

16th February 2023

Chichester District Council – Custom and Self-Build Action Plan

The Custom and Self-Build Health Check and Action Plan process provides a mechanism to determine how ‘healthy’ an LPA’s policies, procedures, protocols, and engagement are in respect of CSB and how the authority is delivering on their duty in respect of the Right to Build legislation. The Health Check Questionnaire Responses are considered against a series of ‘benchmark’ requirements. These are to ensure:

- **That each LPA has a RTB Register that is visible, well promoted and regularly monitored and actioned.**
- **That fee charges, if employed by LPAs to join registers are appropriate and proportionate. Connection tests, if applied are reasonable and necessary in accordance with national policy and guidance.**
That effective and meaningful planning policy is used in emerging or adopted local plans to positively promote and support CSB in all its guides.
- **That regular annual monitoring takes place in relation to the supply and demand of CSB in the LPAs area.**
- **That CSB applications are correctly recorded and that appropriate legal obligations are used to ensure permissions come forward as intended for CSB.**

In order to increase diversity in the housing sector all of the above points play an important role to delivery CSB and to make this a mainstream housing offering.

Within this context, the responses submitted by Chichester District Council via the Health Check Questionnaire, together with a review of information available from the Council’s website, have been assessed to inform the suggested action plan below. The action plan utilises a traffic light priority system in order to assist with implementation.

Chichester District Council CSB Action Plan

Status	Description
RED	High priority - needs immediate attention.
AMBER	The task is a concern and a priority.
GREEN	The task is on track to complete on time.
COMPLETE	Indicates the task has been finished and ready for next phase.

Name of local authority	Chichester District Council		
Name of lead contact:	Mark Bristow, Housing Delivery Officer, Housing Delivery, Chichester District Council		
	Health Check Outcome	Priority (RAG)	Action Plan Intervention
Resourcing for CSB	<p>Chichester Council does not have any specified identified resource for custom and self-build and notes significant skills gaps in housing delivery, planning policy and development management. The Housing Delivery Team is keen to push forward the agenda, in particular, affordable provision via CLTs on LA land. Greater training and experience would be very helpful.</p>		<p>The Task Force have found that having the benefit of a dedicated CSB officer who is responsible for driving CSB and investing in working with CSB enablers and community self-build groups significantly helps increase diversity in housing in the local authority area and ensures a proactive approach to CSB as a defined type of housing.</p> <p>It is recognised that local authorities are experiencing significant budgetary and resourcing challenges at present and therefore the most expedient approach is likely to be upskilling/training existing staff. The Task Force regularly facilitates training opportunities which are often provided to local authorities free of charge. These include a series of masterclasses covering monitoring, design coding, delivery, working with enablers and appeals. There is also an existing forum for officers with responsibility for CSB. This has proved to be an excellent learning opportunity for officers and a forum where concerns, issues and challenges can be discussed, and experiences shared. Therefore, it is suggested that the Council designates one or more officers who can take the lead on CSB engagement and act as the first contact for the LPA. Lack of specific responsibility for CSB within a planning/housing department is a very limiting factor in engaging with people who wish to build their own homes as well as custom build enablers and community groups.</p>

			<p>The Council may also wish to consider suitable funding sources for example any residual new burdens funding to provide officer resource for CSB. Over time, as the Council adopts suitable development plan policy that secures provision of CSB on large sites, the Council could explore the use of Planning Performance Agreements to facilitate delivery of CSB.</p>
Political Backing	<p>No member champion has been identified, although the Housing Portfolio is keen on seeing CSB coming forward. There appears to be broad support for CSB as a result of an individual promoting this form of housing.</p>		<p>As a starting point, it is suggested that the Council seeks to hold an initial session to engage Members in CSB and ‘win hearts and minds’. The Housing Portfolio holder, who is keen to see CSB coming forward in Chichester, can play an important role as a ‘Member Champion’ to lead engagement and understanding of CSB amongst the Council’s membership.</p> <p>The Task Force offers introductory workshops, and it is understood that this is in the process of being arranged for the Council. The Task Force believe that this is an essential first step in achieving clarity and support for officers across; development management, policy and housing enabler teams. In our experience, these work best when attended by a broad range of officers across the Council’s housing and planning functions and crucially, elected members. Establishing strong political support and leadership is essential to proactive CSB promotion by a local authority.</p> <p>It is also important that Planning Committee Members also have specific knowledge in CSB. The Council may wish to consider arranging bespoke training for Planning Committee Members to ensure they are fully cognisant of the Right to Build legislation and are able to take the Councils duties into account in exercising their decision making powers. This would be a paid for provision with the Task Force being able to visit the LA and deliver a bespoke face to face training session to suit the needs of the LPA.</p>
Register	<p>The Council does not currently charge a fee for entry onto the Register. There is a local</p>		<p>It is welcomed that the Council does not currently charge a fee for entry onto the Register. In the Task Force’s experience, register fees simply act as a deterrent for applications and</p>

