

**Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk**

**SELF-BUILD & CUSTOM HOUSE BUILDING  
ACTION PLAN**

**November 2018**

Borough Council of  
**King's Lynn &  
West Norfolk**



This marks the first document where the Borough Council has set out both its responsibilities and ambitions for self-build and custom house building in the Borough.

Self-build and custom house building has recently received increasing Government attention in the face of meeting the need for housing in the UK.

This action plan sets the background as to why self-build and custom house building has gained increasing focus from Government, which has translated into national legislation, policy, regulations and guidance. This document marks the first corporate action plan that comprehensively covers this issue.

It explains emerging local policies, strategies and development in the Borough, as well as the latest evidence the Council has regarding the local demand for self and custom build housing.

The Council recognises that self and custom house building developed in the Borough offers an important potential route to home ownership and contributes towards housing delivery. This action plan marks the first step in the Council in:

***‘Positively influencing or helping to secure development opportunities where it can support individuals or organisations in our local communities to deliver high quality self-build or custom house building to meet demand in the Borough.’***

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### **The Purpose and Role of Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Self-Build & Custom House Building Action Plan**

- 1.1 The purpose of this action plan is to set out the Council's own responsibilities and wider ambitions in respect to self-build and custom house building in the Borough.
- 1.2 The delivery of self and custom house building in the Borough is not the sole responsibility of the Council, it in fact relies heavily on those wishing to and having the means to build houses themselves, organisations who would like to facilitate or deliver self-build plots or build custom built houses and interested landowners and developers promoting sites for such products. Given this context, the Council aims to: ***'positively influence or help secure development opportunities where we can support individuals or organisations in our local communities to deliver high quality self-build or custom house building to meet demand in the Borough'***.
- 1.3 This document sets out the Council's proposed actions to directly meet its own responsibilities to help deliver quality self-build and custom house building in the Borough to meet local demand. It also sets out the Council's wider ambitions, where we want to work with customers and partners to influence and help deliver such high-quality housing products.
- 1.4 This action plan will need to be reviewed and updated as and when necessary. This is the Council's first comprehensive action plan focused on this issue. The Council also recognise that this sector in many respects is in its infancy in the UK, and with increasing experience in the Borough, it is important that lessons are learnt and reflected in future action plans.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

### **Self-Build & Custom House-Building Gaining Increasing Focus from Government**

- 2.1 Back in November 2011 the Government published ‘Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England’.<sup>1</sup> This national strategy supported many proposals that had been set out in an industry-led Government Working Group Action Plan promoting self-build housing, produced in July earlier that year.<sup>2</sup> Within the strategy the Government explained how it was intent on doing more than ever to support individuals and communities taking the initiative to build their own homes, which in turn is considered beneficial to the national economy. However, the Government saw that there was a huge untapped potential for custom-built homes, especially when making international comparisons. The Government pledged to enable this housing sector to become mainstream, and to double the number of self and custom-built homes over the next decade. The Government recognised that there were also challenges to self-build and custom house-building, as well as limited information regarding this housing sector.
- 2.2 In the 2014 March Budget, the Government announced that it would consult on a new ‘Right to Build’ giving prospective custom builders a right to a plot of land from their local council, and established several vanguards to test the practicalities of operating such a ‘Right’ across England. In addition, in March 2014 the Government announced that all new developments by individuals extending or building their own home would be exempt from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). CIL is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008 as a tool for local authorities to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area. The Housing White Paper in February 2017, which this document mentions later, continues this exemption commitment.
- 2.3 In October 2014, the Government produced ‘Right to Build: Supporting Custom and Self Build’,<sup>3</sup> a consultation document, in which it explained how it intended to further empower aspiring self-builders to build their own home in their local area by bringing legislation through the next Parliament, as well as taking into consideration the experiences from the vanguards and the outcome of the consultation.<sup>4</sup> This led to the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act (2015).

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<sup>1</sup> HM Government (November 2011) ‘Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England’.

<sup>2</sup> Self-Build Government Industry Working Group (July 2011) ‘An Action Plan to promote the growth of self-build housing’.

<sup>3</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government (October 2014) ‘Right to Build: Supporting Custom and Self Build’.

