

# York and North Yorkshire's draft Retrofit Strategy

Increasing Comfort, Lowering  
Costs and Supporting our Climate

2025–2030

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Executive Summary

# What is Retrofit?

Retrofit can improve ventilation, comfort and resilience to high and low temperatures. Some common works that can be considered to be retrofit are:

- Insulating walls, roofs and floors;
- Upgrading windows and doors and installing external window shutters;
- Installing solar panels;
- Installing mechanical ventilation, trickle vents and extractor fans;
- Moving away from fossil fuels, such as by changing the heating source to an air source or ground source heat pump;

Examples of complementary measures include:

- Installing EV charging equipment;
- Smart controls, like smart meters, which could be used in conjunction with other technology like battery storage.

This list is not exhaustive, especially as innovative technologies are constantly being developed. Additionally, every building is different and requires a unique approach to ensure the right works are completed. For example, heritage buildings may require more bespoke measures.

*'Retrofit refers to any improvement work on an existing building to improve its energy efficiency, making them easier to heat, able to retain that heat for longer, and replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy.'*

Centre for Sustainable Energy<sup>1</sup>

*Retrofit can include 'the introduction of new materials, products and technologies'*

Retrofit for the Future<sup>2</sup>

## What is the Retrofit Strategy?

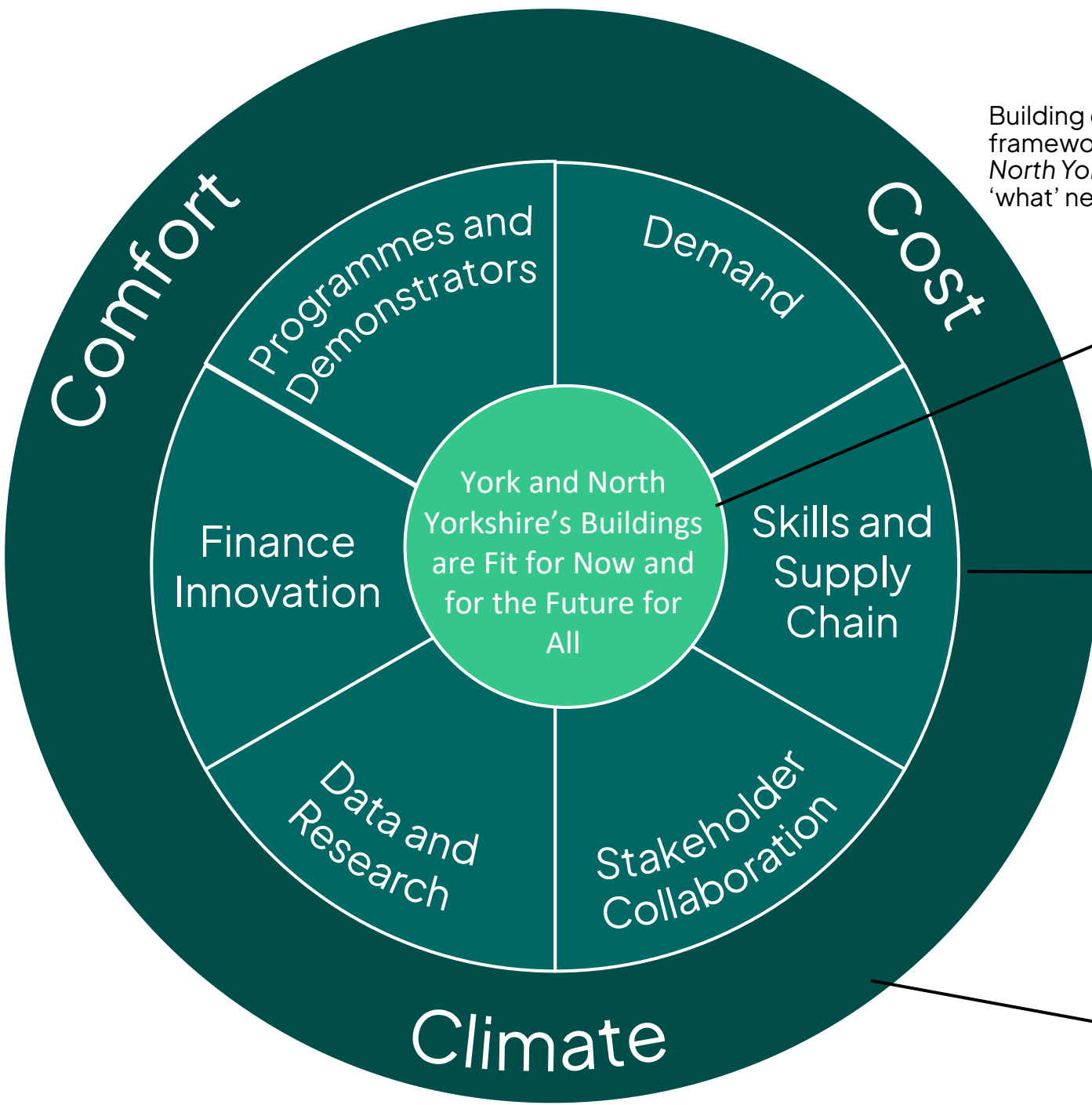
York and North Yorkshire's Retrofit Strategy is a collaborative document that provides strategic direction for retrofit in the region. Its aim is to provide a clear, co-owned plan to accelerate retrofit in York and North Yorkshire. It is intended to complement other work in the region, not replace it, and the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority (YNYCA) will work to ensure it complements other Combined Authority strategic documents including the Routemap to Carbon Negative and the Local Growth Plan.

