

Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is the difference between Part 1 and Part 2 of the register?

The register has two parts:

- Part one of the register is for those who have a local connection to Stevenage.
- Part two of the register is for all other applicants.

For those whose applications are determined as eligible for part one of the register, the council is required to find a serviced self-build and custom housebuilding plot, to offer to the applicant to purchase within three years from the base period. The fee for entry onto part one of the register is £300 (£250 plus vat).

The fee for entry onto part two of the register is £102 (£85 plus vat). There is no requirement for the Council to find sites for applicants on part 2 of the Register.

Q. How has the fee been determined?

The fee structure takes into account the amount of work required by the Borough Council in assessing the applications to determine eligibility for entry onto the register, particularly reviewing the evidence submitted to demonstrate affordability and local connection to Stevenage. The fee includes the cost of maintaining the register in the following years and ensuring that it is up to date and the cost contacting those on the register to advise them of any changes and seeking information if this is required. For Part 1 of the register, the fee also includes the cost of finding plots for self-build and custom housebuilding and informing those on the register when we have permissioned suitable land. We are not currently charging an additional annual fee.

Q. What type of evidence do I need to submit?

Local connection

Please provide evidence to demonstrate any one of live, work and family. We only need evidence for one of these, you do not need to evidence all three.

These are examples we will accept for you to choose which to email:

- Live: proof of address could include a copy of a current UK driving license, a recent utility bill, etcetera. Documents we will not accept include, but are not limited to Provisional driving licence, mobile phone bills and credit card statement.
- Work: Proof of employment could include a copy of a recent payslip, a recent letter from your employer etcetera.
- Family: This must be a close family relative i.e. parent, grandparent, sibling, spouse or dependent. Please state the relationship of this person to you and provide evidence of their connection to Stevenage.

Funding

Please provide evidence to demonstrate you have funding. If you answer yes to both mortgage and alternative funding on the form, we will require evidence of both.

- Mortgage: The details we require are a mortgage offer, or an offer in principal, from your bank / building society. This can be scanned and emailed.
- Alternative funding: If this relates to savings, we require a letter from your financial advisor or bank to confirm the amount of savings. Alternatively you could scan and email a recent bank statement which shows the funds. If you have another alternative funding source, please provide the evidence.

Q. How does the register work? For example, will plots be offered at a set price or will those on the register be required to bid for them?

The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register allows Stevenage Borough Council to gain a greater understanding of the number of people looking for self-build opportunities (to enable effective planning), it also enables sites to be directed towards the people on the register. Where sites are owned by Stevenage Borough Council we will offer them for sale to people on the register as a priority. We will encourage private landowners to do the same, but we do not have any direct control over this.

Sites will be sold on the open market and at market values. Being on the Register has benefits in terms of potentially being the first to find out about sites, it also requires the Borough Council to find and make available a certain number of sites (for those registered on Part 1). However, it does not provide any discount on a site or priority over other potential purchasers. People do not need to be on the register to purchase a plot of land for self-build purposes.

Sites will be sold with outline planning permission. Reserved matters applications will need to be in accordance with all local planning policies.

We have asked about the size of properties people are seeking to build and an indication of finances to allow us to gain a greater understanding of the type of plots which are required. We will seek to offer plots that meet the size and location requirements selected by an individual as closely as possible, however, this may not always be possible.

Q. What are the timescales?

The Council has three years in which to grant planning permission for an equivalent number of plots of land, which are suitable for self-build and custom housebuilding, as there are entries on Part 1 of the Register for that base period. Base periods run from 31 October to 30 October each year.

Of course, if sites become available earlier we will offer them earlier, if possible.

For example, if you joined Part 1 of the Register in November 2017 we would have three years from the end of that base period (30 October 2018) within which to permission a plot of land for self-build purposes. Please note – this does not mean we have to ensure that you have purchased a plot of land, it is only a requirement to ensure the correct number of plots are granted permission.

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Q. The plots are requires to be serviced, how is this defined?

A serviced plot of land is a plot of land that either has access to a public highway and has connections for electricity, water and waste water, 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.

Access to a public highway can include sections of private or un-adopted road, it does not mean that the plot has to be immediately adjacent to the public highway just that there is the guaranteed right of access to the public highway.

Connections for electricity, water and waste water means that the services must either be provided to the boundary of the plot so that connections can be made as appropriate during construction or adequate alternative arrangements must be possible such as the use of a cesspit rather than mains drainage.

For example a plot of land alongside an existing public highway that is an infill between existing dwellings would count as being serviced. There is no expectation that services must be physically connected to the plot at the time of granting planning permission.

Q. What guidance documents are there on design and topics such as car parking provision, cycle

Sites will be sold with outline planning permission. Reserved matters applications will need to be in accordance with all local planning policies. The design will need to be in line with local policies. Parking will be required in line with the Parking SPD, the level of need for parking is based on the use and location, rather than the individual circumstances of an applicant, as occupants will change over the lifetime of a dwelling. Information, including the Stevenage Design Guide SPD and Parking Provision SPD, is available at <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/149690/planning-policy/90259/>. The Local Plan, Supplementary Planning Documents and all other material considerations are available on our webpage at: <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/149690/planning-policy/90238/>

Q. Where can I find more information?

Information and the Stevenage Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding online application form is available at <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/149690/planning-policy/159560/>

There are a number of useful websites including:

- The National Custom & Self Build Association - <http://www.nacsba.org.uk/>
- The Self Build Portal - <http://www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/>
- The Build Store: <http://www.buildstore.co.uk/>
- Build It Magazine - <http://www.self-build.co.uk/about-build-it-magazine>

There are also national homebuilding shows.