



The Case for Self Build

1 - Introduction

LIVEDIN has prepared this document to be read alongside other supporting documents. It gives a brief introduction to LIVEDIN and makes a case for why self-build applications of this kind should be supported.

The rest of the document is structured as below:

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2 LIVEDIN: Who We Are

- 2.1. LIVEDIN is an innovative and leading and award winning provider of self-build plots in England.
- 2.2. Our goal is to significantly boost the supply of high quality opportunities into the self-build and custom-build housing sector. In line with the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 and national policy, we seek to enable anyone who wants to build their home to be able to find a suitable plot in their local area.
- 2.3. We are trained architects and have designed self-build homes for over 20 years. We continue to manage our own separate architectural practice from our base in the Cotswolds. This foundation in high-quality design underscores all of our work.
- 2.4. We seek to deliver small schemes (typically up to 10 homes) to enable individuals and communities to design and live in houses that they have designed themselves.
- 2.5. We look for sites that we think have excellent potential for self-build: sites that are going to be great places to create a home and that can integrate well with existing communities and landscapes.
- 2.6. We have delivered a number of successful self-build sites across the country.

- 2.7. As well as being self-build enablers, we have expertise in self-build and custom-build registers, having completed a major data project with NaCSBA (National Custom and Self Build Association), published in their Custom and Self Build Market 2023/24 Report. The aim was to create a representation of the self-build data submitted to DHLUC by every local authority in the country.
- 2.8. We have also worked closely with, and assisted, the government funded Right to Build Taskforce in delivering 'Masterclass' sessions to Local Authority Planners on topics such as 'Edge of Settlement Self Build' and 'Affordable Self Build'.

3 - EXPERIENCE: Our successful projects

- 3.1. One of our early experiences of self-build was the Dursley Tree-house in Stroud District (2012). Situated next to a grade 2 listed building, and amongst woodland with some veteran trees, the site had 2 previous planning refusals on it. The design was for a no-dig scheme (to respect tree roots), and had a floating design, carefully inserted into the trees. The self-builders executed it extremely well with a team of local craftsmen. It featured prominently on the television series Grand Designs. The host Kevin McCloud said; "This place is flippin' brilliant. It's a great credit to the Architects for designing such a low impact treehouse." It has also won the annual Best Passive House award due to its excellent environmental performance.



- 3.2. In subsequent years, we built a successful practice with a great many self-build projects, mainly in the West Country. Below is an example of a more traditional design form in the village of Bisley, responding to the conservation area it's located in, and the sensibilities of the older couple that it was built for. This is a clear example of Self-build responding directly to its people and its place.

¹ The Dursley Treehouse - Design and photography credit - Millar + Howard Workshop.



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3.3. Since 2014, and responding to strong demand from those wishing to become self-builders getting in touch with us, we started to bring forward small multi-plot schemes.

Below is a 3 plot scheme carefully knitted into the middle of a village conservation area, with a softly contemporary vernacular design responding carefully to its very specific local context:



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3.4. More recently, in 2020, we enabled an award-winning 12 plot scheme at Ingoldisthorpe in rural Norfolk. The architecture is a softly contemporary vernacular, using traditional local

² The Henhouse - design and photography credit - Millar + Howard Workshop.

³ Randalls Green, Chalford. Design and photography credit Millar + Howard Workshop.

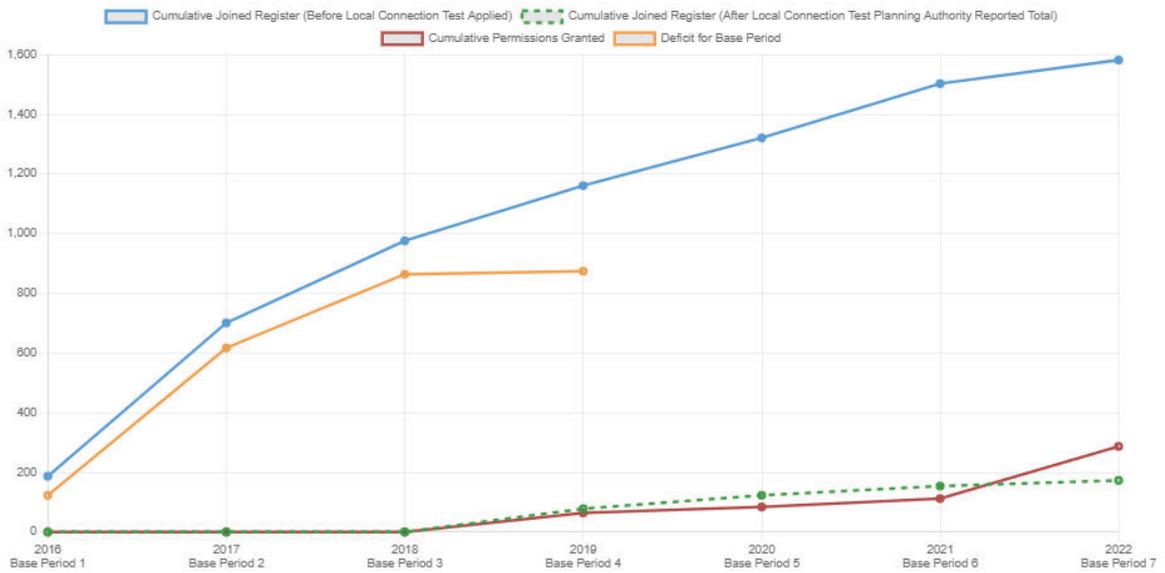
materials in more modern ways. The landscaping is rooted in the local typology, and a benefit of this is in the creation of a new village green. The project was awarded Best Custom Build Project by former MP Richard Bacon (responsible for the Right to Build Act), with his citation reading:

