



Michael Dyson
associates ltd

ERDF Summative Assessment 2023

August 2023

Prepared for Luton Borough Council

In connection with RENEW2 – Refurbishment works to 5Nr High Rise Blocks in Luton

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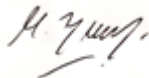
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1. Introduction

1.1 About Luton Borough Council

The Luton Borough Council (LBC) Corporate Plan 2023-2028 has strategic priorities to:

- Building an inclusive economy that delivers inward investment to support the growth of businesses, jobs and incomes.
- Improving population wellbeing and tackling health inequalities to enable everyone to have a good quality of life and reach their full potential.
- Supporting a strong and empowered community, built on fairness, local pride and a powerful voice for all our residents.
- Tackling the climate emergency and becoming a net zero town with sustainable growth and a healthier environment.
- Becoming a child friendly town, where our children grow up happy, healthy and secure, with a voice that matters and the opportunities they need to thrive.
- Creating a modern and innovative council, providing high-quality, efficient services that meet the needs of residents and delivers on the vision for Luton 2040.

Under the 2018 Luton Energy Strategy the Council committed to:

- Continuing to improve Energy Efficiency
- Significantly reduce fuel poverty
- Developing a Council owned energy business
- Supporting the delivery of social and economic benefits from community led generation activities

One of the headline strategic ambitions of the LBC Housing Strategy 2019-2022 is “quality homes and places”, which states LBC’s intention to reduce fuel poverty by 25% over three years.

1.2 About ERDF in the East of England

The ERDF call responded to by LBC for this project was as follows;

‘The call to run a project supporting the shift to a low carbon economy in the South East Midlands’

This call was looking to support the shift towards a low carbon economy in all sectors, specifically:

- promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable resources.
- promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy use in enterprises
- supporting energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructure, including in public buildings, and in the housing sector
- promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas, including the promotion of sustainable multimodal urban mobility and mitigation-relevant adaptation measures
- promoting research and innovation in, and adoption of, low-carbon technologies

1.3 Project Description

Project RENEW2 aims to develop an area-wide replicable solution for hard to treat homes. The project will focus on 5 blocks of 1960's built flats, consisting of 560 solid walled, reinforced concrete construction flats within Luton. Its focus is to reduce carbon emissions through a decrease in energy use, improving thermal comfort for housing tenants and an increase in the use of renewables and battery storage. Fuel poverty can be a factor when considering the cost of heating a residence to a comfortable level. The aim is to provide residents with homes that they can afford to heat and to save them money through reduced utility bills. This has a knock on effect on tenants' health and a wider economic effect through a reduced need to access health services. A warm home may mean that in-patients can be discharged from hospital sooner for instance.

The application of external wall cladding to "wrap" the structure will insulate the building but to prevent the build-up of excessive condensation on the interior, heat exchange systems will be installed in each flat. This will ensure that humidity levels are maintained at a suitable level without the loss of heat associated with conventional extraction systems. The extractors are automatically controlled so that occupants do not need to operate them manually.

The cladding will consist of an aluminium sheet rain screen over a rock wool fill. The system is designed to be hung on rails which are secured to the building. Fire stopping and the non-flammable nature of the materials were carefully tested prior to project start.

All lamps within the blocks will be replaced with LED bulbs.

20 kWp of solar panels and 26.4 kW of battery storage will supply electricity to the communal areas, such as staircases. Financial savings made through the use of generated electricity will be passed on to the tenants via reduced service charges.

Fuel poverty is a real problem for many of the social tenants and an important part of the project is to ensure that the tenants have a financial saving through reduced utility bills and can also heat their flats adequately.

The various energy conservation measures aim to reduce carbon emissions by an estimated 1tonne CO₂ per flat per year and give a saving of around £200.

Help and advice from tenant liaison officers will ensure that tenants get the maximum benefit from the project.

1.4 Project Details

The project follows on from RENEW and the Project's core objective was to enable households to reduce energy consumption and utility bills, thus tackling fuel poverty and reducing carbon emissions whilst improving thermal comfort.