	<p>connection restriction as land is at a premium within the area. A financial solvency test has also been implemented although the Council is considered this is removed.</p>	<p>being able to demonstrate healthy demand for CSB is crucial for the promotion of any CSB interventions particularly proactive local plan policies. Given the current stage of plan making, the Task Force would advise against the introduction of a fee as data from the Register will be important in seeking to justify the Council's intended policy approach to delivering CSB at Examination.</p> <p>In respect of the local connection restrictions, Planning Practice Guidance makes clear that tests need to be proportionate, reasonable and reviewed periodically to ensure that it responds to issues in the local area, for example, areas with exceptional demand or limited land availability. It is recognised that a significant proportion of Chichester falls within the South Downs National Park (and therefore not the local planning authority for this area) as well as the Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and internationally designated habitat sites. It is suggested that the local connection test is monitored and reviewed over time, particularly as progress is made on the new Local Plan. If there is an opportunity to remove the connection test over time this would be a positive step for inclusivity and help to encourage Custom Self Build to all interested parties.</p> <p>In terms of the financial solvency test, Planning Practice Guidance is clear that this may be applied where relevant authorities wish to assess whether the applicant can afford to purchase the land, although authorities should be aware that self-build and custom build can provide a route to affordable home ownership for those on low incomes and so will need to take this into consideration if introducing a financial solvency test. The Council is considering whether to remove this test and this would be supported by the Task Force. The financial solvency test introduces an additional resource requirement for local authority officers whereby time will be spent processing applications and, in our view, this is largely unnecessary. The Register can ask a series of questions around</p>
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<p>Website Presence</p>	<p>The Council's website has not been updated for some time. The Council's CSB webpage helpfully provides a guidance note that covers the Register which addresses the additional eligibility requirements.</p>		<p>The Council should ensure regular updates to the website in regards to CSB. Fundamentally, there should be clear links between the Council's housing and planning webpages as it may not be immediately clear to customers when searching for information on custom and self-build where they need to be looking. CSB webpages should be engaging and ideally provide a range of information sources to aid consumers including details of the Council's local plan policies (once adopted), register requirements and ideally, details of any plots currently available. As an example, please see Teignbridge District Council's website which contains a broad range of information to assist prospective custom and self-builders including an interactive map of consented sites across the District.</p>
<p>Communications Strategy for CSB</p>	<p>No dedicated officer, member or local community engagement in respect of CSB has taken place.</p>		<p>It is important to engage with local communities, as well as developers and enablers regarding CSB, both to convey demand and information relating to the Council's future plans to support CSB and explore opportunities to upscale CSB delivery.</p> <p>Positively promoting CSB and actively seeking to engage and work with local SME builders and CSB enablers is important to ensure CSB is delivered to satisfy the needs of those on the</p>

			<p>Council's Register. Local community engagement is also a powerful opportunity to establish evidence of demand and identify where communities want to see CSB.</p> <p>In the first instance, the Council could also consider arranging town and parish council briefings for custom and self-build. These can be invaluable in informing and inspiring local communities to take action to promote CSB in their local area whether through a community housing initiative or neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>In time, as larger, strategic scale development proposals are identified consider the use of engaging marketing events to inform the local population of the opportunities that this form of housing can provide and make them aware of potential opportunities that may be coming forward in their area. This could provide multiple benefits including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a greater understanding of the demand for CSB at the local level. • Raising awareness amongst the local community. • Stimulating interest in upcoming developments which will aid the marketing process. <p>Finally, as the Council's Custom and Self-Build approach becomes more established, the Council could also consider arranging specific forums for SME builders and CSB enablers that operate in the area (similar to agent/developer forums). This would provide an opportunity to provide updates as to the latest permissions, pipelines of sites, policy and design requirements as well as developing positive working relationships.</p>
<p>Corporate Plan / Housing Strategies</p>	<p>The Council's Corporate Plan is silent on CSB as is the Housing Strategy.</p>		<p>The Task Force has found that reference to CSB within relevant corporate / housing strategies greatly helps ensure that all key parties are aligned and are working towards cross-departmental, mutually agreed goals and aspirations to advance the delivery of CSB in their area. It also ensures that</p>

