

Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation

# Results from the comfier homes survey Dec 2024

Community Energy Funded Project Output

## Summary

To help people in Letchworth Garden City make their homes more energy efficient, comfortable, we undertook a funded project to assess the opportunities and tried to communicate this information clearly to residents. Engagement was primarily targeted through in-person workshops, and social media posts. A lasting resource was produced that will be available via the Foundation's website. Government subsidy is available for some, but we worked with consultants to see if there were other financial model(s) that might assist the able to pay market. We also wanted to understand the specific barriers to residents through consultation, this document forms the summary of the questionnaire from that part of the project.

The survey revealed strong resident interest in home energy improvements for comfort, cost savings, and environmental reasons. The most popular measures are those with clear benefits and minimal disruption, while more complex or invasive upgrades face scepticism. Financial, technical, and trust-related barriers are widespread, and conservation area restrictions further complicate retrofitting for some. Based on the results there appears to be a solid foundation for community-led engagement and peer support to help overcome these challenges.

## Method

Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation published and promoted a survey at the end of 2024. The survey was aimed at all households in Letchworth Garden City. There was a significantly low response rate, less than a quarter of a percent. Over 14,000 households, 32 responses. Therefore, is not indicative of the whole town.

It was communicated through social media and the organisation's newsletter. A prize was offered in the form of vouchers to attend the Letchworth Broadway Cinema, Entry to Standalone Farm (which the winner decided to forgo) and a Gift card for a local wholefoods shop. There are inherent risks in the results due to the self-selecting nature of this approach. And potentially a prize that was only desirable to a particular group of residents.

The questions selected were aligned with the work of [Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership](#) and Green Heat Co-op so that the results could be comparable with that of the local area. It is possible that the same households responded to the two other questionnaires in the past, therefore combining the datasets would introduce duplication.

## Reflection on the survey response rate

Considering typical methods to increase response rates, if there were an opportunity to carry out this piece of work again, we should consider:

Identify a clear benefit to completing the survey, to increase motivation. For example, giving every respondent a smaller financial incentive. Even £2 for completing the survey would have cost the same amount as the prize.

We also would benefit from building an audience around retrofitting, or energy efficiency in town, either through continuous communication through a new channel. Or we could link the survey to another piece of work, where we already have built a relationship.

We could consider an alternative methodology. For example, a Health and Wellbeing survey conducted at the time had a much higher response rate. The project manager printed paper copies of the survey and visited key groups in the town in person.

The survey was only promoted a handful of times, and in a digital only format. More marketing and multiple methods to respond might have yielded greater results.

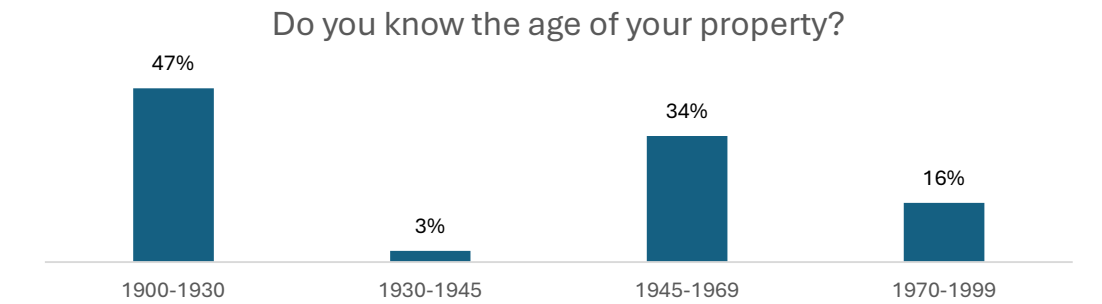
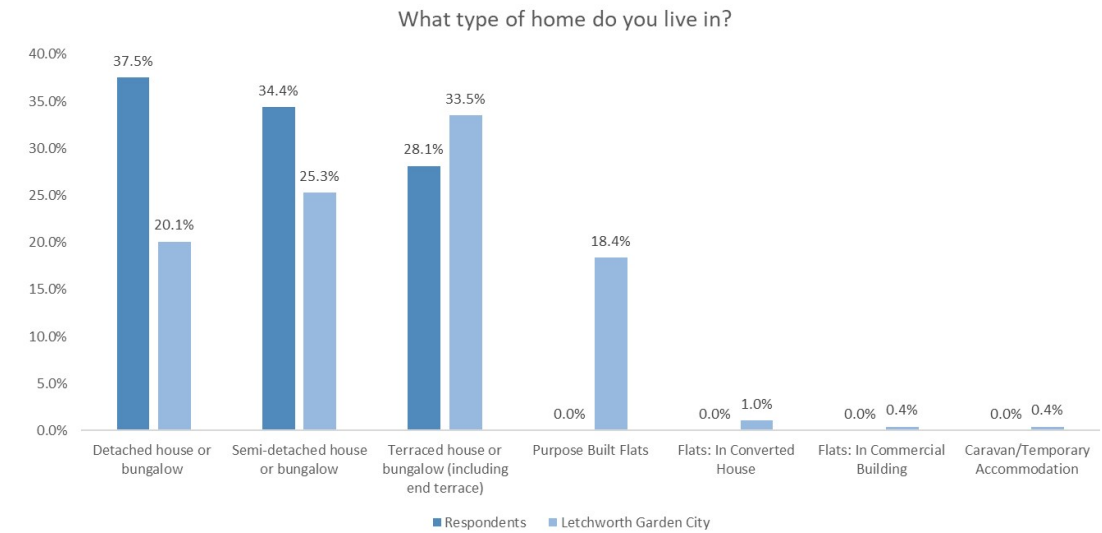
Given the need of the Foundation to regularly ask questions of residents, it would be beneficial to create a genuinely representative group of residents that aren't self-selected to respond to surveys.

