



Ash Sakula



Collective Custom Build is a web-based advocacy tool that makes the case for developing Collective Custom Build as part of a more diverse housing market in the UK. It uses an animated narrative to curate key research findings, revealing them as peelbacks at key points in its argument.

Collective Custom Build is part of the *Motivating Collective Custom Build* practice-based research project within the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded *Home Improvements Knowledge Exchange* based at the University of Sheffield. *Motivating Collective Custom Build* is led jointly by the University of Sheffield School of Architecture, Ash Sakula Architects and Design for Homes.

Email collectivecustombuild@sheffield.ac.uk  
Twitter @CoCuBuild

# NEXT STEPS: PUBLIC SECTOR

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT COLLECTIVE CUSTOM BUILD

### Summary

This study has also found that the most effective strategy in successful examples has been the identification and establishment of partnerships between organisations from different sectors, in order to work mutually and overcome significant barriers, such as identification and access to suitable land, access to finance - particularly short-term development finance - forming and maintaining a successful Collective Custom Build group, and negotiating planning and other statutory obligations.

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this study to analyse the implications of specific recommendations, A number of recent publications by key sources have recommended specific actions that could be taken by Public Sector organisations - such as Housing Associations, other Private Registered Providers of Social Housing, and Local Authorities at all levels - to enable the greater fulfilment of Collective Custom Build (Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013; NaSBA, 2013, 2012a, 2012b, 2011; Parvin et al., 2011; Self Build Portal, 2013; Wallace et al., 2013).

It is widely accepted that Local Authorities may be instrumental in delivering a change in volume, and that partnership working and/or consortia could also overcome obstacles that currently limit scale (Hill, 2013a; NaSBA, 2013, 2012b, 2011, 2008; Parvin et al., 2011, p. 152; Stevens, 2013a, 2013b; Wallace et al., 2013, p. 8). Whilst the Self Build Portal<sup>1</sup> web-platform is designed to inform the general public about how they can access self-provided housing, the National Self Build Association (NaSBA) publish specific guidance for Planners (NaSBA, 2012b)<sup>2</sup> and the Public Sector (NaSBA, 2013) on the next steps they can take. Specifically, *'How The Public Sector Can Help People Build Their Own Homes - A Practice Guide'* (NaSBA, 2013) outlines sixteen distinct conditions likely to be encountered in relation to 'self-build' - such as forms of constitution, and terms that describe the level of direct involvement by self-providers in building their own homes - and makes specific recommendations as to how 'councils and registered providers' can provide support in each case.

<sup>1</sup> Please visit [www.selfbuildportal.org.uk](http://www.selfbuildportal.org.uk)

<sup>2</sup> NaSBA also intends to publish guides for Developers and Lenders and to update these guides periodically in line with developments in the self-provided housing sector.

Generally, sources that advocate for a wider fulfilment of self-provided housing encourage public sector organisations to enable Collective Custom Build by making land, development finance or technical support available to developers and independent groups, specifically for the purpose of self-provision. NaSBA identify six key strategies that can achieve these aims:

1. **Training Up Staff** - principally by encouraging officers, councillors and general staff - as well as embryonic self-providing groups - to become familiar with existing schemes, by visiting them in order to understand how they operate and identify the qualities of the end result, as well as to become aware of governance models such as Cohousing, Community Land Trusts and Mutual Home Ownership Societies (MHOSs).
2. **Identifying Suitable Land** - by checking land-holdings and considering buying more land specifically for self-provision<sup>3</sup>, as well as making public sector land available for self-provision through land allocation via the adoption of Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders. This strategy can apply particularly to 'unconventional' pieces of land on which development is unviable using 'normal' means.
3. **Promoting & Disseminating** - by ensuring projects have strong local political support and providing leadership, as well as providing a platform for evaluation and the sharing of knowledge between projects.
4. **Developing a Self-Build / Custom Build Strategy** - perhaps by providing short-term development finance or financial guarantees to groups or developers, and by adopting a relaxed, supportive and flexible attitude to proposals, such as allowing extra time to raise money to buy land, or accepting Design Codes as part of planning applications. Public sector organisations are also encouraged to consider partnering directly with independent groups and developers / kit home manufacturers - or third sector organisations such as the Community Self Build Agency - to set up partnerships that have the capacity to make developments viable.
5. **Measuring Local Demand** -by conducting Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs) and Strategic Housing Land Allocation Assessments (SHLAAs), through consultation or by using housing waiting lists to identify potential groups of people that could be enabled to provide their own homes. Local Authorities are relatively free to set their own standards against which they measure demand, and the HM Treasury also provides guidance on how to account for social value when auditing and evaluating decision making (HM Treasury, 2003, pp. 57–67).
6. **Empowering People & Communities to Do It Themselves** - by providing in-kind support and assistance with aspects of developing proposals, such as design and planning consultancy, or seconding talented 'enablers' into a community organisation to help it decide its optimum governance structure, apply for grants, work out what it wants to build and steer it through the planning and finance process.

