

# **Self and Custom Build**

## **Monitoring report**

**May 2025**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 [The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015](#) (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016) and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 forms part of the government's agenda to increase the supply of homes through self and custom build. The Act provides a legal definition of self and custom housebuilding and is further described in [Planning Practice Guidance](#) as covering a wide range of self build projects. These can vary from where individuals or an association are involved in building or managing the construction of their home from beginning to end, to the other end of the scale where they commission their home, making key design and layout decisions. The Government wants to increase the capacity and diversity of the housebuilding industry to build more high-quality new homes faster and believes expanding the self and custom build sector will make an important contribution to this.
- 1.2 The Act required local planning authorities to establish a register by April 1, 2016, and to maintain it thereafter to keep a register of individuals and associations of individuals, who want to acquire serviced building plots in the authority's area. Herefordshire Council established a self and custom build register on April 1, 2016.
- 1.3 [The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Regulations 2016](#), set out detail on the requirements for custom build registers including the ability for relevant authorities to define their own eligibility criteria in limited circumstances, and provide the detail required for the section 2A duty. However, at this stage, Herefordshire Council does not set any eligibility criteria but it does ask optional questions about local connections. The regulations also define a serviced plot of land as being land with, or that can be provided with, utilities (electricity, water and wastewater) and access to the public highway.
- 1.4 [The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding \(Time for Compliance and Fees\) Regulations 2016 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#) requires local planning authorities to grant planning permissions for serviced plots (or those capable of being serviced) to equal the number of entries onto the register in a given period (known as base periods) within 3 years of the end of each base period. These regulations also allow local

planning authorities to charge a fee to be entered onto the register. However, Herefordshire Council does not charge any fee for this.

- 1.5 [The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 \(LURA\)](#), includes a number of provisions which amend the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act. Under these new changes, all Local Planning Authorities are now required to only count permissions that can be specified as self-build or custom housebuilding. These measures are intended to prevent Local Authorities counting all or a proportion of single plots as self-build or custom housebuilding. It should be noted however that Herefordshire Council has only counted plots where there is some evidence of self-build or custom housebuilding. This process is explained in more detail in section 4 of this report.
- 1.6 Another key change brought into effect by the LURA is on how unmet demand is dealt with by Local Authorities. The amendments in the LURA now specify that any unmet demand within the 3 year period will be rolled over to the following year.
- 1.7 The legislation sets out the information that should be collected by local authorities from people who are entering their details onto the register. However, applicants can be asked to provide optional additional information to help provide a better understanding of the nature of demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in their area. This in turn can be used inform local planning policies and assist in bring forward appropriate land. In the case of Herefordshire this will be used to inform the new Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Development Plans.

## **2. Planning Policy**

- 2.1 [The Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy](#) was adopted in October 2015 prior to the legislation coming into force and the Herefordshire Self and Custom Build register being set up. Therefore, the Core Strategy does not include policies that specifically refer to self and custom build but it does reference support for the principle to develop self and custom plots, in the supporting text of the document. A

Herefordshire Local Plan 2021 - 2041 was being developed, and a [Regulation 18](#) version was published for consultation between March and May 2024. This included draft Policy BC3 relating to self-build and custom build housing.

2.2 However, following the update to the NPPF and the mandatory housing targets published in December 2024, the council made a decision to cease any further work on the Draft Regulation 18 Local Plan as a new spatial strategy is required to address the significant uplift in housing growth. The Council is therefore progressing the Local Plan under the Levelling up and Regeneration Act (LURA) 2023 System. Further information about this can be found in the latest [Local Development Scheme](#).

2.3 A number of [Neighbourhood Development Plans](#) include policies, allocations or reference to self and custom build in their documents. A list of these can be found in Appendix 1.

### 3. The Herefordshire Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register

3.1 [The Herefordshire County Self-build and Custom Build Register](#) was established in April, 2016, and has been available for people to submit their application through the Herefordshire council website [online form](#).

3.2 The table below sets out the number of individuals and associations registered for each base period since the 1 April 2016.

