

Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Action Plan

Sevenoaks District Council

July 2026

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Executive Summary

This Action Plan sets out how Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) will support and increase the delivery of Self-build and Custom Housebuilding (CSB) across the District.

The Council has undertaken a review of its current approach to CSB, drawing upon internal monitoring and experience and the previous Right to Build Taskforce Health Check, dated 2024 (included at Appendix A).

The review identifies that whilst SDC has strong foundations in relation to CSB, including a well-established CSB Register, evidence of meeting historic demand and emerging Local Plan policy, there are still key areas where improvements are needed in order to strengthen delivery of CSB.

This Action Plan sets out the root causes affecting CSB delivery and targeted actions to improve outcomes.

1. Introduction

1.1. This action plan has been prepared to analyse the Council's approach to Self-build and Custom Housebuilding (CSB), including identifying root causes affecting delivery of CSB and sets out a number of specific actions.

1.2. The aims of this Action Plan are:

- To review SDC's performance in meeting its duties under the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015;
- Identify potential barriers to CSB delivery; and
- Set out specific actions to increase the delivery and supply of serviced plots.

National Context

1.3. National planning policy requires local authorities to:

1. Maintain a register of individuals and groups seeking to acquire serviced plots; and
2. Grant sufficient development permissions to meet demand within statutory timeframes.

1.4. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 recognises that authorities should support people wishing to commission or build their own homes and promote a mix of housing types, including self-build and custom housebuilding.

Local Context

1.5. Sevenoaks District is highly constrained by Green Belt and National Landscapes (previously AONB). The District therefore has a limited supply of suitable and available land for new development and relies heavily on windfall and brownfield opportunities. These constraints directly influence the ability to deliver CSB plots.

2. Current Position

- 2.1. Sevenoaks District Council is committed to supporting access to both affordable and market housing for local people and this includes supporting people who wish to build their own homes.

Self and Custom Build Register

- 2.2. The Council's Self & Custom Build Register forms part of the Council's evidence base, helping to identify and quantify local demand for self-build and custom housebuilding. This helps us to prepare and implement planning policy.
- 2.3. At 30 October 2025 (the close of Base Period 10), there were 371 individuals listed on the self and custom build register. Among those households, the strongest preferences are for detached three- and four- bedroom properties.
- 2.4. At present, the Council do not charge a fee to join the register, nor have we implemented a local connection test or financial viability test. We hope that by making our self-build register readily accessible, we more accurately reflect the demand within the District.

Permissions to meet identified demand

- 2.5. In the monitoring of Self-build and Custom Housebuilding, permissions are currently being assigned to Base Period 8, with the associated granting period due to close on 30 October 2026.
- 2.6. The below summary table sets out the current position against each Base Period.

Base Period	Base Period Dates	Granting Period (3-year period after Base Period)	Confirmed shortfall at end of Granting Period
1	1 July 2015 – 30 October 2016	31 October 2016 – 31 October 2019	0
2	31 October 2016 – 30 October 2017	31 October 2017 – 30 October 2020	0
3	31 October 2017 – 30 October 2018	31 October 2018 – 30 October 2021	0
4	31 October 2018 – 30 October 2019	31 October 2019 – 30 October 2022	0

Base Period	Base Period Dates	Granting Period (3-year period after Base Period)	Confirmed shortfall at end of Granting Period
5	31 October 2019 – 30 October 2020	31 October 2020 – 30 October 2023	0
6	31 October 2020 – 30 October 2021	31 October 2021 – 30 October 2024	0
7	31 October 2021 – 30 October 2022	31 October 2022 – 30 October 2025	5
8	31 October 2022 – 30 October 2023	31 October 2023 – 30 October 2026	Granting Period still open
9	31 October 2023 – 30 October 2024	31 October 2024 – 30 October 2027	Granting Period still open
10	31 October 2024 – 30 October 2025	31 October 2025 – 30 October 2028	Granting Period still open
11	31 October 2025 – 30 October 2026	31 October 2026 – 30 October 2029	Granting Period not yet open

Table 1: Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Position against Base Periods

- 2.7. As of 30 October 2025, the close of Base Period 10, there was a cumulative shortfall of 98 plots to meet demand up to Base Period 10 (see the full statistics for each Base Period and Granting Period at Appendix B).
- 2.8. The above figures will be updated following the close of Base Period 11 and Granting Period 8, on 30 October 2026. Self-build and Custom Housebuilding figures are updated annually, alongside the monitoring year which runs from 1 April – 31 March.

Local Policy Position

- 2.9. The adopted Local Plan for Sevenoaks District currently consists of the Core Strategy (2011) and the Allocations and Development Management Plan (ADMP) (2015). There is not currently an adopted policy for Self-build and Custom Housebuilding.
- 2.10. The emerging Local Plan proposes Policy H8 – Self-build and Custom Housebuilding, which supports proposals for CSB where they are in suitable and sustainable locations, in line with national and local policy. In addition, the policy sets out a percentage requirement for CSB plots for developments of 50 units or more, to be informed by the latest evidence on CSB demand.

