

# Estates Strategic Plan

## 2026-2030

May 2026



# Executive summary

This Estates Strategic Plan 2026-2030 translates the SOAS Strategy 2026–2030 into a single, sequenced delivery programme that stabilises risk, modernises learning environments, optimises our Bloomsbury footprint and delivers the pathway to Net Zero; while securing a resilient, affordable residential portfolio to underpin postgraduate growth.

By 2030, all core buildings will meet Categories A & B condition; teaching and research environments, including large lecture spaces, will be renewed for hybrid, inclusive pedagogy; operational carbon will reduce by around eighty percent on the route to Scopes 1 & 2 Net Zero in 2032; and student accommodation will be stable and community-centred within realistic travel times.

The Year-2 review evidences substantial progress since 2023 including:

- Critical infrastructure, lifts and life-safety risks addressed;
- New shared, hybrid-enabled office spaces introduced;
- World Classrooms and targeted teaching room refurbishments delivered;
- Inclusive and general toilet upgrades;
- Enhanced access control across the campus and a visible 24/7 Safety Hub established;
- Corridor & interstitial space refurbishments;
- Senate Chamber and refurbished Doctoral School @ 53 Gordon Square;
- Net Zero Strategy developed and pipeline mobilised; and,
- The acquisition of Wood Green Hall (169 rooms) in January 2026, as SOAS's first owned residence in many years - an affordable anchor on a direct Piccadilly Line route that provides a solid basis for the portfolio.

Space Optimisation is the lever that enables growth without expansion: rethinking space as an institutional resource; embedding inclusive design; expanding informal study and social provision; right-sizing the teaching estate for pedagogy and real attendance; and migrating to shared, hybrid-friendly offices that release space for student-facing uses.

The 2025 Campus Experience Index (CEI) reinforces these priorities—SOAS performs above global urban benchmarks for Teaching Space, Wayfinding and Green Space, with continued pressure in study capacity & quality, food affordability & choice and toilets. Targeted actions during 2025–2030 directly address these user-visible issues.

Benefits of the 2026-30 interventions will be material and compounding: improved learning quality and satisfaction; higher utilisation with no external room hires; lower operating risk and energy exposure; a clearer proposition for partnerships and public engagement (anchored by the Library); stronger inclusion, safety and wellbeing; and residential certainty and affordability that support recruitment, retention and progression.

Delivery is governed through the Capital Programme Board, the Net Zero Assurance Group and the Space Optimisation Programme Board, with whole-life value guiding investment decisions and a concise KPI set tracking condition, experience, utilisation, carbon, inclusion, residential stability and income.

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# 1. Introduction

SOAS enters the 2025–2030 period with a stronger platform for delivery and a clear institutional vision. The estate is no longer a passive backdrop; it is the operational engine that enables postgraduate growth, partnership, financial resilience and climate responsibility. Early interventions since 2023 have stabilised risk, modernised teaching environments, strengthened inclusion and laid the foundations for Net Zero. The next phase shifts decisively from remediation to transformation—sequencing a coherent programme that improves quality, unlocks capacity within our existing footprint and secures a resilient accommodation pipeline.

The SOAS Strategy 2026–2030 places financial sustainability, postgraduate growth, expanded access and choice, partnership, academic reform and environmental stewardship at the centre of decision-making. The Estates Strategic Plan translates those pillars into place: digitally-enabled learning environments for hybrid and collaborative programmes; equitable workplaces to support the Colleges’ structures and staff voice; spaces and schedules that use our compact Bloomsbury footprint efficiently; and building fabric and systems that deliver the pathway to Net Zero.



## 2. Looking Back 2023–2025: What We Delivered and Why It Matters

The Year-2 review confirms substantial delivery across assets, learning environments, campus experience, safety and sustainability—guided by the 2021 condition survey, two Campus Experience Index (CEI) cycles and the 2024 utilisation study. These works have reduced high-risk backlogs, improved daily experience and created the conditions for growth without expansion.



Refurbished teaching rooms, ground floor, Philips Building



Philips Building corridor improvement



Senate Chamber, third floor, Paul Webley Wing

### 2.1 Stabilising the Core: Asset Management, Safety and Resilience

The Philips Building (Library) roof was replaced to resolve water ingress and protect collections; Library lift cores were upgraded; and a campus-wide life-safety programme strengthened fire protection and egress. Estates achieved ISO 45001 certification for Occupational Health and Safety, formalising safe-operations governance. The effect is a safer, more reliable estate with embedded compliance and fewer disruptions.