**Table 1: Number of Registrants entered on individual base periods.**

Base Period (BP)	Number of Individuals	Number of Associations of Individuals
BP1: 1 April 2016-30 October 2016	174	1

<b>Base Period (BP)</b>	<b>Number of Individuals</b>	<b>Number of Associations of Individuals</b>
<b>BP2:</b> 31 October 2016 – 30 October 2017	139	0
<b>BP3:</b> 31 October 2017 -30 October 2018	76	0
<b>BP4:</b> 31 October 2018 -30 October 2019	82	0
<b>BP5</b> 31 October 2019 -30 October 2020	59	0
<b>BP6</b> 31 October 2020 -30 October 2021	111	2
<b>BP7</b> 31 October 2021 -30 October 2022	74	0
<b>BP8</b> 31 October 2022 -30 October 2023	33	0
<b>BP9</b> 31 October 2023 – 30 October 2024	46	0

#### **4 Planning permissions granted to meet the demand on the registers.**

4.1 [Planning Practice Guidance](#) states that a relevant authority must be satisfied that development permissions being counted meet the legislative requirements. In order to achieve this, the Council has analysed planning permissions granted between 31 October 2016 and 30 October 2024 and has counted planning permissions using the following criteria:

- Planning applications that have self or custom build in their description;
- Those identifying the proposal as self-build in the 'housing type' section of the planning application form.
- Where there is evidence in the design and access statement, planning statement or correspondence relating to the planning application.
- Known to Planning Officers from discussion with agent and /or applicant.

4.2 The council considers that this is a fair and reasonable approach and that these meet the legislative requirements. However, there are some planning applications where it is not always clear whether an application is for self or custom build or is for market housing. In these cases, the permissions are not included in the monitoring and therefore there is likely to be an underestimation of the number of planning permissions that have been counted as self or custom build.

4.3 Details of individual permissions that have been counted towards meeting the demand for self and custom build shown on the registers for base periods 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 can be found in the appendices. The following table also summarises this information:

**Table 2 Number of plots granted planning permission that meets definition of self and custom build for the first 5 base periods.**

<b>Base Period Number</b>	<b>Dates of Base Period</b>	<b>Number of plots required</b>	<b>Number of plots granted planning permission granted within the 3 years following the end of the base period</b>	<b>Shortfall in meeting demand</b>
1	1 April 2016- October 30 2016	175	175	0
2	31 October 2016 –30 October 2017	139	139	0
3	31 October 2017 – 30 October 2018	76	69	7



<b>Base Period Number</b>	<b>Dates of Base Period</b>	<b>Number of plots required</b>	<b>Number of plots granted planning permission granted within the 3 years following the end of the base period</b>	<b>Shortfall in meeting demand</b>
4	31 October 2018 – 30 October 2019	82	73	9
5	31 October 2019 – 30 October 2020	59	42	17
6	31 October 2020 – 30 October 2021	111	55	56
			<b>Total Shortfall</b>	<b>89</b>

4.4 Table 2 shows that the demand expressed within Base Periods 1 & 2 has been met within the 3 years from the end of those periods. However, it can be seen that there

is a shortfall of meeting the demand expressed on the register from base period 3. This amounts to a total short fall of 89 plots.

- 4.5 It should be noted that the Council has adopted a cautious approach to identifying Self and Custom builds and it may be that the figures reported here are an underrepresentation due to not all planning applications providing background information.
- 4.6 The council considers that this shortfall is also attributable to restrictions in granting planning permissions within the River Lugg catchment. In Herefordshire, the River Wye and its tributaries are recognised as being of international importance for their unique character and wildlife, requiring the highest level of protection, management, enhancement and, where appropriate, restoration. The River Lugg is part of this catchment. Herefordshire Council as the 'competent authority' under the Habitats Regulations, (The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017) is legally required to assess the potential impacts of projects and plans, on internationally important sites which include the River Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
- 4.7 The River Lugg Special Area of Conservation (SAC), is currently failing to meet its conservation targets. Therefore, developments are required to demonstrate nutrient neutrality in order for a Habitat Regulations Assessment to be signed off and planning permission granted. Analysis of planning applications that are currently 'on hold' because of this situation, shows that they include a number of applications that are considered to be self or custom build, that would help to meet the shortfall on the register.
4. Herefordshire Council is addressing this issue through a number of projects and mechanism including the creation of the integrated wetlands in the Lugg catchment area. Details of these measures can be found on the council's Nutrient Management web pages. These include a Phosphates credit system, which enables developers to acquire phosphate credits as a means of mitigating and achieving nutrient neutrality. Phosphate credits generated from the wetlands project are allocated in validation date order.

