



Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

Self-Build Register Reform Consultation

August - September 2026

What is the Self-Build Register?

The Self-Build Register is maintained by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council to record people and organisations interested in purchasing serviced plots of land for self-build and custom housebuilding projects.

A **serviced plot** is a piece of land with services connected (water, electricity, drainage, etc.), ready for someone to build their own home (through self-build or with a custom builder).

The register helps the Council understand how much demand there is for self-build and custom build opportunities in the borough. It also supports Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan (2020-2040) Policy HOU6, which sets out the policy approach to self-build and custom-build housing in the borough

Why is this important? The Self-Build Register provides essential evidence for planning decisions and helps us understand the true demand for self-build opportunities in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Why Are We Changing the Register?

Current Limitations

We are looking to improve our register in several ways:

- **To introduce eligibility checks:** to ensure a genuine connection to Newcastle-under-Lyme and a realistic ability to proceed. These changes will support the Council's understanding of demand in the Borough.
- **To provide a structure:** to provide a structure for the Council in considering entries onto the register, including the ability to remove outdated entries.

What the Council Has Approved

The Council has approved:

- A **Local Connection Test** to ensure applicants have a genuine tie to the borough.
- A **Self-Declaration of Financial Capacity** to confirm applicants are serious about purchasing land.
- A **two-part register structure** to manage different levels of connection and readiness.

- **Registration fees** (£42 initial application, £21 annual renewal) to cover costs of running the register.

The eligibility criteria represent the implementation of these Council-approved decisions. These changes will help us meet our statutory duty credibly and deliver Policy HOU6 effectively.

We are consulting on a number of aspects of the tests proposed to be introduced before implementing the new arrangements, as set out through this consultation document.

Local Plan Policy HOU6

Our Local Plan includes Policy HOU6 (Self Build and Custom Dwellings), which sets out the policy position on how the borough council will consider proposals for self-build and custom-build housing in the borough. The policy requires the Council to seek the provision of serviced plots on suitable residential developments, with the amount of provision based on:

- Identified demand on the Self and Custom Build Register
- The size and nature of the development
- Site-specific constraints and viability considerations

The Self-Build Register is therefore essential evidence for implementing this policy and ensuring we understand genuine local demand for self-build opportunities.

How the New System Works

Two-Part Register Structure

Part 1: Main Register

You are entered on Part 1 if you meet **all** of the following:

- The national eligibility criteria (you are seeking a serviced plot to build your own home).
- The **Local Connection Test** (you have a genuine connection to Newcastle-under-Lyme).
- The **Self-Declaration of Financial Capacity** (you can realistically purchase a serviced plot within 5 years).

Part 1 entries **count towards our statutory duty**. This is the register inspectors, planners, and the public can rely on to understand genuine demand.

Part 2: Broader Interest Register

You are entered on Part 2 if you meet the national criteria but do not meet the Local Connection Test or Self-Declaration. Examples:

- Someone newly moved to the area.
- Someone genuinely interested but currently lacking financial resources.

Part 2 entries **do not count towards our statutory duty**, but you remain registered and can come forward if suitable plots become available. You can also move to Part 1 at any time when your circumstances change.

Part 2 is a pathway to Part 1, not a barrier. We want to keep people engaged with the register as their circumstances evolve.

National Eligibility Criteria (Applies to Both Parts)

All applicants must first meet the national eligibility criteria in the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Regulations 2016:

- Seeking to acquire a plot of serviced land.
- Intending to build (or complete) a house for own occupation.
- Project falls within the definition of self-build or custom housebuilding.

Proposed Eligibility Criteria for Part 1

To qualify for Part 1 of the Self-Build Register, you must demonstrate a local connection by meeting **at least one** of the following criteria, and you must make a self-declaration of financial capacity.

The Local Connection Test

Route 1: Residency

The applicant has resided in the borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme by choice for:

- A continuous period of at least **two years** immediately prior to the application; **OR**
- A period of at least **three out of the last five years** immediately prior to the application.

What "residency by choice" means: Voluntary, settled residency. This excludes:

- Bail hostels or detention facilities
- Inpatient hospital care
- University student accommodation (unless permanently settled)
- Temporary accommodation
- Accommodation under the Mental Health Act

Example: Sarah lived in Newcastle 2019–2022, moved away, and returned in January 2023, living continuously since. In November 2025, she applies. She meets the test (2 years continuous residency since January 2023).

