

Sustainability at Selwyn

by and for Selwyn JCR and MCR

Living sustainably can be a stressful endeavour at the best of times, and often comes with a whole heap of conflicting info to sift through, taking time and energy that sometimes we just don't have to give. However, at Selwyn we believe it's up to each of us to play our part as best we can, and hopefully this guide can help you out there! We're not expecting everyone to follow all of these guidelines all of the time, but even taking up some of the tips can help cultural and habitual shifts.

These are things that you can do as an individual but we are fully aware that collective, institutional and economical change is required. It isn't all up to you - climate change and environmental destruction are systemic issues. This guide will help you understand what Selwyn's doing to be sustainable, and how you can fit into our sustainable community.

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Green Officers 2022

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Waste & Recycling

Recycling, combined with mindful consumption, helps us make the most of the Earth's resources and preserves our planet for generations to come. In Cambridge, recycling is highly encouraged, and may be possible for more items than at home!

What can you do?

Students - recycle most things in your gyp in a bin with a green bag. Recycling here is consistent with recycling in a Cambridge City Council 'blue bin' so see here for details: [Recycling and rubbish A to Z - Cambridge City Council](#).

Things to recycle here include:

- Aerosols (although to avoid aerosols completely consider trying a [solid plastic-free natural deodorant](#) instead, sold at [Lush](#), [Full Circle](#), [Arjuna Wholefoods](#) and [Revital](#))
- Aluminium foil and containers - wash it first (and best if stored and accumulated into a ball before recycling)
- Cans/Tins - Rinse first
- Cardboard - Remove tape; don't recycle if greasy from food
- Envelopes - No need to remove the plastic windows, and if they are lined with bubble wrap they can be put in the Envelope Exchange box (Porters' Lodge)
- Glass - bottles and jars (unless smashed)
- Lids - Plastic and metal
- Plastic bottles - washed and squashed
- Plastic packaging - including pots, tubs, trays, lids, cups, triggers, bottle tops (almost anything except black plastic!) - wash first
- Paper - any paper except if shredded
- TetraPak/Cartons - squashed, lid-on

The main things you can't recycle here are black plastic (because the scanners in recycling centres can't pick it up), polystyrene, and anything made of mixed materials. Please also don't recycle greasy items like pizza boxes - anything with food residue risks messing up the recycling process, sending the whole batch to landfill. And remember - if you put it in the bin in your room, it won't be recycled!

If wasted food were a country, it would be the [third largest emitter](#) of greenhouse gases, so having good food go to waste is never ideal! The

[Love Food Hate Waste](#) campaign can help you out with ideas for how to prevent it, including a helpful Leftover Food Recipe Finder. You can also request a compost bin for your gyp - more [here!](#)

Some specialist items can also be recycled around Cambridge:

- Batteries - Porters' Lodge
- Bicycles - ask the Porters, who use the [OWL Bikes](#) scheme
- (Empty) Blister packs (from medicines) - [Superdrug](#), Sidney Street
- Bras - [Bravissimo](#), Sussex Street
- Bubble wrap - Pass on to the development team for re-use (or re-use it yourself!)
- Computers & IT equipment - if it's not broken: sell it or fix it ideally! Seek advice from the IT department for fixing or recycling if needed
- Contact lenses - [Boots](#), Petty Cury
- Electrical Appliances - if it's not broken: sell it or fix it ideally! Contact Housekeeping for appropriate recycling
- Makeup containers, applicators, and perfume bottles - [Boots](#), Petty Cury/[Superdrug](#), Sidney Street/[The Body Shop](#), Petty Cury
- Pens, Tipp-Ex, markers, highlighters, and printer cartridges - [Rymans](#), Sidney Street
- Soft plastics and mixed materials: Crisp packets, sweet wrappers, plastic film, plastic bags (if not suitable for reuse) - [Sainsbury's](#), Sidney Street
- Textiles - if items aren't fit for resale or donating to charity, drop-off to a [textile bank](#) (e.g. Lammas Land car park, Newnham)

If possible, looking for less packaged options will help reduce waste, even if it's packed in a recyclable material.