### 2.2 Modernising Learning Environments

Seven flexible teaching rooms created in SOAS Gallery; a first tranche of World Classrooms in the Main College Building introduced high-quality, hybrid-ready AV; targeted refurbishments in the Philips Building improved comfort and digital capacity; and the Paul Webley Wing delivered a modern Senate Chamber for governance. Projects emphasised acoustics, lighting, accessibility and technology to close the quality gap that diagnostics linked to utilisation and satisfaction.



Student Union Hub, Main College Building



Safety Hub, lower ground floor, Main College Building

## 2.3 Activating the Everyday Campus: Informal Learning and Social Spaces

In the Main College Building, a new Student Union Hub and a larger capacity bar and outside area were created on the lower ground floor, a new JCR with merchandise store and under-used interstitial areas became study and collaboration pockets. These visible, sometimes modest interventions increase time-on-campus, relieve pressure on timetabled rooms and make the campus journey more legible and welcoming.

## 2.4 Inclusion, Accessibility and Safety

An Inclusive Toilet Strategy expanded provision (including a centrally located Changing Places suite in the Paul Webley Wing) and responded to cultural needs with targeted facilities. The Access Control Programme balanced openness with safety via speed lanes and a visible 24/7 Safety Hub with a co-located Logistics Hub. A new Wayfinding Strategy brought consistent numbering, floor labelling and digital mapping, improving experience for users and visitors.



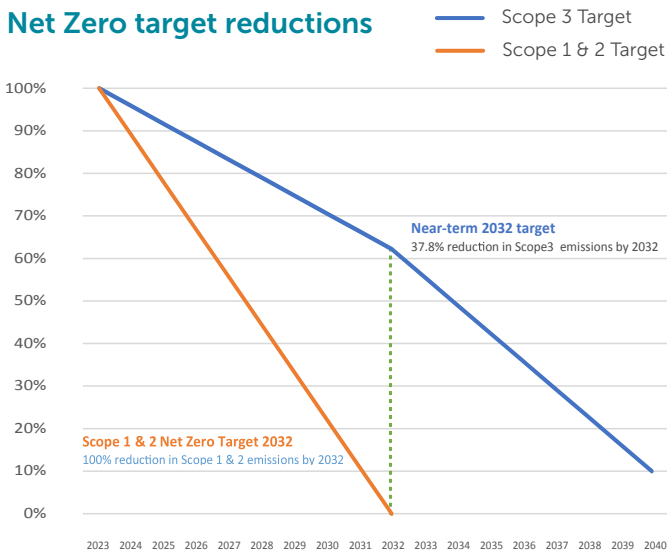
Digital Display Boards, Main College Building

## 2.5 Evidence, Diagnostics and Culture Change

The 2024 utilisation study indicated high booking frequency but comparatively low occupancy and utilisation and 11.2% no-shows with mid-week peaks, confirming the need to right-size rooms, broaden the teaching day where appropriate and expand informal study. Space is being reframed from an individual entitlement to a shared institutional resource, underpinned by transparent data, policy and governance. Utilisation sensors have been installed across all teaching spaces that will link with timetabling information to provide deeper and more-timely insights.

## 2.6 Sustainability and Net Zero Foundations

The Net Zero Strategy (2023) and Net Zero Action Plan (2024) commit to Net Zero for Scopes 1 & 2 by 2032 and full Net Zero by 2040 (38% Scope 3 reduction by 2032). The pipeline includes connection to the upgraded Bloomsbury Heat & Power low-carbon network, a 30 kWp PV array on the Main College Building, LED conversion, secondary glazing, insulation and smart controls, delivering the bulk of operational carbon reduction by 2030.



## 2.7 Student Accommodation: Securing a Stable, Affordable Pipeline

A portfolio review confirmed fragmentation and dependency on expiring third-party leases. In January 2026 SOAS completed the acquisition of Wood Green Hall (169 student rooms) our first property acquisition in many years. This strategically significant, affordable, SOAS-controlled anchor sits on a rapid Piccadilly Line route to Russell Square and provides a solid basis for the balanced model to 2030: selective ownership plus long-term nominations within a realistic travel time.



Wood Green Student Accommodation

### 3. Vision for 2030

By 2030, SOAS will operate a **safe, inclusive and climate-responsible estate** that is digitally enabled, flexible and recognisably SOAS. All core buildings will achieve Category A and B condition. Teaching and research environments, including large lecture spaces, will be renewed to support hybrid, interdisciplinary education. Space will be used equitably and efficiently, with utilisation embedded as business-as-usual. Operational carbon will have reduced by around eighty percent, placing SOAS on track for Net Zero. And a stable, affordable accommodation portfolio will underpin postgraduate and international growth.