**Analysis of Letchworth Retrofit Survey (32 Responses)**

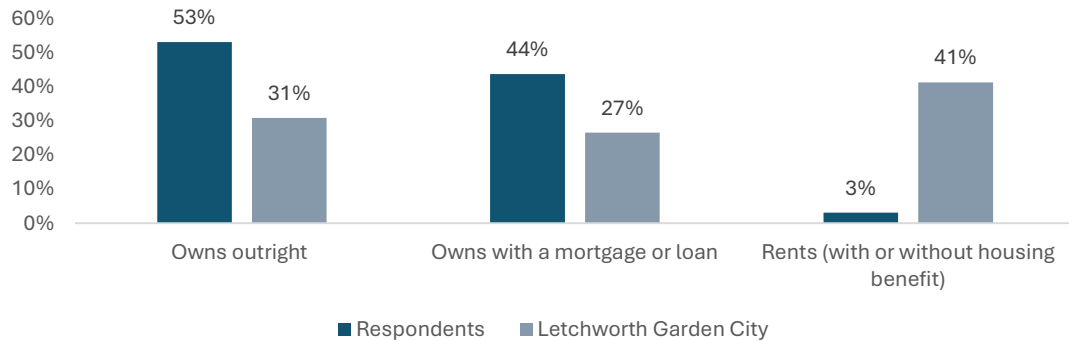
**Home and Household Characteristics**



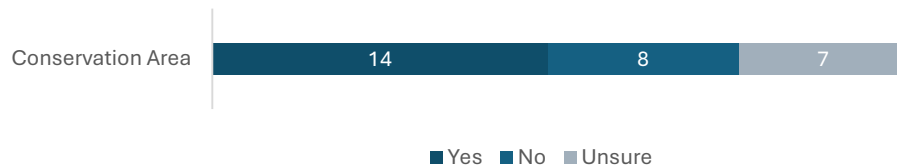
Respondents living in detached houses/bungalows, and semi-detached houses/bungalows were over-represented compared to Letchworth Garden City.



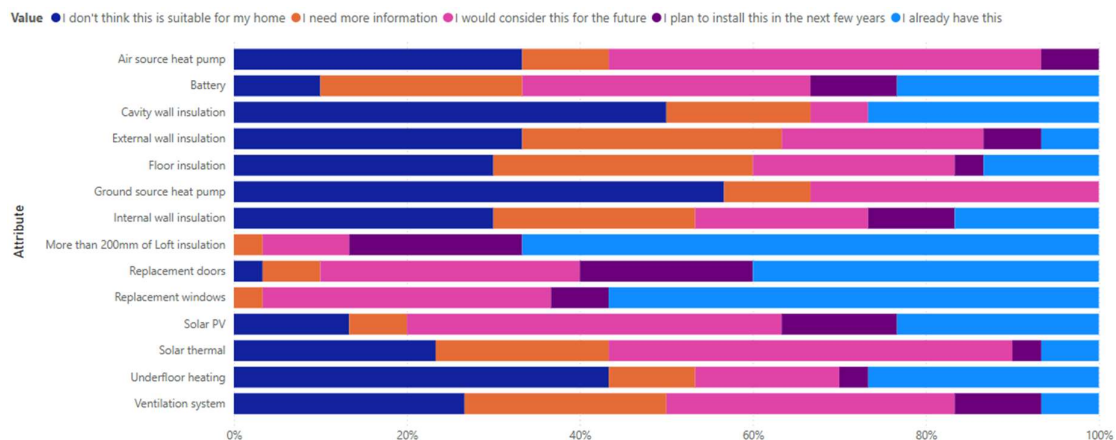
## Does your household own or rent your home?

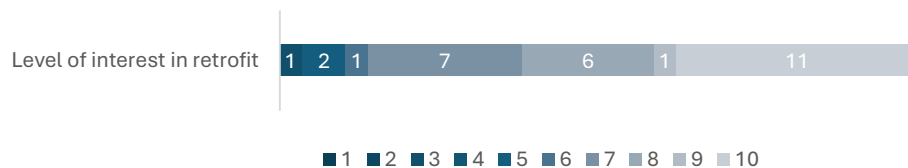


Respondents who owned outright or owned with a mortgage or loan were significantly over-represented. This could be due a number of factors. Our biased opinion is that some renters may feel that they are unable to make their homes more energy efficient due to restrictions on making changes to the property they are occupying. They are likely to be younger, or in social housing, and therefore their priorities are likely to be different. Additionally they may be more time poor than the group that owns their home outright or with a mortgage. This could be an area to interrogate in the future.