What's happening in college already?

Ongoing efforts are being made across college to reduce waste and improve how it's processed, including...

- In Hall, sauces are dispensed from refillable bottles rather than in sachets
- A discount on your takeaway hot drinks if you bring your own cup
- Garden waste is recycled - all mulch for the borders is made from our own garden waste!
- Food waste recycling for student gyms is available via requesting a compost bin and emptying it into specific bins around college - see below!

Composting

We can't always avoid food waste - peel, seeds, and skins of various foods just aren't good for us to eat! This is where your compost bin comes in.

What can I do?

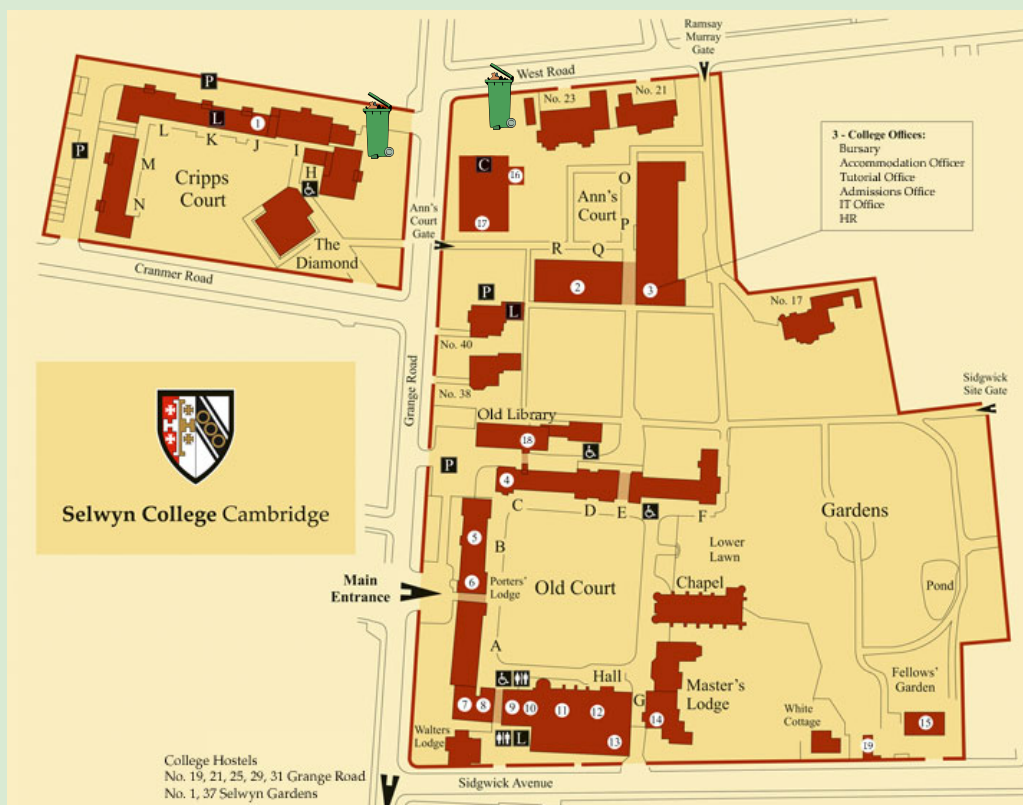
To get hold of a compost bin, there's a [form](#) to fill in, and your bin should be kept closed in the gyp. Liners, which were chosen from the reputable brand [Alina](#), can be collected from Green Officer pidges to keep it clean.

Things which can be composted include:

- egg shells
- compostable tea bags (plastic free)
- fruit and veg
- stale bread

...but unfortunately no meat, fish, or “compostable” packaging - only paper!

