

Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Guidance Note

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. What is Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding?.....	2
3. Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register	3
4. How do I register for Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding?.....	4
5. Delivery of Serviced Plots	5
6. Planning Applications	6
7. Design Requirements.....	7
Design Codes	7
Plot Passports	7
8. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Exemptions	8
9. Marketing	8
10. Affordable Housing.....	9
11. Monitoring.....	9
12. FAQs.....	10
13. Further advice and information.....	11

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This self-build and custom housebuilding guidance note has been prepared to provide detail and clarification on the self-build and custom housebuilding process, provide information on how the Council will support the delivery of serviced plots and to provide sources of further information and advice.
- 1.2. Policy HO2 (4) in the adopted RBWM Borough Local Plan (BLP) states the following:

Proposals for 100 or more net new dwellings (on greenfield sites) are required to provide 5% of the market housing as fully serviced plots for custom and self-build housing.

On other allocated and windfall sites, the Council will encourage the provision of custom and self-build plots. Self-build plots will generally be expected to be provided in clusters.

Where developers provide custom and self-build plots, these plots must be made available and appropriately marketed for 12 months. Marketing should be agreed with the Council before it is commenced. If the plots have not been sold in the 12-month period, these plots may be reverted back to the developer to build. All self-build plots will need to be provided with a plot passport.

- 1.3. The supporting text for HO2 (paragraph 7.5.7) states that

A plot passport should be issued to every self/custom build plot available on a self-build site. This should set out the rules for design as well as a summary of the main features to be delivered.

- 1.4. The Government is committed to increasing the supply of housing. [The Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 \(as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016\)](#) places responsibility on local planning authorities for keeping a self-build and custom housebuilding register of individuals and associations of individuals, who are seeking to acquire serviced plots of land in the authority's area in order to build houses for those individuals to occupy as homes.
- 1.5. The [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\) \(2021\)](#) states that the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies, including people wishing to commission or build their own homes.

2. What is Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding?

- 2.1. The [Self-Build and Custom Housing building Act 2015 \(as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016\)](#) (The Act) provides the legal definition of 'self-build and custom housebuilding' 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.

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.

2.2. The Act does not distinguish between self-build and custom housebuilding and provides that both are where an individual, an association of individuals, or persons working with or for individuals or associations of individuals, build or complete houses to be occupied as homes by those individuals. For the purposes of planning policy, self-build and custom build dwellings share the same definition and the terms are used interchangeably.

2.3. There are various models of self-build and custom housebuilding, including:

Self-build housing generally refers to when a person is directly involved in organising the design and construction of their own home. This can cover a wide range of projects, from a traditional DIY self-build home to projects where the self-builder employs someone to build their home for them. In this scenario, the finding and buying of a plot of land would usually be undertaken by the individual/self-builder.

Custom build housing is where a person commissions a specialist developer to help deliver their own home. In this scenario, the developer may secure the site and manage the build. They may even arrange the finance. This is a more 'hands-off' approach, but the home would still be tailored to match the individual requirements of the customer, who should retain primary input into the design of the dwelling.

Group self/custom build is where a group of people come together to design and build a housing development which they then live in. They may do this themselves, or with the help of a developer who would manage the project.

2.4. [Government guidance](#) states that in considering whether a home is a self-build or custom build home, relevant authorities must be satisfied that the initial owner of the home will have primary input into its final design and layout. The Council will not consider self-build and custom build homes to include development where a developer delivers speculative units with the purchaser choosing the final specification of, for example, the kitchen or bathroom, or one floor of the dwelling. Off-plan housing, homes purchased at the plan stage prior to construction and without input into the design and layout from the buyer would also be considered to fall outside the definition.

3. Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register

3.1. [The Act](#) states that each relevant authority must keep a register of individuals and associations of individuals who are seeking to acquire serviced plots of land in the authority's area in order to build houses for those individuals to occupy as homes.

- 3.2. The self-build and custom build register helps us understand the level of demand for this type of housing in the Royal Borough and to allow us to support the kinds of self and custom build projects that would be most appropriate.
- 3.3. In preparing this register the Council is not making any commitment to provide self-build or custom build plots. Consequently joining the register does not guarantee that a suitable plot will be identified or become available, but we will use this information to help plan for future needs.

