

Medway Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Topic Paper

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Medway Council

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1 Introduction

1.1 Definition and purpose

- 1.1.1 The purpose of this topic paper is to explain the processes undertaken to establish the need for self and custom build plots in Medway and how the council intends to ensure they are delivered during the period of the new Local Plan 2041 through Policy T9.
- 1.1.2 Background on current legislation and national planning policy guidance has been outlined as well as detailed evidence from Medway's Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Register. Responses provided through previous Regulation 18 and 19 consultations have been considered and results of further research undertaken to date shared.

1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 National planning policy¹ advises that authorities should include people wishing to commission or build their own homes when planning for the needs of different groups in the community. The Government has also provided additional policy and guidance to support the demand from the self and custom house building market, which advises 'in considering whether a home is a self-build or custom build home, relevant authorities must be satisfied that the initial owner of the home will have primary input into its final design and layout'².
- 1.2.2 Self-build is generally where the owner is directly involved with and/or manages the design and construction of their new home, while the custom housebuilding approach is where the owner commissions the construction of their home from a developer / builder / contractor / package company who builds the property to the owner's specifications. With custom build the occupants do not usually carry out any of the physical construction work but still make key design decisions.
- 1.2.3 Medway's vision for 2041 includes an aspiration that all sectors and ages of the community can find decent places to live; as part of this custom and self-building will provide new living opportunities for residents. This is supported by one of the Local Plan objectives of supporting people to lead healthy lives and strengthening communities by providing high quality, energy efficient homes that meet the needs of Medway's communities, reflecting the range of sizes, types and affordability the area needs, including provision for specialist housing, such as custom and self-build; and driving reductions in the carbon impacts of housing by securing opportunities for retro-fitting older properties.

¹ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2024). National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 63). Available at [National Planning Policy Framework](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/5-delivering-a-sufficient-supply-of-homes#note28)
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/5-delivering-a-sufficient-supply-of-homes#note28>

² Self-build and custom housebuilding Guidance, paragraph 016 reference ID: 57-016-20210208, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/self-build-and-custom-housebuilding>

- 1.2.4 The need for plots of land on which people can build their own home has been identified through the Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Register, required under legislation³ from 1st April 2016. Medway Council's Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Register is publicised on the website⁴ and operates in 'base years', which run from 31 October in one year through to 30 October the following year. Eligible⁵ individuals or associations (groups of individuals) can apply to go onto the Register to record that they are seeking to acquire a serviced plot of land for their own self-build and custom housebuilding.
- 1.2.5 Links to relevant legislation and guidance can be found below:
- [Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 \(as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016\)](#)
 - [Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Regulations 2016](#)
 - [Self-build and Custom Housebuilding \(Time for Compliance and Fees\) Regulations 2016](#)
 - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/self-build-and-custom-housebuilding>

³Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016), available at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/17/contents/enacted>

⁴ Medway Council, 'Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Register', available at:

https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200149/planning_policies/144/self-build_and_custom_housebuilding_register

⁵Eligibility criteria as stated in The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Regulations 2016

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2016/950/regulation/4/made>

2 Medway's Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Register

2.1 Number of applications on the Register

- 2.1.1 From the commencement of the Register to the end of the latest Base Period 10 (1st April 2016 - 30th October 2025) the council received a total of 146 applications from individuals and 2 applications from associations, resulting in an average of around 16 applications per year (see table 1 below). Around a quarter of these applicants have also applied to go onto other authority registers which although could be a double-count of demand, is thought to be counteracted by numbers of people who possibly do not know about the register but still have a desire to build their own home.
- 2.1.2 The Housing and Planning Act 2016 requires relevant authorities to grant development permission to enough serviced plots of land to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in their area. At the end of each base period, relevant authorities have 3 years in which to permission an equivalent number of plots of land, as there are entries for that base period. Any demand not met is carried forward.
- 2.1.3 Table 1 shows the number of self and custom housebuilding applications received to the Register each base period, and the date by which sufficient permissions need to be granted by.
- 2.1.4 Table 2 gives a breakdown of the details of each of the 26 plot permissions granted by 30/10/2025.

Table 1: Number of applications on the Register – Demand for self/custom build plots

Base Period – table showing number of applications on the Register	Individuals*	Associations	Date Medway need to have enough permissions granted by	Permissions granted within 3 years of end of base period	Shortfall in permissions granted
One (1/4/2016 – 30/10/2016)	15	0	30/10/2019	11	4
Two (31/10/2016 – 30/10/2017)	39	0	30/10/2020	0	39
Three (31/10/2017 – 30/10/2018)	14	1	30/10/2021	3	12
Four (31/10/2018 – 30/10/2019)	14	1	30/10/2022	0	15
Five (31/10/2019 – 30/10/2020)	17	0	30/10/2023	4	13
Six (31/10/2020 – 30/10/2021)	12	0	30/10/2024	2	10
Seven (31/10/2021 – 30/10/2022)	12	0	30/10/2025	6	6
Eight (31/10/2022 – 30/10/2023)	9	0	30/10/2026	n/a	n/a
Nine (31/10/2023 – 30/10/2024)	7	0	30/10/2027	n/a	n/a
Ten (31/10/2024 – 30/10/2025)	7	0	30/10/2028	n/a	n/a
TOTAL PLOTS PERMITTED				26	
TOTAL PLOTS REQUIRED INDIVIDUALS	146	-			
TOTAL PLOTS REQUIRED ASSOCIATIONS	-	2			
CUMULATIVE SHORTFALL OF PERMISSIONS GRANTED AS AT 30/10/2025					99

- 2.1.5 Applicants may decide they no longer wish to be on the Register and can request removal at any time. As at 30 October 2025, one association and sixteen applicants have been removed from the Register, either at their own request or due to the inability to establish further contact with them. However, this does not reduce the reported demand for the relevant base period.

