



(Carillion-Igloo's 'HomeMade at Heartlands' development - Image courtesy of Carillion-Igloo, HomeMade Homes and HTA)

Planning for Self- and Custom-build housing

June 2016



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Contents –

1. Introduction	-	1
2. Requirements on LPAs	-	2
3. Methodology	-	4
4. Defining Self and Custom Build	-	5
5. Register of Interest	-	6
6. Plan Making	-	8
7. Decision Taking	-	12
8. Summary	-	15

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1 Introduction

1.1 PAS has commissioned this research to find out how local planning authorities (LPAs) are currently responding to the government's agenda for promoting the self-build and custom building sector of housebuilding. The research has been structured to discover what planning policy measures have been adopted by councils and whether it is possible to assess the effectiveness of these in promoting delivery. It also explores the practical considerations that commonly arise in connection with consideration of applications for planning permission for self-build or custom build homes and what solutions LPAs have found to deal with these.

1.2 This report is structured as follows –

Section 2 – Requirements on LPAs	Links to relevant policy documents and information on the requirements placed on LPAs.
Section 3 - Methodology	The aims of the research and the process undertaken.
Section 4 – Defining Self and Custom Build	Discussion on the meanings of the key terms.
Section 5 – Register of Interest	LPAs experience of registering interest in self-build and custom housebuilding.
Section 6 – Plan Making	The approaches, practical challenges faced and solutions LPAs are finding for plan-making for self-build and custom housebuilding.
Section 7 – Decision Taking	A discussion on the development management process and issues arising in decision-taking.
Section 8 – Summary	A review of the key practical challenges facing LPAs in meeting the requirements and key additional support required.

2 Requirements on LPAs

2.1 Self-build and custom housebuilding is a key element of the government's agenda to increase supply and tackle the housing crisis, as evident by the Conservative government's aspiration to at least double the number of custom and self-built homes by 2020¹.

2.2 Subsequently, new legislation has been introduced and guidance has been published to support an increase in self-build and custom housebuilding:

The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act (March 2015)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/17/contents/enacted>

The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding (Register) Regulations 2016 (commenced 1st April 2016)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2016/105/contents/made>

Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Planning Practice Guidance (April 2016)

<http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/self-build-and-custom-housebuilding/>

Housing and Planning Act 2016

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/22/contents/enacted/data.htm>

2.3 LPAs are under a duty to keep a register of individuals and associations who have expressed an interest in acquiring serviced plots for self and custom build². The register regulations set out the requirements that LPAs must follow in preparing and keeping their registers. The requirements placed upon LPAs regarding the form and content of registers are set out in the regulations and guidance:

LPAs must hold a webpage dedicated to self-build and custom housebuilding setting out what the authority is doing to promote opportunities in their area, the purpose of the register and how to apply for entry onto the register.

Each LPA must keep its own register but LPAs may share the administration duties with neighbouring authorities.

An application for entry into the register must be made in writing and include; the name, date of birth and nationality of the individual and confirmation that the individual is seeking (either alone

¹ The Conservative Party Manifesto 2015

² The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act (March 2015)

or with others) to acquire a serviced plot of land in the relevant authority's area to build a house to occupy as that individual's sole or main residence. If the applicant is an association then they must provide the information as discussed above for each member and in addition, the name and address of the lead applicant and the number of serviced plots of land that the members of the association are seeking to acquire.³

LPA's may request applicants to provide additional information to that required by the legislation, but it is up to the applicant whether they wish to disclose the information⁴. LPA's cannot currently adopt additional eligibility criteria, although under the Housing and Planning Act further regulations may provide for eligibility to be determined by reference to criteria set by a relevant authority.

Where a couple or two or more members from the same household are jointly seeking a serviced plot, one member could be nominated as the lead and apply as an individual or they could apply as an association.

Determination of applications must occur within 28 days once received. LPA's must notify the applicant of the outcome in writing and provide reasons should the applicant not be successful.

Each entry on the register must include; name, address, number of plots required and the date the entry was made (as well as the date of any amendments).