# 4. Space Optimisation: From “Me & Mine” to “Us & Ours”

To deliver growth without expansion, SOAS will implement an evidence-led Space Optimisation Plan (2025–2030) that reframes our compact Bloomsbury footprint as a shared institutional resource. The plan translates utilisation audits, timetable analysis and user feedback into policy, design standards and governance that raise quality, unlock capacity and strengthen financial and environmental performance.

## 4.1 How We Will Change the Estate

First, we will **rethink ownership and allocation** through a Space Management Policy and a senior-endorsed Timetabling Policy to create a single source of truth, smooth demand across the week, reduce no-shows and align activity to the right room types and sizes with live utilisation data and integrated systems.

Second, we will embed inclusive, **user-centred design principles** (comfort, acoustics, lighting, accessibility, neurodiversity) with a coherent design language and naming/wayfinding system so refurbished spaces are legible and recognisably SOAS.

Third, we will **expand informal learning** by converting under-used interstitial areas into welcoming study and social settings with varied zones and co-located student-support functions,

sequenced with classroom upgrades and office migrations.

Fourth, we will **right-size the teaching estate**. Room capacities and layouts will align to pedagogy and expected attendance with modular AV & furniture; oversized rooms will be subdivided where appropriate and others repurposed for study. A prioritised and structured refurbishment approach will prioritise impact at pace.

Finally, we will adopt a **consistent and equitable approach to office accommodation**, moving to shared, hybrid-friendly workplaces that release under-utilised cellular space back to student-facing use, with change supported by pilots and transparent processes.

## 4.2 Delivery, Governance and What Success Looks Like

A summary of the **Space Optimisation Plan** is provided in **Annex A: Space Optimisation Plan Summary (2025–2030)**.

A Space Optimisation Programme Board (DVC F&O sponsor) will oversee four workstreams: Teaching & Learning Spaces; Workplace & Collaboration; Utilisation & Timetabling; and Space Logistics. By 2030, rooms will be well booked and well used across the week; informal study will be higher-quality and more available; workplaces will be equitable and collaborative; reliance on external hires will be eliminated; and consolidation & quality upgrades will contribute to carbon reduction.