			<p>CSB is taken into account as part of relevant decisions taken by the Council, in accordance with the Right to Build duties. Strategies should establish specific, measurable and realistic targets which can be monitored as part of the Council's corporate KPI monitoring process. Fundamentally, this further enshrines the need to diversify the housing market (and the benefits this brings) into the culture of the organisation.</p>
Monitoring of CSB	<p>The Council monitors CSB permissions and completions as part of overall housing monitoring. Specific monitoring is done by the Council's CIL team.</p> <p>It is unclear whether the Council is currently meeting its statutory duties in respect of CSB. The Council also does not actively publish CSB land supply information although CSB is included within a list of permissions as part of 5yhls data which is published annually.</p> <p>No monitoring of CSB delivery is included within the Council's wider corporate performance activities.</p>		<p>The Task Force would strongly suggest that the Council should seek to publish data in respect of CSB register demand as well as permissions and completions. Publishing monitoring data not only helps the sector to understand the market and demand in your areas but crucially helps the local and regional market to respond and seek to deliver for those who are wishing to build their own homes.</p> <p>To assist local authorities, the Task Force has produced a standardised template for monitoring CSB land supply. This is available as a Guidance Note on the Task Force Website: PG13 – Annual Monitoring Reporting</p> <p>Whilst the duty is explicit in meeting the demand for CSB by reference the number of entries on the Council's Register, the reality is that many authorities are not currently meeting the demand for CSB. Where this is the case, it is important to demonstrate that proactive, positive action is being taken within the local authority.</p> <p>Please also see the Task Force's Planning Guidance Note: PG 10 Counting relevant permissioned plots.</p>
Local Plan & CSB Policy	<p>The Council does not currently have an adopted local plan policy that supports CSB. The Council's emerging plan is proposed to include a number of references including housing mix, percentage policy on larger sites, CSB references within a rural exception</p>		<p>The emerging Chichester Local Plan Review 2035 (Preferred Approach – December 2018) includes references to custom and self-build housing within Policy DM2 'Housing Mix'. Although it is noted from the Council's health check responses that the intention is that policies will go further than this. The Council's approach to establishing a broad package of policies to support custom and self-build is welcomed. It is important to establish clear, unambiguous policy requirements in respect</p>

	<p>policy. The subsequent allocations DPD will also be an opportunity for dedicated allocations.</p> <p>In terms of evidence, the Council has its CSB Register, a list of CIL exemptions and the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment.</p> <p>The Council's emerging Plan is not yet at Examination.</p>	<p>of CSB. The Task Force advocates for CSB support to be enshrined in various aspects of planning policy including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic policy (CSB as part of housing mix as well as broader support for CSB having regard to spatial strategy/settlement hierarchies) • Site specific (Allocations, percentage policy requirements, small sites requirements) • Development management (windfall sites, exception sites, design standards etc.). <p>The Task Force is able to offer technical support with drafting policies, evidence and/or acting as a critical friend for local plan policy approaches as part of a paid for service.</p> <p>With regards to the Register, this is a useful starting point although it is important to recognise that the registers provide a snapshot of demand at a point in time. They are ultimately dependent on register awareness and how the LPA has marketed the Register and therefore are unlikely to be a reliable proxy for longer term plan-making.</p> <p>Therefore, it is important to support register data with other sources of demand. It is important to ensure that any plan-wide needs assessment does not simply repeat the register data. The recent Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment undertaken by Icen Projects Limited takes into account broader demand evidence such as use of secondary data sources as recommended by PPG. It also recognised the Register's limitations as an expression of demand. The approach is welcomed and will help justify the inclusion of CSB policies within the local plan.</p> <p>Should the Council wish to go even further, the Council could consider a separate Demand Assessment Model which considers longer term strategic demand for CSB. This has been developed by Three Dragons, in collaboration with the Task</p>
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			<p>force to assist local authorities with long term planning and identifying underlying demand for CSB. Their approach uses current local and national data in respect of demographics and affordability and provides information about demand across a local authority or housing market area, taking account of the type, size and tenure of serviced plots.</p> <p>In addition to demand evidence, the Council could also helpfully develop the evidence base in respect of land supply. This could be facilitated through a call for sites process that specifically invites land submissions for custom and self-build.</p>
SPD for CSB	The Council does not have an adopted or emerging SPD for CSB.		<p>The Council does not have an adopted or emerging Supplementary Planning Document for Custom and Self-Build. Clearly, an SPD, by nature must be supplementary to development plan policy and therefore there will need to be a suitable policy 'hook' in place to support an SPD. The courts have made clear that it is not appropriate to use SPDs to supersede development plan policy or make an alteration to plan policy to address new evidence. Consequently, as the new Local Plan is adopted, the Council may wish to consider whether an SPD could helpfully expand upon policy or provide further detail to CSB policy requirements to demonstrate how they can be taken forward. A draft SPD could helpfully cover the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions of CSB and the differences between them • Delivering % policy requirements • Guidance for planning applications • Phasing and delivery • Achieving quality design • Use of design codes and plot passports • Servicing and utilities • Marketing plots • Delivery of affordable CSB • Other matters including CIL
Neighbourhood Plans	The Council does not currently engage with parish and town		Chichester District Council has a significant number of neighbourhood plans. Neighbourhood plans are powerful tools