4. How do I register for Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding?

- 4.1. Applicants must meet all of the eligibility criteria for entry on the register. [Government regulations](#) state that each individual and every member of an association of individuals that applies for entry on the register must be:
 - Aged 18 or over;
 - A British citizen, a national of an EEA State other than the United Kingdom, or a national of Switzerland;
 - Satisfy any local eligibility conditions; and
 - Be seeking (either alone or with others) to acquire a serviced plot of land in the relevant authority's area for their own self-build and custom housebuilding project.
- 4.2. If any individual, or association of individuals would like to be added to the Council's register, they should complete the registration form on the Council's website – [Self-build and custom housebuilding register | Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead \(rbwm.gov.uk\)](#)
- 4.3. As development in the Borough continues to come forward, the Council will undertake regular reviews to the registration process and the registration form. The Council will also review whether the administrative duties required to maintain the register in future necessitate the setting of a fee to join and/or remain on the register. All members of the register will be advised of any future changes.
- 4.4. To keep the register up to date, the Council will periodically contact the individuals and associations of individuals on the list to reconfirm their interest. If your contact information changes, members join or leave your association, or you would like to be removed from the register please notify us in writing. In accordance with The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding (Register) Regulations 2016, the Council should remove an entry from the register within 28 days of receiving a written request.

Please submit written instruction via email to planning.policy@rbwm.gov.uk

- 4.5. The Council will not publish details of individuals who have signed up to the register. The only information which we may publish on a periodic basis is as follows:
 - The number of individuals and associations on the register;
 - The number of serviced plots sought;

- A summary of general preferences such as preferred self-build/custom build type, preferred location, types and sizes of preferred property.
- 4.6. Applicant details will be held securely and in accordance with the rules and regulations on data protection. Personal details included on the register will not be made public, but anonymised data extracted from it may be published. Information as submitted will only be used for land-use planning and statistical purposes. We will not pass identifiable information from the register onto anyone without your consent. For more information on privacy and how we use your data please see our [privacy notice](#).

5. Delivery of Serviced Plots

- 5.1. A [serviced plot](#) of land is defined as a plot of land that either has access to a public highway and has connections for electricity, water and waste water, or, in the opinion of a relevant authority, can be provided with access to those things within the duration of a development permission granted in relation to that land.
- 5.2. Policy HO2 of the BLP states that proposals for 100 or more net new dwellings (on greenfield sites) are required to provide 5% of the market housing as fully serviced plots for custom and self-build housing. On other allocated and windfall sites, the Council will strongly encourage the provision of custom and self-build plots.
- 5.3. Some residential developments of 100 units or more may be entirely for flatted development where serviced plots are not feasible. If this is the case, the Council may consider the provision of 'shell home' or 'self-finish' units where the Council considers it appropriate. These are wind and water tight homes with no internal fixtures or fittings. In such instances, the purchaser could define internal layouts, finishes and fixings as well as any exterior landscaping for flats or apartments with private garden space.
- 5.4. On large sites the Council will expect the early delivery of parcels of self-build plots. The Council will work with developers to understand any challenges to the early phasing and release of the self-build element of developments. Where clear justification is provided to demonstrate why parcels of serviced self-build plots may not be delivered early in the build programme, the Council will expect self-build plots to be released when not more than 50% of the total dwellings are commenced. The Council accepts that this will vary from site to site.

6. Planning Applications

6.1. The Council also accepts that the structure of planning applications will vary from site-to-site, but Table 1 below includes the general recommended planning application format for proposed self-build development:

Table 1

Type of development	Recommended planning application format	Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) advice for self-builders
<p>Single self-build dwelling</p>	<p>Full planning permission (valid for 3 years from date of approval).</p> <p>A phasing plan is required if the self-builder wishes to begin any works (e.g. access or servicing) without triggering the CIL liability for the dwelling.</p>	<p>Before commencement, all self-builders must complete the relevant CIL forms, or they must be charged CIL and will lose the ability to pay in instalments. See also Section 8 below.</p>
<p>Any larger residential site involving multiple self-build plots</p>	<p>Outline Planning Application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application will need to include the proposed number of self-build plots and their approximate location within the proposed development. • Delivery of proposed plots will be secured via Section 106 Agreement. • A Design Code (see Section 7) and a Marketing Strategy (see Section 9) will both be required through planning condition and should be submitted and approved prior to the marketing of any plots. • Subsequent separate Reserved Matters, including plot passports. 	