The Strategy sets out the strategic direction for retrofit via the strategic framework on the following page, and includes action plans which detail projects and initiatives focused around the six strategic priorities. It has been co-designed by regional and national partners, and has utilised previous work from key stakeholders in the region.

The Retrofit Strategy sets out a long-term direction of travel for retrofit, but focuses on priorities and interventions between 2025 and 2030. This is because we are still awaiting key decisions at a national level which will impact the retrofit system, and new technologies and approaches are emerging every day.

# Strategic Framework

Building on an extensive evidence base and working closely with stakeholders, this framework sets out the region's approach to delivering our vision, that *York and North Yorkshire's Buildings are Fit for Now and for the Future for All*. It summarises 'what' needs to happen (the strategic priorities) and 'why' (the outcomes).



## Vision:

This is the long-term goal for retrofit in York and North Yorkshire.

## Strategic Priorities:

The strategic priorities are the 'what' and the areas of focus for activity, which span the whole retrofit system. They must all be tackled to increase the pace and scale of retrofit. They are:

- Demand - Grow York and North Yorkshire's market demand for retrofit at a pace and scale aligned to regional and national retrofitting and net zero targets.
- Skills and Supply Chain - Support the supply chain for retrofit to cope with growing demand.
- Finance Innovation - Reduce finance as a barrier to retrofit, to ensure it does not hold back the rate of change.
- Data and Research - Ensure a data and research driven approach to retrofit.
- Stakeholder Collaboration - Enable York and North Yorkshire organisations to be united in their approach to retrofit and coordinate strategic delivery
- Programmes and Demonstrators - Demonstrate best practice and deliver programmes that meet the pace and scale of retrofit required.

## Outcomes:

These are the 'why' of the Retrofit Strategy, which outline what needs to happen as a result of the Strategy. All activity under the Retrofit Strategy will aim to meet at least one of these outcomes.



# What needs to happen?

From our evidence base, we know that in York and North Yorkshire we need to accelerate the pace and scale of retrofit. This includes:

- Delivering retrofit at scale across domestic buildings to improve their energy efficiency and move away from fossil fuels
- Retrofitting public and community buildings to improve their energy efficiency and move away from fossil fuels
- Retrofitting existing business premises and increasing the energy efficiency of buildings

We also know that our buildings are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as flooding and heat waves. YNYCA are currently undertaking an Adaptation Study which will be completed by the end of 2025. When available, the outputs of this will be included in this Strategy.

## How can this happen?

To accelerate the pace and scale of retrofit and realise the benefits, transformative change is needed across [Demand](#), [Skills and Supply Chain](#), [Finance Innovation](#), [Data and Research](#), [Stakeholder Collaboration](#) and [Programmes and Demonstrators](#). The Retrofit Strategy sets out interventions under each of these strategic priorities in six action plans which will enable these changes.

