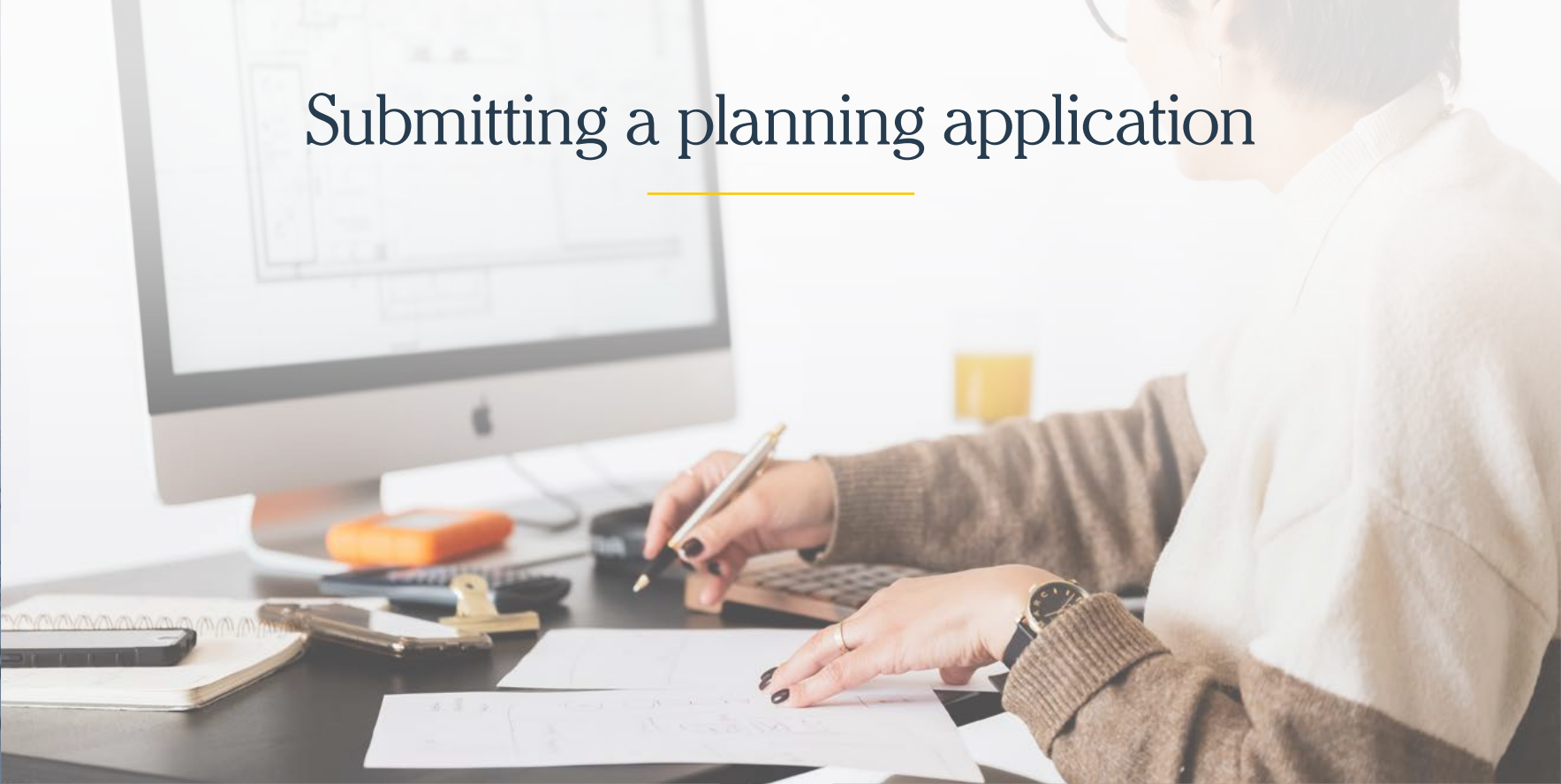




Planning

A self-build guide

A person is shown from the side, sitting at a desk and working. They are wearing a white sweater and a brown cardigan. Their hands are on a desk with various items: a computer monitor, a pen, a calculator, a ruler, and some papers. The background is a blurred office setting. The text 'Submitting a planning application' is overlaid on the image.