The LPA must remove an entry from the register within 28 days of receiving a written request from an individual or association. If the LPA deems an entry no longer eligible to remain on the register then the LPA must notify the subject in writing and give reasons for the decision within 28 days of the decision.

LPA's should feed the demand data from the registers into their HEDNA (Housing and Economic Development Need Assessments) and make reasonable assumptions to avoid double-counting households.

LPA's do not have to publish their register but they must publicise it and are recommended to publish headline data in their Authority Monitoring Report including: the number of individuals and associations on the register; the number of plots sought; location preferences; plot size and type of housing intended to be built.

- 2.4 LPA's are under a duty to have regard to the register when carrying out their planning, housing, land disposal and regeneration functions⁵.

³ The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding (Register) Regulations 2016

⁴ Draft Planning Practice Guidance

⁵ Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015

The guidance sets out that, in terms of **plan-making**, LPAs should use their registers as evidence of demand when developing their Local Plan and associated documents. The register may be a material consideration in **decision-taking**.

- 2.5 The Housing and Planning Act 2016, places a further duty upon LPAs to grant suitable development permission in respect of enough serviced plots of land to match demand on their self-build and custom build register. The Housing and Planning Act sets out:

That demand is evidenced by the number of entries added during the base period;

An authority gives permission if it is granted by the authority, the Secretary of State, the Mayor of London or (in the case of permission in principle) by a development order in relation to land allocated for development in a document made, maintained or adopted by the authority;

Permission is considered suitable if the development could include self-build and custom housebuilding.

- 2.6 Therefore, it is likely LPAs will have to review, and potentially revise, their planning policies to ensure they plan for sufficient self-build and custom housebuilding in their areas.

- 2.7 They will also need to ensure they have appropriate development management policies and efficient practices to deal with planning applications:

- For serviced plots of land suitable for self-build and custom housebuilding;
- Permission for and reserved matters applications for houses on those sites; and
- Applications for permission to build homes that include self-build and custom housebuilding.

3 Methodology

- 3.1 The aim of this research is to inform evolving good practice and help LPAs to meet the current and foreseeable requirements by exploring:

the approaches LPAs are using to plan for the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding;

how LPAs are responding to planning applications for self-build and custom housebuilding;

the practical challenges they are facing and additional support required.

- 3.2 A sample of LPAs (listed in Appendix 1) was carefully selected to explore the issues from a variety of perspectives and across a range of economic performers. Included in the sample were LPAs

from the North, South, Rural/Urban areas, London Boroughs; Vanguard Councils and non-Vanguard Councils.

- 3.3 In-depth interviews were carried out with the sample LPAs to discuss the issues from their perspective. A standardised schedule of questions was used to structure the interviews and to enable comparison across the LPAs.

4 Defining Self and Custom Build

- 4.1 Self-build and custom housebuilding are defined in the Housing and Planning Act as:

“...the building or completion by— (a) individuals, (b) associations of individuals, or (c) persons working with or for individuals or associations of individuals of houses to be occupied as homes by those individuals. But it does not include the building of a house on a plot acquired from a person who builds the house wholly or mainly to plans or specifications decided or offered by that person.”⁶

- 4.2 The definition underlines the importance of the role that the future occupier takes. From our surveys it was clear that LPAs and other stakeholders recognised various models of self-build and custom housebuilding including: individual and group delivery mechanisms to acquire land, secure planning permission, fund the costs and procure the dwellings. Where a developer delivers speculative units (notwithstanding a purchaser could make various choices during the construction phase (e.g. kitchen and bathrooms)) for profit, this is outside the definition. If the future occupier is involved in the full planning process it is recognisable as within the definition of self or custom build. However, because developers funding the enabling works (including the planning permission) to bring forward land for sale to self-builders is likely to be an important mechanism in allowing demand for self-build sites to be met, there remains some grey area in the definition at least until such time as the reserved matters or details for approval application is submitted and the future occupier can be identified.
- 4.3 Paragraph 136 of the [CIL guidance](#) sets out that a self-build exemption is available to anyone who builds or commissions their own home for their own occupation. Community group self-build projects also qualify for the exemption where they meet the required criteria.

