

CASE STUDY

SUMMERWOOD ESTATE



Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING

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CASE STUDY SNAPSHOT

ADDRESS

This case study focuses on the Freebridge Community Housing-owned homes on the Summerwood Estate in Great Massingham, West Norfolk.

THE CHALLENGE

Freebridge is committed to improving the energy efficiency of its homes, with a target of achieving EPC D across all homes by 2030 and EPC C by 2035.

The Summerwood Estate is one of Freebridge's larger housing estates, comprising approximately 60 homes. All of which had EPC ratings of D or below prior to the works commencing.

THE SOLUTION

Given the poor energy performance of the homes, the estate was identified as an ideal location for a programme of full-house retrofits. The scope of works, as informed by detailed Retrofit Assessments, was an investment averaging around £25,000 per home.

THE RESULTS

The Summerwood Estate has become one of Freebridge's flagship retrofit hot-spots, with approximately 50 of the 60 properties (around 80%) now fully retrofitted. This demonstrates how whole-house improvements can transform homes, reduce carbon emissions and help residents manage their energy costs.





BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As discussed on the previous page, the Summerwood Estate in Great Massingham is one of Freebridge's most sizeable communities.

The average £25,000 spend per home on the retrofit scheme included having some/all of the following measures installed at each home on the programme:

- Loft and cavity wall insulation to improve thermal performance and heat retention.
- Replacement of ageing and inefficient oil-fired and electric heating systems with cleaner, more efficient storage heating and air source heat pump (ASHP) technology.
- Enhanced ventilation through the installation of new decentralised mechanical extract ventilation (dMEV) systems and door undercuts, to promote healthy airflow and even heat distribution.
- Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels to help offset electricity consumption and reduce household energy costs.

WHAT IS RETROFITTING?

Retrofitting involves adding new technology or features to existing buildings to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, and enhance comfort – such as upgrading insulation, heating systems, or installing solar panels.

It is crucial for lowering energy bills and achieving net-zero targets by making homes warmer and less reliant on fossil fuels.

CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS

LOW PERFORMING COMMUNITY

The 60 homes owned by Freebridge on the Summerwood Estate all had EPC ratings of D or below before the programme began.

Given Freebridge's target of achieving EPC D across all of its 7,600+ homes by 2030 and EPC C by 2035, this programme represented an investment of around £1 million in total.

CUSTOMER CONCERN

A whole-house retrofit fundamentally changes the way a home performs and in some cases, the way residents interact with their heating and ventilation systems. This can naturally create uncertainty, particularly among more vulnerable tenants.

One of the project's greatest challenges was building trust with tenants, reassuring them throughout the process, and managing expectations around the scale of works being undertaken.

Issuing clear communication, providing ongoing support, and responding to concerns quickly were essential in maintaining positive tenant engagement.

An example of addressing tenant concerns was holding an engagement day at Great Massingham village hall in June 2026. There, retrofit specialists from both Freebridge and partner LivGreen, who carried out the works, were on hand to answer any queries that tenants had regarding the scheme.



THE RESULTS



‘POSITIVE FEEDBACK IS TESTAMENT TO THE SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAMME’

Freebridge’s Retrofit & Sustainability Manager, Jacob Medlock, said the following on the programme:

“The Summerwood Estate demonstrates the transformative impact that strategic capital investment and funding obtained from central government can have on communities.

“By improving the energy performance of an entire estate, we are creating warmer, healthier and more sustainable homes for our residents while helping to reduce carbon emissions for the future.

“The positive feedback we’ve received from tenants, alongside seeing the scale

of the improvements from the air, is a real testament to the success of the programme and the commitment of everyone involved.”



80 PER CENT OF THE SUMMERWOOD ESTATE IS NOW FULLY RETROFITTED

The programme has already delivered significant results, with approximately 50 of the 60 properties (around 80 per cent) now fully retrofitted.

To date, Freebridge has invested around £1

million into improving the energy efficiency of homes across the estate.

The improvements are expected to save approximately 100 tonnes of CO₂ emissions every year, while also helping residents enjoy warmer, healthier homes that are cheaper to run. The project highlights the positive impact that targeted investment and government funding can have when delivered on an estate-wide scale.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Works at Summerwood Estate are expected to conclude by the end of 2026. Following its completion, Freebridge will continue its retrofit programme on other significant housing estates in Hockwold and Tilney All Saints. By continuing to combine capital investment with external funding opportunities, Freebridge aims to build on the success of Summerwood Estate and accelerate progress towards its long-term net zero and energy efficiency ambitions.

ABOUT OUR PARTNER

LivGreen are the UK's Leading Retrofit and Decarbonisation Specialist.

They offer a full-service retrofit package, covering every stage from initial assessment and funding support to installation, quality assurance, and tenant engagement.

They are fully accredited under PAS 2035 and 2038, and TrustMark, ensuring compliance with all WHSF project requirements.



CONCLUSION



▲ The success of the project will help inform and accelerate future retrofit works across estates in Hockwold and Tilney All Saints, supporting **Freebridge's long-term ambitions of achieving EPC D by 2030, EPC C by 2035**, and progressing towards a lower-carbon housing stock.

KEY FINDINGS

- ▲ This project has demonstrated how a **targeted, whole-house retrofit programme** can significantly improve the energy efficiency, sustainability and comfort of social housing on an estate-wide scale.
- ▲ Through a combination of Freebridge's capital investment and Social Housing Fund support, around **£1 million has been invested to retrofit approximately 50 homes**, with works on the remaining properties due to be completed by 2027.
- ▲ The installation of insulation, low-carbon Heating systems, improved ventilation and solar PV technology is expected to **reduce carbon emissions by around 100 tonnes annually**, while helping residents benefit from warmer, healthier and more affordable homes.
- ▲ Effective engagement has been central to the project's success, ensuring **tenants have been supported throughout the process** and helping to build confidence in the new technologies being introduced.
- ▲ As one of Freebridge's flagship retrofit schemes, the **Summerwood Estate provides a strong blueprint for future investment programmes**, demonstrating the positive outcomes that can be achieved through strategic planning, partnership working and estate-wide delivery.



Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING

CUSTOMER TESTIMONIALS

**both asked to remain anonymous*

“My wife and I are very happy that we have had these works done.”

Customer one: “When we heard about the programme we had our reservations.

“But everything was well explained to us and, when the work began, the operatives were absolutely brilliant.

“They really worked hard – to get it all done in two days was unbelievable and much quicker than we had imagined.

“When they took out the old radiators and immersion heaters, I couldn’t believe it! There was a lot going on, but they did it well. They were all really nice people, too.

“We used to have electric water filled heating, which were very expensive to run and the positioning of them wasn’t ideal.

“We told LivGreen what we wanted and they put the new radiators in much better positions, which is great.

“My wife and I are very happy that we have had these works done and can’t wait to see how the house, and our bills, feel and look moving forward.

“Overall, we’re more than happy with everything that has been done here.”

“We’re actually looking forward to the colder months.”

Customer two: “I really can’t fault anything about the process. The team who did the works told us how it would be and they kept to all of the timescales.

“The workmen always explained to us what they were doing and kept us informed.

“It’s a lot of work, but we felt like we were always aware of what was happening and how we should be using our new system.

“We’re actually looking forward to the colder months to see just how well it’ll work and how much money we’ll be saving.”



With thanks to Paul Tibbs Photography for the drone images.