



Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Guidance

Strategic Planning and Enterprise



www.north-herts.gov.uk

“Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper”

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1.0. Introduction

- 1.1. The Government is committed to increasing the supply of housing. To support this aim, local planning authorities must hold a register of individuals and associations of individuals, who want to acquire serviced plots of land for self-build and custom housebuilding. This is the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register.
- 1.2. Self-build gives people the chance to design and construct their own home.
- 1.3. Most future development in North Hertfordshire will take place on sites that have been identified in our new Local Plan. New homes may also be built within towns and villages where other sites or land become available. Both types of site may provide opportunities for self-build development.
- 1.4. The Council will have regard to self-build and custom housebuilding when assessing planning applications.

2.0. What is Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding?

- 2.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) refers to Self and Custom Build. Paragraph 63 states (emphasis added):
 - the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and **people wishing to commission or build their own homes**).
- 2.2. For the purposes of planning policy, custom and self-build dwellings share the same definition and the terms can be used interchangeably. In practical terms, the difference is that custom build is where a person appoints a specialist developer to help build their own home; self-build is where a person is more directly involved in organising and constructing their own home.
- 2.3. Some self-build schemes may be regulated by design codes provided there is still scope for meaningful input by those wanting to build their own home.
- 2.4. People interested in self-build and custom housebuilding will need to be trained in construction skills or budget for tradesmen. There are a range of books, courses and self-build organisations that provide access to a range of courses, literature and resources.
- 2.5. Self-build and custom housebuilding does not include the building of a house on a plot of land acquired from a person who builds the house wholly or mainly to the plans or specifications decided or offered by that person.
- 2.6. Self-build and custom housebuilding does not include speculative housing offered for sale by a developer.

3.0. What is the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register?

- 3.1. It is a list of people seeking to acquire land to build a home for themselves
- 3.2. The Council must consider the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register when carrying out planning, housing, land disposal and regeneration functions.
- 3.3. The Register evidences demand for self-build homes in the District over a 12-month base period which ends on 31 October each year. The first base period ran from the inception of

the Register to 31 October 2016. Each following 12-month period forms the next base period.

- 3.4. Within three years of the end of each base period the Council should grant an equivalent number of permissions for self-build.
- 3.5. It should give suitable development permissions in respect of enough serviced plots of land to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in the authority's area arising in each base period. This duty does not apply to any person entered in Part 2 of the register. More details on the Register and its format can be found in section 4 of this document.
- 3.6. The Compliance and Fee Regulations confirm that the time allowed to comply with the duty is 3 years beginning immediately after the end of the base period.
- 3.7. 'Development permission' means planning permission or permission in principle, and a permission is "suitable" if it is in respect of development that *could* include self-build and custom housebuilding.
- 3.8. A serviced plot is a plot of land which either has access to a public highway and connections for electricity, water and waste water; or where in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) highways access and utilities connections can be provided before the granted planning permission expires.
- 3.9. There is no requirement that the permission be implemented. Equally there is no requirement that the permission is granted to or for the benefit of an individual on the register.
- 3.10. The Register is not a guarantee to those who join it that the Council will provide them with a serviced plot to build on or that any land will be sold at a discounted rate for self-builders to build on.

4.0. Can I join the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register?

- 4.1. To join the register you 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; and
 - Seeking (either alone or with others) to acquire a serviced plot of land in North Hertfordshire to build a house to occupy as your sole or main residence.
- 4.2. The Register can be divided into two parts.
- 4.3. Part 1 of the Register includes people who meet all criteria including an additional 'local eligibility test'. People who meet all the criteria except the local connection test, will be entered in Part 2.
- 4.4. The Council does not currently use local eligibility criteria to separate the Register into Part 1 and Part 2. If such criteria are introduced in the future they may include:
 - a local connection test whereby individuals would need to provide evidence that they work, live or have family ties to the authority's area.
 - a test where individuals would need to demonstrate that they will have sufficient funds to support a self-build project.
- 4.5. If a group or an association apply to the Register, then each member must fulfil the eligibility criteria. The Council will assess applications to ensure that applicants meet the eligibility requirements.

- 4.6. In order to better understand the need for serviced plots, information relating to location preferences in North Hertfordshire is requested.
- 4.7. If you would like to be added to the Register please complete the registration form on the Council's website (<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-policy/self-build-and-custom-build-register>). The Council will seek to determine applications within 28 days from when the application was received. Please note that entry onto the register does not guarantee that a suitable plot will be identified or become available.
- 4.8. The Council will only accept direct applications from relevant individuals or groups. Entries provided or suggested by third-party data aggregators or commercial services will not be included.
- 4.9. We will process any data that you submit in accordance with our [Privacy Statement](#) and General Data Protection Regulations 2018.
- 4.10. To keep the Register up to date and accurate, the Council will periodically contact registered individuals and associations to reconfirm your interest. Similarly, if your interests or details change, you should inform the Council.
- 4.11. Due to the administrative costs of maintaining the Register, the Council will undertake regular reviews of whether to set a fee (and at what level) to join and remain on the Register.
- 4.12. The Council will only accept direct applications from relevant individuals or groups and do not include any entries provided or suggested by third-party data aggregators or commercial services.