The aim was to find a cost effective and reliable way of delivering a comfortable, low carbon solution to 560 homes: first by improving the performance of the fabric and core building services, followed by the whole house energy solutions. The project RENEW helped to develop area-wide replicable solutions for hard to treat homes within Luton.

To ensure the tenants got the maximum benefit from the carbon saving initiatives, a direct communication and engagement strategy was included within the project. Specialist staff were engaged to advise tenants on how to save energy and heat their homes more efficiently.

As well as direct indicators (reduction in fuel bills and hence reduction in carbon emissions), indirect indicators were measured where possible. These included the reduction in number of households in fuel poverty, improvement in health, improvement in educational attainment, supporting the green economy, upskilling the local workforce and the creation of new jobs.

An understanding to barriers for uptake of energy efficiency measures will also be useful for informing future projects.

Table 1 below shows the key project details as set out in the Business Case and Funding Agreement.

Item	Detail
Project name and reference;	RENEW2
Project Offer Letter/Funding Agreement;	2020
Project Start Date;	01/08/2020
ERDF Grant;	£6,496,980.01
Intervention Rate;	
Total Project Eligible Costs; from latest PCR (no change from original Grant Funding Agreement)	
Practical Completion and Activity End Date (Revised)	30/09/2023
Financial Completion (Revised)	30/09/2023
Final Grant Claim (Revised)	

ERDF Summative Assessment 2023

Following the approval of a Project Change Request on the 13 January 2023, the following was the outcome.

Item	Detail
Project name and reference;	RENEW2
Project Offer Letter/Funding Agreement;	2020
Project Start Date;	01/08/2020
ERDF Grant;	£8,772,608.50
Intervention Rate;	
Total Project Eligible Costs; from latest PCR	
Practical Completion and Activity End Date (Revised)	30/09/2023
Financial Completion (Revised)	30/09/2023
Final Grant Claim (Revised)	

1.5 Project Context

It is important realise the local context of the project, and the national situation regarding cladding related projects.

In 2019, a new primary objective of eradicating poverty from Luton by 2040 was set, with the alleviation of fuel poverty playing a major part in this. This project (and planned future ones) sit at the heart of this objective.

LBC has approximately 2400 hard to treat properties. These are defined as those which are solid walled or have a cavity of less than 49 mm. High rise blocks are particularly hard to treat and have traditionally only been rendered. LBC owns 10 such blocks and works were completed to 2 of those blocks as part of the first RENEW project. Any works to improve the thermal efficiency of the building envelope not only reduces the heating load in the winter but also protects against overheating in the summer.

In order to avoid traditional and ineffectual attempts to improve thermal efficiency in tower blocks (by applying external insulation through the use of a time consuming and difficult to apply external render) a new approach has been adopted for the Renew project.

This includes a “whole site” approach to energy reduction measures, with external insulation, internal heat exchange systems, LED bulbs and communal PV panels and battery storage all installed. In addition, an innovative method of offsite manufacture of the external insulated cladding system, followed by fast onsite installation, has been used.

1.6 Benefits

Making the buildings more energy efficient results in a decrease in carbon emissions through reducing the requirement for heating and comfort cooling. There will be less likelihood of tenants living in homes which aren't heated sufficiently, thus reducing the health issues associated with living in poorly heated and ventilated homes. This has wider social implications for health care, education and ability to work.

Spending less on heating and lighting improves fuel poverty levels with a knock on effect for the local economy.

1.7 Innovative Approaches

External insulation, internal heat exchange systems, LED bulbs and communal PV panels and battery storage together provided a “whole site” approach to energy reduction measures.

The innovative method for offsite manufacture of the external insulated cladding system, followed by fast onsite installation, provided an opportunity to test and develop a system which could then be rolled out to more properties within Luton and also to other authorities across the region, stimulating growth in this market.

The technologies and delivery methods used in this project were intended to inform LBC and others for future projects. A quicker and more efficient way of installing external walling cladding will enable the Council to accelerate their carbon reduction programme.

In addition, specialist staff were engaged to advise tenants on how to save energy and heat their homes more efficiently.

