

## **Inspector's Question 81**

I would welcome the Council's observations on representations commenting on the soundness of policy H5, self/custom build housing; 793 Mark Rose of Define on behalf of Bovis Homes, 1330 J Richards of Dandara Ltd, 1353 Roger Welchman of Armstrong Rigg planning on behalf of Bellway Homes Ltd, Bellcross Co Ltd and Fosbern Manufacturing Ltd, 1532 Alastair Bird of Barton Willmore on behalf of Catesby Estates Limited, 1624 Nicole Penfold on behalf of Gladman Developments Ltd, 1781 Tina Pearsall of Cerda Planning Ltd, 1852 Guy Wakefield of Hunter page Planning on behalf of CALA homes Ltd, 1976 Robert Love of Bidwells on behalf of Persimmon Homes Midlands.

## **AVDC Response**

The key issues in the representations identified by the Inspector are listed below and are addressed in the Council's responses.

- There is no evidence of demand for self-build and custom plots in Aylesbury Vale, particularly as the Council has not published its Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register
- The threshold of 100 dwelling plots and over to include a percentage of self/custom build plots is not justified
- The policy is too vague on how the percentage of self/custom build plots will be calculated through site by site assessments; there should be broad parameters for developers
- Self/custom build plots in major developments should come forward with and complement the main development
- The policy does not set out how uptake of plots will be guaranteed and does not address viability implications if this does not happen
- A more suitable approach may be to allocate or identify whole, serviced sites dedicated to self/ custom build as opposed to providing small parcels of larger sites with a wide design approach

## **No evidence of demand**

As per sections 2(1) and 2(4) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 the Council has a duty to have regard to the self-build and custom housebuilding register as part of its planning and housing functions, which justifies the inclusion and position of policy H5 in the VALP. Section 1(2) of the same Act states that the Council must **publicise** its register, which it has done on its website here <https://www.aylesburyvalecd.gov.uk/buying-land-order-build-their-own-home>. The page includes an online form for applicants but the Council is not required to publish data from the register. The content of the register is evidence of demand for self and custom build housing in Aylesbury Vale.

## **100 dwelling threshold is not justified**

The figure of 100 dwellings is not based on any detailed assessment but is considered a reasonable minimum threshold to define larger developments and which will ensure the requirement does not have any negative viability impacts on the main development. However it should be noted that the requirement for determination on a site by site basis will ensure that a requirement will not be imposed where it would render a development unviable.

### **Policy is too vague on proportional percentage calculation**

The policy determines a site-by-site basis for the proportion of plot provision because the Council appreciates that there will be considerable variation in the demand and viability of self/custom build for each individual site. It would likely be inappropriate to set a standardised methodology or specify any required parameters to calculate the percentage of plots to be provided given that demand demonstrated by the register is unpredictable and viability will vary on a site by site basis.

### **Self/custom build plots should come forward with and complement main development**

Any applications for self/custom build homes will still have to be approved through the same Development Management process as the main development in accord with the policies in VALP and the plot location within the main site will be considered as part of this. The very nature of self/custom build is to allow owners/occupiers a certain extent of creative freedom over their dwelling and so to set restrictive design parameters would be inappropriate and against the intention of the policy.

The Council is not ultimately responsible for the build out rate of sites. If a developer wishes self/custom build plots to be delivered at the same rate as the main development, this should be achieved through developer-self/ custom builder negotiations on a site-by-site basis.

### **Viability of lack of plot uptake**

The mechanisms to ensure deliverability of plots, should there be little or no uptake of plots, can and should be covered under the scope of the legal agreement specified as a requirement in the policy.

The viability of self/custom build was considered in paragraph 2.2.19 of the VALP Viability Assessment (2017), [CD.INF.002](#), and it was broadly considered to not have negative impacts. Based on the limited work available on viability exploration of this type of housing, the assessment went as far as stating it as potentially profitable, 'so as not to prove a significant drag on overall site viability'.

### **Allocating plots solely for self/ custom build**

The current allocations and commitments to date fulfil the Full Objectively Assessed Need (FOAN) for the VALP, including unmet need from other districts, and so this Plan cannot justifiably allocate any further sites. Paragraph 5.52 of the VALP clarifies

the policy approach to include self/custom build plots within larger sites as there is a concern that custom builders would struggle to compete for sites and the Council would consequently have failed its duty to have regard to them under the previously mentioned Act.