<sup>4</sup> DCLG (March 2015) ‘Right to Build: Supporting Custom and Self Build Government response to consultation’.

2.4 Since this time, several pieces of Government legislation, regulations, policy and guidance have come into force that have placed certain responsibilities on Councils. However, before this document explains these, it is firstly important to define what self-build and custom house building is.

### 3.0 WHAT IS SELF-BUILD & CUSTOM HOUSE BUILDING?

- 3.1 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 house building:

*'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 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.'*

- 3.2 Whilst legally self-build and custom house building share the above definition, custom build is commonly regarded as where an individual commissions a specialist developer to deliver their own home. Whereas, self-build is where the individual 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.

#### **Forms of Self-Build and Custom House Building**

- 3.3 Currently there are a variety of ways self-built homes and custom house building are being delivered. Firstly, there are different approaches to the process, some self-builders take forward projects alone, others work in groups. Secondly, the level of self-build can vary, ranging from self-builders carrying out the whole of the construction to custom builders who hire a contractor to carry out the construction through to completion.
- 3.4 In considering whether a home is a self-built 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.
- 3.5 Some of the typical approaches to self-build or custom home building are outlined briefly in Figure 1 on the next page. However, it should be highlighted that the housing products listed below are not exhaustive. With this being an emerging sector, it is highly likely that new self-build and custom house building housing products will rapidly change over time.

## **Figure 1. Examples of Self-Build & Custom House Building Products**

### **Contractor Built One-off Home**

The owner manages the design process including finding the land, hiring an appropriate consultant, and securing planning permission and building regulations approval. Often the owner either hires a main contractor to do all the construction work; or they themselves project-manage the construction phase and hire various sub-contractors to do the work. The owner might also undertake some of the simpler tasks, such as decorating, themselves.

### **Self-Built One-off Home**

The owner follows a similar route to above method except that they then undertake virtually all the construction work themselves. This is popular with people who want to take 'hands on' approach and who may already have experience of building.

### **Kit or Package Home**

The owner finds the plot of land and then works with a kit home company to finalise design. The kit company then supply and erect the house. Sometimes the owner has a watertight shell built and then carries the fitting out work themselves.

### **Developer Built One-off Home**

Here the owner finds a developer with a site and a design that meets their requirements, and the developer then builds it for them.

### **Supported Community Self build**

This is where a group of people come together to share their skills and build a number of houses collectively. The group will normally all work on everyone's house until completion. Often these schemes include training to boost the participants' knowledge of building. Some community groups form themselves and some are coordinated by housing associations or other agencies.

### **Independent Community Collaboration**

Here a group is formed to acquire a larger site that is split into individual plots. They then organise the design and construction of their own home, sometimes collaborating with others to, for example, order materials in bulk.

### **Developer/Contractor led Group Project**

A developer/contractor finds a suitable site then seeks a number of self-build clients and builds the homes to their specification under contract. Often the developer provides an option to just build a watertight shell, so the owner can 'self-finish'. An alternative arrangement is for the developer to offer serviced plots which are sold 'off plan' with a design and build contract.



## **4.0 WHAT ARE THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SELF-BUILD & CUSTOM HOUSE BUILDING?**

- 4.1 In the light of national legislation, regulations, policy and guidance the following paragraphs explain what responsibilities Councils have in respect of self-build and custom build homes.

### **National Legislation**

- 4.2 The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016) placed a duty that (by 1st April 2016) all local authorities should keep a register of individuals and associations of individuals who are seeking to acquire plots of land for self and custom build housing in the local authority's area (to build houses for those individuals to occupy as homes).

### **National Regulations**

- 4.3 The relevant regulations, The Self and Custom Housebuilding Regulations 2016 and The Self and Custom Housebuilding (Time for Compliance and Fees) Regulations 2016, allowed authorities to introduce a 'local connection test' and charge applicants a fee to be on the register.