“...a scheme that the judges felt embodies what Custom Build could be.... Imagine if even half the small settlements across the UK saw modest growth with this kind of incremental tailor-made development. It’s got to be the way forward for our housing market.”



⁴ The Green, Ingoldisthope. Lead architects - Project Orange.

3.5. The Registers project completed with NaCSBA processes the DLUHC self-build data through a formula we co-created with NaCSBA, and then processing every Local Authorities self-declared self-build data into a set of standardised graphics.



4 - SELF-BUILD: History and the international context

History of Self Build in the UK

- 4.1. Self-Build housing has a very long history in England and internationally, and this is an important part of understanding why the statutory duties under the 2015 Act arose and why the Government so strongly supports self-build today.
- 4.2. A significant majority of Britain's housing prior to 1900 is self-built. One sees this in picture-postcards of a quintessential Cotswold village, or Golden Hill in Shaftesbury, Dorset (from the famous Hovis advert) where each house was fashioned over generations by its occupiers. Subtle variety within a limited vernacular palette of materials - now listed buildings.



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⁵ Castle Combe, Cotswolds. Photographer unknown.

⁶ Golden Hill, Shaftesbury. Photographer unknown.

4.3. It can also be seen to the rear of Bath's Royal Crescent; one of the best known and most controlled facades in the world. Grade 1 listed and part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Each strip plot behind that facade was built by its owner in their own fashion:



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4.4. In the 20th century, developments such as Walters Way in South East London (intended as low skill and low cost eco self-build) and Turn End in Haddenham, Buckinghamshire continued this tradition:



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4.5. In the modern era, the council lead development at Graven Hill, Bicester shows an example of what can be achieved:

⁷ Royal Crescent Bath. Photographer unknown.

⁸ Walters Way, Lewisham. Photographer unknown.

⁹ Turn End, Haddenham, Bucks. Design credit Peter Aldington. Photographer unknown.

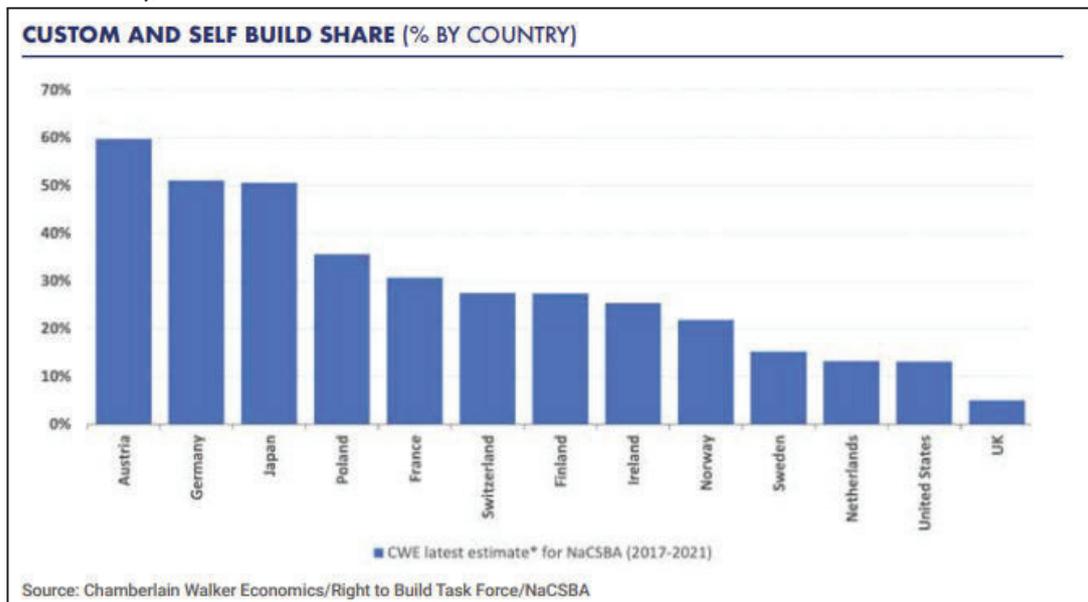


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4.6. Self-building is deeply rooted in our culture, providing us with so much of our most treasured architectural history. It has left us with fabulously diverse, characterful and beautiful housing. The close integration of the design process between occupier and architect/build team is what makes projects of this kind so successful.

The International Perspective

4.7. Self-build is a major part of the housing sector in other European countries; markets such as Germany, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian nations.