2.2 Permissions granted for self/custom build plots

- 2.2.1 By the end of Base Period 10 on 30 October 2025, the council had granted permission for 26 self/custom build plots across 12 sites as shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Permissions granted for self/custom build plots during base periods 1-10

Application number	Site address	No of plots	Date outline permitted	Status 31/3/25*
MC/17/3572	Land west of Merryboys Farm House, Cooling Common	6	6/6/2018	Complete
MC/18/0096 superseded by MC/21/2065	Land adjoining 35 Cooling Road, High Halstow	5	31/7/2018 then 19/5/2022	Under construction
MC/20/1025 MC/24/1877 MC/24/1878 MC/24/1879 MC/24/1880	Land at 309 Lower Rainham Road	3	6/10/2021	Not started
MC/22/1317 superseded by MC/23/2753	Land to the rear of Fenn House Farm, Fenn Street, St Mary Hoo	4 superseded by new permission for 3	16/11/2022 (S106 signed 27/7/23) superseded on 20/11/24 at Planning Committee	Not started
MC/24/1204	91 Rolvenden Road, Wainscott	1	3/7/2025	Not started
MC/24/1213				
MC/25/0233 for 4 dwellings refused 3/4/2025	Land Rear of the Old Vicarage High Street Grain – subject to S106	2	25/10/2024	Not started
MC/25/1034 for 3 plots awaiting decision				
MC/24/1721	Land at Court Lodge Farmhouse, Stoke	1	29/1/2025	Under construction
MC/25/0540	Yantlett Farm. West Lane, Grain	1 (net 0)	1/8/2025	Not started
MC/24/2505	68 Sr Evelyn Road	1	14/4/2025	Not started
MC/24/2231	Adjacent to 13 Matts Hill Road, Rainham	1	11/4/2025	Not started
MC/25/0036	Rear of 106 Pilgrims Road	1	29/4/2025	Not started
MC/25/0912	6 Matts Hill Road Rainham	1	4/9/2025	Not started
Total number of plots permitted since 1/4/2016		26**		

*Surveyed as part of the annual monitoring process which runs from 1 April to 31 March each year, different to base period years

**Reduced from 27 because the permission for 4 plots at Fenn House Farm was superseded by a newer permission for 3 plots

2.3 Refused self/custom build applications

2.3.1 As at the end of base period 10 on 30 October 2025, 13 applications have been refused (some also refused at appeal) on 11 sites:

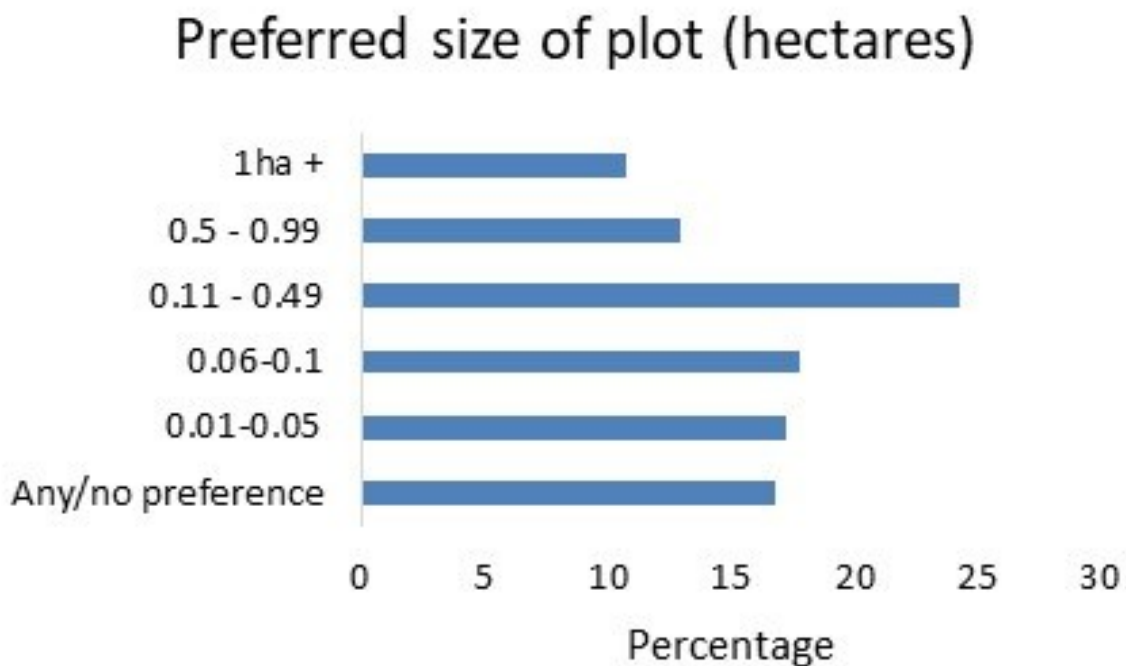
- MC/19/1455 (6 plots), MC/21/1026 (1 plot) and MC/21/2618 (1 plot) on land North of Merryboys Road Cliffe Woods (all refused on appeal)
- MC/19/2593 Land East of Merryboys Farm Cooling Common (also refused on appeal), 4 plots
- MC/20/1025 309 Lower Rainham Road (subsequently permitted on appeal, see above), 3 plots
- MC/20/2840 Land to the rear of Fenn House, Fenn Street St Mary Hoo, 4 plots
- MC/20/2945 Homeleigh, 218 Main Road Hoo, 7 plots (also refused on appeal)
- MC/20/2980 Land at Chattenden Farm, Lodge Hill Lane (also refused on appeal), 8-12 plots
- MC/22/2934 Land adjacent to 5 Bellwood Court St Mary Hoo (also refused on appeal), 1 plot
- MC/23/0568 Land on west side of Newlands Farm Road St Mary Hoo (also refused on appeal), 4 plots
- MC/23/2401 34 Thorndale Close Chatham (also refused on appeal), 1 plot
- MC/24/0708 Fisherwood House Sharnal Street High Halstow (also refused on appeal), 2 plots
- MC/25/0233 Land rear of the Old Vicarage High Street Grain, 4 plots (extant permission for 2 plots)