2. Summative Assessment Approach and Methodology

2.1 Overview

The below sets out the intended approach to the Summative Assessment and proposed methodology. In summary this included:

Impact and benefit of the programme

The summative assessment has sought to analyse the extent to which the project has helped contribute towards delivery of the strategic objectives of the ERDF Operational Programme, particularly those related to low carbon economic growth. The relevant ERDF call and Priority Axis Social Housing Retrofit to support energy conservation and generation in existing social housing, seeking to harness the best national, regional and local expertise and experience and delivering the best economic and carbon reduction outcomes.

The projects objectives therefore matched this strand of the ERDF call for projects.

Review of programme financial performance

An assessment of the financial performance of the project has been undertaken, using ERDF claims submitted measured against agreed profiles to identify any deviation from profile as part of this process.

Review of Programme outputs/results/performance

An assessment of the performance of the project has been undertaken in relation to the profiled set of targets. As part of this MDA has examined any issues that have arisen in respect of providing evidence. The assessment has been carried out through an initial examination of data followed by discussions with project management staff.

Review of programme implementation and management

MDA has examined the structure and systems set up to manage the project plus any available meeting notes and associated materials.

Lessons learned and how this can inform future activity

Where applicable we have extracted lessons learned from each of the categories above and provided a summary within the final summative assessment report. We have looked at the potential longer term legacy of the project.

2.2 Nature and Period of Summative assessment

The timetable for the summative assessment means that it has been carried out close to, but before the end of the project. As a consequence the summative assessment of project performance is to the end of February 2023. It cannot include final claims made after this date but will provide a robust examination of project performance and likely outcomes v profile.

2.3 Documents Examined

During the summative assessment the following key project documents were examined:

Document	Notes
ERDF Business Case	November 2018
ERDF Funding Agreement	2020
ERDF Project Change Request	13 January 2023
Project forms and Documents	On the Spot Verification Visit; 14 February 2023
ERDF Claim documents	Q1 2022 (Claim 7) and Q4 2022 (Claim 10)

2.4 Claims Examined

In the completion of this summative assessment a sample of project claims (as supplied by LBC) were examined, as outlined in the table below.

Claim Number	Period
1.	Q1 2022
2.	Q4 2022

3. Project Financial Performance Analysis

3.1 Documents Examined

To examine the performance of the project the following documents were analysed:

- Project business case and funding agreement
- All claims
- Project change request documents
- Revised and related financial and indicator tables

3.2 Financial Performance

Category	Spend to Q1 2023	Profile	Variance	Total Project Budget	%age of total spent	Spend remaining to Project Completion
Capital	12,243,461.04	£17,278,451	29.1	£17,278,451	70.9	£5,034,990
Revenue	161,414.00	£266,766	39.5	£266,766.00	60.5	£105,352
Total	12,404,875.04	£17,545,217	29.3	£17,545,217	70.7	£5,140,342

This table shows the position up to the end of March 2023, in respect of the project's progress towards its overall financial targets. Progress against re-profiled spend is below target, however it is to be noted that the works are in fact complete, and expenditure here was on target based on the costs prior to the PCR. Remaining costs will be claimed in Q2 2023 and ahead of the project completion of 30th September 2023.

3.3 Project Financial Performance Summary

The project is on track to achieve overall financial profiles which were set out at the start of the project.

3.4 Project Value for Money

This project is expected to be delivered within the agreed contract sum and any cost changes/variations have been managed within the project contingencies and provisional sum which were included within the contract.

Thorough pre contract discussions also took place to ensure that the contractors had fully aligned with the contract requirement to avoid additional costs.

4. Project Target Performance Review

4.1 Indicator Targets and Re-Profile

This project supports ERDF programme indicators C31 and C34.

At project completion the outputs will be as follows:

C31 Number of households with improved energy efficiency	560
C34 Reduction in greenhouse gas (tonnes)	estimated 560/annum

The energy conservation measures have a projected life of up to 30 years thus saving in the order of 16,800 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂).

EPC results benchmarking shows that the flats were originally rated at an efficiency rating of D or low C. Pre project each flat was calculated as producing about 2 tonnes of CO₂ per annum with space heating calculated at 4329 kWh per annum. An indicative post project EPC showed the impact of the various proposed energy conservation measures. Each flat was calculated to consume 2391 kWh per annum and produce 1.1t CO₂ thus producing a theoretical saving of 0.9t CO₂ per flat.