4.8. With rates of delivery as high as 50%, these countries have long experienced that self-build drives a more robust, more responsive and thus more affordable housing market. It also invariably leads to higher standards of design and much greater popular acceptance of new development.

¹⁰ Dwelling in centre of image - Box House by Studio Bark Architects. Photographer unknown.

4.9. The UK is however somewhat behind the curve and has some considerable catching up to do. As NaCSBA record: “The UK has the lowest known rate of self-commissioned homes in the world. It is the largest single difference between our housing market and those of other developed market economies. Its effects are damaging to us as a nation in both absolute and relative terms.”¹¹

4.10. The canal district of Amsterdam is another well known historical example, where the city council (short of money) put in the canals and basic infrastructure, then sold the land off as strip plots to self-builders (local merchants), with a set of simple design rules governing architectural style, proportion, building materials and tighter control on visual unity at street level, whereas more freedom for the upper floors. The result, again, is picture postcard architecture. Very high-quality design and building, with subtle but complimentary variety.



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4.11. In the last decade or so, what could be considered as a modern reworking of the Amsterdam idea has been happening in Almere (also in the Netherlands).

¹¹ p.6 NACSBA 2023 report

¹² Amsterdam city centre facades - photographer unknown



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4.12. Looking at all of these schemes they work because they have a certain level of coherence, whilst allowing variety to be celebrated. That is something that is derived partly from what is possible (available materials, means and structural techniques) in the above UK examples (Cotswolds, Dorset), but then from a more intentional master planning and design coding in the later schemes (Bath, Amsterdam, Almere). The balance between coherence and variety is something that can be used to create the character of each individual place. The imposition of certain limits/ rules/ design codes can also ensure that any given scheme retains a local distinctiveness.

4.13. Another common thread with all of these projects is the self-builders direct connection to the land and the built form upon it. All self-builders are motivated to design and build well because they will be the occupiers of the building that they are designing and building, so they have a vested long-term interest in creating the best building that they can within their means.

Summary

4.14. This historical and international background informs all of our work today – identifying sites that have great potential to deliver high quality, place-specific designs.

5 - DIVERSIFYING HOUSING: Choice and quality of design

5.1. Over the last decade the Government has commissioned and published a number of Reports and White Papers to address the various issues in Housing. These issues include:

- a. Too few houses are being built, especially in the areas where they are most needed, which has a negative effect on affordability.

¹³ Almere, Netherlands - photographer unknown

- b. A small number of large companies producing the majority of housing - which is less resilient and more open to oligopolistic practices (ie where the players can take advantage of their position to manipulate prices or other practices which adversely affect consumers)
- c. Inferior quality and poor customer satisfaction.
- d. Low levels of innovation or proactive approaches to sustainability in the industry, which instead tends to await regulation.

5.2. A recurring theme proposed to address these issues is to diversify the housing system, so that there are more types of housing being delivered by more suppliers. A key player identified to help address this is the Custom and Self Build industry. In 2017 the Housing White Paper: Fixing our Broken Housing Market re-emphasised the need for greater diversification in housing supply:

“The way in which the house-building market operates constrains the supply of new homes because there is insufficient competition and innovation. We want to diversify the market to achieve the amount, quantity and choice of housing that people want... The Government wants to support the growth of custom build homes. These enable people to choose the design and layout of their home, whilst a developer finds the sites, secures planning permission and builds the property. Custom built homes are generally built more quickly and to a higher quality than other homes and tend to use more productive, modern methods of construction.”

5.3. Clearly diversifying the industry on its own is not enough - it is how it is diversified that matters. And the key constituent of CSB that is being sought is customer choice. Increasing choice will help with the issues listed above by allowing consumers to have more ability to choose where they want to live, who will design and build their homes, and how they will perform. The benefits that flow from this choice are outlined in the next section.

5.4. In the Prime Minister’s introduction to the Bacon Review (2020) he states:

“The way in which our housebuilding market operates constrains the supply of new homes because there is not enough competition and innovation. Unlike housing markets elsewhere in the world, there is a lack of consumer choice and diversity of supply.

Self-build and custom housebuilding can play a crucial role in increasing choice for consumers and ensuring people can live in the homes that they want, and that are designed to meet their needs. We know that self and custom builders deliver high quality, well-designed homes that are energy efficient, accessible, affordable, and welcomed by their communities.”

5.5. Former MP Richard Bacon, in his introduction to the same Review, sets out his vision behind diversifying the market:

“When we have fully opened up the housing market and the planning process to the power of consumer choice, we will see more great places being developed which are warmly welcomed by their communities, with beautiful and more spacious houses, at keener prices – and that are better designed, better built, greener and which cost less to run, which enrich the lives of the people who live there – while driving innovation and inward

investment. And when afterwards we have done this, we will look back and wonder why it took us so long.”

