

INTERPRETATION OF SELF/CUSTOM BUILD

In simple terms:-

Self Build

It is what it says, namely individuals (either singly or collectively) who wish to build their own homes themselves either through their own knowledge or expertise in the business or people who are capable of putting together a whole team of sub-contractors who built the house for them to their design and specification, under contract yet with them retaining a high degree of involvement in the whole process.

Custom Build

In essence is the same process, yet the build is undertaken by a contractor or professional project manager. The actual construction is therefore not undertaken by the client, yet the client still has an input on the design of the house or houses and also in the specification, both externally and internally. Such people tend to not want to actually put 'sweat equity' into the actual build of their home, for numerous reasons, but would sooner commission the build, using a building contractor to undertake the work.

Historic Overview

Over the centuries up until circa 1955 most houses were built by Self and Custom Builders, for example by landowners and farmers or wealthy individuals, building homes for themselves or farmers for their workers or say the Bourneville family building homes for their staff or factory workers, in Birmingham.

Thereafter homes generally started to be built by house-builders, for sale in the open market to private individuals, wanting to buy a new more sustainable home. Initially in the form of a 2 part contract, namely the plot was sold to the buyer who then entered into a contract with the builder, who would build the house for them.

OVERVIEW IN CHICHESTER DISTRICT COUNCIL

Self & Custom Build came into vogue especially in the Northern part of the CDC District (Loxwood, Plaistow, Ifold) about 40 years ago, when numerous homes were built in Ifold & Plaistow in woodland/greenfield acreage by self builders.

In the last 30 years larger homes were self/custom built in and around the area and in Loxwood, by demolishing small houses/bungalows on one third to half an acre plots and far larger modern homes were built in their place in the form of

1.1 or 1.2 replacements. This has created a tremendous advantage over the intervening years by:-

- CDC supporting a demand;
- improving and updating the old housing stock;
- widening and diversifying the type of people moving into the area, and in their house styles.
- Bringing more money into the rural communities and revitalizing community services and businesses and the area generally.
- Educating and encouraging local people into the building industry and all its off-shoots. It is recognised by the building of 1 Self & Custom Build (**S & CB**) home creates and banks £150,000 into the local community be it to benefit local shops, building material suppliers the employment of local sub-contractors, or the creation of more ancillary jobs in say garden maintenance or in arboriculture.
- Substantial more revenue to CDC in the payment of more and higher rates because of these numerous new, and larger homes.
- By creating a far healthier Rural Economy and Community in out of town locations.

Some of the statistical merits of Self/Custom Build are:-

- 46% of the public are not wanting to buy houses from volume house-builders, but rather self or custom build themselves.
- Self builders create local jobs and spend their 'building money' locally in builder's merchants and buy their weekly 'home' provisions in local shops, use local services and involve themselves in local community activities. Their 'dream homes' are also designed to a higher more aesthetic standard. Yet invariably their homes are cheaper to build than developer homes are to buy, and are therefore more 'affordable' as recognized by Government.
- They live in their 'dream homes' substantially longer than buyers of developer homes. They also integrate into and contribute more to local communities and in a more positive way.
- The styling of their homes invariably differ, thus contributing substantially to the housing style and mix of communities and making such communities more diverse and interesting and less uniform as required by NPPF Guidance policies.
- They are prouder of their homes and their upkeep is better than owners of developer housing.
- Self build is more socially inclusive and 'affordable' as required by NPPF.

SELF BUILD Is becoming ever popular throughout the UK and is now heavily supported and endorsed by Government. For example a senior MHCLG Town Planner has been seconded and commenced touring all UK Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) assisted in person by Mr. Richard Bacon MP (Chair of the All Party Select Committee on Self Build) in educating LPA's on the numerous merits

of 'Self Build'; all as to encourage them to grant more consents so they meet their 'Self Build' targets.

This is a quite exceptional endorsement by Government, senior and numerous MP's and senior 'Planning' Civil servants in support of the merits of Self and Custom Build in assisting ordinary members of the public to fulfill their wishes and aspirations.

DEMAND

- Throughout the UK there has been a 31% increase in single building plot consents to 31st October, 2017.
- More than 1 million people want to build their own home.
- Richard Bacon MP (Chair of the All Party Select Committee on Self Build) recently stated that a large excess of people have now registered with LPA's for self and custom build homes throughout the UK. This figure is anticipated to quadruple now as LPA's are required by Law to advertise their Register to the public. Both the need and demand is therefore very clear and substantial, yet some 90% of LPA's seem unable to satisfy this need and demand as they are legally required to do, nor are many correctly advertising the **Self Build Register** which they are required to also do.

There is no doubt that demand for Self and Custom Build (**S & CB**) is insatiable. Recent Mori polls indicated that over 1 million people in the UK would wish to build their own home or alternatively to commission such a build through the avenue of Custom Build..

- A survey commissioned by the Building Society Association in October 2011 suggested that **53% of people in the UK would consider building their own home given the opportunity.** Around 100,000 people subscribe to one of the main plot-finding websites (**refer to the House of Commons Library**).