3 What are applicants to the Register looking for in their plot?

3.1 Plot preferences (size, location, type of dwelling)

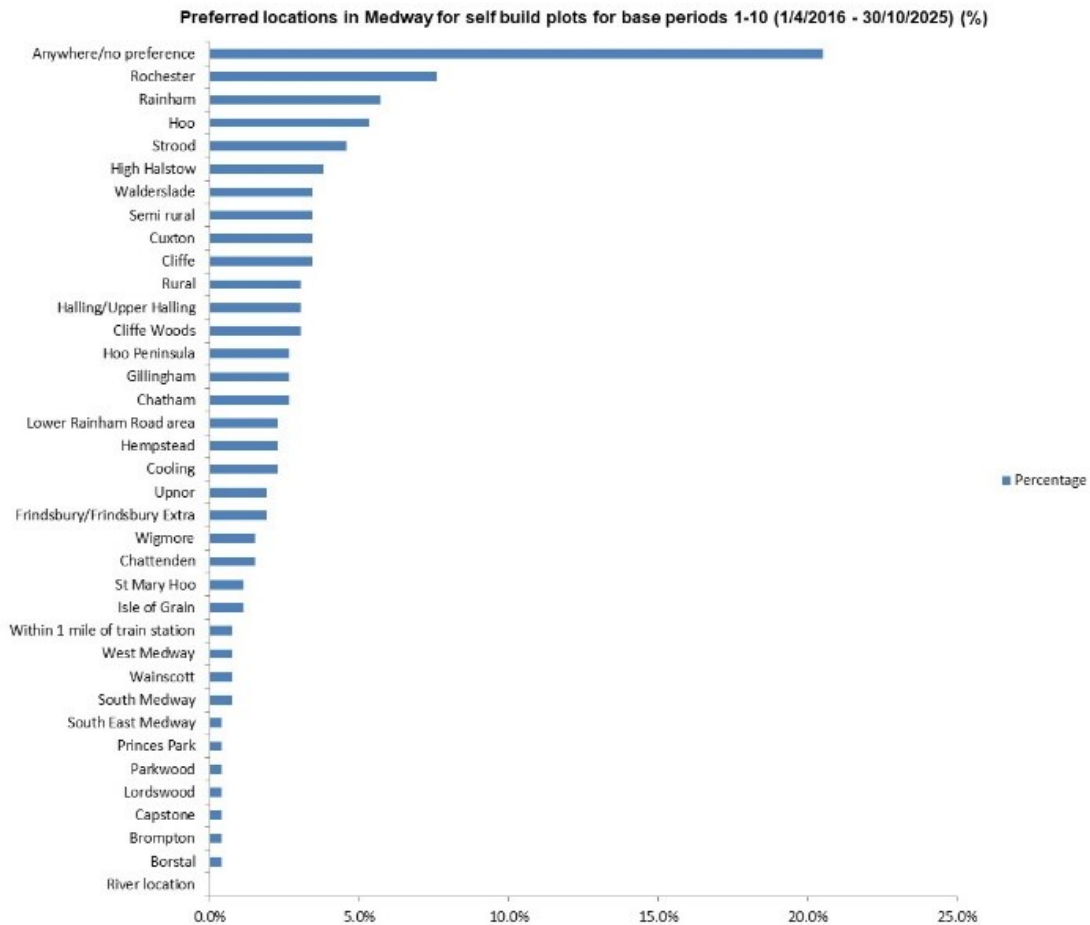
- 3.1.1 Applicants are interested in acquiring plots across the Medway area for building their own house or bungalow, with plot sizes ranging from 0.01ha to 1ha and above (see chart 1).

Chart 1: Preferred size of plot (hectares)



- 3.1.2 Where a range has been given by the applicant which overlaps the different plot size thresholds, one in each is counted, which is why there may be more plot areas counted than applications received.
- 3.1.3 Applicants have shown interest in sites across the Medway area, these are shown in popularity order in Chart 2 below with the 6 most popular being 'anywhere in Medway', followed by Rochester, Rainham, Hoo then Strood and High Halstow. It should be noted that some applicants have expressed a preference for more than one location when submitting their application.

Chart 2: Preferred locations in Medway from applicants on the Register for self/custom build plots to end of Base Period 10 30 October 2025



3.1.4 When combining the preferred areas into sub areas, the most popular still remains 'anywhere in Medway', followed by Rainham, the Peninsula then Rochester and Strood. See Chart 3 below.

Chart 3: Self build applicants preferred locations by sub area

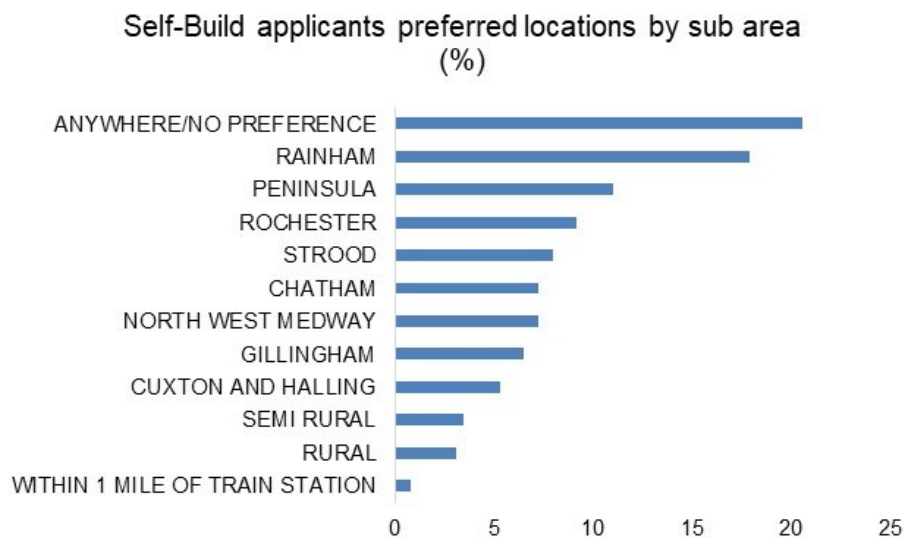
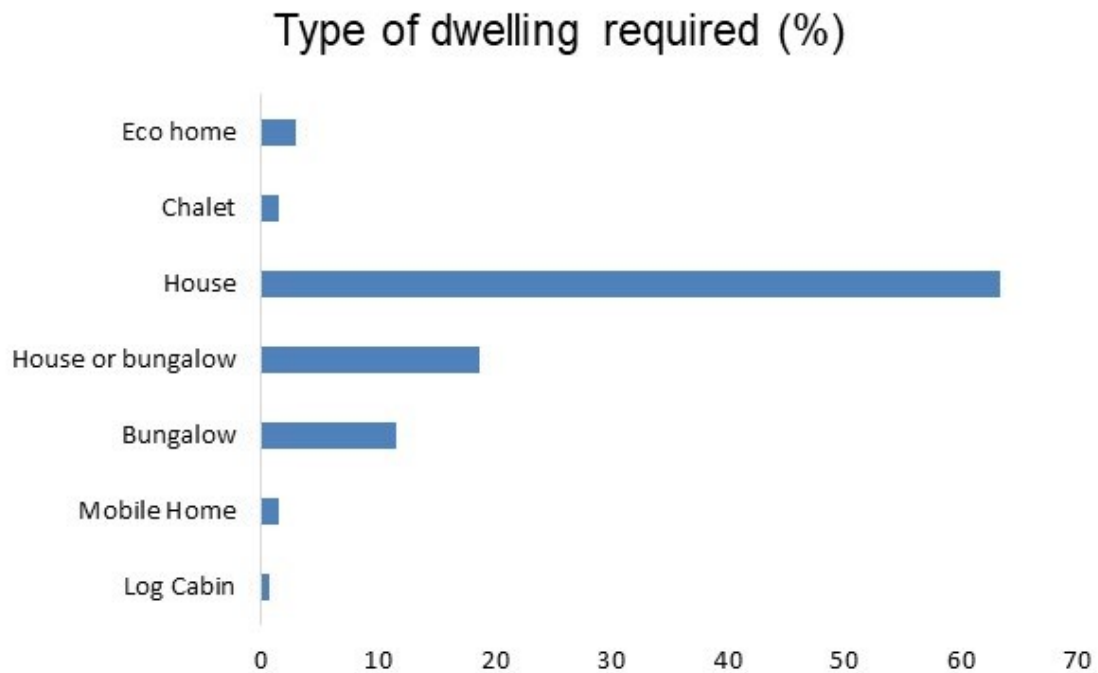