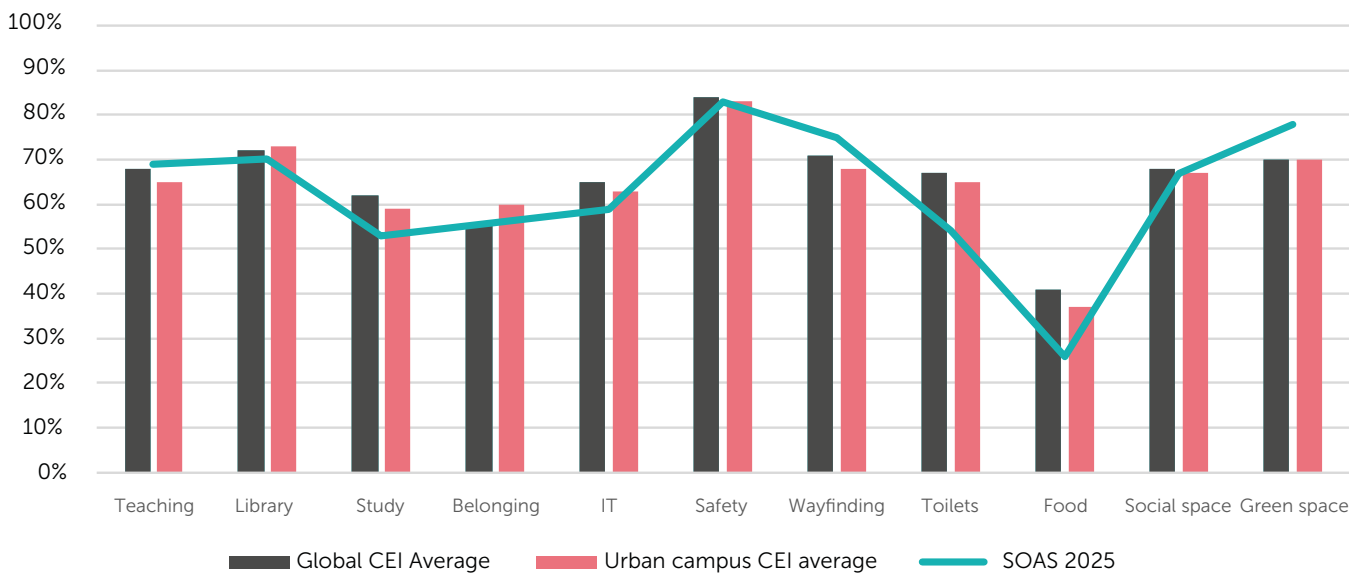
### Space Optimisation Plan

<b>Aim:</b>	Enhance the fitness and flexibility of the estate: deliver better environments within our exiting central London footprint. Reframe our compact estate from “me & mine” to “us & ours”				
<b>Objectives:</b>	Space usage is aligned with SOAS’s values and purpose		Every space contributes meaningfully to teaching, learning, and collaboration		Our facilities enable hybrid and agile working
<b>Enabling Themes:</b>	Rethink ownership and allocation through evidenced based space utilisation	Create user-centred inclusive environments	Expand informal learning spaces	Right-size the teaching estate: align capabilities to hybrid teaching and new pedagogies	Consistent and equitable approach to office accommodation

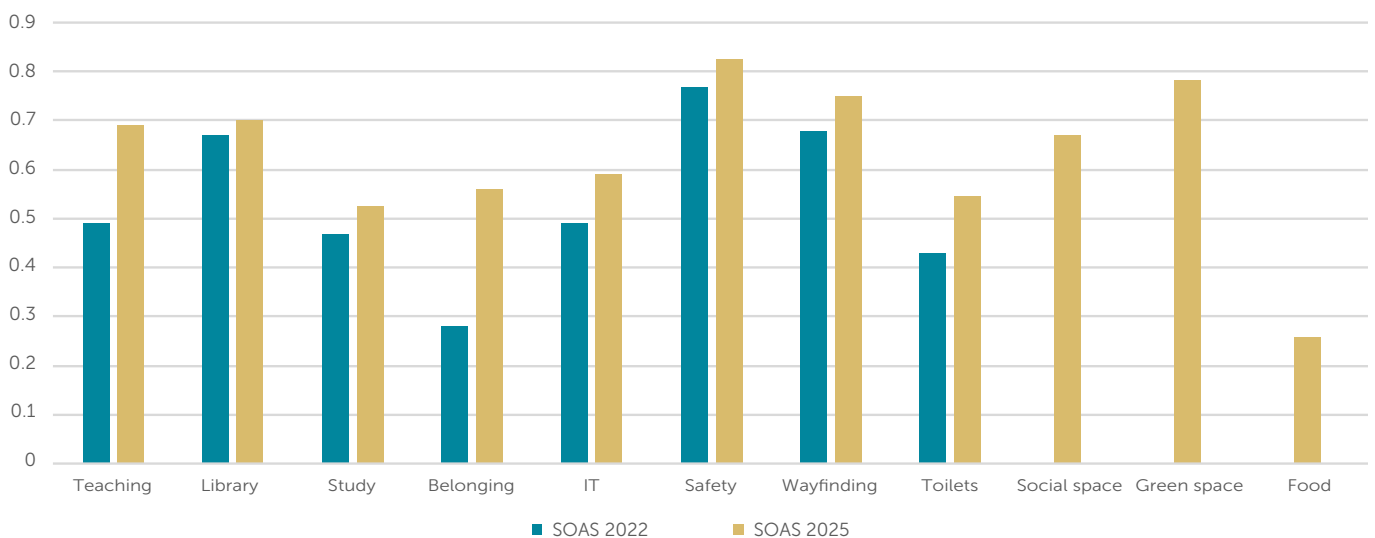
# 5. Campus Experience Index (CEI) 2025: Evidence and Response

The 2025 CEI confirms that SOAS continues to ‘punch above its weight’ on a compact, heritage estate: Teaching Space, Wayfinding and Green Space score at or above global benchmarks, while the clearest pressure points are Study Space capacity & quality, Food affordability & choice and Toilets (despite significant gains). Social space is average but functionally scarce across our buildings, nudging activity off-campus and weakening daytime belonging. These findings align with the five Space Optimisation themes and are embedded in the forward-look actions.

