

Building for the future: St Andrew's Village targets Homestar 8 retirement living

As retirement villages plan for a lower-carbon future, many face the challenge of balancing sustainability ambitions with affordability, resident comfort and long-term asset performance. For St Andrew's Village in Auckland, the answer has been to focus on building performance from the outset.

Its latest development, Glen Firth, is a 20-unit independent living villa project currently under construction and due for completion in late 2026. Designed to achieve Homestar 8 certification, the development reflects the village's commitment to creating lower-carbon, energy-efficient homes that are comfortable, resilient and fit for the future. If achieved, Glen Firth is expected to be one of the first Homestar 8 retirement village developments in New Zealand.



St Andrew's Village, prior to construction of the Glen Firth development.

Looking beyond minimum standards

St Andrew's Village has been progressively incorporating sustainability principles into its developments for several years and, after applying Homestar 7 principles in the construction of its Care Suites, the organisation chose to take a further step with Glen Firth.

The decision was driven by a desire to reduce its carbon footprint, improve building performance and respond to the increasing importance of energy efficiency for both residents and operators.

"We wanted to create homes that would perform well for decades to come, while supporting our broader sustainability goals and providing a healthier, more comfortable environment for residents."

The organisation also recognised that rising energy costs and increasing expectations around sustainability would make higher-performing homes more valuable over time.

Investing in performance

Unlike many sustainability projects that focus primarily on renewable energy generation, Glen Firth has prioritised reducing energy demand through better building design. The development incorporates a high-performance building envelope, enhanced insulation, improved airtightness, moisture control measures and high-quality ventilation systems designed to maintain comfortable indoor temperatures throughout the year.

Energy modelling undertaken during the design phase indicates the Glen Firth villas could achieve at least a 15% reduction in energy consumption compared with a standard Code-compliant build. While this will need to be validated once the homes are occupied, the modelling suggests residents will benefit from lower energy use, reduced running costs and improved comfort. The result is expected to be homes that are warmer in winter, cooler in summer and less reliant on mechanical heating and cooling.

This "fabric first" approach reflects the principle that the cheapest and cleanest energy is often the energy that does not need to be used.

Making the business case

Achieving Homestar 8 requires additional investment compared with conventional construction. The project team has needed to balance higher upfront costs with the long-term benefits of improved building performance, lower operating costs and enhanced asset quality.

For St Andrew's Village, the decision was ultimately about taking a long-term view. Retirement village residents often live in their homes for many years, meaning even modest reductions in energy use can deliver meaningful savings over time. Better thermal performance can also improve comfort, reduce moisture-related issues and contribute to healthier living environments.

The village also sees higher-performance homes as a way of future-proofing its assets against changing energy costs, market expectations and environmental requirements.

Challenges along the way

Designing and constructing higher-performance buildings is not without complexity. One of the key challenges has been achieving the right balance between airtightness and ventilation to ensure homes remain healthy, comfortable and easy to operate.

The construction process also requires a higher level of attention to detail than conventional building methods, with performance outcomes dependent on careful design, coordination and quality control. However, St Andrew's Village believes the additional effort is justified by the long-term benefits.



View of the eastern aspect of the Glen Firth development.

Looking ahead

Because Glen Firth remains under construction, operational energy savings and resident outcomes cannot yet be measured.

St Andrew's Village intends to undertake a formal assessment after the homes have been occupied for a full year, with analysis planned for late 2027. This will enable the organisation to compare actual performance against the design modelling and better understand the energy, cost and comfort benefits achieved through the Homestar 8 approach.

Based on design modelling and expected performance, St Andrew's anticipates benefits including:

- Reduced household energy consumption

- Lower heating costs for residents
- Improved thermal comfort
- Better moisture management and indoor air quality
- Greater resilience to future energy price increases

The development has also influenced how the organisation thinks about future investment decisions.

"It has strengthened our focus on lower-carbon, energy-efficient solutions that make sense both environmentally and financially."

What's next?

St Andrew's Village views Glen Firth as part of a broader sustainability journey. Planning is already underway for future solar installations, with the organisation exploring opportunities to incorporate renewable energy generation from 2027.

The experience has reinforced the value of considering sustainability at the earliest stages of project planning and has shaped the organisation's approach to future developments. For St Andrew's Village, the project demonstrates that smaller operators can play a meaningful role in New Zealand's decarbonisation journey. By investing in higher-performing homes today, the village is creating long-term benefits for residents while helping build a more resilient and lower-carbon future for retirement living.



Looking east across the Glen Firth development site