Chart 4: Type of dwelling required

- 3.1.5 Chart 4 shows that the most popular type of dwelling applicants wish to build is a house.

3.2 Average age of applicants

- 3.2.1 As at the end of Base Period 10 (30 October 2025) the average age of applicants to the Register was 50.2.

3.3 Further research

- 3.3.1 Late 2024/early 2025, a survey was sent to all existing applicants on the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Register to seek more information on what is important to them when looking for a plot. Any subsequent applicants to the Register were also provided with this questionnaire to complete. More details on the responses received so far can be found in section 7 of this topic paper.

4 Future demand for Self-build and Custom Housebuilding plots

4.1 Future demand

- 4.1.1 Table 3 shows that since the start of the Register in 2016 the average number of applications received is 1.3 per month (16 per annum), although the current rate of applications has slowed from the initial interest received when the Register was launched.

Table 3: Average demand to date

	Number of months	Applications (individual and associations)	Average per month
Base year 1	7	15	2.1
Base year 2	12	39	3.3
Base year 3	12	15	1.3
Base year 4	12	15	1.3
Base year 5	12	17	1.4
Base year 6	12	12	1.0
Base year 7	12	12	1.0
Base year 8	12	9	0.8
Base year 9	12	7	0.6
Base year 10	12	7	0.6
TOTAL	115	148	1.3

- 4.1.2 The recently published Local Housing Need Assessment uses two methods to calculate future demand of plots in Medway:
- continued average flow of demand from the Register (shown in table 3)
 - target prevalence rate using Right to Build Register monitoring data from the ONS
- 4.1.3 Both of these methods result in a similar figure, suggesting that we should be planning to grant permission for around 430 plots over the course of the plan period to address current and likely future demand.
- Although the rate of applications may continue to decrease from the initial interest shown, it is also plausible that interest could increase in future as awareness of the Register grows. This will be closely monitored and if the level of demand changes significantly, the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Policy will need to be reviewed.

5 Supplying current and future demand for Self-build and Custom Housebuilding

5.1 Supplying demand

- 5.1.1 Self-build and custom build can be an important source of delivering a mix of homes; all self-build proposals in sustainable and suitable locations will be positively considered. The contribution small and windfall sites can make to providing Self-build and Custom Housebuilding plots is encouraged and welcomed; it is also acknowledged that there can be opportunities on larger sites to meet expected demand. Larger site developers are encouraged to work with smaller sized builders to promote site diversity and to offer a range of plot sizes to provide the different types of plots self-builders are looking for. This enables people to have the opportunity to build their own high-quality homes, on a range of different sized developments, which can also boost and support the local economy by providing opportunities for local tradespeople and small and medium sized builders, as well as leading to a good mix of property designs, giving the area visual interest.
- 5.1.2 To meet the demand on the Self and Custom Housebuilding register and to facilitate a wide range of opportunities of different types and tenures for self/custom builders, Policy T9 proposes:
- Small site and windfall plot provision in sustainable and suitable locations for self and custom builders is supported and encouraged.
 - Fenn Farm, Hoo will be allocated within the Local Plan to provide 4 self and custom build plots⁶
 - Sites of 100+ dwellings will be required to supply no less than 4% of serviced dwelling plots for sale to self or custom builders, excluding flatted developments⁷.
- 5.1.3 The full policy is shown below:

Policy T9: Self-build and Custom Housebuilding

The Council will support self-build or custom build home development in sustainable and suitable locations across Medway, encouraging plot provision in areas preferred by applicants on the Register.

Site Allocations for self-build and custom housebuilding

The following potential sites is identified specifically for self-build and custom housebuilding:

⁶ Fifteen sites were submitted to provide self-build plots as part of the most recent Call for Sites and further sites were also submitted in the responses to the Reg 18b consultation in Summer/Autumn 2024. Following concluding work on the Land Availability Assessment and reviewing responses to the Reg 18b consultation, one of these sites at Fenn Farm Ratcliffe Highway, Hoo (AS2) was identified as a suitable self/custom build allocation.

⁷ In this calculation, if the result is not a full number, then any rounding would need to be made upwards if the decimal is 0.5 or higher and downwards if it is 0.4 or below.

- Fenn Farm, Ratcliffe Highway, Hoo (AS2) – 100% (4 plots)

Sites of 100+ dwellings will be expected to provide no less than 4% plots for self and custom build

To ensure a consistent supply for the demand identified from the Register, sites of 100+ dwellings will be expected to provide no less than 4% plots for self and custom build. They will be secured by use of a Section 106 agreement. If it is not viable to provide self-build plots on site, applicants would be expected to present robust evidence to show why for the Council to consider. No provision will be expected where the scheme proposed is a predominantly flatted development.

Affordable Housing

The affordable housing requirement of the site should be calculated on the total number of homes being delivered, including the self-build and custom housebuilding element. Self and custom build units delivered will not be accepted as part of the affordable housing provision.

