CITY OF YORK COUNCIL

Self and custom build housing

Non-statutory planning guidance



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Introduction

City of York Council has a strong ambition to promote and deliver self and custom build housing within the district, as well as a duty to deliver self and custom build plots through the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016). Policy H4: Custom and Self Build Housing of the Local Plan, requires that all Strategic Sites identified in our Local Plan should provide at least 5% of dwelling plots for sale to custom house builders or individual self-builders.

Self-build and custom-built homes could be a route for some to get on to the property ladder and for others to build their ‘dream home’. Every year, around 11,000 people build their own house. Whilst self and custom housebuilding are still relatively unusual in the UK, this method of building houses is considered the norm in countries such as Austria and the Netherlands.

The Council recognises the benefits self and custom build housing has to offer York residents over mainstream developer models of delivery. These may include:

- Opportunity to create a home that perfectly suits your lifestyle;

- Increased housing choice;
- Enhanced diversity of supply;
- Effective way of increasing the mix of housing types and tenures;
- Custom-builders are more likely to be more innovative, build sustainable homes with high energy efficiency and to use green technology;
- Improved build quality;
- Custom-builders are more likely to use local suppliers and trades people supporting the local economy and creating a strong sense of community;
- Lower development costs;

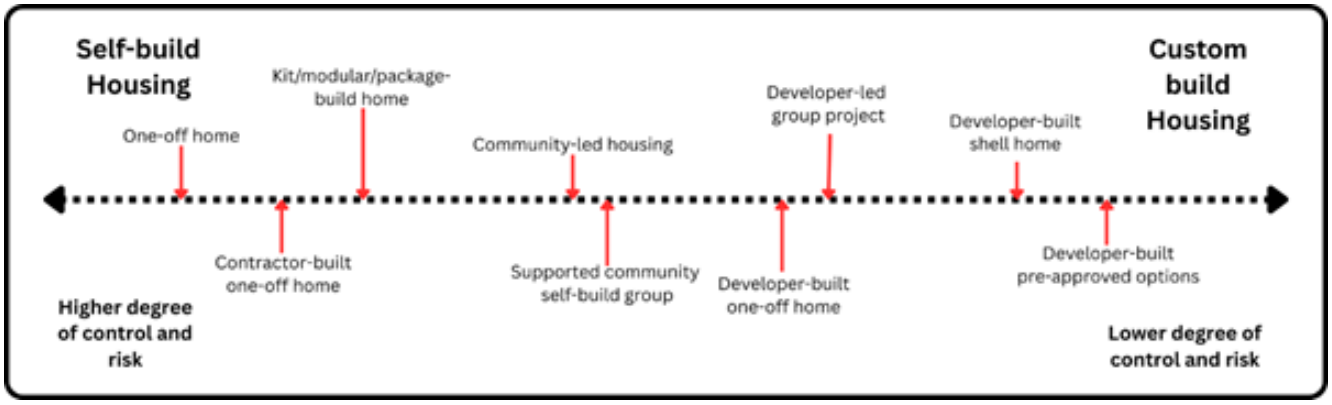
This guidance provides detail around how City of York Council would expect to see any self and custom built plots brought forward under policy H4.

What is Custom and Self-build Housing?

Custom and self-build housing, as distinct from other forms of housing, offers a greater degree of design freedom which can help meet occupants' needs and desires, and can lead to higher quality homes with improved energy efficiency standards. Custom and self-build housing can therefore deliver greater choice in the housing market and diversify housing supply, which can help speed up housing delivery.

Custom and self-build housing share the same legal definition, as set out in section 1 of the 2015 Act, which can be broadly defined as housing whose initial occupants have a primary input into its final design and layout. Notwithstanding the single legal definition, the differences between custom and self-build housing can be best understood as a spectrum of design and delivery control.

The 2015 Act makes clear that homes built wholly or mainly to plans or specifications decided or offered by someone other than the initial occupant are not custom or self-build homes. In other words, the initial occupant must have the primary input into the final design and layout of the home. The 2015 Act also requires custom and self-build homes to be occupied as a sole or main residence.



