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Residents' relief as Berecroft roof safety work is completed

By Chris Moss

SAFETY improvement works to scores of homes on the fire-ravaged Berecroft estate have now been completed following months of "unavoidable" delays.

The neighbourhood was the scene of two major fires in recent years and concern over the ease with which flames spread through the shared roofspace of terraced homes prompted housing association South Anglia to agree to replace the roofs of 226 properties.

Unforeseen structural problems delayed the £4m project earlier this year but on Friday contractors Kier Harlow finished work on the final phase.

Tracy White, managing director of South Anglia Housing, told the **Star** that despite the delays the association had worked hard to ensure the work was completed.



"We have stood by our promise to residents to invest millions upgrading more than 200 roofs in Berecroft and hope the fire safety improvements will mean people feel safe in their homes," she said.

"During the work we had to tackle issues which were more complicated than our independent engineers and surveyors originally anticipated.

"But we worked hard to overcome all obstacles to successfully finish this vast project which has brought long-term safety and a secure future to Berecroft's residents."

All terraced homes on the estate now boast modern, lightweight steel roofs with firebreak walls. Fascias and soffits have been replaced with upgraded materials requiring less maintenance.

New guttering and downpipes have also been fitted to homes to ensure good drainage.

Resident Ted Thirley, who was part of a nine-strong residents' quality control team set up to scrutinise the work being carried out, described the project's completion as a "relief".

"When we first heard about the re-roofing my wife and I were apprehensive," he said.

"But South Anglia and Kier Harlow gave us the chance to see the work at every stage and nothing was too much trouble for them during the project.

"It was such a relief when we got our new roof. Not only is it safer, it also has more storage room."

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Harlow MP Robert Halfon, who backed residents' calls for safety improvement works in May last year and helped set up a steering committee to oversee the project's delivery, added: "This has been a real community effort and residents' input throughout has been dedicated and constructive.

"Berecroft is now a fantastic place to live and the new roofs look beautiful. South Anglia and Kier Harlow have done an excellent job."

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