To empty the bin, tip it into one of the green bins shown on the map or outside the MCR hostels on Grange road:



Food

A plant-based diet is advised by the [UN](#) to help mitigate some of the enormous impact agriculture has on climate change - livestock have been estimated to be responsible for roughly [14.5% of global emissions](#), which is around the same (if not more) than all transport, including aeroplanes. Even one meat- and dairy-free day could cut down drastically on your impact, or try to target the most [environmentally damaging](#) foods you eat first.

What's going on in college?

Selwyn have made some key commitments to promote a sustainable culture around eating and drinking, including:

- Hosting termly vegan formals since the start of 2022
- Listing plant-based options first on menus in Hall, and expanding the range of non-meat options offered
- A charge for anyone using a non-reusable cup in Hall
- Removing non-recyclable "compostable" takeaway containers - reusable containers only!
- Reducing or eliminating some particularly harmful foods, such as tuna
- Sourcing ingredients and snacks as close to Cambridge as possible

Some projects are also in the works, such as developing a labelling system to indicate which the most sustainable choices on the menu are each day.

What can I do?

If you don't feel able to go plant-based just now, there are still plenty of small adjustments you can make to your eating and drinking habits!

Some other things to consider:

- If you're not that confident with vegan cooking yet, try a [vegan restaurant](#) (as recommended by the uni Vegan Society!); a complete list of vegan and vegan-friendly places to eat can be found here on [Happy Cow](#)! There is also a termly [Cambridge vegan market](#) which is a great place to try new products
- Try to avoid takeaways delivered in a car, or with excessive packaging - can you collect it instead?

- Take a reusable cup out with you (and you may even get a discount on your coffee)
- Ask for no straw in your drink, and refuse single-use plastics in cutlery and unnecessary packaging
- Share food within your kitchen (like bread or milk) to cut down on waste
- Plan your meals for the week and only buy what you need (also helps for budgeting)
- If possible, buy food grown locally and in season
 - Cambridge's market has a few good fruit and veg stalls, often locally grown and cheaper than a supermarket - if you're unsure, chat to the stall owner!
 - When shopping in supermarkets, check the labels
 - Some foods, like avocados and mangoes, will always be grown a fair distance away so consider cutting down on these
- Try to find options with minimal packaging
 - Sainsbury's lets you buy quite a few fruits and veg loose
- [Full Circle](#), Norfolk Street, is a zero waste shop where you can fill up containers with a huge range of bulk items, such as flours, pastas, cereals, and nuts - topping up herbs and spices here will be substantially cheaper than getting them from supermarkets! They also sell a range of personal hygiene and cleaning refills
- When buying packaged items, avoid plastic in favour of tin, glass and cardboard (which can be recycled far more easily/more times)
- Try to buy larger packages of things like pasta which won't go off
- Buy the Fairtrade options of things like coffee, bananas and chocolate when you can.
 - Although the Fairtrade system isn't perfect, if you can use your money in this way it signals the consumer's desire for a fair global economy!
- Donate unopened, non-perishable and in-date food to Cambridge Foodbank instead of binning it at the end of term (or cook a big meal to share with friends!)
- Make a packed lunch and use a refillable water bottle for days in the department, and take a reusable travel cup for hot drinks
- Save money and reduce food waste by shopping later in the day for reduced-to-clear items which would otherwise be wasted, or use food apps such as [Too Good To Go](#)

Finances

What's going on in college?

Banks can often invest in industries you might not want to support yourself, so where you invest can have a strong sustainability and ethical impact! Selwyn have made some big financial commitments, which include our overall policy of no material level of investment in fossil fuels. In practice, this looks like:

- Direct fossil fuel, tobacco and armaments holdings have been **totally divested**
- Increasingly strict investment criteria to move Selwyn away from indirect fossil fuel investments
 - Indirect fossil fuel investments had been decreased to below 0.5% of all investments by the end of 2021
- Selwyn encourages the Cambridge University Endowment Fund (which we have a small investment in) to accelerate its current pledge to remove its investments in fossil fuel companies by 2030

Can I do anything?

