

ENP-03 / Development and Refurbishment Sustainability Policy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy sets out Unite Students' approach to improving the environmental sustainability of new property developments and refurbishments.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all aspects of Unite's operations under direct operational control. All Unite Students new developments are design-and-build projects. As the client, Unite Students appoint a third-party main contractor to build the property as per Unite Students' standard building specification, and in line with Building Regulations and planning consent. Unite Students do not therefore have direct control over the design and construction. In addition, while Unite Students develops most properties directly (including land acquisition, obtaining planning, appointing main contractor to build in line with our specification, and acting as client during development), some new Unite Students properties are forward-funded, meaning that a third party has developed the property meaning Unite Students has reduced ability to influence outcomes.

1.3 Responsibilities

This policy is managed by the Head of Sustainability and our Construction Sustainability Manger and applies to all Unite's employees and contractors across all our operations including joint ventures and co-investment vehicles. It is of particular relevance to our Development and Estates functions who coordinate and undertake construction and refurbishment activity respectively.

1.4 References

The strategy is further supported by key policies and commitments across the business including but not limited to the following:

- Sustainability Policy
- Environmental Policy.
- Net Zero Carbon Pathway.
- Sustainable Construction Framework.
- Procurement Policy.
- Social policy suite (covering: Social Impact, Charity, Volunteering, and Living Wage).
- Health & Safety Policy, and Fire Safety Policy.

- Governance policy suite (covering: Anti Bribery, Modern Slavery, and Privacy).
- Customer policy suite (covering: Student Mental Health, Student Disability, Sexual Misconduct and Domestic Violence, and Safeguarding).
- HR policy suite (covering: Equality Diversity & Inclusion, Trans and Gender Identity, Bullying & Harassment, Grievances, Disciplinary, Appeals, Employment Practices, Flexible Working, Parental, Adoption & Surrogacy, Sickness and Absence, Alcohol & Substance, and Whistleblowing).

1.5 Definitions

BREEAM	The Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology. One of the most widely used approaches to measuring and improving the sustainability performance of new and existing buildings. Awards a rating from “pass”, thorough “good”, “very good” and “excellent”, to “outstanding”.
EPC	Energy Performance Certificate. Mandatory assessment of a buildings likely energy performance calculated using the buildings design characteristics rather than real-world performance.
GHG:	Greenhouse gasses. Emissions that contribute towards climate change, including a number of gasses some of which are more potent than carbon dioxide. Usually represented simply as tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO ₂ e)
LCA	Lifecycle Analysis. The process of assessing and improving the environmental impact (especially embodied carbon and GHG emissions) and performance of a building throughout its whole lifespan including consideration of, for example, its design, specification, construction and materials used.
LCC	Lifecycle Costing. The process of modelling total costs of construction, operation, maintenance and disposal of a property.
LZCTs	Low and Zero Carbon Technologies. Equipment that either generates low or zero carbon energy (such as solar photovoltaic (PV) panels), or that deliver building services like heating or hot water in a more carbon efficient manner than traditional approaches (for example using a heat pump rather than gas boilers).

2 Policy

2.1 Intent

This policy seeks to reduce the environmental impacts arising from the deliver and subsequent operation of new properties for Unite Students', and the refurbishment of existing properties. It also aims to ensure Unite Students' properties support and facilitate responsible living and working habits among employees and customers and creates a positive impact on local communities.

2.2 Principles

While the operation of our properties is the most visible and obvious source of environmental impacts, there are significant impacts associated with the development and construction of new properties, and refurbishment of existing properties. These activities are typically undertaken by third-parties on our behalf, which can bring additional complexities and challenges.

Careful consideration must be given to the performance of a building over its full lifecycle, as decisions made to reduce impacts during construction could affect performance during operation. For example, moving to a lightweight structure with less concrete could reduce embodied carbon but lead to a more thermally-responsive building that requires more heating and cooling to maintain thermal comfort, thus increasing operational GHG emissions.