### **'Fixing our Broken Housing Market' Housing White Paper**

- 4.4 In February 2017, the Government published a Housing White Paper entitled 'Fixing our broken housing market'<sup>5</sup> which set out the Government's plans to reform the housing market and boost the supply of new homes in England. Whilst wide ranging in nature, one of its main aims was to diversify the construction sector through supporting custom house building. It also reaffirmed its commitment to support custom-build homes with greater access to land and finance and giving people more choice over the design of their home. Finally, it also commented that *'If we do not believe local authorities are taking sufficient action to promote opportunities for self and custom house-building, we will consider taking further action including possible changes to legislation.'*

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<sup>5</sup> MHCLG (7<sup>th</sup> February 2017) 'Fixing our broken housing market'.

## **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

- 4.5 In July 2018, the Government published the National Planning Policy Framework, which sets out national planning policy. Under the section entitled *'Delivering a sufficient supply of homes'*, the Government makes it clear that to boost supply, 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 and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay. Furthermore, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies *'including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes'*.
- 4.6 The footnote to this paragraph reminded authorities that they are required to keep a register of those seeking to acquire serviced plots in the area for their own self-build and custom housebuilding. They are also subject to duties to 'have regard' to this and to give enough suitable development permissions to meet the identified demand.
- 4.7 The footnote also explained that self and custom-build properties could provide market or affordable housing. This is reinforced in the glossary of NPPF - *'Self-build and custom-build housing: as housing built by an individual, a group of individuals, or persons working with or for them, to be occupied by that individual. Such housing can be either market or affordable housing.'*
- 4.8 Furthermore, importantly the NPPF now requires on applications of 10 homes of more that at least 10% of the homes are available for affordable home ownership. However, there are exemptions, one of which is where 100% of the site is proposed for people wishing to build or commission their own homes.

## **National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)**

- 4.9 It is envisaged that National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG), which provided guidance on policy in the previous NPPF, will be updated to reflect the recent changes to the new NPPF in terms of local housing need. However, it is helpful to highlight that the NPPG that supported the previous NPPF advised that authorities, when assessing the housing and economic development needs of their area, can supplement data from their register with secondary data sources to obtain a robust assessment of demand for this type of housing in their area. Examples of secondary data sources listed in the guidance include building plot search websites, 'Need-a-Plot' information available from the Self Build Portal; and enquiries for building plots from local estate agents and local planning

authorities.<sup>6</sup> It also provided guidance on matters such as administering the self-build and custom house building registers, the duties (i.e. giving suitable permissions) and where exemptions to such duties apply.

4.10 The following sections will look at the local policy context and local evidence of demand for self-build and custom house building in the Borough from the register.

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<sup>6</sup> National Planning Policy Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments> Paragraph: 021 Reference ID: 2a-021-20160401 Revision date: 01 04 2016

## **5.0 WHAT HAS THE COUNCIL DONE TO SECURE SELF-BUILD AND CUSTOM HOUSE BUILDING TO DATE? AND WHAT IS PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE?**

- 5.1 The borough council has already put strategies and plans to facilitate self-build and custom house building in place. These are detailed in the following paragraphs; however, the situation is evolving to reflect more recent Government legislation, regulations, policy and guidance. This coincides with the review of the Local Plan.

### **Corporate Business Plan**

- 5.2 This corporate strategy sets out the broad framework for the borough council over a four year period (2015/2016 – 2019/2020). The top priority within this is to drive local economic and housing growth. The borough council has committed to supporting new and existing businesses to help them thrive and ensure that housing growth targets are met.
- 5.3 The focus is on providing the support that businesses need to start up or relocate here and successfully develop. Businesses need to attract employees with appropriate skills and housing for them to live in. This is why the borough council is driving forward with housing growth that will help ensure local people can access housing that meets their needs. This includes those who aspire to build or commission the construction of their own home.

### **Adopted Local Plan**

- 5.4 The adopted Local Plan sets out policies that guide future development in King's Lynn & West Norfolk. It is used to help determine planning applications. In the context of self-build and custom house building, it is important to understand that existing local planning policies were developed and adopted as part of the Local Plan, prior to the recent Government legislation. The current Local Plan is presented in two parts; the Core Strategy (2011), and the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (2016).