Your money is used by banks too, so it's good to think about where you store it! There are a few banks we'd recommend, but doing your own research will help you make a good personal choice.

- [Triodos](#) - although their current account costs £3 per month, so might not be for everyone, they're consistently voted the most sustainable and ethical bank around. A certified B-corp, they have a number of sustainable features, such as
 - A published map with details of all the investments they make, for total transparency
 - A commitment not to invest in fossil fuels, fast fashion, weapons or ammunition, and tobacco
 - A biodegradable debit card made from renewable resources like plant leaves and corn
 - An overdraft rate of only 18%, compared to an industry standard of over 40% (which disproportionately impacts vulnerable people)
- [Tred](#) - launched in 2022 this debit card plants trees everytime you spend! You can also track and offset your carbon emissions from your spending and the card is made out of recycled plastic. You

can't yet receive BACS payments into the account, but you can transfer money here for your day-to-day spending.

- [Nationwide](#) - this bank is owned by its members, so its priorities are different compared to other big banks. They also have a branch in Cambridge!
- [Cumberland Building Society](#) - open to you if you're from Cumbria, South West Scotland, West Northumberland, or North Lancashire, and still registered at this address
- [Engage](#) - they also have a charge for the account (£2 per month) and for cash withdrawals (75 p per transaction), but are run by credit unions supporting local communities and supporting those who might not otherwise be able to open a bank account. It has a responsible lending policy, so there's no overdraft available here
- [Starling Bank](#) - they say they "expressly avoid" funding fossil fuels, mining, arms, and the military, and is also part of TechZero, a group working towards net zero in the tech industry. However, in 2021 they accepted funding from Qatar's sovereign wealth fund, which was set up to invest revenue from the oil and gas Qatar supplies to the world.
- [Green Growth](#) - If you are seeking a stocks and shares investment account this app exclusively offers a range of ready-made sustainable plans such as Clean Energy and Green Transport and will track your green impact. Invest from £20!

With all of these choices, there's no one-fits-all option! If you can, opt to go paperless, and try to choose a bank that fits with your needs and ethical standpoint.

Water and Energy Usage

Water and energy have huge impacts on the environment, and our everyday behaviour can impact how much we use these resources.

What's going on in college?

Selwyn is part of [The Consortium of Cambridge Colleges](#), which means it gets most of its energy from two solar farms within 30 miles of Cambridge, and any extra needed is from UK solar farms. Cripps Court is also home to solar panels, which feed renewable energy back into the grid!

However, it's still important we minimise our usage to ensure as many people as possible can use energy from renewable sources. Some ways we're helping do that include...

- College-wide heating for 2022-3 will be switched on at a later date in Michaelmas (and off earlier in Lent) than in previous years, subject to weather at the time
- The 'Three Hostels Project' (MCR accommodation at 29 and 31 Grange Road, and 1 Selwyn Gardens) includes the provision of a ground source heat pump and charging points for electric vehicles
- Lighting in communal areas is being replaced with LED bulbs

What can I do?

Be mindful of your usage - this includes:

- Turning off lights in empty rooms
- Turning off taps, especially when brushing your teeth or shaving
- Take shorter showers
- Washing your laundry on cold or warm instead of hot
- Report dripping taps and broken sensors immediately to [maintenance](#)
- Air-drying clothes instead of using the drier
- Using your heating sparingly (can anyone control this?)
- Putting a lid on pans when cooking
- Cooking meals as a group in your kitchen, or cooking your pasta together
- Only boiling as much water as you need
- Doing laundry once you have a big load
 - consider putting your clothes together with a friend to save water, electricity, and money!

- As long as you feel safe, try to walk or cycle (or get the U-bus for only £1) instead of getting an Uber or taxi

Clothes and Fast Fashion

Fast fashion is currently responsible for up to [10%](#) of global emissions, and online shopping in particular produces huge amounts of waste from returns being sent to landfill or even [burned](#). The cheap prices which encourage overconsumption are made possible by companies outsourcing their manufacturing to countries with little to no labour protection, meaning workers can be heavily exploited to make your clothes.