7. Design Requirements

Design Codes

- 7.1. Developers of sites with self-build plots will be encouraged to provide a Design Code¹.
- 7.2. As explained in the [Right to Build Toolkit](#), Design Codes are well established tools to help achieve consistently better quality development. They typically consist of written and graphic rules that establish, with some precision, the two- and three-dimensional design elements of a proposed development. They can also advise on the preferred form and layout of new development across a wider area.
- 7.3. Design Codes vary depending on the site and the amount of development proposed but typically will include some or all of the following:
 - Plot form – e.g. plot size and plot width, developable footprint
 - Building form – e.g. heights, massing, and bulk
 - Building orientation – e.g. position on plot, overlooking etc.
 - Density – e.g. plot ratios, site coverage, dwellings per hectare
 - Building types – e.g. detached, semi-detached, terraced etc.
 - Street network – e.g. urban grain – street and building pattern and connectivity
 - Views – e.g. relationship to heritage assets, topography, corridors, and setting
 - Soft landscape – e.g. standards, species, biodiversity etc.
 - Public realm
 - Building frontage – e.g. active frontage, building features, townscape features
 - Cycle provision, car parking and access
 - Waste and recycling provision
- 7.4. A design code should be submitted through planning condition and approved prior to the marketing of any plots.

Plot Passports

- 7.5. Policy HO2(4) of the BLP makes clear that all self-build plots will need to be provided with a plot passport. The plot passport provides a plot-specific summary of the rules for design as well and the main features to be delivered.
- 7.6. Plot Passports are a simple and succinct summary of the design parameters for a given plot. As explained in the Right to Build Toolkit, they act as a key reference point for the purchaser, capturing relevant information from the planning permission, Design Code (where relevant), design constraints and procedural requirements in an easily understandable and readily accessible format.
- 7.7. The passport should clearly show the plot location, the permissible building lines and side spacing requirements, heights, and footprints as well as proximity constraints to neighbouring buildings and the part of the site where a new house can be constructed (the developable

¹ Planning Practice Guidance: Design Codes - [Design: process and tools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/design-codes)

footprint). The plot passport should also include information on the cost of the plot where possible. Plot passports should also be very clear about the number of dwellings that can be built on a single plot and any other pertinent details, including car parking and access location.

7.8. As mentioned, a plot passport will include key extracts from any agreed Design Code. Further examples of plot passports can be found via several sources including:

- [Graven Hill's Plot Passport Explained - Build It \(self-build.co.uk\)](https://self-build.co.uk/graven-hill-plot-passport-explained/)
- [Custom Build – The Design Takes Shape \(facit-homes.com\)](https://facit-homes.com/custom-build-the-design-takes-shape/)
- [Custom Build Blog: The Design Code & Plot Passports - Build It \(self-build.co.uk\)](https://self-build.co.uk/custom-build-blog-the-design-code-plot-passports/)

7.9. For outline applications, plot passports should be provided with subsequent reserved matters applications. Plot passports should be submitted with full planning applications.

8. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Exemptions

7.1 The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 allow for certain development such as self-build and custom build housing to apply for an exemption from the levy and guidance provides a definition of self-build and custom build housing for that purpose. Self-build and custom build multi-unit and communal schemes can also qualify for the exemption where they meet the required criteria. See [Community Infrastructure Levy exemptions](#) for more information.

7.2 Any planning application for a self or custom build house seeking exemption from CIL must be supported by the appropriate CIL exemption claim forms.

7.3 Applicants are strongly advised to read the information relating to CIL on both the [Planning Portal](#) and the National Planning Practice Guidance. There is a set application process that needs to be followed in order to gain CIL exemption. [Government guidance](#) explains that the process requires 4 steps to be undertaken within the required timescales. Failure to follow the set procedures within the required timescales will mean that the exemption will not be obtained, or will be rescinded if previously obtained, and a full CIL liability will be incurred. Failure to submit a commencement notice before building works begin will result in a surcharge.

7.4 It is important to note that proposals must fall within the definition of self-build in order to be able to claim CIL exemption. Whether any proposed projects may be excluded from this definition is at the discretion of the Council.

9. Marketing

8.1 BLP Policy HO2 states that where developers provide custom and self-build plots, these plots must be made available and appropriately marketed for 12 months. Marketing should be

agreed with the Council before development is commenced (or of any phase of development which includes self-build plots).

- 8.2 The strategy should set out when marketing is to begin, how plots will be marketed to eligible purchasers, the method for valuing plots, the proposed terms and conditions for the sale and plot passport(s). The strategy should also include the use of a reputable and experienced estate agent to value and potentially market the plots. The use of reputable 'plot finding' websites is also recommended; more information is available on the [NaCSBA Self Build Portal](#).
- 8.3 In advance of the marketing period beginning, developers must let the Council's Planning Policy team know in writing at planning.policy@rbwm.gov.uk. The Council will then endeavour to alert members of our register when marketing periods will begin.
- 8.4 If the owner/developer has been unable to sell one or more of the self-build plots within the 12-month period, they should notify the Council and provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the agreed marketing strategy was complied with.
- 8.5 It is usually the case that the Council will have the opportunity to make an offer to purchase the plot if it remains unsold after the initial 12-month period. If the Council declines the offer, the plot may be offered to housing associations to purchase. If the plot(s) remain unsold, the developer may be released from the obligation to provide the plot of land for self-build housing. The developer would then be responsible for any CIL liability that transpired.
- 8.6 Whilst self-build housing can contribute to meeting local housing need, it does not automatically come under the definition of affordable housing. It can often be low cost but is generally considered to be market housing unless meeting the definition of affordable housing (BLP Policy HO3). The Council will not normally expect a development to offer its self-build element as affordable housing.