## **5.0 Key characteristics of entrants for all base periods**

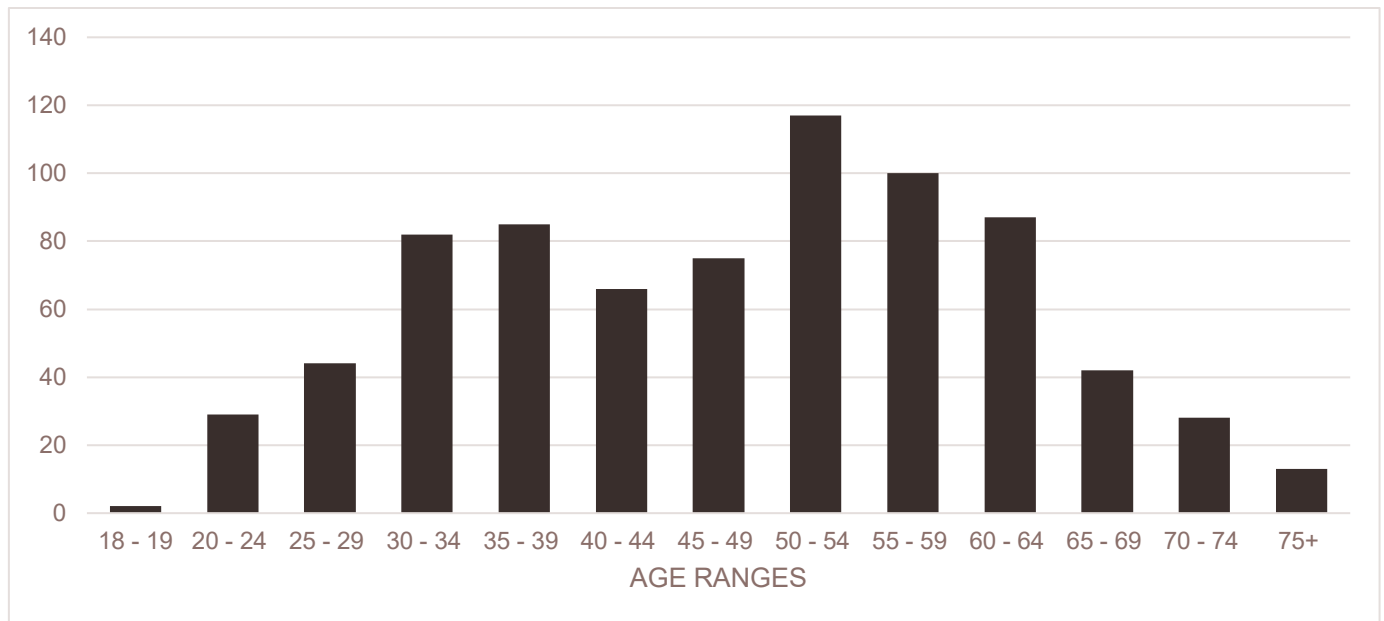
5.1 This section provides some anonymised information about the requirements and profiles of the registrants.