The following are all types of self-build and custom housing:

Self-build

A one-off home: The owner manages the design and construction process and undertakes a proportion of the building work;
Contractor-built one-off home: The owner manages the design process and selects a contractor to build the home;
Kit/modular/package-build home: The owner selects the kit home which is erected by the kit home manufacturer;

Custom Build

Community-led housing: Schemes involve groups of local people in housing need building homes for themselves with external support and managing the process collectively. Individual self-build is not widely regarded as community-led housing. There are now a number of iterations of CLH;
Supported community self-build group: Project is often organised by a social landlord, a local authority, a community land trust or a charity and this approach tends to suit people on low incomes who like the idea of someone coordinating the group on their behalf.
Developer-built one-off home: Undertaken by a developer/enabler, the design is commissioned by the plot owner. The plot owner is integral to the design of the home. The developer/enabler takes care of the whole process start to finish, on behalf of the plot owner;
Developer-led group project: A developer organises a group and builds the homes;
Developer-built shell home: Undertaken by a developer/enabler, the external envelope of the home is built speculatively before being sold at first fix stage with all internal walls yet to be installed. The plot owner has

control over the internal layout within the confines of window, services and staircase locations.
Developer-built pre-approved options: Undertaken by a developer/enabler, the plot owner chooses from a set of pre-approved options for layouts. The plot owner has limited choice and the developer/enabler takes care of the whole process start to finish;

Please be aware that the council has a preferred self-build and custom build hierarchy for the types of plots delivered on strategic sites. This preferred hierarchy has come from feedback from those on the council's self-build register.

1. Individual serviced self-build plots
2. Serviced self-plots with a packaged design and build approach
3. Community led self-commissioned homes
4. Custom build through a specialist custom and self-build enabling firm
5. Large scale house builder custom build homes

Making a planning application for Self-Build Housing

Plots brought forward as part of a strategic site, or similar sized site, should be sold with outline planning permission and be in line with the serviced plot definition within this document. Due to this the council expects all strategic site planning applications to be hybrid applications with the self-build element to remain as outline until the plots are sold. Following this, purchasers of the plots will need to submit reserved matters applications on a site-by-site basis.

Planning application forms for Full and Outline planning permission include a question on the number of residential units and the type of units that are being proposed (i.e. market, social, affordable, starter homes, and self and custom build, and so on).

Applications for self and custom build can also be identified in the proposal description or Planning Statement. In accordance with our local

planning validation requirements, applications involving any self and custom build housing and those that trigger policy H4 (5% of total dwellings requirement) should submit a Self-build and Custom Housing Statement.

Plot design expectations

Serviced Plots

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 amended the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 to define a serviced plot of land as:

"a plot of land that

a. Has access to a public highway and has connections for electricity, water and wastewater, or
b. Can be provided with those things in specified circumstances or within a specified period;"



Image: Section from Lowfield Green Illustrative Masterplan showing the location of the 6 self-build plots (image credit – BDP)

Custom and self-build housing must therefore be serviced for electricity, water, and wastewater and have access to a public highway. If a private road is proposed to connect plots to a public highway it will be expected that the private road be secured through the planning permission. It will

also be expected that custom and self-build housing be serviced for telecommunications, with fibre optic broadband to the plot boundary. Early engagement with infrastructure providers is recommended to ensure the timely delivery of infrastructure and other development.

Given that custom and self-build housing on serviced plots can take longer to build out than developer housing, it is important that early consideration is given to the approach and likely timescales for finishing the construction of access roads to the serviced plots and whether access roads will be private roads or adopted by City of York Council as the Highway Authority. Early phasing of custom and self-build housing on developer led sites is recommended. This will help ensure that custom and self-build housing is completed before the site wide developer has moved off the site. Consequently, the site wide developer will be on site to complete the access roads as required. The objective is to complete access roads as early as possible, although not so early that the completed street will carry a significant volume of heavy construction traffic.

Custom and self-build housing can be marketed before being serviced; however, the minimum 12-month marketing period referenced in policy H4 will only commence when the agreed marketing strategy has been initiated, the plot has been serviced, has defined boundaries, and is available for immediate purchase.

Plot Sizes

It is good practice for plot providers to seek to provide a mix of serviced plot sizes to meet the range of demand and affordability. The council is publishing regularly updated data indicating demand from those on the self-build register at https://data.yorkopendata.org/dataset/self-build-register .