Submitting a planning application

At the start of your self-build project you need to consider whether you need planning permission. You usually need to get planning permission if you are constructing something new, making a major change to a building or changing the use of it. It's more than likely that your self-build project will need planning permission. It is possible to have planning permission granted retrospectively but there are also many reported cases of an entire building needing to be demolished. It's never worth taking the risk of going ahead with building work without planning permission in place.

GOING IT ALONE OR FULL SELF-BUILD PACKAGE?



Which way to go with Self-Build

Just as you can project manage the construction of a self-build yourself, it is entirely possible to take care of the planning application process yourself too. However, as with project management, you may decide that you would prefer to have someone else take care of the whole process for you. Our full turnkey self-build package includes every aspect of planning, from initial free planning advice, preparing all the planning submission documents, managing the entire process through to the decision. We have the advantage of decades of experience in streamlining the process, as well as enjoying close working relationships with Local Authorities.

If you are taking care of the planning application yourself, it is well worth taking expert advice at least initially. One of our planning experts, Steve Goodwin, of Goodwin Planning Services says:

"If I could only offer one piece of advice to anyone embarking on a self-build, it would be to ask a planning expert to do a site visit and appraisal before embarking on any work at all. A planning expert can advise you from the outset whether a project is likely to be acceptable or unacceptable in principle, saving potentially thousands of pounds pursuing an unacceptable site and, if acceptable in principle, guiding you on what will be needed to support your planning application."

Fitting in with the Local Development Framework

When you are considering a plot of land and working out whether it is viable for building or not, you need to investigate relevant planning policies and find out if development is promoted in your area. Find out which Local Planning Authority and neighbourhood boundary it falls under and if they have a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan in place which sets out a development framework. You will find these documents on the local council's website.

Once you have looked over these plans, consider whether your self-build project would be in accordance with any existing Local Development



Plan or Neighbourhood plan? Is it inside the settlement boundary? Is it Green Belt or a Conservation Area or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)? If you are looking at a replacement dwelling, find out if the existing building is listed or identified as a Building of Local Importance.

Planning applications are usually decided in accordance with the development plan. If your project needs to be an exception to the plan, you will need to be able to justify it within your application. It is important that you can say why you think your proposed development should be allowed to go ahead.

Timing of surveys is crucial

Ecological issues are really important for almost all development. In Cheshire, for example, any project involving either demolition or restoration is highly likely to require bat and bird surveys. You should consult an ecologist as soon as you can. There are seasonal 'windows' when these surveys can be carried out. If you miss out you may have to wait the best part of a year to complete them before being able to start the planning application process. As well as looking at the potential impact on native species, the ecologist will also recommend what mitigation

measures you need to put in place. This detail will need to be included in your planning application. You also need to consider any trees around the plot and find out if any of them have Preservation Orders. Flood risk is another key area to investigate too.

Other material considerations that the council's planning officer will be looking at are any potential impacts on neighbours, highways implications for access, particularly if it is an isolated spot, or its proximity to an industrial site as this might have noise implications for future occupants. Any of these issues will need to be addressed in your application.



Outline or full planning application

You can apply for outline planning to see if the principle of residential development is allowed or you can proceed straight to a full planning application. There is more cost associated with putting in the full application as you need your whole design to be complete, along with architect's drawings. Generally speaking, if your application is quite straightforward, there is no reason not to go straight to the full planning application.

Prior to submitting an application, you can also have informal contact with a planning officer if you want to. You may be charged for this. Their response will demonstrate if the principle of the project is acceptable and makes it less likely that you will submit an invalid application. You can discuss any potential issues such as infrastructure, including highways, footpaths, power and phone lines and how to address them. You can ask if the council is likely to refuse permission or to impose particular conditions. Remember that it is worth exercising caution though, as councils can tend towards being a little negative at this stage, in order to cover their backs further down the line when the full application is submitted.

Online or 'old school' application

To apply for planning permission, you need to submit a planning application. Planning applications can be made and paid for online via the Planning Portal. Planning fees are set nationally. Following the portal's instructions will show you what type of application you need to make and also which council you need to apply to. The portal has provision to attach documents, fill in the application forms and submit them. You can save as you go and return to it later. If you want, you can still make the application in a more old fashioned way by downloading and printing out the forms and posting hard copies of everything to the council instead.

Your planning application will need to include detailed architectural drawings, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) form, and the Land Ownership certificate. If you do not own the site, or if you only own part of the site, you will need to serve the appropriate notice on the owner.

