



All Party Parliamentary Group on
Self-Build
Custom and Community
Housebuilding & Placemaking

Chairman: Richard Bacon MP

imagine choice
enterprise home rural
urban ideas build
villages human
green family habitat
community places
create landscape adapt
garden

To whom it may concern

Letter of Support for Custom and Self-Build Housing in England

I am writing to you as the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Self-Build, Custom and Community Housebuilding & Placemaking to express my support for custom and self-build housing.

The vision of the National Custom and Self-Build Association (NaCSBA) **is to make custom and self-build a mainstream choice for all those seeking a home of their own**, a vision which I share. Indeed, surveys show that the majority of people in the UK would like to build their own home¹ at some point in their lives.

If we are to deliver more and better homes, then a step change is required. With support from across the political spectrum, Parliament has taken a lead. The legislative framework for the 'Right to Build' began with the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, which started as my Private Member's Bill. This was amended and strengthened further by the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and also the government's White Paper of 2017, *Fixing our Broken Housing Market*, which notes that: "...custom build houses are generally built more quickly and to a higher quality than other homes".

As you will be aware, the Right to Build means that local authorities in England have a legal duty to provide sufficient serviced building plots to meet demand. Local authorities must measure this demand, evidenced by Right to Build Registers, and must then meet the demand by providing enough suitable development permissions within three years on a rolling basis. It is also important to note that councils must assess the longer-term demand for custom and self-build homes, as recognised in paragraphs 50 and 159 of the current National Planning Policy Framework. This requirement is also being carried forward and further extended in para. 62 of the recent proposed revision to the Framework.

I see the Right to Build as enabling legislation that helps a local authority to meet the housing needs of its community. It does this through a focus on new homes that people want to live in, providing an affordable, high quality, sustainable alternative to homes built speculatively for maximum profit. This message is increasingly being heard, with councils across the country embracing custom and self-build. Actions to release smaller sites for custom and self-build housing, using the flexibility within the current legislation with regards to 'best value', are therefore welcome.

The Netherlands has seen strong growth in custom and self-build in recent years following Government intervention to diversify and boost housing supply. Evidence from the Netherlands shows that increasing choice drives higher quality and better value. The outcome has been stronger public support for better quality and better value homes that take less time to complete. I have taken a number of groups of local government officials and elected members – as well as other officials from across the UK - to see the difference for themselves.

Based on the learnings from the Netherlands, the Right to Build Task Force – supported by government and with funding from the Nationwide Foundation – has been created to help local authorities, communities and landowners apply the Right to Build legislation to meet local demand.

¹ A Building Societies Association (BSA) survey 2016 found that 53% of adults would like to build their own home. Ipsos Mori research commissioned by NaCSBA indicates 1m adults plan to take action to build their own home in the next twelve months.



All Party Parliamentary Group on

Self-Build

Custom and Community
Housebuilding & Placemaking

Chairman: Richard Bacon MP

imagine choice
enterprise home rural
urban ideas build
villages human
green family habitat
community places
create landscape adapt
garden

Please follow this link for more information; <http://righttobuildtoolkit.org.uk/right-to-build-task-force/#> and this link for inspiring case studies that show what can be delivered <http://righttobuildtoolkit.org.uk/case-studies/#>.

The custom and self-build housing sector is extremely diverse, covering a wide range of groups and individuals delivering affordable housing for everyone from community groups to military veterans and from the unemployed to ex-offenders, as well as the 'Grand Designs' homes which are the typical public perception. The sector ranges from individual detached homes through to flats, terraced housing and higher-rise developments. At its heart is the sector's capability to enhance value for the occupier and also to help build strong cohesive communities which play an important role in regeneration and local economic development.

The homes constructed will be of higher quality, better value-for-money, better for the environment and more suited to how people now choose to live than any mainstream alternative. Custom and self-build is increasingly recognised by local councils as a route to delivering genuinely affordable homes through shared ownership, social rent, discounted market sale and other forms of tenure. Some projects involve the self-builders working on a DIY basis to reduce the cost of a home, with some models contracting to take this 'sweat equity' in lieu of a financial deposit as a low cost route to shared home ownership.

Under the legal duties established in the Right to Build legislation, the latest numbers show that planning authorities must grant suitable development permissions for 33,000 serviced plots by 31 October 2020².

I hope that you will recognise that custom and self-build housing offers the opportunity for more and better homes that more people will want to live in and also the route through which your local authority can help meet its local housing objectives alongside its duties under the Right to Build legislation.

With best wishes,

Yours faithfully

Richard Bacon MP
Chair, APPG Self-Build, Custom and Community Housebuilding & Placemaking

² On 1 November 2017 NaCSBA used the Freedom of Information Act to establish the number of individuals and groups of individuals registered under the Right to Build across England.