This policy therefore sets out overarching principles and requirements that we will apply during construction and refurbishment activity in order to reduce environmental impacts arising from that activity, but also aims to ensure that decisions made during design, construction and refurbishment help us to minimise downstream environmental impacts during building operation.

2.2.1 GHG Emissions from construction and refurb activity

As set out in our Environmental Policy and Net Zero Carbon Pathway, reducing our contribution to climate change is the most materially significant opportunity we have for reducing our overall environmental impact. Notwithstanding that design and specification decisions influence downstream operational GHG emissions, the three most significant sources of GHG emissions during actual construction and refurbishment are:

1. **Demolition:** The carbon emissions associated with the demolition or strip out of existing materials on-site, including site operations, water consumption, transportation and waste processing.
2. **Construction activity:** GHG emissions arising directly from construction site activity, such as energy, fuel and water use on site, transport of materials and construction workers to site, and waste arising from construction activity.
3. **Embodied-carbon:** GHG emissions that have already arisen in the supply chain of construction materials and components including extraction and processing of raw materials, manufacturing, and distribution.

These GHG emissions can be reduced by changing behaviour, working practices on site, as well as material selection, material sourcing and the design of the building. Lifecycle analysis (LCA) is the practice of optimising the design of a building to best balancing all environmental impacts throughout the whole lifecycle of a property, from design, through construction, occupation, to eventual end of life.

Taken together, these two sources of GHG emissions are a significant contributor to our “scope 3” or supply-chain emissions (as opposed to “scope 1” or “scope 2” emissions arising from direct combustion of fossil fuels and use of electricity respectively during the operation of our properties). We calculate and publicly report scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions in mandatory and voluntary carbon reporting each year.

2.2.2 Operational performance

It is also important that new properties are designed, specified and built to reduce energy and water consumption during occupation, and that consideration is given to other factors that influence other aspects of sustainability too such as how the building design and facilities support occupant health and wellbeing, indoor air quality, recycling and biodiversity.

2.3 Key Outcomes

This policy seeks to reduce environmental impacts associated with delivery of new developments and refurbishment of existing properties, and to improve their operational performance, as outlined in section **Error! Reference source not found.** To do so, we will consider all aspects of our activity in these areas including but not limited to:

2.3.1 Legal Compliance

We will comply with all relevant legislative, regulatory and planning requirements at all stages including planning, design, construction and refurbishment including but not limited to Health

and Safety laws, Planning Consents, Building Regulations, and the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations.

2.3.2 New Development GHG Emissions

We will assess, and work with our supply chain to reduce, GHG emissions from construction activity and embodied carbon in new developments. These will be calculated and publicly reported annually as part of our Scope 3 GHG emissions.

2.3.3 Consultation and Site Selection

We will consult with relevant stakeholders and consider the impact of new developments on the local community when selecting sites for new developments, and favouring brownfield or existing urban sites.

2.3.4 Project Sustainability Lead

We will appoint a dedicated sustainability lead for all new projects to work through all stages of planning, design and construction, to act as design champion for sustainability and will monitor progress against agreed outcomes through the construction process.

2.3.5 BREEAM

All new developments will be assessed using BREEAM (the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology) at both Interim and Final Assessment stage and must achieve formal certification to at least Excellent. We will also specify additional credits that must be achieved in addition to mandatory credits stipulated by BREEAM, which are particularly important and relevant to our sustainability strategy (such as on energy performance, water efficiency etc).

2.3.6 Sustainability Throughout Design and Operation

We will ensure that the principles of sustainability are applied to all new developments and refurbishments, from pre-planning through to handover and ongoing operation, helping to ensure our customers and operations teams can live and work in a sustainable manner. Specific consideration will be given to how new developments and refurbishments can support our sustainability strategy

2.3.7 Sustainable Procurement

The principles of our Sustainable Procurement Policy will be applied in relation to suppliers of products and services at all stages of work.