Details matter, be consistent

The external appearance of a home and the finishing materials used are becoming increasingly important to Local Authorities. You can keep the application section on materials quite general if you wish but you will need to provide details anyway at a later date, so you may as well provide all the details in your application, down to the type of bricks you are going to use. Once you have committed to this level of detail, it is important that you stick to it when it comes to the build. This is because planning permission will be granted on the basis of all the details you are submitting in your application, so any changes risks invalidating it. As well as meticulous attention to details like this, consistency is absolutely key. For example, a small difference between an elevation drawing and the corresponding floor plan will cause delay in validation.

Once you have submitted your application you are allowed to make minor amends and this is comparatively straightforward to do, but it's obviously preferable to be sure of all the details before your submission.

[Contact us](#) to find out more about our free planning advice and full self-build turnkey package, which includes the management of the whole planning application process.

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Once you or your agent have submitted the planning application for your self-build house, you will receive an acknowledgement of receipt. You will then receive a letter to say if your application has been validated, along with an application number, which means you can track your application's progress on the council's website. Most applications are validated within three to five working days from receipt. Major applications are usually validated within ten working days.

Site notices for planning applications

After registering the application, site notices for any applications that fall within a Conservation Area or relate to listed buildings or a public right of way will be displayed. In some areas, councils want site notices posted for all applications near to the proposed building works. These days, quite often, the applicant is required to post these notices and provide photographic evidence that this has been done. A public consultation period of three weeks then starts.

The council will write to any neighbours who may be affected by the construction to ask if they want to look at the plans and make any comments. The council will make statutory consultations to the local Highways department, and if applicable the Environment Agency. This public consultation period also allows any other interested parties, such as the local parish council or specific interest groups to make any comments on the plans and express their views.

Expert planning help

Remember, if any aspect of your planning application is likely to be considered at all contentious, your planning expert will have provided a planning statement that demonstrates how your proposal is in compliance with planning policy. A design statement will also have been drawn up that provides more information about your project. Similarly, if your plot of land is in a conservation area or is near to listed buildings, a heritage statement will also accompany your application. The Council's Highways



department will be interested to see a traffic statement if access to the plot has any potentially dangerous aspects.

If anyone wants to make any representations on your application, these will be logged on the council website, along with any consultation responses. A neighbour for example, might raise an issue. The local planning authority will take into account any written comments, providing they are strictly relevant to the application and 'material' to planning issues.

Can neighbours block your planning permission application?

Reduction in value of a neighbour's property is not a material planning consideration. Also, remember you can't be refused planning permission just on a neighbour's opinion, for example if they are worried about noise.

If a project has been previously rejected on the same site then a similar scheme is likely to be rejected, unless the revised scheme specifically addresses the concerns raised by the Local Planning Authority in its previous refusal. Your own age, status of health or background are also not valid grounds for refusal of planning permission. The length of time it may take to carry out the construction is also not taken into consideration.

Planning officer site visit for your self-build

Once the consultation period is over, the planning officer will visit the site at some point before a further five week period. Planning officers are busy people, under considerable time pressure, so although you can try and contact them to arrange a site visit, they may well prefer just to turn up and may not always have time to meet with you. As well as visiting the site itself, they may also take the opportunity to view it from adjoining properties.

The planning officer is likely to be looking at ecological issues and also Flood Risk. If your site is categorised within Flood Risk zones 2 or 3, as defined by the Environment Agency, you should have submitted a flood risk assessment with your application. This is why it is so important to get issues like this checked by an expert before making the application as matters such as these, or appropriate drainage strategies for example, can be addressed in the application, with documentation to show how your design mitigates any issues.

What's next?

Following the site visit, you can stay in touch with the planning officer to find out how your application is progressing. Sometimes a planning officer may tell you in advance of the final decision that your project is likely to be denied planning permission, particularly if it is just a small tweak needed to the design. In these circumstances you may be allowed to make a change to your design so it can still go through.

The planning officer assesses your application against local and national planning policies. They will be looking primarily at the design,

scale and layout of the proposed building. They will be looking at highways issues and car parking allowance. They will also take note of the location of the proposed development and its impact on the landscape, the local environment and ecology, such as trees, and neighbouring property.

You will hear when the planning office has made a decision on your case by email or by letter or you can keep an eye on the council's website, which will show when the status of the application has changed. Most planning applications are decided within an eight week period. Particularly large or complex applications can take up to 13 weeks.