Route 2: Employment

The applicant has settled employment within Newcastle-under-Lyme for a minimum period of three out of the last five years immediately prior to the application.

Settled employment is defined as:

- **For employees:** A permanent or fixed-term contract of employment for a minimum of 16 hours per week; **OR**
- **For self-employed:** Operating a viable business or trade primarily based within the borough for a minimum of 16 hours per week.
- **Exceptional circumstances:** Unpaid voluntary work undertaken for a recognised organisation on a regular basis may be considered as settled employment at the Council's discretion.

Example: James has worked at a firm in Newcastle town centre as a permanent employee (30 hours per week) for the last 4 years. He meets the test, even though he currently lives outside the area.

Route 3: Family Association

The applicant has a close family association with the borough, defined as a parent (including step-parent), sibling (including step-sibling), an adult child (including step-child or adopted child), or a spouse, civil partner, or long-term partner who has lived continuously in the borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme for at least five years immediately prior to the application.

Example: Daniel's parents have lived continuously in Newcastle for 7 years. Daniel moved to the area 2 years ago but meets the family connection test through his parents' residency.

Statutory Exemptions

The Local Connection Test does not apply to the following groups, who only need to make the Self-Declaration of Financial Capacity to go onto Part 1:

- a) A member of the Armed Forces or former Service personnel where the application is made within five years of discharge.
- b) A bereaved spouse or civil partner of a member of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner.

c) A serving or former member of the Reserve Forces who needs to move because of a serious injury, medical condition, or disability sustained as a result of their service.

Rationale: These exemptions recognise the particular circumstances of Armed Forces members and veterans, who may not have maintained settled local connections due to postings and service commitments.

Self-Declaration of Financial Capacity

To be entered on Part 1 of the Self-Build Register, an applicant must make a self-declaration confirming that they have, or will have access to, sufficient financial resources to purchase a serviced plot of land for self-build or custom housebuilding in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

The Self-Declaration Statement

Applicants will be asked to confirm:

"I confirm that I have, or will have access to, sufficient financial resources to purchase a serviced plot of land for self-build or custom housebuilding in Newcastle-under-Lyme within the next five years."

How It Works

At Application: You make the self-declaration on the form. No evidence is required at this stage.

At Annual Renewal: You reconfirm the declaration. If circumstances change and you can no longer confirm it, you will be moved to Part 2 but remain registered. You can move back to Part 1 when circumstances improve.

If Circumstances Change: You can move from Part 2 to Part 1 at any time by reconfirming the declaration.

How to Apply: Evidence Required

Evidence for the Local Connection Test

You must provide evidence for **at least one** of the following routes:

Route	Evidence Required
Residency	Council Tax bill or utility bill (name and address); Tenancy agreement or mortgage statement; Electoral register confirmation

Route	Evidence Required
Employment	Recent payslips (last 3 months); Employment contract; Letter from employer on headed paper; For self-employed: business rates, accounts, or tax returns
Family Connection	Council Tax or utility bill for family member; Birth certificate or proof of relationship; Statement explaining relationship
Armed Forces	Military ID card; Discharge papers (showing date of leaving); Veteran ID card

Evidence for the Self-Declaration of Financial Capacity

No evidence is required at the point of application. You will simply confirm the self-declaration statement on the application form. The Council may request verification if a suitable plot becomes available.

Assessment Process and Timescale

The Council will assess your application within 20 working days of receipt. If we need further information, we will contact you.

If you meet the Local Connection Test and confirm the Self-Declaration of Financial Capacity, you will be entered on **Part 1**. If you do not meet one or both criteria, you will be entered on **Part 2** (provided you meet national eligibility criteria).

Reviews

If you are placed on Part 2 and believe you should be on Part 1, you can request a review by providing additional evidence or clarification.

In exceptional circumstances, the Council may exercise discretion to place an applicant on Part 1 where there is compelling evidence, even if standard criteria are not fully met. Such decisions will be made by senior officers and fully documented.

Associations and Groups

For associations or groups applying jointly (e.g., co-housing groups):

- **Standard approach:** At least one member must meet both the Local Connection Test and the Self-Declaration of Financial Capacity.
 - **Exceptional circumstances:** Where the majority of members meet both requirements, the Council may exercise flexibility, recognising the complex nature of group self-build projects.
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Fees

The following fees apply:

- **Initial application:** £42 per person or association
- **Annual renewal:** £21 per person or association

Why Fees?