4.2 Achieving Outcomes and Impacts stated in the Logic Model

4.5 The logic model states that 560 flats will have reduced energy consumption, improved thermal comfort and see a reduction in energy costs when compared with unmodified flats. At present (February 2023) all flats have some energy saving measures installed (LED bulbs and heat exchangers) and the external wall insulation. Post retrofit data on energy consumption attributable to the heating (i.e. gas consumption) will not be available until the end of the 2023 -2024 heating season. Current energy consumption is being gathered to provide a baseline.

4.3 Additional economic, social and environmental benefits of the project

The effect of poorly heated homes is difficult to quantify in absolute terms but in 2014 Public Health England issued a report (Fuel Poverty and cold home-related health problems) in which the price of fuel and the energy efficiency of homes were identified as contributors to fuel poverty.

In the report, it is stated that research on the cost of housing-related ill health, where poor housing conditions are a main contributor, estimates that the annual cost to the NHS is £2.5bn. This includes costs accrued by primary care services, treatment costs, hospital stays and outpatient visits.

The Marmot review team 2011 report for Friends of the Earth (The Health Impacts of Cold Homes and Fuel Poverty) states that, as well as direct physical and mental health effects, there are indirect impacts from cold housing and fuel poverty, such as children's educational attainment, negatively affecting dietary choices and increased risk of accidents due to an adverse effect on dexterity.

The report also states the positive effects of stimulating the energy efficiency market on the local labour market and economy.

Environmentally, reduction in energy use directly impacts on CO2 emissions and thus climate change.

4.4 Strategic Added Value

The project supports a number of national, regional and local priorities.

The call specification under Investment Priority 4c is to support energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructure, including public buildings and in the housing sector. This project supports energy efficiency (both installation of technology and the education and support of the users) and the use of renewable energy, with the use of smart metering to analyse data from the solar panels and battery storage.

SEMLEP ESIF 2014-20 implementation plan priorities (2017-2020) include the "Low carbon and technology innovation support programme". This priority axis supports social housing retrofit to support energy conservation and generation in existing social housing. The intention is to utilise local and national expertise to deliver the best economic and carbon reduction solutions.

The strategy also aims to build the market for low carbon environmental goods and services. The innovative method for offsite manufacture of the insulated cladding system, followed by fast onsite installation, provides an opportunity to test and develop a system which can be rolled out to more properties within Luton and also to other authorities across the region, stimulating growth in this

market. The RENEW project has given us an opportunity to refine the manufacturing and installation of the system.

4.5 Performance following final re-profile to final claim

The table below shows performance of the project to the final claim measured against the profile to the end of the project.

Indicator Reference and Description	Cumulative Profile to End of Q3 2023	Cumulative Performance to Q3 2023	Variation	Target at end of Project	% Achieved
ER/C/O/31; Number of households with improved energy consumption classification	224	560	336	560	100
ER/C/O/34; Estimated annual decrease of GHG	201.6 (based on 0.9t per property)	504 (based on 0.9t per property)	302.4	560 (tonnes per annum)	90

4.6 Performance versus Target Indicators Summary

The target numbers have remained the same since the original grant funding agreement.

To date the full evaluation of the estimated decrease in heating required through re-assessment of the performance rating certificates of the flats has not been completed. This process will be completed in time to achieve the targeted outcomes.

Luton Council anticipates meeting all targets, based upon performance to date and initial indications of reduced heating requirements per flat.

5. Qualitative Performance Analysis and Future Performance Review

5.1 Factors affecting performance

The RENEW2 project was scheduled to begin in June 2020 with completion by September 2023 which will be achieved.

Prior to the initial tender at the start of the project, an abseil survey was performed to give an indication of the condition of the exterior of the buildings. This was a lesson learnt from the initial RENEW project.

5.2 Overall learning from operational delivery

The table below gives details of issues and mitigations carried out during the project.