## SOAS CEI Performance measured against Global and Urban campus CEI averages



## SOAS CEI Scores 2022-2025



# 6. Programmes of Work 2025–2030

## 6.1 Asset Management and Compliance

A **rolling risk-based programme** (including roofs, façades, windows, lifts, electrical and life-safety systems, and modern controls) sequenced to minimise teaching disruption and integrate efficiency measures that avoid abortive costs.

## 6.2 Teaching and Research Environments

Complete the World Classrooms rollout and modernise large lecture rooms and specialist facilities, embedding accessibility, acoustics, lighting and inclusive technology.

In response to CEI evidence, right-size rooms by pedagogy and cohort, target priority lecture theatres for acoustics, light & ventilation upgrades, relieve changeover congestion in busy venues, publish simple AV quick-guides in rooms and eliminate Wi-Fi blackspots.

## 6.3 Library Masterplan

**Continue to transform** the Philips Building Library with a welcoming entrance, window overhaul, lighting and fabric upgrades and a re-imagined Commons—expanding and diversifying study provision while improving performance and stewarding heritage.

## 6.4 Space Optimisation and Scheduling

Embed **shared-ownership policies** and transparent allocation rules; rebalance scheduling; right-size under-used rooms; convert low-utilisation interstitial areas to high-quality informal learning; and continue hybrid-ready AV and comfort improvements (lighting, acoustics, furniture).



Visualisation of the Library Commons Reading Area, Philips Building

## 6.5 Campus Experience and Inclusion

**CEI-led improvement actions (2025–2030)** will add study/social capacity, improve wayfinding and lifts, sustain toilet reliability and strengthen digital AV performance in teaching spaces. Key moves include:

- **Create** clearly signed informal study hubs in high-visibility, non-critical circulation areas, with power for charging and durable, comfortable furniture.
- **Convert** selected under-used rooms into quiet, plug-rich study zones
- **Simplify** room-naming conventions and improve lift signage and queue management; enhance maps at key points and progress digital wayfinding overlays.
- **Increase** cleaning frequency and supply checks in high-use and all-gender toilets; maintain a balanced mix of gendered and all-gender provision.
- Introduce targeted food affordability measures; extend evening opening to support later study; expand microwaves and hot-water points.

## 6.6 Sustainability and Net Zero

Connect to the upgraded **Bloomsbury Heat & Power Network**; install heat pumps and electric boilers; deliver fabric-first upgrades, LED with smart controls, rooftop PV and advanced energy management; embed circular construction/low-embodied-carbon materials and supply-chain reform.

## 6.7 Student Accommodation

**Anchor the portfolio** with the SOAS-owned Wood Green Hall (169 rooms) and complement with long-term nominations where value is strong; reduce fragmentation and strengthen community, service quality; maintain affordability via a balanced rent profile and clear service delivery criteria; prioritise proximity/connection within ~40 minutes of campus with the closest options reserved for first-years and vulnerable cohorts; and embed partner protocols for pastoral care and data-sharing to support belonging and transition.

## 6.8 Commercial and Conferencing

**Grow income** from events, conferencing and retail in ways that complement academic priorities and leverage improved convening spaces.

## 6.9 Strategic Property to Support Future Expansion (2026–2030)

If SOAS achieves the target of 6500 students by 2030, the capacity, whilst sufficient, will soon become a constraining factor for future growth. We will explore several **opportunities for expansion**, both on the Bloomsbury Campus and beyond, by progressing three complementary workstreams aligned to the Courtauld lease horizon:

- Vernon Square post-2030 strategy;
- Feasibility of a single storey roof extension (~486 sqm) on the Main College Building; and,
- Re-instating planning for a six-storey new-build (~2,100 sqm) overlooking Torrington Square connected to the Philips Building.

All these options will be reviewed and an options appraisal submitted for consideration during 2027/28.

## 7. Alignment with the SOAS Strategy 2030

The Estates Strategic Plan 2026-2030 is the operational delivery vehicle for the SOAS Strategy 2030. Postgraduate growth and expanded access are supported by hybrid-ready learning environments and a right-sized estate; reprioritisation of expenditure is enabled by utilisation gains, eliminated external hires and shared offices; partnerships are strengthened through digitally enabled convening spaces and fit-for-purpose governance rooms; academic structure and staff voice are supported by equitable workplaces and consistent design standards; and estates delivery is the principal lever for Net Zero (Scopes 1 & 2 by 2032) and a major enabler of Scope 3 reductions through procurement and circularity.