This may include plots suitable for bungalows for people with limited mobility, smaller plots which provide opportunities for households seeking lower cost market housing, and larger plots suitable for semi-detached properties to cater for extended families wishing to build together. Plot providers may also choose to consult with the local

community and consider the immediate demand. The use of design codes (discussed elsewhere in this document) can ensure the development works as a cohesive whole.

The range of plots provided should be informed by market research including statistics from the council's Self-build Register.

Design Quality

Self and custom build housing provides a unique opportunity to create an exciting and vibrant development with a large array of different houses designs and types. The council expects that all outline applications including self-build plots will come forward with a design code that details what can be and, more importantly, what cannot be built on the plot. This applies to individual single plot sites, plots being brought forward as a part of a 5% obligation on a strategic site, and everything in between and should be applicable for all plots on the development site.

The design code will cover overarching parameters across all the plots on a single development and enables developers to ensure that the homes designed and built on the plots respond successfully to the local context and deliver at least the same level of sustainability as the rest of the main development. The council expects design codes to be as free as possible and to only restrict what needs to be restricted. As self-builders will still need to secure a reserved matters planning permission for their home, the detailed style and materials can be left to the LPA to secure.

Example parameters that could be agreed at outline planning stage and explained through the design code:

- Plot form including plot size, width, depth.
- Build form with details of massing, height, number of storeys.
- Building orientation - Orientation to the sun, location on plot, overlooking, active frontages.
- Materials – Either a palette of materials or detailing a free choice.
- Density - site coverage including buildings and hardstanding.
- Developable footprint including build zone and location of building on plot.
- Building type - Detached, semi-detached or terrace.

- Building line – Where should the property be located on the frontage?
- Views and vista's
- Parking standards - Especially if this differs from the LPA's parking standards policy.
- Waste collection details including what bins are required and where they are to be kept and collected from.
- Townscape features.
- Soft landscaping requirements - Percentage or curtilage to be soft landscaped, boundary treatments.
- Sustainability U-values, water consumption figures, energy consumption.

Achieving high quality design that responds to climate change is a very important consideration that is embedded in the design and construction of new housing. It is essential that all new housing is built to extremely high sustainability standards as per policy CC2 in the Local Plan. The council would encourage all new build housing to aim for 'net zero carbon' in use as set out in our Housing Delivery Programme Design Manual.

Plot Delivery

Plots will need to be accessible to heavy vehicles required for construction. Where necessary, developers will need to engage with the Highway Authority to explore if alternative or temporary access arrangements can be made to the Self Build element of a scheme in order to promote early delivery of plots and tackle any site safety issues. Where necessary the Council and/ or Highway Authority may require the serviced plot provider (the applicant who secures outline planning permission) to enter into a Section 278 agreement to ensure the provision of safe roads, access routes and junctions. This will ensure roads can be brought up to a suitable standard as development is completed. On smaller scale projects this may more simply be dealt with via planning conditions.

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 custom and self-build plots to be released when not more than 50% of the total dwellings are commenced. However, the Council accepts this will vary from site to site and is subject to access options and size of the overall development.
It is not expected that the master developers on all the strategic sites will directly deliver the self and custom build obligations themselves. As a specialist form of housing delivery the council encourages developers to seek out self and custom build partner developers often referred to as enablers. While the council cannot recommend any particular enabler it is suggested that the National Custom and Self-Build Association (NaCSBA) or The Right to Build Taskforce are engaged to obtain a list of enablers who have and do work in the area. Different enablers have different delivery models and it is recommended that early engagement with the LPA is undertaken to understand which models would be supported on any particular site.

Phasing

Custom and self-build housing must be delivered in individual plot phases to ensure that:

a. Custom and self-build housing is delivered in a timely manner,
b. Self-build plots can benefit from CIL exemption,
c. Custom and self-build plots do not unnecessarily hold back later development phases, and
d. Custom and self-build plots are not required to deliver any part of the site wide infrastructure.

Where custom and self-build housing is to be delivered as part of a larger development, the Council will expect either the early delivery of custom and self-build plots or for the plots to be delivered incrementally in line with the phasing. However, where clear justification is provided to demonstrate why parcels of custom and self-build plots may not be delivered early in the build programme, the Council will expect all custom and self-build plots to be marketed in accordance with the agreed marketing strategy and available for immediate purchase when not more than 50% of the total dwellings are occupied. This will be dealt with via a section 106 agreement.