	Forecast/Target	Actual Performance	Comments
Time Overall project timescales	Proposed start date: September 2023 Proposed completion (financial, activity, practical): 30/09/23	As per target.	This project has been delivered within the timescales.
Cost spend against target	Initially costed at £17,278,451	As per target.	The project is set to be delivered within the agreed contract sum.
Outputs Performance against agreed targets	Targets: • 560 Properties completion • 560 tonnes of CO ₂ reduction (1 tonne per property)	Summary at March 2023: • 560 Properties completed • 504 tonnes of CO ₂ reduction as at February 2023	The current status is slightly lower than the target.
Risks Any risks dealt with during the project	Risks identified in ERDF Full Application 2018:	Actions to September 2019:	The highest impact risks have all related to delays with the project, and although these have been managed where possible, they have resulted in PCR's being required.
	1. Lack of, or diminishing, corporate support for project outcomes	1. Continued engagement corporate leadership team ensuring project is monitored at a strategic level, both in terms of works and financial outputs	
	2. Lack of, or diminishing support from staff and managers for project outcomes	No changes	

3. Lack of Member buy – in for project and its outcome	3. Support from Council Members is still maintained
4. Financial - insufficient funds to complete project	4. Sufficient funds have been made available for the original works.
5. Individual members of project steering group unable to commit time to deliver project outcomes	5. All present members of the steering group have maintained involvement within the project.
6. Service managers recalling officers back from project steering group	6. Service Managers have maintained their support to ensure successful completion of the project.
7. Loss of key members of staff	No changes
8. Lack of appropriate skill set to deliver project outputs	No changes

5.3 Summary of lessons Learned

Whole building approach to energy conservation measures maximised CO2 and financial savings.

Carbon savings of 560 tonnes per annum will be achieved for at least the next 30 years.

Residents will save money on utility bills thus helping to move them out of fuel poverty.

Warmer drier homes will improve living conditions for the residents.

The enabling works and the cladding of the building will ensure a further 30 years of useful life.

From the first project a number of lessons have been learnt and measures were implemented to avoid the same issues reoccurring.

5.4 Qualitative Feedback

The battery storage system will provide valuable information on the financial value of adding storage systems to existing PV installations as well as providing a business case for installing battery storage as standard whenever PV is installed.

External wall insulation and rain screen cladding on high rise blocks is a new energy conservation solution for LBC. In particular the method of off-site manufacture and installation is a departure from the traditional rendering solution.

LBC plan to continue to collect data after completion of the project (particularly as LBC would like to obtain a results form a full winter with the project work complete) particular attention to the often seen performance gap between design performance and the actual performance post retrofit. Quality control and testing will ensure the correct performance of the system and analysis of key construction details and modelling have shown where improvements could be made in areas such as methods of fixings and thermal bridging.

The learning from this project will significantly improve the progress and management of any future initiatives. In particular, tighter sub-contractor management process will be put in place, however, the impact of external factors can never be fully factored in or mitigated against.

5.5 MHCLG Feedback

The project is part funded by the East of England European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Operational Programme 2014-20. The Managing Authority for the programme is the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Feedback from MHCLG was received at the On the Spot Verification Visit; 18/04/2023. No irregularities were identified at the visit.

LBC has specifically asked for their gratitude to be recorded for the support received from MHCLG during the project. Without the professional and pragmatic approach displayed by MHCLG colleagues, the project would have been even harder to keep on track and the required outcomes difficult to achieve.

6. Project Management and Compliance

6.1 Project Management

This project has been managed by an external consultant Michael Dyson Associates Ltd (MDA) who have provided Employers Agent, CDM Principal Designer and Technical/Design services.

6.2 Governance and management

The project has been overseen by a steering group chaired by the Service Director for Housing. Senior team members also attend some progress meetings which are held with contractors.

The governance and management structure and the delivery team have been effective. This follows the same model as other internal projects that have been successfully completed in the past.

By regularly attending the SEMLEP ERDF focus group, the ERDF and Delivery Programme Managers gained additional guidance from other attendees.

6.3 LBC team structure

The LBC team structure proposed within the ERDF funding agreement included 4 staff: ERDF Programme Manager (0.25 FTE), Project Manager (0.40FTE), Project Officer (0.40FTE) and Delivery Programme Manager (0.10FTE).

