

# Local Area Retrofit Accelerator (LARA) Pilot

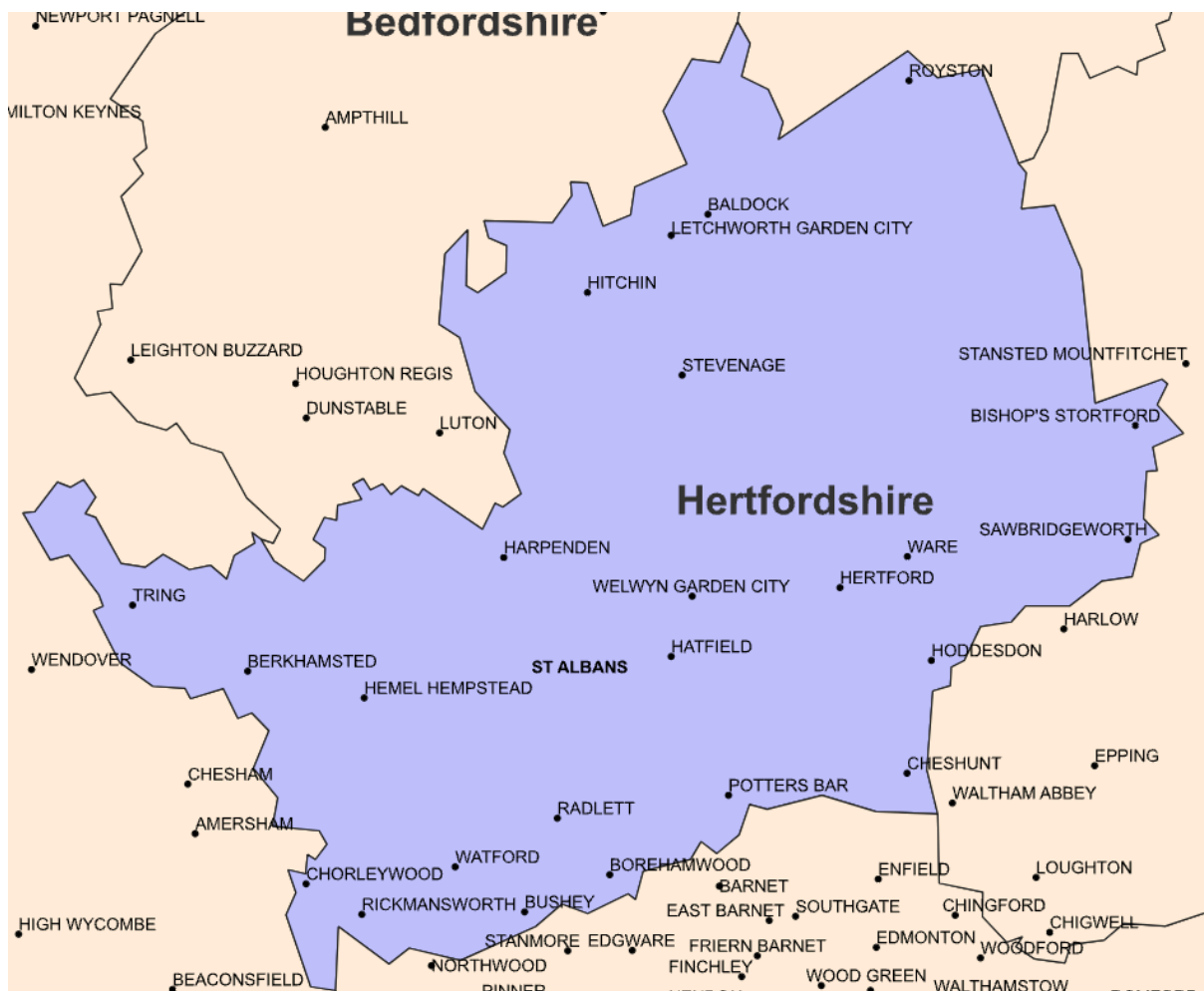
## Hertfordshire Locality Assessment Report

Jan 2025

## 1. Overview - Locality Assessment Report

- 1.1. The Locality Assessment Report details specific geographic and demographic information about the locality, as well as insight into activity within the locality in relation to each of the six pillars.
- 1.2. This will include a summary table as well as more detailed overview information derived from the stakeholder interviews. And information on the quantitative dataset with a RAG rating for selected measures in terms of the locality in comparison to the national picture.

## 2. Desk review findings



### 2.1. Demographic

- 2.1.1. The locality has 1.2 m people. The largest populations are situated in Dacorum and East Hertfordshire (East Herts) with Watford being the most densely populated area, followed by Stevenage. Hertfordshire experiences lower levels of fuel poverty, higher life expectancy, higher average pay and lower free school meals than the national average. There is only 1 area in Hertfordshire in the lowest 10% of the

indices of multiple deprivation, with the majority of areas (over 25%) being in the highest 10% of the UK.