Delivery of a custom and self-build plot means providing access, servicing to the plot boundary, making the plot available for immediate purchase, and marketed in compliance with any marketing requirements. It is also important that each custom and self-build plot, or the plots taken together, has access to a construction compound/s and material storage area/s.

Early attention in the design process must be given to how the phasing best enables access and servicing of custom and self-build plots. Such plots should be designed in a way which avoids conflicts with construction arrangements with the main developer(s) and ensure suitable access, site safety and security. Furthermore, care needs to be taken in how different build out rates of custom and self-build plots might interact with the main development site and amenity of new residents. If self-build plots are not identified on the phasing plan as individual phases that can be delivered independently of other elements of the development, any commencement of the development could result in the loss of potential CIL exemption on self-build plots other than those for which CIL exemption has been already granted. In this situation the CIL burden will be required to be taken on by the developer.

Custom and self-build housing can take longer to deliver than housing delivered by mainstream housebuilders for many reasons even where there are requirements for the plots to be built out in a specific timescale. Therefore, consideration needs to be given at the design stage to ensure that future phases of a development are not compromised or held up by waiting for self-build homes to be completed.

For sites obligated to deliver more than 8 plots, consideration will need to be given to delivering clusters of plots to avoid flooding the market with self-build plots and resulting in plots remaining unsold after the minimum 12-month marketing period.

Site wide infrastructure requirements such as transport infrastructure, sustainable drainage systems, and Biodiversity Net Gain must be delivered by the site wide developer and must not trigger the commencement of development on custom and self-build plots. The phasing plan must therefore ensure that site wide infrastructure is not part of any custom and self-build housing phase.

Monitoring progress on Self and Custom Build

The council maintains a database of all planning applications submitted to the Council that involve residential developments. Applications that involve self and custom build plot provision or are single home applications are monitored. The council is required to submit the number of permissions granted each year to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

With the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy, the part 1 and part 2 exemption forms will also be used to actively monitor the number of self-build and custom build dwellings being delivered.

Information on our Self-Build Register

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 introduced a 'Right to Build' which requires that all 'relevant authorities' in England have a legal duty to keep a register of individuals and associations of individuals who are seeking to acquire serviced plots of land in the authority's area. The requirement is to maintain a Self-Build Register and have regard to it when carrying out planning, land disposal and regeneration functions derives from the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016). The register monitors interest and quantifies the volume of plots for which suitable planning permission should be granted and runs in base periods of 12 calendar months (commencing 31st October – 30th October).

The legislation imposes a duty upon the Council to grant sufficient 'development permissions' to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in their area on a rolling three-year basis. The demand is that which is evidenced on the register (i.e. the number of entries). The register is open to all who have an interest in self and custom build within the City of York.

In accordance with this requirement, the Council established a Self-Build Register in April 2016. The Self-build Register is used to measure the demand for self-build in the district, collect information on the types,

sizes and locations of the plots sought, and to contact prospective self-builders when plots become available.

Currently the Council does not apply a local connection test to those wishing to be on the register, however, the council does reserve the right to do so in the future depending on the level of demand generated from residents and those living outside of the boundaries of the city of York. This would require applicants to confirm their local connection by providing documentation (each member of an association will be required to meet the local connection criteria).

The Council's Self-build Register shows a strong demand for self and custom build plots in York, and due to this there is a need to deliver plots efficiently to ensure the demand is met.

The Council is required to monitor all applications for new dwellings to identify whether they count as self or custom build dwellings to ensure that the Council are meeting the necessary demand on their register.

CIL Exemptions

City of York Council introduced a Community Infrastructure Levy in February 2026. Under the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended 2014) there is an exemption for people building or commissioning their own home, providing it is occupied as their sole or main residence (see Regulations 54A –54D) and the correct process is followed. Further information on CIL exemption for self build dwellings can be found at https://www.york.gov.uk/planning-building/community-infrastructure-levy-2 .

It is also important to note that for developers reverting Self Build plots back to speculative or regular open market plots (possible after 12 months) under policy H4, the CIL exemption will no longer apply, and the dwellings will be liable for the appropriate CIL.