	<p>councils, neighbourhood groups, forums to promote the benefits of CSB, although once the new Local Plan is adopted then more active engagement may take place.</p>		<p>that give local communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood so they can deliver the development they need and want. Neighbourhood plan groups therefore have powerful planning tools at their disposal to support custom and self-build delivery.</p> <p>The Council could play a supportive role in engaging with neighbourhood plan groups to facilitate opportunities for custom and self-build. The Council could actively support groups in taking forward a range of opportunities that could help facilitate CSB opportunities in advance of the new local plan being adopted. These could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging CSB in the area or asking new housing developments to include serviced building plots in a scheme • Identifying specific sites and areas where CSB would be supported. • Promoting affordable CSB opportunities on rural exception sites – either as single homes or as part of a larger site. • Encouraging and identifying suitable sites where group or community led projects can be built. <p>Neighbourhood plan support could naturally follow on from a process of engagement with local communities (as covered above) to encourage and inspire aspirations to deliver more CSB opportunities across Chichester.</p>
<p>CSB – Member and Officer Training</p>	<p>No internal or external training for officers / elected members on CSB has taken place in the last 6 months.</p>		<p>As set out in the 'Political Backing' section, in the first instance an introductory workshop with members and officers would assist with instilling support and enthusiasm for CSB at all levels within the Council. The Council may also wish to consider arranging a site visit for officers and members to see some of the UK's successful CSB first hand. One such example is Graven Hill in Bicester, which is the largest and most ambitious CSB project in England. The Task Force have arranged two guided</p>

		<p>tours to Graven Hill, with significant discounts for local authorities. Further details can be found at: 7 March 11:30-2pm 10 May 11:30-2pm</p> <p>There are also a number of opportunities for more specific, bespoke training based around key issues facing the sector. The Task Force offers a strong masterclass programme whereby sessions are free for local authorities to attend. Recent sessions include percentage policy sites, planning appeals, delivery models and counting plots. There are also a number of additional sessions in the pipeline including a session covering: -</p> <p>Part 1 Affordable Custom & Self Build Housing - (Big A and Little a) What it is and potential approaches to make it happen. 15th February 2023 @12.30pm -2pm</p> <p>Part 2 Affordable Custom & Self Build Housing - Who could assist in making it happen? (Community led housing, Registered providers, Local authorities, etc.) 12th April 2023 @12.30pm – 2pm</p> <p>Self & Custom Build Planning Policies The Good, Bad & The Ineffective on the 23rd of February @ 11.30am-1.1pm</p>
<p>Development Management Process and legal controls / s106</p>	<p>The Council does not have a template section 106 agreement for CSB. Use of legal controls is an evolving issue within the Council. At present there does not appear to be a well-established framework in this regard although once the new Local Plan is adopted the Council will likely look at legal stipulations in relation to issues such as phasing, marketing</p>	<p>It is important to ensure that permissions for custom and self-build home are secured and delivered as such. Planning obligations (via s106 agreement or unilateral undertaking) and planning conditions will help provide certainty over the delivery of custom and self-build. It is therefore important that these cover all of the essential components to ensure CSB provision is delivered in a timely manner.</p> <p>Over time, the Task Force has developed a good understanding of the components needed within a legal agreement to secure high quality delivery of CSB. These include:</p>

	<p>periods, restrictions on occupation etc.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Site-wide delivery which includes the number of CSB plots secured. ● Defining CSB as the occupant having primary input into the dwelling's final design and layout ● Distribution and phasing of plots on the site ● Servicing plots and utilities ● Staircasing / cascade ● Marketing ● Control over design – design code and plot passport <p>It is suggested that the Council establishes a standardised draft s106 schedule which addresses all of the key requirements set out in the Council's local plan and those which are necessary for the delivery of high quality plots.</p>
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