5.0. How will the Council deliver serviced plots?

- 5.1. Policy SP8 of the Council's new proposed Local Plan, requires that large housing sites of more than 600 units provide at least 1% of dwelling plots for sale for self- or custom builders. The Council expects these plots to be sold with outline planning permission, services to the boundary and access to the highway.
- 5.2. Sites with multiple self-build plots will usually come with a design code that complies with the Council's Design SPD. This will ensure there is a high standard of urban design in the area and will assist with the marketing of self-build plots.
- 5.3. The Council will normally require appropriate conditions be put in place where a serviced plot is provided by a site developer. On schemes providing a range of housing types and tenures, development proposals will normally be divided into phases for the delivery of site infrastructure, development and serviced plots. This ensures that the delivery of self-build and custom housebuilding is not stalled and that any Section 106 obligations are triggered correctly. *Note; a Section 106 Agreement can restrict the availability of finance from banks and this should be considered at an early stage by any persons or associations interested in self-build and custom housebuilding.*
- 5.4. The Council is currently developing a Developer Contributions SPD which will offer further guidance on the delivery of serviced plots for self-builders.
- 5.5. The Localism Act (2011) empowers communities to create Neighbourhood Plans for their areas. Through neighbourhood planning, communities have the opportunity to encourage self-build and custom housebuilding by creating new planning policies or allocating new development sites in their neighbourhood areas to meet local needs. Further guidance on neighbourhood planning can be found [here](#).

- 5.6. It is recognised that not all sites and locations will meet the specific requirements of local demand, however, the Council will encourage serviced plots within residential schemes that are in accordance with the Local Plan.
- 5.7. North Hertfordshire District Council may identify council owned serviced plots that are suitable to market for self-build purposes when disposing of land.
- 5.8. Members of the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register are encouraged to continue looking for potential serviced plots while on the Register as the Council cannot guarantee that applicants to the Register will be provided with a self-build plot.

6.0. How can I get a serviced plot?

- 6.1. Plots provided on private development sites may be transferred fully to North Hertfordshire District Council or retained by the developer.
- 6.2. Should the developer retain control of allocating the site, those on the Register will be asked to give their consent to be contacted by the developer. The Council will not be directly involved in disposing of the plots.
- 6.3. For self-build plots that arise through the Council's land disposal function, or that are transferred to the Council from the developer, there will be an appropriate marketing and advertising process. At this stage the Council may filter members of the Register through the location preferences identified by applicants to the Register as well as requesting proof of funds to support the purchasing of land, and associated construction costs.
- 6.4. Following this filtering process a sealed bidding process (or similar) will take place to determine the purchaser of the serviced plot(s), criteria for which will be defined at an appropriate time. If at this stage the sale of the plot(s) falters it is likely that the site will be advertised again and the process repeated.

7.0. How can you get a self-build permission?

- 7.1. Where an area of land has been identified to provide multiple plots to be individually sold for self-build and custom housebuilding, the Council will normally seek to grant outline planning permission. This is where the principle for housing has been agreed, but without detail of scale, design and appearance etc.
- 7.2. The detailed design of houses on these sites will be guided by the Design SPD, design guidance from the developer and / or any design code. The detailed design can be contained in either a 'reserved matters' application (in association with the outline application) or a 'full planning' application (either a 'reserved matters' or a 'full' application which would include all of the scheme's detailed design).
- 7.3. If an individual plot for self-build is identified by a person on the register or a site including multiple self-build plots is identified by an 'association of persons' on the register, there is likely no need for an outline (in principle) application, and full details of the proposed design(s) and layout(s) could be provided as part of a 'full application'.
- 7.4. Individual serviced plots for self-build units may offer the opportunity for homes to be more bespoke in their design; however a planning application for development will be subject to the relevant Local Plan and national policies.
- 7.5. Prospective self-builders are encouraged to engage in pre-application consultation with the Council.

8.0. How will the Council monitor self-build and custom housebuilding?

- 8.1. The Council will publish the following data in the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR):
 - the number of individuals and associations on the Register;
 - the number of plots secured through planning permissions;
 - the number of people who have chosen each location as a preference.
- 8.2. Published information will help inform the delivery of serviced plots across the District.
- 8.3. Anonymised, collated data from the Register may be published by the Council in reports or other publicly accessible material.

9.0. What legislation is relevant to self-build and custom housebuilders?

- 9.1. The [Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015](#) requires each relevant authority to 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.
- 9.2. The [Self-build and Custom Housebuilding \(Register\) Regulations 2016](#) made under the Act provides guidance on designing and administration of the Register.
- 9.3. The [Housing and Planning Act 2016](#) sets out the duties local planning authorities are required to meet regarding self-build and custom housebuilding.

10.0. Where can I find more information?

- 10.1. The Self Build Portal (www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/) provides a wide range of information on self-build and custom housebuilding. It is produced by the National Custom and Self Build Association (NaCSBA).
- 10.2. NaCSBA has also assembled an online toolkit to provide further information on and highlight examples of self build and custom housebuilding from the UK and Europe. The toolkit can be found at www.customandselfbuildtoolkit.org.uk.
- 10.3. There is a range of information including self-build finance providers and insurers set out on the [Build Store](#) website.
- 10.4. The Government has also prepared a [Planning Practice Guidance](#) on Self-build and Custom Housebuilding.
- 10.5. The Council offers a pre-application advice service and applicants are encouraged to use this service at an early stage of the development process. Further information on the Council's pre-application advice service can be found [here](#). This service may be particularly helpful for sites with significant development constraints such as flooding or land contamination.
- 10.6. 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. Hertfordshire [Building Control](#) Team can provide more information on what is required at each stage of the design and construction process.
- 10.7. 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](#).
- 10.8. Note: Any website referred to in this document that has not been authored by North Hertfordshire District Council is referenced for information purposes only and does not have any formal endorsement by the Council.

