

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive for Decision 03 September 2018

Portfolio:	Planning and Development
Subject:	Self-Build and Custom House Building Action Plan
Report of:	Director of Planning and Regulation
Corporate Priorities:	Providing Housing Choices

Purpose:

To approve the Self-Build and Custom House Building Action Plan for implementation.

Executive summary:

The Self-Build and Custom House Building Action Plan is a result of the Council recognising, along with national Government, that this is an emerging housing sector. This Action Plan sets out the Council's main aim, which is to 'positively influence or help secure development opportunities where we can support individuals or organisations to deliver high quality self-built or custom-built homes to meet demand in the Borough'. It sets out the key actions the Council can take to achieve this aim. The working document has seven key sections. The first two introduce and provide background as to why the Council has produced this Action Plan. It then explains what self-build and custom house building are, what responsibilities the Council has for this sector and what has been done to secure it in the Borough to date. The penultimate section explains what the evidence the Council have on the local demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in the Borough indicates, as well as explaining that the Council's current knowledge is limited. Finally, the document outlines eight key actions which the Council propose to undertake to achieve its aim, including gaining a more detailed understanding of local demand for self-built and custom-built housing in the Borough.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Executive approves the Self-Build and Custom House Building Action Plan for implementation.

Reason:

To enable the implementation of the Self-Build and Custom House Building Action Plan, and update the Action Plan thereafter.

Cost of proposals:

The costs of producing the Self-Build and Custom House Building Action Plan has been met within existing resources.

Appendices: A: Self-Build and Custom House Building Action Plan

Background papers: None

Reference papers: None

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Executive Briefing Paper

Date:	03 September 2018
Subject:	Self-Build and Custom House Building Action Plan
Briefing by:	Director of Planning and Regulation
Portfolio:	Planning and Development

INTRODUCTION

1. This marks the first time the Council has set out its Corporate aims in respect to self and custom build house-building in the Borough. This Action Plan sets out the Council's aim of *'positively influencing or helping to secure development opportunities where we can support individuals or organisation in our local communities to deliver high quality self-build or custom house building to meet demand in the Borough'*. It sets out the key actions the Council can take to achieve this aim. Whilst the Action Plan sets out the direct actions Council can take itself, it is important to explain that self and custom build housing is not the sole responsibility of the Council. It is for this reason, the Action Plan also sets out the Council's wider ambitions, where it would like to work with customers and partners to influence and help deliver high quality self and custom build homes.

BACKGROUND

2. As the Action Plan explains, self and custom build housing is very much in its infancy in the UK, and the Council will look to review the document when local experience or national policy necessitates. The Government began to focus on self and custom build housing back in 2011. However, it was not until 2015 that this began to feature in legislation.

WHAT IS SELF AND CUSTOM BUILD HOUSING?

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

'Self build and custom housebuilding means the building or completion by individuals, associations of individuals, or persons working with or for individuals or associations of individuals, of houses to be occupied by those individuals. 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.'

4. Custom build is commonly regarded as where a person who commissions a specialist developer to deliver their own home. Whereas, self-build is where a person is more

directly involved in organising or constructing his or her own home. Both routes require more significant input into the design of their home than other forms of housing. In considering whether a home is a self-build or custom-built home, the Council must be satisfied that the initial owner of the home will have the primary input into its final design and layout.

5. National planning policy increasingly recognises the role self and custom homes had to play in providing for a diverse range of housing needs. Parallel to this (prior to much of this recent legislation) the Council put policies in place to secure self and custom-built homes in the Borough through its Corporate and other strategy documents. For example, the Adopted Welborne Plan looks to secure 1% custom build plots (i.e. homes) on the site.
6. It is important that national policy recognises that some self and custom build products can be secured as affordable housing. Increasingly the Council will look to strategies, such as the emerging Local Plan to both help secure self and custom build housing through local policies and allocations, but also clarify how such policy mechanisms work in more detail.

LOCAL SELF AND CUSTOM BUILD DEMAND IN THE BOROUGH

7. A key Council responsibility, required by national legislation, is to keep a register of those seeking to acquire serviced plots in the area for their own self-build and custom house building. The Council are also subject to duties to have regard to this and to give enough suitable development permissions to meet the identified demand.
8. The Self and Custom Build Register was launched on the Council's website on 21st March 2016. The eligibility criterion for entry onto the Council's self-build register is established through 'The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding (Register) Regulations 2016'. It stipulates that any individual or member of an association that signs up to the register must be aged 18 or older and a British citizen, or a national from an EEA State other than the UK, or national of Switzerland. The individual or member of an association must also seek to acquire a serviced plot of land in the Borough to build a house to occupy as their sole or main residence.
9. As the Executive may recall, it approved an Executive Report agreeing several changes to the register in July last year. This included a charge for applicants joining or remaining on the register. It also introduced a 'local connection test'. This test means that applicants must confirm they have either lived in the Borough for a minimum of 2 years, or they have been employed in the Borough (for more than 16 hours per week) continuously over the last two years. This means the register now falls into two parts, those with a local connection are in Part 1 and those without a local connection are in Part 2.

THE COUNCIL'S ACTION PLAN

10. The Council's Action Plan has eight key actions flowing from its main aim of *'positively influencing or helping to secure development opportunities where we can support individuals or organisation in our local communities to deliver high quality self-build or custom house building to meet demand in the Borough'*.
11. The first is to explore and implement innovative methods for engaging with customers who are interested in self and custom-built homes in the Borough, such as raising awareness of the grant of suitable planning permissions or suitable Council land

disposals.

12. As previously mentioned, it is important that the Council continues to improve its understanding of those individuals or organisations that are interested in self-build or custom house-building opportunities within the Borough, as well as their ability to afford such housing options. It is for this reason the Council will be undertaking more detailed research on local demand in the Borough.
13. How the Council assesses and allocates land has an important impact on how housing sites in the Borough are developed. The Council therefore will assess sites potential for self-build and custom housebuilding through the Council's housing availability assessment (e.g. Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment).
14. It is important that our services are easy for our customers to use, therefore the Council will work with interested parties to produce design and procedural guidance to achieve high quality design on self and custom build developments in the Borough (e.g. design codes, plot passports & standard conditions).
15. As previously mentioned, this is a newly emerging sector, therefore one of the actions is to ensure that any new significant change to, national policy or in evidence on the demand for self and custom-built housing products, should be reflected in reviewing the Local Plan, as well as other strategies.
16. Government and other partners can be a source of funding for self-build and custom housebuilding, therefore one key action is for the Council to actively work with such bodies to secure funding this type of housing to be delivered.
17. Sharing experience in this emergent sector is vital for all the key players to learn from in order to achieve high quality self-build and custom-build housing to meet local demand. It is for this reason that the final action is in place, which is that the Council will host or facilitate a series of forums or events (such as web-pages, Expos or workshops) to encourage skill and experience sharing with interested parties.
18. Lastly, although not forming an action, it is important to recognise that the Action Plan is a 'live; working document, that will be updated when necessary as the Council's gains experience working with this important sector of housing in an increasingly diverse housing market.

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Claire Burnett (Ext 4330).