5.6. The Housebuilding Market Study (Final report) 26 February 2024 on P.163 discusses Increasing the diversity of housing tenure:

“LPAs could require increased diversity of tenure for larger sites to be granted planning permission. This could involve increasing the proportion of affordable, build to rent or custom build homes on sites. Increasing the diversity of housing tenures, which are aimed at different sub-segments of the market, could allow for more homes to be absorbed within the local market without housebuilders needing to reduce the prices of the housing they produce for the private market, thereby improving the speed of housing delivery. LPAs could publish their policy on housing tenure requirements, meaning they are known by housebuilders and reflected in land transactions. These could be decided and operated in a similar way to LPA policies on affordable housing and developer contributions. We note that the Letwin review recommended a similar measure, although it has not been taken forward by the UK government. Paragraph 3.8 of the Letwin review recommends that all large housing sites above 1,500 units must strive to achieve sufficient housing diversity to support the timely build out of the site and high quality development. Housing diversity includes housing of differing type, size and style, design and tenure mix. It also includes housing sold or let to specific groups, such as older people’s housing and student accommodation, and plots sold for custom or self-build.”

5.7. The CSB legislation therefore seeks to actively promote the concept of ‘choice’.

5.8. The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016) provides a legal definition of CSB housebuilding:

(A1) In this Act “self-build and custom housebuilding” means 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.

(A2) But 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.

5.9. The Right to Build Task Force Custom and Self-Build Planning Guidance PG1: Defining self-build and custom housebuilding notes that:

“When 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.” (March 2021: Version 2.0)

5.10. The intention behind this is outlined in the Guidance - Self-build and custom housebuilding (Last updated 8 February 2021):

“What are the benefits of self-build and custom housebuilding? Self-build or custom build helps to diversify the housing market and increase consumer choice. Self-build and custom housebuilders choose the design and layout of their home, and can be innovative in both its design and construction” (Paragraph: 16a Reference ID: 57-016a-20210208)

- 5.11. As practising architects and self-builders, we have seen the evidence of how incorporating 'choice' leads to better homes. And how homeowners' direct and personal input into the design process has tangible benefits to the outcome, which are unmatched by any speculative scheme.
- 5.12. The effect of this is the creation of homes and places that are designed to be enjoyed by the people who will live there. It means that people will live there longer, be more invested in their place, and as a result it will inevitably be more valued than their blander surroundings.

How 'Choice' can be built into the process

- 5.13. There are many ways in which a self-builder can have primary input into the design and build of their home, even if they do not have an architectural or construction qualification. Some of these stages are set out below:
- a. Brief: The process can begin with identifying and delivering the brief; i.e. what it is that matters to the self-builder, be this design or issues around material choices or building performance.
 - b. Internal layouts: The type, size, number and relationships between the rooms, including open plan.
 - c. Setting: How the house will relate to its immediate surroundings and wider landscape, views, sunlight, etc.
 - d. Specification: Details, structural consideration, insulation (ie how the building will perform)
 - e. Construction: Self-builders are often directly involved in selection and management of tradesmen, contractors, and even turning their hand to building themselves.
 - f. Interiors and finishes: These final touches complete the homes and help make them individually tailored to the homeowners needs.

Placemaking and Diversity

- 5.14. The design process outlined above has the embedded effect of making each house distinct and responsive to the specific occupiers and immediate place, rather than being an imposed house type, dropped into a generic layout. So placemaking and needs-led diversity are core benefits of the self-build process.

6 - BENEFITS OF CUSTOM AND SELF BUILD: the results of choice

Quality over efficiency

- 6.1. Self-builders invariably invest more in high-quality materials and in ensuring a very high-quality finish to their home. They are not merely financially but personally invested in the final product. Rather than creating a house to sell (as per speculative development) they are creating a home to be lived in.
- 6.2. The NaCSBA 2023 report found that the two greatest motivations for wanting to self build were to 1) Attain a higher quality of home and 2) Attain a home that is more sustainable...



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Environmental Sustainability

- 6.3. "It is a received wisdom that CSB homes are usually more "sustainable" than general new build homes and a great deal more so than the existing housing stock. Typically, the word "sustainability" is synonymous with the adoption of renewable energy or heating technologies in the home and more highly insulated properties.... It is well documented that CSB homes have a greater propensity to employ such technologies than wider "conventional" new build homes built at scale."¹⁵

¹⁴ p.23 NaCSBA custom and self build market report 2023

¹⁵ p.88 NACSBA 2023 Report

6.4. In 2023 NaCSBA commissioned Chamberlain Walker Economics to do some research into what the empirical difference in performance is between CSB housing and mainstream speculative housing, and the results were striking.

6.5. NaCSBA observe: “Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) provide a testable form of data that empirically show that custom and self build homes are greener than typical mainstream new builds. The data demonstrated reduced energy consumption between 8% and 42% lower, with CO₂ emissions between 7% and 43% lower for custom and self build homes in the case study areas.”¹⁶

TABLE 2 AVERAGE ENERGY CONSUMPTION IN KWH/M² FOR CSB AND NEW BUILD HOMES

Authority	Region	Average energy consumption, kWh/m ²			
		(CSB)	(Other new build)	(Regional comparator)	(England comparator)
Breckland	E	60	82	83	85
Folkestone & Hythe	SE	70	81	78	83
Herefordshire	WM	51	88	88	85
South Gloucestershire	SW	48	68	77	84
Durham	NE	89	97	94	84

