

## Overview of Self and Custom Build within the District

Self and Custom Build (S&CB) has been well recognised by Chichester District Council (CDC) for very many years.

The whole area of Ifold, Plaistow and Dursfold Wood for example was originally estate woodland. In the 1930s it became a place for Londoners to escape to, away from the smog, to erect their own weekend holiday chalets in the countryside. The area was subsequently transformed with the building of small (replacement) yet basic permanent timber homes to accommodate families with cheaper housing on fairly large (1/3 acre – 10 acre) woodland plots.

As time has gone by these homes have been replaced, yet again (on a 1 for 1 replacement basis) with much larger modern day brick built homes.

Some of these replacement homes within the last 10 years have increased in size from an original building of circa 1,200 ft sq. to large 4-storey mansion houses of circa 12,000 ft sq (for example Cherry Blossom Farm).

Again some of the larger plots have also been sub-divided to create a number of homes, in replacement of the original single home, thus increasing site densities.

Ifold, Plaistow and Dursfold Wood have, as a consequence changed, with the support and encouragement of CDC – beyond all recognition, from what was originally woodland to generally a 'wooded' area of reasonably high density S & CB housing, accommodating some 1900 residents and 824 homes of many different styles and sizes.

Within the parish boundary of Loxwood (for further example) are a minimum of 14 S & CB homes, all outside the settlement boundary.

All these new homes without exception have made a major contribution to the Loxwood housing stock. They have:-

- created bespoke housing for each family in differing price ranges and in the location they wanted to live
- generally been close to the village shops, school and general services
- been innovative
- contributed to a higher and better build standard
- offered more housing choice
- created more eco and airtight homes
- offered more sustainability
- created more bio-diversity
- created more housing diversity and higher standards of design
- been a very major financial contributor to the rural economy, by buying materials locally and employing local labour **estimated at £500,000 plus (average) for each newly built self-built home.**

In a letter from the Rt. Hon Christopher Pincher the Minister for Housing dated 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022 to a CDC resident he said:-

- *“Government strongly believes that S & CB housing can play a crucial role in securing greater diversity in the housing market as well as helping to deliver the homes people want”*
- *“Richard Bacon MP was earlier commissioned to review S & CB to establish a plan to ‘scale up’ S & CB”.*
- *“Government have since made interventions to further support S & CB under an Action Plan as to make S & CB more viable, affordable and mainstream”.*
- *“On 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021 the prospectus for the £150 million **Help to Build equity loan scheme** was launched to deliver low deposit mortgages as to improve affordability of home ownership to S & CB similar to the **Help to Buy scheme**”.*
- *“More widely the Secretary of State is considering the best way forward to reform the planning system that provides more certainty and better outcomes for the environment, growth and quality of design”.*
- *“Further recommendations on **Richard Bacon’s Action Plan** are under review. They are related to the planning system as it effects S & CB directly”.*

Clearly Government are very supportive of S&CB, not only for the above reasons, but also to encourage more freedom of choice and diversity. Loxwood Village has just recently consented the building of some 125 new nondescript, non eco homes. All at a high density with small gardens with little aesthetics as to design or to create high build standards. The village has suddenly become a village with less beauty and identity; yet S&CB can be a major contributor in keeping the village alive and vibrant, by for example keeping ‘Local’ by buying materials locally, by employing local sub-contractors and local consultants. Also by creating a new exciting housing alternative with larger gardens and design flair offering a real sense of place, presence and character but also ‘giving back’ in a major financial way to local people in supporting the local shops and services and by uplifting the rural economy per se. Recently the beauty, individuality and distinctiveness of the village has suffered, due to new build dense developer housing of no merit. Yet further such homes are proposed by CDC in Loxwood substantially in excess of the above numbers.

CDC have, in February 2022 published their Local Plan Review, which stated:-

- Government housing targets for CDC’s Local Plan are unlikely to be met, including the full housing needs and targets.
- CDC are looking at options that concern the re-distribution of housing and number of homes. In consequence Loxwood PC are again formally being required by the LPA to further ‘up’ their numbers in the village. In consequence the new numbers could amount to 420 New Homes (namely 98 as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 plus 322, amounting to a total of 420). **This is a**



**potential increase of 236% more new homes within the village** that are unexpected new homes yet to be found and delivered on by the Parish Council.