Fees help us:

- Cover the cost of administering an improved service.
- Maintain register accuracy through renewal reminders and removal of inactive entries.
- Deter speculative applications and ensure genuine demand is reflected.

Fee Waivers

The Council will consider waivers or reductions on a case-by-case basis for applicants facing genuine financial hardship. To request a waiver, please contact us confidentially at planningpolicy@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk

Please note: Fees are subject to annual review and may be adjusted by the Council.

Annual Renewal and Existing Applicants

Each year, you will need to renew your registration by:

- Confirming your details are still correct.
- Reconfirming the Self-Declaration of Financial Capacity (if on Part 1).
- Confirming you remain interested in self-building.
- Paying the annual renewal fee.

If you do not renew, your entry will be removed from the register, but you can re-apply at any time.

If you are currently on the Self-Build Register, you will need to re-apply under the new system.

Fairness and Equality Considerations

We have designed these criteria to be fair and proportionate. Here is how we have addressed key fairness concerns:

Local Connection Test Design

- **Multiple routes:** The Local Connection Test offers three different ways to demonstrate connection (residency, employment, family), recognising that people have different life circumstances.
- **Flexibility:** The "3 out of 5 years" option recognises that people may have moved but retain strong local ties.
- **Clarity on exclusions:** The definition of "residency by choice" is clear about what counts and what doesn't, providing certainty.
- **Armed Forces exemption:** Recognises special circumstances of military service.
- **Consistency:** The approach aligns with the Council's Housing Allocations Policy, ensuring consistency across our services.

Self-Declaration of Financial Capacity

- **Accessible approach:** The self-declaration requires no complex evidence gathering, making it accessible to people with different circumstances.
- **Realistic timeframe:** The 5-year timeframe is generous and recognises that people's circumstances change.
- **Movement between parts:** Applicants can move between Part 2 and Part 1 as circumstances improve, ensuring the register remains dynamic and fair.

Other protections

- **Fee waivers:** Available on a case-by-case basis for people facing genuine hardship.
- **Multiple evidence options:** For each criterion, we accept different types of evidence, recognising that people may not have all documents.
- **Annual renewal with protection:** Applicants in temporary difficulty can move to Part 2 and return to Part 1 when circumstances improve.

We welcome your feedback if you have concerns about whether these criteria might disadvantage any particular group or protected characteristic. Please let us know what mitigations we could consider.

Data Protection and Privacy

Information you provide in your application will be processed in accordance with the Council's data protection policies and UK GDPR. Your information will be used only to manage the Self-Build Register and will not be shared with third parties without your consent.

We will publish a summary of responses received. Your name and organisation may be attributed to your response in our consultation report. For more information about how the Council uses personal data, or to exercise your data protection rights, please see our **Planning Policy Privacy Notice** at:

<https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/privacy-notices/planning-policy-privacy-notice>

We Want Your Feedback

We are consulting with stakeholders on these proposals because we want to get them right. Your experience, expertise, and concerns are valuable to us.

Please respond to the following eight questions:

Question 1: Local Connection Test - Proportionality and Practicality

The proposed local connection test includes residency, employment, and family association routes.

Please provide your feedback on:

- Are these criteria proportionate and practical to implement?
 - Are the timescales (2 years continuous, 3 out of 5 years, etc.) reasonable and realistic?
 - From your perspective, are there practical barriers to applicants meeting these tests?
 - Should we adjust any element of the approach?
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Question 2: Self-Declaration of Financial Capacity - Workability and Clarity

We've proposed a simple self-declaration question asking applicants to confirm they have, or will have, sufficient resources to purchase a plot within five years.

Please provide your feedback on:

- Is this approach clear and workable?

- Is the five-year timeframe appropriate, or should it be different?
 - Will applicants understand what the declaration means?
 - Are there any concerns about this approach?
 - Should we provide more guidance on what constitutes "sufficient financial resources"?
-

Question 3: Two-Part Register - Clarity and Workability

Part 2 is for people who don't currently meet Part 1 criteria.

Please provide your feedback on:

- Is it clear what Part 2 is for and how it operates?
 - Will the two-part structure work effectively from your perspective?
 - Are there concerns about Part 2 that we should address?
-

Question 4: Associations and Co-Housing Groups - Approach and Flexibility

We propose that associations need at least one member to meet both Local Connection and Self-Declaration tests, with flexibility for co-housing groups where majority of members meet requirements.