(NaSBA, 2013, p. 19 - headings - and details throughout)

Wallace et al. also note that although a number of Local Authorities are 'testing the market' for self-provision at a relatively small scale by making land available through land allocation, there is a need for large-scale pilot schemes on a scale similar to those in evidence in the Netherlands and Germany (Ibid. 2013, p. 8), to test the 'mainstream' delivery of self-provided housing initiatives such a Collective Custom Build.

The establishment of a Local Authority-run Revolving Fund is cited by some sources as stimulus for Collective Custom Build that is likely to be both effective and relatively easy to establish (Hill, 2013a;

---

<sup>3</sup> Acquiring land by a reverse-auction process is a specific recommendation made by think-tank Policy Exchange in 'A Right To Build - Local Homes for Local People' (Morton, 2013).

Parvin et al., 2011; Stevens, 2013a, 2013c). Indeed, the HCA's Custom Build Homes Fund is designed as a pilot scheme and intended to demonstrate the viability of providing this kind of support to Local Authorities, encouraging them to set up their own funds (HCA, 2012). Cornwall Unitary Council is one example of a Local Authority that has a long-standing revolving fund with which it has successfully supported multi-unit self-provided housing developments in partnerships with Cornwall CLTs Ltd and Cornwall Rural Housing Association (Cornwall Rural Housing Association, 2013a, 2013b; Moore and Northcott, 2010; Stevens, 2013a).

A number of sources also state that there is a real opportunity for Collective Custom Build to provide a more meaningful route to affordable housing, particularly when considered in conjunction with governance models such as Community Land Trusts that can separate the price of a home from the value of the land that it is built on (East London Community Land Trust, 2013; Hill, 2013a, 2013b; Parvin et al., 2011).

The Community Self-Build Agency (CSBA) has a long and proven track record in partnering with Local Authorities and Registered Providers to deliver community self-build projects that have an emphasis on training - particularly for groups of people in severe housing need such as young unemployed and homeless people, and returning service veterans - and are actively seeking opportunities to develop further projects<sup>4</sup>.

Further recommendations from key sources are summarised below.

### A 10-Point Plan To Boost Self Build

A Self-Build Industry Round Table Meeting<sup>5</sup>, held at a major trade-show in 2013 made the recommendation that Local Authority should seek to encourage and support small-scale development on sites of up to thirty homes to stimulate the 'small-builders' and build a greater volume of high-quality, sustainable homes with greater value to local economies (Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013, p. 4). In a report entitled 'A 10-Point Plan To Boost Self-Build', the Round Table also made the following recommendations that it states '*should not require primary legislation, but seek to build on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and add further clarification and guidance on how it should be interpreted and implemented by local authorities. There is also scope to implement some of the changes by reviewing the outdated-but-not-revoked 'Planning System: General Principles'*' (Ibid. 2013, p. 4):

1. 1. Allow Sites for 1-30 Units to Be Classed as Minor Development
2. Local Authorities Should be Encouraged to Allow Small-Scale Greenfield Windfall Sites
3. Extend the 'Help to Buy' Scheme to Include 'Help to Build'
4. Remove Affordable Housing Contributions/Section 106 Agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy On Minor Development Schemes
5. Allow Only Sites with Planning Permission to be Counted as 'Deliverable' Within the Five-Year Supply Requirement
6. Ensure Neighbourhood Plans Cannot Be Taken Into Account Prematurely
7. Reduce the Cost of Putting Forward Planning Applications for Minor Development Proposals

---

<sup>4</sup> Please see [www.communityselfbuildagency.org.uk/](http://www.communityselfbuildagency.org.uk/) for further information or to make contact.

<sup>5</sup> The Self-Build Industry Round Table Meeting was hosted by publisher Homebuilding & Renovating on the day prior to the 2013 National Homebuilding & Renovating Show at the NEC, Birmingham, and included "14 key self-build leaders" including "planners, finance providers, package suppliers, custom builders, and providers of building materials (some, but not all of whom, were members of the National Self Build Association, NaSBA)" and asked them to share what they saw as the main issues holding their industry back (Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013, p. 2).

8. Ensure the Target-Driven Culture Does Not Lead to Unnecessary Refusals
9. Ensure Determination Targets Do Not Lead to Refusals
10. Provide Further Guidance Notes on Interpretation of the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to Sustainability and Rural Exception Sites.