3. Aspects of the Action Plan

3.1. The following table sets out the considerations of the aspects of the Action Plan and the Health Check Outcome.

Aspect	Health Check Outcome
Resourcing for Custom and Self Build (CSB)	Sevenoaks District Council does not currently have a dedicated officer for Self and Custom Housebuilding. Responsibility for this work area sits within the Strategic Planning Team, alongside other workloads. There is currently a full understanding of the CSB legislation and understanding of CSB duties amongst Strategic Planning Officers. A Self-Build Officers working group is in place, with membership across Strategic Planning, Development Management, Validation and Planning Information teams. The working group meets intermittently when matters for discussion arise, covering matters such as the Council's current position in respect of CSB and preparing a flowchart of current processes. The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Register is hosted by the Strategic Planning Team through the Council's engagement portal, Citizen Space. In terms of knowledge and skills gaps, across the planning department there is a variety of knowledge levels with respect of CSB and this has translated into the creation of the CSB Officer Working Group. However, knowledge requires further development and a joined-up approach across the department. Development Management – knowledge gap amongst DM Officers, based on seniority (e.g. Senior and Principal Officers are more likely to lead on CSB Projects and applications. Some CSB training for all levels of DM Officers in the future would be beneficial. Strategic Planning – Responsibility for monitoring CSB plots and undertaking work in respect of matching permissions to base/granting periods to demonstrate whether the LPA is meeting its duty. Also lead on government returns and maintaining the Self and Custom Housebuilding Register. Difficulties arising from lack of knowledge of other elements of CSB process (including CIL Regulations). Also, conflicting appeal decisions has led to uncertainty regarding evidence which has previously been relied upon to demonstrate that a permission is for CSB (in particular CIL Form 7 Part 1, where government guidance suggests this should be acceptable evidence but does not stand up at appeal).

Aspect	Health Check Outcome
Political Support for CSB	Sevenoaks District Council does not have a dedicated elected member champion for CSB, although there is support at a general level for CSB amongst members. Regarding member awareness and planning committee specific knowledge, there is no specific knowledge or interest in CSB known, but members are aware of CSB through Local Plan work and work undertaken by the Council's housing service. Historically there were regular meetings for CIL Champions, however these have been discontinued. Due to the different positions of each CIL Champion, champions were aware of CSB in regards to the overall process and detail specific to their roles only.
Register	Sevenoaks District Council does not charge a fee to join the CSB register and does not apply any tests, such as local connection or financial solvency. A range of questions are asked of those joining the register, including: • Type of project; • Type of plot; • House type; • Number of bedrooms; • Location preferences; • Budget to acquire a plot and build a house; • Number of plots; • Timescales; • Main reason for wanting to self or custom build In terms of maintaining the register, contact is currently limited to sharing details of available plots, at the request of site promoters / landowners / developers, following grant of planning permission.
Website Presence	The information regarding CSB on the Council's website is updated as and when it is required. The number of 'clicks' on the Register are not currently tracked as this is hosted via our consultation portal. FAQs are included on the Self and Custom Build Register webpage on the consultation portal, including contact details for the Strategic Planning team. There are also generic CIL FAQs, with a small section on Self Build.

Aspect	Health Check Outcome
	The following observations were made by the Right to Build taskforce, when assessing the SDC website: • Visibility of the CSB Register is relatively poor, no reference on the homepage or housing page; • The Planning page also does not provide an obvious link, the available link is under Planning Policy / Current Local Plan / Self and Custom Build Register; • Searching on the homepage for CSB variations does provide a link to the CSB page; • A link to the CSB page could also be found through an external web search; • The page provides some explanation of the register, including eligibility criteria, brief definitions of CSB, a link to the register, a brief comment on the use of data and links to the Self Build Portal and NaCSBA webpages; • The Register overview page repeats the information listed above and provides a contact detail for the Strategic Planning Team; • The registration process is relatively straightforward, consisting of five pages; • A fair amount of detailed information is collected, including: ○ General contact details; ○ Household and employment details (including income and local connection); ○ Project details, individual or group, motivation, number of plots, property type, number of bedrooms, preferred location, identified plot, funding and timescales
Communications Strategy for CSB	Regarding community engagement in respect of CSB, local engagement on draft policies has been undertaken through the emerging Local Plan process (including three Regulation 18 consultations and the upcoming Regulation 19 Publication). This has included a CSB policy as part of the emerging Policy H1 – Housing Mix, but has since seen a standalone Policy H8 – Self-build and Custom Housebuilding be developed. Regarding officer engagement, a dedicated officer working group has been set up for CSB
Corporate Plan / Housing Strategies	There are no references to CSB in the Council Plan. The Sevenoaks District Housing Strategy 2022-2027 does include references to CSB, as summarised:

Aspect	Health Check Outcome
	• Theme 1 – Seek to enable more housing, including affordable housing, through the diversification of provision i.e. self & custom build, community-led housing and co-housing schemes • Theme 2 – Support for older people either to stay living in their existing home or to find and move to a more suitable home, including co-housing The Targeted Review of Local Housing Need (TRLHN) 2022 is the Council's Housing Needs evidence and makes specific reference to CSB at paragraphs 6.68 to 6.82. All Parish Local Housing Needs Surveys seek to gauge the level of need for self-commissioned housing at a local level. Through the emerging Local Plan, we are seeking to introduce a policy (Policy H8) whereby the needs of those seeking self-commissioned housing is met by the introduction of a % requirement on larger development sites and its inclusion as a form of housing that can be considered under rural exceptions policy.
Monitoring of CSB	The Strategic Planning Team monitor CSB permissions and completions annually, at the close of each Base Period on 30 October. The Planning Support team also monitor commencement and completions, as well as how long applicants have been residing in self-build (as part of CIL Form 7 Part 2) and any S106 connivances. SDC does not regularly publish CSB monitoring data or monitor CSB delivery as part of its wider corporate objectives.
Local Plan and CSB Policy	There are no references to CSB in the Core Strategy (2011) and the Allocations and Development Management Plan (ADMP) (2015), which form the current Development Plan for Sevenoaks District. The Regulation 19 Publication of the emerging Local Plan proposes an emerging Policy H8 – Self-build and Custom Housebuilding, which sets a % requirement for developments of 50 units or more to provide 5% self-build plots. The emerging Local Plan Regulation 19 Publication is currently open until 17 September 2026, and the Plan is due to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination by 31 December 2026.

Aspect	Health Check Outcome
Neighbourhood Plans	Sevenoaks District Council actively engages with Parish and Town Councils, Neighbourhood Groups and forums to promote the benefits of CSB, in particular through emerging Neighbourhood Plan work. Town and Parish Council forums are held regularly and periodically include updates from the Housing Policy and Strategic Planning teams. However, to date we have not specifically referenced CSB in these meetings.
Member and Officer Training for CSB	Sevenoaks District Council has not yet undertaken any dedicated Officer/Member training on CSB, other than the Task Force introductory workshop in April 2023.
Development Management Process and Legal Controls / S106 Agreements	Sevenoaks District Council does not currently have a specific Section 106 template for CSB but have used wording for CSB in S106s in the past. There is also CSB wording including in Unilateral Undertakings.

4. Action Plan

4.1. The table below sets out measures which can be taken by Sevenoaks District Council, how they will be implemented, by whom and when.

Aspect	Action	Who	When
Resourcing for Custom and Self Build (CSB)	Consider dedicated Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Officer Liaise with other West Kent Authorities to understand their resourcing for CSB	Planning Policy, future West Kent Unitary	Ongoing and from 2028
Political Support for CSB	Consider promotion of elected member champion for CSB Consider establishing a cross-party working group of interested members in CSB.	Planning Policy, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure	Ongoing discussions
Register	Refer to general advice issued by Right to Build Task Force (see Appendix A)	Planning Policy	Ongoing
Website Presence	Review visibility of CSB on SDC website, including consideration of homepage	Planning Policy, Communications	Throughout 2026, ongoing
Communications Strategy for CSB	Positively promote CSB and actively seek to engage and work with local potential partners and stakeholders. Consider local forums, to engage landowners and developers, as well as Town and Parish Councils and other community groups. Improve internal communications for Officers and Members	Planning Policy, Communications	Ongoing
Corporate Plan / Housing Strategies	Consider reference to CSB in SDC's Council Plan, helping to ensure that it is taken into account as part of decision making process throughout various departments.	Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure, Planning Policy	Ongoing

Aspect	Action	Who	When
Monitoring of CSB	Consider publishing annual monitoring data, on both demand and supply, helping potential purchasers and the sector to understand the market. Utilise recommendations of TRLHN in relation to Self-build Monitoring	Planning Policy	Annually
Local Plan and CSB Policy	Progress the emerging Local Plan and Policy H8 – Self-build and Custom Housebuilding towards adoption	Planning Policy	Ongoing, by Spring 2028
Neighbourhood Plans	Continue to advise Neighbourhood Planning groups and other community groups of the benefits of CSB	Planning Policy	Ongoing
Member and Officer Training for CSB	Continue to take up opportunities for training on CSB for both Officers and Members, particularly Portfolio Holders and Deputies and those who sit on planning committees and Cabinet.	Planning Policy, Development Management, Members	Ongoing
Development Management Process and Legal Controls / S106 Agreements	Review Right to Build Task Force PG3.8, which provides detailed guidance for LPAs. See Right to Build Task Force comments at Appendix A.	Planning Policy, Development Management	Ongoing