### **Adopted Local Plan: Part 1 - Core Strategy**

- 5.5 The Core Strategy was adopted in July 2016; it provides strategic level guidance as to growth and significant issues across the Borough in the period to 2026. It is the main document setting out the long term strategy, including the vision and objectives for the borough, and broad policies that will steer and shape new development.

- 5.6 Core Strategy Policy CS01 sets out the spatial strategy for the borough and identifies sustainable development locations in accordance with the settlement hierarchy, as set out in Policy CS02.
- 5.7 Policy CS09 Housing Distribution identifies the minimum number of dwellings to provide over the plan period and the method for distribution, which again is in line with CS02. CS09 also discusses housing type, size and tenure which should be provided. Stating that the most up to date strategic housing market assessment should be taken into consideration. The last published strategic housing market assessment is a 2014 update. This is due to be updated shortly as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan review .CS09 continues and addresses affordable housing in term of the percentage sought, thresholds, viability and the mix of tenure. This reflects the identified affordable housing needs of the local population.

### **Adopted Local Plan: Part 2 – Site Allocations and Development Management Policies**

- 5.8 The Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan was adopted in September 2016. This gives effect to and compliments the Core Strategy. This is done so through the provision of land use allocations for land uses including residential housing and economic land to meet aspirations of the Core Strategy. It also provides a series of detailed development management policies which will assist in guiding development through the application determination process.
- 5.9 92 residential housing sites are allocated and these have the potential to provide at least 6,294 dwellings. To date approximately 80% of these sites have come forward with some form of a planning proposal. Indeed a number are being built out currently and some have already been completed.

### **Local Plan Review**

- 5.10 The borough council is committed to a review of its Local Plan. This is to reflect emerging housing and employment needs through to 2036. A further 10 years into the future compared to the current plan period. This is set out within Policy DM2A – Early review of Local Plan, contained within the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan.
- 5.11 This new Local Plan, once adopted will fully supersede both parts of the adopted Local Plan. A call for sites and policy suggestions consultation was carried out in November 2016, in accordance with Policy DM2A. The new plan is currently at a draft stage, with a consultation on a draft version currently anticipated to take place in early 2019. This broadly in-line with the latest Local Development Scheme (LDS).

## **Emerging Local Plan: Draft Local Plan review**

- 5.12 The new draft plan will seek to create a policy environment which encourages custom and self-build opportunities. This will not only provide opportunities for those wishing to build or commission the build of their own home but also assists with the supply and the delivery of housing.
- 5.13 In the most recent financial years (2016/2017 & 2017/2018) approximately 50% of housing completions were on sites of 1 – 4 dwellings, with half of these being single plot sites. The majority of these single plots could be classed as Custom & Self Build. The completions of such sites have occurred throughout the borough from Burnham Market in north to Wretton in the south.
- 5.14 Analysis of the housing trajectory shows that aside from single plots, slightly larger developments ranging from 5 dwellings to 25 are starting to come forward and are being developed with a view to providing custom and self-build opportunities.
- 5.15 It is clear that smaller sites are providing opportunities for custom and self-build housing. To increase these opportunities the Local Plan review it will seek to provide settlements with a development boundary. This will enable windfall development to continue. It also looking to introduce a new policy which allows for small scale development to take place outside of development boundaries, in areas reasonably related to the relevant settlement.
- 5.16 This could allow for the sensitive infilling (either in full or part) of small gaps within an otherwise built-up frontage and potentially for the ‘rounding off’ of development boundaries. Clearly the development would need to be appropriate to the scale and character of the surroundings, and developing a gap which makes a positive contribution to the street scene will be resisted. Beyond this in exceptional circumstances small groups of dwellings may be considered appropriate where the development is of a particularly high quality and would provide significant benefits to the local community.
- 5.17 It is considered that such a flexible approach will seek to maximize the potential for custom and self-build opportunities. Greater weight could also be placed upon those applications which indicate the site is for custom and self-build, ensuring that some sites do actually come forward as custom and self-build.
- 5.18 One of the key opportunities of Custom and Self Build is to increase housing supply by creating more opportunities for people who are not just looking for housing but are looking to meet their housing requirements through this route. Indeed if new national policy requirements are to be met, the Council needs to ensure that identified need can be met. At the same time of creating additional opportunities for plots, a mechanism needs to be applied in order to ensure such plots are available explicitly for the Custom and Self-Build delivery route. If not there is danger the route will not be available for those wishing to build in this way, and that sites are used purely for speculative development or, are traded and do not come forward for development in a timely way.