## Who needs to be involved?

Delivering retrofit at scale must be collaborative because the retrofit system is complex and involves a range of stakeholders who play different roles. Every organisation has a role to play, and every individual should be able to make a difference. Therefore, all the organisations involved in retrofit need to be involved in the implementation of the Retrofit Strategy. Some of the types of organisations who have been involved in the development include Local Authorities, Social Housing Providers, skills providers, private landlords, businesses, community groups, and expert organisations in fields such as heritage and biobased materials.

## Where does this need to take place?

This Strategy focuses on York and North Yorkshire. During the development of the strategy, a range of interventions have been identified. Some of these will need to take place at an organisational level, whereas others will require a more strategic approach across the whole region.



# Why Retrofit? What are the benefits?

Retrofit can have a lot of benefits, which can broadly be divided across the themes of Comfort, Cost and Climate.

## Comfort

Retrofit is an opportunity to improve the condition and resilience of our buildings to ensure that every person in York and North Yorkshire is comfortable and can afford to heat and cool their building. This is crucial because:

As of 2023, there were approximately 50,000 households in fuel poverty in York and North Yorkshire<sup>3</sup>

63% of homes (221,308) and 57% (11,511) of non-domestic buildings have an EPC below EPC C<sup>4</sup>

28% of York and North Yorkshire's buildings were built before 1930<sup>4</sup>

Cold homes have been found to have a direct negative impact on the mental and physical health of children and adults<sup>5</sup>

90% of our country's housing stock in 2050 will be homes which exist today<sup>6</sup>

## Cost

Retrofit can reduce energy use, leading to lower bills for homes and businesses, and savings for key services. There is also an opportunity for retrofit to boost our local economy. This is important because:

As of 2024, 36.3% of households spend more than 10% of their income on domestic energy, an increase on previous years<sup>7</sup>

The average energy bill for small businesses is £2889.37. As a result, more than nine in 10 businesses expect to increase prices<sup>8</sup>

Retrofitting ~250,000 homes in York and North Yorkshire to EPC C or above could save up to £250 million per year in energy bills<sup>9</sup>

For every £1 invested in keeping buildings warm, it is estimated that there is an NHS saving of 42p in direct healthcare costs<sup>10</sup>

Approximately £8.7 billion in investment is needed to retrofit homes, which represents a huge opportunity for our local supply chain<sup>11</sup>

## Climate

As storms, floods and heatwaves intensify across the world, there is growing urgency for collective action to tackle climate change. Retrofit can deliver emissions reductions and help us adapt, which is important because:

Buildings are responsible for 25% of the region's total emissions<sup>9</sup>

Two thirds of emissions in the region are from domestic buildings, with the remainder from non-domestic buildings<sup>9</sup>

20% of UK built environment emissions come from the construction and refurbishment of buildings<sup>12</sup>

Buildings are at risk from changes to our climate, such as heatwaves, floods, soil erosion and storms<sup>13</sup>

Retrofit can deliver emissions savings, such as an air source heat pump saving 2900kg of CO<sub>2</sub>e per year compared to a gas boiler<sup>14</sup>



# What is the opportunity for York and North Yorkshire?

Aside from the benefits of retrofit, York and North Yorkshire is in a strong position to lead the way for retrofitting buildings.

Our region has:

- A unique building stock, with rural, coastal and urban roots.
- A strong heritage sector, with 28% of York and North Yorkshire's buildings having been built before 1930, and a high number of conservation areas and listed buildings.
- A thriving biobased materials sector including hemp and sheep's wool, which can be used for insulation.
- An ambitious carbon negative aspiration as a region, with a role to play for every person in York and North Yorkshire.
- Innovative projects like the Local Net Zero Accelerator, which focuses on unlocking private sector investment, and the Innovate UK funded Retrofit One Stop Shop for York.

**All of this means that we have the ability to test, trial, perfect and lead the way for retrofit.**

We are developing this regional Strategy to harness these opportunities. Nationally, Retrofit is central to the delivery of the Government's forthcoming Warm Homes Plan and has a role to play in the delivery of national and local housing targets. Additionally, whilst retrofit is currently driven by Central Government funding schemes, Combined Authorities are being given more local powers and devolved funding to deliver retrofit. Therefore, it is essential that we map out our approach now to cement our strong position, so we can make the most of future opportunities.

This Strategy is a result of extensive collaborative work which has identified key action areas. However, to truly deliver transformative change, significant investment (such as a devolved retrofit settlement) is required. This would mean that the region can undertake more retrofit at a greater pace and scale to realise the benefits for the region.