⁶ Housing and Planning Act 2016 (Chapter 2, Section 9)
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/22/section/9/enacted>



Broadhempston Community Land Trust - a community led affordable self build scheme for 6 families. - Teignbridge District Council <https://broadhempstonclt.com/about/>

5 Register of Interest

- 5.1 The majority of LPAs who have established registers of interests already ask the questions required under the new regulations, as well as more detailed information around location preferences, plot/house size, financial status etc. These established registers have undergone a process of refinement to meet the regulations which came into force on the 1st April 2016.
- 5.2 In terms of local connection and financial status criteria, LPAs are currently asking about this for information purposes only. However, it is likely that in constrained growth areas with high demand, local connection criteria could be a useful tool to manage the supply and demand. Such criteria may in the future be permitted in regulations due out in the autumn pursuant to the provisions of the Housing and Planning Act. If so, LPAs may be able to use this to determine eligibility for the register. Detailed guidance is expected to supplement the regulations.
- 5.3 LPA's on the whole have not found the register process too onerous. However, they noted that there needs to be a mechanism in place to ensure it remains up-to-date. This is likely to take the form of an email sent to applicants to ask if they wish to remain on the register, either annually or bi-annually.

- 5.4 The sample LPAs reported “reasonable” numbers of people registering interest (see summary table in Appendix 2). As is to be expected, demand is higher in growth areas and desirable locations. A wide range of people are registering interest in self/custom build plots. The majority seem to be aspirational self-builders looking to build three to five bedroom detached properties with the resources available to enable them to deliver the project. It is interesting to note that the sample LPAs have received very few registrations from groups looking for collaborative schemes.
- 5.5 Currently, it is possible for people to sign up to multiple registers, which creates a problem when measuring need. In order to streamline the registration process, it has been suggested by those questioned that regional registers or a central register is set up, which each LPA is able to access to view the headline data. This could be similar to the pan-London [‘Build Your Own London Home Register’](#). However, at present there is no intention from the government to require LPAs to do other than establish and maintain a register for their own area.
- 5.6 ‘A disconnect is likely to exist between the register and the number of applicants with the ability to take projects forward’ (London Borough of Wandsworth). LPAs questioned consider that for the registers to quantify need rather than demand, information on the financial position of applicants needs to be collected, so that the register reflects need rather than aspiration.
- 5.7 In their self-build register, Teignbridge District Council ask the following questions about the financial position of the applicant (with a menu of drop-down choices for each including a ‘prefer not to disclose’ option):
- What is the maximum amount you have saved and could definitely afford to pay as a deposit or for the whole build without borrowing additional finance (including sale of existing dwelling)?
 - Indicate the maximum mortgage amount you could realistically access from a bank or building society. Banks typically lend a maximum of 3.5 times your gross (total) household income.
 - Indicate the Maximum monthly rent/mortgage amount you could realistically afford.
- 5.8 In LPA’s where registers of interest are well-established, the data is being fed into their HEDNA. West Oxfordshire District Council commented that the data from registers will be incorporated into the HEDNA as they go along, but in more general terms, unlike the specific provision made for Traveller communities.

- 5.9 Newcastle City Council are currently preparing their Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). They commented that in line with the Housing and Planning Act, the call out for new sites and assessment of suitability for housing development would feed into the proposed Brownfield Register and Small Sites Register. The Small Sites Register in particular will provide an opportunity for those interested in self-build to identify sites for development and encourage land owners to come forward with land. A working group of the Planning Policy, Housing, Development Management and Property Teams has been established to share information throughout this process.

6 Plan Making

- 6.1 This section analyses the approaches taken by LPAs; any issues that have arisen; how successful the policies are in meeting local demand for serviced plots; and whether LPAs plan to supplement their approach with further planning tools in order to increase the supply of serviced plots.

