



Lighting and cameras installed at The Causeway (Photo: Peter McCluskie)



Photo: Gren Manuel

Want to reduce your home energy use by 75%?

GREN MANUEL

That's the remarkable energy-saving achieved by Judith Leary-Joyce, one of the speakers at the energy-saving forum organised in May by HGS REACH, the RA's climate action group. Ms Leary-Joyce owns a terraced house in a conservation area in St Albans built in 1901 and, despite her much-reduced heating bills, she says, "We're much warmer than we ever were."

The event focused on the kind of significant changes that result in this kind of dramatic energy-saving. Known as a 'retrofit', it involves insulating walls, floors, and roofs and generally taking a take-no-prisoners approach to reduce heat loss. An estate agent told Ms Leary-Joyce that the building's exceptional eco profile would make it a 'special sale' and increase its value by £90,000. This kind of energy-saving uplift may make good financial sense. But there is another, stronger impetus.

The UK's targets for reducing climate emissions demand that all homes built before 1990 get this kind of treatment, said Dermot Barnes, associate director of sustainability at environmental consultancy XCO2, another speaker at the event. Some 30% of UK carbon emissions come

from domestic buildings, with 80% coming from hot water and heating. So if the UK is to meet the targets it has set for itself, the heat loss from our homes must be dramatically reduced.

"If we are to meet our obligations under the Climate Change Act, we would need to do 25 million comprehensive retrofits in 30 years. And that's basically every house built before 1990," he said. "And just to translate that massive figure into something a bit more immediate, that means 833,000 homes a year, or one every 40 seconds."

The homes in the Suburb almost certainly need more work than most. A REACH poll earlier this year indicated 26% are entirely single-glazed. Only 32% of residents with lofts that can be insulated said they have the recommended 270mm thickness.

Some residents may think all energy-saving improvements are impossible as the HGS Trust would not permit them under the Scheme of Management.

But Simon Henderson, HGS Trust chief executive, joined the event for the Q&A session and was keen to dispel this belief. He said the Trust is routinely approving improvements such as double glazing that matches the original design. He said: "There is

a good percentage of properties on the Suburb that could have significant energy-saving improvements – but almost nobody's applied to do them."

He also noted the Trust has no say on changes that cannot be seen from outside the building. Residents with listed homes will need Barnet's permission for internal changes. But changes are still possible – Mr Barnes' firm has done extensive retrofit on historic buildings such as the old Battersea Town Hall, which is Grade 2* listed.

One of the most significant barriers to dramatic energy saving is a knowledge gap. A bad energy retrofit may not only go over budget and yield poor results but also impair ventilation, which can cause mould or other problems.

Moderator Sarah Stafford, who is managing her own retrofit in the Suburb, said finding good experts is hard. Ms Leary-Joyce had to do so much research she wrote a book afterwards: *Beginners Guide to Eco Renovation: Understand the Basics and the Best Questions to Ask*.

To help solve this problem, HGS REACH has created a new page on its section of the HGSRA website with links on retrofit. It also has a video from the event and the speaker presentations. Visit hgsra.uk/reach to learn more.

Suburb Ward Walks

CLLR. ROHIT GROVER

Over the past few months Barnet's Community Safety team have started planning 'Ward Walks' across the Borough, where councillors, the police and residents' associations visit areas where community safety issues, including anti-social behaviour, have been reported. Council officers from other departments, such as Environment, are also invited.

The first Garden Suburb Ward Walk took place at the end of March in the North side of the Suburb. The route started at East Finchley tube station and passed through several 'checkpoints' – locations where residents have reported safety concerns directly to the police, or the email inbox that is shared between the police and the council's Community Safety Team (safestreets@barnet.gov.uk).

These checkpoints were: The Causeway, Edmunds Walk, Deansway, Gloucester Drive and the path between Maurice Walk and the A1. The community safety issues that had been identified mainly revolve around the absence of CCTV, bad lighting, blind spots/hiding places and overgrown foliage.

Many will recall that a disturbing assault took place in The Causeway back in October 2020. Since then, the council has implemented several measures, including the installation of CCTV, improved lighting and cutting back the foliage that was both

obscuring the street lighting and providing hiding places.

Thankfully, no further incidents have been reported since then, although for many people this is clearly still an area of concern.

Regrettably, no representative from the local police was able to attend the Garden Suburb Ward Walk so we were unable to hear their views on The Causeway or learn much more about the incidents that had been reported at the other checkpoint locations along the route. However, the presence of Barnet environmental officers and representatives from the HGSRA did provide us with the opportunity to identify and report the following issues for action: fly posting on The Causeway, damage to the green on Edmunds Walk, overgrown foliage on Deansway and poor waste disposal practices behind Market Place.

These Ward Walks are to take place twice a year and I would expect the next one to be in the south side. While I was disappointed that we did not get the opportunity to explore some of the reported anti-social behaviour issues in greater detail with the police, I would encourage all readers to get in touch with your ward councillors at cllr.r.grover@barnet.gov.uk and cllr.m.mire@barnet.gov.uk so that we can take these types of issues up directly with the council's Community Safety Team and the police as necessary, and investigate them in future Ward Walks.



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