The Best Selling Self Build Magazine 'Homebuilding and Renovating' have consistent monthly sales in excess of 20,000 units, yet there are other monthly 'Self Build' magazines on sale. Total monthly sales of all such magazines are circa 100,000.

Their 2 day weekend **Self and Custom Build Show at Sandown Park, Esher in July 2018** had a footfall of 6,800 visitors.

- Government have stated that they wish to substantially increase the number of **S & CB** from 10,000 to 20,000 units by 2020.
- This wish is reflected in **NPPF 2018** and the statements made within this document.

- The demand as reflected in **CDC Self Build Register** is small compared to other nearby authorities. This is because CDC are not adhering to Government policy of fully and regularly advertising the existence of their Register to their residents and others. Advertising does not mean the very occasional comment on S & CB in say West Sussex Connections magazine. Advertising means:-
- educating CDC planning and housing staff on their legal duties and per se on S & CB.
- Similarly educating all their Councillors, , particularly those on the Planning & Housing Committees by way of Planning & Legal updates via existing Planning Members Meetings for example. This also applies to Cabinet Members and the Council Leader.
- Educating also all Parish Councils including also the general parish public and those sitting on steering Groups in the district on the merits and opportunities available with S & CB.

This is particularly relevant to Parish Councils (PC's) who are in the process of updating or writing for the first time their Neighbourhood Plans, who have a duty to include **S & CB** in such plans, because of the dominance of S & CB in NPPF 18. Such PC's include Loxwood and Wisborough Green (See NPPF Para 2) who are presently starting this process and seen at present unwilling to recognize **S & CB** because a lack of education.

- CDC also have a duty to best help and support their residents. Part of this should seek the support of experts such as myself to help and assist CDC in educating all these parties on the advantages of S & CB; also in seeking out and identifying suitable sites including affordable housing sites specific to S & CB. Also to utilise my experience, knowledge and contacts with major and smaller developers in encouraging them to release small sections of their sites (particularly the affordable housing element) for use for 'affordable' Custom Build.

By doing so this would create more diversity and design in housing styles. Also bring into rural areas in particular large sums of money to help and support the rural economy and community and thereby add more vibrance and more jobs to those villages; that in turn would assist greatly in retaining our pubs, post offices and local shops and in making communities thrive and not die.

DUTIES OF CDC

The National Custom and Self Build Association **NaCSBA**
(See righttobuildportal.org) state that:-

* **The Right to Build** was set out by legislation announced and placed in statute in 2015 and updated in 2016. (**The Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015**)

* **The Right to Build** requires all councils in England by law to maintain a Register of individuals and or groups of individuals who want to build their own home.

It places a legal duty on them (the LPA's) to grant sufficient planning permissions for 'serviced building plots' to meet demand on a rolling 3 year basis. By the end of the first base period NaCSBA's research revealed that 33,000 individuals had signed up to express their interest in buying a plot.

New Burdens funding is being paid by Government to LPA's to take account of additional dedicated resources required to identify land to satisfy the demand on each LPA's **Self Build Register**. Each LPA is also required to work closely and continuously with **Self Build Experts** to achieve this (refer to MHCLG). **CDC accept that they have not sought to identify any Self Build housing land as required under NPPF guidance. Nor have they worked with any Self Build Experts, within Government's requirements to achieve this.** All this CDC are duty bound to do.

Under NPPF (see paras 38, 59, 61 68, 122 and Footnote 26) CDC are required to take into account policies in the Framework and also within the preparation of plans to cater for self/custom build. Plans including Neighbourhood Plan also need to be revised to take into account the Framework policies either through a partial review or by preparing a new plan. The Core Strategy at CDC is not in place and as at now no specific policies are in place to support **Self-Build** as required under NPPF, yet this is an urgent requirement and stipulation under NPPF.

* It is commendable that CDC are in the process of employing a Self Build Officer and in writing a **supplementary guidance policy on S & CB**. I would hope that his/her duties will/should include:-

- promoting the merits of S & CB.
- educating and updating all councillors, especially those on the Planning and Housing Committees on the merits of S & CB and in their legal duties under The Self & Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, the Right to Build, The Housing White Paper (February 2017), the Housing & Planning Act 2016. Also the recent statement (17th January, 2019) by Lord Porter (Chair of the Local Government Association) on S & CB.
- educating all Parish Councils in the District on the above issues and legal obligations and their duty to include S & CB in their Local Neighbourhood Plans or their revision of same.
- fully promoting S & CB throughout the District by having meetings, making on-going press statements, in seeking the support of experts such as myself to assist in identifying such sites and promoting them together with CDC.

* to promote the article of 17th January, 2019 by Lord Porter to fully support S & CB. For example he stated:-

"I want to focus here on 2 options that are often overlooked Self-Build and Custom Build".

"We seek to address our nation's housing crises through new and innovative ways of building. I believe that Self-Build and Custom-Build will become increasingly important and that it will be Conservative Councils across the country who will be leading the way in delivering housing which matches the specific and unique needs of families in their areas".

