on via an annual report. This update can be maintained by the Project Manager for Sustainability (PMS) and reported to College Council. The PMS can coordinate with relevant Heads of Department, such as the Catering Manager and Gardener, to formulate the annual report. The presentation of the report to Council will provide the context for Council to consult on actions and targets for the coming year(s). Any financial implications would be identified in the budget and would be pre-approved to demonstrate the College's commitment to the policy.

Strategy

These principles inform the policies and actions of the College, with respect to environmental sustainability. These policy areas can be categorised into three groups: Estate, Domestic and Strategic. Table 1 lists some policy areas in each category. Each policy area is coded with a traffic light system: green corresponds to areas where progress has been made since 2019 and should be built on in the coming years; amber corresponds to areas where it is recommended that more effort is concentrated for the coming five years.

Measurable targets

Next to each policy area, in Table 1, some examples of actions are given. Council should consult on actions and metrics, which can be measured and evaluated by the annual progress report (led by the PMS). **It is recommended that these measurable targets are agreed annually by College Council and are appropriately quantitative.**

[1] Informed stakeholders to recommend policy areas of focus including members of relevant college committees, and the Project Manager (Sustainability).

Table 1 Policy areas and actions, informed by the operational environmental sustainability principles. Measurable targets to be agreed by Council.

Policy area	Areas of action – to be extended
Estate	
Energy	Installing an on-site heat network
Biodiversity	Monitoring
Construction / Refurbishment	Insulation of existing buildings
Domestic	
Waste and Recycling	Increasing proportion of waste management activity at the higher stages of the waste hierarchy
Energy Consumption	Monitoring and reducing
Food Policy	Promoting an environmentally conscious diet
Hazardous Products	Embedding minimum ESG standards into policy and practice
Procurement	Embedding minimum ESG standards into policy and practice
Strategic	
Investment / Divestment	Reporting on progress against investment policy (Appendix)
Sustainable Construction	Considering sustainable building certifications. Evaluating materials used by maintenance department.
Transportation	Embedding low-carbon travel incentives and funding policies for all members

Appendix – Darwin College Cambridge Strategic Plan 2022-2032

2022-2032 Strategic Plan includes the following aim and goals: *To act on and promote solutions to global challenges including sustainability.*

a. Initiate an ambitious College-wide Sustainability Plan that enables the College's estate to become at least carbon zero by 2032, and which fosters behaviours and actions that reduce individual and collective environmental impacts more widely. This will include ensuring that all energy sources used in College are supplied from renewable sources, including providing heating and hot water using new technologies such as heat pumps.
b. Create and promote sustainability best practice guides for use by all the College community both in College and beyond.
c. To establish a rolling programme of College activities (research collaborations, education and outreach initiatives, interdisciplinary seminars, practical actions within College) to contribute to selected global challenges, especially those identified by the Global South.
d. Establish a College Sustainability Fund to support collaborations that address sustainability both within and beyond the College.
e. Foster collaborations with other University, College and local initiatives addressing global challenges where Darwin can add value.
f. To collaborate with our highly qualified and globally distributed alumni network to share knowledge and inform key decision makers.
g. To promote Darwin internationally as a destination of choice for students and Fellows committed to addressing global challenges.

Appendix – Darwin College Cambridge Investment Policy

Objective C: Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) considerations

The College Trustees have, as a matter of principle, and endorsed by the Governing Body, decided that the College will not invest in entities where:

- The investment may conflict, or be inconsistent, with primary aims, objectives and activities of the College;
- The investment might alienate the College's supporters or potential supporters;
- The investment may be reputationally damaging;
- The investment is considered by the Trustees to be unethical; or
- The investment might otherwise hamper the work of the College.

The College will undertake the following particular ESG actions:

- **ESG Ratings Monitoring:** The College will continue to require its investment managers to provide regular updates and a comprehensive annual report on the ESG ratings (using robust and objective metrics) of the College's direct equity holdings, and will expect its investment managers to maintain or improve the overall average ranking of the College's portfolios.
- **Climate change and sustainable development:** The College recognises that climate change is a real and present danger, and encourages debate on the appropriate response by the College to its risks. The College seeks to support sustainability, carbon reduction, the development of renewable energy sources, and action to mitigate the effects of adverse climate change.

The College Trustees have a legal duty to ensure that the College's investment risks and returns are kept in balance, and that any risks that are financially material are taken into account. The Trustees therefore expect the Finance (Investments) Committee to ascertain where climate change presents a financially material risk in the College's investments and to take appropriate investment/divestment decisions to address this risk.

The College's policy incorporates a three-tiered approach to tackling climate change through its investments:

- **Divestment:** The College will maintain its existing position in not investing in the most carbon intensive fossil fuels – thermal coal and tar sands. It will progressively divest from its holdings in other fossil fuel companies, on a timescale which is based on a robust evaluation of the companies' financial prospects, transition risk, and progress in shifting to renewables and work to enable carbon reduction, and which seeks to manage any diminution in income to the College.
- **Monitoring and engagement:** The College will, through the ESG ratings monitoring referred to above, continue to monitor its investments for their environmental and climate impact. The College will seek to use its influence, both as an academic institution and (through its investment managers) as an investor in companies which may be significant carbon emitters, to encourage and facilitate positive change.
- **Positive Investment:** The College will give serious consideration to investing in dedicated ESG funds as these become more established and in other opportunities to invest in low carbon, sustainable, or renewable solutions to global energy needs.
- **Ethical screening:** The College adheres to Charity Commission guidance on ethical investments, and the Trustees may from time to time when it is consistent with that advice, direct the Finance (Investments) Committee and the College's investment managers not to make direct investments in specific companies. Such directions are in place prohibiting investment in tobacco companies, companies dealing in armaments with countries in which the UK government does not permit them to trade, and companies dependent upon pornography or child labour.
- **Pooled investments:** The College will seek to extend the above ESG principles to its indirect holdings through pooled investment funds.

Appendix – Darwin College Cambridge Sustainable & Ethical Catering Statement

Summary of Aims:

- Reduce ruminant meat.
- Reduce the consumption of dairy products.
- Promote the consumption of more plant-based foods.
- Reduce food wastage.
- Source food and other products locally where possible.
- Ensure that products are traded fairly throughout the supply chain.
- Ensure that we provide fish from sustainable sources, limiting the impact on threatened stocks and through the environmental impacts of aquaculture.
- Reduce single-use plastic and reduce the use of all plastic packaging.
- Continue to implement forward-thinking sustainability best practice.

Objectives:

- Raise awareness of the benefits to the environment and individuals of the sustainable and ethical statement through communications, training and accreditation applications.

- Monitor performance against the statement aims, including setting sustainable food targets, and reporting regularly on performance against these.