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Collective Custom Build is a web-based advocacy tool that makes the case for developing Collective Custom Build as part of a more diverse housing market in the UK. It uses an animated narrative to curate key research findings, revealing them as peelbacks at key points in its argument.

Collective Custom Build is part of the *Motivating Collective Custom Build* practice-based research project within the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded *Home Improvements Knowledge Exchange* based at the University of Sheffield. *Motivating Collective Custom Build* is led jointly by the University of Sheffield School of Architecture, Ash Sakula Architects and Design for Homes.

NEXT STEPS: GROUPS

NEXT STEPS FOR GROUPS THAT WANT TO BUILD THEIR OWN HOMES OR INDIVIDUALS WHO WANT TO FIND A GROUP

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Summary

A number of key publications have recommended actions that could be taken by independent groups of people that wish to build their own homes to enable the greater fulfilment of Collective Custom Build (Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013; NaSBA, 2013, 2012a, 2012b, 2011; Parvin et al., 2011; Self Build Portal, 2013a; Wallace et al., 2013).

This study has also found that the most effective strategy in successful examples has been the identification and establishment of partnerships between other-wise independent groups and organisations from public, private and third sectors - often termed 'development partners' - in order to work mutually and overcome significant barriers, such as identification and access to suitable land, access to finance - particularly short-term development finance - forming and maintaining a successful Collective Custom Build group, and negotiating planning and other statutory obligations.

A number of sources suggest that the most effective course of action that can be taken by a self-providing group is to become constituted - adopting a governance structure and identity that enables the group to act as a legal entity and engage formally with stakeholders in the construction industry, such as planners, developers and other agencies (Hill, 2013a, 2013b; Self Build Portal, 2013b; Stevens, 2013a). Learning points highlighted by existing case studies - such as the Ashley Vale Action Group (Moulding, 2012; Self Build Portal, 2013e), and the Low-Impact Living Affordable Community (LILAC, 2013) - suggest that this is crucial in securing development partners and overcoming significant barriers facing groups that want to build their own homes.

Other sources suggest that groups should pro-actively lobby Local Authority, both in identifying potential sites and asking for technical support, as well as highlighting that the Authority has a duty under the NPPF to both assess the demand of - and plan for - those that wish to build their own homes¹ (Self Build Portal, 2013b; Stevens, 2013a, 2013b). Groups can also approach developers with the proposition that they become the first phase of an otherwise 'normal' development, seeding the project with an attractive community that attracts other customers, an idea familiar to UK house-builders who also conduct business in North America (Hill, 2013a, 2013b).

¹ Please refer to 'Statue & Policy' in the study.

The Self Build Portal provides some 'next steps' for groups and individuals wishing to find, initiate or join an 'independent community collaboration'², 'supported community self-build group'³ or 'developer-led group project'⁴ (Self Build Portal, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d). Groups should read about and learn from case studies and precedent examples of groups of people coming together to build their own homes, including visiting schemes and meeting the people that were instrumental in initiating the project.

There are also emerging means of access for individuals that wish to find or form a group in order to self-provide housing. For example, CommunityBuild.org.uk⁵ provides a 'match-making' service for independent groups, as well as a map-based database for identifying land (CommunityBuild, 2013). Some 'Custom Build Developers' - who offer to manage a Custom Build process on behalf of individual households on multi-unit sites - also offer some form of match-making service (see Solidspace, 2013a, 2013b) and do not work out working for already-formed groups of people, whilst some - such as HAB Housing⁶ - offer the opportunity to become an investor in the company itself (HAB, 2013).

Existing umbrella organisations, such as the National CLT Network⁷ and UK Cohousing Network⁸ already offer support to groups - and individuals wishing to join a group - in becoming established and developing a project. In most cases they can also make connections with local sources of support (National CLT Network, 2013; UK Cohousing Network, 2013).

Groups can also seek financial advice or assistance from 'ethical lenders' such as the Triodos bank⁹, or the Ecology Building Society¹⁰ who have specific agenda of lending to community projects and have supported a number of the innovative Collective Custom Build schemes discussed in this study. The Tudor Trust (Tudor Trust, 2013) for example, were instrumental in bringing forward schemes with the Holy Isle of Lindisfarne Development Company, a constituted group of self-providers set up to manage a Community Land Trust in partnership with a local housing association (Peacock, 2011).

Parvin et al. (2011) also suggest and illustrate a number of 'near-future scenarios' in which self-provided housing could be 'scaled up' as a mainstream option, including details of the roles required of key stakeholders, such as Local Authorities, other public and third sector organisations, developers and self-providing groups (Ibid. 2011, pp. 125–143)¹¹. The study also includes an 'index of key actions' required to create the conditions for each scenario (Ibid. 2011, p. 152).

Parvin et al. recommend a series of key actions that could be taken by self-providing groups:

- *Co-operate* - Connect with other groups, organisations and networks to share and aggregate knowledge, risk and market power.
- *Establish a 'constitution'* - It is often remarked upon that the slowness and difficulty of initiating self-provision schemes is a major cause of pessimism for self-providing groups. Yet equally, it is also highlighted that the long pre-project interval is necessary to calmly establish common aims and design principles, as well as equitable systems for making decisions.

² Please visit www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/independent-community-collaboration

³ Please visit www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/supported-community-self-build-group

⁴ Please visit www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/developer-led-group-project

⁵ Please visit www.communitybuild.org.uk

⁶ Please visit www.habhousing.co.uk

⁷ Please visit www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk

⁸ Please visit www.cohousing.org.uk

⁹ See www.triodos.co.uk/en/personal/

¹⁰ See www.ecology.co.uk/

¹¹ The scenarios explored by Parvin et al. include Suburban Co-housing, Urban Community Land Trusts and Self-Build Zones (Ibid. 2011, pp. 125–143).

- *Appoint a project manager* - The occasionally conflicted and adversarial nature of the design process is more or less inevitable, and perhaps important. Thus it has been suggested from a number of sources that the appointment of a neutral project manager is a worthwhile investment in terms of overall savings, and helpful in bringing building procurement expertise which extends to, for example, whole life-cycle costing etc. This may or may not be the architect.
- *Design process as well as product* - As well as negotiating the design of the 'finished' houses and neighbourhood, explore ways of reducing cost, risk and financial thresholds through the design of the houses, including density, degrees of individual customisation and scope for allowing members of the group with relevant skills to invest 'sweat equity' in a fair, verifiable way.
- *Innovative Models* - Investigate innovative procurement and tenure models which suit the situation and the aims of the project, possibly including Community Land Trusts and mutual home / land ownership, or equitable ways of co-investing in neighbourhood infrastructure, such as shared resources or micro-regeneration.

(Parvin et al., 2011, p. 154)

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This excerpt is taken from www.collectivecustombuild.org and forms a single element of a wider research study. Please visit the website or contact us at collectivecustombuild@sheffield.ac.uk for more information.



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homeimprovements