How much does it cost to apply for planning permission?

If you are carrying out your self-build project via a turnkey solution from a self-build specialist, the cost for applying for application is included in the overall fee. If you are managing the process yourself, it currently costs £462 to apply for a new single dwelling in England. Apart from the separate costs for architectural plans, additional costs you need to allow for are those involved in preparing the plans and documents and

having necessary surveys carried out. If you need to revise your plans in any way to secure planning permission this might incur further architect's costs too. It is sensible to allow for around £2,000 for the planning permission part of the self-build process.

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YOUR PLANNING APPLICATION DECISION

Remember, the best way of avoiding planning application refusal is to take advice from a planning expert, long before your application has been submitted. If they conduct a site appraisal, they are best placed to advise you whether or not your project is likely to get a green light, based on their years of experience and knowledge of planning policy.

If the planning officer has indicated that he or she is likely to refuse the application (but has not yet done so) then there is an opportunity to revise the application without having to go through the whole process again.

If the application is actually refused by the planning officer then you cannot amend the application. You need to submit a new application, which may or may not attract a fee. There is provision for a “free go” within 12 months of a refusal so long as it is on the same site and of a similar development to that refused by the Local Planning Authority. This free go on a site can only be used once.



Can I change the design of my self-build project?

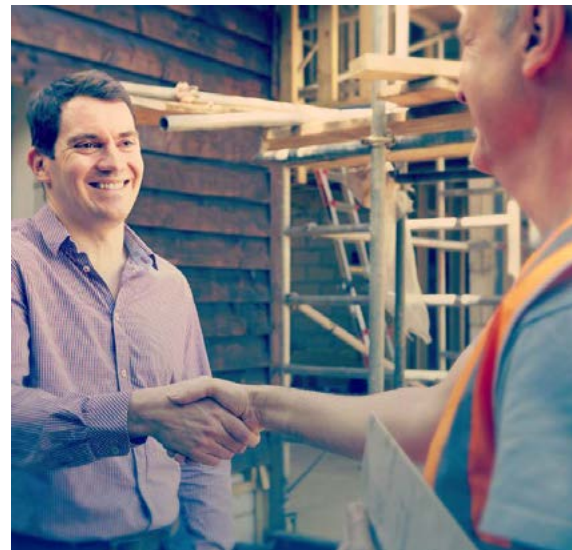
If your application is refused, the reasons for refusal have to be spelt out. It is usually a specific policy that has been breached. The decision notice itself is short but the planning officer's report will provide you with more background. You can find this on the council's website. If you re-submit the application to appeal against the refusal, you can provide additional information as grounds for your appeal. However, you cannot change the design during an appeal as it the scheme that was determined by the Local Planning Authority that must be considered. Of course, you can go back with a fresh application for an alternative design.

Are appeal processes available?

If your self-build planning application is turned down, you have the option of making an appeal. The time limit on doing this is six months from the date of the refusal. You can go through one of the three appeals processes. These are either a written submission, an informal hearing, which does not happen very often, or a public enquiry, which can get very expensive.

What is a written submission?

A written submission responds specifically to the reasons for refusal. Once submitted, there is a six week time period during which third parties can respond. During this six week period the Council is also able to produce its Statement as well as third parties. You will then be given a final opportunity to make comments on any additional submissions from third parties or the Council. A planning inspector will visit the site and provide an appeal decision in writing. If you decide to go down this route, you don't have to pay any fees but you may have to pay for expert help.



When is it worth making an appeal?

You should only go down the appeal route if it is the only option left to you and you are sure that you can provide genuine arguments on key planning points as your grounds of appeal. If the planning officer has recommended approval but it is the planning committee that has turned it down, it might be worth considering an appeal. If the planning officer has not recommended your plans being approved, then you need to look really carefully at their reasons. If they involve a particular interpretation of planning policy or a point of law, then your best bet is definitely to take expert planning advice rather than managing the appeal yourself.

Just over one in three appeals are successful. Going through the whole appeals process is time-consuming. It can take several months and may end up costing you more money. Occasionally you can get costs back from the council but similarly, the council can make a claim against you for costs as well. Even if you win the appeal you won't automatically get costs awarded back to you.

What is 'discharge of planning conditions'?