Approaches

- 6.2 LPAs have taken various approaches to incorporate self and custom build into policy. Every LPA will have different aspirations, needs, opportunities and constraints which will influence the approach taken. It was clear from the consultations that most LPAs are taking or plan to take multiple approaches to deliver plots effectively, as taking a single approach is considered unlikely to yield the plot numbers required to meet demand.
- 6.3 One common policy is to encourage or require self and custom build alongside other housing based on the level of local demand using housing mix policies. Alternatively, others are using a percentage policy to require a proportion of allocated or windfall sites over a certain size to make provision for self and custom build, usually in the form of serviced plots.
- 6.4 The policy approach (whether through percentage or housing mix) is an effective approach in LPAs who do not have large land holdings for disposal or lower appetites for using their own assets in this way. This approach delivers serviced plots alongside plots intended for market housing whilst requiring limited active input from the LPA. Having a policy in place acts as a strong starting point for negotiations with developers. However, delivery is reported to be slow and the LPA has little control over when serviced plots for self-build come forward to the market. Teignbridge District Council have granted outline planning permission for 61 plots across 5 sites in the past year and half since their register has been established, however none of these plots have been brought to the market yet.

- 6.5 Land allocation for self-build and custom housebuilders in plans (which may be supplemented by acquisition of sites and/or disposal of council's own assets) is also seen. For example, Sheffield City Council are identifying Council-owned sites which are suitable for custom build housing and promoting these to people on the register and to developers. Also, Plymouth are planning a strategic land review to identify smaller plots, to proactively identify sites and establish if they are suitable for self and custom build. Plymouth Council then prepared a planning statement for suitable sites to provide some certainty for prospective buyers. However, many LPAs are not able to take this approach as they do not have large land-holdings. In addition, there are significant challenges in allocating land based upon tenure type. LPAs need to be resourced, or willing to take on financial liabilities, in order to enable the acquisition of land for such approaches to work. There are a range of issues that need to be considered when allocating a specific site for self/custom build plots in a plan including: location, constraints, planning policy obligations, viability, land ownership and design.

Practical Challenges

- 6.6 The following table sets out the practical challenges and offers some suggestions based on discussions with the sample LPAs, to address these.

Issue	Explanation / Solution
Guidance on policy implementation	Clear guidance provided in an SPD can be effective in managing delivery issues such as location of plots onsite, completion of infrastructure, length of marketing time for plots and what happens if the plots are not sold to self or custom builders.
Land availability	<p>Notwithstanding government singling out the self-build and custom housebuilding sector for growth, it is important that custom housebuilders and infrastructure enablers are able to compete in the open market for land in order for the sector to mature. If they are not able to compete side-by-side with other residential sectors the market will not deliver the plots. The ability to compete is subject to greater volumes and economies of scale such that the manufacture of the units is cost competitive to traditional build (i.e. the land price + house price = competitive to the traditional model).</p> <p>As with PRS (private rented sector) and retirement living (e.g. McCarthy & Stone) it is challenging to allocate sites for specific sectors of the residential market. Council's may overcome this by choosing to make the provision of plots for self-build a condition of sale on their own land or as a condition of a planning permission and enforced through a S106 agreement. However this is in the context of Councils' statutory obligation to obtain 'best consideration'.</p>
Viability	<p>To ensure that Local Plans are sound, LPAs need to ensure that their self/custom build policies are deliverable. Delivery of both affordable housing and serviced plots is likely to cause viability issues. They also have different cost models for the land developer, in terms of profit and risk, presenting different viability challenges. These need to be better understood.</p> <p>If infrastructure and/or abnormal costs are high and values are low then LPAs may struggle to meet the requirement in the Housing and Planning Act to grant enough planning permissions to meet demand for plots. Pendle Borough Council commented</p>