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TABLE 3 AVERAGE ENERGY CONSUMPTION IN KWH/M² FOR CSB AND NEW BUILD HOMES

Authority	Region	Average CO ₂ emissions, CO ₂ kg/m ²			
		(CSB)	(Other new build)	(Regional comparator)	(England comparator)
Breckland	E	10.1	13.9	14.1	14.5
Folkestone & Hythe	SE	11.7	13.5	13.1	14.1
Herefordshire	WM	8.6	15.2	15.1	14.5
South Gloucestershire	SW	8.4	11.9	13.0	14.3
Durham	NE	15.5	16.7	16	14.3

6.6. NaCSBA continue: “Sustainability and biodiversity are increasingly important factors for new homes. Our research shows that half of all CSB homes are built using Modern Methods of Construction and half have a sustainable primary heat source.”¹⁷... “ more than 50% of CSB homes have a renewable energy source as their primary heating system...”

6.7. The NaCSBA research focused on Operational energy and carbon usage. It did not go into detail on the issue of embodied carbon. “From the perspective of a single building’s life cycle, the proportion of embodied carbon is around 50% on average for new energy-efficient buildings. From a macro-economic perspective, approximately 10% of global energy-related CO₂ emissions are attributable to the embodied emissions of buildings.”¹⁸

¹⁶ p.89 NACSBA 2023 Report

¹⁷ p.13 NACSBA 2023 Report

¹⁸ from Building Cities Journal, Article by Thomas Lützkendorf and Maria Balouktsi

6.8. MMC are almost all focussed on timber framing of one sort or another, rather than the carbon intensive use of concrete block and brick. The findings that half of CSB homes are built with MMC is a clear indicator of significantly lower embodied carbon, when compared to typical speculative volume housebuilding.

Social Sustainability and Community

6.9. Research has found that self-builders live in their properties for an average of 25 years (rather than the national average of 6 years)¹⁹. With the effort that goes into designing and building a dream home, the self-builders are intent on putting down roots and it follows that they foster greater community connections.

6.10. Self-build projects often involve active participation from local residents, fostering a sense of ownership, pride, and community spirit. Individuals and families become directly involved in the planning, design, and construction process, creating a stronger sense of connection to their neighbourhood and neighbours.

6.11. Self-build projects are often driven by shared values and goals within the community, such as affordability, sustainability, or architectural design. Collaborating on a common project can bring together diverse individuals and groups, encouraging dialogue, cooperation, and mutual support. This is often reinforced by having mutual obligations, like shared spaces to look after collectively.

6.12. Self-build projects provide opportunities for skill-sharing and knowledge exchange among community members. Participants can learn new skills, share expertise, and mentor one another, fostering a culture of lifelong learning and empowerment.

6.13. Self-build projects often result in a diverse range of architectural styles and design solutions that reflect the unique preferences, needs, and cultural identities of the community members involved. This diversity contributes to the visual richness and character of neighbourhoods, creating vibrant and inclusive urban environments. Self build naturally fosters diversity and inclusion, because the homes are by nature, designed and built for the specific needs of the occupants.

6.14. Self-build projects strengthen social cohesion and resilience within communities by fostering relationships, networks, and support systems among residents. The collaborative nature of self-build initiatives builds social capital, trust, and reciprocity, which are essential for community well-being and resilience in the face of challenges and crises.

6.15. There is a common misconception that self build is just “Grand Designs” for those with unlimited budgets. To the contrary, self-build around the world, right through history, has been the predominant housing type. It provides opportunities for individuals to invest ‘sweat

¹⁹ Ted Stevens, founder of NaSBA, which then became NaCSBA

equity' into their homes, thereby increasing affordability.



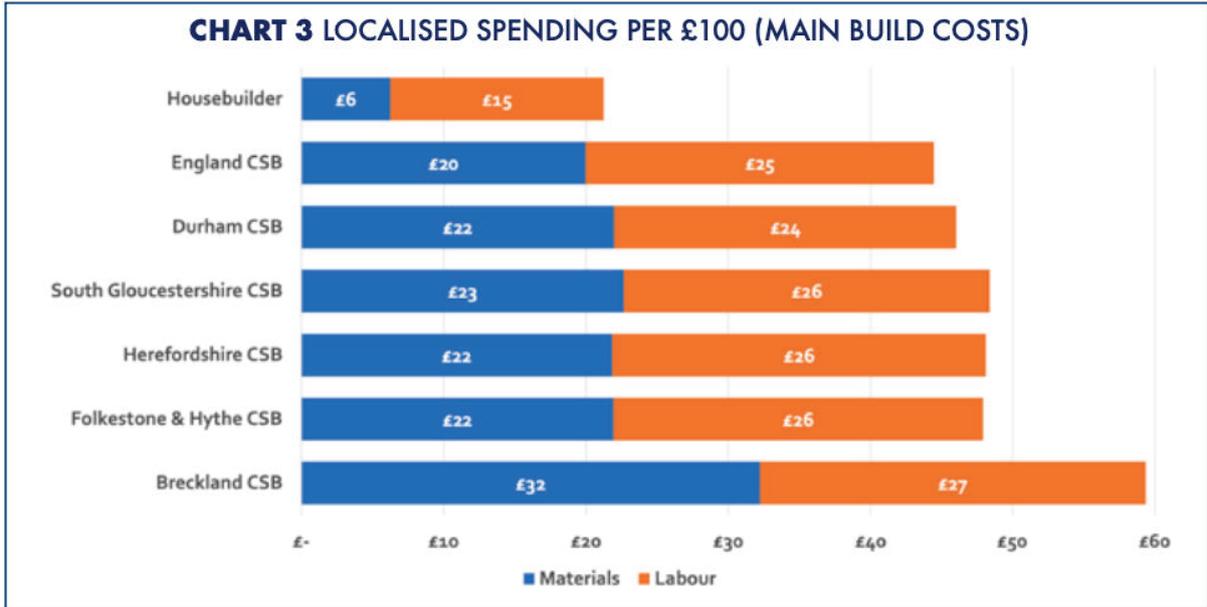
Self builders in Salisbury in the 1950's