Please provide your feedback on:

- Is this approach fair and workable?
 - Should we adjust the approach?
 - Do you have experience with group/association self-build that would help us understand what's needed?
-

Question 5: Fairness and Equality - Your Assessment

We've designed criteria to be proportionate and fair.

Please provide your feedback on:

- Do you have concerns that they might disadvantage any particular group or protected characteristic?
- If so, what could we do to mitigate?

Question 6: Practical Implementation - What Will We Need to Know?

Thinking about how the criteria will work in practice.

Please provide your feedback on:

- What practical guidance or support will stakeholders/applicants need?
- Are there implementation challenges we haven't considered?
- How could the application process be made clearer or easier?

Question 7: Overall Effectiveness

Please provide your feedback on:

Do you think these changes will:

- Make the register more accurate and credible?
- Help the Council meet its statutory duty effectively?
- Support Policy HOU6 delivery?
- Improve self-build opportunities in Newcastle-under-Lyme?

Question 8: Any Other Comments?

Please use this space for any additional feedback, including:

- Experiences with self-build that would help us understand what's needed.
- Concerns about any aspect of the proposal.
- Positive comments on things you particularly support.
- Ideas for improvement.
- Any other points you'd like us to consider.

How to Respond

About You (for analysis purposes)

To help us understand who is responding to this consultation, please include the following information:

- **Your name** (required)
- **Organisation/Company** (if applicable, or state "N/A" if responding as an individual)
- **Your role/position**
- **Type of stakeholder** (please select the category that best describes you):
 - ☐ Current member of Self-Build Register
 - ☐ Self-build advocacy organisation/group
 - ☐ Developer (general housebuilding)
 - ☐ Developer (self-build focused)
 - ☐ Planning agent/professional
 - ☐ Council officer/elected member
 - ☐ Housing association/partner organisation
 - ☐ Other (please specify)
- **Email address** (required, so we can contact you if we have questions)

Submitting Your Response

Email your response to: planningpolicy@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk

Deadline: **xx xx 2026**

In your email, please:

- Quote the questions you're responding to.
- Keep comments clear and concise.
- Include your name and contact details if you'd like us to contact you with questions.

Optional: Keep Me Updated

Would you like to receive updates on the progress of the Self-Build Register reform and the outcome of this consultation?

- ☐ Yes, please send me updates via email
- ☐ No, thank you

What Happens Next?

After the consultation closes, we will:

1. **Analyse all responses received** - We will carefully review all feedback and identify key themes, concerns, and suggestions.

2. **Publish a summary of feedback and the Council's response** - We will publish a consultation report outlining the feedback received and explaining how it has influenced our approach. Where we have not adopted a suggestion, we will explain why.
3. **Finalise the eligibility criteria** - Based on consultation feedback, we will refine the eligibility criteria and produce final guidance and training materials.
4. **Communicate the implementation date** - We will announce the launch date for the new register, giving stakeholders time to prepare and communicate the changes to their networks.

You will be kept informed of progress through updates to The Council's website, which can be found at: <https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/planning-policy/building-property>

Further Information

Questions About This Consultation?

Email: planningpolicy@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk

Phone: 01782 742467

Website: <https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/planning-policy/building-property>

For More About Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding

- [National Custom and Self Build Association \(NaCSBA\)](#)
- [Right to Build Task Force](#)
- [GOV.UK Guidance on Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding](#)

Key Points Summary

- ✓ The register helps understand demand for self-build in Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- ✓ We're introducing a **Local Connection Test** (residency, employment, or family) to ensure genuine local ties.
- ✓ We're introducing a **Self-Declaration of Financial Capacity** to confirm serious intent.
- ✓ The **two-part structure** (Part 1 for those meeting both tests; Part 2 for others) provides flexibility and a pathway for people whose circumstances change.

- ✓ Fees of **£42 (initial) and £21 (annual renewal)** help cover costs and maintain accuracy.
- ✓ **Existing members** will need to re-apply under the new system.
- ✓ We have designed the criteria to be **fair and proportionate**, with fee waivers available for hardship and flexibility for group applications.
- ✓ **We welcome your feedback** to ensure the register works fairly and effectively for all stakeholders.