Issue	Explanation / Solution
	<p>that in low value areas the delivery of serviced plots may not be viable due to the cost of servicing the sites.</p> <p>The ever increasing complexity of the housing market including not just self-build and custom housebuilding, but also PRS, retirement living, starter homes, affordable housing etc. creates disproportionate work for Local Plan viability testing and a pragmatic approach is required by Inspectors.</p>
CIL Exemption	<p>This acts as a dis-incentive for LPAs to deliver plots. Without the exemption, CIL funds could be used to bring forward more serviced plots for self and custom builders e.g. through enabling infrastructure development to release more plots. However, this would add to the total cost for the self and custom builders and would only work once construction costs are competitive with traditional build.</p> <p>LPAs also report ongoing issues with the administration of CIL exemptions for self-build particularly in respect the requirements of the self-build exemption forms; inflexibility in relation to the notice being served prior to commencement; and the provision of self-build warranties. This should be clarified as part of the independent CIL Group review.</p>
Evidence of demand	<p>Developers are challenging LPAs in terms of evidence of demand for plots. The provision of an up-to-date register of interest provides robust evidence of demand. It is important that the registers are detailed enough to be able to demonstrate the nature of the plot requirements in specific locations. The demand from the registers can be used to inform HEDNA's in terms of the quantum of need and location requirements of self-builders.</p>
Location of sites	<p>A miss-match often exists between areas where there is demand for plots (usually higher value, constrained areas) and areas where either development is coming forward or where the LPA owns land.</p> <p>However, as demand for housing is so high, LPAs are taking the opportunities that are presented. 'In London, there are particular challenges with delivering plots as land values and demand are very high and sites coming forward are likely to be small and constrained' (London Borough of Wandsworth).</p>
Land values	<p>As more demand is evidenced for plots (through the registers), the more plot values are likely to increase which could put self/custom build further out of reach for a large proportion of the market. The challenge for Councils is to mobilise their own land-holdings at affordable prices which enables self/custom builders to deliver an 'affordable' house. South Cambridgeshire are piloting modular construction for affordable homes on a small Council-owned site and aim to roll this model out for self/custom build.</p>
Managing expectations	<p>Expectations are high that self/custom builders will be able to choose any site and that permission will be automatically granted, notwithstanding that the site may be outside settlement boundaries. This is due to confusion surrounding the government's statements in support of self-build, the publicity for the register, new regulations and requirements placed upon LPAs. Councils are developing supplementary guidance notes to explain the approach that the Council will take to considering whether sites are suitable. Teignbridge have published a draft Custom & Self Build SPD.</p>
Delivering high quality design	<p>Design Codes are generally considered an essential tool for both helping existing communities to understand the form and design of homes to be constructed on self-build plots, and to balance flexibility of design with quality and consistency across a site or area for the future self-builder. These are most often adopted as SPD by councils and subsequently referred to in conditions on the planning permission. There is an adopted design code for the Graven Hill development in Cherwell.</p>

Issue	Explanation / Solution
Large-scale self & custom build	<p>Local Development Orders (LDO) can be a useful policy tool to facilitate the delivery of large scale self and custom build schemes. Cherwell have a LDO in place for their Graven Hill, Bicester development of 1,900 units. The self-build elements are part of a larger housing scheme granted outline planning permission. The enabling infrastructure, including roads, services and public realm will be delivered through the terms of the outline permission. Through the LDO, The Graven Hill Village Development Company (owned by the Council) provide Plot Passports for each plot which contain the rules for design, then the purchasers submit an application for a compliance check to the planning authority who will approve the designs if this complies with the Plot Passport and established Graven Hill design code (approval period of 28 days).</p>
Delivery of plots alongside traditional affordable housing	<p>The planning policy context has become much more complex with initiatives on self and custom build arising at the same time as changes to the provision of affordable housing and starter homes. LPAs report some confusion about how these should all be taken into account on assessing housing need and consequent policies for delivery.</p> <p>Teignbridge District Council state that developers may provide affordable self-build plots (classed as intermediate product) that satisfy both the serviced plot requirement and the affordable housing requirement, providing they meet specific criteria set out in their draft SPD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the Council confirms there is no existing need for traditional intermediate or shared ownership properties; • the developer must demonstrate that there is realistic and deliverable demand for affordable self-build plots; • all the plots within a parcel of affordable self-build plots should be transferred as one to an enabler to ensure all the plots are delivered; • the maximum cost that the plots should be transferred to an enabler at is £5,000 per plot including site accessing and servicing; • the resale price of the dwellings is restricted to at least 20% below market value in perpetuity; • the dwellings are subject to the affordable housing clawback period in respect of CIL Regulations; • if the affordable self-build properties have not sold after 12 months of marketing, the affordable dwellings should be built out and brought forward via S106 in the normal way, rather than reverting to the open market after a minimum 12 month marketing period⁷.
Monitoring	<p>Because of the delay in delivery of self-build plots and subsequently for the build out of homes on these sites, monitoring is particularly important. CIL exemption certificates have tended to be the most effective way to pick up starts on site, but these need to be monitored as part of the annual monitoring report. Self-build/custom build is now also monitored on planning application forms.</p>
Table 2 – Practical Challenges and Solutions in Plan-making for Self-build and Custom Housebuilding	

