

Thames Freeport launches Sustainable Construction Lab as first retrofit works begin on the Becontree Estate

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Thames Freeport has launched its Sustainable Construction Lab, marking the start of a coordinated programme to accelerate neighbourhood-scale retrofit and low-carbon construction across East London and South Essex.

The launch coincides with the first retrofit works beginning this week on homes on the Becontree Estate in the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham. These initial projects are being delivered by Transform-ER and E.ON, working in partnership with the council and local supply-chain providers.

The programme responds to urgent challenges in the built environment. In 2022, England generated **63 million tonnes of construction and demolition waste — the highest level recorded since reporting began in 2010**. While recovery rates have improved, rising total waste and the scale of inefficient homes across the region demonstrate the need for a more coordinated approach to retrofit and construction delivery.

Turning ambition into delivery

Thames Freeport Chair, Rt Hon. Ruth Kelly, said:

“The Sustainable Construction Lab is about turning ambition into delivery. We’re starting with retrofit because the need is immediate — warmer homes, lower bills and new skilled jobs. The old model isn’t delivering at the pace the country needs, but modern methods of construction can. Thames Freeport is uniquely positioned to bring those innovations together and help build the next generation of sustainable homes.”

A system-level approach to construction and retrofit

The Sustainable Construction Lab brings together **Rainmaking, Ramboll, Energiesprong UK, BE-ST, Tallarna and E.ON**, with support from the three Freeport local authorities.

The programme will:

- Retrofit the first neighbourhoods by April 2026
- Unlock up to £200m in private investment for low-carbon construction
- Establish a regional marketplace for sustainable construction materials
- Introduce a new green construction qualification with FE providers
- Lay the foundations for a Sustainable Construction & Homes Innovation Centre within Thames Freeport

Partner quotes

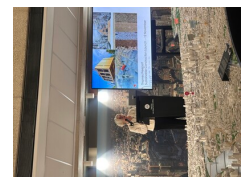
Daniel Avery, Director, Rainmaking, said:

“We’re thrilled to be working with Thames Freeport and our innovative partners on building greener, faster and more affordably. We urgently need to build more and better homes, and improve the comfort and efficiency of the homes we already have. We look forward to proving and scaling crucial new models which will be beneficial to us all.”

Saurav Chaudhuri, Head of Innovation, E.ON UK, said:

“E.ON is redefining its relationship with homeowners, empowering them to take an active role in the energy revolution with innovative solutions that help reduce energy demand. We’re moving

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toward a more open and collaborative model — one that brings together partners, stakeholders and end users to create long-term value.

The biggest barrier to adopting low-carbon home technology is cost. E.ON Next Gen Home removes that hurdle by combining all equipment, installation and energy costs into one simple monthly payment — no large upfront spend, no complex financing. Greener choices shouldn't be limited to the affluent. This first-of-its-kind offer brings solar panels, batteries, heat pumps, EV chargers and smart energy management together in one accessible package, helping more people benefit from lower-carbon living.”

Emily Braham, Director of Strategy & Operations, Energiesprong UK, said:

“Over the last two years, we've collaborated with 12 industry leaders to create a new delivery model for faster, smarter and more affordable home energy upgrades at scale. The result is Transform-ER — a resident-focused approach designed for real-world delivery. We're excited to demonstrate it across the Thames Freeport region.”

Louise Rogers, Impact Manager – Housing & Manufacturing, BE-ST, said:

“BE-ST is proud to be working alongside Thames Freeport and its partners to accelerate better, faster and more affordable built-environment solutions. This collaboration strengthens manufacturing capability, promotes low-carbon product adoption, and supports high-quality local jobs. The ambition shown by Thames Freeport is exactly what's needed to unlock long-term sustainable economic growth.”

Claire Racine, UK Head of Sustainability for Buildings, Ramboll, said:

“Ramboll is delighted to partner with Thames Freeport in advancing their vision for sustainable construction. This collaboration brings together a network of companies committed to shaping the future of the built environment, construction and retrofit sectors.

By contributing our multidisciplinary engineering expertise and sustainability knowledge, Ramboll will support the creation of an innovative Green Product Catalogue and provide practical solutions for the Built Environment Innovation Centre. We are thrilled to be part of such a forward-thinking initiative driving real progress toward greener, more sustainable construction.”

Stuart Rimmer, CEO of Thames Freeport, said:

“The Sustainable Construction Lab is exactly the kind of joined-up, practical innovation our region needs. No single provider, council or contractor can deliver retrofit or green construction at the pace required — but together, we can create a system that works.

What excites me most is the opportunity this creates for people: new skills, new pathways into good work, and new industries rooted here in East London and South Essex. The Lab brings together global innovators with local capability, proving that the Thames Freeport region can lead the way in building warmer homes, stronger supply chains and a greener economy.”

Company Contact:

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Thames Freeport

E. john.stasi@thamesfreeport.com

W. www.thamesfreeport.com

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