**Action 1: The borough council through its Local Plan review will seek to develop a new policy which could boost the potential supply and delivery of custom and self-build opportunities on small sites. This will apply to areas outside of development boundaries but reasonably related to the settlement, be this infill or 'rounding off'.**

5.19 Aside from this specific policy there will also be general encouragement for sites which are seeking to come forward for custom and self-build purposes. It is considered that this is essential, and this would be the minimum approach hence we are seeking to go above and beyond this through the potential policy outlined above.

**Action 2: The borough council's Local Plan review will create a policy environment which supports and encourages custom and self-build opportunities. This will provide opportunities for those wishing to build or commission the build of their own home and will also assist with the supply and the delivery of housing.**

5.20 The borough council will also support those landowners / developers of sites allocated within the current Local Plan and in the future the Local Plan review who are seeking to bring forward and develop their site for custom and self-build purposes.

**Action 3: The borough council will support the land owners / developers of allocated sites within the current Local Plan and Local Plan review who wish to bring forward their site(s) for custom and self-build purposes.**

**Action 4: The borough council through future Local Plans, beyond the current review, will explore options for securing the development of custom and self-build housing on sites, large, medium and small**

## Neighbourhood Plans

- 5.21 Neighbourhood planning is a right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Communities can shape development in their areas through the production of Neighbourhood Development Plans (often referred to simply as Neighbourhood Plans).
- 5.22 The borough is one of the largest in terms of land mass in the country, consequently there are approximately 100 parishes. This includes the un-parished area of King's Lynn and the Town Councils of Downham Market and Hunstanton. Currently about a 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the parishes within the borough are engaged with the neighbourhood plan process. With 4 already made, one being reviewed and another at the referendum stage.
- 5.23 A Neighbourhood Plans once made forms part of the local development plan, sitting alongside the borough's Local Plan. They can contain a range of land use policies which are used in the planning application decision making process. They also have the ability to make their own residential housing allocations and can advocate custom and self-building housing. The borough's Local Plan review will seek to support neighbourhood plans and allow local communities through their neighbourhood plans to choose how best to accommodate the housing need of their area.
- 5.24 As part of the borough council's duty to support communities who wish to prepare a neighbourhood plan, the borough council will inform neighbourhood plan groups with regard to custom and self-build and back custom and self-build opportunities communities wish to bring forward. These could be in the form of general policies or specific allocations.

**Action 5: The borough council through its duty to assist those communities who wish to prepare a neighbourhood plan for their area will inform and support policies which seek to encourage custom and self-build opportunities, as either residential housing allocations or more general land use policies.**



## **6.0 LOCAL SELF-BUILD AND CUSTOM HOUSE BUILDING DEMAND IN WEST NORFOLK**

### **West Norfolk Self-build and Custom Build House Building Register**

- 6.1 The Self and Custom Build Register was launched on the Council's website on April 2016. The eligibility criteria 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.
- 6.2 To better understand local demand for self and custom build plots in the Borough, the Council has included additional questions, researching the preferences of those on the register. This includes locations within the Borough they would prefer, the type of self or custom build property they are interested in building and the number of bedrooms they are seeking.
- 6.3 Since then, this information indicates that there are 133 individuals interested in self and custom build. In terms of the type of self and custom build those on the register are interested in, 80% are interested in detached houses and 50% are interested in detached bungalows. There is limited demand for other types of housing. The majority of households have indicated that they would be interested in building anywhere in the borough. Finally, in terms of plot size, demand covers a wide range of plot sizes with 33% of households are looking for a plot of less than 500sqm (0.12acres), 28% look for for between 500sqm (0.12a) and 1000sqm (0.25a) and 33% looking for more than 1000sqm.