All new self-build/custom housebuilding applications

- Applicants will need to have regard to the local landscape and guidance from other relevant Local Plan policies in the same way that other types of residential applications do; this will ensure all types of new development are of high quality.
- Permission granted for self/custom build sites with more than one plot will be outline only; reserved matters applications would be required for each plot sold.
- In accordance with Government guidance on Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding, the plots must be serviced (have access to a public highway and connections for electricity, water and wastewater) or, in the opinion of a relevant authority, can be provided with access to those things within the duration of a development permission granted in relation to that land.
- For larger sites where a proportion will be self/custom build plots, the plots should all be located in one attractive area of the site and not pepper-potted throughout.
- For phased development, self/custom build plots must be provided and serviced at the earliest stage possible. This will be secured by a planning condition.
- Self/custom build plots must respond to the sizes identified on the Register.
- The person(s) occupying the plot will need to provide evidence confirming they have had primary input into the final design and layout of their property and that it will be their sole/main residence.
- To prevent overall completion of a site being drawn out and the delay of housing delivery, a short timeframe for building the plot(s) is desirable. This could be translated into a shorter time limited condition than the standard requirement, depending on the site.⁸

⁸ For example, the site may already be serviced and have access to the public highway, electricity, water and wastewater, so once reserved matters are approved, there are no physical barriers to commencing construction.

- Sites (including the self-build element) that meet or exceed the threshold to trigger the requirement for developer contributions will attract mitigation contributions in the same way as any other housing development.

Design Code

- Depending on the location of the site, the Council may require a design code framework; this should be agreed with the Council prior to the submission of the outline planning application. This will ensure that the variety of design and construction materials will respect the character and appearance of a local area, without suppressing innovation and individuality. The design code will be secured by condition.

Marketing the self/custom build plot

- Once a site has received outline permission and plots become available for sale, the landowner/developer is required to market (to the satisfaction of the Council) the plots available for self/custom-build for a minimum period of 12 months.⁹ The 12 months will start from when the plots are first available for purchase, with the responsibility on the plot provider to notify the Council when the marketing period has begun.
- If any plot(s) remain unsold after being marketed for the minimum period, they can either remain for sale as a self/custom build plot or be offered to the Local Authority to acquire for the provision of affordable housing (separate from any relevant affordable housing requirement for the Development as applicable), before reverting back to the land owner to build out on the plot or sell without restriction.¹⁰ To prevent the delay of housing delivery, the Local Authority will be given a time period of three months to acquire the vacant plot(s).¹¹ This provision will be secured as part of the original Section 106 agreement.

Expanding/intensifying existing residential permissions

- Where there is an existing residential permission and the developer approaches the Council seeking to expand/intensify the development, the developer should demonstrate that they have considered some/all of the additional plots to be provided as serviced self/custom build plots, where there is identified demand.

Speculative residential applications

⁹ The local planning authority would expect to see clear and robust evidence to show that there is no demand from self/custom housebuilders following a sustained 12-month period. This would include evidence showing records that the site has been actively marketed by a recognised commercial agent and should include a copy of the dated letter of instruction to the commercial agent, dated records of associated web-based marketing and the Estates Gazette, or similar publication. Plots should be marketed at a reasonable price commensurate with local market values. The commercial agents should provide records of enquires throughout the period of the marketing campaign, including date, contact details and nature of enquiry and the follow-up actions undertaken, e.g. whether the enquiry resulted in a site visit.

¹⁰ All contact would need to be made through the Housing Team at Medway Council who will facilitate contact with housing associations.

¹¹ This timeframe shall be calculated from the date of the initial correspondence. This timeframe may be extended at the mutual agreement of the landowner, land promoter, local authority or housing association.

- Where a landowner has a suitable site that they wish to obtain speculative outline residential permission for, they are encouraged to have regard to the Register and consider the plot for self-build or custom housebuilding, depending on the local demand.

Neighbourhood Plans

- The Council supports and encourages the consideration of self-build and custom housebuilding in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans, and joint working with Neighbourhood Plan groups to establish a locally derived design code.

Rural Exceptions

- These will be considered on a site-by-site basis.

Council owned land and Regeneration

- The Council will consider opportunities for self-build and custom housebuilding in disposal of Council land and in promoting regeneration schemes.

- 5.1.4 The policy encourages small site and windfall delivery of self/custom build plots. Since Base Period 1 in April 2016 an average of 0.2 plots per month have come forward via windfalls (26 over 115 months); if they were to be projected forward at that rate over the plan period, 36 plots could expect to be provided. This is clearly not enough to supply the demand and consequently the plan cannot be entirely reliant upon windfalls.
- 5.1.5 Therefore, setting a percentage policy will ensure a reliable stream of plots to supply the demand from self/custom builders. The Local Plan identifies and allocates a number of sites for housing delivery over the plan period; once predominantly flatted and already permitted sites have been removed, the remaining sites (of over 100 dwellings size) totalling around 9,800 would provide around 392 plots when applying the 4% policy. These site allocations are all in locations which have been listed as preferred areas by applicants to the Register.
- 5.1.6 Finally, when adding the 4 plots allocated at Fenn Farm Hoo, it shows that the proposed policy approach detailed above should deliver sufficient numbers of serviced plots in areas preferred by those on the Register in order to meet the demand of 430 over the plan period. See table 4 for a breakdown.

Table 4: Sources of supply over the plan period

Source of supply	Number of plots
Windfalls	36
4% on sites over 100 dwellings	392
Allocated site AS2 at Fenn Farm Hoo	4
TOTAL	432

- 5.1.7 To compliment this, Policy T9 states that the Council will consider opportunities for self-build and custom housebuilding in disposal of Council land and in promoting regeneration schemes. The council's property team are aware of the Self/Custom build register should any sites owned by them be made available in future which could be suitable for offering to self/custom builders.
- 5.1.8 Policy T9 also supports and encourages the consideration of self/custom build in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans, which can help to deliver plots in accordance with community needs.