### Alignment Matrix — Estates Programmes x SOAS Strategy 2030 Pillars:

Estates Programme	P1: Grow PGT	P2: Expand PGT access & choice	P3: Reprioritise expenditure	P4: Scale up partnerships	P5: Academic structure & staff voice	P6: Sustainability & climate justice
Asset Management & Compliance	-	-	●	-	-	●
Teaching & Research Environments	●	●	-	-	-	-
Library Masterplan	●	●	-	●	-	-
Space Optimisation & Scheduling	●	-	●	-	-	-
Campus Experience & Inclusion	-	-	-	-	●	-
Sustainability & Net Zero	-	-	-	-	-	●
Student Accommodation	●	-	-	-	-	-
Commercial & Conferencing	-	-	●	●	-	-
People & Capability (IiP)	-	-	-	-	●	-

See also Annex B — Programme of Work Alignment with SOAS Strategy 2030

**Programmes overlap by design:** Asset Management & Compliance and Sustainability & Net Zero underpin comfort, reliability and carbon trajectory; Library Masterplan and Teaching & Research Environments are the primary engines of student-facing quality; and Space Optimisation connects pedagogy, policy and data to ensure rooms are both well booked and well used across the week.

## 8 Delivery Roadmap

- **2026–2027: Stabilise and Prepare:** complete priority life-safety and resilience projects; advance Library enabling works; deliver a first tranche of right-sized classrooms and informal learning; embed allocation/scheduling policies; confirm the residential pipeline (including Wood Green Hall integration).
- **2026–2028: Transform and Scale:** execute major decarbonisation projects; progress Library internal reconfiguration and entrance works; modernise large lecture theatres; roll out shared offices; standardise wayfinding and interiors.
- **2028–2030: Consolidate and Optimise:** achieve Category A and B condition; complete complex fabric and window programmes and continuous commissioning; lock in utilisation and carbon gains via analytics; secure the accommodation pipeline for the early 2030s.

# 9. People & Capability Plan – to Deliver the Estates Strategic Plan 2026–2030

The People and Capability Plan will equip Estates & Campus Operations with the skills, operating model and culture to deliver the Strategy reliably through 2030—covering capital delivery, FM compliance, digital & data, sustainability, service to Colleges and students and validate practice externally through Investors in People (IiP).

## 9.1 What this enables in the Strategy

- **Capital and Space Optimisation:** competent project/programme and commercial capability to deliver classroom modernisation, right-sizing and Library works to time, cost and quality.
- **Compliance & Safety:** strengthened OSH leadership and contractor control to sustain life-safety improvements and safe operations.
- **Net Zero & Whole-life Value:** sustainability and energy skills to execute the carbon pipeline (fabric-first, LED/controls, PV, heat decarbonisation, BHP connection).
- **Digital & Data estate:** ISO 19650 -informed information management and common data environment use for accurate asset/space data and smooth project-to-operations handover.
- **Service & Culture:** a consistent service experience for Colleges and students underpinned by IiP's Leading–Supporting–Improving framework.

## 9.2 Investors in People – to facilitate delivery of this Strategy

IiP is a recognised standard for people management that assesses how organisations lead, support and improve their people through nine indicators and a maturity model. Achieving Silver and then Gold provides an external, evidence-based assurance that our leadership, management and development practices meet industry benchmarks and are being consistently applied across Estates.

- **Consistent leadership & line-manager effectiveness:** IiP's "Leading" indicators sharpen expectations and routines for planning, feedback and coaching, reducing delivery variance across capital, FM and supplier teams.
- **Stronger staff voice & engagement:** the assessment uses surveys and interviews to surface what helps or hinders delivery, turning feedback into targeted action that improves service quality for Colleges and students.
- **Continuous improvement engine:** the maturity model requires demonstrable outcomes and learning loops; the three-year accreditation cycle hardwires review and optimisation into BAU.
- **Credible external assurance:** an independent report for the Executive Board strengthens confidence in the people–system enablers behind Estates KPIs (safety, utilisation, delivery, carbon).

**Ambition: Silver by Q4 FY2028/29 and Gold by Q4 FY2029/30.**

# 10. Institutional Benefits if We Deliver All Ambitions by 2030

Delivering the full Estates portfolio by 2030 creates a durable institutional advantage for SOAS. It aligns the physical campus with the SOAS Strategy 2030, strengthens our academic proposition, and improves financial resilience while advancing climate leadership and inclusion. The benefits are cumulative (each programme reinforces the others) so the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

## **Academic excellence and student outcomes.**

A coherent, hybrid-ready learning ecosystem (World Classrooms, modernised large lecture spaces and an expanded, inclusive study estate) supports pedagogy, research engagement and global co-teaching, addressing utilisation/CEI diagnostics and improving satisfaction and academic outcomes.