## 2.2. Geographic/climatic

- 2.2.1. Hertfordshire - one of the home counties - is situated to the North of Greater London. It also shares a border with Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex and Buckinghamshire. The largest settlement is Watford, and the county town is Hertford.
- 2.2.2. Mix of rural and urban areas. More than 185 conservation areas and almost 10,000 listed buildings (with both East and North Hertfordshire having the highest proportion of both).
- 2.2.3. According to Hertfordshire's Sustainability Strategy, the county is set to experience hotter summer days, increased frequency and intensity of storms, and decreased summer rainfall in the future.
- 2.2.4. Over 1.5 million tonnes of emission reduction (CO<sub>2</sub>e) are targeted in Hertfordshire through savings from renewable heat and renewable electricity to 2050.

## 2.3. Housing stock

- 2.3.1. There are 482,893 households in Hertfordshire.
- 2.3.2. There are 485,666 houses with active Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) across the county. Of these, data shows that there are 750 EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) A-rated homes in Hertfordshire - at 0.15% of the county's housing stock this is less than the national average of 0.3% of homes. Although East Herts matches the national average of 0.3% of A rated homes, with 182 properties.
- 2.3.3. Most of Hertfordshire's houses are in band D (37%) - which is similar to the national average of 38% of homes in this band. Closely followed by band C (35%, which is higher than the national average of 31%).
- 2.3.4. Hertfordshire has comparatively few of the 'leakiest houses' (loss of heat through house fabric), with just 3% in bands F and G - compared to the national average of almost 5%. Stevenage has the smallest proportion of lowest rated properties at just 0.16%. East Herts has the most band G-rated properties (0.89%).
- 2.3.5. And in Hertfordshire 67% of householders own their homes, with 35% owned outright (no mortgage). Of the 33% that rent property, 11-13% are social renters and 22% are private-renters.
- 2.3.6. Hertfordshire's residents experience less fuel poverty than the national average - 8.2% in Hertfordshire compared to 13.1% nationally.

## 2.4. Strategic/Financial

- 2.4.1. Hertfordshire has 157 Trustmark certified Retrofit Installers. There is one Trustmark installer per 1,000 people, which is much higher than the UK average of one per 4,600 residents. Data on government support in Hertfordshire specifically is not available.

## 2.5. Political/administrative

- 2.5.1. Hertfordshire has a two-tier system with Hertfordshire County Council overseeing ten district and borough councils.
- 2.5.2. Hertfordshire aims to reach net zero emissions by 2050.
- 2.5.3. The Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) consists of all 10 district and borough councils, the county council and Hertfordshire Futures. HCCSP is a strategic group which acts as the lead partnership organisation for partners to collaborate and identify joint work programmes on environmental, climate change and wider sustainability issues.
- 2.5.4. The councils are at different stages of addressing climate change. Three Rivers Council, East Herts and North Hertfordshire (North Herts) are relatively more active in the retrofit space, having focused efforts on where funding is available.

### Selected measures - at a glance

Factor	Herts	National Average	Rating
Demographic - Fuel poverty	8.2%	13.1%	
Demographic - Life expectancy	Males - 80.9 years Females 84.8 years	Males - 79.3 years Females - 83.2 years	
Demographic - Average pay	£32,138	£28,000	
Demographic - Free school meals	17.2%	27%	
Demographic - Economic activity	81.8%	78.8%	
Housing stock - EPC A	0.15% housing stock	0.3% housing stock	
Housing stock - Average EPC band D	37% housing stock	38% housing stock	
Housing stock - EPC F/G	3% housing stock	5% housing stock	
Strategic - Trust Mark installers	1 per 1000 people	1 per 4600 people	

In this table, the green rating means that the measure is performing/experiencing a higher/lower/better than national average rating (depending on the metric), amber marginally more/less than or similar to the national average and red means not performing as well as the national average.

### 3. Interview analysis

- 3.1. Seven interviews took place to inform the Hertfordshire Locality Assessment. The following offers initial highlights across the thematic areas identified and additional insight that is of value to the LARA process. It follows the six project pillars (see appendix 1) and outlines issues and information that were raised by interviewees of relevance to the process.