While we all need to consume less than we currently do, there are also lots of ways to consume more sustainability:

- Don't buy it! Instead of an impulse purchase, wait an hour - do you still like it as much?
- Buy less, and if possible opt for quality over quantity
- Learn to take care of your clothes - washing them colder and less frequently, decoding the care label, and making small repairs
 - If you aren't confident to make adjustments yourself, use a [local business](#) for your repairs and alterations
- Swap with friends for special occasions (e.g. formals, balls)
- Shop second hand
 - There are lots of [charity shops](#) in Cambridge, especially behind the Grafton Centre (Burleigh Street) and along Mill Road
 - Online options like Depop, eBay, and Vinted can be great, but try local pages to avoid postage if possible (or visit the local [Serpentine Swap](#))
 - Facebook Marketplace can be a great place to shop!
 - CUSU have a [May Ball buy/sell page](#) for all genders
 - Try other online groups, such as [Cambridge plant/flower exchange](#) and [Cambridge UK buy/sell/giveaway](#) (for women/non-binary people)
- Where you need to buy new, consider an ethical business with a clear supply chain

Shopping

Try to build sustainability into your shopping criteria!

- Buy less - this is the easiest way to reduce your impact!
- Swap your lifestyle products to zero-waste or plastic-free where possible - a great local shop for inspiration on this is [Full Circle](#). Consider using:
 - Sustainable menstrual products e.g. menstrual cups, period underwear, reusable pads
 - Solid soap/shampoo/conditioner bars rather than liquid products in plastic bottles
 - Toothpaste tabs (toothpaste tubes are usually very difficult to recycle)
 - Solid deodorants (avoids use of aerosols as well as the packaging)
 - Reusable straws (made from bamboo, glass, metal or recycled/durable plastic)
 - Reusable travel cutlery to prevent needing disposable cutlery, and tupperware to take to Hall for takeaway
 - Water bottles instead of bottled water, and reusable travel cups for hot drinks ([paper cups were identified as the largest \(non-research\) contributor to the University's waste!](#))
- Buy Second Hand
 - As mentioned above, there are loads of great charity shops in Cambridge!
 - Cambridge-specific Facebook groups can be great for homeware, such as [Life is a Gift](#) or [Cambridge Items for Free/Sale](#)
 - For tech, stores like CEX or Game (both near the Grafton Centre) have refurbished options.
- Try to avoid shopping online!
 - Workers forming the supply chain are often seriously exploited at companies like [Amazon](#) and [Hermes](#) (aka Evri) to keep up with demand
 - Private deliveries to you (rather than bulk ones to a physical store) require much more fuel and energy
 - We're lucky to live so close to a vibrant city centre - use it! There's a host of independent shops and the [Cambridge Arts & Craft Outdoor Market](#) may be the perfect place to find a gift for someone
- Consider where your products come from

- Shipping something halfway across the world, even if the product is otherwise sustainable, perhaps isn't the best option
- Check the labels: even products stocked locally are often manufactured on the other side of the world
- Think about the brands you're supporting - do you agree with their values?
 - [Boycott](#) is an app which makes it easy to see where companies stand on various issues

Want to learn more?

If you'd like to get more involved, join the [Selwyn College Green Collective](#)! It's a Facebook group chat with sustainability initiatives within Selwyn discussed, where members are encouraged to engage actively with issues around College.

[The Cambridge Hub](#) also runs lots of green projects and campaigns to get involved with!

Contact us with ideas and feedback!

- JCR Green Officer - Ollie Norman (osn22)
- MCR Green Officers - Chloe Balhatchet and Rosie Lester (cjb266, rbal2)
- Selwyn Snowball Sustainability Officer - Lily Alford (lja25)