The RUSS self-build group in Lewisham 2020's

Economic benefits

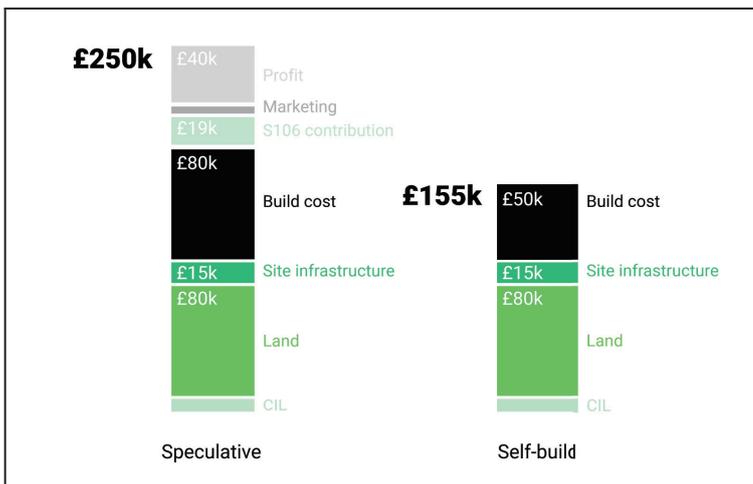
- 6.16. Research commissioned by NaCSBA, and presented in their 2023 report, shows that CSB housing generates roughly a doubling of spending into the local economy when compared to typical speculative volume housebuilding.



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6.17. This has the combined effects of a boost for the local economy and jobs, a better chance of gaining local buy-in to the development, and softer benefits around accountability and community connectedness.

6.18. Because self-building is not speculative, and so does not need to account for the same profit margins and transactional costs, it can create opportunities for greater affordability when compared to typical speculative development. This can be compounded by the opportunities for self-builders to earn sweat equity (their own time and labour to reduce that of others). The graph below (courtesy of Alastair Parvin - Open Systems Lab / Wikihouse) shows this.



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²⁰ p.87 NaCSBA custom and self build market report 2023.

²¹ 'Scaling the Citizen Sector' - A White Paper on the role of digital innovation in tackling the UK housing crisis -Alastair Parvin and Andy Reeve, October 2016

- 6.19. It also stands to reason that a more diverse housing market, with greater innovation, and a proliferation of different business models, will have a greater natural resilience to fluctuations in the economic climate; it will be more responsive to changes in macro-economics, demography, and climate.

How the LIVEDIN approach builds upon these advantages

- 6.20. Master planning and Landscaping: high-quality design is a natural by-product of self-building; part of its DNA. However, it is essential that the individual self-builds are augmented by thoughtful master planning on multi-plot sites, to ensure that the homes work well with each other as well as their wider setting.
- 6.21. Coherence: Design codes help strike the right balance between coherence and variety, and need to be appropriate for each site. The proposals for how high-quality design will be curated for a Site are explained through the Planning Statement and DAS.
- 6.22. Landowners included in the process: many landowners have an affinity to their local community and feel responsible for what happens with their land. Whilst they often want to “do the right thing,” the incumbent speculative industry excludes them from the process. The LIVEDIN model allows the landowner to be involved in the procurement and input into the outcome, so they can be proud of their legacy.