5.2 When people enter their details on the register they are invited to provide some background on the reasons for wanting to self or custom build. These are often referred to in the supporting information accompanying planning applications that have been counted towards meeting the self and custom build requirements. The reasons given for wanting to self or custom build are varied. The list below includes some of the frequently given reasons:

- To provide for caring needs of family member.
- To find location close to work / own business.
- To include workshop / work from home space.
- To provide a retirement home / to down size.
- To create an eco, green home / Passivhaus standards / zero emissions / low carbon.
- To downsize for smaller cost effective property.
- To create a modern sustainable home for young family.
- Want to build in a family group / create a multi-generational home.
- To reduce costs / own home within budget / to get on the property ladder.
- To meet own specific design requirements.
- To enable a garden big enough to meet requirements / grow own vegetables / small holding.
- To build a lifetime home.

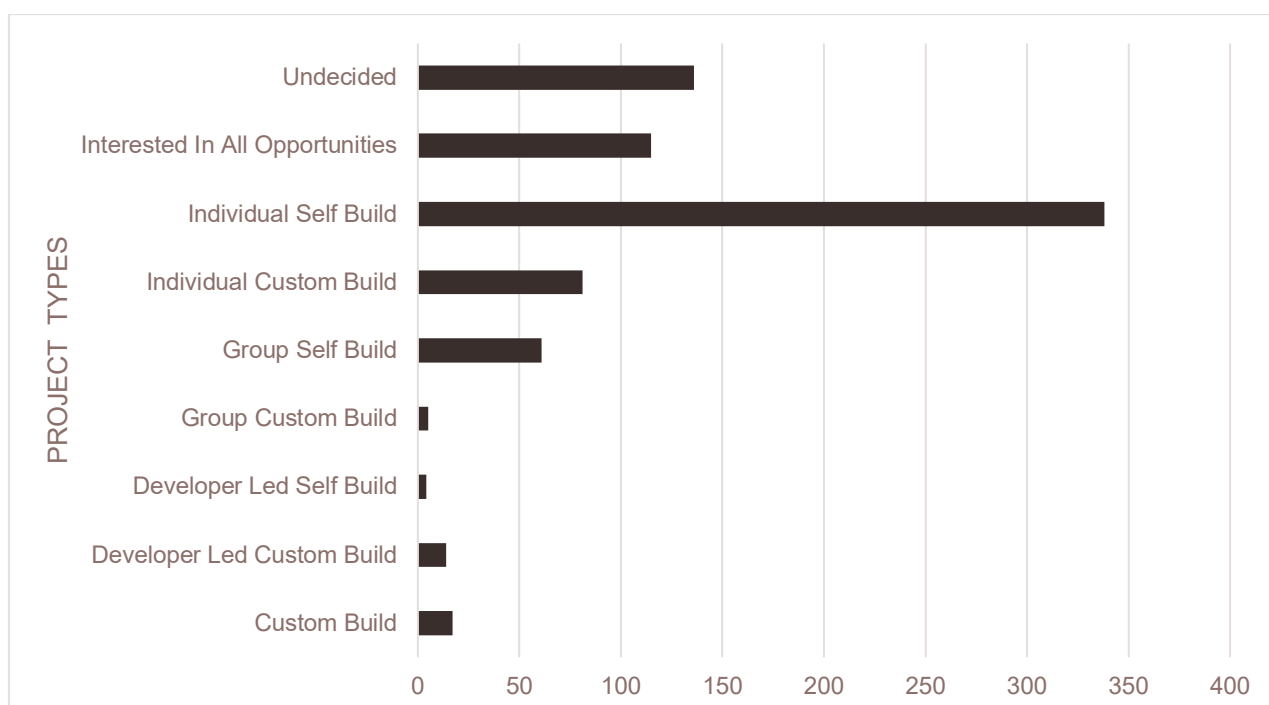
**5.3 Age profile of residents:** This chart displays the age ranges of registrants. The most represented age group is 50–54, followed by 55–59 and 60–64, indicating strong interest from older adults approaching or in early retirement. There is also a significant number of registrants in the 30–39 age range, showing interest among younger adults. Very few are aged under 25 or over 75. Overall, the data suggests that middle-aged registrants (50 – 59) are the most represented group on the register.