⁷ Custom & Self Build Housing Draft Supplementary Planning Document, Teignbridge District Council, July 2015

Partnerships

6.7 The LPAs interviewed were keen to partner with experienced enablers in whatever form. Cherwell noted the value of partnering with a main contractor to assist with management of self-build schemes. A couple of LPAs noted that Registered Providers were wary of taking on self/custom build schemes due to the additional complexities involved and the challenges they are facing around funding. One LPA was particularly keen to make self and custom build accessible to a wider market through making it more affordable by partnering with organisations specialising in off-site manufacture and construction methods. But such partnerships are beginning to evolve and seem to offer a valuable route to meeting the demand for sites evidenced by the register.



Homes for Heroes self build scheme in Bedminster Bristol with The Community Self Build Agency (CSBA) and Knightstone Housing Association <http://www.self-build.co.uk/homes-heroes>

Neighbourhood Planning for Self-build and Custom Housebuilding

6.8 In terms of neighbourhood planning, most plans are still in the early stages, so whilst there is general support, no specific proposals have come through yet in the sample LPAs. However, it was noted that Parishes are not incentivised to plan for self/custom build as they receive CIL funds (25%) if speculative housing development comes forward, but they don't receive anything if development takes the form of self/custom build due to the CIL exemption.

6.9 Early engagement with Parishes helps to facilitate the inclusion of self-build and custom housebuilding in neighbourhood plans. For example in [Winslow Neighbourhood Plan](#) land has been allocated for 20 custom build plots. Also, the [Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan](#) supports the construction of up to six custom build, self-build, single dwellings in the period up to 2026.

7 Decision Taking

- 7.1 Pre-application advice tailored to self-build and custom housebuilding is important to guide applicants through the planning process, as most of the current guidance is very high-level. This needs to include guidance on the CIL exemption. Some vanguard councils have appointed a dedicated self/custom build project officer to provide this specialist advice which helps make the delivery process more efficient.
- 7.2 LPAs reported that it was difficult to differentiate between speculative housing applications or self/custom build applications. However, self-build/custom build is now monitored on planning application forms. The only way to monitor this previously was through the CIL exemption. The applicants for the CIL exemption are from a wide range of backgrounds - not-for-profit groups, local small and medium housebuilders, national housebuilders, custom-build developers/enablers, landowners and individuals looking to build their own home. However, the majority are from individuals building a single dwelling for their own residence.
- 7.3 The type of application being received by LPAs is mixed between outline and full applications. For single homes, outline applications tend to be received more often where the plot is in a sensitive area or there is less certainty about the outcome. In terms of large multi-plot sites, the approach from developers tends to be to submit outline or hybrid applications (detailed for means of access and infrastructure) followed by reserved matters applications wherein the design and appearance of the individual homes are considered for permission. These applications are generally considered by case officers in the normal way, with the assistance of self-build officers where available (Teignbridge District Council). In pre-app discussions self-build officers could provide information on relevant topics such as viability, timing for pre-commencement conditions, the CIL exemption and it also provides an opportunity to signpost them to further resources, such as the Custom & Self-build [toolkit](#). Plymouth have a dedicated self-build planning officer who provides free pre-app advice and meets on-site to go through potential issues and to offer guidance on how to gain planning permission.
- 7.4 This two-step application provides the developer with a reasonable level of certainty but also flexibility on larger sites in particular. Reserved matters applications could be submitted by the developer to establish general principles of siting, design and appearance according to a design code or by subsequent self-build plot purchasers to fix the detailed design for an individual plot. Equally, if the planning permission conditions compliance with a design code, the self-builder may simply be required to submit an approval of details application to show compliance with the design code.