- there is a long way to go yet before CDC are able to revert to the Planning Inspector before they (CDC) are given the go ahead to be able to complete their draft Plan. So adoption of a new Local Plan is some time away, as is the revised Neighbourhood Plan (NP) for Loxwood.

This is an ideal time and opportunity for CDC to be more strongly supportive of S&CB, not least because parishes like Loxwood are going to be required yet again to increase their housing numbers very substantially and in doing so Parishes like Loxwood will further lose their character, individuality and identity.

If some of this 'box style' developer housing is replaced by more interesting and diverse S&CB housing, some of the loss of character can be offset. Yet higher sustainability and water neutrality standards can be improved upon, with higher housing standards generally, through the creation of small pockets of S&CB housing. Such housing could also be built and occupied quicker than the developer housing, because of 'hold ups' over water neutrality on developer housing.

#### **SUGGESTED CLAUSES TO BE INSERTED IN THE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW IN SUPPORT OF S&CB**

(1) It is the Council's intention to be fully supportive of the recent HEDNA report and of S&CB throughout the district and to our Parish Councils both with the granting of more consents on single windfall sites and any development exceeding 10 units, where 1 in 10 of these units will be specifically consented and allocated to individuals or groups wanting to undertake custom build. This demand places CDC in the top half of authorities in England

- (a) The council will seek to encourage developments of more than 10 custom build dwellings on a single site location to be developed in accordance with council policies and an agreed design and sustainability code.
- (b) Planning permissions will include a condition requiring the custom build development to be completed within 3 years of the custom builder purchasing a plot or group of plots. The 3 years to run from the date that all services are available and operational to each plot or plots.
- (c) All such S&CB plots will be required to be made available for purchase immediately planning consent is granted on the site. All these plots should be fully and formally offered to the open market with the completion on each plot sale only when all services are available and operational to each individual house plot.
- (d) If any S&CB plot is not sold on a site at the end of each development site being completed and occupied, that plot or plots must then be offered to a housing association or to the Council to purchase, at the same or



reduced price, before being released and built out by the developer into the private open market.

(2) The Council will appoint (like other LPA's) a dedicated full time Custom and Self Build Officer to help support, promote and advise all potential S&CB purchasers and potential landowners. This officer will fully understand the concept of (MMC) modern methods of construction pertinent to S&CB and have a knowledge of land purchase and planning law. The officer will have a yearly promotional budget to support yearly seminars and educational talks throughout the district and parishes and be required to satisfy demand and a minimum target of available plots to achieve, year on year, over the Plan period. Similarly the officer will be advertising in the local media Facebook, Twitter etc. and via the Council website and newsletter all the S &CB plots for sale in the District on an updating basis.

(3) The Council recognises that:-

- (a) S &CB has certain 'exemptions' (including the non payment of CIL) and will support those 'exemptions' and any further 'exemptions' that are created by changes in planning law and within NPPF, during the Plan period.
- (b) The CIL exemption will be fully preserved, where (for example) a shell S&CB property is handed over to a client, with all connections to services installed and the garden landscaped and driveway/footpath installed, for the home owner to complete internal fit out to their specification in conformity with building and all other regulations and pre-set standards.

(4) The Council intends to remove all barriers to applying to the Self and Custom Build Register for all potential S&C Builders or their potential clients, including requirements to submit appraisals and proof of funds. Furthermore, we will be publicising our Register more fully, including highlighting the benefits of S&CB so everybody can understand them and be supportive of them.

(5) The Council also recognises the in-direct financial benefits to rural communities in our District created by S&CB, so we will also be encouraging and committing to smaller developments of up to 20 units in all price ranges for purely 100% S&CB housing which would suit groups or co-operatives of family house builders seeking more diverse house designs with yet higher levels of bio diversity, air tightness and so on.

By buying 'locally' and using local contractors and sub-contractors and consultants, money will automatically flow into local communities, the local shops, local pubs etc. and indirectly into the pockets of local residents; thereby also enriching the character, variety and vitality of local rural communities within our District, at the same time.

(6) The Council will be endorsing The Bacon Review's six recommendations in the wish to create more interest within the District for S &CB as to offer

more residents and others the opportunity to aspire to create the homes that they want in the places that they want to live and at a price they can afford. At the same time creating higher eco standards of house building and higher standards of design and diversity in the market place (as another higher alternative) to that presently on offer from mainstream developer housing.