## 7.0 THE COUNCIL'S SELF-BUILD & CUSTOM HOUSE BUILDING ACTION PLAN

- 7.1 Given this national and local context, the Council's objective is to: ***'positively influence or help secure development opportunities where we can support individuals or organisation in our local communities to deliver high quality self- built or custom-built homes to meet demand in the Borough'***. This section of the action plan sets out what actions can be taken to achieve this.

### **Engaging with Self-build & Custom Build Customers**

- 7.2 The Council is proposing further measures to improve its services to different customers, such as notifying those on the register when planning permission is granted for self-build and custom-built homes (having regard for data protection) and publishing local demand and delivery evidence through the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).
- 7.3 In line with the Council's continuing service improvement (through 'channel shift'), which ensures a 'customer focused' approach to service delivery and the quick resolution of problems. The Council will aim to update its website with useful information for those interested in self-build and custom house building in the Borough, such as producing guidance in the form of leaflets etc for applicants and headline information on permissions.

**Action 6: Explore and implement innovative methods for engaging with customers who are interested in self-build and custom house building in the Borough and raising awareness of the grant of suitable planning permissions or suitable Council land disposals.**

### **Understanding Local Demand for Self & Custom House Building**

- 7.4 Importantly, the Council need to first understand more about the nature of demand for self-build and custom house-building in the Borough. Whilst the existing register is a helpful guide, it relies on individuals and organisations' knowing the register exists. Through undertaking research, the Council will be able to get a realistic understanding of local demand, but also their ability to afford available options. The Council will also need to understand whether there are any barriers to those individuals or organisations that can afford self-build and custom housebuilding, and whether the Council can play a role in preventing these barriers from occurring.

**Action 7: Continue to improve the Council’s understanding of those individuals or organisations that are interested in self-build or custom housebuilding opportunities within the Borough (as well as their ability to afford available options) by undertaking detailed research.**

### **Opportunities for Self & Custom House Building in the Borough**

- 7.5 Next, it is important we engage with those who have the means to assist individuals or organisations interested in self-build and custom housebuilding. In its simplistic form, to make self-build and custom housebuilding a reality for those who desire it, it requires the provision of suitable land and finance, the skills and materials to build it, as well as suitable utility and public highway access provision. It is important that the Council understands how all these interested parties can work together, to help those who are interested in self and custom build.
- 7.6 Turning to the first, available land. The Council has a direct role where it is a landowner itself, to establish if the land is suitable for self-build and/or custom- build homes. This can be exercised through its land disposal, regeneration or housing functions. The Council will also assess the potential for self-build and custom housebuilding on its own land assets and seek to deliver a pilot scheme.
- 7.7 Secondly, using its planning functions, the most appropriate route for the Council is to approach landowners or relevant parties with land suitable for development to meet local demand for self and custom-built housing, is through Council’s housing availability assessment, commonly known as the ‘Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment’ (HELAA). A HELAA is a technical exercise to determine the quantity and suitability of land potentially available for housing development. Another example is when pre-application inquiries are made to the Planning Service for self-build and custom-build homes.
- 7.8 Thirdly, the current Local Plan allocated a large scale strategic site at West Winch for major growth. The site is allocated for at least 1,600 dwellings through to 2026 and in the region of 4,000 dwellings in the fullness of time. The growth area is located within the parishes of West Winch and North Runcton. These two parishes have jointly prepared a Neighbourhood Plan for their respective area. This was formally made in 2017. The Neighbourhood Plan contains Policy GA09 ‘*Opportunities for small-scale and self-build development*’ this encourages Custom and Self-Build opportunities within the Growth Area.

**Action 8: Assess sites potential for self-build and custom house building through the Council's housing availability assessment (e.g. HELAA).**

**Action 9: Identify Council owned site to provide a pilot scheme to directly deliver custom build units.**

**Action 10: Seek to integrate Custom and Self-Build as part of the West Winch Growth Area, in line with the North Runcton and West Winch Neighbourhood Plan (2017).**

7.9 With the backdrop of the Government looking to boost house building, Councils like West Norfolk are looking at an increasingly diverse range of housing products, such as self-build and custom-build homes to meet local housing demand. Therefore, it is appropriate that when sites are promoted to the Council, these local needs (including self-build and custom house building) are part of the assessment process.