"Self-Build & Custom-Build will become increasingly important to delivering the new homes we need".

- **CDC have agreed under the Cabinet Report dated 4th December 2018 to support Self/Custom Build and :-**
 - **to use the New Burdens Grant funding to CDC to employ a Self-Build Officer.**
 - **To ensure there is sufficient permissioned and serviced land for intended Self & Custom Builders.**
 - **To undertake additional research and policy resources on C & SB.**
 - **Accept there is an identified need for C & SB.**
 - **Accept there is a requirement to develop more policy on Self-Build including supplementary planning guidance.**
 - **In researching alternative means of delivering affordable housing.**
 - **Ensure there is sufficient permissioned and serviced land to satisfy demand on the Self-Build & Custom House-Building Register.**
 - **Accept that the £100K (approved by Cabinet on 7th February 2017) is used to recruit an additional planning officer to deal with Community Land Trusts, rural affordable housing sites and Self-Build sites.**
 - **Accept the Custom & Self-Build New Burdens Grant be used to provide additional resources to deal with the register and policy work within the housing service.**
 - **Accept that Government believes that Self & Custom Build housing can play a crucial role in securing greater diversity in the Housing market and in helping to deliver the homes people want; and accept Local Planning Authorities are expected to play a role in achieving these ambitions.**
 - **Accept that the input of the proposals will benefit the residents of the district and by therefore ensuring that Neighbourhood Plans include support for S & CB in their plans.**
 - **Accept that this initiative has a Human Rights and Equality Impact.**

For the Human Rights & Equality Impact issue alone, I believe the Draft Local Plan should significantly highlight the whole issue of S & CB and recognize fully that the residents of the district will benefit. I suggest more so than the rights of 'Travellers' and catering to their needs which is already adequately covered within the Draft Local Plan. We must not discriminate against Self & Custom builders.

NPPF 2018 SUPPORT FOR SELF & CUSTOM BUILD

- **The Housing and Planning Act 2016**
- **The Housing White Paper** (February 2017) re-asserts the Government's commitment to support the self/custom build sector (**refer to the House of Commons Library**).
- Again in the Housing White Paper - refer to **Clauses 3.14-18**
- **The July 2018 published National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** states :-
- **INTRODUCTION -Para 2**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) must be taken into account (including footnotes) in preparing the development plan and Neighbourhood Plans and is a material consideration in all planning decisions.

- **Para 11** The core strategy is the Presumption in favour of sustainable development. **For decision takers (LPA's and Parish Councils) this means where there is no 5 year land supply granting permission.**
- **Para 38** Decision makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- **Para 59** to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed and that the **needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed (such as self and custom builders).**
- **Para 61** 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**).
- **Footnote 26 states:-**

Under section 1 of the Self Build & Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 local authorities are required to keep a register of those seeking to acquire 'serviced plots' in the area for their own self-build and custom house building. They are also subject to duties under sections 2 & 2A of the Act to have regard to this and to give enough suitable development permissions to meet the identified demand. Self and custom-build properties could provide market and affordable housing.

- **Para 68 states:- small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirements of an area.** LPA's should support the development of **windfall sites** through their policies and decisions, **giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes.**
- **Para 117** Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes... in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed or 'brownfield' land.

- **Para 122** Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land taking into account:-
- (a) **the identified needs for different types of housing (such as self or custom build) and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it.**
- **Para 124** The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development (as prevalent in S & CB housing schemes).
- **Para 200** LPA's should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset should be treated favourably.

CONCLUSIONS

- It is clear that CDC are keen to fully support and encourage Self & Custom Build in their area and this should be reflected positively in the Local Plan.
- Such support should also be reflected by Parish Councils in the District, in their writing of their Neighbourhood Plans (be it for the first time or in updating of existing NP's).
- It is encouraging that CDC are about to employ a Self Build Officer. Yet CDC could and should do so much more with the £100,000 grant given to them by Government to support, encourage and educate on Self/Custom Build.
- For example CDC should be working continuously as suggested by Government, with Self Build Experts such as myself in:-
 - educating on a regular basis all council planning and housing staff and Councillors on these two committees on Self/Custom Build.
 - Similarly with Parish Councils in the district and to the residents of these parishes.
 - Fully advertising the merits of Self/Custom Build on a very regular basis via a 3 year long high profile campaign – to the residents of the District.
 - Seeking out and identifying suitable sites in the District and having them consented for Self and Custom Build in all its different forms.
 - It is therefore imperative that the Local Plan at CDC should write into the Plan a lengthy piece specific to Self & Custom Build, if only to reflect the importance of this build process, as to encourage Self & Custom Build which has been prevalent at CDC for some 40 years already anyway. Also to encourage such residents and others to make planning applications, knowing CDC will be supportive and that they (the applicants) will be helped by the Self Build Officer in their aspirations in their 'Right to Build'.
 - Let us not forget that Self/Custom Build only very recently became a stand-alone housing category on the Planning Application Portal and this is another reason why it should be publicized and highlighted as an important method of increasing our housing numbers in a time of housing crises in the UK and at CDC.
 -