6.4 Operational delivery

At a strategic level, the ERDF and the Delivery Programme Managers have reported to MHCLG on project progress against targets, claims and any changes and guidance.

Operationally the Project Delivery Manager, Programme Manager (in the absence of the Project Delivery Manager) and the Project Officer were responsible for ensuring that progress on site was maintained and for carrying out general contract administration.

Regular health and safety audits meeting were held by the Contractor focusing on site safety. The consultant Principle Designer conducted regular Health and Safety audits on behalf of the Council, which showed no major concerns.

The Customer Liaison Officer (supplied by the contractor as part of their contract) worked very closely with residents disseminating information, providing updates to works and also wider contribution to the social aspects of the project, for instance engaging with local schools and nurseries.

6.5 Systems and Compliance

In common with other projects an extensive and detailed set of procedures and associated forms had been developed for the project.

The project underwent a full 'Progress and Verification' (PAV) visit on 7th February 2023. This is a management verification audit carried out by the Managing Authority. During the visit detailed checks were carried out on the systems and defrayed expenditure during the selected claim period.

A Reality of Operations Check visit was carried out on 7th February 2023. No report has been produced but the verbal feedback was positive.

6.6 Sustainable Development

The RENEW project supports and promotes the principles of sustainable development and complies with European environmental legislation. Its activities have a direct and quantifiable effect on the environment by reducing the energy demand and level of greenhouse gases of 509 households.

LBC is committed to sustainable procurement, as a minimum requirement. For any work streams sub – contracted, evidence was sought as to the supplier's commitment to sustainable development; in the form of certified environmental management systems or public environmental statement. Also, as part of any tender process, an environmental commitment was included as part of the evaluation criteria.

As well as supporting the environmental principles of sustainable development, RENEW was also designed to support the goal of a more sustainable economy. The project aimed to create jobs in the local area and so offer a better financial future for tenants. Reducing the amount of money spent on utilities moves tenants out of fuel poverty and means more money is available for discretionary spend. Better heated houses will improve the health of tenants and improve their children's learning opportunities. This in turn improves the socio-economic outlook for the area.

The environmental impact during contract delivery was designed to minimise waste and to ensure that recycled materials were used wherever possible for promotional materials, events and communications with households.

The Council has considered equal opportunities in developing this project, and, as a local authority, is necessarily strongly committed to equal opportunities. This commitment is described through the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy which complies fully with the Public Sector Equality / Equalities Act 2010.

The project was open to all and LBC attempted, in the delivery of the project, to ensure equality of access to all the nine protected characteristics as defined in the Equalities Act of 2010, providing additional support where needed to especially vulnerable groups. This responsibility was cascaded to any and all contractors engaged to deliver elements of this project.

Social housing tenants are often from the more vulnerable groups in the community, so this project offered additional support to the tenants where needed, to ensure that the improvements to the building offered maximum benefit to the residents. Fuel poverty is not just a problem for older households as is often suggested as families with children and other working age households make up over 70 % of those in fuel poverty. Of these, families are by far the largest single group (45%), 34% of those in fuel poverty have a disability or long term illness, and may not be able to work. However, around 80% of people living in fuel poverty who can work do so. (www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics)

Employment in the construction industry tends to have a male bias but contractors were encouraged to take positive steps to recruit female candidates where possible.

Luton Council and/or subcontractors involved in this project were expected to commit to equality of opportunity. Evidence was obtained as to their commitment to preventing discrimination in the form of a public statement or a published policy. Also as part of any tender process LBC included a statement of equality and diversity and anti-discrimination commitment as part of their evaluation criteria.

6.7 Summary

Overall the governance, management structures and project processes appear to have been effective and all lessons learnt from RENEW have been implemented which has improved how the project has run.

The themes of Equal Opportunities & Sustainable Development are integrated into all projects including project RENEW.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Summary

Overall, the project is considered to be on track to achieve expected spend and outputs and programme targets.

7.2 Achievement of objectives

Throughout the implementation of lessons learnt via RENEW the project is set to achieve the financial and programme targets overall and any cost increases have been managed within the agreed provision sum and project contingencies. Whilst some blocks have slipped from the agreed completion dates they have still been managed within the overall September completion date.