Further detail about each of these proposals - and the arguments for them - can be found in the '10-Point Plan To Boost Self-Build' (Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013).

### Build-It-Yourself?

Enabling support for Collective Custom Build from key industry stakeholders, including Local Authority and central Government, is viewed as a critical factor for increasing the number of successful schemes - either through assisting and 'smoothing a path' for otherwise independent groups, or by initiating projects and forming groups specifically to build homes. Reflecting on their findings, Wallace et al. conclude that:

*'Most group self-build housing was led by a community group [and] often formed organically – although strong individuals were instrumental. The present complicated and lengthy procurement methods are likely to mean that these models will remain small scale and a 'niche' market unless their development is specifically supported in the future'.*

(Wallace et al., 2013, p. 7)

Wallace et al. also make a number of key recommendations that target Lenders, central Government, Local Authorities and Developers specifically (2013, pp. 7–9):

- Government should maintain their enabling role by co-ordinating reform of existing processes to facilitate scale models. They should signal their on-going support for the sector beyond 2015 (the end date for key initiatives), recognising that it takes time to achieve a step change in a previously limited sector of the housing market. Government should commission an evaluation of emerging models of procurement to facilitate better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and longer-term viability. There are also opportunities for the Government to initiate more opportunities for sharing evidence of good practice, particularly in relation to local government.
- Local authorities should consider the extent to which they can use planning agreements to embed self-build sites within speculative developments and, where appropriate, consider the benefits of supporting the sector to provide 'more affordable' housing for local people. The opportunities to expand this model from its more traditional rural location to urban areas should be explored. They should seek to address those aspects of the planning process that particularly constrain self builders. There may also be opportunities for local authorities to make land available and to designate a proportion as self-build plots.
- Developers and registered providers should recognise the social and economic benefits of working with prospective residents/purchasers to enable them to procure and/or customise their homes. There are also opportunities to work collaboratively as enablers to provide packaged solutions of professional services to help self-builders overcome the 'silo' approach that currently characterises and slows the self-build process.
- Lenders should provide additional guidance to potential self-builders about the criteria for funding. They should appraise the risks that pertain to the different procurement models and consider whether products can be tailored to reflect the different risk profiles. They should work across the industry to smooth lending

processes to the sector and consider working in consort with other lenders, developers, housing associations or local authorities to effect the delivery of large-scale self-build sites. They should also consider the development of more accessible products for individual customers.

(Wallace et al., 2013, pp. 8–9)

## A Right To Build

Parvin et al. (2011) suggest and illustrate a number of 'near-future scenarios' in which self-provided housing could be 'scaled up' as a mainstream option, including details of the roles required of key stakeholders, such as Local Authorities, other public and third sector organisations, developers and self-providing groups (Ibid. 2011, pp. 125–143)<sup>6</sup>. The study also includes an 'index of key actions' required to create the conditions for each scenario (Ibid. 2011, p. 152).

Specific recommendations for central Government and the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) are:

- A National Self-Provided Housing Agency<sup>7</sup> - Continue to pull together experts, lenders, private sector companies and self-provision organisations at a national level through a central agency, in order to serve as a resource for local authorities, private sector companies and communities, as suggested by Hill et al. Of course the aims and agendas of these actors will not always cohere into a single clear message, however, their collective aim should be to make different models of mass self-provision as normal, accessible, easy and risk-free as possible, for everyone involved.
- Research - Gather together ongoing research and evidence of the externalities and public value outcomes which emerge from pioneer projects. This should also include a watchfulness for external negative consequences, such as social exclusion.
- Develop Standard Models - Create, communicate and support standard legal, financial and planning models, which are backed by partnerships.
- Set Up Revolving Funds - Establish catalyst funds for communities, groups or organisations trying to develop self-provided housing schemes with limited capital resources, but good prospects of long-term revenue.
- Public Land Assets - Pioneer the sale and use of public land assets for self-provision models. These should include Self-Build Zones, assembled around Local Development Orders and development partnerships.

(Ibid. 2011, p. 152)

Parvin et al. also have specific recommendations for Local Authorities and Planners:

- *Land and market assessments* - Include demand for self-provided housing types in Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs) and Strategic Housing Land Area Assessments (SHLAAs), so that land can be allocated proportionately to its market share, as advocated by the Office for Fair Trading.
- *Public land disposal* - In the interests of achieving the best public value outcomes, local authorities should consider making sites or plots for self-provided housing a standard component of all public land disposals. This might include slow 'geared' land purchase, rather than single one-off payment. Even where there may be a disparity between the financial yield offered by self-provision and conventional market

---

<sup>6</sup> The scenarios explored by Parvin et al. include Suburban Co-housing, Urban Community Land Trusts and Self-Build Zones (Ibid. 2011, pp. 125–143).