2.3.8 Lifecycle Cost Analysis

We will undertake full lifecycle cost analysis for all new developments including consideration of future energy, carbon, and maintenance to reduce the financial and environmental impact of future operation

2.3.9 Materials and Resources

We will consider the selection and responsible sourcing of materials and equipment so as to reduce the embodied carbon and wider environmental impacts of the development and help create sustainable and healthy buildings.

2.3.10 Energy Performance

We will ensure that all new developments achieve a non-domestic EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) rating of at least a B rating, with aspiration to achieve an A rating. We will also ensure that opportunities to improve building energy and water efficiency are considered and, where practicable, implemented during refurbishments.

2.3.11 Health and Wellbeing

We will consider the design and specification of new developments and refurbishments to support and improve health and wellbeing of building occupants and users.

2.3.12 Biodiversity

We will give consideration the impact of developments on the local environment and implement measures to protect and enhance biodiversity where practicable.

2.3.13 Heating and Cooling and Other Building Services

We will design and construct buildings that provide comfortable living conditions all year round in the most energy and carbon efficient manner, taking account of passive design features and building services to reduce heating, cooling, lighting and other energy consumption for example by using heat recovery ventilation, daylight, and building fabric performance.

2.3.14 Low and Zero Carbon Technologies

We will make use of LZCTs such as renewable energy and heat recovery to minimise energy consumption and carbon emissions. We will endeavour to make use of solar PV on to generate electricity on site in all new developments, favour low carbon heating and hot water solutions such as heat pumps and use smart networked heating controls to optimise comfort and reduce energy wastage.

2.3.15 Water Efficiency

We will ensure the building, building services and landscaping are designed and constructed to minimise water consumption during operation.

2.3.16 Waste Management

We will ensure the principles of the waste management hierarchy are applied to design and construction to minimise waste and enable recycling both during construction and ongoing operation. We will work with our supply chain where possible to use products and materials that are recycled and/or easily recyclable.

2.3.17 Construction Site Impacts

All construction sites must participate in the Considerate Constructors Scheme, and we will assess the embodied carbon and construction activity carbon emissions of all new developments.

2.3.18 Commissioning

We will undertake initial commissioning and then periodic re-commissioning of building services to ensure ongoing efficient and effective operation.

2.4 Governance

Detailed implementation of this policy will be achieved via our standard procedures and specifications used for new developments and major refurbishments. This document is reviewed annually and communicated to appropriate stakeholders. All staff and contractors are expected to comply with this policy and support its implementation.

2.5 Reporting

We will actively participate in various environmental and sustainability related reporting and disclosure schemes such as CDP and the Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark (GRESB) as well as through disclosures made in our Annual Report and Accounts and on our corporate website, including The Taskforce for Climate Related Financial Disclosure (TCFD) and the European Public Real Estate Association Sustainability Best Practice Reporting guidelines (EPRA sBPR): <https://www.unitegroup.com/sustainability>.

Appendix A – Document Control Information

Document Management			
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<input type="checkbox"/> Data Protection	<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> NCC / ECC	<input type="checkbox"/> City Teams
<input type="checkbox"/> Sales	<input type="checkbox"/> IT Service Desk	<input type="checkbox"/> IT	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal
<input type="checkbox"/> Finance - AR	<input type="checkbox"/> Finance - Treasury	<input type="checkbox"/> InfoSec	<input type="checkbox"/> HR
<input type="checkbox"/> Finance - AP	<input type="checkbox"/> Procurement	<input type="checkbox"/> H&S	<input type="checkbox"/> Business Intelligence
<input type="checkbox"/> Estates	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Marketing	<input type="checkbox"/> Asset Management
<input type="checkbox"/> Digital	<input type="checkbox"/> Office Support	<input type="checkbox"/> PMO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Finance	<input type="checkbox"/> Acquisition / Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Student Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
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