7 - THE LEGISLATIVE HISTORY: a journey to the 2015 Act and the 2023 Act Reforms

- 7.1. Self-build and custom-build had long been recognised as a part of the housing market but had no express legislative recognition. At the beginning of the 2010s, the Government recognised the need to provide direct support for self-build and custom-build.
- 7.2. In 2011, alongside the National Custom and Self-Build Association (NaCSBA) the then Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) set up the Action Plan for Custom and Self-Build.
- 7.3. From March 2012, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contained express support for self-build and custom-build development. That wording has strengthened in successive versions up to the present day.
- 7.4. On 26 March 2015, the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 received Royal Assent, for the first time putting in place an express duty to register levels of demand for self-build and then to actually meet that demand. We have set out how that duty should be addressed in our CSB Assessment document.
- 7.5. In 2017 the Housing White Paper: Fixing our Broken Housing Market stated;
- “The way in which the house-building market operates constrains the supply of new homes because there is insufficient competition and innovation. We want to diversify the market to achieve the amount, quantity and choice of housing that people want.... the Government wants to support the growth of custom build homes... Custom built homes are generally built more quickly and to a higher quality than other homes and tend to use more productive, modern methods of construction.”²²*
- 7.6. Through the Bacon Review (2021), the Government Response (2022), and the Bacon Review Progress Update (2023), the importance of self-build and custom-build was identified and supported by the Government, with resolution to:
- a. - mandate LPAs to widely promote Registers and that they share demand data and information on suitable development permissions;
 - b. - Set a target for LPAs to provide for serviced plots unless market demand (not Register demand) can be shown to be regularly met and there are deliverable allocations in new style local plans to meet this demand;
 - c. - Give substantial weight to CSB as a material consideration in the revised National Planning Policy Framework;
 - d. - LPAs to take a more interventionist approach to bring forward land for CSB and SME home builders by running pilot programmes to support councils in land assembly to create serviced building plots for new housing as part of the new-style local plan land allocations process
 - e. - Allow minor changes to new style local plans following a streamlined process, if a development on the edge of a settlement/urban area provides for small scale CSB plots, and for councils to set locally-specific policies for this;
 - f. - Make minor changes to the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, where possible through secondary legislation,

²² Government White Paper - Fixing our Broken Housing Market (Feb 2017)

- g. - Clarify the definition of custom and self-build housebuilding;
- h. - Supply definition what counts towards giving suitable development permissions and how the 'duty to provide' is measured;
- i. - Remove the use of fees and eligibility criteria;
- j. - Introduce a clear sanction if the demand on the registers is not met;
- k. - and link under-delivery to the Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development (or its replacement under the planning reforms);
- l. - Introduce a targeted exception and windfall site policy which enables custom and self-build housing on unplanned housing sites in rural areas and on sites adjacent to existing settlements;

7.7. In his Written Ministerial Statement (19 December 2023), the Secretary of State expressly stated:

"Councils which ...enable custom and self-build homes, drive the necessary increase we need in supply and better ensure the right homes are provided in the right places. ...Our policy changes also ensure that local authorities should seek opportunities to support... self-build and custom build housing. [They also encourage 'permission in principle' alongside other routes to permission (such as local development orders) to remove barriers for smaller and medium site builders in the planning system."]

7.8. The NPPF now states expressly at NPPF 70b:

To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities should:

b) seek opportunities, through policies and decisions, to support small sites to come forward for community-led development for housing and self-build and custom-build housing;

Government's Intent Behind the Legislation

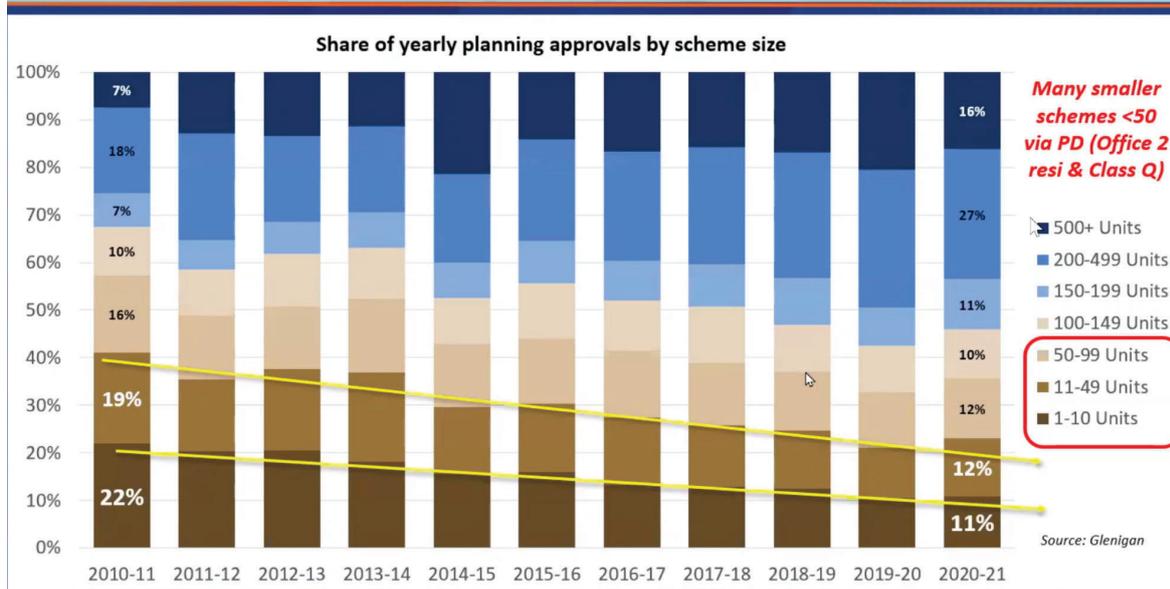
7.9. There are at least five factors that underlie this strong Government support.

