



MidKent College Sustainability Policy

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1 Introduction

MidKent College (MKC) is a large Further Education (FE) provider with campuses in Medway and Maidstone. The student population consists of c. 4,200 16-18-year-old students, 3,000 adult students and 700 apprentices.

The College launched a ten-year Strategic Plan in 2020. The Strategic Plan clarifies the College's key priorities until 2030. Among these priorities is work on the environmental agenda in order to reduce the College's impact on the environment.

A first step in the work on the environmental agenda for MKC was to measure the carbon footprint and set out targets to reduce the level by 2030 to net zero.

The Estates Strategy and Curriculum strategy provide the overall principles for environmental sustainability within the College estate. However, it is recognised that in order to reduce the College's environmental impact, the above principles need to be transformed into SMART targets with a clear action plan. It is also recognised that whilst the College estate is the most significant factor contributing to the College's environmental impact, there are other factors that require consideration, such as environmental awareness in teaching and learning and travel and transport to College. It is the role of this Sustainability Policy to bring the full breadth of MKC's environmental sustainability work under a single overarching policy.

This Sustainability Policy replaces all prior environmental sustainability plans. The Policy is split into a number of phases and this document covers actions related to the first phase, which will be delivered between January 2022 and July 2025. Phase 2 will start from August 2025.

2 Defining “green”

The Sustainability Policy at MKC covers all aspects related to the College’s environmental sustainability i.e. “maintaining or ‘sustaining’ the environment by protecting natural resources and preventing damage through climate change”¹. **The strategy endorses and uses the *Climate action roadmap for FE colleges (Roadmap)*, produced by the Climate Commission for UK Higher and Further Education in 2020 as a base line for the action plan. The *Roadmap* is included in Appendix A. using the principles from the *Roadmap* the College has created its own strategy to become carbon net zero by 2030.**

The *Roadmap* divides colleges into three levels depending on their maturity in terms of sustainability:

1. **Emerging:** colleges just beginning to address sustainability
2. **Established:** colleges with an established approach to sustainability and structures in place to support it
3. **Leading:** colleges which are models to others on sustainability

Whilst there are examples of good practice related to green approaches at MKC, as described in the next Section, as a whole MKC is considered to be at an emerging level at the time of writing this Policy. MKC’s target is to move from emerging to established during the calendar year 2024, with a view to becoming a leading college on environmental sustainability by 2026.

In scope of the strategy are initiatives related to:

1. Leadership and governance
2. Learning, teaching and research
3. Estates and operations
4. Partnerships and engagement

Data collection, the fifth element of the roadmap by the Climate Commission, is embedded within all the above initiatives.

¹ Climate action roadmap for FE colleges, Climate Commission for UK Higher and Further Education (2020)

3 Leadership and governance

3.1 Current status with leadership and governance

As described in Section 2, the aim of this policy is to cover the full breadth of green work from estates to curriculum and partnerships.

The dedicated lead for environmental sustainability is the Executive Director of Finance and Estates.

The College has a Sustainability Committee and the purpose of the Committee is to oversee the implementation of the College’s Sustainability Strategy as approved by the Board and recommend to the Board any changes to this strategy, helping ensure MKC is a responsible, resilient and sustainable business.

The College also has a Sustainability Governance Committee, formed to overview the project to replace the College’s reliance on the use of gas to provide heating and hot water. This major decarbonization project also targets the generation of electricity on site and reduce the reliance on the National Grid. The College is also working to target a reduction in the use of electricity on site, particularly in the change to low voltage lighting.

3.2 Phase 1 actions for leadership and governance

Leadership and governance actions			
Item	Action	Success measure	Lead
1	Agree a college-wide Green Strategy	Strategy approved by Corporation	Exec Director of Finance and Estates
2	Appoint a sustainability lead for the college	Clear task description defined Appointment agreed by SMT	Exec Director of Finance and Estates
3	Establish a sustainability Committee to drive the implementation of the strategy forward	Cross-college and department representation secured Terms of reference agreed	Exec Director of Finance and Estates
4	Gather college views on sustainability	Build buy-in to the work of the Sustainability Committee Create a whole-college ethos around Sustainability	Sustainability Committee
5	Set net zero target for MKC	Ambitious, specific, and achievable target set Drive forward the work of the Sustainability Committee beyond 2025	Sustainability Committee

6	Commit to an annual budget to support work on environmental sustainability	Annual budget confirmed, separating revenue and capital expenditure	Exec Director of Finance and Estates
7	Oversee and monitor progress towards greener MKC	Termly reports to SMT on progress against actions	Exec Director of Finance and Estates
8	Phase 2 Sustainability Strategy developed	Phase 2 builds on lessons from Phase 1 Phase 2 strategy is deliverable Phase 2 Strategy is endorsed by Exec and Corporation	Exec Director of Finance and Estates

4 Teaching, learning

4.1 Current status with teaching, learning

The extent to which environmental sustainability is embedded in teaching and learning is currently dependent on the campus, curriculum area and individual teachers. There are many examples of student and staff-led initiatives on environment sustainability across the College.

