

Regeneration & Development Panel: Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Custom and Self-Build Action Plan - Summary Report

Introduction

- 1.1 The Government has an ambition for 300,000 homes per year to be built in England every year by the mid 2020's. For this to be realised the approach must be wide ranging. Part of this is the recognition that certain sectors of house building could contribute more to delivery, given the right attention. One such sector which has been identified is Custom and Self-Build housing.
- 1.2 Custom and Self-Build housing currently contributions in the region of 10% of housing completions a year. When compared to countries around the world this is incredibly low. For example in main land Europe the contribution is as high as 80%. With Austria, Germany and the Netherlands, in particular, contributing significantly.
- 1.3 Self-Build and Custom housebuilding is defined as individuals or an association of individuals who either build or commission the build of their home. It can take a number of forms. The most common include: a contractor built one-off home, self-built one-off home, kit or package home and developer built one-off home.

Borough Council Responsibilities

- 1.4 The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 and the Housing and Planning Act 2016 placed a duty on local authorities to keep a register of those seeking to acquire plots of land for self and custom build housing. The local authority must 'have regard' to their register during plan making and in the determination of planning applications. This is to ensure that enough permissions are granted to meet the need.
- 1.5 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2018) builds upon this and identifies those people who wish to build or commission the build of their own home as a group of people whose need should specifically be planned for. This can be both market and affordable housing. The revised Framework also introduced the Housing Delivery Test (HDT). This measures the actual deliver of housing against what should have been delivered. Failure of the test could lead to the engagement of the presumption on favour of sustainable development. Which is the same situation in failure of 5 year housing land supply.

Custom and Self-Build Task Group

- 1.6 As a response to the challenge the Regeneration and Development Panel in 2016 established a task group. The purpose of which is to explore policy options, aid delivery, direct delivery on borough council owned sites, encourage diversity in design and to create further opportunities in informing and assisting people meet their ambitions.
- 1.7 The task group has invested a considerable time, understanding and researching the issue. A register has been set up and continues to be maintained. Issues surrounding affordable housing delivery of custom and self-build have been explored. Analysis of sites coming

forward both on allocated and windfall sites has taken place. An industry event was held to raise awareness, inform and encourage those considering Custom and Self-build either as a land owner or developer.

- 1.8 The timing of this coincides with the borough council's commitment to review its Local Plan. This will cater for the needs of the local population through to 2036. It is clear that the Local Plan review cannot be silent upon this issue. As with many recent approaches to planning, housing and delivery taken by the borough council the task group has a great desire to go beyond the minimum.
- 1.9 As part of this the task group arranged for Mario Wolf (Mario is the industry's leading expert, he has been seconded from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government to lead the National Custom and Self-Build Association) to host a 2 day challenge event on with both Members and officers from planning policy, development management and housing strategy. The primary outcome is to encapsulate all of the ideas and works conducted to date in the form of a borough council wide Custom and Self-Build Action Plan.

Custom and Self-Build Action Plan

- 1.10 The purpose of this action plan is to set out the borough council's own responsibilities and wider ambitions in respect to self-build and custom house building. This will be the borough council's first comprehensive action plan focused on this issue
- 1.11 The delivery of self and custom house building in the Borough is not the sole responsibility of the borough council, it in fact relies heavily on those wishing to and having the means to build houses themselves, organisations who would like to facilitate or deliver self-build plots or build custom built houses and interested landowners and developers promoting sites for such products. Given this context, the borough council aims to:

Positively influence or help secure development opportunities where we can support individuals or organisations in our local communities to deliver high quality self-build or custom house building to meet demand in the Borough.

- 1.12 This document will set out the borough council's proposed actions to directly meet its own responsibilities to help deliver quality self-build and custom house building in the Borough to meet local demand. It also sets out the borough council's wider ambitions, where we want to work with customers and partners to influence and help delivery.
- 1.13 The plan will contain number of commitments termed actions. These will be for different departments across the council, in collaboration, including planning, housing strategy and housing delivery. The table overleaf provides an indicative broad outline of the likely actions to be included within the action plan. It highlights which area they cover i.e. promotion, facilitation or enabling. In many instances they cover more than one of these areas. The time scale each action is considered achievable within is indicated via a traffic light system. Green is short term (1- 2 years), amber is medium term (2-5 years), and red represents long term (5 years +). However, once more some actions cover a number of time scales.

No.	Action	Area	Time Scale
1	The Local Plan review will seek to develop a new policy which could boost the potential supply and delivery of custom and self-build opportunities on small sites. This will apply to areas outside of development boundaries but reasonably related to the settlement, be this infill or 'rounding off'.	Facilitation	Medium
2	The Local Plan review will create a policy environment which supports and encourages custom and self-build opportunities. This will provide opportunities for those wishing to build or commission the build of their own home and will also assist with the supply and the delivery of housing/	Facilitation	Medium
3	The borough council will support the land owners / developers of allocated sites within the current Local Plan and Local Plan review who wish to bring forward their site(s) for custom and self-build purposes.	Facilitation & Enabling	Short & Medium
4	The borough council through its duty to assist those communities who wish to prepare a neighbourhood plan for their area will inform and support policies which seek to encourage custom and self-build opportunities, as either residential housing allocations or more general land use policies/	Promotion, Facilitation & Enabling	Short, Medium & Long
5	Explore and implement innovative methods for engaging with customers who are interested in self-build and custom house building in the Borough and raising awareness of the grant of suitable planning permissions or suitable Council land disposals	Promotion	Short
6	Continue to improve the Council's understanding of those individuals or organisations that are interested in self-build or custom housebuilding opportunities within the Borough (as well as their ability to afford available options) by undertaking detailed research	Facilitation	Short
7	Assess sites potential for self-build and custom house building through the Council's housing availability assessment (e.g. Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment).	Enabling	Short & Medium
8	Direct delivery on Council owned land. Identify Council owned sites to identify a suitable pilot scheme to Directly deliver custom build units	Enabling, Facilitation & Promotion	Medium
9	The Council will work with interested parties to produce procedural guidance on how to apply for planning permission for self- build and custom house building developments in the Borough (e.g. standard conditions) and establish 'in house' advisory service.	Promotion & Enabling	Short
10	Any new significant change to national policy or in evidence on the local demand for self-build and custom house building should be reflected in reviewing the Local Plan, as well as other emerging strategies.	Facilitation	Short, Medium & Long
11	The Council will actively work with Government and other partners to secure funding to enable self and custom-build housing to be delivered.	Facilitation	Short, Medium & Long
12	The Council hosting or facilitating a series of events or forums, such as Expos, workshops and webpages, to encourage skills and experience sharing with interested parties	Promotion	Short
13	Integrate Custom/Self Build plots as part of West Winch Growth Area, working with landowners	Enabling	Long
14	Secure development of Custom and self-build on sites, large and small through future local plans, i.e. beyond the current Local Plan and the Local plan review.	Facilitation and Enabling	Long