#### **7.10 Approach to affordable housing on Custom and Self-build sites**

- The Councils adopted affordable housing policy (policy CS09) requires built affordable units to be completed on site and transferred to an affordable housing provider. This policy still applies to custom build sites, however the Council recognises that the approaches that are used to secure affordable units on sites developed by speculative developers may not be appropriate for Custom build sites. The Council has developed an approach which allows the affordable housing to be delivered on site as per the policy requirement whilst not acting as a barrier to custom build sites. The following options could apply;
  - Landowner can commission affordable housing to be transferred to an RP at a price they can pay without the need for other subsidy.
  - Landowner can transfer serviced plots at a price that enables the development of affordable housing without the need for other subsidy. This would be at a cash equivalent price of providing the affordable units on site when being developed by speculative developers.

**Action 11: The Council will work with interested parties such as land owners, planning agents, Registered Providers and custom builders to evaluate if the approach is a practical alternative solution for the transfer of affordable housing on custom build sites.**

### **Achieving High Quality Design**

- 7.11 Where sites have already been identified for self or custom-built housing, such the Council will endeavor to ensure its services, such as planning and building control, help deliver high quality self and custom-built homes. Taking Planning Services, there are different ways the Council can help ensure this type of house building is high quality; this can be an area of concern as self and custom build can potentially lead to a huge degree of variation with so many parties involved, which risks undermining design quality.
- 7.12 Furthermore, self and custom build development pose new challenges for the planning, and it is important that the Council can make good decisions on such applications appropriately and swiftly. The use of procedural advice when submitting a planning application for self-build and custom-build housing is likely to be beneficial to both the applicant and the Council. It could include helpful information on matters such as the level of detail required for outline, full, hybrid and reserved matters applications, as well as how to claim CIL exemption and the use of standard conditions or clauses for s106 agreements.

**Action 12: The Council will work with interested parties to produce procedural guidance on how to apply for planning permission for self- build and custom house building developments in the Borough (e.g. standard conditions) and establish 'in house' advisory service. This will also contain guidance for those communities engaged in the neighbourhood plan process.**

- 7.13 For this action, the Council will aim to involve experienced applicants in helping define what the Authority's design and procedural guidance should cover, as well as provide helpful feedback to the Planning Services for continuous service improvements. This is in line with the Councils approach, as previously mentioned, which puts the customer at the centre of Council services.

### **Update Relevant Corporate Strategies**

- 7.14 Whilst the emerging Local Plan will have specific provisions for self-build

and custom house building, any new significant change in evidence on local demand for these housing products will need to be reflected in the review of the Local Plan. Furthermore, with the Government confirming in the recent NPPF for example, that self and custom-built housing can include both market and affordable housing, it is important that the Council is clear how this distinction is made in the emerging Local Plan.

**Action 13: Any new significant change to national policy or in evidence on the local demand for self-build and custom house building, should be reflected in reviewing the Local Plan, as well as other emerging strategies.**

### **Financing Self & Custom House Building**

- 7.15 Ultimately, the personal financing of self-build and custom house building is largely a matter for interested individuals and the organisations involved. The Council will work to secure funding streams, such as the Home Building Fund currently available from the Government; to enable self-build and custom-build homes to be delivered.

**Action 14: The Council will actively work with Government and other partners to secure funding to enable self and custom-build housing to be delivered.**

### **Sharing Experience**

- 7.16 When it comes to the skills and materials to develop self-build and custom-build homes, the Council is keen to work with all relevant partners to help facilitate investment in construction skills and support economic activity of this sector. The Council is keen to encourage the sharing of skills and best practice in self and custom house building. Hosting or facilitating a series of events that share good practice and skills will help increase collective awareness of all the parties involved.

**Action 15: The Council hosting or facilitating a series of events or forums, such as Expos, workshops and webpages, to encourage skills and experience sharing with interested parties.**

## **8.0 MONITORING & REVIEW**

- 8.1** The Council will look to continually monitor this action plan. If circumstances change significantly, the actions are considered not to be appropriate or not working to achieve the Council's objective, the Council will look to update this action plan. This is the first action plan the Council has ever produced on self-build and custom house building, a relatively new housing sector, therefore it likely it will need to be updated to reflect local experience over the coming years.