## **Financial resilience and value for money.**

Right-sizing rooms, smoothing the timetable and consolidating offices improves overall utilisation. Whole-life investment in fabric and plant lowers energy and maintenance costs and reduces disruption risk; commercial and conferencing income grows in ways that complement core activity.

## **Strategic growth and competitiveness.**

Optimising the Bloomsbury estate enables postgraduate growth without footprint expansion. Digitally enabled convening spaces, especially within the Library, enhance partnerships, research exchange and public engagement, projecting SOAS's identity and global ambitions.

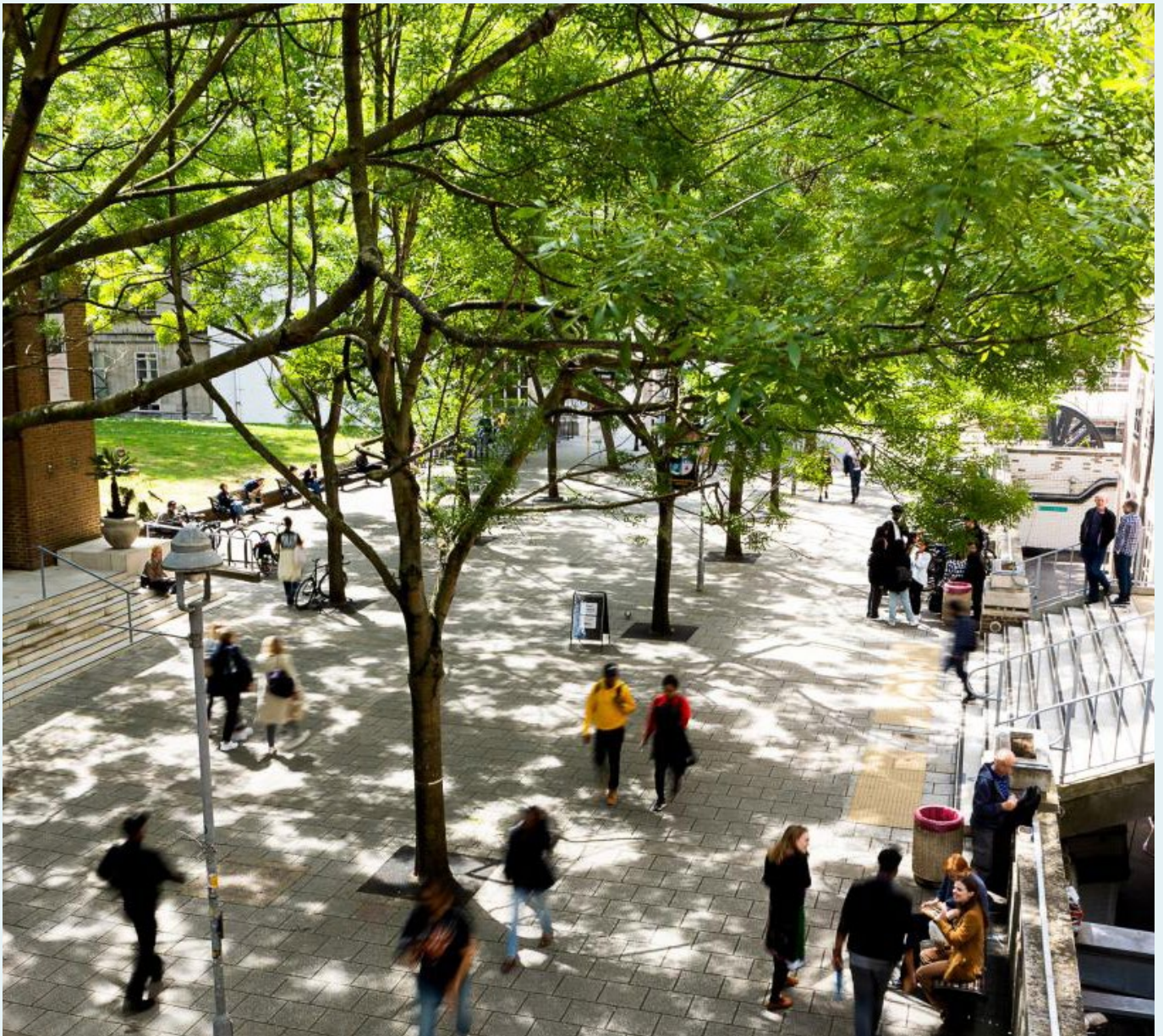
**Climate leadership and risk reduction.** A c. 80% reduction in operational carbon by 2030 on the pathway to Net Zero Scopes 1 & 2 by 2032 reduces exposure to energy price volatility and future carbon costs while improving comfort and resilience.