6 Consultation on Medway's Self-build and Custom Housebuilding emerging policy

6.1 Consultation

- 6.1.1 During the Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 consultation stages of preparing the new Local Plan, there has generally been support for the principle of the proposed policy. However, some respondents expressed caution about adopting a percentage-based approach, citing concerns that it could lead to overprovision and that sub-allocation of sites might hinder housing delivery.
- 6.1.2 Other comments included:
- Supporting a move to provide a choice and mix of homes, particularly self and custom building.
 - Said that some allocations of large sites owned by volume housebuilders should have some self-build areas.
 - Said that the plan should ensure smaller sites are allocated for growth to give local construction companies the chance to provide good quality, well designed and sustainable homes as alternatives to large scale uniform estates built by one national developer.
 - Said that innovation in more energy efficient buildings designed to reflect local distinctiveness, is likely to be achieved in developing smaller sites in Medway's villages for custom or self-built homes.
 - Showed concern that there would be considerable noise and traffic generated with longer term custom built self-build projects.
 - Looking for evidence of future demand
 - Should utilise unused or unutilised brownfield land
 - Should include specific environmental and biodiversity standards for self/custom build projects
 - Concern that plot prices would be inflated too high for ordinary self-builders to be able to afford
 - Length of marketing period (12 months) and cascade process of allowing council 3 months to acquire unsold plot for affordable housing as being too long
 - Concern in using the word 'attractive' when describing the area of the site for locating self-build plots in
 - Query over whether it would always the optimum time to provide self/custom build plots in an early phase
 - Removal of the clause requiring unsold plots after 12 months to be offered to council/housing association and to revert straight back to the developer instead
 - Requesting that the self/custom build element of the site counts towards the affordable housing requirement.
 - For there to be an acknowledgement of the role Permission in Principle as a proportionate route for enabling self/custom build schemes and to ensure they can be counted towards the demand on the register

- Requesting the addition of supporting text stating the council support small scale self-build and custom housebuilding proposals outside settlement boundaries, including through Permission in Principle, where they respond to local need, are well-designed, and make use of underutilised or degraded land at the rural edge.
 - Challenges to the published viability assessment
 - Design code
- 6.1.3 Self-build and custom housebuilding policies across the UK have continued to evolve in recent years and there has been a marked increase in adopted plans with percentage based policies. Having a site partially devoted to self-build can help to balance different density requirements across a site and encourage larger house builders to work alongside smaller local house builders, with the potential to work successfully alongside the delivery of mainstream housing. These types of % policies can work most effectively as part of a package approach, which is why as well as applying a 4% requirement to sites 100+, Policy T9 also allocates a specific site for self/custom build development in Hoo and encourages plot provision on smaller and windfall sites, maintaining the key intention of providing self/custom build plots to meet expected demand. On larger development sites, the policy requires that self-build plots are grouped together in a single area rather than scattered throughout the site. Among other benefits, this approach can help residents feel as though they are part of a smaller, more cohesive development within the wider scheme.
- 6.1.4 This policy approach has been through a Viability Assessment which determines that it can work. However, if a developer/landowner feels that their site will not be able to deliver self/custom build plots, then they have the opportunity to present evidence as to why not when they submit their application for the Council to consider.
- 6.1.5 The fundamental purpose of Policy T9 is to deliver self-build and custom build housing in Medway, but it is plausible that due to circumstances out of the control of the Council and landowner, some plots may not receive the interest that has been anticipated and are not taken up by the self and custom housebuilding market. It is important that the land is not left unused or vacant for sustained periods while other essential types of housing are needed, such as 'affordable housing'. This is reflected in the 'cascade' approach of the Policy.
- 6.1.6 A 12 month marketing period as a minimum is considered an acceptable length of time to allow potential self/custom builders time to view the site, arrange finances and apply for planning permission or have pre-application discussions to ensure that what they actually want to build on the site is acceptable. This 12 month timeframe is generally seen as a successful benchmark for many other Council's recently adopted Local Plans.
- 6.1.7 Therefore, in the event that a plot remains unsold after a minimum period of 12 months of marketing (to the satisfaction of the Local Authority), if the land owner no longer wishes to promote it for sale to self/custom house builders, it should be offered to the Local Authority or Housing Association in the first instance to decide if they wish to acquire it. To ensure there is

no delay to the delivery of housing, the Local Authority/Housing Association shall then have up to three months to acquire the plot(s), before reverting back to the land owner to build out on the plot or sell on without restriction.

- 6.1.8 The Housing Team at Medway Council supports this approach, as any opportunity to deliver more affordable housing is welcomed. This is also an approach taken by other Local Authorities, including Right to Build vanguard Council Teignbridge.
- 6.1.9 The Housing Team have also confirmed that 3 months is realistically the minimum amount of time that would be expected to acquire a plot in order to go through internal approvals, valuations, conveyancing etc... and so a shorter time limit would not be viable.
- 6.1.10 On a large site, of 100+ dwellings, it is unlikely that the developer will have left site within 15 months. However, if a plot progresses through the 15 months without being sold or taken up by the Local Authority and the developer is not able to return to the plot to build out, Policy T9 states that it can be sold on without restriction. This could provide an opportunity for a local small/medium builder to purchase and build upon the plot.
- 6.1.11 The policy has clear marketing directions which include an instruction that the plots should be marketed at a reasonable price commensurate with local market values, to prevent sale prices from being over inflated.
- 6.1.12 Purchased plots should not be left empty to the detriment of its neighbours or the developers as a whole – however it would prove difficult for the Council to control/enforce a requirement for purchased plots to be built out within a certain timeframe within Policy T9, so instead will include a desirability for a short timeframe for builds (which could be translated into a shorter time limited condition than the standard requirement depending on the site). Generally, self-build mortgages can be more expensive than standard mortgages, so in most cases builders will be eager to complete the build expeditiously to be able to move across to a standard product as soon as possible.
- 6.1.13 The policy asks for self-build plots to be provided and serviced at the earliest stage possible because it enables early construction and minimises disruption to residents of market homes; as well as this it also helps to maximise marketability and choice, potentially helps to avoid delays to later development phases to ensure plots are integrated without disrupting the main development schedule, as well as helping to meet the statutory duties under the self-build and custom housebuilding Act.
- 6.1.14 Some self/custom builders seek to be more innovative and adventurous in their design/green credentials, which the policy allows for through the use of design codes where relevant. Using both traditional and modern methods of construction, self and custom builds can often be and most certainly are encouraged to be the pinnacle of energy efficient, environmentally friendly and sustainable standards, demonstrating superb examples of what can be accomplished in both green and high-quality design. The policy states that applicants will need to have regard to the local landscape and guidance from other relevant Local Plan policies in

the same way that other types of residential applications do; this will ensure all types of new development are of high quality.

7 Further Research

7.1 Local land/estate agents

- 7.1.1 As part of efforts to better understand the wider level of demand in Medway, in 2024 the Council surveyed 44 local land/estate agents on the level of enquiries received on plots for sale. Only one agent responded to indicate any level of interest, and that was after sites were listed for sale.