Examples of green initiatives at MKC

Recycling – investment in new recycling bins and process, involving the students and then measuring the amount of waste recycled

Increasing the biodiversity on the College campuses, for example achieving the Hedgehog Friendly Campus Bronze Award.

Repurposing waste products in Construction – such as wood and metal

Involving the students in local litter picking, cleaning the community areas and analysing the waste to help in lobbying, ie disposable vapes

Environmental lobbying

Set up a student green club on both campuses to listen to the views of students and assist them in running projects to further the sustainability agenda

In addition to the curriculum work, MKC has formed a student union in 2023/24 and the union will be appointing to an Environmental Sustainability Officer role, which will lead on the student voice and involvement working towards agreed goals.

4.2 Phase 1 actions for teaching, learning

Teaching, learning and research actions			
Item	Action	Success measure	Lead
1	Deliver carbon literacy training for staff and students		Curriculum Directors and L&D Coordinator

2	Ensure new curriculum strategy considers environmental sustainability in teaching and learning	Environmental sustainability is embedded into curriculum delivery and/or enrichment activity as a core part of the college offer	Exec Director of Curriculum and Quality
	Develop professional short courses in sustainable methods of construction & engineering through SDF and LSIF partnerships	Establishment of Skills factory, Energy Centre, and Retrofit Centre with associated short course offer available.	Exec Director of Curriculum and Quality
3	Create a VLE page to share good practice materials and examples on embedding sustainability into curriculum	Good practice is disseminated across the college group	Exec Director of Curriculum and Quality
4	Include a Green Award in the annual MKC Student Awards to promote excellent practice	Excellent practice is recognised and celebrated	Director of Marketing & Comms
5	Arrange a best practice workshop with other colleges	Learn from best practice and implement ideas within MKC	Exec Director of Finance and Estates

5 Estates and operations

5.1 Current status with estates and operations

5.1.1 Decarbonisation

The College has embarked on a major decarbonisation project to remove the gas boilers and replace with ground and air source heat pumps and to produce a significant amount of the electricity required on site via solar panels. A major £12m investment in the latest technology to reduce the carbon footprint of the College by 70%.

The College engaged Hillside Environmental, now called Hillside Infinitas Group, to measure the College carbon footprint and to produce a report which identified projects to reduce the emissions and reliance on fossil fuels. The report detailed the potential to remove all of the College gas powered boilers as the source of heating and hot water on both campuses. The solution for Maidstone was presented to remove the boilers and use a ground source heat pump to produce the heat required. The main car park was an ideal site as it was already a brownfield site and located in between the two buildings, it would also be able to be returned to a car park once the bore field was completed.

Medway has a significant amount of Heritage assets on and near to the site which prevents the use of ground source heat pumps and so the campus requires air source to replace the gas boilers.

Solar power source is suitable for both sites and this solution will then power both the heat pumps and also provide the electricity for the campus buildings.

The solutions are innovative and market leading and so the College strategy is to utilize the marketing potential of the projects to showcase the College as a leading environmentally progressive organisation. This includes the potential use of PV-T and also vertically fitted solar panels which can demonstrate visually the Colleges commitment to the green agenda.

5.1.2 New builds

BREEAM, short for Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method, is a tool typically used to assess the environmental sustainability of college new build and major refurbishment projects. Local authorities granting planning consent for a building project often specify a minimum BREEAM level they expect a project to achieve. The ESFA providing capital funding for further education also often sets minimum BREEAM levels they expect projects that they fund to target. The BREEAM levels include:

- Outstanding – broadly top 1% of UK non-domestic buildings
- Excellent – broadly top 10% of UK non-domestic buildings
- Very Good – broadly top 25% of UK non-domestic buildings
- Good – broadly top 50% of UK non-domestic buildings
- Pass – broadly to 75% of UK non-domestic buildings
- Unclassified – non-compliant with BREEAM

The MKC Property Strategy has defined that all new builds should achieve a BREEAM level Very Good or better from 2024 onwards.