**Inclusion, safety and wellbeing.** Inclusive toilets (including Changing Places), coherent wayfinding and a visible 24/7 Safety Hub, together with user-centred design standards, create a campus that is easier to navigate, safer and more dignified - reinforcing belonging and wellbeing.

**Residential certainty and affordability.** A stabilised portfolio anchored by SOAS-owned Wood Green Hall (169 rooms) and complemented by longer-term nominations within a realistic journey time secures access, protects affordability and strengthens community—enabling recruitment, retention and progression.

# Conclusion

This **Strategic Plan** converts evidence into action. It completes the pivot from fixing problems to creating a coherent, inclusive and climate-responsible estate that people choose to be in. By sequencing asset renewal, classroom modernisation, space optimisation, campus experience and Net Zero actions, and by securing a resilient accommodation pipeline, SOAS will deliver an estate that embodies its values and enables the ambitions of the SOAS Strategy 2030.



# Annex A — Space Optimisation Plan Summary (2025–2030)

## Executive Summary

This annex distils the Space Optimisation Plan into purpose, evidence, actions and alignment to SOAS Strategy 2030. It reframes our compact Bloomsbury estate from “me & mine” to “us & ours”, using data, inclusive design and governance to unlock capacity, improve quality and strengthen financial and environmental performance within our existing footprint.

## 1. Context & Evidence

Utilisation audits, timetabling analysis and user feedback show high booking frequency but comparatively low occupancy, a bias to small rooms, and uneven demand across the week. Spatial modelling indicates overall capacity is sufficient for growth if we rebalance space types, right-size rooms, expand informal study and migrate office space towards shared, hybrid-friendly models.

## 2. Five Enabling Themes

- **Theme 1:** Rethinking Space: policy, single source of data and transparent KPIs for shared institutional use.
- **Theme 2:** Inclusive Environments: consistent, user-centred design standards (comfort, acoustics, light, accessibility, neurodiversity).
- **Theme 3:** Informal Learning: convert under-used interstitial areas into welcoming study/social settings with varied zones and co-located support.

- **Theme 4:** Right-sized Teaching: align capacities/layouts to pedagogy and cohort; strengthen hybrid; improve timetabling spread; AV & comfort upgrades.
- **Theme 5:** Office Accommodation: shared, hybrid-friendly workplaces to release under-utilised cellular space back to student-facing uses.

## 3. Delivery, Governance & Dependencies

Programme Board (DVC F&O sponsor) with workstreams for Teaching & Learning Spaces; Workplace & Collaboration; Utilisation & Timetabling; and Space Logistics; dependencies include robust space data/sensors, policy updates and sequencing with compliance, heritage and Net Zero projects.

## 4. Outcomes, KPIs & Risks

By 2030: rooms well booked and well used; higher-quality informal study; equitable, collaborative workplaces. KPIs: utilisation/occupancy & no-shows; booking-to-room fit; satisfaction; office area released; contribution to carbon reduction; risks mitigated via pilots, governance, single-source data and benefits tracking.

## Annex B — Programme Alignment

This annex provides a fuller narrative explaining how each strand of the 2025–2030 Estates Programme directly enables delivery of the SOAS Strategy 2030. It expands beyond the alignment matrix by describing mechanisms, dependencies, and long term institutional effects.

**Strategic Fit:** Estates is the principal operational engine translating academic, financial and climate objectives into physical change.

- **PGT Growth:** delivered through hybrid ready teaching capacity, modernised lecture theatres and optimised timetabling.
- **Access & Choice:** inclusive design standards, reduced barriers to participation and enhanced digital physical integration.
- **Reprioritise Expenditure:** shifting from reactive maintenance to whole life value, reducing operational risk and stabilising budgets.
- **Partnerships:** improved convening and research exchange spaces, particularly within the Library Masterplan and the wider campus.
- **Academic Structures & Staff Voice:** equitable workplace design supporting Colleges, interdisciplinarity and collaborative research.
- **Sustainability & Climate Justice:** heat decarbonisation, PV, insulation, circular construction and pathway to Scopes 1 & 2 Net Zero by 2032.