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that this already exists to a large degree in the form of the National Self Build Association (NaSBA), although Parvin et al. suggest that its capacity should be wider than advocacy and representation. Please see [www.nasba.org.uk](http://www.nasba.org.uk) for further information.

purchase, an evidenced case should be sought and put forward that the disparity be considered a form of investment in place-making outcomes (this might be guaranteed, for example, by the formation of a CLT).

- *Section 106 and CIL* - Where small self-provided housing schemes need support, local authorities should consider exemption from external Affordable Housing contribution or CIL. Alternatively, they can make this easier for self-providers to finance by deferring CIL payments until after completion.
- *Use of public land* - Seek to design legal arrangements and contracts allowing licensing of public land, which may include rents geared up over time with the resident's ability to pay.
- *Land through planning conditions* - Seek legal and professional advice on the capacity to make land (and / or infrastructure) for self-provision models (including self-finish) part of a Section 106 planning requirement on large sites for private development.

(Ibid. 2011, pp. 152–153)

## References

- Cornwall Rural Housing Association, 2013a. Cornwall Community Land Trust [WWW Document]. URL <http://www.crha.org.uk/cclt/cclt.html> (accessed 11.6.13).
- Cornwall Rural Housing Association, 2013b. Cornwall Rural Housing Association [WWW Document]. URL <http://www.crha.org.uk/> (accessed 6.17.13).
- East London Community Land Trust, 2013. Welcome [WWW Document]. URL <http://www.eastlondonclt.co.uk/> (accessed 5.29.13).
- HCA, 2012. Custom Build Homes Fund Prospectus.
- Hill, S., 2013a. We are the 75% - Resident-owned communities in Europe and the USA.
- Hill, S., 2013b. Interview with Stephen Hill at Motivating Collective Custom Build stakeholder workshop, at Ash Sakula Architects, London, 25th February 2013.
- HM Treasury, 2003. The Green Book - Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government, 2003 edition with changes made in 2011. ed. TOS, London.
- Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013. A 10-point plan to boost self-build. Homebuilding & Renovating, Birmingham.
- Moore, T., Northcott, R., 2010. Delivering Homes and Assets with Communities: The Cornwall Community Land Trust Project. Community Finance Solutions / Carnegie UK Trust / University of Salford, Salford.
- Morton, A., 2013. A Right To Build - Local homes for local people. Policy Exchange, London.
- NaSBA, 2008. Selfbuild as a volume housing solution. National Self Build Association, Swindon.
- NaSBA, 2011. An Action Plan to promote the growth of self build housing - The report of the Self Build Government-Industry Working Group. NaSBA, Swindon.
- NaSBA, 2012a. A progress report to Government on the implementation of the Action Plan to promote the growth of self build housing. NaSBA, Swindon.
- NaSBA, 2012b. Planning for Custom Build Housing - A Practice Guide - 1st Edition. NaSBA, Swindon.
- NaSBA, 2013. How the public sector can help people build their own homes - A Practice Guide - 1st Edition. NaSBA, Swindon.
- Parvin, A., Saxby, D., Cerulli, C., Schneider, T., 2011. A Right To Build - The Next Mass-Housebuilding Industry. Architecture 00:/; University of Sheffield School of Architecture, Sheffield; London.
- Self Build Portal, 2013. The Self Build Portal - The Gateway to more Custom Build Homes [WWW Document]. URL <http://www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/> (accessed 5.29.13).
- Stevens, T., 2013a. Introducing the Self Build Revolution - Presentation to the HCA Custom Build workshop in Middlesbrough, 29th January 2013.

- Stevens, T., 2013b. How they do large scale self build in the Netherlands - Presentation in the Sustainable Self Build & renovation seminar stream at EcoBuild 2013, London.
- Stevens, T., 2013c. Presentation at Self Build Talk & Debate at RCKa Architects, Clerkenwell, London, 9th May 2013.
- Wallace, A., Ford, J., Quilgars, D., 2013. Build-it-yourself? - Understanding the changing landscape of the UK self-build market. Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York; Lloyds Banking Group, York.

---

This excerpt is taken from [www.collectivecustombuild.org](http://www.collectivecustombuild.org) and forms a single element of a wider research study. Please visit the website or contact us at [collectivecustombuild@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:collectivecustombuild@sheffield.ac.uk) for more information.



Ash Sakula



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.



homeimprovements