## 9. LIST OF ACTIONS

9.1 This Action Plan contains a number of commitments termed actions. These will be for different departments across the council, in collaboration, including planning, housing, property services and corporate projects. The following table provides a list of the actions contained within the Action Plan. It highlights which area they cover i.e. promotion, facilitation or enabling. In many instances they cover more than one of these areas. Which department(s) within the borough council they chiefly apply to. And the time scale each action is considered achievable within. This is indicated via a traffic light system. Green is short term (1- 2 years), amber is medium term (2–5 years), and red represents long term (5 years +). However, some actions span more than one time scale.

No.	Action	Area	Department	Time Scale
1	The Local Plan review will seek to develop a new policy which could boost the potential supply and delivery of custom and self-build opportunities on small sites. This will apply to areas outside of development boundaries but reasonably related to the settlement, be this infill or 'rounding off'.	Facilitation	Planning	Medium
2	The Local Plan review will create a policy environment which supports and encourages custom and self-build opportunities. This will provide opportunities for those wishing to build or commission the build of their own home and will also assist with the supply and the delivery of housing/	Facilitation	Planning supported by Housing	Medium
3	The borough council will support the land owners / developers of allocated sites within the current Local Plan and Local Plan review who wish to bring forward their site(s) for custom and self-build purposes.	Facilitation & Enabling	Planning supported by Housing	Short & Medium
4	The borough council through future Local Plans, beyond the current review, will explore options for securing the development of custom and self-build housing on sites, large, medium and small.	Facilitation & Enabling	Planning supported by Housing	Long
5	The borough council through its duty to assist those communities who wish to prepare a neighbourhood plan for their area will inform and support policies which seek to encourage custom and self-build opportunities, as either residential housing allocations or more general land use policies. Also see Action 10.	Promotion, Facilitation & Enabling	Planning supported by Housing	Short. Medium & Long
6	Explore and implement innovative methods for engaging with customers who are interested in self-build and custom house building in the Borough and raising awareness of the grant of suitable planning permissions or suitable Council land disposals	Promotion	Housing supported by Planning	Short
7	Continue to improve the Council's understanding of those individuals or organisations that are interested in self-build or custom housebuilding	Facilitation	Housing	Short



	opportunities within the Borough (as well as their ability to afford available options) by undertaking detailed research			
8	Assess sites potential for self-build and custom house building through the Council's housing availability assessment (e.g. HELAA).	Enabling	Planning & Housing	Short & Medium
9	Direct delivery on Council owned land. Identify Council owned sites to identify a suitable pilot scheme to Directly deliver custom build units.	Enabling, Facilitation & Promotion	Property Services and Corporate Services. Supported by Housing and Planning	Medium
10	Seek to integrate Custom and Self-Build as part of the West Winch Growth Area, in line with the North Runcion and West Winch Neighbourhood Plan (2017).	Enabling	Planning & Housing	Long
11	The Council will work with interested parties such as land owners, planning agents, Registered Providers and custom builders to evaluate if the approach is a practical alternative solution for the transfer of affordable housing on custom build sites.	Facilitation & Enabling	Housing supported by Planning	short
12	The Council will work with interested parties to produce procedural guidance on how to apply for planning permission for self-build and custom house building developments in the Borough (e.g. standard conditions) and establish 'in house' advisory service. This will also contain guidance for those communities engaged in the neighbourhood plan process.	Promotion & Enabling	Housing supported by Planning	Short
13	Any new significant change to national policy or in evidence on the local demand for self-build and custom house building should be reflected in reviewing the Local Plan, as well as other emerging strategies.	Facilitation	Planning supported by Housing	Short, Medium & Long
14	The Council will actively work with Government and other partners to secure funding to enable self and custom-build housing to be delivered.	Facilitation	Housing	Short, Medium & Long
15	The Council hosting or facilitating a series of events or forums, such as Expos, workshops and webpages, to encourage skills and experience sharing with interested parties	Promotion	Housing supported by Planning	Short