7.10. First - **Diversifying** the housing market: the Government recognises the importance of diversification to support a more resilient market with more choice. The Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) wrote to the The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) in 2022 supporting a study into the housebuilding sector, highlighting the importance of ensuring that the housebuilding market is working in the best interests of consumers. In February 2024 they produced their report: *"We have investigated the key drivers of these poor outcomes in the market and the role of competition. The number of houses being built and their affordability are propelled by two key drivers: the nature and operation of the planning system and the limited amount of housing being built outside the speculative approach (such as affordable housing, self-build, and build-to-rent). The level of build-out rates is an additional factor."*²³

The graphic below shows the sharp decline of smaller site delivery since the credit crunch of 2008-9.

²³ Summary of CMA market study final report into housebuilding" 26 February 2024 (para 31)

Self Build – diversifying housing

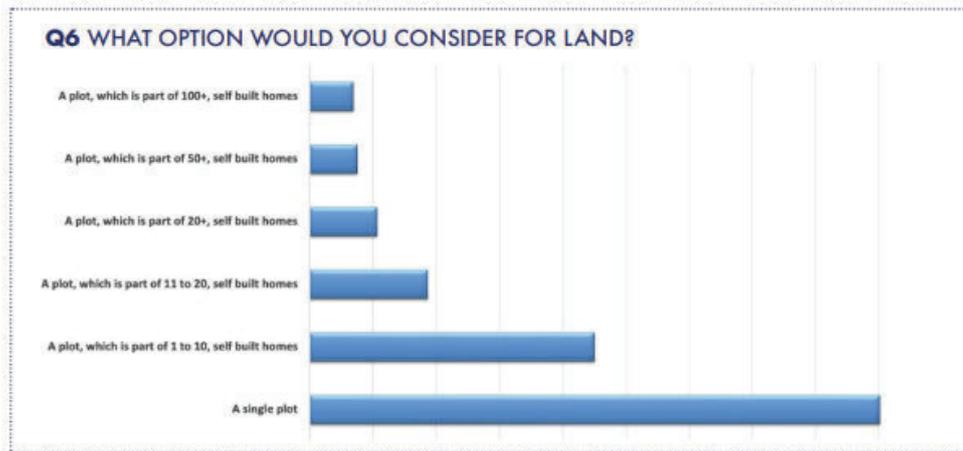


- 7.11. The potential outcomes from a more diversified housing market include:
- Providing more choice for homeowners in the types, designs and locations of homes available.
 - Increasing innovative solutions, when the speculative market is too risk averse to do so
 - Reducing land-banking
 - Increasing access for SME contractors: NaCSBA statistics show that the vast majority of self-build and custom-build projects employ local contractors.
- 7.12. Second - **Quality**: it is widely understood that self-builders build to very high quality designs, and designs that have a clear local distinctiveness. Self-build plots have a strong but respectful relationship to their immediate surroundings. Whilst innovative, especially in respect of energy efficiency, they also often bear reference to existing heritage and designs.
- 7.13. Third - **Community**: self-builders often become a key part of their local community. They live on average 25 years in their houses, as opposed to a general average of 6 years. They are often invested in the community they live in. In addition to hiring local tradesmen and businesses to build their homes, they will put love and care into what they build.
- 7.14. Fourth - **Demand**: self-build is very popular, and meets a recognised need in the housing sector. 32% of people in the UK want to build their own home²⁴.
- 7.15. Fifth - **“Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly.”** (NPPF para 70). It is expressly recognised that smaller sites need additional support – in a competitive land market, they will not regularly arise. Therefore the applications that are brought forward should be looked upon favourably in that context – recognising that market factors will act as a constraint. It is particularly important that small individual sites are identified, and not merely parts of larger allocations.

²⁴ Nacsba 2022 Consumer Survey

Small sites are where self builders want to build (see the graph below), and can create gentle organic and incremental growth, rather than big new housing estate

25



8 - THE STATUTORY DUTY AND POLICY IMPERATIVE

- 8.1. In conclusion, we summarise why self-build plots of this kind should be supported wherever they are brought forward.
- 8.2. Self-build is a unique form of development. The 2015 Act puts in place the only statutory scheme that sets in place numerical targets that LPAs must meet. The core principle at the heart of the 2015 Act is that needs must be met.
- 8.3. This duty was further strengthened with section 123 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 which came into force on 31 January 2024.
- 8.4. Section 123 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 makes two important, targeted reforms to Section 2A. In short:
 - (1) LPAs are now required to carry over unmet demand on a cumulative basis (New Section 2A(2) and 2A(6) of the 2015 Act)
 - (2) The types of development permissions that will be considered as having met demand are clarified and will be clarified further through new Regulations (Section 2A(2))
- 8.5. Our Planning Statement and Custom and Self-Build Assessment set out why this Local Planning Authority is presently in breach of its duty.
- 8.6. Fundamentally, this application provides a major opportunity for the Council to meet its significant unmet needs.

9 - SUMMARY

- 9.1. We have provided the above summary to set the context to our Planning Statement.
- 9.2. We would be happy to meet with Officers as part of the determination phase to discuss any aspect of the Application and any matter addressed above.