- 7.5 In the spirit of encouraging self-builders, it is important that LPA's are flexible on the design parameters to allow for individual variety as well as custom housebuilders house types and designs. To this extent, both members and officers do need to appreciate that the resulting developments will have more variety in the design approach taken. Planners need to be wary of being more prescriptive than is necessary to take account of locally distinctive character or to preserve residential amenity between neighbouring properties.
- 7.6 In terms of encouraging the provision of a greater number of serviced plots to meet self-building demand, South Norfolk District Council has found that they have been able to negotiate successfully with developers who have an existing planning permission that they want to expand/intensify. In these cases the Council have pushed for the additional dwellings to be in the form of serviced plots for self-build. This has received 'mostly positive feedback from developers so far'.
- 7.7 There are particular issues/material considerations which are arising in connection with applications for land to be built out as serviced plots for self/custom build. We tabulate these below, alongside the methods LPAs are developing to address these challenges and mitigate the impact from self/custom build schemes.

Material Consideration/Issues	Explanation/Solutions
Phasing of multi-plot schemes and triggering of CIL	Need to split the scheme into separate phases for access road, any speculative development and each serviced plot
Control over design on multi-plot sites	Design Codes are efficient as a means of managing expectation, embedding a quality standard and providing certainty for designers/applicants. These can cover a range of issues from siting and bulk issues in order to provide a standard approach to the protection of neighbour amenity to boundary treatments, building lines, materials and if required by policy, applying the residential technical standards. The approach taken by Cherwell Council to the Graven Hill site is a useful example especially the Plot Passports on page 7.
Tying the Design Code to planning permission	Design codes are best conditioned to planning permissions at the outline stage.
S106 requirements	Issues arise where the outline permission for the provision of serviced plots is followed by the submission of reserved matters applications for individual plot permissions by self-builders. Supplementary planning documents need to provide clear guidance on the approach to s106 developer contributions, and to provide details of trigger points for payments or provision of

	infrastructure/mitigation measures required through Grampian conditions.
Monitoring of CIL exemptions granted for the 3 year period	A system needs to be set-up using monitoring software and cross-departmental support
Issues with programme, quality and delineating responsibility	Partnering with a main contractor to manage the self/custom builders on-site. Cherwell District Council employs a single contractor to manage the process from start to finish.
Controlling the build-out of sites to ensure serviced plots are delivered	<p>Delivery of serviced plots should be a condition of the permission. Failure to discharge conditions at the correct time can invalidate a planning permission rendering the site without the benefit of consent - meaning that permission would have to be re-applied for, possibly attracting other financial penalties such as a new S106.</p> <p>Teignbridge's SPD includes a clause to ensure that if self-build properties have not been sold after 12 months of marketing, then they should be brought forward in the normal way via S106.</p>
Viability in delivering serviced plots	Currently, these assessments are based on standards costs and comparables. These tools will need to be developed to assess these applications.

Table 3 – Material Considerations/Issues and Solutions in Responding to Planning Applications for Self/Custom Build

- 7.8 Feedback from community consultations on self/custom build applications has generally been positive as it is perceived that self-build and custom housebuilding offer high quality and unique design in comparison to national housebuilders. Concerns generally relate to technical matters such as scale of development, amenity and materials which can easily be overcome through planning conditions or through the use of Design Codes. Although, some concerns have been raised over the potential for disruption and half-finished houses/sites due to the length of time often taken to complete self/custom build dwellings. LPAs reported that most self-build and custom housebuilding applications are being dealt with under delegated powers, with only the major or more complicated applications needing referral to committee. This is primarily a function of the smaller scale of self-build proposals to date; most being for fewer than the threshold for committee referral, but also reflects the perceived community support that results in fewer objections.

