Self-build and Custom Housebuilding
Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is self-build and custom housebuilding?

Self-build means you will be actively involved in acquiring land to build a home, designing and getting planning permission for this home, and building the home. You could do all the work yourself, but it is more usual after you have found the land to commission an architect to design the building and obtain planning permission, and commission a builder or different building trades to build the home. You can self-build as an individual or as part of a group set up specifically to build your own homes.

Custom build is where a house builder offers a site for sale with a 'design and build' service to allow you to tailor the home that is built on the site to your requirements. House builders will allow different degrees of customisation; some will allow you to fit out (lay flooring, install kitchens and bathrooms, tile, wall paper and paint) the home yourself, while others will give you a range of fit and finishes to choose from that they will install.

2. The legal stuff

The Council is required by law to keep a register of people who are looking to acquire land in the borough in order to build houses (and flats) to occupy as their main home.

The Council is also required to grant planning permissions for enough serviced plots of land to meet the demand for self-build homes as evidenced by the register.

The Council has up to three years after accepting a register application to make sure serviced plots are available for sale to these qualifying self-builders.

These duties are set out in two Acts of Parliament – The Housing and Planning Act 2016 and the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015. In addition the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Regulations 2016 set out how the register should be administered. This includes the eligibility requirements for joining the register.

3. What are the eligibility requirements?

The register is for people who are looking to build a house or flat to live in as their home, it is not for people looking to build a home for sale for a profit.

The Regulations sets the eligibility criteria for the registers, and also allows Councils to set their own eligibility. These are called **local eligibility conditions**, and people who meet these conditions will be included on **Part 1** of the register.

Waltham Forest Council has set the following local eligibility conditions (LEC):

LEC1: a local connection through living and/or working in the borough for a continuous period of at least two years and must still be living and/or working in the borough when applying to join the Register (any person in the regular service of the armed forces or who left the service not more than two years before applying to join the Register is exempt from this condition); AND

LEC2: able to demonstrate that they have the resources to purchase land for their self-build or custom homebuild.

For an **association** each and every individual in the association must meet both of these local eligibility conditions for the association to be included in the Part 1 Register.

Everyone applying to join the Register also has to meet the following conditions (as set out in the Regulations):

- must be over 18 years old
- must be a British citizen, a national of an EEA state or Switzerland
- must be seeking to build a home as a sole or main residence

Any individual or association of individuals that meets this criteria but does not meet the local eligibility conditions will only be eligible for inclusion on Part 2 of the Register.

4. What is the difference between Part 1 and Part 2 of the Register?

The Council has to use the Register to determine how many development permissions it will need to give in order to meet the demand for self-build in the Council's area secure. Developable sites are scarce so it is important that any self-build permissions the Council is able to grant will be taken up and are allocated as fairly as possible and in a way that meets the need of the local community. The Council will therefore be using local eligibility conditions to determine how many development permissions will be required.

Individuals and associations that meet the age and nationality criteria and the **local eligibility conditions** will join **Part 1** of the Register. The duty to give suitable development permission in respect of enough serviced plots of land to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in the authority's area does not apply to those registered under **Part 2** of the Register.

When serviced plots are available the Council will require that they be offered first to individuals and associations on the Part 1 Register. Should individuals and associations

on Part 1 Register not take up all available plots these should then be offered to applicants on the Part 2 Register. The Council will not be seeking development permissions specifically for the Part 2 Register.

5. How do I register?

Waltham Forest Council operates a web based Register administered by Ecomotive. You can apply to join the Register here. The Council will not accept any other form of application to join the register.

The Council will confirm your eligibility within 28 days of receiving all the information requested. You will need to provide supporting information for **local eligibility conditions** to join Part 1 of the register.

The **first local eligibility condition** is individuals and all members of the association must currently live and/or work in the borough and have done so for at least two years prior to applying to join the register. This should be evidenced with tenancy agreement(s), utility bills, council tax records, electoral register, employment contract, or any other verifiable residency or employment record. This two year residency requirement is similar to that currently used for the Council's housing allocations scheme (due to be increased to four years from April 2017). **Individuals in the regular service of the armed forces of the Crown** (as defined in Section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006) or **who left the service not more than two years** before applying to join the Register **are exempt** from this condition.

The **second local eligibility condition** is individuals and all members of the association must have the resources to be able to buy a serviced plot of land in the borough. This could be a self-build mortgage offer, other verifiable loan facilities, savings and cash. The Council cannot provide a definitive guide as to the minimum price of a serviced site in this guide as land values are variable depending on many factors. The actual prices serviced sites sell for will be published on the Council's website when available.

There are other eligibility requirements for both Part 1 and Part 2 of the Register relating to age and nationality. Applicants will be expected to provide evidence of age and nationality such as a passport to confirm they meet these eligibility conditions.

The Council will not accept applications to join Part 1 or Part 2 of the Register if it cannot verify that any or all of these eligibility requirements have been met, and may undertake searches to confirm applicants meet local eligibility conditions (Part 1) and the age and nationality criteria required for both Part 1 and Part 2.

Once your eligibility to join Part 1 or Part 2 of the Register is confirmed, your application will be accepted as active on the Register.

6. What happens after I register?

We will contact you from time to time for information to update the Register and provide information on self-build and custom homebuilding opportunities. It is important that you inform us of any change of circumstances and change of contact details, if we cannot contact you your entry will be removed from the Register.

The Council will publish summary updates on the Register from time to time, setting out how many people have been accepted on the Register in a given period, and how many serviced plots have been made available, and the price these plots were offered and sold for.

7. When will I be able to buy a serviced plot?

A serviced plot is a bit of land that has road access and available connections to electricity, water and sewage, and where available gas (these are also referred to as 'utilities'), and planning permission to build residential dwellings (houses or flats).

It will take a while for the demand on the Register to work its way to serviced plots becoming available. The Council has up to three years after accepting a Part 1 Register application to grant planning permission for serviced plots to meet demand.

8. What if I cannot afford a serviced plot in Waltham Forest?

The Council is currently not required to provide subsidised or free land or grants to help self-building in the borough. You may therefore have to look for self-build plots elsewhere in the country.

9. Where can I find more information?

There are a number of organisations and agencies set up to provide information, advice and support to self-builders. An internet search should provide some useful organisations and agencies, and there are Government sponsored sites http://www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/ and http://customandselfbuildtoolkit.org.uk that provide some useful information.

10. Contact us

If you have any queries, please contact placeanddesignteam@walthamforest.gov.uk