If planning permission is granted, discharge of planning conditions will need to be met. There will be some conditions which are "pre-commencement conditions". These are the conditions which need to be discharged before development can start. Not all conditions are pre-commencement conditions. Some will relate to implementing the planning permission in accordance with the approved plans or in accordance with other reports which have already been submitted to the Local Planning Authority. Planning conditions vary from matters such as highways work to improve access or getting a ground investigation report completed to specifying what materials have to be used in the construction.

You must make sure that all conditions are met or planning consent cannot be implemented. For example, the building position and specific floor levels are very typical planning conditions. In a worst case scenario, if the building is not built exactly in the specified position with the precise floor levels as set out in the conditions, the permission is invalid and the building might have to be rebuilt.

It is common for a local authority to make approval of external materials a condition of planning. These include external cladding, brickwork, render, tiling, external joinery colours etc. They may or may not require to see actual samples. If you are building in a Conservation area or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, restrictions are likely to be tighter. Again, if you don't get approval of these things in advance, you may have to replace them, so it's never worth taking a risk in the hope you will just be lucky.

[Contact us](#) to find out more about our free planning advice and full self-build turnkey package. This includes the management of the whole planning application process, including an appeal, if it proves necessary.

FINAL CHECKLIST



As your project is almost ready to start on site, here are some final points to bear in mind.

Building Regulations

While you don't need to be an expert in Building Regulations in the UK, it does help to have some rudimentary knowledge of the process and the basics of what's permitted and what isn't, when it comes to erecting a building from scratch.

Building Regulations are the rules of the game when it comes to construction. They are the statutory regulations that enforce what is permitted and the strengths, sizes, etc of

materials used. Building regulations approval is required for most building work in the UK. The regulations that apply across England and Wales were set out in the Building Act 1984 (Scotland's is more recent, from 2003), though many amendments have been made to England and Wales's regulations over the years, to account for technological and social change. The latest updates occurred in 2010.

The Building Regulations for all parts of the UK are available to read online but don't try and read all the documentation! The detailed legislation is set out under 16 separate sections under lettered headings, Part A to Part R. They cover everything from workmanship, adequate materials, structure,

waterproofing and fire safety, to sound insulation, electrical safety, ventilation, drainage, disabled accessibility and facilities, and also high-speed broadband infrastructure. In many cases they are the minimum requirements, and features such as timber beams and windows, can actually be made larger to create a visual impact.

Your architect and project manager will make sure your project sticks to the regulations. Your self-build site will also have to be visited by a building control officer, to make sure what has been proposed is being built. That's why it's such a good idea to engage with construction professionals to oversee and carry out your self-build project from start to finish.

What are SAP Calculations?

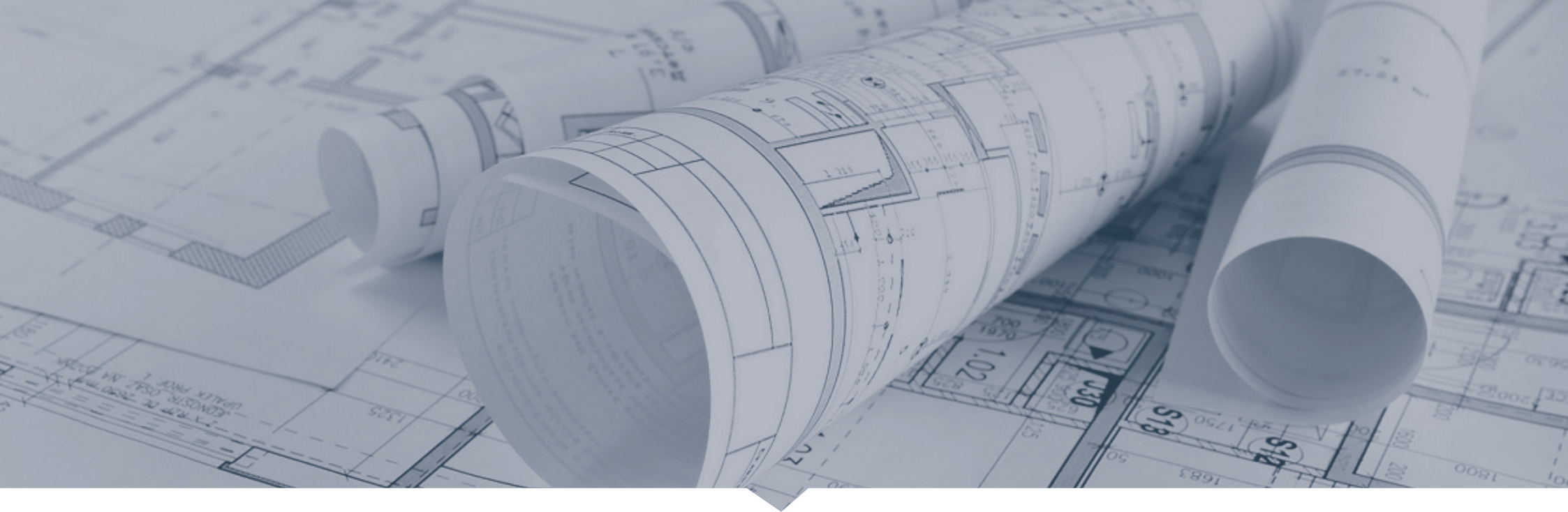
Part of the Building Regulations involves Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) Calculations, which are required for any new-build in the UK. They were introduced in 1995 and assess the energy rating of a new building. They determine the building's SAP Rating, which is the energy-related running cost of the structure. They also demonstrate compliance with Part L of the Building Regs and the data is used to produce an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC), which is required, for example, when a property is sold. In some cases you may also need an SAP for a conversion or extension.