Options to BREEAM as a sustainability measure

Whilst BREEAM is the most commonly used measure to assess the environmental sustainability of new builds and major refurbishment projects, it is not the only and not always the best one to assess the true sustainability of a building. Other measures used include:

- Be Lean (use less energy), Be Clean (supply energy efficiently) and Be Green (use renewable energy). Be Seen (post completion monitoring with performance assessments) has recently been added to this list. This approach complements a BREEAM assessment but can also be used to evidence sustainability without the additional costs associated with acquiring a BREEAM certification.
- Net zero carbon developments. BREEAM does not calculate net zero and as such, this would form an additional or alternative way to demonstrate the sustainability of a development.
- Passive House: a voluntary standard for energy efficiency in a building, which reduces the building's ecological footprint. It results in ultra-low energy buildings that require little energy for space heating or cooling. This often increases build costs, but these are usually paid off over time due to lower energy consumption.

5.1.3 Estate maintenance and refurbishments

The current annual consumption of electricity and gas across the college campuses is provided below.

Campus	Current energy consumption per annum kWh	Possible reduction in energy consumption per annum
Medway		
Maidstone		

The energy certificates for each building provide a number of recommendations for actions to reduce energy consumption. Many of these currently remain unactioned and will be targeted as part of the Sustainability Policy.

The approach to lighting varies across the College's campuses. In all campuses, old light bulbs are replaced by LED lighting as a standard practice. In some areas, many offices, corridors, and classrooms have lighting with motion detectors which automatically switch the lights off when the space is not in use. In some spaces, switching the lights off when leaving the room is dependent on the room users. In these areas there are posters/ signs to encourage switching off the lights.

Building heating and cooling systems vary between the college campuses. It is possible to centrally turn off electricity from radiators to ensure they are off during summer and holiday times. Mechanical ventilation and heating is available. This is managed centrally by the Facilities team.

Good practice on the management of heating, cooling, power, and lighting would be to update the Building Management System (BMS), which is planned as part of the decarbonization project. This could automatically switch these services on and off in each space depending on when they are occupied.

Purchases relating to fixtures, fittings and equipment and building materials are undertaken with a strong focus on value for money, and until now without much focus on environmental sustainability. Procurement practices are now changing to focus on sustainability.

5.1.4 IT systems and infrastructure

The carbon footprint of the college IT systems and infrastructure is significant but effective IT systems enable the adoption of other more environmentally sustainable approaches, such as the move towards paperless work and study.

The IT department has adopted many green options as the default option for their systems, 'nudging' user behavior towards greener approaches. This includes black and white printing and double-sided printing as standard practice. Software is used to send PCs into sleep mode after 5 minutes and shut them down at the login screen if no user is logged in to reduce power consumption.

The IT department has processes in place to reduce, re-use and recycle IT hardware. These include:

- Reusing spare parts from old equipment thereby extending the life of existing equipment and avoiding the need to procure more.
- Reusing older PCs by converting them for use with VDI technology, avoiding the need to procure additional terminals.
- Purchasing refurbished IT equipment to reduce costs and the need to manufacture more equipment. MKC also sells some redundant equipment to allow others to do the same.
- Recycling the majority of redundant equipment in accordance with WEEE regulations. For MACs, this includes recycling the packaging as well.

5.1.5 Waste management

There is no up-to-date knowledge of the amount of waste MKC produces weekly, monthly, or annually.

Current waste management processes vary between the campuses. In all campuses, the processes for managing food waste by the catering providers is effective with clear sorting of waste to recyclables, bio waste, metal waste and general waste. Similarly, waste from building works, refurbishments and day-to-day estates operations is effectively sorted.

The process for managing waste produced by staff and students is through recycling and regular bins, which are available in classrooms, staff rooms, and in the corridors.

5.1.6 Food management

Catering at the Medway Campus is managed by Aramark and at the Maidstone Campus it is run inhouse by the College. There is a Costa franchise at Medway, run by Aramark.

Aramark and the inhouse team are highly effective in ensuring minimal food waste from the catering offer. Aramark has a detailed sustainability policy that they implement as part of their service.