### Summary table

Pillar	Key themes	Recommendations for the LARA process
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community engagement is key</li><li>• Subsidy is a motivator</li><li>• Supplier/installer trust is an issue</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To understand why people don't act upon recommendations</li></ul>
Skills and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Big skills shortage</li><li>• Collaboration between industry and skills providers AND between skills providers is important</li><li>• Better alignment across the process would help</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strengthen relationships between skills providers and industry</li></ul>
Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Damp/mould and affordable warmth key motivators</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Convening those from social care, health and housing to facilitate collaboration.</li><li>• Focus on people, not buildings</li></ul>
Low carbon technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SMEs are important</li><li>• Need for regional strategy</li><li>• Collaboration is key</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Look into planning guidance</li></ul>
Financial resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of private investment in Hertfordshire</li><li>• Need for better understanding of money available</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Better advice and guidance for homeowners re access to grants</li></ul>
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Need for one stop shop for retrofit/retrofit coordinator</li><li>• Local authorities are trusted intermediaries</li><li>• Retrofit needs a clear home</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create conduit from government to LARA stakeholders</li><li>• Better balancing of supply and demand</li></ul>

3.2. In section 3.3 to 3.8 the insight is grouped according to the six pillars and then additional themes are discussed in section 3.9.

### 3.3. Community

3.3.1. Supply chain issues and engagement with communities - particularly residents - were identified as challenges within the locality. An interesting point was raised about how people aren't acting on their retrofit surveys. The interviewees perceived no tangible barriers to moving forwards with the recommendations, but people are nonetheless not taking action. This is potentially something to

investigate further and speaking with residents about this could unpack this more.

- 3.3.2. People are more likely to act when subsidy is provided - as seen in the installation of heat pumps when supported by subsidy.
- 3.3.3. Concern about finding reliable contractors was mentioned in multiple interviews. It was suggested that because trust is an issue, guidance on how to find good contractors would be helpful, as well as providing access to pre-vetted installers. This could help to navigate the liability issue that was flagged.
- 3.3.4. Some saw the local authority role as providing leadership in the private rental space.

#### 3.4. Skills & training

- 3.4.1. A massive skills shortage was identified in Herts. This applies not just to installers of retrofit measures, but also to the social housing sector. This was described as 'depleted of people who have the skills and qualifications to deliver the work' from an oversight/administration viewpoint, as well as those involved directly in installation of measures. A lack of capacity and resources within local authorities was also identified.
- 3.4.2. The college representative that participated in an interview explained how they are offering a Level 5 Retrofit Coordinator Diploma - the approach to delivering the course in Hertfordshire has been designed in line with fulfilling local authority priorities. They are also developing a 'Boot camp' - an idea which has been drawn from elsewhere to apply to retrofit specifically. This would essentially be a course that is comprehensive and 'that delivers everything in retrofit' because this resource doesn't currently exist.
- 3.4.3. Different roles and training for different groups of people were identified. Training existing staff who work in associated areas (electrical, brickwork, civil engineering) in retrofit was seen as important. Upskilling older, experienced people was mentioned, as was increasing the employability of younger people through developing retrofit skills. This was seen as a way of bolstering opportunity in areas where there is an oversupply in traditional skills to differentiate people.
- 3.4.4. The colleges want direct access to industry - to both share course content and collaborate on the development of courses, particularly where there are critical skills shortages. And the need for colleges to

collaborate better with each other was also identified to ensure that different elements of the retrofit system are offered and that the swathe of different retrofit skills can be filled, with specialisms also covered off. This also highlighted that retrofit has several different branches that need better delineation and definition to ensure that all elements are appropriately covered.

- 3.4.5. One local authority hosted a sustainability careers fair to inform students about the opportunities that exist within the retrofit industry and the wider sustainability landscape. It was attended by over 300 students and 24 businesses were in attendance.
- 3.4.6. Better alignment at every stage of the training development and delivery process was flagged as important - to both benefit colleges' work and local authorities in delivery.

### 3.5. Homes

- 3.5.1. A key driver to action on housing - particularly within the county council's Healthy Homes programme - has been the delivery of measures related to damp and mould and this includes retrofit.
- 3.5.2. Energy efficiency improvements are seen by housing associations as a way to get rents down according to one interviewee.

### 3.6. Low carbon technology

- 3.6.1. A lot of attention was focused on contractors and local installers within the interviews.
- 3.6.2. There was an appreciation of local installers and the role that SMEs play in delivering retrofit. There was concern that a lot of projects are given to larger contractors with little or no retrofit experience and sometimes this is inefficient and can become costly. Whilst it was flagged that general contractors could transition to deliver retrofit measures, it might be better to use specialists initially. Collaboration was flagged as a way to remove some of these barriers to delivery - both in terms of smaller contractors working with larger contractors, but also with each other to pool resources. One interviewee suggested that housing associations need educating on which contractors can actually help with the work.
- 3.6.3. Improvement work that has retrofit integrated into it was seen as a challenge and opportunity to future projects. More projects are requiring it to be considered than before which is seen as positive.