The SAP Rating will be between one and 100+. A figure of 100 represents zero energy costs and anything over means you are exporting energy. The SAP Calculations define the energy cost based on the construction materials used, the form of heating, the level of insulation, the lighting and any renewable technologies that have been incorporated into the design, such as solar panels. It doesn't include energy used for cooking or appliances, such as computers, home entertainment, washing machines etc. To meet Building Regulations, self-builders need to have their project pass the SAP Certificate. SAP assessors are officials who have been accredited and registered with a certification body. They can help the designer or architect to create the most energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly home possible, so it's useful to open a dialogue with them at the planning stage.

Do I need to engage a Structural Engineer?

Depending on the size, scope and construction methods being employed on your self-build project, you may need to engage a structural engineer, in addition to an architect. A structural engineer is concerned with the design and integrity of structures, such as buildings, bridges and other monuments. They can contribute to the design process, and advise and report on loads and stresses the construction will be subjected to once it is built. Qualified structural engineers will have an in-depth knowledge of the properties of a range of building materials, and understand structures using support beams, columns and foundations.

Structural engineers are sometimes involved in the planning stage of large projects and can offer advice on the best way to overcome challenges, such as poor ground conditions. When you have engaged an architect and project manager for your self-build, they will be able to talk to you about whether a structural engineer is required. That's why it's often the safest option to appoint a turnkey construction firm to carry out your project, as they can offer expert guidance on such matters from the start.



Council Charges CIL – exemption for self-build?

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge that local authorities can place on new development. It was introduced in the UK in 2008. Its aim is to raise funds to go towards infrastructure, facilities and services, such as schools, roads or flood defences, which are needed to support new homes and businesses. The CIL is calculated per square metre, but there are certain exemptions. The calculation is carried out by multiplying the CIL charging rate by the net chargeable floor area (based on Gross Internal Area) and factoring in an index figure (to allow for fluctuations in building costs over time). Any

residential development over 100m², be it a new-build or extension, is liable for the fee.

The charge is payable when the development commences, usually within 60 days. It is also possible under amendments made in 2010 to pay CIL separately, at each phase of a larger development. But importantly, self-build projects are now exempt from the CIL charge. The change, which was first mentioned in April 2013, has been implemented as of February 2014. It means that anyone wishing to build their own home qualifies for relief from the CIL, which can potentially be a huge saving, depending on the size of project.

To claim a CIL exemption for a self-build home, you can apply for relief using a two-part Self-Build Exemption form, available on the Planning

Portal. The first form should be submitted prior to construction commencing. The second should be filled out within six months of completion and should be accompanied by a number of supporting documents, including a completion certificate and a copy of the property deeds. Talk to your local authority or your projects manager, to find out how to submit your exemption in advance of construction starting. At CB Homes, this is something we take care of for you, as part of our turnkey service.

If you're satisfied that all this documentation has been taken care of, you are now ready for your Self-Build project to commence. [Contact us](#) to find out more about our complete turnkey solution for your self-build project.

We can offer you help at every stage of your self-build project, including finding a plot, all pre-start work and a fixed fee, full turnkey package, as well as all aspects of design and planning. Talk to us to find out more.

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