10. Affordable Housing

- 10.1. The Council will endeavour to explore how self-build and custom housebuilding can qualify as an affordable housing product and will work with local housing associations and community land trusts where possible. The Council strongly supports the principle of community led housing and would also encourage developers of large sites to work in collaboration with housing associations, community land trusts and other organisations to facilitate the delivery of innovative and more affordable models of self-build housing in the Royal Borough.

11. Monitoring

- 11.1. In accordance with Monitoring Indicator 3 of the BLP, the Council will monitor the number of self and custom build plots made available each year. The Council's Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) will also include the number of individuals and associations of individuals on the register, as well as the number of plots secured through planning permissions. The number of

serviced plots delivered during the reporting year will also be monitored through CIL exemption certificates.

12. FAQs

12.1. Will the Council find me a site?

- Being on the register does not guarantee that a suitable plot will be identified or become available to specific individuals or association of individuals.
- The Council will aim to use the data from our register to inform decision making based on the demand profile within the Borough, with the aim of helping deliver the types of self-build and custom build plots needed to best suit the preferences of our register members.
- The Council will look into how best to inform the register members when self and custom build plots have been granted planning permission.
- Please also note that the Council does not offer any financial assistance to self or custom housebuilders to secure plots.

12.2. I am already on the register; do I need to re-apply?

- If you are already on the Council's register you do not need to re-apply as we already have your interest logged.
- However, we intend to introduce a new application form which will allow applicants to provide us with more up to date and robust data to inform our knowledge of the type of demand for self and custom-building housing within the Borough. We would welcome any resubmissions of the new application form from our existing register members. We will notify our existing members of any changes to the registration form.
- The Council intends to be in more regular contact with our register members to ensure that our register is as up to date as possible.

12.3. How do I find a plot?

- Two good sources of advice on finding a plot are the [Self Build Portal](#) and the [Planning Portal](#). The [Plot Browser](#) website also lists thousands of available self-build plots across the UK.
- A number of sites allocated within the Local Plan should also include self-build and custom build plots. Those plots will need to be appropriately marketed, as per Section 9. The Council will endeavour to advise members of the register on how to best contact the developers of those sites.

12.4. Is there an obligation for the Council to tell people about self-build plots that become available?

- No, there is no obligation to do so.

12.5. Should I buy a parcel of land for self-build that doesn't have a planning permission?

- Buying a parcel of land to build a home on that does not benefit from planning permission for housing is a very big financial risk. Purchasing a plot of land with an existing planning permission for housing will be more expensive because the price reflects the development potential of the land.

13. Further advice and information

13.1. The following links provide further information on self and custom housebuilding:

- The Self Build Portal (www.selfbuildportal.org.uk)
- National Customer and Self Build Association (NaCSBA) (www.nacsba.org.uk)
- Right to Build Taskforce (www.righttobuild.org.uk)
- Build Store (www.buildstore.co.uk)
- National CLT Network (www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk)
- The Government has also prepared Planning Practice Guidance on Self-build and Custom Housebuilding (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/self-build-and-custom-housebuilding>)
- [Plot Passport Explained | Graven Hill](#)

13.2. The Council offers a pre-application advice service and applicants are encouraged to use this service at an early stage of the development process. This service may be particularly helpful for sites with significant development constraints such as flooding or land contamination. More information can be found via the following link - [Planning pre-application advice | Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead \(rbwm.gov.uk\)](#)

13.3. Once planning permission has been secured any self-build or custom housebuilding project will be required to be designed and built-in accordance with Building Regulations and associated legislation. The Council's Building Control Team can provide more information on what is required at each stage of the design and construction process.

13.4. The construction of new build dwellings is not subject to VAT, so self-builders can reclaim their VAT within 3 months of completing the work. Further information should be sought from HMRC.

13.5. In addition to the costs involved in acquiring a plot of land, there are a range of other costs associated with the design and construction of a new home. Therefore, those seeking to build their own home are advised to carefully consider the whole project cost, not just the price of acquiring a plot of land. More information can be found online, including the following links:

- [NSBRC - The Costs of a Self Build Project | NSBRC](#)
- www.homebuilding.co.uk