5.1.7 Procurement

The College procurement policy includes increased focus on sustainable buying, looking to purchase wherever possible from local suppliers. It also includes a much more focused approach to the reviewing of tenders and quotes to put greater emphasis on suppliers green credentials and this element is now reflected in the scoring

5.1.8 Travel and transport

The College community consists of c.7,000 individuals who regularly attend the College campuses, these include students, staff, subcontracted personnel and visitors. Most of them travel to and from College on a daily basis and this travel is a significant Scope 3 emission for MKC.

The Medway and Maidstone campuses are located within excellent transport links. The strong connectivity helps support the use of public transport when travelling to and from College campuses. Car parking is provided for staff free of charge on a first come, first served basis. The College currently has 2 electric car parking spaces at each campus.

Each campus offers cycle parking.

5.2 Phase 1 actions for estates and operations

Estates and operations actions			
Item	Action	Success measure	Lead
1	Upskill on measuring emissions	Estates staff are trained and better able to assess college emissions	Facilities Managers
2	Measure the college's carbon footprint using existing data	Clear understanding of college baseline Ability to track progress over time	Exec Director of Finance and Estates
3	Ensure recycling signage is available in every building	Students and staff are aware of the college's recycling processes A 20% increase in the amount of waste recycled by students and staff in 2025	Facilities Managers
4	Implement strategies to reduce energy use	Project to change the lighting to low voltage utilising an ESFA grant	Facilities Managers
5	Quantify the amount of waste produced by the college per annum	Clear understanding of college baseline Ability to track progress over time	Director of IT
6	Establish environmental sustainability targets for all new build and major refurbishment projects	All new builds achieve at least BREEAM very good or equivalent measure All new builds target net zero carbon developments All major refurbishments achieve at least BREEAM Very Good or equivalent measure	Exec Director of Finance and Estates
7	Negotiate with food suppliers for sustainable food options	10% increase in the share of sustainable food options available	Commercial Director and Facilities Managers

6 Partnerships and engagement

6.1 Current status with partnerships and engagement

The college has a wide variety of partnerships with thousands of organisations including:

- Suppliers, such as Aramark
- Employer partners, such as Rivermeade School and JTL.
- Funders, such as the ESFA
- Local authority and other political and social partners
- Other colleges, schools, higher education providers etc.

For those partners that the College has a contractual relationship with, the procurement process can be used to set requirements on environmental sustainability. For example, for energy suppliers it could mean determining a minimum level of renewable energy supply that is required. The MKC Procurement Policy includes a reference to environmental sustainability as criteria for assessing tenders, in addition to quality and value for money.

In addition to those partners that MKC has a contractual relationship with, the College has an opportunity to influence behaviours and promote environmental awareness among the full spectrum of stakeholders it interacts with, from internal to external stakeholders. The College has sophisticated communications platforms and strong experience in running communications campaigns. There are also good practice examples, such as the UCL sustainability webpages⁸, which provide ideas for how MKC can approach stakeholder engagement on environmental sustainability.

6.2 Phase 1 actions for partnerships and engagement

Partnership and engagement actions			
Item	Action	Success measure	Lead
1	Sign the Global Climate Letter	Demonstrate college commitment to the environmental agenda	Exec Director of Finance and Estates
2	Include environmental sustainability as a criterion for all procurements	All supplier contracts include clauses on environmental sustainability	Finance and Procurement Manager
3	Create an engagement plan for involving students, staff, the local community, and wider stakeholders in the college's green work	College community and key stakeholders are encouraged into and enthused by sustainability work Information on MKC's work on environmental sustainability is easily available	Commercial Director
4	Publish targets for reduced carbon footprint and net zero	Targets are clearly identified, based on current measures and communicated widely	Exec Director of Finance and Estates

7 Conclusions

MKC is one of three large colleges in Kent. Through its estate and operations and the actions of the college community, MKC makes a significant impact on the environment every year. In a time of a global climate emergency, it is a moral duty for MKC to do its part in reducing its impact on the environment in order to protect and sustain the environment for the future generations that it serves.

This Sustainability Policy is a starting point in this work and its aim is to ensure that by July 2025 MKC:

- Be an established level college on sustainability;
- Have committed to a net zero target;
- Set an annual capital and revenue budget to
- Have in place structures for driving the sustainability strategy forward;
- Have created momentum among staff and students for working on the green agenda;
- Have a new curriculum strategy in place, which is aligned with the green strategy;
- Have a reputation for being a leading college on environmental sustainability.

Appendix A. FE Climate Action Roadmap