8 Summary

- 8.1 The majority of LPAs are at the early stages of developing self-build and custom housebuilding policies and building these into Local Plan reviews. Emerging practical challenges faced by LPAs in developing policy and dealing with applications include:

Delivery is slow notwithstanding policy approaches as while the LPA can encourage supply it does not have effective control over when development comes forward – this is market-led.

Although, there is likely to be demand for serviced plots in the majority of locations, there is a mismatch between demand and supply (there is high demand for plots for single detached dwellings of 3-5 bedrooms in desirable and often rural locations).

It is challenging for planning policy to identify or allocate plots suitable for self-build serviced plots to be delivered, especially on private land. Where councils have suitable land assets and a commitment to encouraging self-build, there is a higher likelihood that sufficient serviced plots will be delivered to meet demand. Conversely where these conditions don't exist, delivery is at a lower rate and new mechanisms such as partnerships with land developers need to be explored in order to foster market supply.

Ensuring quality design - Design Codes are an effective tool for delivering high quality design, and ensuring residential amenity. They simplify the planning process and make it more efficient and certain for the self-builder. But the approach in LPAs needs to also respond to the flexible needs and variety of the self-builder, and particularly custom housebuilders, reducing prescriptiveness as far as is compatible with local distinctiveness and preservation of residential amenity.

To ensure that delivery is not stalled and that S106 obligations and CIL are triggered correctly, the phasing of schemes needs to be managed through planning conditions. To overcome this issue developments should be divided into separate phases for site infrastructure, speculative development and each serviced plot.

LPAs will need to update the register at appropriate intervals (annually or bi-annually). Email or letters to registered parties will take additional resources. Individual councils need to consider whether to include questions around the price point for plots, size and location(s) in order to better match demand to supply.

Live updates of key learning points from other schemes and successful delivery most valued in passing on best practice. The [NaCSBA's Right to Build Portal](#) is an important and helpful resource for both self-builders and also for LPAs considering their role in promoting this sector of the housing market in line with their statutory duties.

LPAs identified specific training needs around development viability for land development of serviced plots, costs of self-build and engagement with SME housebuilders, possible delivery partners, and community groups

when we've built it, we'll move in



John and Daryl Etherington's self build PassivHaus in Plymouth June 2016
<https://jdplot2.wordpress.com/>

Appendix 1 – Sample LPAs

Cherwell District Council

Huntingdonshire District Council

London Borough of Wandsworth

Newcastle City Council

Pendle Borough Council

Plymouth City Council

Sheffield City Council

South Cambridgeshire District Council

South Gloucestershire Council

South Norfolk Council

Teignbridge District Council

West Oxfordshire District Council

**Local Planning Authority Interview Participants
(all respondents are gratefully acknowledged)**

Appendix 2 – Register of Interest Response Summary

Local Planning Authority	Approximate number of expressions of interest or formal registrations to date
Cherwell District Council	Not available
Huntingdonshire District Council	Not available
London Borough of Wandsworth	200
Newcastle City Council	5
Pendle Borough Council	37
Plymouth City Council	243
Sheffield City Council	250
South Cambridgeshire District Council	320
South Gloucestershire Council	102
South Norfolk Council	92
Teignbridge District Council	280
West Oxfordshire District Council	100
Register of Interest Response Summary at time of interviews	

Planning Advisory Service

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Smith Square,
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone **020 7664 3000**
Email **pas@local.gov.uk**

www.pas.gov.uk [@pas_team](https://twitter.com/pas_team)

The Planning Advisory Service provides consultancy and peer support, learning events and online resources to help local authorities improve their purpose and service, and respond to planning reform.

Sign up for email updates online at **www.pas.gov.uk/register**

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