

19. 12.18

Press release, for immediate release.

Government's Right To Build policy proves a postcode lottery as 40,000 join council registers for a self build plot

New research by the National Custom and Self Build Association (NaCSBA) has found that, since 1st April 2016, over 40,000 people have now signed up to Right to Build registers across England to secure a plot to design and build their dream home.

Over 10,000 new registrations have been added, many via NaCSBA's Right to Build Portal. While NaCSBA is happy to see the number of people who have registered growing, it remains the case that the numbers remain far short of the real underlying demand.

NaCSBA believes this is because of a lack of promotion of the registers by many local authorities and increasing action by many authorities to make it harder for individuals to sign up to the registers.

NaCSBA research* shows that while in the first year of the registers very few local authorities placed restrictions on joining, the number now has risen to over one in four. These restrictions include local connection tests and charges to join and remain on registers.

Local connection tests must only be applied where there is a strong justification and in response to a recognised local issue. Charges must be on a cost recovery basis but range from £50 one-off to £350 as a one-off charge and £150 for each year.

In many cases NaCSBA believes that there are strong grounds to challenge the approach taken by local authorities and believes that, through such actions, individuals are being denied opportunities for a better-quality and better-value home. In effect this is creating a postcode lottery as well as a domino effect by shifting activity to those councils which continue to maintain open registers.

Councils should also be promoting their registers, but action is again limited, with one council noting that its proactive promotional activity consists solely of a "press release around the introduction of locally-set criteria and fee".

NaCSBA supports the fact that the majority of councils are managing their registers as part of a wider suite of evidence for demand for custom and self build, but in light of the uneven picture it plans to use this evidence to raise its concerns with the Government.

Michael Holmes, NaCSBA's Chair said, "While it's great news that the numbers who want to self build has increased, NaCSBA has deep concerns that, rather than meet the demand for custom and self build homes through the granting of planning permissions to match demand, some local authorities are instead seeking to minimise the number of registrations.

"This is a direct challenge, not only to members of all parties in parliament who supported the legislation, but also to the 60% of the public who are interested in commissioning or building their own home. Through their actions these local authorities are reducing the number of homes that are built as well as depriving individual and families of the best and most cost-effective route to a well-designed home of real quality and value."

NaCSBA urges anyone wanting to build to sign up to their Right to Build via its Self Build Portal campaign site at www.righttobuild.org. If a local authority imposes a fee NaCSBA still urges people to sign up as evidence of demand, but where people feel the charge is too high and refuse to pay, it suggests they write to the head of the council asking for their aspirations for a plot to be considered within the Council's planning policy. NaCSBA can help with this if they contact info@nacsba.org.uk.

ENDS

PR enquiries
Duncan Hayes, Media Officer
NaCSBA
E: media@nacsba.org.uk
T: 07714 004257

Notes to Editors:

***Details of this survey:** NaCSBA issued a Freedom of Information request to all 336 English Planning Authorities on 6 November 2018 requesting details as to the operation of their registers and of the numbers of people and groups of people on their registers. More than 85% of these have now responded. The overall result has been extrapolated based on past years' responses received. Follow-up work will be taken from 4 February 2019 to seek justifications for local connection tests and charges. This is the earliest date to ensure that a future request can be made.

The legal context: The 'Right to Build' places two legal obligations on Local Authorities in England:

1. Under the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 all Local Authorities in England must keep a register of people and groups of people who are seeking to purchase serviced plots of land in the authority's area and to have regard to that register when carrying out their functions. Registers were required from 1st April 2016.

2. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 requires all Local Authorities in England to grant sufficient 'development permissions' to meet the demand for Custom and Self Build housing in their area, as established by their register, on a rolling basis. Permissions equivalent to the number of people registering from 1st April 2016 to 30th October 2016 should be granted by 30th October 2019. Permissions equivalent to the number of people registering from 30th October 2016 to 30th October 2017 should be granted by 30th October 2020 and so on. This includes 18,000 permissions by 30th October 2019.

The obligations are set out under primary legislation, secondary regulations and supported by MHCLG Guidance.

About NaCSBA: The National Custom and Self Build Association (NaCSBA) is the voice for the Custom and Self Build industry across the UK. Its vision is to make custom and self build a mainstream choice for all those seeking a home of their own..

NaCSBA estimates that over 13,000 Custom and Self Build homes are built annually and the number is growing. It shares the Government's Manifesto target to deliver 20,000 homes by 2020. NaCSBA's own manifesto includes 10 key asks of Politicians that are essential for a better housing market. These include raising public awareness of the Right to Build and improving access to low cost funding, including a Help to Build Equity Loan for Custom and Self Build. More details about NaCSBA can be found at www.nacsba.org.uk.

What is Custom & Self Build? The term self build can be misleading as relatively few individuals physically build their own home. A typical self builder may do some of the work but primarily they manage the process of building their own home including finding the plot and engaging the different parties in the build. A custom build approach more typically involves a prepared plot of land with services already supplied and a single main contractor for the build. In both cases, and in contrast to buying from a typical housebuilder the choice of the home and how it is built lies with the homebuyer.

About the Right to Build Portal: NaCSBA's www.righttobuildportal.org is a campaign page that allows members of the public to quickly find their local, and neighbouring, authorities' register, saving them the need to search them out. This provides the links that enable them to easily sign up to the official local authority registers.