**Figure 1 Age of Registrants**



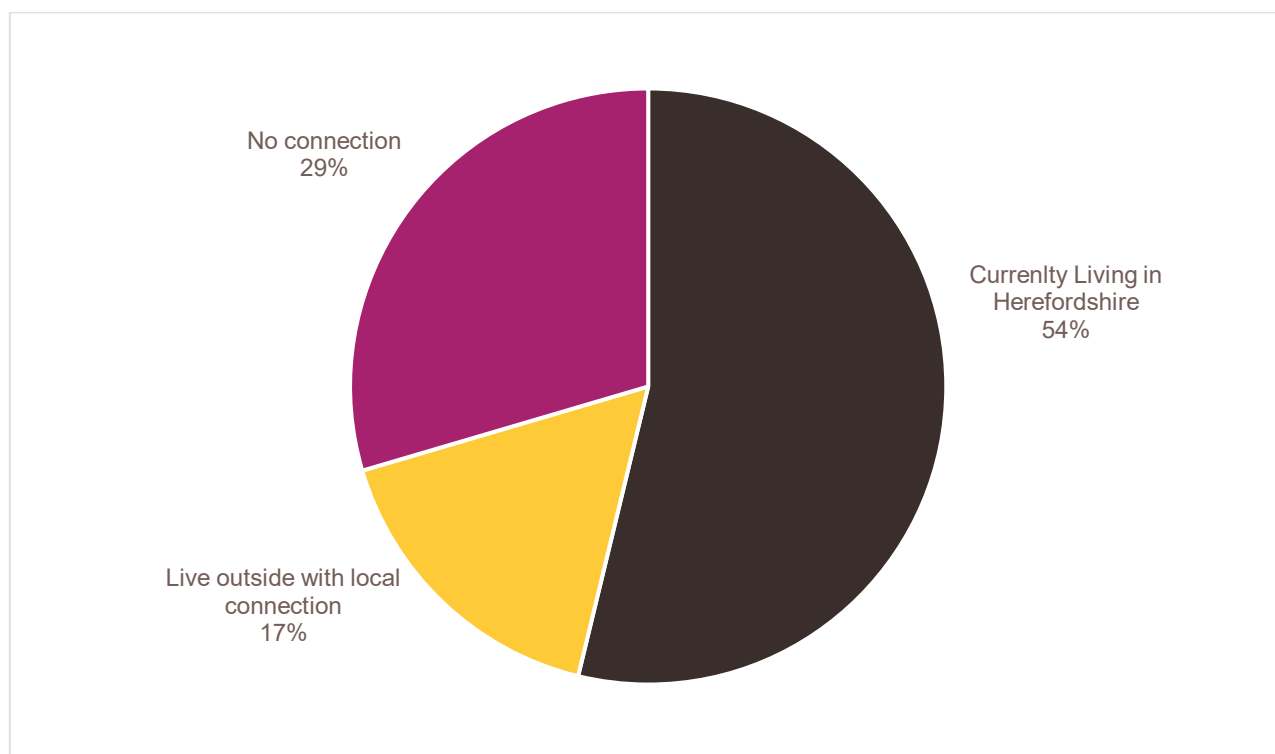
**5.4 Project Type:** The chart below shows what type of self-build and custom housebuilding project registrants were interested in. The most popular choice expressed was for Individual Self-build, followed by a moderate interest in both those who were Undecided or Interested in all opportunities. Registrants showed minimal interest in Group Custom Build and Developer Led options.