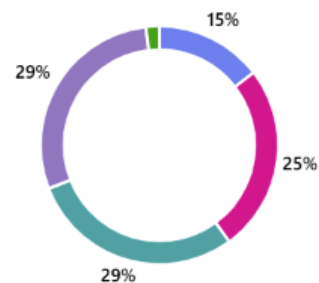
7.2 Survey of existing applicants on the Register

- 7.2.1 To gain even more of an understanding into what existing applicants to Medway's register are specifically looking for, the Council sent out an online questionnaire late 2024/early 2025 which could be useful to assist landowners/developers providing plots to self/custom builders in helping to meet identified need and ensuring the types of plots are desirable and viable. Any subsequent applicants to the Register have also been provided with the questionnaire to complete.
- 7.2.2 So far, around 23% have completed the voluntary survey; a summary of the main questions and answers can be found below:

- What type of area would you like to build in?

(Tick all that apply)

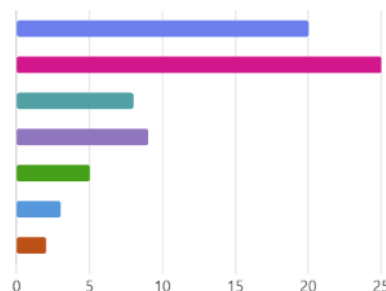
Urban	8
Suburban	14
Rural	16
Any	16
Other	1



- What type of property would you like to build?

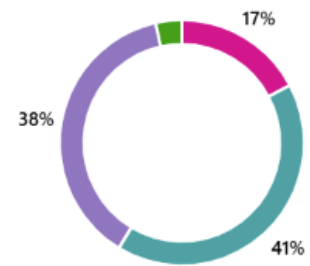
(tick all that apply if you haven't yet decided exactly what you'd like to build)

Detached bungalow	20
Detached house	25
Semi-detached bungalow	8
Semi-detached house	9
Terraced house	5
Flat or apartment	3
Other	2



Please indicate the number of bedrooms you would need:

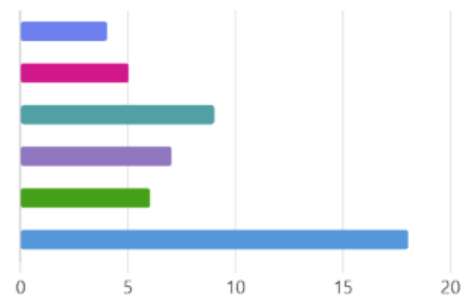
One bedroom	0
Two bedrooms	5
Three bedrooms	12
Four bedrooms	11
Five or more bedrooms	1



- What size plot are you looking for?

(Tick all that apply)

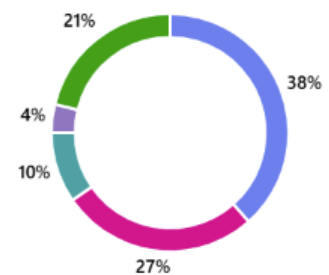
0.01 - 0.04 hectares	4
0.05 - 0.09 hectares	5
0.1 - 0.4 hectares	9
0.5 - 0.9 hectares	7
1 hectare plus	6
Any size	18



- What size self-build/custom house build development would you consider building your home on?

(Tick all that apply)

Single home plot	20
Small development (2-5 plots)	14
Medium development (6 - 50 plots)	5
Large development (51+ plots)	2
Any	11



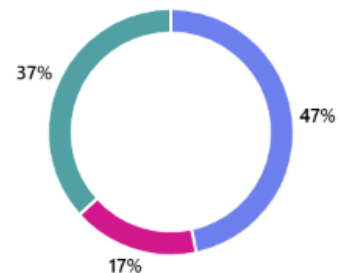
- The emerging Local Plan Policy for Self-build and Custom Housebuilding proposes developers to provide 4 % of plots on sites larger than 100 homes.

If you wish, you can read more details on the proposed policy (T9) here:

<https://medway.oc2.uk/document/18/689#d708>

Would you consider building your home on a serviced plot within a larger mainstream housing development?

Yes	14
No	5
Maybe	11

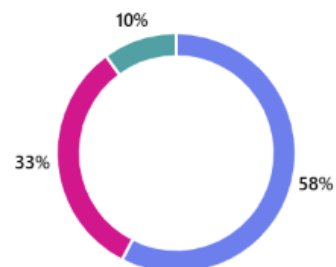


- Self-build is generally where the owner of the new home is directly involved with and/or manages the design and construction of their new home.

Custom build is generally where the owner of the new home commissions the construction of their home from a developer, builder, contractor or package company who builds the property to the owners specifications.

Do you know what type of build you want to do?

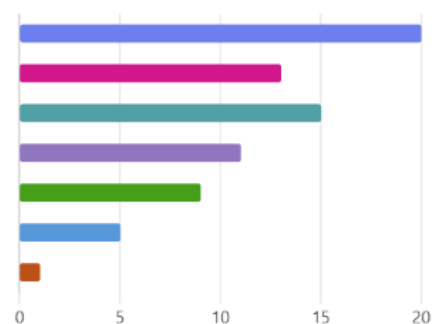
Self-build	23
Custom Build	13
Not sure	4



- What type of self-build/custom housebuilding do you want to carry out?

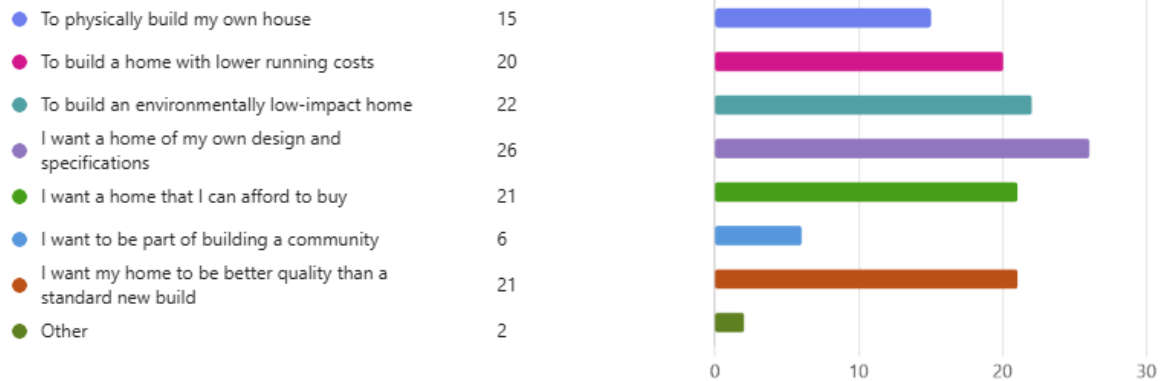
(Tick all that apply)

Do It Yourself one off home	20
Self commissioned home by a contractor	13
Kit/modular/package home with a choice of pre-approved designs and layout chosen by yourself...	15
Self finish/shell home	11
Group custom/self-build - community led housing	9
Unsure/Undecided	5
Other	1



• Why do you want to build your own home?

