



## MASTERCLASS: ASSESSING DEMAND FOR CUSTOM AND SELF BUILD HOUSING

### Led by:

Mario Wolf, Director, Right to Build Task Force

### 1. Importance of assessing demand

- Assessment of local demand is a critical first step before deciding what specific action to take to support Custom and Self Build housing.
- Although not statutory in Scotland, demand registers, waiting lists, surveys or opinion polls are important tools to gauge local demand and inform how many serviced plots could be made available on a site or in an area, but they have limitations and don't replace assessments as part of Housing Need and Demand Assessments (HNDA).
- Wider demand assessment is critical to inform local housing and planning strategies.
- Councils that have a good understanding of local demand are better placed to decide whether to make plots available in their local development plans and negotiate with housebuilders and developers to make plots available, especially when supported by clear local policies.

### 2. Registers and waiting lists

- **English authorities** have threefold legal duty under the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 and the Housing and Planning Act 2016, but this does not exist in Scotland.
- **Content:** to be robust, registers/waiting lists should include around a dozen core questions to build a good profile about local demand. Lots of good examples are now available. Avoid too many questions.
- **Promotion and marketing:** well-managed marketing and promotional campaign is essential to draw local people's attention to a register or waiting list. 80% of people don't know about registers in England. Poor promotion results in low response rate, weak data sets and misinformed decisions.
- Marketing doesn't need to be costly. Consider having dedicated and visible webpage covering the purpose of a register/waiting list, how to apply, headline data and other sources, as well as details on recent action taken to promote Custom and Self Build housing locally.
- **Avoid restrictive eligibility tests such as local connection and financial insolvency:** their introduction should be considered carefully as they will suppress demand. Tests should be proportionate and only be introduced if there is a strong local justification. Consult on proposals before introducing such tests and review them periodically to ensure they are effective.
- Local connection tests could include a range of criteria including residency, family members residing in the local area and/or a local employment connection. Financial insolvency tests could assess whether an applicant can afford to buy the land.
- Consider whether members of armed forces and ex-service personnel should be subject to any local criteria given their status.
- **Consider how to link plots to people on the register:** preferences expressed by people on register can guide types of plots being brought forward and people of the register could be given first option to buy/receive a plot.
- **Keep people informed** when serviced plots have been given planning permission (eg. send people an email and/or list permissions given on website).





- **Fees:** could be charged to those who want to be registered or who want to remain on the register to recover some costs but consider the scale of the fee so as not to put people off and decide what people receive in return (eg. offer of a plot).
- **Registers, waiting lists and surveys:** can be useful when trying to assess demand for a specific site (especially for larger sites).
- **Consider assessing demand for a wider housing market area:** by working with neighbouring Councils.

### 3. The Scottish Planning Policy (SPP, 2014) and assessing demand

- **HNDA:** can play key role to assess future demand for Custom and Self Build housing (HNDA Guidance and Supporting Materials don't provide information on 'how' and 'what').
- **Scottish Planning Policy on Self Build housing:** says local authorities are required to consider need for specialist provision and sites for people seeking Self Build plots

“Where authorities believe it appropriate to allocate suitable sites for self-build plots, the sites may contribute to meeting the housing land requirement”

- **Local opinion polls:** can help provide a high-level picture of local demand which may exist or could be expected in an area. Can also help test whether the marketing and promotion of local lists/registers is proving effective in practice.
- **Analysing demand:** doesn't have to be onerous. Important to profile different demand scenarios to determine locations where people want to build; when and what they want to build; tenures; budget/affordability; plots types being sought; willingness to build on larger sites.
- Profiles can be refined by looking at data collected about local connection (where relevant locally), and whether there is demand for group/collective projects.
- **Data availability and need for a demand assessment tool:** emerging demand assessment tool by Three Dragons in association with Task Force could be applied in Scotland.

### 4. Discussion themes

- Challenges and opportunities when using registers.
- Role of HNDA to inform local strategies and larger site proposals.
- Data availability and use of suitable tools.