**Figure 2 Project Type**



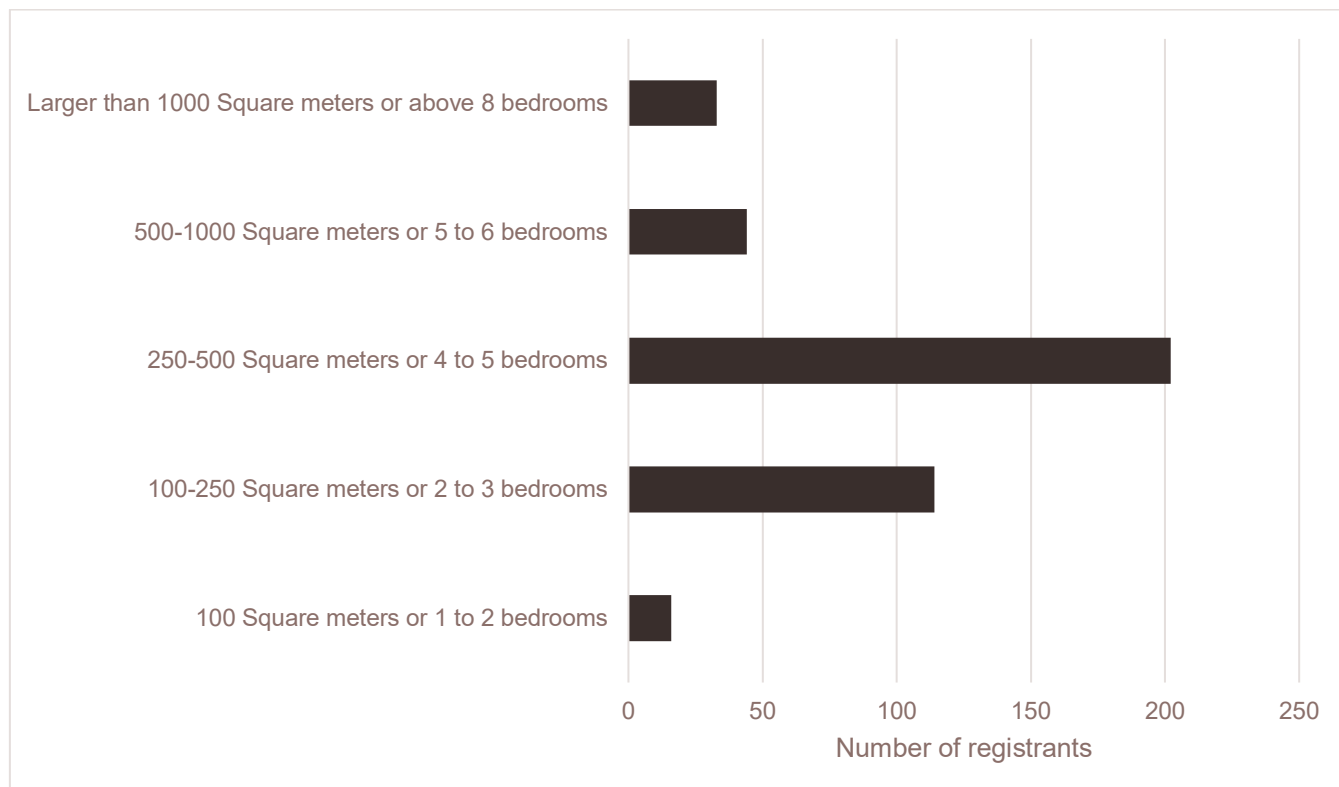
**5.5 Local connection:** The chart illustrates the local connection of registrants to Herefordshire. More than half (54%) of those registered currently live in Herefordshire, 17% of registrants lived outside the county but have a local connection (have close family or work in county). 29% of registrants had no local connection to Herefordshire, showing a notable interest for outside the County. Although Herefordshire does not apply a local connection test to those registering, registrants are invited to provide information on their connection to the county for monitoring purposes.

**Figure 3 Local Connection**



**5.6 Plot Size:** This bar chart displays preferred plot sizes. The highest demand is for 250-500m<sup>2</sup> or 4-5 Bedrooms showing significantly higher demand than other plot sizes. This is followed by 100-250m<sup>2</sup>. Smaller plots of 100 m<sup>2</sup> and those 500m<sup>2</sup> and larger (5 to 8+ Bedrooms) show considerably less demand.

**Figure 4 Plot Size**



**5.7 Location Preferences:** The data shows that 34% of people are specifically seeking rural locations, a larger proportion (49%) are flexible in the location, open to considering both urban and rural options. Only 17% of registrants are specifically looking for urban locations in Hereford or the market towns.

**Figure 5 Location Preferences**