- 3.6.4. Planning was also seen as a barrier - particularly around issues of conservation and heritage. A workshop was held by Three Rivers Council to unpack these challenges. Planners saw no barriers to retrofitting heritage properties and heritage organisations were positive about retrofit. There is a need to address the lack of clarity in the planning rules - residents need good advice and planners need to see the public benefit of retrofit.
- 3.6.5. Three Rivers Council is pushing for a retrofit first policy in the local plan to try and address these issues with planning.
- 3.6.6. There is a need for a bigger regional and national retrofit strategy, and to work with trade bodies. Some strategic areas need more clarity - for example around Passivhaus standards and how to address electric vehicles and their infrastructure in retrofit approaches.
- 3.6.7. There was agreement that the underlying infrastructure is in place in Herts, but that there is a need to sharpen focus and direction. That the existing 'machinery needs oiling to start performing'. Because the system is already quite well set up, what is needed is a stronger case for why people should be involved - some don't necessarily see why. The fact that everyone is at different stages and all have different agendas was flagged.

### 3.7. Financial resourcing

- 3.7.1. Further investment in the supply chain was flagged as an area of importance, as was the price of retrofit. It is clear that retrofit still needs subsidising or funding and that local authorities have little capacity to deliver or support retrofit otherwise.
- 3.7.2. Big grant schemes seem to default to big contractors for delivery, but SMEs are vital too and this is something that should be considered in the grant application process.
- 3.7.3. There is little to attract private investment in Herts. One interviewee suggested a model like Solar Together which has been successful in the area could be applied to heat pump procurement - an idea potentially worth investigating.
- 3.7.4. It was suggested that initiatives should be targeting those areas that could have the most impact from having more money - but no particular examples were provided.

- 3.7.5. A need was identified for better understanding of the money available - particularly peripheral pots that aren't commonly known about.

### 3.8. Governance

- 3.8.1. It is clear that there is fragmented governance to deal with retrofit, with it being situated within different teams across different local authorities within the locality (housing, environment, policy to name a few). Some have dedicated resource and teams, others have oversight but it isn't in their day to day work. Many of the local authorities in Herts do not have housing stock. Action is being taken that is politically motivated in some cases, driven from the ground up and in other places driven through the availability of funding. No one has the capacity to do it alone.
- 3.8.2. The role of local authorities generally was seen to be a trusted intermediary. The role of Herts County Council was seen by those working in district councils and for external organisations as bringing people together and linking different bits of the system. This external 'pulling together' was flagged in several interviews as important, particularly as it was identified that there is some competition in the locality rather than working together. The need for county level governance was identified to bring all the infrastructure together. And influencing supply is best done at the highest level.
- 3.8.3. The need for a Retrofit Coordinator was identified multiple times, or for a central retrofit resource 'one stop shop' - some saw this to be a digital hub. A need for understanding of what works and doesn't work was seen as important, as was learning from experience. This included case studies (from in Herts and outside). Case studies and site visits were seen as a key activity for LARA. At the same time however it was flagged that there is a need to move beyond signposting but that resources are a challenge.
- 3.8.4. It was suggested that ownership of the issue could report into a governing body that's already in existence and has credibility - so that it has a clear home somewhere. Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) was seen as a natural fit, but it was emphasised that it needs to be clear that it's not just them driving it forward, that there needs to be system-wide commitment.

### 3.9. Additional insights

- 3.9.1. Some other important elements were also identified. For example, acknowledgement that the existing culture of focusing on tangible

deliverables is not always easy - especially when working on pilot projects. Often impact or learning can be obtained from a project that is of great value to the broader retrofit sector - what worked well, what could be improved. These elements can be hard to quantify, but are very important to capture and perhaps focusing on a number of installations, or whatever a project's particular metric is, can potentially miss significant learning opportunities.

- 3.9.2. The importance of linking health and other co-benefits was flagged multiple times as important in the delivery of retrofit.
- 3.9.3. Having a conduit from government to LARA was suggested - no further details about what this might be or how it could work were identified.

## 4. Appendix

### 4.1. Six pillars

The six pillars are identified as follows:

- Community:
  - Awareness and appetite for retrofitting from residents
  - Trust building
  - Participation & engagement
- Skills and Training:
  - Market size and quality of works
  - Range of different programmes, tenures & building typologies
  - Skills pipeline needed for future works
- Homes
  - Building types and tenures across the area
  - Approach to the carbon and energy saving
- Low carbon technology
  - Heat pump 'readiness'
  - Energy generation & storage
  - Planning & infrastructure eg. grid constraints
- Financial resourcing
  - Funding and finance
  - Variations across tenures & delivery models
  - Impacts on quality retrofit works eg. user-centered service models
- Governance
  - Ownership and governance
  - Procurement policy eg. community wealth building

## 4.2 Sources

### Add organisations

<https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/1c05ac6f5a1e49e28da425d29ee1b63c/E10000015?clear=true#>

<https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/eb7013b48b5c416e814a386cde0b8c81/E10000015?clear=true>

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/herts-insight/topics/economy-work-and-education.aspx>

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