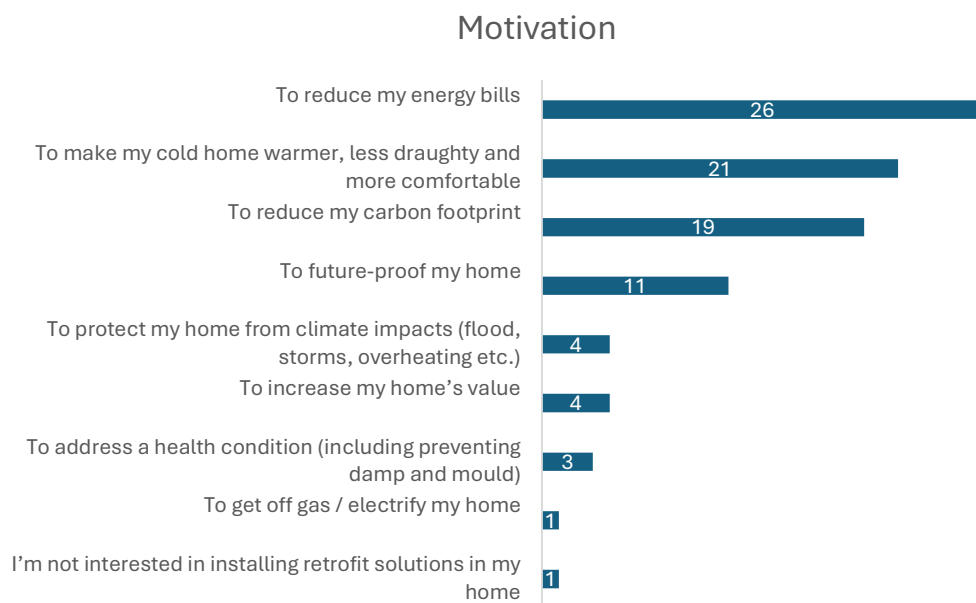
## An indication of what measures people already have or might consider.



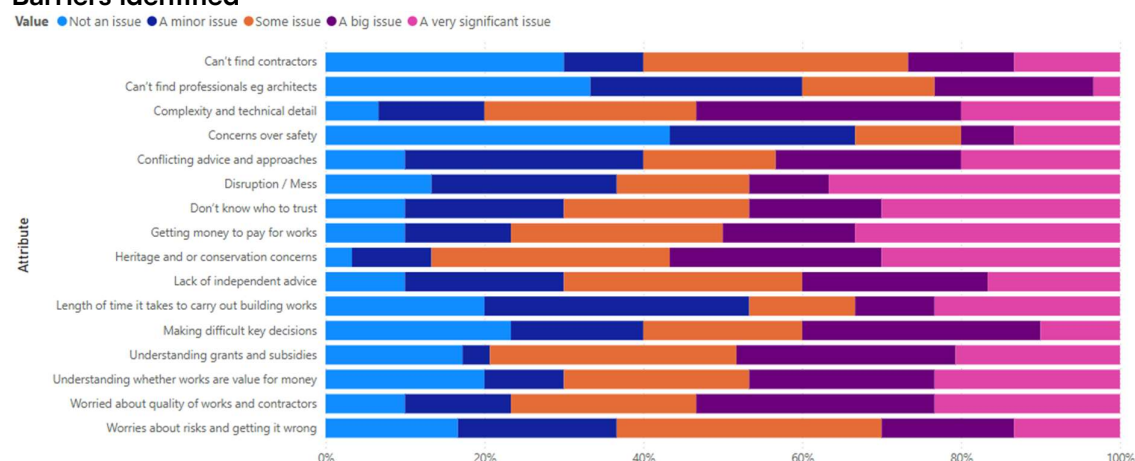


The chart above indicates 86% of respondents indicated their interest in retrofitting their homes as 7 or greater. With 10 being most interested.

Respondents were asked to provide their top three motivations behind retrofitting their homes:



## Barriers identified



**Heating Systems:**

- All respondents heat their home with gas in some way (with or without hot water tank)

**Community Group Membership:**

- 6 are members of groups (Decarbonise Letchworth, Friends of the Earth)
- 23 are not members

**Conclusion****Resident Interest in Home Energy Improvements**

- Strong interest in retrofitting for:
  - Increased comfort
  - Cost savings
  - Environmental benefits

**Preferred Measures**

- Popular upgrades are:
  - Those with clear benefits
  - Minimal disruption to homes
- More complex or invasive improvements face scepticism

**Barriers to Retrofitting**

- Common challenges include:
  - Financial constraints
  - Technical difficulties
  - Trust-related concerns
  - Conservation area restrictions add further complications

**Community-Led Solutions**

- A solid foundation exists for:
  - Local engagement initiatives
  - Peer support networks
  - Community-driven efforts to overcome obstacles