(Tick all that apply)



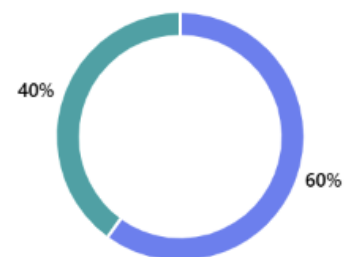
• Do you want to own, part own or rent your home?

Own	29
Part own (ie shared ownership)	0
Rent	0



• If you were registered as an individual, would you be interested in joining a group project if you were offered the opportunity?

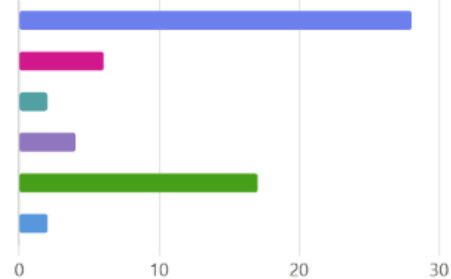
Yes	18
No	0
Maybe	12



- Would you be interested in joining a group housing project that included the following features?

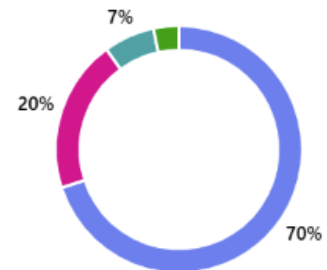
(Tick all that apply)

• Individual private homes as part of a group project	28
• Cohousing (living in a private home but sharing some facilities with neighbours)	6
• Co-operative housing (you and your neighbours own shares in the homes)	2
• Community Land Trust (homes part owned by a local community group)	4
• Self-help housing (residents are supported to renovate empty buildings into homes, which th...	17
• No	2



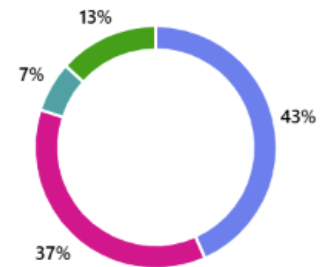
- If you found a suitable plot, how long would it take for you to be ready to purchase that plot?

• Within 6 months	21
• 6-12 months	6
• 1-2 years	2
• 2-3 years	0
• 3+ years	1



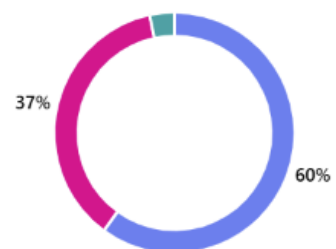
- How soon would you be able to start building once full planning permission is obtained?

• Immediately	13
• Within 6 months	11
• Within 12 months	2
• More than 12 months	0
• Not sure	4



- How long do you estimate it would take to complete the build once commenced?

• Under 1 year	18
• 2 years	11
• More than 3 years	1



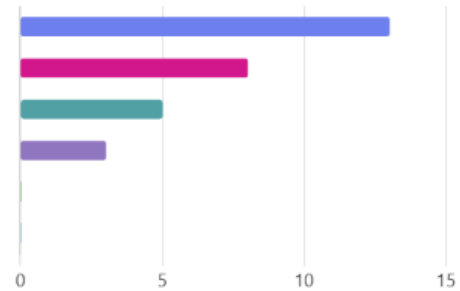
- Have you researched the financial requirements to build your own home?

Yes, fully	18
I've started to	11
No	1



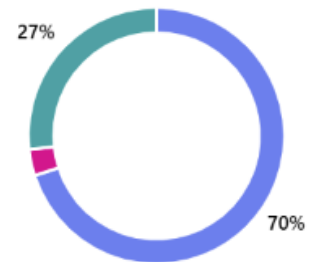
- How much do you expect to spend on purchasing a plot?

0 - £150K	13
£150K - £250K	8
£250K - £300K	5
£300K - £400K	3
£400K - £500K	0
Over £500K	0



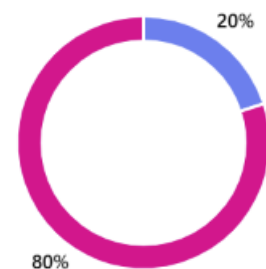
- Do you have sufficient resources to purchase a serviced plot of land that meets your requirements in terms of size and location?

Yes	21
No	1
Not sure	8



- Are you a first time buyer?

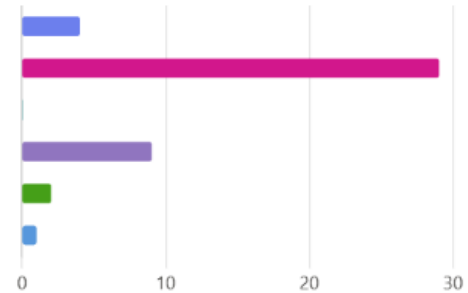
Yes	6
No	24



- What are the barriers (if any) which are preventing your self-build/custom housebuilding plans from progressing?

(Tick all that apply)

Unable to secure finances	4
Unable to find a plot	29
Unable to find appropriate design/designer	0
Complexity of the planning process	9
Finding the time to undertake the process	2
Other	1

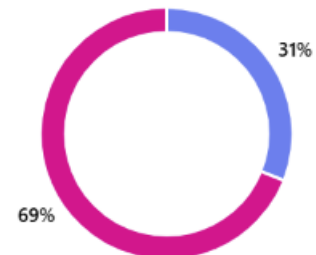


- How did you hear about the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register?



- Have you applied to go on any other local authority Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Register?

Yes	9
No	20



- Medway Council has a dedicated webpage for the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding register which has recently been updated.

https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200149/planning_policy/144/self-build_and_custom_housebuilding_register

Do you find the information and process to apply easy to understand?

● Yes	27
● No. If no, what would you suggest to make it clearer? Please use the other box below for your...	0
● Other	2

